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# *Committee Meeting*

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS  
AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

*"An in-depth look at career and technical education as a model for high school reform"*

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**LOCATION:** Newark Tech High School  
Newark, New Jersey

**DATE:** April 3, 2009  
12:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS OF SUBCOMMITTEE PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Joan M. Voss, Chair  
Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair  
Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey



**ALSO PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Ralph R. Caputo

Melanie Schulz  
*Executive Director*

Sharon Benesta  
*Chief of Staff*

*Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by*  
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,  
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**ASSEMBLYWOMAN JOAN M. VOSS (Chair):** I want to call the meeting to order, and I'd like to call upon Dr. Michael Pennella to come up and say a few words.

**S U P T. M I C H A E L A. P E N N E L L A, Ph.D.:** Good afternoon.

I'd like to thank the Joint Committee on the Public Schools' Subcommittee on Innovative Programs and Charter Schools for being here today. I'd like to welcome you to the Essex County Vocational Technical Schools.

I'd like to thank a few people. First of all, I'd like to thank you for being here; Principal Baruti Kafele and his staff for hosting us; and, of course, to our County Executive, Joe DiVincenzo, for his continued support. Most of this program was put together under the direction of our Community Outreach Director, Liz Moore. I'd like to thank her. And I'd like to make sure that I recognize the many other people who worked on this, including the baseball team, under their Coach, our security guard Jerry Barker.

This is an important occasion for us. And in order to give the members of the Legislature a better feel for who is in the room from our side, I'd just like to introduce the following people.

If you'd please stand up, I'd appreciate it.

You've already met Principal Baruti Kafele. With us today is Principal Eric Love, from Bloomfield Tech; Principal Patricia Clark-Jeter, from our North 13th Street School; Principal John Dolan, from our West Caldwell Tech Campus. We have our Supervisor of Vocational Education, Janice Kenyatta; Supervisor of Special Education, Michael Zelkowitz;

Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction, Dixiana Carbonell; and someone else you already met this morning, who is our Director of both Career and Technical Education, Joseph Tysk. I'd also like to thank someone else in the audience today who is a continued source of support to us, and that is our Executive County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Larry Feinsod. And our Board Member representing the Board of Education, Sal Carnovale. And a second thank you goes to one of our Freeholders who is here, and also Assemblyman, Ralph Caputo. And finally, to our head of the New Jersey Council for Career and Technical Education, Judy Savage.

At this time, I'd like to call upon, if I could, Principal Kafele to give a welcome from Newark Tech. (applause)

**BARUTI K. KAFELE:** Good afternoon.

On behalf of the entire Newark Tech family, I certainly would like to welcome all of you here. I think that this is an honor and a privilege that you are here this afternoon, and we have a lot to share with you.

I do want to say, regarding the blowers (referring to air conditioning), we're shutting them down right now. That's going to impact heat. But I think it would be better if we shut them down now so we can hear one another. And we'll monitor the temperature. If it's cold, then we'll turn it back on. We'll just need to speak loudly.

But, again, welcome to Newark Tech, a school that's certainly on the move within a district that's on the move. And I look forward to a very good afternoon. (applause)

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS:** Now I'd like to call upon Executive County Superintendent Dr. Larry Feinsod.

Please come up.

S U P T. L A W R E N C E S. F E I N S O D, Ed.D.: Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure for me to be here. And I'd like to recognize and thank the distinguished panel that I'm sitting in front of.

Just a few minutes ago Melanie asked me if I would like to say a few words, and I'll keep it brief. But I would like to say that if there's anything that has affected me as an educator for the last 40 years, it's been the fact of technical education, career education, and how it changes the lives of young people, and how it provides a way to go, if you will -- how it provides an occupation, a sense of dignity, and how it has given meaning to many young men and women. If there's anything you can do during this difficult economic time to enhance institutions such as this-- All of you were with me as we walked through, and we saw so many dedicated teachers and so many young people learning their future, experiencing something that obviously will change their lives. So I am an enthusiastic supporter of what's going on in this unique institution and institutions like this throughout the state.

So whatever this distinguished panel can do for kids and for the teachers who make this place so successful, and places like it around the state, I tip my hat. Thank you all for caring. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you so very much.

It is such a pleasure for me to be here. And I am one of the people in the Legislature who happens to be an educator. That's my number one priority. I spent 41 years in education.

And when I was writing my dissertation, it was about places like this, places where children have hands-on education, places where

children will learn the professions that are going to serve them well throughout their lives. And I've been a big supporter, proponent of technical and vocational education since I can remember, because it saves children, it motivates children, and it gives them a future that they all deserve. And so you certainly have a supporter. I was very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to many of the educators in this district.

Once a teacher, always a teacher. And I have volunteered my services, anytime you need me, to come in and speak to the students about government or about anything that they would like to know. Because it is really important that they have the ability to access the people who are making the rules and regulations in our society. Because they, someday, are going to become the people making the rules and regulations.

So I can't tell you-- I'm so impressed with this school. I really am. We have gone all over the state. A few weeks ago we were down in Ocean County at the MATES Academy. We've been at the Union Vocational Schools. Bergen County has an excellent vocational and technical program, as well as an Academy. And I just can't see enough, because as you can probably tell, I'm a politician and teacher, and I talk, and talk, and talk. And so when I have something I'm very passionate about, as I am about vocational and technical education -- the more I see, the more I can advocate. So I am so pleased to be here today. And as I said, I'm so impressed with everything I have seen in this school. Continue to keep up the good work.

Senator Rice, would you like to say a few words?

**SENATOR RONALD L. RICE (Co-Chair):** Let me, first of all, thank my colleagues for being here today; and also thank Madam

Chairwoman of this Subcommittee, who is also the Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools along with myself, and to our staff.

I thank all of you for coming out. It's important that we hear from you. We have some very serious fiscal difficulties. We know that the vocational schools are pretty much funded at the county level with some support from the State. We believe that we have to be a little bit more innovative and helpful at the State level when we talk about vocational schools, whether it's this vocational setting or the others we have been to. They're still a part of the public education.

And we sit and talk about charter schools and vouchers -- some things I support, some things I don't. But we don't talk about the real funding needed for vocational schools.

The tour was very interesting, because I haven't been here in a while. For those who may not know, I still live in Newark after 50-some years, about five minutes from here. But there have been a lot of changes made here.

But the young people are very interesting. Because one thing that stuck with me is that, as we spoke to the young people, those who are graduating -- interestingly enough, they finish career -- at least academics and mechanics, and you would think they're going to leave here and maybe go to work for one of the auto dealers and do something else. But they're going to college in a different direction, which I thought was interesting, because it means they have a potential opportunity for some assistance going through college with a job. But their focus is where we always thought young people need to focus anyway, and that's on college academics, higher education.

And so the way that you're doing that here, under your leadership -- and impressing upon these youngsters the importance of that. I think it's important to all of us to certainly set a model that we think we need to be looking at, in terms of our public schools in general. We know we can't make public schools vocational schools. But I think that the key element here is that there are things of interest that attract the youngsters to want to learn all those other things.

So with that, let me just say thank you very much. And we're looking forward to hearing from you today.

Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you very much, Senator.

I'd like to go a little out of order from the roster that we have here and invite Councilman Ron Rice -- not Junior (laughter) -- to come up and say a few words.

**COUNCILMAN RONALD C. RICE:** Thank you.

It's my pleasure to welcome this Subcommittee of the Joint Committee to the City of Newark, on behalf of our Mayor and our Council President for the City of Newark. We welcome you to Newark Tech to address this really important issue.

I will speak louder. (referring to air conditioning)

This issue is of extreme importance, obviously, to places like Newark. And so I think it's timely, as the Senator said, in these fiscal times when resources are short. The needs are great -- the need to evaluate where we target those limited resources. And, obviously, in communities like ours here in the City of Newark, technical and vocational education is vital. It's vital because it leads young people into real careers that will pay them real

wages over the course, for some, of their entire lives. And it gives them options.

And so it is, I guess, in the interest of education, the biggest bang for the buck in terms of helping young people to specialize in these skill sets and to give them the education they need that will lead to real jobs and not just training, and training, and training.

Lastly, let me just say that this particular school, and the leadership that is here in Baruti Kafele, I think is testament to technical schools that work well, that are community-based, that are open, and that produce results. I think you will not find -- and I know many schools are represented here. But I'm going to brag a little bit about the one that's in my city. I don't think you'll find a better program -- and a program that could be matched up against any throughout the state, in terms of academic rigor and in terms of preparedness for our young people.

So, again, on behalf of our Mayor and on behalf of our City Council, we welcome you to Newark. And I look forward to hearing some testimony, even if I have to leave a little early to do some work today, as well.

But, again, welcome and thank you for coming. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: My colleague, Assemblyman Ralph Caputo, would you like to say a few words?

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I'll try to say a few, but we had a double dose from the Rices. I don't have my son here. (laughter)

But it's always a pleasure to see the Senator and his son, and of course Assemblywoman Voss and Assemblywoman Mila Jasey.

I have a little bit of a different issue with the vocational schools. First of all, I lived in Essex County, basically Newark, most of my life. I taught in Newark. I also was in the County Superintendent's Office for a while, served as acting and assistant. And I have quite a bit of a background in terms of what goes on in the Newark Public Schools.

I don't know if you know the history of this particular building. This was, for those of you who have been around, built as an adult career center, basically out of Federal money, over 20 years ago. When Sussex Avenue closed, this became a regular high school for our students. At that time, back in the '80s, the reform had not really taken place. The vocational schools were really lagging way beyond their time for change. What I mean by that is, many of the courses that were offered really weren't relevant to the job market.

When you compare and contrast what was then and what is now, it's amazing what's taken place in terms of progress and elevation of the core curriculum. First of all, we have an outstanding staff. I could mention them all by name. But the truth is, even from my position, I know their expertise and their dedication to the children of Essex County. And I think that we ought to recognize the kind of focus that they place on educating our children.

Most of the time, people don't understand the value of what's going on here. This is almost like a private school, even though it's a public institution, a public school. These kids that come here -- the atmosphere, the fact of the way they're handled, in terms of discipline and also in terms of their motivation for learning, is quite different than some of the urban places that we see. And what we see here really should be spread

throughout -- regardless of the type of school that it is, whatever is being done -- and we can bottle it, and sell it, and market it. We have to learn what those ingredients are. But I think it's very valuable to other educators who want to do similar types of successful work.

Now, the other role, as far as being a legislator -- we all know what that's all about. But I also sit on the Board of School Estimate, which means we are part of the public that either approves or disapproves the budget. And what's happening here-- You know, years ago, districts didn't even pay tuition. Now the districts pay tuition. There's more a of a contribution toward the budget from local districts. And plus, what we do need to do -- and everybody understands that -- is that fact that, because it's not classified as an Abbott district, we're really being shortchanged at the State level. So there are a lot of things that we can talk about.

But I value, and I think everybody on this panel values, the process that's going on. This school system is very special. And you've had to work with some old facilities. They're not all the same. West Caldwell is one thing, North 13th Street is another, Bloomfield is another. So they've had to retrofit their program to fit into facilities that are really not appropriate for the kind of learning that's going on. But in spite of that, the job that's being done is really superb. So we're very proud to support those initiatives that come from the County Executive; from the Superintendent, Dr. Pennella; from all of the ideas that come to us. We will deeply consider them and fight as hard as we can for the best possible educational program that's available.

So it's my pleasure to be here and also be a part of this.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you, Assemblyman.

And now I'd like to introduce you to Assemblywoman Mila Jasey. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

The advantage of going last is that everything that needs to be said has been said. (laughter) And so I would certainly echo everything that my colleagues have said, and assure you that I am a strong supporter of vocational and career academies. And you should know that at the State level, you certainly have a friend and supporter in me.

The funding issue is a major issue, and it's one that we talked about over lunch. We talk about it constantly -- how to find more funds to come into programs that are working. Because I believe strongly that schools that are not working should not continue. But schools that are working well and that are producing graduates -- particularly graduates with skills and the ability to go on into the world of work or further education -- need to be supported and replicated.

So that's one of my goals in the Legislature -- to make sure that schools that are working are supported, and schools that are not working are closed and alternatives are proposed for the kids from those schools. And exactly how we do that I don't know. I think it's going to take all the stakeholders coming to the table to figure that out. But at a time when funds are limited and fiscal constraints are very real, we have to make sure that every dollar we spend is spent well and spent in the interest of our kids, who are certainly our future.

So I look forward to hearing more about this organization, this institution. I was very impressed with the young people who I had the

opportunity to talk to. I look forward to following their careers. And they're talking about doing all kinds of things from criminal justice, to attorney, to Senator -- one young man told me -- to the FBI, and many other places -- animation. Their worlds are wide open, and that's what we want for all young people in the State of New Jersey. We want them to know that the options are limitless and the world is there. And our job is to prepare them for it.

So I look forward to learning more this afternoon, and I thank you for inviting us. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you.

And now I would like to ask Dean Phil Linfante to come up. (applause)

**DEAN PHIL LINFANTE:** Good afternoon, everyone.

When Dr. Yamba, the President of Essex County College for the past 28 years, asked me to represent him today to speak about the relationship between Essex County College and the Essex County Vocational Technical Schools, I was extremely pleased.

Essex County College and the Vocational School have had a long-standing, positive relationship. And you know it's very easy. And I'm sure you've heard that before. But I'm going to spend the next couple of minutes showing you some examples of how that relationship actually works.

We are very proud of the relationship between the two schools. And I'm going to concentrate on something called *dual enrollment*. As we know, dual enrollment is the ability for a high school student to get a head start to college, to be able to take college courses while still in high school,

achieve their high school diploma and receive college credits at the same time.

And the Vocational Schools and the College have worked very closely together to try to provide that opportunity for the students. Let me give you some examples. Especially since the vocational school is set up in academies, it works well to work with the College -- the Community College -- and for this school especially, because the College is right next door. But we do work with the other sites: Bloomfield Tech and North 13th Street.

We work with their engineering academy, where students come to the College and take some engineering courses, receive college credit, and then come back to their high school in order to take part in the rest of their academic courses and also their extracurricular activities. We take -- partner with their law academy, where students take criminal justice courses, legal assistance courses -- receive college credit for them and, again, also can take part in their high school activities and finish the rest of their curriculum. These are just a few of the areas.

One of the main areas that we work with is math. As we all know, our students in math have a difficult time when they leave high school and they enter college. The Vocational Schools took a very proactive approach. They approached the College and said, "What can we do to help our students?" And we found that there really wasn't much of an articulation between what happens in high school math compared to what's needed to take the placement test -- which is the ACCUPLACER, which is administered by every community college for incoming freshmen -- with the math that's done at the high school.

What we've done is -- and we're doing it as a pilot -- we have a hundred students in the Vocational Schools who are actually taking our transitional math class using our books and our curriculum, working with our faculty, hoping that by the time they finish their senior year, they will be college-ready. And that's what we're all about -- so that a student would not have to take developmental courses but then can go right into college.

I'm happy to say that with all the college courses that are offered, I think it was 72 percent, last year, of all the students who took a college course succeeded. And that means they got an A, B, or C. So when you think about three out of four of the students who took a college course -- and remember, they're doing the same work that any other college student would do. I think that's extraordinary.

And just the last program I wanted to highlight is our program that is a joint program between the Vocational Schools, the College, and PSEG -- Public Service Energy and -- technology. And I think it's so impressive, because it's us working together with industry. What we did was-- The Community College was approached by PSEG to develop an associate's degree program in energy utility technology, which is great. The students take their core requirements at the College; spend Fridays at the Edison Training Facility for PSEG, where they learn their major courses; and they get an associate's degree. And if they achieve that associate's degree -- and they have paid internships every Summer -- they receive a job at PSEG starting at approximately \$45,000 to \$50,000.

We thought it would be excellent to bring that program down into the Vocational Schools. And we met with the Superintendent, and Principals, and Mr. Tysk. And we developed a program where the students

start, in their senior year, taking a college-level course taught by a PSEG instructor at the College -- at Essex County College. It starts out with a bigger group. And then those who are interested continue on at Essex. And then they go through the program with PSEG, receive an associate's degree, and then are able to go to work for the company.

So that's just one -- and I think that's the exemplary program that we have -- working with the Vocational Schools, the College, and also an industry standard, to get them into work.

That's just the beginning. We've had many meetings with the Superintendent -- with Dr. Pennella. We put in an RFP with the Commission on Higher Ed to start an EMT program, working with our police academy. Because EMT is one of the only allied health fields where at 16 you could be certified. Most of the other allied health programs you need to be 18. So we are actually starting, next year, in September, working and having an EMT program where the students will then be certified, working and achieving college credits toward an EMT certificate.

So those are a few of the examples. I'm open to any questions that you might have. But once again, it's easy to say there's a relationship between the College and the Vocational Schools. But I hope that I gave you a few examples to show that the positive relationship exists, and we're very close, and work very closely together.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you so much.

I'd like now to have our student panel come up. And our student panel is Master Moore, from Newark Tech; Noedienne Pierre, from West Caldwell Technology; forgive me if I don't say this right -- Rajiyyah

Woodson, from Bloomfield Tech; Karin Tavares and Levitta Lawrence, from North 13th Street Tech.

Thank you very much for being here today. (applause)

Would each of you--

Master Moore, would you like to start and say a few words about--

I had the privilege of having lunch with this young man, and he is extremely interesting in his choice of career path. So maybe he will share some of that with us right now.

**M A S T E R M O O R E:** Hello. My name is Master Moore. I am a sophomore here at Newark Tech. And for a career I chose to be a professional video game designer. That entails basically graphic designing, game play writing, things of that nature. I want to personally be a game play writer. I want to be the one who does the storyline of the video game. I want to be the one who basically has all the details about -- if this character does this, then what happens, and things of that nature.

My plan is to buy out Sega at the age of around -- between the ages of 25 and 30, have my own company by the time I'm 35, and retire at the age of about 53. Those are basically my goals.

I have everything mapped out from high school to college. So that's basically what I want to do with myself.

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS:** Thank you very much.

I had such a nice lunch with him. He's going to retire at 53. I never was able to do that. (laughter)

Noediene.

**NOEDIENE PIERRE:** My name is Noedienne Pierre. I'm a senior at West Caldwell Campus. I'm majoring in business technology, where we learn accounting procedures. We do taxes, we do the basic computer skills: Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, Office. And we do filing. And we're really preparing for the office positions for work.

For the future, I plan on taking accounting, to be an accountant when I get older. And I plan on maybe later in the future taking up the medical field, maybe be an RN if I have the time. And I'm attending Jersey City University.

That's about it. (applause)

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS:** Excellent. Thank you.

Now, this young lady I've been encouraging to enter the teaching profession, because she's extremely good in mathematics, and we desperately need math and science teachers.

So if I can be of any persuasion on you to think about a career in teaching, I would be very, very happy.

**RAJIYYAH WOODSON:** Well, yes, you have.

My name is Rajiyyah Woodson, and I'm a senior at Bloomfield Tech Campus.

I'm going to NJCU, New Jersey City University. Those are my plans after I graduate in June. And I want to be a teacher. I want to be a math teacher. And I will take up business administration, because, as I was told, it connects with education. So I think that would be a good field for me. And like I said, I'm good with numbers. And as a business major, we do accounting, E-commerce, virtual business. We've learned a lot of things on the computer. And being an accounting major and having that class

helps me with the numbers, because it's basically numbers. So I think that's pretty good for me. And being a math teacher is what I want to be. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you.

Karin.

**KARIN TAVARES:** My name is Karin Tavares. I attend North 13th Street Campus, and I am currently studying law and public safety. I've been studying that since my sophomore year.

The reason I chose law and public safety was because I want to be an attorney when I grow older. I want to basically-- The field I want to go into is family law. And I believe that the shop I chose helps a lot because we don't only learn about that one specific field of law and public safety, we learn about everything. We have taken trips to the Essex County College Police Academy and seen how bad it is over there and the steps they go through over there.

Also, I am part of the Mock Trial team, which my shop started when I started there. We basically go to a State competition and we put on a case -- a mock case. And I was one of the lead attorneys. And it was a good experience, because I get a feel of how it is to be in the field, what it is like to be in a real courtroom setting.

Also, I'm a part of the Essex County College. I take one of the courses at the County College in legal assistance. And we get three college credits from that towards graduation, that are transferable to any college that we would like to go to. I've learned a lot in that class, because I learned a lot of the different fields in law, and what I need to learn and study for the fields that I want to go through. And I think it's very helpful

-- the classes are very helpful that I'm taking, because they helped me out a lot in choosing what college I want to go to and the career path I want to go into -- possibly even child services, if I'm allowed to.

And I'm going to attend Caldwell College in the Fall through the EOF program. And that's basically it. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: That makes me very happy, because some of the issues that we work on in the State Legislature is the fact that there is a tremendous amount of violence in our society, that there's a tremendous amount of domestic violence, that family values need to be worked on. And we certainly need young ladies who will be attuned to working with the people who desperately need help. So I'm very happy to hear that.

Levitta.

**LEVITTA LAWRENCE:** Hi. My name is Levitta Lawrence.

I currently go to North 13th High School. I'm studying Web design, and it's fairly new to our school. But I really enjoy it. It's really interesting. I thought designing Web pages would be difficult, but it's not actually. So I'm glad about that.

In the Fall I will be attending NJIT, studying architecture. And even though I'm not pursuing the Web design, I'm glad I have it under my belt. It's a very good skill. And my teacher is looking into getting us certified in HTML coding, which probably some of you don't know about. But it will certify me to be a Web designer. And that's something that I can make a little extra money on the side with. Because it's a great field. Everybody needs a Web site nowadays. I think it's really good. I'm very glad that I took that class. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: You all are very, very impressive, and I'm so happy to hear your career plans. There's an expression: By your students you'll be taught. And I can certainly use some of your skills to teach me about some of these things like Web design.

Senator.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you.

I'm really impressed. And you can know how -- probably can understand, being a Newarker -- Councilman Rice is my son. And the first African-American to be Councilman of the West Ward, here in the City of Newark, was myself. There was one councilperson in between that when I stepped down. And he's the Councilman.

And growing up in Newark and watching the public education system, and the changes that have taken place-- All we hear in Trenton is what young people can't do, what they aren't doing. And we get that throughout the state. It's not just a Newark rap. It's an urban rap in most cases. And when you break it down from an urban perspective, it's really a rap on young minority men and women in general. It's a rap on our families that struggle with the economics and the social ills that plague our cities that a lot of people don't understand. We do. We get it.

But it makes me feel good coming here, after traveling through some of the other vocational areas that the Assemblywoman spoke of -- to see across the state that there is a difference in vocational education, in terms of what the institution is bringing to young people and preparing them to go forward.

I would suspect that when you say vocational education, the majority of people in New Jersey think this is one of those One-Stops, like

the old days when you came into Newark or Irvington vocational -- Bloomfield -- and you learned a little bit about mechanical drawing, and then you'd work with some drafting person or a little about auto, and you went and pumped some gas. I don't think they understand that the majority -- what appears to be the majority of our vocational students, from at least the population we have seen or interacted with, are picking up some skill sets that are immediate but are also a foundation. And they're going on to college and other areas that are very, sort of, needed.

Let me say to the young lady that a math major is very important. Marion Bolden and I graduated together, went to school together. She was a math major and became the Superintendent of the Newark school system during times of great troubles when people thought they couldn't pull it up. And she had no money. They cut her budget, after they mismanaged about \$70 million. So that's important. And I think if young people know that you're going to go into math -- talk about it -- we can encourage others.

I know that the young man -- that vision you have is not a vision we see every day, because we don't interact with young people the way we should to realize they have visions. They actually have a plan. It may not be 53, it may be 52, it may be 55. But I'll be out of the Senate, so you're going to need a lobbyist, because it's government related. So I will come work for you. (laughter)

Nursing is very important. I'm glad we have the relationship.

The bottom line is that we have to do more to figure out, as this Committee has lead the battle, if you will -- the conversations with Assemblywoman Lampitt -- to make sure that community colleges are

transferable into four-year institutions. You don't want to work for nothing. You want to work and know you're getting your just dues if you go along with the program and do what you're supposed to do.

There's a need to make certain that the relationships that are starting to develop with Essex County College and Essex County Vocational Schools -- that we are looking at leaving high school with credits that are acceptable upon walking in at least at the community college level, if not above. To me it makes good sense. Because it's going to encourage young people to do more. So I want to just say that.

And I wanted you, as Essex County residents, Newarkers, and other cities within the county, to know that you are representing this population well, you're representing this county and cities well.

So I know I can go to Trenton and fight now a lot more for the kinds of things that we need. And we also want to encourage you, as you see a need for the school or for your career, to write us and let us know. Because sometimes the administrators are busy, teachers are busy; and there are little things that we need to be adding to the academic piece or to make available to you, to continue to encourage you to move forward, that we may not know about.

And finally, one discussion we're having is -- I really believe that we need to change this name of vocational technical schools. We've had that conversation. I think it's beyond it's time. It's worn out. It's stereotyping what these academic institutions are all about and the kinds of products that are being prepared and being delivered to the four-year institutions. And that's one thing I'm committed to doing.

We think we have language. I believe Assemblywoman Jasey, and I, and Voss were talking about it. We know they should be more -- academic careers, or institutes, or something. But vocational is kind of played out.

And so hopefully one day soon, Assemblyman Freeholder, we're going to take this Essex County vocational thing off the building and put another word, that is more appropriate to what we have here, on the building.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I just wish that we could bring most of the legislators to see what you're doing and to see how intelligent, and how articulate, and how focused you are.

And I have to agree with Senator Rice. The term *vocational* is archaic at this point. The average person does not understand what we're talking about. And Assemblywoman Jasey and I were just saying: Why don't we call them career academies, or something that is much more relevant to what you are learning and what you are doing? All of the young people I spoke to are going on to higher education, all have wonderful career goals, all have done so many things already. And I'm very impressed with the fact that you can get college credit for subjects while you're still in high school. I had the privilege of teaching a college credit course when I was teaching. And so many of my students were able to go on to college with at least a semester -- with college credits -- which you are going to be able to do, which is great. It gives you a head start on your careers.

And as I said, I wish we could bring more people than just the people on the Education Committee to see what is happening in some of

the wonderful schools in our state. Because I think that the average person doesn't really know what's going on here. And this is the direction that education should really be taking. And I'm very proud of all of you. You did a great job. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: The only thing I'd like to add to that is, it just occurred to me sitting here-- We often talk about the fact that it's hard to share information with our fellow legislators. Perhaps, because you have so much experience and ability in the technology area, you might want to think about, as a senior project -- perhaps not for this year, but for next year -- but a video that does kind of a short interview with students. Because we've had the privilege of hearing from you today and talking to you during the morning. But in order to share that more widely, perhaps if we had something -- if we had a CD to take with us that we could pop in, for example, that was maybe five or 10 minutes long -- pop it in at the beginning of an Ed Committee meeting, or a joint committee meeting. Put it on the cable stations. Put it on NJN. Because we need to get the word out to the rest of the public about what Senator Rice was talking about. And that is that-- I would say probably 99 percent of our young people are doing the right thing. You have goals, you have plans, you're excited, you're intelligent. And all you need is the opportunity to do something with all of that. But it's the 1 percent who get the headlines and that everybody talks about. And I get very, very tired of having to try to defend.

I was on the Board of Ed for eight years in my district. And I got so tired of people talking about, "Oh, the high school is not what it used to be." And I told people, "You know what? That's what they said to me

in 1972, when I moved to this town. And 30 years later, people are still saying the same thing.” It’s very tiresome. People do -- they connect to the negative. And I really do believe that there is so much more positive to be talking about. And one way to do it, perhaps, is through some kind of video, some kind of graphic, if you will, that we could actually take with us and say, “Before we start the meeting today, we’re going to play this video, because we want you to meet the young people of New Jersey.” And I would love to have something to share from every county in this state at these various venues that we go to. Because everybody doesn’t have the luxury or the time that we have to come and visit with you. So that’s just my two cents. Perhaps there’s somebody out there who can pick up on this and put something in our hands that we can share. Because we need to share your stories.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I guess for over 40 years I’ve been railing about education not being a one-size-fits-all situation. And I think that I have to echo what Assemblywoman Jasey said. We have to show the other people in the Legislature and the other people in the communities at large what is happening. We have a terrible tendency in education to test, and test, and test. I hate those test. I have to tell you, I don’t think they really test anything except taking up a lot of our time. And we need to have different kinds of assessments. We need to show people that there are many levels of intelligence and that intelligence is not just measured by a paper-and-pencil type of test. And we have to get the word out.

As I said, the things that you're doing (bell sounds). I think they're telling me I said enough. (laughter) The things that you're doing here are just so spectacular, that I have to say that I wish we could get a little videotape, because there are so many people who are not full-time legislators and they don't get a chance to come to some of the places that we get a chance to go to. And you would impress them so very much.

Thank you very much.

Does anyone on the panel have anything, any questions they'd like to--

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Just maybe a little bit off the subject--

You know, we have a lot of students in Essex County. And I think in the vocational schools -- if you'd correct me, Dr. Pennella -- we're serving 1,800 or 2,000. Really, we're just scratching the surface.

You have to grow to survive. I think what we've done now is polish the jewel. But now I believe it's time to expand and offer this type of education to more of our students. We have a lot of lost people out there without a place to go. This is a wonderful opportunity. And maybe we know about it. And some of the people on the panel have suggested the marketing of this particular type of education has to be provided. But just think of all the kids in Essex County; 1,800, or 2,000, 2,200 is a very small group -- and very exclusive, by the way. So you do have a very exclusive group. But I think it's time for us to blossom and look for additional ways of providing this technical academic education to more people.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I want to thank you all very, very much for your input today. Good luck in your future.

And I want to see you a teacher. (laughter)

Thanks, again. (applause)

And now we have a panel of distinguished educators coming up.

I'd like to call up Dr. Michael Pennella; Principal Kafele; and Special Assistant to the Superintendent, Spring Banks.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Spring's not here today. She had a death in the family.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Spring's not here.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Joe Tysk is going to be there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Okay.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: And I'd also like Phil Linfante up at the table.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Okay. So now we're going to have Phil Linfante and Joe Tysk.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Thank you.

It's always very interesting that sometimes you wind up in a situation where you talk to people (bell sounds) -- it's a school -- you talk to people that you want to convince of something, and you realize, "They get it." You get it. But I would like, for your information and background, to just share some facts about who we are, about what our mission is here -- our unique mission. I hope you're getting a sense of who our people are -- our young people, our people with more birthdays than the young people have, and where we're going with our growth.

Phil, I would like thank you for introducing -- that's why I wanted you at the table, so in case there are other places where we can discuss that more.

My organization -- brief comments are the who we are, what we are achieving, what we're doing, and then, of course, a request for your consideration.

The reality is that we've been discussing recently, Senator Rice, that perhaps the term *vocational technical schools* should be changed to *career and technical schools*, because we're really preparing people for more than just the typical vocational education.

And, Assemblywoman Jasey, to your comment, we're very happy to tell you that as of this month, we have our television studio at Bloomfield Tech up and running, and it will be one of the projects it will take on so that people can get a capsule of some of the comments that our young people want to make, as well as some of the comments that our teachers can provide about what we're doing here, and the sense of community, and the success stories.

Right now, we are filled beyond -- I will say slightly beyond capacity. But we are very, very, very popular among the young people in Essex County. We have 2,120 individual students that we are serving. Two hundred and eighty of those students are full-time, special education students; and 89 of them are shared-time students.

Also, every day, Newark Tech has 711 students, West Caldwell has 317, North 13th has 649, and Bloomfield Tech has 443. Each day, we also help the adult population with the RPN program at our South Clinton Street facility.

In these schools-- These schools represent the oldest vocational school system in New Jersey, as well as the second largest vocational technical school in New Jersey. We are proud of the partnerships that we have, and there will be more discussion from Mr. Tysk and perhaps from Phil Linfante, as we go along, to describe our partnerships.

We have tremendous challenges here in that a lot of our students arrive to us -- apply to our schools and arrive with reading and mathematic skills in the 6th and 7th grade levels. Our job then is to quickly close that gap. And I'm happy to say that we're doing so.

In 2005, the vocational technical schools graduated 50 percent of their people with an SRA degree. That's no longer the case. At this point, they're at 16 percent, and that figure is dropping and will continue to drop. We will not be satisfied until it drops to zero. (applause)

In 2003, the number of juniors passing the State testing was 33 percent. It is now 73 percent. In language arts, it was 67 percent. It's now 86 percent. Ninety-three percent of our students come to us from the local Abbott districts. Right now, I'm very happy to tell you that because of the efforts of the staff and leadership -- principals of the district -- our scores outstrip the sending districts dramatically. And it is because of the extra effort that is going into academic support.

The schools have been recognized. And three of our schools were recognized by *U.S. News and World Report* as among the top schools. Now, to be very honest with you, all of those things -- if we weren't recognized I wouldn't feel bad, and if we were, I don't let it got to -- we don't let it go to our heads. However, I wanted to know what the criteria was. And the criteria for this was people not just doing -- not just taking

students who are well-prepared and have had all the opportunity along the way, it's for making the difference for some of our neediest students. Now I feel a little bit better about that recognition.

Bloomfield Tech, last year, was recognized as the only school in New Jersey to be so recognized as the top school serving Title I students. And we were recognized in Tennessee, on a national level, for that accomplishment.

Over 70 percent of our students go on to further education -- post-secondary education. Our students populate the schools of New Jersey -- the post-secondary schools in New Jersey. But they also attend schools such as Georgetown, Villanova, Rutgers, and other challenging and competitive schools.

What we are doing right now -- what we are trying to do is focus on two things. And this is where your comments may resonate. We are trying to (a) provide a credible academic and whole person support. And Principal Kafele will talk a little bit more about that. We are trying to provide more options for students, options that will not only capture their interests, but will prepare them for a career. Now, it's very possible that our students in their sophomore and junior years will say, "I'd like to go into law and public safety," and find that their interests change over the years. But what they will learn is the ability to be in a work setting, to be competitive, and to solve problems, and to achieve those 21st century skills that we are all striving for.

Our focus to do this, how we do what we do, is to keep in mind that New Jersey has 21 vocational technical districts. And as part of the Vocational Council led by our Executive Director, Judy Savage, we're all

unique in some ways. But when you pick up the *New York Times* and you read about some of the vocational technical schools, you might assume that it's a cookie-cutter approach to saying, "Let's take some of the strongest students and make them stronger, which is an incredible contribution to our economy." That's not our mission here. And, again, I don't want to belabor the point, because I know you get it. And it is for us to not cookie-cutter, not one-size-may-fit-all, but to create four schools that provide unique and special options to students. In doing that, we are also addressing tremendous academic needs.

I just-- For the interest of you as our guests, I'd just like to cite a few of the things that we're doing that is allowing us to achieve the results that we are achieving.

Our students come to school -- students who are preparing for the State tests or who have been identified as needing additional academic support come to school before school starts, and we offer classes before the regular day begins. We also offer classes after the regular day begins. This comes from the extra effort of leadership. We have situations where a principal will teach classes in math on the weekends, on Saturdays and Sundays, to the students. We have examples of a principal having quiet reading after school with students, walking the walk, and modeling that. We have a Summer school enrichment program where 320 students last year-- Again, with the support of the County Executive, the Freeholders, and our Board of Education, we were able to provide enrichment to 320 students in problem solving, math, reading, and language arts.

This year, recognizing the need that we have in vocational math, we have begun a math program as part of our career and technical

education. So students in our career and technical education classes are getting math that's tied directly to the vocational and career area that they're addressing. So beyond the math class, we're offering it in a practical setting, and we're having the effects that we want to have. And that is why people-- I was asked the question before: Why are the scores going up here? And it is those kinds of efforts that are making a difference.

One of the things that is of interest -- and I hope of use to you as you work with your colleagues -- is we're able, right now, in the 9th and 11th grades, to offer 80 minutes of instruction in math and 80 minutes of instruction in language arts. Now, part of the complexity of what you need -- what you're "burdened" with is: How do you address the needs when people suggest that extra courses will make everything better, that if everyone has an Algebra II course -- and I know, I'm very pleased that we're moving in the right direction there -- but I use it only as an example -- that that will make the economy and the world better? The facts are -- the facts according to Dr. Pennella (laughter) -- are that our students need to be treated as individuals. And that means that they should all graduate with three strong years of math. And they should be able to go on to college, go on to a career, but also have the basic math skills that, for those who say, "I want to go into -- immediately want to go to work in utilities, but I have to pass a test at PSEG" -- to pick just one of many -- "I want to get into a preapprenticeship program" -- same thing. This is what -- this is the response that our mission calls us to fulfill.

If we add more classes, the remedial courses -- such as that 80 minutes of math -- they begin to disappear. And we can't run our own

schools and create the successes that we create right now. Once again, I recognize the fact that I'm talking to people who get it.

We've instituted comprehensive assessment. That assessment allows us to look specifically at what students' needs are, and then to have specific administrators and supervisors charged with working with two or three teachers in math or in language arts to make sure that students are getting prompt feedback, and that a plan is being designed to meet their individual needs.

In our quest to reduce SRA-- We're very pleased that seniors -- that students now get three shots at this test. In our quest to do that, we've created a task force that is working with -- that worked with our seniors to prepare them for this past March -- last month's HSPA test, to make sure that our students know that SRA is not enough, and HSPA is not enough. As we achieve-- You know, I'm happy to say that at Bloomfield Tech, we achieved close to 98 percent proficiency last year. In doing that, it's very important now for us to get a new message in all of our schools that HSPA is not the end all and the be all. It's merely a mark of quality.

We will be doing more things. I spoke to you upstairs about transition academies for 9th graders, technical courses to introduce students, career courses at the 9th and 11th grade levels. But these are some of the things that we want you to know we're doing with what we have. But of course I'm here to say we need more.

Moments ago I was called out of the room by Ana Santos on behalf of the County Executive. There was an emergency across the street and he's not going to be able to be here today, which makes my opportunity to ask for -- request for consideration all the more important. Because one

thing I know about our County Executive is, he would not be shy asking for consideration. So I have big shoes to fill. But I'm going to do this before I hand this microphone over to Principal Kafele to talk a little bit about our approach to looking at the whole child.

Our buildings are old. We have one building that was built in 1928. We have another building that was built in 1930. We are doing a very, very good job of maintaining our facilities. We have a new HVAC shop, we have new changes to our culinary, a new business lab, a television studio. We are renovating these buildings to do the best we can, but it's not enough. For us to do major capital improvements, we can't look at adding space. We're looking at getting bathrooms that are more functional. We're looking at getting heating that works.

I know that there is a bill that came out of Committee that will be considered by the Assembly to make sure that the heat in these buildings are neither too high nor too low. And that is a very commendable task. But I want you to know that two of our schools had to be shut last year, without a bill, because they became too warm in June. We need help. We are doing the best we possibly can. But without looking at economies of scale, where more students can be educated under the methods, and plans, and commitment that we have-- Unless we can move-- The County Executive has come forward and said that he believes -- and I share his vision that including Newark Tech as it is -- that a school that combines three of our existing schools into one will provide us with tremendous economy of scale. And by that I mean it will allow us to configure our classes in different ways.

Let me give you one specific example: In math classes, where a concept is introduced, maybe we could be more successful if it were introduced to a larger group of students. And then when we find out that some students are achieving at one level, and others at a different level, we could have teachers then handling smaller groups. But they need the space and place to do this. This building -- if we were asked to meet on a regular basis, we would not be able to find the place. There are no meeting rooms. There are things that are basic to good education and a good education facility that we do not have. So we're asking for your consideration.

Ninety-three percent of our students are from Abbott districts. That 93 percent of construction funding would be a tremendous step forward for the Essex County Vocational Technical Schools, and I'm certain for other vocational technical schools in the state as well.

We are looking to bring together the best people in the best places. And in any place that you and your colleagues can help us with construction funding and with the support for curriculum and school support, we would be very, very grateful.

And so on behalf of the County Executive, but certainly on my own behalf, I ask you: We need your help. We appreciate that you recognize what we do. We know it's not enough. And if you came back to us in a year or two, you'd find that there's even more happening. One of the critical components of this--

And you're going to hear from Principal Kafele. And I want to be very careful. I'm going to ask Mr. Tysk to talk -- when he talks about the vocational and technical education -- to make sure that we emphasize that there are four strong schools here. You have been fortunate to see the

Newark Tech school. But the other three schools, through their career clusters and academies, and through their academic support, are equally impressive. And I don't want that to slip from the table, because I know that Principal Kafele has the ability to do a very strong -- to make a very strong statement. So I'm going to give him that opportunity right now.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Obviously, the County wants to build a large, campus-type facility. Am I correct, Dr. Pennella?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: So in the event that would happen, the three other schools would be sold, whatever. Is that correct?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: To the best of my understanding, that's correct. We own those schools.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: What would happen with the career center? What would happen with this particular building?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: This building would stay.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: This building would stay.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Let me ask another question. There was legislation -- landmark legislation passed in terms of school construction by this group right here, sponsored by Senator Rice in the Senate and supported by all of us in the Assembly. Let's put it this way, Essex County anyway -- we just about got it through.

Did you apply for the--

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Yes, we did.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: And what happened?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: We're awaiting-- We were very, very early in submitting. We were very timely and early. We have not had a response yet from the Department of Education.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Could you tell me what you submitted for?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: We submitted for infrastructure needs: windows.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: No, I'm talking about new schools.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: We would receive 48 percent funding. The County would have to assume 52 percent of that funding, and the County is not in a position to assume it at this particular point.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I understand that. Even under that legislation, you would still have to support it by local -- by County funds.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Well, you haven't heard -- you haven't had a decision on that?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: We have not had a decision on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Let's say there is not a change in the legislation, what would you -- would the Board accept that grant?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: I can't speak for the Board. I would recommend that we -- if there's no change in the legislation -- that we move forward.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Obviously, if you submitted it, it wouldn't be something that--

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: The options, Freeholder Assemblyman Caputo--

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: You're talking about renovations on the existing buildings for that money?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: What we're talking about is new windows. I mean, it's--

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: It wasn't a big item in terms of the magnitude of what you need.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: It's not, if you look at the tax dollars that are needed to support it.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: What you want is a change in the legislation.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: It's the only way for us to get to where we want to go.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Obviously.

Now, the outcome of the final court decisions, relative to Abbott funding, is almost over. So we'd have to see how that works out -- see what impact that would have, in terms of the future of funding here. Am I right?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: All right. You answered my questions.

Thank you.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I'm sorry I took your time.

MR. KAFELE: It's all right.

SENATOR RICE: Madam Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Senator.

SENATOR RICE: I just-- The Essex delegation had a very interesting meeting, which we do regularly -- in this case with the Continental Airlines and the Port Authority. And there's a need -- and the Port Authority is very much interested -- at least Continental Airlines -- in getting young people more involved with the airline industry -- career aviation, but some of the other areas such as controllers and the kinds of things they have to do to make certain that aircrafts get off the ground safely, properly filled with whatever we put in these days -- luggage and things of that magnitude. Has there been any thought about, or any contact, or any conversations with the airline that's based here out of New Jersey, Continental?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Not as of yet.

SENATOR RICE: Is it something you would be interested in, in terms of conversation and potential of having maybe a look at the careers in the airline industry?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: One of the things that-- At North 13th Street, we have a global information systems curriculum that's in place. And one of the things that we have been in discussion --

internally -- is, should this be expanded to transportation and logistics? So we've already had conversations in that area. So any overture by the airlines, or any people that we should contact, we would certainly be interested in exploring that.

SENATOR RICE: Why don't I ask my Assemblyman -- I'm only kidding -- why don't we ask Sharon to make a note to remind me to get our delegation to set a meeting up with the people we met with Ralph, and have some dialogue there.

The other question is: What kind of relationship do you presently have with the Lincoln Techs and other institutions? They seem to be doing a pretty good job in the technical area.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: I apologize. Could you repeat that? I didn't--

SENATOR RICE: Do you have any relationship with your students going on from here to institutions like the Lincoln Tech Institutes or career programs like that? Some of them have pretty good reputations, internationally.

**J O S E P H T Y S K:** What we found-- In the past we've had affiliations with many of those organizations. Fortunately, because of the quality of our students -- and this is what I was planning to mention later -- we have working relationships with many of the unions.

For example, our students are able to leave high school and get right into -- I'm trying to think of the name of the local -- Strauss Auto. They have a local auto union. They recruit our students daily, yearly.

SENATOR RICE: I think that's 108.

Well, that's -- Charlie Hall (phonetic spelling) has been working with them. It may be UAW, but it was 108 at one time.

But go ahead.

MR. TYSK: Along with Strauss Auto, we have working relationships with many of the unions: IBEW Local 164, the Laborers 472, the Ironworkers out of Springfield, the Operating Engineers. And yearly we place numbers of students in those unions, where they get into apprenticeships, and they go to school for free -- and the carpenters -- the unions pay for their training, rather than spending \$7,000, \$8,000, \$9,000 in some of these training proprietary trade schools.

SENATOR RICE: Do you keep a record of how many students you actually put with these unions?

MR. TYSK: It's accessible. Yes, our apprentice coordinator would have these records.

SENATOR RICE: Would you ask him to get it to me? Let me just say this while I'm here. I'm glad you brought it up.

For years -- and I'm not a junior Senator or a junior person -- there's another Ron Rice, so you can tell I'm not that junior. But I work very hard for the trade unions. And they're reaching a point that they don't like me too much, because I speak out and let them know that I work hard. But I don't see minority and women participation in these jobs, particularly close to home. So we started all the social justice stuff and all the training -- apprentice -- and that's wonderful on paper. But we're not seeing the results. And with all this stimulus coming down, and your students are graduating high school over the next few years, those jobs are going to be available. And so I want to see exactly what the unions are doing. And I

want to see where these people are that they keep claiming they're taking in, that we can't see when you ride 202, 206. And so I'm pro-labor, but I'm pro these young people who graduate with these skill sets, and I'm pro people throughout our state that have these great needs, for who we're doing all the work.

So through the Chair here -- well, actually, through me as the Co-Chair -- well, through the Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee, and through this Committee, would you provide that information? We're going to work to help you, but we're traveling the state to get information about what's happening in the afterlife. So I'd like to know exactly-- Because it's wonderful to have relationships with trade unions, but it's a different thing to have jobs with them. And I'm not going to take it from the Essex County folks. I might take this statewide -- Black Caucus, Latino Caucus -- looking at that issue too. But that's something that we want to partner with the unions with. But they have to be sincere. Project labor agreements were good for the unions, but they were not good because they would not take commitments we had for women and minorities, particularly in urban communities in the state. And I need to say that.

But if you can-- We'll try to work with you with the airline stuff. And you can share some information with us. It's public anyway. We just didn't know you were doing it.

And I think that's about it, in terms of the questions right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I just wanted one more comment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Not to be shy about this: Senator Rice put it to the people from Continental. We all were involved in a meeting with Continental Airlines in the port, and we did request that they get in touch with you. So maybe we could develop some kind of partnership here. I feel very strongly about that. So we will get back to you on the point -- on what individuals to contact. And if we have to be involved in that meeting -- I know the Senator wants to be there. So that could be a very, very good, fruitful exploration for our kids. So we're going to follow up on that one.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I just wanted to interject something, because we all are very supportive of organized labor, and IBEW 164 is one of them. But when we were down in the automotive shop, you had mentioned Strauss Auto. Now, they're having some very big difficulties with their contract negotiations at this particular point in time. And so I was just wondering if you had any insight into what is happening in that particular venue, since it was one of the ones where many of our young people are headed.

MR. TYSK: I was not aware of that. My main concern, as the Director-- I just make sure that they're willing to accept our students. They come in and test our students. And if our students pass the test or have all the required prerequisites, they place them immediately. And that's--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I was asking a little out of the box, because of the fact that, in these very difficult economic times, a lot of the unions are not wanting to do what they have normally done, in terms of

their employees. And so it was a question that I thought maybe you could give me some insight on.

Thank you.

I'm sorry.

MR. KAFELE: It's all right.

Good afternoon, everybody.

And as I always start off here at the school with my students -- we're on the move, we're in flight, we're going for the gold. This Principal is on fire.

I want to talk a little bit about what we do. And I want to kind of talk about the district as well, but from the point of view from a principal as opposed to a superintendent.

I came to this school back in July of '05, and we were a school that was on the list of schools in need of improvement. And we knew we had a lot of work to do from the outset. So here we are, four years later, and we're no longer on that list. As Dr. Pennella said, we're one of three schools that were recognized by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of America's best. I'm very proud of that. I'm very proud of the work that all of the staff have done to ensure that these young people are, in fact, successful.

When I think about the work we did-- We put together a mission. We knew that we had to have a common mission as we moved forward. We said, very simply, our mission is to ensure that every student strives to achieve excellence. It's very important. When we look at what's happening with inner-city young people across the country -- you look at various different data, and you see the achievement levels, and then you

look at what we've done. And I'm going to talk about who is in the building in a minute. What we have accomplished as a school and as a district is quite extraordinary.

But then we looked at the overall vision. And knowing that there were so many school districts that are performing poorly -- we hear about schools being shut down, etc. -- we said, "We need a vision that not only is going to move us forward, but a vision in terms of being able to link with other schools who are looking for ways to get it done." So we said, "Newark Tech is a national model, and we'll become a national model for urban educational excellence."

We want others to be able to look at what we're doing, us and the District, and say, "There's a model of excellence. There's a model of what we can emulate in order to move our young people forward." And I think that we've been doing an excellent job of that.

But when you look at who our students are, you look at who is in the district, particularly you look at who Newark Tech is -- we don't go out recruiting young people at all. I refuse. We give a test, and then we open up the doors until the school is full. We have students in here who, quite frankly, don't qualify to be here. We have students in here who fail all three sections of the New Jersey ASK 8, which was formerly known as the GEPA. Most of our freshmen come in two grade levels behind -- most of them -- I would say about 70 to 80 percent of them. But yet, when we take these standardized tests, by the time they get to juniors, they're able to demonstrate proficiency, if not advanced proficiency. And, again, that's because of the work that we put into a lot of these young people.

One of the things that we do to develop these young people, as Dr. Pennella was alluding to, is we devised a program here called the Young Men's Empowerment Program. I don't have to tell you the challenges that African-American young men face in this country. I don't have to tell you of the data that defines so many African-American young men and Latino young men. So we, therefore, decided to put a focus on these young men. We do the same with the young women, just not to the same extent. We're getting there. But every Monday -- we call it Power Monday. We don't just call it Monday. We call it Power Monday. And every young man in this building is required to come to school looking the way I look right now -- shirt and tie, slacks, shoes, belt, jacket if they have one -- a full suit. Young ladies: business attire. We want them to look powerful so that they feel powerful. And then we have meetings, two hours at a time, with an entire grade level of young men in the same grade level, the young women -- that we call them, as opposed to girls, females, so forth.

We're talking about how to become -- how to evolve from being a young man into a man, how to evolve from being a young woman into a woman. So we're talking about the gambit of what it is to be a man, what it is to be a woman. And we're seeing the change in so many of these young men and women.

I want to bring one student in particular to mind, Master Moore, who spoke with you today. He's still here. I want to talk about some of the challenges our young people face. I was sitting -- I'll never forget it, about a month ago I was sitting at a basketball game here in the gym. A parent was sitting with me. And the parent said to me, "Your students are so well-behaved in the stands, but yet they're having fun at the

same time.” And he made reference to the athletes, and he talked about how good they were at basketball. I said to him, “You know, you’re right. But what you don’t realize -- what you may not realize -- is that every one of these students has a story. Every one of these students has a testimony that if you knew, I wonder if you could endure what they have to endure.” There’s just so much tragedy. Just the walk to school alone is a challenge for a lot of them. Just to endure being in their households at night could be a challenge for so many of them. But yet they come here and throughout the district, they take care of business, and we see the end result, whether it be an achievement on a standardized test -- whether it be achieving honor roll, whether it be graduating with a full scholarship, going to the college of their dreams -- they’re making it happen.

I’m going to use Master as an example here. I asked him for his permission, and he said I could. This morning -- well, all week-- When I told him, I guess about a week or so ago, that he was going to be doing this -- because I don’t ask my young people to do these types of things, I tell them they’re going to do this. That’s how we operate here. And I told him he was going to present today, and he was fine. So he’s been a little nervous ever since. So today he’s walking to school, and he’s robbed on his way to school. It was about 7:15 this morning. He was robbed of \$30 in cash, and about \$145 in music -- electronic device -- iPod, etc. But yet, he’s here; yet, he spoke. Give him a big round of applause. (applause)

And there’s no way in the world that any of you detected that anything might be wrong with him. He spoke truth to power this afternoon. And I told him, “You just come here, you speak, you keep a

smile on your face. And when I speak, I'm going to talk a little bit about the experience that you had this morning."

He's going to be okay. We'll give him the \$30, and we'll give him a gift for that other item that he lost. But the fact of the matter is, these are some of the experiences that so many of our young people have to endure, but yet they still achieve.

So my point in bringing that up is, when these young people have the opportunity to come into an environment such as this-- This is a very caring environment. I know every student in this building. There may be one, two, or three that slip through the cracks. They're just so quiet that I missed them. But I know my students. They know how I feel about them. And the same with my colleagues -- their relationship with their students. It's the same thing. So it's a family atmosphere, it's a family relationship. I feel like the father of the school, of these young people. And therefore, I think that that increases the probability exponentially that they will, in fact, achieve excellence.

So as Dr. Pennella said, we certainly welcome any assistance that we can get, because we need it. There's so much that we want to do. There's so much that we can do. There's so much that we can accomplish, but what we have is limited.

For example, today is April 3. School opens on September whatever -- after Labor Day. I'm already at 206 incoming freshmen. I needed to cut it off at 180. So I still have to turn down-- I would say between now and September, I will have said no to at least 500 to 700 parents -- between now and then -- because that's the volume that we get. They want to be here, because they know the programs that we have and

they want their children to be exposed to them. They want to be here, because they know that they're in a very, very -- and I say *very* many times -- safe environment. They know that they're in a caring environment. They know they've got a dynamite principal. (laughter)

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: How did I know that was coming? (laughter)

MR. KAFELE: And I say that-- I feel like I'm getting ready to preach, but let me just say this.

I say to educators all the time, "If, when you look at the reflection in the mirror -- you see the reflection. And if you're an educator, you're a leader, you're a classroom teacher -- which is still a leader -- and you don't see someone extraordinary looking back at you, how in the world are you going to effectively lead a school -- and you don't see yourself as extraordinary? So you have to see yourself as extraordinary if you're going to effectively lead young people to where you want them to be." So we talk the same thing to them. I see myself as extraordinary. My colleagues behind me see themselves as extraordinary. And that's why we're able to take what little we have -- to take these young people to where we take them.

So, again, the appeal was for your assistance in any way to help us enhance what it is we're trying to build and develop here in the Essex County Vocational Technical School District.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: You're great.

MR. KAFELE: Oh, man, you're making my head big.

SENATOR RICE: Through the Chair, if the 500 parents that you're going to say no to -- that you don't want to say no to, but you have to-- Is that for this facility, or does that include Bloomfield? That's just this facility?

MR. KAFELE: I'm talking this facility alone. If you add on the other schools, it would be more than that. I get about, I would say, at least 50 calls a day.

SENATOR RICE: Okay. Sharon, Melanie, we need to make a note that the Joint Committee needs to have a discussion of vocational schools in the state -- about what kind of rejections, in terms of numbers, we are doing annually or semester -- whichever way it's done. And then how are we going to start to look at addressing that. Because I think the worst that can happen to young people is that those of us in leadership roles, and those of us who are family members, encourage young people to go to school where they're going to have to go -- we don't encourage them, we tell them they're going to go -- and then disappoint parents and students. And they're compelled to go to locations that may not offer the same kinds of opportunities. And so they become a bunch of placeholders; and we can't get skill sets where they should be, and we can't get scores up because they're really not all there mentally, because they don't choose to be there mentally. And so we need to address that. And that's where we may have to have some partnerships with some of the others schools.

I've always said that schools cannot just be math, and reading, and basic things -- that we're going to have to put some programs in other schools -- not to supplement or take away from the career academies --

that's the new name, career and technical institutes, okay? -- but to at least give them a flavor so they don't feel denied. So I think that's important.

And while I do have the mike, let me just say this to Bloomfield. I represent Bloomfield as well -- the Township of -- and I'm very proud of the students there. But I'm also proud of your team. I know you won your section. We're waiting to see how the Essex County people made out -- the Shabazz women and all the rest statewide. But we are going to be bringing you to Trenton to congratulate those young people in Essex County, because I think we're at about four schools that won sections, and then went on to the State. I need to talk to Rufus to see how we made out. So I just wanted to say that to you, as well.

And I also want to reinforce what the Superintendent said. We move around the state quite a bit. And we have staff -- the Executive Director, and her assistant executive director -- to actually identify locations for us, because we have to facilitate based on people, based on getting there, based on parking, etc. So we're just here. The discussions we're having here is not about "Newark," as it relates to the academic academy and technical institute. It's about the Essex County system of education and these technical career -- what we call the *career academies*. So I just want to be clear with that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I just want to say that I think this school -- and I'm sure there are other schools -- should be held up as a role model. But I want to commend you, as Principal. Because my attitude has always been: a school should be a family, and the teachers should care about their students as they care about their own children. And one of the

most important things you brought up -- and I wish we could reinforce this through all school districts -- I like that Power Monday. Because having gone to many schools, sometimes I see teachers come into school as if they just fell out of bed. And we need to be role models for our students, we need to show them that we have respect for the profession and that you respect them. I always used to say to my students, "You act the way you dress." And that is so important. And so we-- I know that's just a minor thing. But the family concept and the fact that you have pride in yourself-- And I thank you so much. I was sitting here like a bobble-head at everything that you were saying.

Anybody else have anything? (no response)

MR. TYSK: I don't know how I can top that one, but I'm going to try. I'm going to be as brief as possible so I'm not repetitive.

Mr. Kafele spent a good amount of time talking about Newark Tech. I'm just going to say that we have three other schools in the district that are just as good. And if I had brought -- if we brought the principals up here, they would give as well a presentation.

But Phil Linfante spoke before about partnerships. And our philosophy in the school is that we want to give every student an opportunity to fulfill -- to go as high as he can go, based upon the skill levels that he has. Hopefully by this Summer, Dr. Pennella, and I, and the rest of the staff will have completed our desire to go -- to develop a clustering system. In lieu of not having one facility, we had to do the second best. We created four schools, each school with an identity or a fingerprint, if I could say so.

Because of the term *dual enrollment*, which you mentioned before, it's going to give us an opportunity for every one of our schools, and every program in our schools -- give those students who want to attend college and receive college credits while they're in high school that opportunity. Now, just very quickly on dual enrollment -- and, Phil, I don't want to steal your thunder -- it gives us the opportunity to provide classes at West Caldwell, which maybe isn't convenient for busing; or in Bloomfield to get them down to the County College -- where our teachers can become adjuncts if they meet the qualifications, or a college adjunct can go into one of our high schools and teach a college-level course and allow that student to achieve college credits.

Now, with that said, I just want to be very -- give you a very quick understanding of how our career academies are set up in our four schools. As you saw, in Newark Tech we have the health careers, we have automotive technology, building trades, and preengineering. At North 13th Street School we have the law and public safety academy, the GIS academy -- Senator Rice -- which is looking for a partner. And that thing down at the airline would be the best fit that I could not even think of. And the business academy, which my associate Janice Kenyatta is setting up at North 13th Street. Bloomfield Tech has our TV production, our energy academy with which we're partnering with Public Service Electric and Gas, building trades, and marketing component. West Caldwell is our school of diversity. We have special ed, shared-time students, as well as full-time students.

With that said, I'm going to hand the floor back to Dr. Pennella, and he can continue.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Just one last comment. I want to make sure-- We said that three of our four schools were recognized as top schools. The fourth isn't eligible only because of the number of students without special ed designation. The number doesn't come high enough for us to even be considered. So I want to be clear. And that's something that's been a misunderstanding for a while -- why only three schools. There are actually some reasons, that we don't control, why they couldn't be considered.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR RICE: You mentioned special ed.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: Do you have a special ed school?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: No, we have two schools that serve the needs of special education: North 13th Street and West Caldwell.

SENATOR RICE: Okay. Maybe we should have some more discussion on special ed and exactly what's happening with that population, how they're doing. Because this Committee is at the forefront of really paying attention to special ed needs throughout the state. We know that we've been shortchanged in education for a lot of reasons. We also know a lot of our students get sent out of state, depending on what their needs are. And we can do a better job in New Jersey, we believe, even cheaper.

But is anyone here to have that discussion? If not, we can maybe have it another time with the full Joint Committee. (no response)

Okay. I see where I have to have a meeting set up. (laughter) I just set up meetings, but (indiscernible). I'm having one on the 16th of

April. Just make sure someone is there from the vocational components to also have that discussion. Okay?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Our Supervisor of Special Education, Michael Zelkowitz, is here. And if you would like him at that meeting, I'm certain he would say he would like to be there.

SENATOR RICE: Mike, raise your hand so Melanie will know where you are.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: He just went out in the hall.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: He just went out in the hall.  
(laughter)

SENATOR RICE: Oh, he just went out in the hall. He knew he was going to get an assignment.

Thank you. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Just two quick questions: What's your male-female distribution throughout the system, throughout the four schools? Is it about even?

MR. TYSK: It's pretty close to even. Every now and then I check my little charts. And it's probably favored more to the females than the males, probably about 55-45.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay.

And the other question I have-- Dr. Pennella, you mentioned placement exam or comprehensive exam. Is there an exam that you give to students as they're entering that then indicates what their areas of weakness or strengths are?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: We were not satisfied. We give one, because it gives us enough information for entry. However, upon arrival, we use a more sophisticated assessment that gives us a clearer profile of what we need to do in order to provide support.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And what is that assessment?

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: It's called MAPs testing, and it's by the Northwest testing -- one more letter.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: And also, this just proved the point of never leave the room. Because Dr. Zelkowitz did leave for a moment, and he wound up at a meeting. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: Phil is here to provide support. His most important message he gave already. But I asked him to be at the table in case there was something that we needed.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Okay. Great.

SUPERINTENDENT PENNELLA: He did such a good job to begin with.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Yes, he did.

Does anyone from the public wish to ask any questions? We have many experts.

Judy Savage.

**J U D Y S A V A G E:** It's not really a question, but I was just going to ask the Principal if he could explain to you the numbers on the walls. Did anybody notice 85-90? What's that about?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: We asked about that.

SENATOR RICE: That's like affordable housing formula.

(laughter)

MR. KAFELE: I believe in goal setting. I believe in goal setting very heavily. I live by it -- goal setting and having a plan of action according to how to achieve the goal, and coupled with a vision. The 95-80 simply means that in language arts, the goal is to achieve -- for 95 percent or more of our students -- to achieve proficiency or above in language arts; and 80 percent of our students or above achieving proficiency in mathematics. So you will notice in every room that you went into -- you saw the 95-80. You'll see it in all the hallways, you'll see it in the cafeteria, you'll see it everywhere you go, you'll see it in my office. No matter where you go, you'll see these numbers. And it's just a reminder to the students. It doesn't mean that that's why we're here, but it's a reminder that we still have to pass the assessment. So currently we're at 95-81. So we've exceeded it, and we're proud of that. But we want to continue to move higher and higher.

Thanks.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Anyone else have a question or a comment?

Chris, you're close to the table.

SENATOR RICE: While Chris is coming up, let me say to the students-- I heard one of the young ladies mention that she will be attending college under the EOF program. And I just want you to know that those of us here, as well as the members of what is known as the Legislative Black Caucus, and Latino Legislative Caucus, have always been at the forefront of fighting to sustain and increase EOF and TAG dollars.

So I'm glad to hear that there are students who know that those things do exist and take advantage of them. (applause)

**CHRISTOPHER EMIGHOLZ:** Good afternoon.

I don't want to take much time, but I just want to take the opportunity, every chance I can-- I'm the Director of Education and Workforce Development Policy for the State Business Association, NJBIA. We have about 22,000 members around the state -- businesses in Salem County, Sussex County -- but many right here in Essex, right here in Newark. And we try, and I try, to advocate to have a better workforce for those businesses. And one of their top complaints is: We have trouble finding skilled workers. And one of the things they say is most important to a successful economy is having skilled labor, having access to skilled labor. And we see that as a complaint, so we have to address it.

And I try to be a cheerleader wherever I can for vo-tech schools. This school in particular -- and after getting a tour, and seeing these students, and seeing everybody here -- I don't need to say that vo-techs work and vo-techs do great things. But we actually have statistics, results. We ask our members. And in our surveys they tell us that vo-techs do a better job than our comprehensive high schools. So what I ask you to do is very simply: one, figure out how to increase the capacity, figure out how to shift funding. And you know BIA is always looking to cut cost, cut spending, decrease taxes, because our businesses are complaining about -- on top of the skilled workforce, they're complaining about New Jersey being -- this high-cost-of-doing-business state. That is an issue. But we need that workforce, and we need to invest it in our kids. And if every single one of our workers in New Jersey was like the five students who got up here, we'd

have no problem. We'd have a great economy in this state. But unfortunately, that's not the case. So we need more schools like this, more students like those students.

And how do we replicate that? And that's the other thing. Beyond expanding vocational schools, beyond looking at their capacity, we have to look at: How can we replicate some of the best practices, some of the models that work here, that work in vo-tech schools all throughout the state? How do we make those happen in our non-vo-tech schools, and career technical education programs throughout the state in noncareer and technical programs, so that all students, whether they're CTE, vo-tech, or just the regular run of the mill, ordinary student -- they're getting what it takes to get ready for the workforce. Because my members need it. And the economy, as we all see every day in the news, the economy needs the help.

So that's all I wanted to say.

Thank you. We're proud to support vo-techs, because they are doing the right thing. (applause)

**CARLA RUIZ:** Good afternoon.

I traveled an hour to get here. I'm actually on my job's clock -- just able to come.

But I'm a parent, and I have a child who attends this school. I have two sons. I'm a parent of seven children, and I'm by myself. I'm a widow. I have two sons who have applied to come to vo-tech, because this is what fits their needs.

What I say to my kids -- my older ones who have graduated -- one from a vo-tech school, the other from traditional high school -- it's a

circle that we have to work. I do my job. I work and I try to take care of my kids. And my kids have to come to school every day, and they have to study, and they have to get their education. And the school has to provide for them to be able to be successful. Because where I work, that's what we need. We need kids who can read, and write, and understand it's not just about that.

One of my sons dreams to be a dentist. He saw the statement that I had to pay when we got his teeth fixed, and he said, "That's what I want to be," two years ago. And it has not left his mind. But if you come-- They had an open house here in September -- October. If you come here, you'll see a lot of these students. You'll see all the stuff that they're capable of doing. Then you'd be encouraged that this is what they need. This is not something to be cut.

My other son wants to be a sneaker designer. I wanted to be an architect. He decided to be a sneaker designer. He said that when he went and interviewed at Bloomfield Tech. This is what he wants. He should be entitled to explore what he wants. It's not a box. It's something that-- When we get older, we're going to be sitting somewhere, hopefully with our minds, and these kids are going to be doing what we want them to do to be able to support us. So I took the time to come and say to you that I need this. My kids need this. Those kids need this. There's no need to cut it, there's no need to deprive them.

You make choices. I work at the New York Stock Exchange. You know what's going on in the economy. You see what Bernie Madoff has gotten away with. There are millions of people who make decisions that affect people like that; and it's nothing. You have the ability to make a

decision that's going to impact children and their education when you leave here today -- whatever it is that hits you, impacts you, just think that-- Go past what's in the box. Go outside of it to make the very best effort so that they can have the very best of what they need, not like it was a favor. But it's their right and a privilege.

That's all I wanted to say. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you for your comments.

Would you please state your name so we can have it for the record.

MS. RUIZ: My name is Carla Ruiz, R-U-I-Z.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

**D O N N A J A C K S O N:** Good afternoon, panel.

Donna Jackson, New Jersey kick-the-dust-up resident.  
(laughter)

I'm an Essex County Vo-Tech alumni parent. My daughter graduated from West Caldwell. And my two nieces who I had custody of graduated from North 13th.

Nobody does it better, in terms of Essex County Vocational Schools. Nobody gets the results that are needed. However, the county vocational schools emulate the same concerns that the other comprehensive high schools have. If you're bringing children in the building that are two, three, and four years behind academically, and then, now we want to come in and say, "We're going to hold you responsible," we also have to hold responsible those who sent them into this facility. And then ask the

teacher, who is a 9th grade, 10th grade teacher, to deal with a child who is on a 4th or 5th grade level.

The difference in the county vocational schools is to give a child a career path to explore in their freshman year. Nobody else does it. They get four different shops their freshman year. They get to pick which one they want. They may choose one their sophomore year that they didn't explore their freshman year.

I think most of the things that we said here today were excellent. I totally disagree, and I have to say for the record that I will not allow Essex County government to consolidate the four buildings. We do not live in a community -- as you heard Mr. Kafele say today, talking about the young man over here -- where we can put 2,000 kids in one building. We cannot do that. We have too many factions and infractions going on. And I'm not saying that one person can't handle it, because Mr. Kafele could probably handle a building with 5,000 kids -- after Mr. Dolan, because I know him too. There's the new principal at North 13th. I'm not familiar with her, but I'm sure she can do it. And I know Mr. Love can, because I know them.

And like I said, it's not personal, Mr. Kafele. You know I love you.

And Mr. Dolan, and Mr. Love, you know I love you. (laughter)  
It's not personal.

But when we do consolidation, we have to take into consideration what happens with that. And I'm not looking to put a mega-building-- I'm looking to make five smaller buildings. You can't ask

teachers to have classroom sizes of 25 and 30 kids, particularly when we're talking about the deficit that they come in the building with.

The research across the world shows smaller is better. I don't understand, when we go in a direction-- I know it's money. But sometimes money leads us down the wrong path. Where do we want to send kids, college or jail? We have a big facility on Doremus Avenue that's already full. I guess we're trying to put some sections on that and put some more in there. We have to contain. We have to bring the airlines in. We can't do all of that in one building.

Senator Rice, you know I love you, but I don't know if I can let you change *vocational* on the school buildings. I think that's one of the-- But I hear you. You know we're going to discuss it.

SENATOR RICE: Let me put it this way, Donna. You know me very well, right? (affirmative response) We're going to change it. (laughter)

MS. JACKSON: Well, I guess then I will have to do what I do.

But I think one of the things that sets the County Vocational system apart is the name. And I think that when parents come, when the students come, they know there's going to be a difference.

Now, we began to go into the vocational academy areas all across this state. And that's the only reason why I differ and say that. Because now everybody is an academy, and they're not succeeding either. To throw a name on a building is not what makes it. We have the Dionne Warwick Academy in East Orange, we have the Johnny Cochran Academy in East Orange. And how many kids are actually coming out of there and really pursuing a district of -- (indiscernible). East Orange, again -- because

they're neighboring in Essex County. We just consolidated the high school. They have 3,000-some kids in one building, and they have chaos. They have 22 police officers in there too. That's for the County -- and I'll go over there and see Joe too, (laughter) let him know, "Take it easy. Pump your brakes, Joey."

See, my ultimate dream would have been this: I think we should have put up another building across the street instead of that park. And I went to the Freeholder meeting and told them that. I guess I'm now going to have to make an appointment with the man, and let him know, "Joe, we haven't put anything up over there yet. Maybe that needs to be another school." Because it is heartbreaking for a parent to want to come in here to hang out with Mr. Dolan, hang out with Mr. Kafele, hang out with Mr. Love, and hang out with Ms. Jeeter, and hang out with Dr. Zelkowitz. See, Dr. Zelkowitz is also -- not only is he the head of special ed, but he's the community -- takes care of the special needs children, advocates, and keep us all rolling. When you have a problem, you call him up, and he tries to fix it wherever he can.

The other thing that I have to implore upon you is, there's nothing here in this state for children with special needs after they leave high school -- I mean, after they leave grammar school. The County Vocational School, right now, with the 9,000 special needs kids I have just in Newark -- to only be servicing 250 is criminal. It's criminal. Because I don't have the apparatus set up in the comprehensive, or in my magnet high schools, to address, deal, and handle them. What the special needs kids that come here-- When my daughter graduated from West Caldwell in 1999, one of the girls in her class got an internship, brand new car, right at

(indiscernible). She was working in an office through the clerical staff -- through the computer thingy -- and she went over there working. They gave her a car at graduation. And to my knowledge, she's still working there now. So they have connections.

And I would be very interested, as well, Senator Rice, to see the numbers with the unions. Because at the end of the day, we don't see our young people out here on these construction sites working. So I would, again, force the unions to show the proof. Don't have our children in the intern process, and then have them in the apprenticeship process, and then when it comes time for them to make the \$35.95, don't give them that opportunity.

I don't want us to be so quick to move to mainstream either, because guess what? Electricians, plumbers, gardeners, those who are not in the traditional money-making molds -- they make good money too. And our children need to know how to do that. There's a young man right now in the State of New Jersey who took the compost of the leaves and sold it to another company here for \$2 billion. And he started out here.

So our children have worlds of wisdom. We had a young man come out of our youth house right here in Essex County and go to Gateway Academy. He walked in there in January. He took the HSPA test in March, passed it 100 percent. He didn't miss a question -- out of the youth house.

So when we talk in terms of failure, I totally agree: There has to be something new, and you need to shake people up. There are some people asleep at the wheel. There's no question. But you also have some people in those pockets of failure who are going up against great odds in

these buildings, in these county institutions, and the others. And I have to push and help. Because let me tell you this: I work in other counties too. And they reject as many kids, if not more. Because most of the other counties only have one county vocational school. The blessing here in Essex is that we have four. But we need seven, maybe 10, maybe 15. (laughter) And maybe there needs to be a County Vocational School attached to the comprehensive high schools in Newark to help us do it better. And they have to get the Abbott funding, they deserve to have the Abbott funding. We deserve to support them.

So I am a full supporter of Essex County Vocational Schools. So please let the Governor know that although he said at the little Essex County Democratic thing the other night that he hasn't cut any educational funds, I know what the Supreme Court just told him too. And although we don't have enough money here at vo-tech, they need to have more.

I'm going to end with this. When you talk about school choice, this is a choice. And if you're going to fund a Newark student at \$20,000, a vo-tech kid at \$12,500, a charter school kid at \$9,000, and then you're going to make Blessed Sacrament and St. Mary's close because they're not in the choice equation, now we only have three rings of choice. So if you're going to leave me with three, then fund them all and allow the county vo-techs to expand. And then that charter school -- take that off the table, because I don't want to go there today. (laughter)

SENATOR RICE: Thank you.

MS. JACKSON: In the School Construction Fund money, you cannot discriminate against the county vo-tech schools. So I guess the next hat I'll have to put on is-- I'll have to go to the next school construction

hearing. And I will have to champion that we get full funding for the county vo-tech schools too -- that they get new buildings, fixed-up facilities. I mean, this is a wonderful gym. And I was responsible, at the county board meetings, for getting the new one up at West Caldwell, because they were taking gym in a breadbox room. But we have to give the kids here who are striving and going through excellence with their leaders -- all four of them -- we have to give them the best facilities too so that they shine as bright as they can possibly be.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: We need you in the Legislature.

MS. JACKSON: No, I have to stay over here to keep you guys on your toes. (laughter)

SENATOR RICE: Madam Chair, let me just say that I go back many, many years with Ms. Jackson and her father, whose been deceased, and who was an activist, and was really beating the same drum when it came to young people and education.

A couple of things: Number one, I know that the sneaker design is a good place to go. I know Shaq grew up in the City of Newark. And if we get enough Shaq's around, you're going to have to make a few pairs of sneakers. You know Shaq's pretty big out there.

But I do believe that our kids do know where they want to go. They don't talk to us the way we talked to parents. And we think they're not paying attention, but they know where the industries are and where the dollars are in the future.

I also think that the vocational schools, as well as the other parts of the public education system, need to find ways and means to get

these kids to the Stock Exchange. Because the one thing is that, to get on the floor of the Stock Exchange you need to know someone on the seat. But they do have trips. And I went there a couple of times on the floor. And believe it or not, I wanted to go just to see if they really threw all that paper on the floor. They do that. They get excited and start balling up stuff. It's really dirty on that floor, but they make a lot of money. But there are a lot of field trips, and I didn't know if any New Jerseyans-- I asked, "Do we allow New Jerseyans over here from any of the school districts?" And we really don't. And I think that's an experience in itself. So in connection with the vocational things you're doing--

Donna, when we talk about changing the name, let me say this. I'm a firm believer -- and I have a little bit of gray hair -- that sometimes semantics can get in the way, sometimes terminology can become a barrier. It gets old. And the thing is that when you say *vocational* -- let me tell you what's happening from what I'm seeing up and down the state.

The word *vocation* depicts a certain meaning in certain people's minds. And it means that, like in the old days-- We used to always say, when you go to school you either go to Weequahic -- I'm using our city now -- or South Side, or wherever, and you pursue a college education -- liberal arts course; or you go to Newark Technical School, or Irvington Vo-Tech, Bloomfield Vo-Tech, or Central High School, and you assume a vocational education, leaving the impression that if you went to those schools, you don't go to college.

When we talk about jobs, young people claim they can't find jobs or they don't know what they want to do. And as a result, they do everything but go to school. If young people-- See, I don't look at the

immediate. I'm looking long-term. We have to look long-term, or we'll not (indiscernible) how we left the state. If young people grow up thinking and knowing that everybody goes to school-- In fact, I always told my kid, "You go to school." He didn't know why he was going to college. I said, "Well, everybody goes to school, son. You go to grammar school, then you go to high school, then you go to college." He thought it was just a routine thing. He didn't know anything about just dropping out and stopping here. And he got through it.

But the point is, if young people grow up understanding and hearing the word *career*, and career is defined as a job, as a path to employment, then they're making decisions. And so we're not just talking an academy name, I'm talking about the Essex County, for example -- the Essex County, more or less, career academy and technical institute. NJIT changed the name from Newark College of Engineers to the New Jersey Institute of Technology to let people know that it is a college, but there are these specialties, if you will, of technology. If, in fact, the county colleges will let people know that these are career academies, people will start thinking career-jobs.

I'm telling you, people don't relate the word vocation to job anymore. That was one of those fancy words we learned in college English and high school so that we could be above the average student. So we need to take a look at this.

And I can say this: If I have my way -- and usually I'm pretty good at some of this stuff -- we're going to change the name. But we're going to do it where it's not offensive, and encourage kids -- but kind of like you're saying. Because what you're really saying-- You're saying, "Don't

change the name, because there's a meaning." But I also hear you saying, in the reverse, "If you're going to change the name, make sure that there's a uniqueness about this, especially so people can see what it is about." And that's what we're talking about. And that's why career academy and institute fit hand-in-hand, versus vocation and technology. It just doesn't do it for us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I want to thank everybody for being here. This has been a wonderful day. It really has been a wonderful day. And there are so many other issues that I would like to discuss, but the hour is growing late. So I thank you for your input.

I want to thank Dr. Pennella for his assistance, Principal Kafele for the use of your school.

Students, you're terrific. You really are great.

And to the educators who are here, I thank you for being here.

Liz Moore, you have been very, very helpful. I don't know if she's still here, but thank you.

Judy Savage, you know I'm a cheerleader. I always have been a cheerleader, and I will be a cheerleader as long as I'm in the Legislature, and even after.

And Becky Sapp, thank you, from OLS. We drag poor Becky and her assistant all over the state. Thank you for transcribing and recording our meetings.

SENATOR RICE: Madam Chair, before you adjourn, there was an issue that came up.

Donna, you need to hear this, because I know you, and you know me. And I don't need any movements right now, I need some rationale.

We are in some very difficult times, economically. And this is not going to go away in the next year or two. And in the interim, we're trying to pay attention as to how to get facilities. We're trying to work with the State to figure out how to get facilities throughout the state, urban and suburban, up to this century, where kids can have the kinds of facilities where they can get the kind of quality education that is needed. But we are going to have to pay attention to the economics of construction, the economics of fuel. That's why we're talking green energy and all this other stuff now. And so I don't see us eliminating a school, per se. I do understand that if kids think they're on a college campus-type of setting that it kind of enhances the way they feel about moving forward.

I also believe that we can put together a Bloomfield Tech, for example, maybe say the 13th, etc., in a location. I think when we talk about buildings, we're talking about a building like this, with all that population inside. I don't see it that way. I see if there's enough land, it can be no different than a college setting. But if you consolidate it properly, there's still some economies of scale and savings. For example, I can see a campus where we're not in the old building, but this is still "Bloomfield College." It may not be called Bloomfield College -- excuse me, for the sake of things, career academy -- but the principal is still overseeing it, kind of like a master. And over here you still have 13. But it's in this environment -- like when you went to Howard -- when I went to Howard University. We had a place -- a science building -- called it *death valley*. But we also had

women dormitories and a place we called the *quad*. But it was cheaper to do it that way. Different buildings had to be maintained, but it was still cheaper. Do you understand what I'm saying?

So I think we're our own worst enemies sometimes when something sounds bad and we don't work through the discussions first as to what it should look like. And so we need to be open to that also.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you so much.

As I said, there are many, many other things that we need to discuss, but this has been a great beginning. And you certainly have advocates for vocational and technical high schools. And we're not going to use the word *vocational* anymore -- *career*.

Thank you very much.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**