

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS
AND CHARTER SCHOOLS HEARING

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

Gloucester County Institute of Technology
1360 Tanyard Road, Sewell, NJ

MEMBERS PRESENT:

CHAIRPERSON JOAN M. VOSS
SENATOR RONALD L. RICE
SENATOR STEPHEN M. SWEENEY
ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILA M. JASEY
ASSEMBLYMAN PAUL MORIARTY

ALSO PRESENT:

MELANIE M. SCHULZ, *Executive Director*
SHARON BENESTA, *Chief of Staff*

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1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JOAN M. VOSS (Chair):

2 Good afternoon, everyone. I cannot tell you what a
3 pleasure it is to be here. I'm an educator by profession,
4 and so schools are my passion, and particularly
5 technical and vocational schools. This is where
6 I think it's at as far as education is concerned.
7 We have traveled all over the state to many of
8 the technical and vocational schools, and each
9 time I visit one, it's better than the one
10 before. So right now, you're on top of my list.

11 I just love the fact that the
12 students are enthusiastic about what they're
13 doing, which is what education is all about. But
14 the teachers are enthusiastic about it, and what
15 a great relationship that is. And I can say all
16 kinds of wonderful things, but I think I got it
17 across how wonderful I think this school is.
18 This is where I think education needs to go, and
19 before I go on and on and on, I will turn it over
20 to Senator Rice.

21 SENATOR RONALD RICE: Thank
22 you very much. I'm going to apologize; I wish I
23 could stay all day, but I have to be back in Essex
24 County. It's good to be here in Gloucester
25 County with my good friend and colleague,

1 Majority Leader Stephen Sweeney, who is doing a
2 great job down here in Gloucester and across the
3 state, and with my colleagues on the Joint
4 Committee on the Public Schools.

5 Let me just indicate for the
6 students and those who may not know, the Joint
7 Committee on the Public Schools is not the
8 Education Committee or the Senate. We are a
9 combination of legislators from both parties,
10 Republicans, Democrats. Democrats (indiscernible);
11 Republicans, as you know -- but we are from both
12 Houses and both parties. It's our job to kind of
13 oversee and get accountability for the court
14 decisions in the Abbott districts. But then
15 they're charged also with the responsibility to
16 look at vocational schools and education.

17 And we in the past -- as Chair and
18 working with Assemblyman (indiscernible) putting
19 together subcommittees -- one of the committees
20 we put together was this innovative choice type of
21 committee that we see on this Committee, meaning
22 the Joint Committee. She's also the Co-Chair of
23 this particular subcommittee, who has just taken
24 this thing to a height that is unmatched in the
25 Legislature. We have been up and down the state.

1 What you do here is important to us. Where
2 education is going in the future is important to
3 us. And we prefer seeing institutions like this
4 to seeing prison systems. We've been very, very
5 pleased with the student population and the
6 quality of academics we have seen throughout the
7 state, from Bergen County down to here. We're
8 going to continue to do this. And I do excuse
9 myself. Please accept as love.

10 The only thing about this school,
11 though, Senator Sweeney, I was talking to a
12 lovely young lady right there, and she was
13 telling me her major, and I was trying to teach
14 her some new technology, and she said, "Oh, a
15 beeper; it scared me," you know, like it was
16 something antique. So my pager just went off,
17 and that's why I went over there. It still
18 works. Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON VOSS: Thank you
20 Senator. We are so pleased today to have Senator
21 Sweeney with us, and I have just been talking his
22 ear off, because I just think that this is such a
23 great educational institution, and I think he
24 agrees with me. So we are now going to put our
25 heads together to make sure that everybody in the

1 state knows what's going and where education
2 should go. And without further ado, Senator
3 Sweeney.

4 SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you,
5 Chairwoman and my esteemed colleagues from way up
6 north. Several of these members traveled a very
7 long distance to be here today, and it gives me a
8 chance to brag a little bit about what we think
9 is probably the finest campus situation in the
10 state. I want to recognize our college
11 president; Dr. Russell Davis is here. I know
12 everyone met our Superintendent earlier, Ellen
13 Herdegen. We have our special needs schools
14 here, Bankbridge Regional, Bankbridge Elementary,
15 our autism school, Bankbridge Child Development
16 Center, Gloucester Institute of Technology and
17 Gloucester County College.

18 And we do a lot of partnering.
19 This is one of the few school districts in the
20 state that actually merged administrations. As
21 we've talked about how we can do things better,
22 we saved \$1.5 million annually in administrative
23 costs, which we actually put back into education,
24 because we feel there's a value being produced
25 here.

1 Several years ago, actually in
2 1996, my start was on the vocational school
3 board, and we came to this idea that we were
4 going to make the vocational school, which was
5 called "Gloucester Institute of Technology" --
6 and I'm not ashamed to say that I'm proud of
7 that. I'm old, and that's what we say. But
8 there was a decision made that we were going to
9 make this an academy school. And I have to be
10 honest with you, it was one of the worst
11 decisions I made in my political career, because
12 we were crowding out children that needed
13 vocational training, and there were only so many
14 seats.

15 We were quite proud of our
16 academy, quite proud of the children that
17 achieved. You're going to hear from some of
18 them. They're the best and the brightest around.
19 And we were thrilled. But we had kids that
20 needed vocational training, and the fact is, if
21 we can't provide it, who will? So what we have
22 done here is a wonderful blend of children, who
23 accelerate to children who are going to have
24 careers, like myself, as an iron worker. But
25 they mix well together. They made each other

1 better from being in the same building.

2 And what we have done recently, we
3 just did an expansion of 240 seats; because once
4 you build a school like this, there's a great
5 demand. And a lot of parents and a lot of young
6 people want to come here. We just built a new
7 building with the most modern technology,
8 wireless classrooms, new labs for 240 more
9 students. And we're now embarking on an
10 expansion of our academy school, which will
11 partner with the college, where children will
12 graduate high school in five years with an
13 associate's degree.

14 Now, I think we're going to get it
15 to four years some day. And I make everybody
16 cringe when I say that, but children that can
17 excel should have the opportunity to excel. And
18 we're going to have that facility here. And the
19 nice thing is, by moving this new expansion,
20 we're going to create more seats in our
21 traditional welding, and bricklayers, and carpentry
22 so that we're not going to leave any children
23 out.

24 What we saw here, one of the
25 biggest mistakes when we made this conversion,

1 was we were crowding out the kids that need this
2 education. They need these facilities, because
3 they're not in home districts anymore, and we
4 have to remember it. We can call ourselves
5 "Institute of Technology." We can give ourselves
6 whatever name we want to give us. We need to
7 train children for vocational opportunities also.

8 So I think we have the best of
9 both worlds, Madam Chairwoman, and everyone
10 benefits from it. And the other component is,
11 our special needs children are actually getting
12 added benefits, And Gloucester County is the only
13 county in the state right now that has a program
14 for children that age out of education; they're
15 special needs, and it's here in our vocational
16 schools. We're all benefiting from our
17 coordination and cooperation.

18 And one last plug: The college has
19 been a wonderful partner also. We can't do it
20 alone. And all those barriers -- and this is ours,
21 and this is yours, we don't do this, and you
22 don't do that -- they need to come down today, and
23 we need to work together to make sure that these
24 young people have the very best opportunity to
25 excel and have careers. Thank you.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I love
2 the Senator. His ideas are very, very akin to
3 mine. I have always said that we cannot have
4 an education system as a one-size-fits-all
5 education, because we all learn differently.

6 And one of the wonderful things I
7 learned about this school is that it's
8 practically open 24 hours a day, which is one of
9 my big things about -- we spend so much money
10 building schools, but then they're only open from
11 8 to 3, and then what happens? We need adult
12 training. In this economy that we have today,
13 people are going to have to get alternate job
14 skills, and with a wonderful facility like this,
15 I think it's really terrific, and I thank you for
16 pointing that out to me.

17 Assemblywoman Jasey?

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Good
19 afternoon; I just want to take a moment to thank
20 everyone who has made our stay so wonderful
21 today. As Senator Rice mentioned, the Joint
22 Committee, we've been on the road this year.
23 This is my first term, and it has been very
24 exciting to go from county to county to see the
25 different kinds of educational opportunities that

1 we are providing through the public school
2 system. And it gives me a lot of ideas. I think
3 we're going to take these ideas, hopefully, back
4 to the Legislature and say, "Look, we don't
5 necessarily need to spend more money. We need to
6 spend it more effectively and more creatively so
7 that we meet the needs of all of our students
8 throughout the state, so that we invest in a
9 workforce that can support us as we move through
10 our lifetimes." We're going to be looking
11 to all of you young people to keep our economy
12 strong, and to take care of us, and to make the
13 future even better and brighter.

14 The other thing I want to say is,
15 to each of the students that I have had the
16 pleasure of talking to today, it's always
17 wonderful to talk to young people, because you're
18 so full of hope and energy and ideas, and it
19 gives me hope that we will indeed answer the
20 questions we need to. We will solve the problems
21 that we're facing, and the world will be a better
22 place. So I know that sounds a little
23 Pollyannish, but I really do believe that. I
24 have not been disappointed by any of the students
25 that I have met up and down the state, from

1 county to county. Our young people are
2 fantastic, and we need to do a better job of
3 communicating that message out to the rest of the
4 adult population.

5 You know, most of what you read
6 about in the newspaper is negative. I don't feel
7 that way at all about young people. I think you
8 guys are great. I think your teachers are doing
9 a wonderful job. I think your administrators are
10 very devoted and hardworking. And I think that
11 we, as legislators, because we have an opportunity
12 to speak out and give voice to you, part of our
13 job -- at least I see it as part of my job --
14 is to make sure that that message gets out there,
15 and that we support you, and that we continue to
16 invest in your education. So I'm looking forward
17 to hearing from each one of you and learning more
18 about what you do. Thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Assemblyman
20 Moriarty?

21 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Thank you,
22 Madam Chairwoman, and thank you for bringing the
23 Committee down south to see what we are all
24 excited about down here, which is just a
25 fantastic, fantastic school. And I want to

1 commend the freeholders, the senators and
2 representatives who have done an extraordinary
3 job in supporting this school.

4 You know, far too often I think
5 that when we sit up in Trenton and debate laws,
6 and hold hearings on regulations, and discuss
7 education, we are armed with spreadsheets, and
8 facts and figures. And it's so important to get
9 out and put a face on an institution, to put a
10 face on the people, their learning. And the
11 faces that I see here at GCIT are just incredible.
12 I mean, from the visual arts to the culinary arts
13 to the trades, there is great learning going on
14 here. People are enthusiastic, both the students
15 and the teachers.

16 I wish there was an institution
17 like this when I was in high school so I could
18 have spent a portion of each of my days working
19 on video production, which is what I ended up
20 going into. I might have been a better
21 broadcaster if I started earlier. It has been
22 very exciting today, not to mention the great
23 meal that was made for us, and I'm just excited
24 to hear from some of the students. And we need
25 to continue to support vocational education in a

1 very big way. As you said, there is not a one-
2 size-fits-all, and there is great learning going
3 on here.

4 And I applaud each and every
5 person here. The President is doing a great job,
6 and thank you very much. And thank you again,
7 Madam Chairwoman, for bringing these people down
8 here to see firsthand the great stuff going on at
9 GCIT.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thanks so
11 much. And now one of the most important parts of
12 our program, the student panel. And we have Ashley
13 Taylor from the Performing Arts, Michael Shisler
14 from Construction, Kenneth Kehler from
15 Transportation, and Ajay Vulimiri from Finance.
16 Did I do that correctly? I used to say to my
17 students, "If I mispronounce your name, please
18 forgive me and teach me how to say it properly."

19 And so, Ashley, would you like to
20 start?

21 ASHLEY TAYLOR: Hi, my name is Ashley
22 Taylor. I'm a senior in the Academy of
23 Performing Arts for drama. I want to welcome you
24 to Gloucester County Institute of Technology
25 today. I am currently the student council

1 president for the 2008-2009 school year. And I
2 love GCIT because it offered me a lot of
3 opportunities, and it helped me come out of my
4 shell. When I came here, it was very small, and
5 even after they expanded the teachers really
6 care about you as an individual and as a class.
7 So the education here is amazing.

8 And I also want to say thank you
9 for believing in our generation, because we do
10 have a lot to offer, and it's nice to hear that
11 you guys appreciate us and to hear from people
12 who really do work for us. And thank you for
13 being here today.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: You make us
15 very proud. Let's see, Michael Shisler (phonetic
16 spelling), would you go next?

17 MICHAEL SHISLER: Good afternoon; I
18 would like to thank you all for coming this
19 afternoon. I'm Michael Shisler. I'm part of the
20 School of Construction and Technology. I major
21 in welding. What I like about this school is
22 that it has furthered my options for more
23 technical studies. I'm currently enrolled at
24 Gloucester County College. I take technical
25 studies. I'm a junior here. So it has been an

1 honor to further my education at such an early
2 stage in my schooling. It helps me with my
3 apprenticeship coming next year so I can go to
4 work as a senior, and I can start off at an early
5 (indiscernible). Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you
7 very much. And now we have Kenneth Kehler (phonetic spelling).

8 KENNETH KEHLER: Good afternoon,
9 everyone. I would like to thank you for coming
10 here today and listening to us share about GCIT.
11 First off, I'm a junior here. I'm a student of
12 Transportation Technology. And the reason I love
13 GCIT so much is because it has jump-started my
14 career as an automotive technician. It has
15 taught me to become a hard worker and given me
16 the tools for a successful career one day. And
17 without this school, I believe that I wouldn't be
18 as successful.

19 So as you guys were talking about
20 earlier, I mean, the demand for this school is
21 huge. There is no school around like this where
22 we go to class and we concentrate on our studies
23 and other trades. So I would just like to thank
24 you for checking out what GCIT is all about.

25 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you.

1 Ajay?
2 AJAY VULIMIRI: First I would like
3 to welcome all of you to Gloucester County
4 Institute of Technology. My name is Ajay
5 Vulimiri, and I'm a senior in the Academy of
6 Finance and Business Management. What I like
7 about GCIT is helping me prepare for college.
8 Coming here for my freshman year, I wanted to do
9 something in business, but I didn't know exactly
10 what. And as you all know, there are plenty of
11 things you can do. Thus, I'm going to St.
12 Joseph's University to major in finance and
13 business management.

14 And, also, GCIT has lots of things
15 to offer, as you all say, from culinary to
16 finance, and it gives everyone an opportunity to
17 see what they like and what they don't like. So,
18 when you get to college, you know actually what
19 you want to do. And, thus, it has helped me
20 become a hard worker and to become the
21 valedictorian for GCIT.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS:
23 Congratulations. Would anyone like to ask these
24 young people some questions?

25 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Thank you.

1 It not only helps you understand what you
2 might like, but what you might not like. I'm sure
3 there must be some students that come here that
4 decide after they embark on a vocation that maybe
5 this isn't what they like to do. Do you know
6 students like that? Because that's just as
7 helpful. You know, you don't want to go through
8 life and then start a career and find out you
9 hate it, and you don't like going to work every
10 day.

11 MR. VULIMIRI: Yes, I do. I've
12 heard of seniors who went to class like, for
13 example, business, and they have gone on to do
14 engineering and so forth, and others. And that's
15 the good thing about it. When you come to eighth
16 grade, some people don't know what they want to
17 do, but it gives you the opportunity to try
18 different things. So, when you leave here, you
19 might say, "Okay, I like business, but I don't
20 want to take it in college.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Yes; I
22 think it's important earlier than later, because
23 when you end up graduating from high school, and
24 you select a major and you start embarking on
25 that path, my goodness, if you've gone through

1 two or three years of college and spent a lot of
2 money, your parents' money, and then find out
3 "I'm miserable--" And then you're really probably
4 in a much larger predicament, because now you
5 feel like you've wasted your time, and it's very
6 difficult to start over. So I think that's
7 another level to look at these things.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: In the
9 construction school, you have an opportunity to
10 have a half-year of being involved with, say,
11 welding, and a half-year as an electrician, and a
12 half-year as a plumber, and things of that sort,
13 so that you really get a hands-on understanding
14 of these professions. And I think that's very
15 important, because one of the things in education
16 that I think is very important is that students
17 realize why they're learning what they're learning
18 and how it's going to help them in their lives,
19 whether it's to understand the world or to
20 understand the professions that they're going
21 into. And that's what makes these schools we
22 have been visiting so very important to me,
23 because I always said when I was teaching, "If
24 you don't understand why you're learning what
25 you're learning, you stop me immediately, because

1 why would you learn something that you can't
2 use?"

3 And so I think teachers are
4 becoming more aware of the fact that there has to
5 be an interaction between teachers and students.
6 I said to somebody today, "I'm old, so I didn't
7 have computers when I was young. And so when
8 we first got them, I would go and sit with a ninth
9 grader. 'Could you please show me how to do
10 something?'" And the child would look at me:
11 "You want me to teach you?" And I would say,
12 "There are things I can teach you, but there are
13 things that you teach me," and we become a
14 community of learners. And that's the wonderful
15 thing that I see here, and that's great.

16 Any more questions?

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Is there
18 something that you would like to tell us that we
19 need to know in order to better support not only
20 this school, but other schools like this; or as we
21 move forward to perhaps offer opportunities like
22 the ones you have here to students in other parts
23 of the state?

24 MS. TAYLOR: I think the important
25 thing is, like Senator Sweeney said, the growth

1 of the school. And as a senior, I'm leaving the
2 school, and I'm very proud of that process, the
3 educational process here, because so many
4 students are going to come here and have the
5 opportunity that I had. One thing I learned at
6 GCIT is leadership, and I always had that
7 quality. I was in student government in middle
8 school and elementary school, but here you can
9 really get involved, and I think that's one of
10 the most important parts. I think if you have
11 your academics, you have -- like for me, I have
12 performing arts, but at the end of the day, I
13 also have student council this afternoon, and
14 there's so many things that students may add.

15 My friend from Camden County, she
16 doesn't have those opportunities because her
17 school is open 8 to 3. And we're open until --
18 I don't even know when we close, honestly. But
19 that's one thing that I do enjoy, and I wish
20 other schools had that opportunity to really be
21 involved with other clubs and also within the
22 community.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Anyone else?

24 SENATOR RICE: Let me say that I
25 agree with you. Let me give you the realities of

1 life. I grew up in the City of Newark, and we
2 made some mistakes there as well. When you look
3 at Camden and Newark, we don't have the luxury of
4 all this open space, but we do have the greatest
5 asset around -- as you have here -- our young people.
6 But if you don't become the ambassadors as we
7 work -- as Senator Sweeney had to fight for
8 resources here -- to let people know in these
9 political conversations about money going into
10 the Passaics and Camdens and Newarks, where we're
11 tight -- that we can change the structure to meet
12 some of these needs that our student populations
13 have, then we're always going to be doing this.

14 And what you're going to see
15 happening is people like me, who look like me,
16 who have been a part of the civil rights movement
17 and struggling, who understand the history of
18 women and minorities, traveling the state,
19 beating up on Senator Sweeney if I think he's
20 doing the wrong thing, or supporting him if I
21 think he's doing it right, raising the same
22 question: Why don't women and minorities have
23 contracts, and accounting, and professional
24 services? Because the population is there. But
25 we're not -- we're criticized, and government

1 and accounting is going to tell you that you're
2 going to be supported, and you find out that
3 people abused the money. They're going to find
4 out that people stole the money.

5 But that has nothing to do with
6 the young people. They didn't abuse the dollars,
7 and they didn't mismanage the dollars. And we
8 said, of course, if it's not there, we're not
9 going to find the means to maintain the drive
10 that could process and provide the kind of
11 facilities -- like all this new development that is
12 taking place out here -- that's needed, because of
13 what some adult did. So I guess what I'm saying
14 is that, as we're very impressed with what is
15 taking place here-- But the first thing I notice
16 is, I was getting ready to look for the cows, and
17 I saw nothing but open space. We don't have open
18 space, but we do have students who are no
19 different than the student population here: very
20 diverse, hungry to learn. But newspapers and
21 people put them down because their peer groups in
22 other areas of the states are not speaking up and
23 saying, "Well, we disagree with you, mom and
24 dad and Mr. Politician. We don't know the
25 students in Camden, but it's our generation, and

1 if we can do it here, then they can do it there,
2 and we can support their cause.” So I just want
3 to go on record with that, in overseeing today's
4 visit, and in talking to the Governor and my
5 colleagues. Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I just want to
7 echo something that Assemblywoman Jasey said.
8 The money is there, but it needs to be spent
9 wisely and well. And I don't think that we have
10 always spent the money wisely and well. And this
11 is a wonderful example of the educational dollars
12 getting the biggest bang for the buck. So I'm
13 very pleased to have seen all of you, what you're
14 experiencing here, and I know all of us will go
15 back and try to educate our peers about what we
16 really need to do in education. So thank you
17 very much, students. You did a great job.

18 SENATOR SWEENEY: This is a little
19 bit of bragging, Senator Rice, and you know I
20 don't do that too often. When we merged our two
21 school campuses, our administrations when we
22 first started, our vocational costs -- when I
23 started in 1996, we were 18 out of 21 in
24 administrative costs. We were 8 out of 8 special
25 services school districts in administrative

1 costs. We are now number one in the state for the
2 lowest costs in special services. We're number two
3 in vocational schools in administrative costs.
4 And what I'm most proud of is we took that
5 money, the savings, and put it back into these
6 facilities for these children to get these
7 wonderful programs.

8 There is a better watch to be
9 made, a better clock; whatever you want to say,
10 that says you can't change nature. You
11 absolutely can if you look at it differently.
12 Children are children. They're gifted, as you
13 say, Senator, in North, Central, and South, and
14 they have to be provided opportunities. We have
15 to find ways to get money out of government, end
16 wasteful spending, and get it back into the
17 classrooms where these children can benefit the
18 most. And that's actually what we're most proud
19 of, is reducing our administrative costs and
20 turning those dollars and putting them right back
21 into the young people. And that's why you're
22 seeing so many wonderful young people coming
23 here, because we found a way to squeeze the
24 dollars down to make sure it got into education,
25 not into someone's pocket, which happens from

1 time to time. So we're very proud of the fact
2 that we're basically the lowest costs in the
3 state, and we have some of the best programs.

4 SENATOR RICE: Give me clarity;
5 when I keep hearing we merged the two schools,
6 what two schools are we talking about? Two
7 vocational schools, two --

8 SENATOR SWEENEY: Gloucester
9 County Special Services School District and
10 Gloucester County Institute of Technology, the
11 administrations merged. We eliminated a
12 superintendent, a board secretary. When we
13 started out with saving, the first year was
14 roughly around \$800,000. As we progressed, we
15 found ways to do things even more cost-effectively
16 and more cost-efficiently. We now are up to \$1.5
17 million annual savings.

18 Now, those dollars that we were
19 spending to administer and run these programs --
20 well, we only have one buildings and grounds
21 person now instead of two. It's economies of
22 scale. And what we were able to do when we
23 merged the administrations, we didn't lose
24 teachers. We lost administration, where I don't
25 think it added a whole lot of value. Nothing

1 against my principals in the room, but if we have
2 too many, it impacts the level of education a
3 child gets because those dollars go away from the
4 classroom.

5 We were able to merge these two
6 school districts; and Senator Turner recently
7 allowed to us do a bill, because once we merged
8 the two administrations, we had two separate
9 school boards. Well, when we wanted to merge the
10 school boards, it was against the law to do that.
11 So we said we want to do that. Well, Senator
12 Turner's district in Mercer just basically copied
13 what we did here, and two school districts
14 merged. And they realized what we were saying:
15 that we need one school; one meeting,
16 instead of opening a meeting and running the
17 meeting, closing the meeting, opening up another
18 meeting, bringing some new players and running
19 another meeting. We have one meeting now. The
20 school district has a real long name now. I
21 think it's "Gloucester County Institute of
22 Technology Special Services School, Gloucester
23 County." It's a big long name, but it's one
24 school board now. And Mercer just did what we
25 did. Bergen, I know, has a shared service, and

1 that's actually where we learned from it, and we
2 think we have taken it to the next level.

3 But the most important thing we
4 can do as legislators is find ways to cut money,
5 to cut the dollars in administrative cost and
6 actually pour them back into education.
7 Gloucester County was 76 out of 3,300-some
8 counties in job growth in the nation. We're
9 number one in the state, this little county, in
10 job growth, because we invest in these types of
11 programs. Education is key for us, and we're
12 going to continue to strive to try to have the
13 finest county education system, between the
14 college and these schools, of anywhere, because
15 it's an investment that's well made.

16 You know, when someone wants to
17 move to a region -- what are the schools like,
18 how's the crime rate? -- those are the things that
19 people ask. We figured it out, and we're putting
20 the money back into the school district, which
21 really makes it a premiere program. And these
22 young people actually know what they want to do.
23 And that's the other thing, when a young man
24 says, "I know what I want to do when I go to
25 college."

1 I have a nephew who graduated
2 from LaSalle University who thought he wanted to
3 be a teacher. In his last year, he realized he
4 hated it when he did student teaching. He is now
5 unemployed with a degree from LaSalle, but he
6 doesn't want to teach. So it's so important that
7 young people have an idea where they want to go
8 earlier, because it's a large waste of money for
9 parents. Like my son wants to be a teacher, and
10 if he changes his mind, I'm going to kill him.
11 But it's a large sum of money, and the fact that
12 these young people are learning earlier where
13 they want to go, that's a great thing. Let them
14 explore here so they're ready when they get to
15 the next level.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I'm telling
17 you that teaching is the best profession in the
18 world, and I wouldn't have been anything other
19 than a teacher and it was the most rewarding
20 thing. And I would encourage young people, you
21 will never be happier than when you're
22 interacting with young people, conveying knowledge
23 to them and seeing them grow.

24 The other thing I just wanted to
25 say: I'm so impressed here, because the special

1 needs students are integrated so well in so many
2 of the classes, and it's so important. The
3 Senator and I were talking about how important it
4 is for some of our special needs students to have
5 the socialization that all of you enjoy. And the
6 whole school here has just impressed me no end.
7 So I just want to thank you all for today.

8 Now we have a panel --

9 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: One more
10 question I wanted to ask the students: I know
11 when you come here, it's exciting to be able to
12 go and do whatever you want to specialize in,
13 whether it's auto mechanics or construction or
14 finance; but does it help with your academic
15 subjects? Have you found that it helps improve,
16 let's say, math, if you want to be in automotive?
17 Maybe you weren't so keen in math before, because
18 you didn't know how it related to what you were
19 doing or what you might do in life, but maybe now
20 it's helped you.

21 MR. KEHLER: Well, as an
22 automotive student, we're introduced to our
23 future; so if we need to go to college one day
24 or grab a degree, we need math and science for
25 engineering. So it's set in our minds, as our

1 teacher puts it.

2 The great thing about our school
3 is our teachers. As you walked around with two
4 teachers of ours, they're people who have
5 succeeded in the profession or their skill. They
6 may have gone to a technical school just like
7 this. So they're giving back in a way, giving
8 their knowledge to us. They have already
9 experienced everything, and they're lending what
10 they know to us.

11 So, to answer your question,
12 they're telling us that we need math, we need
13 science -- we go for it. And our teachers, they
14 know what we're going through. They know, "Okay,
15 Ken, he's an automotive student. This might be
16 better for him to learn." They adapt to what we
17 need. So, yes, the school is great for that.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: That goes to
20 what I was saying. When you understand why
21 you're learning what you're learning, how
22 important it is -- because I am the worst math
23 student in the world, but if I have to get
24 carpeting for my house, believe me, I can figure
25 it out without any problem whatsoever. And in

1 one of the schools, they had a school of
2 carpentry, because you really have to be so
3 precise when you're doing all of the construction
4 and things of that sort. So this is why schools
5 like this are so important: because you see what
6 you use it for, that learning, and that's the
7 most wonderful thing in education.

8 Anybody else? Thank you, ladies
9 and gentlemen. You did a wonderful job. And now
10 we have a panel of educators, so if we can switch
11 places. Thank you again.

12 Now we have an education panel,
13 and we have Ellen Herdegen, who is the
14 Superintendent; Gina Mateka, principal; David
15 Kloss, Performing Arts teacher; Charlie McBride,
16 Culinary Arts; and Catherine Hughes of Virtua
17 Health System.

18 **ELLEN HERDEGEN:** And Daniel
19 Moskowitz, who is our welding teacher.

20 **ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS:** Okay.
21 Ellen Herdegen, the Superintendent, would you
22 like to begin?

23 **MS. HERDEGEN:** I would, and I
24 would like to echo the sentiments of our students
25 in welcoming you and thanking you for making the

1 trip down here to South Jersey. We're glad to be
2 able to show you what we do. I think that the
3 students said just about everything that needs to
4 be said about education, and it just makes me
5 feel so proud to see that they are so aware of
6 the opportunities that they have been given.

7 The issue that I would like to put
8 on the table for the panel today is something
9 that Senator Sweeney began to touch upon, and
10 that's cooperation. I think that in this day and
11 age it's almost impossible for any school
12 district, or any organization for that matter, to
13 say we can do it all on our own. Resources are
14 too precious. It's too important that we make
15 sure that every penny of public money is being
16 spent in a trustful and respectful way. And
17 we're looking constantly for ways in which our
18 resources can be shared.

19 That goes to the board of
20 education, in terms of our ability to operate as
21 one board serving two school districts. It goes
22 to the district. You saw today the cooperation
23 between GCIT and the Special Services School
24 District. Our students move in both directions.
25 Our special needs students were here in the

1 baking shop today. Other days they come to see
2 the students perform in the plays that are
3 presented here. But it goes in the other
4 direction. Our students from GCIT will provide
5 mentorship to these young people. Our softball
6 team has adopted the Special Services School
7 District's Miracle League team. And it just makes
8 me so proud to see these students understanding
9 that you don't do this in isolation, that it's
10 not appropriate to think of yourself as your own
11 little island. Community services (indiscernible)
12 understand that the world is diverse and that we
13 need to be a part of it.

14 In addition, what we're being able
15 to do recently with the college -- Dr. Davis is
16 here today -- the cooperation that we're getting
17 so that our students, in five years, can receive an
18 associate's degree. The opportunities for
19 students who are in our Transportation Department
20 to take advance classes, in our Welding
21 Department to take construction classes -- this
22 just enriches their opportunity as students, and
23 it also helps their families when you realize the
24 cost of college education these days.

25 Our partners in business, you're

1 going to hear from one of our advisory members
2 this afternoon. But you also saw what WaWa
3 Corporation has done for us, in terms of providing
4 a place where our special needs learners can
5 actually use WaWa's equipment, follow WaWa's
6 procedures. And we have about six students
7 now who have graduated from our Special Ed
8 Department who are working in WaWas in the
9 area, successfully, happily.

10 And then I think that you have
11 also seen the cooperation that is necessary
12 between the disciplines that we have here. It's
13 not an academy school on one side of the fence
14 and a career technical education school on the
15 other side of the fence. Our students work
16 together. You know, what is the old song, "The
17 Farmers and the Cowboys Can Be Friends." Well,
18 the welders and the dancers can be friends. And
19 they bring such a unique perspective and such
20 unique balance to the table, that I think the
21 message that we would like you take away from
22 Gloucester County today is that we do it better
23 because we do it together.

24 It doesn't diminish the resources to
25 spread them out. It only enriches them. And we're

1 very proud of what we've been able to do, very
2 grateful for the support of our freeholder board.
3 We hope that you'll be able to bring our message
4 back to the State and let people know that we
5 would be thrilled to have more of this kind of
6 educational opportunity available in New Jersey.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you
8 very much. Principal Mateka?

9 **GINA MATEKA, Ed.D.:** Thank you, and welcome.

10 It is my honor to be an administrator
11 here at Gloucester County Institute of
12 Technology. I have been here for the past 11
13 years, and I'm proud to be part of a model that
14 offers young people the opportunity to couple a
15 career pathway with high academic standards.

16 We pride ourselves on high
17 industry standards in addition to the academic
18 component, and our focus is on relevance,
19 relationships, and rigor. And with those three
20 components, in addition to our commitment to
21 community service, being recognized as a national
22 service learning leader school, we here at GCIT
23 aim to educate the whole student -- not only for
24 industry and academics, but as a member of
25 society in which they can go, beyond high

1 school, and be productive members; where they can
2 pursue their career theme and be proud of what we
3 have offered them here at GCIT.

4 And, as Assemblyman Moriarty
5 pointed out earlier, it's just as important for
6 young people to determine their career pathway
7 when they are seniors, as this may not be what
8 they want to do. It is a very costly venture to
9 pursue this in higher education. For
10 middle-class Americans, it's almost unaffordable
11 to send young people to higher education. So
12 this generation does not have the luxury of
13 switching career majors at the higher ed level.
14 So to determine a career pathway, given the
15 opportunity to explore various areas within a
16 particular program, is monumental to where
17 they're going to go beyond high school.

18 And I am just so grateful to be
19 part of such a program that offers such a unique
20 opportunity for young people to explore, because
21 the meaning that it brings to them, and I think
22 the benefits to their families, is unparalleled.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you.

24 David Kloss of the Performing Arts Department?

25 **DAVID KLOSS:** Welcome. My background

1 is totally vocational professional. The
2 students-- I don't know whether you realize
3 I teach ballet, with dance as a profession.
4 There are certain demands that are put
5 on the child, and it evolves quickly. In other
6 words, they start to count down at about 27.
7 If they meet 27, if the body holds out,
8 ironically that's when their artistry starts to
9 be developed. So our focus is technical and
10 to protect the body, and what they learn here
11 in the next four years will actually determine
12 how long they will be able to dance, if they
13 choose it as a profession.

14 Not all of our students do. I have
15 one young lady right now, here, who was
16 injured, and she won't be pursuing that. But
17 she's going into physical therapy. So we have a
18 lot of changeover.

19 Also, the innovative practices that
20 are developed or innovative technology that
21 has been developed, it has (indiscernible) function,
22 because we fix everything. We use our dancers.
23 They were editing their senior pieces, in other
24 words, their pictures.

25 And since it's mandatory to have

1 your credit course to graduate in the arts in the
2 State of New Jersey, now we have been teaching
3 the welding students and everyone else. And it's
4 working out a little rough in the beginning. But
5 may I also state that the way it was written for
6 the state for this to happen is, it should have
7 started in K through. So we're getting 11th and
8 12th graders, and they're doing ballet, and it
9 has been a little bit of a rude awakening, and
10 we're still working on it. But everyone is
11 getting along. It's unfortunate that it couldn't
12 have worked the way it's supposed to.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: That's great.
14 I did a program with the Lincoln Center with
15 dance when I was teaching, and I had the football
16 team, the basketball team out there with the
17 dancers. And I said, "Your (inaudible) at
18 shooting baskets will be so enhanced" and to the
19 football team, I said, "You will be able to
20 shimmy and sway down the field without a
21 problem." And so, again, it's showing them the
22 relevance of how they can use what they're
23 learning and give them an appreciation for the
24 arts as well. So I think you're doing a great
25 job.

1 Charlie McBride? Your food is
2 wonderful.

3 **CHARLIE McBRIDE:** Thank you. I've
4 been a teacher here 26 years. I've seen it go
5 from good to better. Right now I'm part of the
6 Culinary Arts Program. I teach baking and pastry
7 arts. We have two years of culinary arts and two
8 years of baking. At the time they leave here,
9 they have a good, solid base in both trades. A
10 lot of our kids go to college. A lot of our kids
11 go out to work. We have a wide range of
12 students. We do have students from next door,
13 and they have been successful. We have one
14 student who graduated two years ago who is
15 working for Walmart. I won't mention his name.
16 Everybody here knows who he is. And he's making
17 around \$13.50 an hour right now, and he was from
18 next door, Bankbridge.

19 It's just a great program.

20 **ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS:** And I bet they
21 all watch the Food Network.

22 **MR. McBRIDE:** That causes more
23 problems than you know.

24 **ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY:** I was going
25 to say, I have a suggestion that you have a

1 television program, a video program, and you have
2 the culinary. You should be trying to train some
3 TV chefs. You should be doing a cooking show,
4 and you could merge those two. And there's more
5 integration and cooperation.

6 MR. McBRIDE: There you go. I do
7 want to do a little bit of bragging. We recently
8 came back from competition, and won seven-some
9 medals in baking. I'm very familiar with the
10 baking part, obviously. A sophomore came back
11 with first place gold and goes on to the
12 nationals. And then we have students who are
13 doing other programs who are going to the
14 nationals, also, in construction.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I know
16 there were young ladies working on a wedding cake.

17 MR. McBRIDE: Yes, that is correct.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: And
19 it's so professional; it was amazing to me. So you're
20 doing a great job.

21 MR. McBRIDE: Thank you.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Catherine
23 Hughes?

24 CATHERINE HUGHES: Hello, everyone. My
25 role here, I'm a member of the advisory board for

1 the Allied Health Program, and, proudly, I have
2 been part of that board since the beginning,
3 since the first day that we put that together.
4 And I have seen that grow and happily seen the
5 graduating classes come through. So I have very
6 proudly talked about the program to everybody who
7 will listen. I call myself the “number one fan”
8 of this wonderful Allied Health Program.

9 My role on the committee is to
10 bring my expertise and experience the best I can
11 to the school setting. What I do is advise about
12 some of the curriculum, really just minor
13 recommendations. The people here at the school
14 know best, but I bring in things from the
15 employment world, especially the hospital world
16 and health care. I bring in things that I see that
17 are new trends in health care, new requirements,
18 new advances perhaps that we should be looking
19 at even at the high school level. I'm also able to
20 represent the employment world by describing
21 trends or employment trends for hiring.

22 Part of what I have done is (indiscernible)
23 in interviewing some of the students who want
24 some practice before they go out to look for
25 their jobs. And I'm also able, I think, to give

1 some recommendations and suggestions about the
2 things that are most in demand, whether that's a
3 shortage in a certain specialty -- you're all
4 familiar with nursing shortages. So we talk
5 about this a lot. But there are also many things
6 in the technical fields like radiology
7 technicians and echocardiograph technicians.
8 So lots of things that I bring, as well as my
9 partners, who are obviously from many different
10 fields. Some are in private practice, some are
11 in large institutions like I am.

12 So I think we -- or I hope we are
13 valuable as an advisor to the committee, and
14 supporters. And, again, I would just finish by
15 saying I'm so proud of the program. I'm a
16 Gloucester County resident, as well as someone
17 who has been in health care for 40 years. So I
18 speak as often as I can about the value of it and
19 how impressive it is to look at these students
20 and to see that, as they graduate, they will be the
21 most employable, most coveted employees when
22 they hit the workforce. So I'm very proud of the
23 program. Thank you for letting me address you.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Well, I think
25 it's wonderful, because one of the things that's

1 so essential for students to know is where the
2 job opportunities are available. Because a lot of
3 kids want to go into something that they think
4 is going to be very financially lucrative, like, for
5 example, so many people go to law school, but
6 we only need X amount of lawyers. But we
7 certainly need many more nurses. So whenever
8 you're thinking of what you want to do, you have
9 to know where the opportunities will be. And I
10 think not enough of our kids are getting that
11 kind of information. So I thank you very much
12 for what you do. It's great.

13 Does anybody have any questions?

14 We have Mr. Moskowitz (phonetic spelling).

15 **MR. MOSKOWITZ :** Thank you. I want
16 to thank you for coming to our school, first of
17 all. I can't tell you how impressed I am as a
18 vocational teacher. As a vocational student, I
19 graduated a couple years ago from Camden County
20 Vocational School, and we have always felt like
21 the ugly duckling of education -- when I was a
22 student and as an instructor. And to hear this
23 distinguished panel talk about coming to
24 vocational technical schools and wanting to take
25 back to the State level what you saw, what you've

1 learned, hearing you say that we are on the cusp
2 of something great here and that education should
3 -- and we should finally get the recognition that
4 that a vocational technical education deserves, is
5 awesome. I commend you.

6 I think, when you look at today's --
7 I teach in the construction trades program. So
8 we just, obviously, had an historic election and
9 the new President. What does he want to do to
10 spur the economy? Invest in this country, invest
11 in the construction trades, build our country
12 back up. Who's going to do that work? So
13 vocational technical students who come to a
14 school like this give us what they got, and the
15 teachers give them what they have. I think
16 that's the trend that is being set here today and
17 in the national level.

18 So I want to thank you for it. I'm
19 one of those *vocy* guys that the Senator talked
20 about, and I've always been a very proud
21 guy. So thank you very much for your *vocy*
22 support, and continue on with the good work
23 that you're doing.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I think
25 we're finally getting the Legislature to realize how

1 important vocational and technical education is.
2 And I have so many pieces of legislation to
3 encourage people to go into teaching vocational
4 and technical education, because, as I said
5 before, this is where it's at, as far as I'm
6 concerned, in education. And I'm very concerned
7 about some of these things that we're doing in
8 our regular public schools, because I don't think
9 they're doing the service that they should be
10 doing to our students. And so, as I said, I am
11 just thrilled to be here today to see what you're
12 doing. And each time I go to one of the
13 technical schools in the state, I'm more
14 impressed. And so far now, you're on top of my
15 list, as I said before, so thank you.

16 SENATOR RICE: Let me say this: I
17 grew up a few years ago in a different kind of
18 academic setting, where vocational schools were
19 the schools you went to when you didn't want to
20 pursue a college education in a liberal arts
21 program. That has been transformed. That has
22 changed so much. And then we went to -- and I
23 think Senator Sweeney was alluding to the
24 specialty schools, which is more of a science
25 high school with academic topnotch students whose

1 peers don't get an opportunity to be with them
2 anymore. So you take away the competition.
3 When I was in school, believe it
4 or not, I was an honor student, and we had in
5 high school what they called *Special English*,
6 *College English*. They called it *Freshman English*
7 because we were a little bit more advanced.
8 So we all had to go to this new high school.
9 The problem was, my best friend, my sidekick,
10 was playing around, not doing all his homework,
11 bright but didn't care; so he didn't go in the
12 class with us. But what in fact that did was
13 anchor him, number one, and made him buckle
14 down to start to pull the grades back up so he
15 could come into the class. So this whole notion
16 here, what I've seen up and down the state, is
17 that we're talking vocational schools -- we're
18 going to change that name, number one. Most of
19 you have changed it anyway. But we just went
20 with academies, and these other kinds of names
21 make more sense.

22 We also believe that vocational
23 education should have, as much as it can -- whether
24 it's open space like this or tight in the cities --
25 as much of an environment of a college kind of

1 setting for young adults who are moving, so they
2 can start to interact. They've got to perform in
3 a certain way in an atmosphere of a real college
4 campus, whether they're in cities like New York
5 and going in one building up and down, or whether
6 they're going out where it's spread out and you
7 go from location to location, so they know that.

8 I've always argued that students
9 cannot go -- I don't care how bright they are
10 -- from the ninth grade to twelfth grade into
11 classrooms, break for lunch, and just keep looking
12 at blackboards and blackboards. And I guess
13 there are computer screens now, but that can
14 be like a blackboard. They have to feel like
15 there's something else they're doing. I learn
16 best not in reading. If I'm going to read, I
17 have to read three and four times. I've got to
18 highlight everything. But if you show me how to
19 take that heart out, I'll figure it out. I may
20 kill somebody first, but I will figure it out.

21 So we do see vocational education
22 not as vocational education. I think the word
23 *vocation* is (indiscernible) a noun, because that
24 means *work*. When you start talking about career,
25 career seems to stick to people, coming up from

1 here, subliminally: "Well, I'm working on a
2 career." And if they understand what a career
3 means, it really means "vocation." And so we're
4 looking to change that, but we're also looking to
5 see how to maximize the dollars we have and spend
6 them more wisely and efficiently. And we know
7 we're going to run into some problems with that.
8 But I'm looking forward to this Committee coming
9 up with recommendations as to how we can pull
10 some of this together to start to open the doors
11 to make changes.

12 So you're in the forefront with
13 us, because we don't see you as a vocational
14 school. We see you as a public school, and we
15 just want to know what is different about it that
16 can be duplicated.

17 So, Madam Chair, I do have to
18 leave, but I do want you to know that I have
19 given the charge to staff to take what we have so
20 far and to analyze it for us and lay it out, and
21 let's see what a particular school that we will
22 visit in a county is doing versus another
23 programmatically. We will look at demographics
24 and things like that, but what the commonality
25 and what the difference is, to try to determine

1 something that makes sense.

2 And I do have one question to the
3 Superintendent and the principal: Have you had
4 visits from other superintendents or principals
5 of vocational schools throughout the state, like
6 from Essex County, for example, to take a look at
7 your program, how you're situated?

8 MS. HERDEGEN: This is my first
9 year as Superintendent; so I can answer that this
10 year. No, we haven't had that opportunity, but
11 through the Council of Vocational Technical
12 Schools, we do share information on a very
13 consistent basis. And as a matter of fact, we
14 met yesterday in Burlington County, and one of
15 the things that we were talking about was, we do
16 have a lot of commonality and things that we can
17 share, but we also have some very unique
18 differences, and those are special also.

19 And we're planning to spend some
20 time this Summer just giving an opportunity
21 for the superintendents to kind of do best
22 practice sharing. And, yes, the doors are always
23 open. We would love to hear from the Essex
24 County Superintendent, to come down.

25 SENATOR RICE: Through the Chair

1 and through Melanie, can we monitor and work with
2 that organization to see what those differences
3 are and kind of figure out what they view as the
4 best practices? Can we have that information
5 provided to us? And the reason I raise that is
6 because we may encourage, but we may have to
7 mandate if we can't encourage it, that principals
8 and superintendents -- because the freeholders
9 get a little funny sometimes -- go and visit
10 other locations physically, because it's a lot
11 different than sitting at a table talking about
12 it than to come and walk through, which has been
13 our experience, and then have these kinds of
14 discussions and input.

15 I mean, if you're telling me about
16 your partnership, say, with the special needs
17 students, for example, it sounds good to me. I
18 kind of understand it. But for me to see it, to
19 see exactly what they're doing and what the
20 outcome is makes it a lot better and more
21 worthwhile, whether or not it's something I can
22 incorporate into my system and get the limitation
23 on dollars, et cetera.

24 So I apologize to everybody.
25 Thank you very much for having me here. Thank

1 you.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I think one of
3 the things that you're doing with your students
4 is to show them that education is a lifelong
5 pursuit. It's not just something that you do
6 until you graduate from high school. And I used
7 to tell my students, I guess the smartest man I
8 have met was my grandfather, who was a plumber.
9 But he taught me philosophy. He taught me
10 poetry. He taught me theology. And he knew all
11 these things, but his job was a plumber. So you
12 can kind of bifurcate yourself and have many,
13 many interests. And I think that's one of the
14 things that you're doing to your students: to
15 show them, through all of these programs, that
16 life is a smorgasbord, so take advantage of it.

17 I would like to introduce you to
18 Judy Savage, whom I'm sure you know.

19 **JUDY SAVAGE:** Thank you for
20 inviting me up to the table to an available
21 microphone. I just wanted to kind of build on
22 what Senator Rice was saying, because I think he
23 made a really good point about how important it
24 is for not only legislators to get out, but also
25 for educators from around the state to get out.

1 And that is a big part of the Council of County
2 Vocational Technical Schools' mission, to bring
3 together all the superintendents. And although
4 we have not done a lot this year, since Ellen has
5 been the Superintendent here, we do have a
6 tradition of having road trips. So we do a lot
7 of those kinds of visits. I think it's really
8 important. Sometimes, as you know, it's hard to
9 get people up North to come all the way down to
10 Gloucester County, but absolutely we're worth the
11 trip.

12 And just on behalf of the Council,
13 I want to echo what has been well said by all the
14 legislators: What a fantastic school, what
15 fantastic students. It has been just a great
16 day. And even though I have been here a number
17 of times to talk with your students, today I had
18 the chance to see some classrooms and some
19 programs that I have never seen before. So I
20 also really want to take the chance of having the
21 microphone to thank you, the Joint Committee, for
22 all that you have been doing. This is the third
23 full day that the members of this Committee have
24 devoted to actually getting out and seeing
25 schools, seeing programs, and I really can tell

1 that there is so much that is going to come out
2 of this.

3 And I will be very happy to work
4 with your Executive Director at the staff level
5 to put together all the information that you need
6 to do some kind of analysis and not just -- to
7 kind of take the show-and-tell to the next level
8 and really analyze what we have seen, and help you
9 develop what comes out of this. So thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON VOSS: Thank you.
11 Assemblywoman Jasey?

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I have to go
13 back to Trenton for a hearing that is going on,
14 but I want to ask Mr. Kloss a question: You said
15 something that triggered a question in my mind,
16 and that has do with the requirements. We have
17 had quite a bit of discussion about high school
18 redesign and the changes that are being proposed.
19 How has that impacted you, or how do you
20 anticipate those recommendations impacting your
21 school here?

22 MR. KLOSS: You mean the fine arts
23 credits?

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Well, you
25 mentioned the fine arts credits, which can be

1 satisfied through art, music, dance, right?

2 MR. KLOSS: It has to be
3 physically done, and it can't be an appreciation
4 course.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: For example,
6 you have to actually paint or draw or something.
7 So, if it's dance, you have to actually dance?

8 MR. KLOSS: When we reviewed the
9 -- I was on the panel my second year here
10 full-time, to review the Core Curriculum Content
11 Standards. Dance is a stand-alone. It was always
12 in phys ed, and now it's a stand-alone, like
13 music and drama. And it took a long time to get
14 there. In doing the new Core Curriculum Content
15 Standards, we did a K-through-12 of not only
16 the Standards, but how to get to the Standard in
17 terms of: you teach this to get up to there, to
18 get to there, right through 12. It was like a
19 roadmap; which has been kind of dismissed -- even
20 though the core content standards took five years
21 to go around from committee to committee -- and
22 came back in the same way it was written, because
23 they thought it was too strenuous.

24 But the implementation of it
25 really has to start in the lower grades, and it's

1 all four -- are you familiar with what the
2 requirements are?

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: No.

4 MR. KLOSS: Drama, visual arts,
5 dance and music, K-through-6, all four must be
6 taught. Six through eight, two, and by the time
7 you get to high school, you can major in one, or
8 you can carry two, and that's a five-credit
9 course. If you don't have that course, you can't
10 get your diploma, and it goes right through.
11 Now, that has been adopted. I don't know how
12 much it is happening in the lower grades, but
13 it's so necessary for that to build so that by
14 the time it gets to the high school level, it's
15 really worth something.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you
17 for that clarification. I'm also wondering about
18 the other requirements, the academic requirements
19 in order to graduate with a diploma.

20 MS. HERDEGEN: I think that one of
21 the most critical things that we could maybe
22 emphasize about our program is that we want
23 excellence in every standard, not only the
24 industry standards that relate to the career
25 technical paths that our students take, but also

1 academic standards.

2 As Dr. Mateka said, we look for
3 rigor in our curriculum, and we expect that our
4 students perform at a level that is not
5 diminished from anything else in the state. The
6 core curriculum academic standards are alive and
7 well in vocational technical education.

8 I think that we're hoping that
9 there will become some broader understanding that
10 there's just not one way to do it, that students
11 are different. In our school, about 33 percent
12 of our students are classified as special
13 education students, and we need to be able to
14 individualize and to help those students learn in
15 the way that is best for them. A curriculum that
16 would be so directed and so devoted to certain
17 kinds of mathematics, certain kinds of learning
18 may not serve all the students well. I think
19 what Kenny said when he was talking about his
20 transportation classes -- it's one thing to say
21 that you need to know algebra; it's another thing
22 to understand that you want to be an auto
23 technician and that you're going to need these
24 skills. Mr. McBride would understand
25 mathematical skills with baking; obviously, in

1 welding, in dance, some of the science things
2 that would go along with that. So I think that
3 we are in favor of a very rigorous, very strong
4 standard for these students, and raising the bar
5 is great. We just need to have some
6 understanding that all of our students don't
7 learn in the same way, and that to be so directed
8 in some of the things that have been discussed
9 would probably not benefit all of the students.
10 We need some flexibility.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Understood.

12 Thank you.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I think
14 Assemblywoman Jasey and I are very concerned
15 about some of the things that are being proposed,
16 and we have been very vocal about our concerns.
17 And we have a bill in that -- hopefully long-range
18 plans can come about that they will evaluate how
19 successful certain things are in the first year
20 of implementation. Because, again, I keep saying,
21 a one-size-fits-all education is not the way to
22 go, and I have been saying that for 45 years, and
23 I'll say it until the day I die. And, hopefully,
24 the people in Trenton will listen to us, because
25 we certainly have gotten the message. They need

1 to.

2 MS. SAVAGE: With the Chair's
3 prerogative, allow me to ask a question: I
4 wonder if you can just explain a little bit what
5 has been involved in expanding the program?
6 Because if everybody does know, this used to be a
7 half-day shared time traditional vocational
8 school, and it has really been transformed, and
9 there has been a lot involved in that, both
10 fiscally and otherwise.

11 MS. HERDEGEN: Yes. It has been
12 an exciting adventure and, fortunately, I think
13 that we did it the right way. We did not jump
14 into transforming from a shared time vocational
15 school to a full-time school in a couple-year
16 period. It actually took us about six years to do
17 the transition, for several reasons: We wanted
18 to make sure that we were doing it right. We
19 wanted to make sure that we introduced steps in
20 a sequential way. We wanted to make sure that
21 we gave our vocational teachers an opportunity
22 to develop programs that would be appropriate
23 for 9th through 12th grades, rather than just
24 11th and 12th grades. We operated dual
25 pathways so that all students in Gloucester

1 County would have an opportunity to take
2 advantage of the programs at the vocational
3 technical school.

4 In order to do that, we would be
5 admitting freshman to a full-time program, but we
6 didn't want to miss those juniors who would be
7 applying as juniors to be in the shared-time
8 program. So, logistically, it was tricky, I
9 guess would be the best word. Fiscally, we kind
10 of got caught in a trap. We started to increase
11 our full-time population just at the time that
12 State funding was frozen, so that as our student
13 population grew significantly, our funding was
14 based at a number that was way lower. And it was
15 really through the understanding and the
16 generosity of our freeholders who filled in the
17 blanks for us that we were able to succeed.

18 Now, last year we did get a bump
19 in our State aid. This year, I'm sure you
20 understand and we understand that there are
21 constraints in the budget, but we were expecting
22 a 20 percent increase in State aid for every
23 student; we got 5 percent. And it has been
24 challenging to be able to find ways of -- if we
25 hadn't been able to merge some of the

1 administrative functions in the district, it really
2 would have put us in a horrible position.

3 So we believe that the
4 comprehensive approach to education is
5 appropriate with the rigorous standards that are
6 in place for all students. To put them on a bus
7 for an hour a day in the middle of the day is
8 impractical in this day and age, unless the
9 subject taken is in a particular category where
10 it's significantly different than ours.

11 But as we move to a comprehensive
12 program, I think that our students said it best.
13 You understand the importance of the academic
14 subjects when they are placed in the context of
15 what you want to do in a career pathway. So I'm
16 in favor of the program as we have it. We have
17 now completely converted to full-time with a
18 minor exception for a couple of part-time options
19 that we kept open for seniors. But it was a long
20 path. It was a long path, because we needed to
21 do it in an incremental and thoughtful way. It
22 was a bumpy road with the funding, but we're
23 here, and we're delighted.

24 If other districts are embarking
25 on that path, we would be happy to have them come

1 down and talk about it. It's an evolutionary
2 kind of process, and it needs to be taken in a
3 very thoughtful and very considerate way.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I apologize;
5 I have to leave now.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I have a
7 couple quick questions: Can you give me the
8 number of students that are currently enrolled?

9 MS. HERDEGEN: We're close to
10 1,000 students at this point.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: What
12 is the process to getting accepted?

13 MS. HERDEGEN: We go out in the
14 Fall to 8th grade students, offer them a
15 presentation at their schools, then invite their
16 families to come in for an information session.
17 We offer four information sessions in the late
18 Fall, early Winter. Students provide us with an
19 application. The application includes
20 information about their attendance, their
21 standardized test scores, their grades; and we
22 put that on a matrix, a rubric, and we evaluate
23 each application and accept the students based on
24 the ranking.

25 In the Performing Arts, we also

1 have an audition that is included in the rubric
2 for their acceptance.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So, in the
4 last year, how many applied? How many were
5 accepted?

6 MS. HERDEGEN: We had about, I
7 think, over 800 applications, and we accepted
8 about 260 students.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So would
10 you say there's a very large need? You could
11 accommodate more if you were able to?

12 MS. HERDEGEN: The construction
13 that you saw outside will take us eventually to a
14 1,500-student capacity, which we feel will be
15 optimal. We will have 500 students in our
16 academy programs, in the programs that are
17 college-prep oriented; and a 1,000 in our career
18 technical programs.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: What
20 percentage of the students that graduate will go
21 on to further education?

22 MS. HERDEGEN: I'm going to have
23 to get some help; Gina?

24 DR. MATEKA: Well, currently, we
25 only have statistics on our academy -- because

1 this is our first year of a graduating class in the
2 career-technical side -- and over 90 percent of
3 our students in the academy model go on to
4 higher education.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Are there
6 programs that you would like to start, but you're
7 unable to start because of financial constraints?
8 Are there programs that there is a need for?

9 DR. MATEKA: Well, nationally,
10 there's a need for engineering, but Williamstown
11 is currently hosting an engineering academy, and
12 we would not really like to compete with any
13 other school within our county. And we would
14 like to expand on what we're doing well, and we
15 believe that the eight programs that we offer
16 here is what we do well. And we would like to
17 expand an opportunity to pursue those career
18 pathways.

19 MS. HERDEGEN: We're looking to
20 refine some of the programs that we have. For
21 example, in the Medical Arts Department right
22 now, that is only an academy program, but we
23 understand there are certificate-type programs,
24 associate's degree programs, that are appropriate
25 and needed in the medical field. So we are

1 looking to a non-academy-type medical arts
2 program.

3 We're also looking to expand our
4 construction program to include more than what we
5 offer now, perhaps plumbing as a separate option
6 for students, or maybe masonry; but we're looking
7 to kind of move out within the areas that we have
8 already defined rather than add new areas.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: How would
10 you say the students -- you have a limited
11 history to look at, but how would you say they
12 compare educationally to other students in
13 surrounding districts in terms of scores?

14 DR. MATEKA: In terms of scores,
15 we can only compare ourselves with the high
16 school proficiency assessment test, and we have
17 done rather well over the years in scoring in the
18 areas of mathematics and language arts. We have
19 ranked either one or two in the county.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Great.
21 Thank you. One last question: Did I hear you
22 right? You said that dancers are, like, past their
23 prime after 27, and that's when the artistry
24 starts kicking in? That's a rather cruel twist;
25 isn't it?

1 MR. KLOSS: It sure is.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I'm glad I
3 didn't take that profession. Thank you very
4 much.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I want to thank
6 you all. It has been a thoroughly enjoyable day,
7 and we will certainly bring the message back to
8 Trenton. And I think you're doing exactly what I
9 as an educator think should be done in education.
10 So I thank you very much for everything that we
11 have seen today.

12 (The hearing was concluded at 2:30
13 p.m.)

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1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2

3 I hereby certify that the
4 proceedings are contained fully and
5 accurately in the stenographic notes taken
6 by me on the Hearing of the within cause
7 and that this is a correct transcript of
8 the same.

9

10 -----

DEBRA RICE

11 PROFESSIONAL COURT REPORTER

12 DATED: May 21, 2009