

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JOINT SENATE AND HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARING

STATE CAPITOL
NORTH OFFICE BUILDING
ROOM 1
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

TUESDAY, JUNE 7, 2016

IN RE: EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

BEFORE:

SENATOR LLOYD SMUCKER, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
SENATOR ANDREW DINNIMAN, MINORITY CHAIRMAN
SENATOR RYAN AUMENT
SENATOR JOHN EICHELBERGER
HONORABLE STANLEY SAYLOR, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE ROSEMARY BROWN
HONORABLE HAL ENGLISH
HONORABLE MARK GILLEN
HONORABLE HARRY LEWIS
HONORABLE BERNIE O'NEILL
HONORABLE KATHY RAPP
HONORABLE MIKE REESE
HONORABLE CRAIG STAATS
HONORABLE PATRICK HARKINS
HONORABLE MARK LONGIETTI
HONORABLE MICHAEL SCHLOSSBERG
HONORABLE KEVIN SCHREIBER

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ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 * * *

3 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Good morning.

4 Welcome to our fourth joint hearing of the Senate
5 and House Education Committees in regards to the ESSA, the
6 new Every Student Succeeds Act.

7 Pleased, of course, to continue to do this with
8 Chairman Saylor, House Education Chairman. Chairman
9 Dinniman, the Minority Chair in the Senate, is on his way.

10 And very sad to hear of the passing of Chairman
11 Roebuck's wife. So today Chairman Longietti, is our, I
12 guess, temporary Chair of the House Minority Committee.

13 As I mentioned, this is our fourth hearing. We
14 have heard initially at our first hearing from a national
15 education expert from NCSL; then from our Secretary of
16 Education, Pedro Rivera; then from groups representing our
17 School Boards, school superintendents, teachers, and the
18 IUs.

19 Today we're narrowing the discussion and focusing
20 on one particular aspect, one particular component of ESSA,
21 which is turnaround schools.

22 And ESSA has some very specific parameters in
23 regards to underperforming schools. The new law calls on
24 states to establish a methodology beginning in the 2017-'18
25 school year to identify those schools in need of

1 comprehensive support and improvement, which will include
2 the lowest-performing 5 percent of all schools receiving
3 Title 1 funds and any school failing to graduate one-third
4 or more of its students.

5 There must be an annual measure of achievement
6 that includes 95 percent of all students and 95 percent of
7 all students in each subgroup.

8 We've talked about this. Many schools in
9 Pennsylvania have tried (inaudible) models before opting
10 often for a transformation model. Yet often the trajectory
11 for the students in ESSA remains unchanged.

12 So today we'll be exploring how it works and how
13 do schools exit turnaround programs once they've succeeded.

14 We're joined by leaders from our two largest
15 school systems in Pennsylvania today, Philadelphia and
16 Pittsburgh, and by leaders in the world of experts in the
17 world of turnaround schools to help answer some of these
18 questions.

19 So to each of our testifiers here today, we
20 appreciate your time and we appreciate the time that you
21 took to prepare. Our goal, as always, is to have a
22 transparent and comprehensive discussion about the future
23 of education policy in Pennsylvania. We believe that ESSA
24 provides a unique opportunity to do so.

25 We remain committed to working with all

1 stakeholders to make ESSA's implementation not only smooth
2 but as successful as possible.

3 So, Representative Saylor, do you have any
4 opening comments?

5 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: One of the
6 things I think is important as we rewrite Pennsylvania's
7 Education Policy is the importance for us to understand
8 that our policies of the past have failed in many school
9 districts throughout the state. It's a small minority.

10 We have a great education system in Pennsylvania.
11 But the policy we write has to work for all students in
12 this state, those who are in violent schools, those
13 children who are in schools that are not performing.

14 So the new regulations and performance measures
15 that we're going to put in place have to work for charter
16 schools, religious and Catholic schools and Christian
17 schools and our public schools as well.

18 And it's important for all of our leaders in
19 education to come together to make sure that every child in
20 Pennsylvania has an opportunity in this new proposal as we
21 go forward with Every Student Succeeds Act that the Federal
22 Government has passed. We know No Child Left Behind has
23 failed. I think most people even recognized that before it
24 was out the door.

25 But today we have an opportunity to hear from

1 some great experts. But I do want to say that I think it's
2 important for all of us in the General Assembly, as well as
3 to the Governor and educators throughout the state, we've
4 got to start working together.

5 For far too long we have been working at
6 different ends in opposition to each other in trying to
7 solve these problems, as many of our children are lacking a
8 quality education in Pennsylvania in certain districts.
9 It's been going on for far too long.

10 And it is my hope that as we craft this in a team
11 of working together, that this legislation will serve every
12 child in Pennsylvania, not just those who happened to be in
13 privileged districts or live close to a politician who
14 happens to influence a certain school district or school
15 building.

16 So with that, I will turn it back to the
17 Chairman.

18 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Representative
19 Longietti.

20 HOUSE MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman.

22 First, I would just like to humbly ask for your
23 prayers for Chairman Roebuck in the passing of his wife. I
24 think he could use our support.

25 Second -- and I apologize. I can't stay long

1 today because I have a 9:30 meeting. But I did peruse the
2 testimony very quickly.

3 And I'm particularly intrigued by
4 Dr. Wertheimer's testimony. Think of yourself in crisis.
5 We've all been in crisis before. It's hard to even
6 function. And so I think part of when we look at
7 turnaround schools is remembering that a lot of times these
8 are kids in crisis and how do we reach them? There are
9 different things that we need to do to reach them.

10 So I look forward to the testimony and certainly
11 will read through all of the testimony.

12 Thank you for this hearing.

13 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Thank you.

14 With that, we'll ask our first panelists to come
15 to the front.

16 Thank you for being here. We're very pleased to
17 have Linda Lane. Ms. Lane is the Superintendent of the
18 Pittsburgh School District. And we also have Jason
19 Carrion, who is Principal of Cayuga Elementary School and a
20 former teacher in the School District of Philadelphia.

21 So thank you once again for being here. I just
22 ask that you ensure that the green light is on your
23 microphone before you testify.

24 You can proceed in the order you prefer.

25 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Good morning, everyone.

1 Thank you, Senator Smucker and all the members
2 and our elected officials that are here with us this
3 morning and everyone who is interested in education here in
4 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

5 I certainly appreciate this opportunity to share
6 some thoughts with you on this important topic, the plan
7 for the Commonwealth in regard to the passage of Every
8 Child Succeeds Act.

9 The question in districts we all have is, what
10 will this mean for Pennsylvania and what will it mean to
11 our District in particular? And the first thought I had
12 about this was to read the act itself. I was dissuaded
13 from that idea after I discovered how long it was.

14 And as a said, I'm a GLL, Government Language
15 Learner, so that precluded me from having that as an
16 effective strategy. So I waited for translation.

17 We now know that each state is going to have more
18 flexibility than under No Child Left Behind. We believe
19 that is a good thing. But that leads to the next question.
20 What will the Commonwealth do with this flexibility? What
21 will be held tight at the Pennsylvania Department of
22 Education and what decisions will be made by local
23 educators?

24 I have been asked to speak specifically about
25 Focus and Priority schools. And I do have to insert one

1 thing here. For those of you who picked up our written
2 testimony, we are going to provide you a second version.
3 In reading it this morning -- I had left Pittsburgh
4 yesterday -- I discovered this is not the one that we
5 intended. There are some changes. So we'll get you a
6 corrected version. I just wanted everybody to realize
7 that.

8 We have 16 Focus and Priority schools right now
9 in Pittsburgh. We have 5 Priority and 11 Focus. The first
10 thing I would ask -- and I heard that discussed already --
11 is to please examine those categories themselves.

12 One of the things I think we have to look at
13 carefully is what is the correlation between poverty and
14 low performance in Pennsylvania? Because if all we're
15 really doing is ranking our schools by wealth -- and I
16 don't mean wealth of the District. I mean wealth of a
17 student population, families -- then I don't know that
18 we've done a service to kids.

19 The question I would love to know the answer to,
20 what are the highest-poverty, highest-performing schools in
21 the state? And that way, taking time to write case studies
22 on those schools could be informative to all of us.

23 Because there are some people out here getting it done. We
24 in Pittsburgh have some schools where we've gotten it done.
25 But I don't know that anyone has actually assimilated or

1 accumulated what was different about that school.

2 So there are some things we do in our District to
3 help our schools that are struggling. One of the big
4 things we do is. Because we believe teachers are critical,
5 we have priority treatment by our Human Resources
6 Department for our neediest schools.

7 We work with our teachers union in order to get
8 the agreement so that they can hire consideration for
9 staffing. And I think you're all aware that teacher churn
10 in low-performing schools is a huge issue.

11 We waived a provision of a Collective Bargaining
12 Agreement. It used to be if I started as a teacher in any
13 school after August the 1st, my job was -- and I was put
14 out of that job in the summer, other teachers could apply
15 for it and I may or may not go back. And we know that
16 that, as I said, is a hallmark of low-performing schools
17 that have a lot of teacher churn.

18 The other thing we tried to do to the extent
19 possible -- and it isn't always possible -- is do a mutual
20 match. The teacher wants to be there, the principal want s
21 them to be there, and the administrative staff, then
22 providing additional funds to our schools that are
23 struggling the most.

24 In the end, teachers matter most. Struggling
25 students need teachers who love them, who believe in their

1 ability to be successful, and make it a mission to make it
2 happen for kids. Whatever we can do to support our
3 teachers in this effort is one of the most powerful things
4 you can do and we can do.

5 Act 82 was very important to this. But the
6 harder part we found out is, how do we really grow our
7 teacher practice? Just telling people they need to improve
8 does not get the job done. We know that. Most teachers
9 are doing what they know. So we need to build a
10 superstructure on Act 82 to help teachers grow.

11 Our District is unlike many of yours, both in
12 size and demographics. And so in order to actually be
13 supportive to staff in the Pittsburgh public schools,
14 technical support has to be differentiated. Individuals
15 that are sent to our District to help must not only be
16 steeped in instruction but also understand the nuances of
17 urban education and be literate regarding race and
18 institutional racism.

19 We have learned some hard lessons trying to turn
20 around our schools. Lesson No. 1 for me, money is
21 necessary, but not sufficient. There is no one and done.
22 Katie Haycock of the Ed Trust said that struggling students
23 need nutrition over their whole career, pre-K through
24 senior year, not just a vaccination and now they're better.

25 Teachers and leaders need time. When I consider

1 one of our struggling schools, which in year three of the
2 reform made amazing growth, the time it took to see that
3 growth was longer than I ever thought it would be. In year
4 two, when those results were flat, we were all pretty
5 discouraged.

6 I have learned and I told our principals, we are
7 winter, not summer, gardeners. Summer gardeners just plant
8 seeds and in a few days that first little shoot is coming
9 up above the ground. This is more like planting bulbs and
10 knowing that it will be a good long time before those first
11 shoots push through the ground. And remember, it's very
12 much different from going to Home Depot and buying an
13 already planted blooming planter to put out on the porch.
14 That's really instant gratification.

15 The other aspect of time is, in our experience,
16 new teachers and principals seldom get the desired results
17 in their first year or second year at a struggling school.
18 Reconstituted schools, let's be honest, many of our folks
19 in and Priority schools are organically partially
20 reconstituted every year because of the change in teachers
21 and principals. When that happens, it sets them back.
22 Stability is one of the biggest things they need.

23 The final aspect of the need for time is most
24 essential. A significant expansion of time available and
25 improved quality of professional learning is the only way

1 teachers and leaders are going to be able to improve their
2 practice in significant ways. They must be able to do that
3 to affect student outcomes. Evaluation without strong
4 coaching and practice can move things up a little bit but
5 not much.

6 Recent research undertaken in 2015 by The New
7 Teacher Project shows the massive amount spent on what we
8 call professional development across this country is in
9 large part a waste of teachers' time and taxpayers' money.

10 And this is a quote from that report: "In short,
11 we bombarded teachers with help, but most of it was not
12 helpful to teachers as professionals or to schools seeking
13 better instruction. We are not the first to say this.
14 There are other studies that support that as well."

15 But it doesn't have to be that way. One of the
16 things we need to consider is how we approach professional
17 learning. In our District right now, we're rewriting that
18 plan to try to make it more aligned with things that will
19 actually help our teachers.

20 I do believe that our students can help us here.
21 What would it look like if we asked kids about what really
22 helps you learn. And do you think a high school student
23 wouldn't pay more attention to that lesson if I said at the
24 beginning, you know, at the end of this lesson I'm going to
25 ask you a few questions about how well I taught this lesson

1 to you. What did I do that was helpful? What did I say
2 that was confusing? Not only would we get informative
3 feedback from our kids, but it would also engage them to a
4 greater extent.

5 And making them more self-reflective about their
6 learning is certainly a good thing. However we do it, the
7 heart of our work is teaching and the lever to improve it
8 is to double down on supporting teachers in ways that
9 improve teaching.

10 So for the Pennsylvania Department of Education
11 and district leaders, the question is, how good are we as
12 teachers of teachers? Our analysis on spending on
13 professional learning by the District Management Council
14 taught us two things. First, if we take all costs -- and
15 by that I mean salary, benefits, all of it -- and days that
16 we have teachers that we're paying an entire day for
17 teachers to be in professional learning and our principals
18 and others put all in a pot is \$42 million.

19 So the question is, what are the things we are
20 doing? It's not, should we reduce? It's how we make sure
21 that that is a good investment. There's some things in
22 there that really are doing a great job. And we've learned
23 that there's some things in there not as much.

24 And so focusing in on the things that really do
25 help, based on data, both quantitative and qualitative, is

1 incredibly important.

2 As I talked about the training that we do and the
3 training that Pennsylvania and the Department does, we
4 don't do the job we need to do and the Department doesn't
5 either at this point. So I fault myself. I mean, clearly,
6 I'm the Superintendent, right, working on, how can we do
7 that?

8 And I love what you said about doing it together,
9 because that is so incredible that we coordinate efforts,
10 because often things will come in and principals will not
11 see that as particularly valuable. But there's no feedback
12 cycle there. And so having a situation where we actually
13 develop this together and make it strong adult learning, I
14 think we can change things. I really believe that.

15 So another tough lesson we learned is execution
16 is everything. A good plan is great. But unless you
17 monitor implementation and execution, things don't happen
18 the way they're supposed to. All that has to be done. And
19 that's a lot of work. That's a lot of work.

20 No Child Left Behind tried punishment. Close the
21 school. Reconstitute the school. That hasn't gotten the
22 job done either. And we know that. So we also know -- and
23 I heard this mentioned earlier this morning -- we have some
24 children with some very challenging home situations.

25 There are some of our children -- and I'm sure

1 that when you hear speakers from other districts they will
2 say the same -- who are living in circumstances that I
3 don't think I could cope with. And they're getting there.
4 They're getting to school.

5 So there's one thing that I think that you
6 probably want me to reference. How does this apply to our
7 most recent partnership with Wilkinsburg High School
8 District? I want to just give you a little information on
9 some of the things we're doing because these are two
10 low-performing schools that will be working together next
11 year.

12 So highlight a few of the things. Westinghouse,
13 we have put the staffing agreement in place that I already
14 talked about. Second, we have the resources necessary to
15 support students and support students' emotional and social
16 needs. We are able to secure additional social workers and
17 counselors to work with students and families.

18 And we have assessed the Special Education needs
19 of all the children who already had an individual education
20 plan, which in this case for the Wilkinsburg students was
21 slightly over a third of the population.

22 We are also develop ing a coherent plan with the
23 Department to support the teachers' professional practice
24 that works on growth mindsets but also has an academic plan
25 that is based on what students know and how we move them to

1 proficiency.

2 Finally, we have an Oversight Committee that
3 consist of board members from both school districts, key
4 central office staff, and representatives from the State
5 Legislature.

6 When I talk to our principals and ask them what
7 they need from us, the No. 1 thing is more mental health
8 support for kids. And that references back to the
9 situations that some of our children are having to deal
10 with. So thinking about how can we do that.

11 The monitoring we do needs to be more formative
12 and less summative. And by that I mean, both the districts
13 monitor and the Department monitors. We can't just at the
14 end take the temperature of the thing and see how it's
15 going. We're going to have to monitor along and provide,
16 again, reciprocal feedback on how things are going and
17 discuss what changes might need to be made.

18 One of the things that No Child Left Behind laid
19 on us was a lot of paperwork. We know that. And so I'm
20 hoping that this will be an opportunity to reduce that.
21 And I know that it would help at the District level, and
22 I'm sure it would help at the Department level, because
23 they are the ones that have to read all that.

24 So to summarize, work a well-qualified staff who
25 are well versed in instruction of children of color,

1 English language learners, and children whose families are
2 in poverty, working directly with teachers in Focus and
3 Priority schools. This includes sufficient clock time for
4 learning for teachers, calendar time to show growth. We'll
5 have to wait for spring.

6 And please put the focus on growth rather than
7 achievement measures to the extent you can. For
8 low-performing schools, growth is the only way to get
9 there. Growing teachers' practice, what this really means
10 is helping our teachers grow their own practice. It's
11 essential for them to reach performance goals.

12 Thank you very much.

13 PRINCIPAL CARRION: Good morning and thank you
14 for having me here today.

15 Mr. Chairman, my name is Jason Carrion. I have
16 been an educator with the School District of Philadelphia
17 since September 2004. I am currently the principal of
18 Cayuga Elementary, a priority turnaround school which
19 serves over 450 students in Philadelphia. Cayuga
20 Elementary isn't just a school where I proudly serve as
21 principal. It's also the school I would walk by in the
22 same neighborhood where I grew up as a child.

23 I became an educator because of my passion to
24 promote life-long learning. Every day my dedicated staff
25 goes to work believing that we can, working together, make

1 huge differences in the children of Cayuga Elementary,
2 their families, and our neighborhood.

3 Public schooling in the Philadelphia School
4 District successfully contributed to my education and
5 ultimately to my ability to lead a school that is located
6 only blocks away from where I grew up. I am proud to say
7 that public education is working, even in some of the
8 poorest areas in Philadelphia.

9 Cayuga is a school where over 60 percent of
10 students are Hispanics; 27 percent are African-American.
11 In my two years as principal, I am proud of how we have
12 implemented and instituted new instructional programs that
13 let teachers teach and students learn to the best of their
14 ability.

15 We have successfully brought together groups of
16 teachers to analyze data and plan focused instruction that
17 responds to and meets the needs of all of our students in
18 the form of daily Professional Learning Communities, PLCs.
19 This is extremely important, the PLCs.

20 These PLCs have allowed us to provide
21 job-embedded professional development opportunities for our
22 teachers in realtime in response to areas of need for all
23 of our students.

24 Close to 20 percent of my students are ELL. And
25 15 percent of my students are enrolled in Special Education

1 programs. As principal, I work every day to make sure our
2 teachers are meeting students where their needs are and
3 ensuring that all of our students have educational safety
4 nets to help them make academic progress.

5 I and other public school officials are ready to
6 use our unique on-the-ground experience and expertise to
7 help you identify and shape key areas for change and
8 improvement in Pennsylvania classrooms.

9 The School District of Philadelphia is committed
10 to building a system of great schools that serves all
11 students close to where they live. This calls for lifting
12 the performance of all schools in the best way for each
13 school community.

14 The School District of Philadelphia has two
15 options for improving the chronically lowest-performing
16 schools. We have Renaissance Charters or in-District
17 turnaround. Unlike Renaissance Charters, turnaround
18 schools remain fully managed and operated by the School
19 District of Philadelphia, just like my school, Cayuga
20 Elementary.

21 Turnaround schools focus on what we know works.
22 The model is grounded in research and designed to improve
23 schools and build capacity so that schools can exit the
24 turnaround network and remain successful into the future.
25 The turnaround network will focus on schools that are the

1 lowest performing over multiple years.

2 Schools in the network will have great leaders
3 who are supported in their work, use data and analysis to
4 constantly improve teaching, support teachers and help them
5 improve their instruction, create a healthy and safe
6 learning environment, and engage the school community in
7 the turnaround process.

8 Research from the University of Chicago
9 Consortium on Chicago School Research found that schools
10 that succeed in changing at least three of the five
11 essential elements for school turnaround were 10 times more
12 likely to improve and 30 times less likely to stagnate.

13 There are currently 12 schools in the turnaround
14 network. And four schools will be added next year. But
15 our school will be removed from the turnaround status.
16 We're happy because of that. The total cost of the
17 turnaround network for the school year '16-'17 is \$23.7
18 million.

19 All investments across the turnaround network are
20 aligned to the essential elements and paid for through
21 redirecting current resources and new investments.

22 With regards to ESSA and how the bottom 5 percent
23 of schools are regarded, currently states must identify and
24 address low-performing schools and while the law provides
25 states flexibility to determine or to develop their own

1 systems of intervention and accountability, this Committee
2 would be wise to redefine the requirements of the
3 lowest-performing 5 percent of schools in our state
4 including:

5 The state needs to be more comprehensive in the
6 criteria when differentiating the bottom 5 percent and 10
7 percent. Should there be additional metrics other than
8 that performance, there needs to be more quantitative
9 support for school districts in this matter.

10 Perhaps a band strategy could be used for
11 accountability within the state, use poverty concentration,
12 ELL concentration, urban setting when determining bands
13 rather than size of districts. Accountability may mean
14 different things in each band, including standards and time
15 frame to show progress, but that is what will make it
16 meaningful.

17 I appreciate your time and am happy to answer any
18 questions from you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Joint
19 Committee.

20 Thank you.

21 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Okay.

22 I'm going to recognize Chairman Dinniman for any
23 comments and questions.

24 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: Yes.

25 First, Dr. Lane, thank you for your service in

1 Pittsburgh. I know you're preparing for elsewhere. You've
2 really done some amazing work in the city of Pittsburgh.
3 You and I have worked together on many issues. So I wanted
4 to make sure I thanked you for that.

5 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Thank you.

6 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: One of the
7 issues we worked on was teacher evaluation. And we've been
8 successful most of the time in getting exceptions from the
9 Department of Education.

10 Could you help the committee understand the
11 unique aspect of the teacher evaluation program in
12 Pittsburgh and why we required an exception from PDE, which
13 sometimes they're reluctant to give, but with a little
14 pressure we got it?

15 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: There are a couple of
16 differences that probably are most significant. The
17 principal observation piece is the same as it is for the
18 Commonwealth. One of the things that we have used rather
19 than using (inaudible) we had created our own evaluated
20 manager. And so that was something calculated. Mathematic
21 actually calculated that for us. And so that's one
22 important difference.

23 Another one that has been, let's say, an
24 interesting one, informative in some ways, is the use of
25 Tripod. And what is that?

1 That is a survey that students take about how
2 they perceive, not do I like my teacher, but, for example,
3 a question to a kindergartner might be, agree or disagree,
4 and there's a range, of course. We don't waste time in
5 this class. Kids in this class follow the rules. Those
6 kinds of things.

7 So not in the sense of whether you like the
8 teacher or not, but how is the class through a child's
9 eyes. And that gets back to what, you know, I was
10 referencing with asking kids more because they are pretty
11 thoughtful about things.

12 And I know there was some concern that kids
13 wouldn't take it seriously. But the analysis of their
14 answer sheets, they take it very seriously. And we have
15 anecdotal from kids, wow, they asked us what we thought.

16 So those are two important differences.

17 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: I appreciate
18 that. And I couldn't agree with you more about asking
19 children. One of the things in education is we never ask
20 our consumers, do we? Every other profession makes some
21 effort on that. I know as a professor what I began to
22 understand is that my students learned different than I
23 learned.

24 And I finally had to ask the students before me.
25 I took ten minutes of the instruction time and asked them,

1 well, how do you learn? How can I teach unless I
2 understand how someone learns and how different it is from
3 the way I grew up and the way I perceive that.

4 You mentioned that one of the problems with No
5 Child Left Behind has been the focus on punishing students,
6 punishing schools, you know, and the arbitrary scoring,
7 which are my words, in which a child could fail or not fail
8 by a half percent and us not looking at growth.

9 As we develop new types of testing, new types of
10 assessment, as opposed to what we now have with PSSA or
11 Keystones, what do you think should be in them that would
12 help schools that you've spoke of?

13 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: I do believe that effective
14 formative assessments would be really helpful. And by that
15 I mean frequent, low stress, you know, this is just
16 checking in. We're just checking in, just like getting on
17 the scale every day.

18 So let's just see how we're doing so that
19 teachers would have immediate feedback, because getting the
20 information months after the fact is not particularly -- as
21 a teacher, that's not particularly informative of what I
22 need to do differently.

23 So if there would be a way to have some things --
24 and I don't mean that kids are going to be grinding away
25 for, you know, an hour on one of these. But short, quick

1 just check-ins with kids to make sure that we have a sense
2 of where they are and what they understand and what they
3 don't understand.

4 And then also, as I said, I think support for
5 teachers on just plain formative assessment because there's
6 lots of things you can do that aren't even paper and
7 pencil. You know, you see teachers doing this all the
8 time. You know, write on your little WhiteBoard, you know,
9 immediate response and hold it up. And you can stand in
10 that room and see where kids are.

11 So that support is something we're going to work
12 more on, I know, in our District.

13 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: So can the
14 Keystone and -- the PSSAs and Keystones, sometimes the
15 returns don't come in until the next year.

16 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Yeah.

17 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: So there's
18 another teacher. So what you're saying in essence as we
19 evolve the system of assessment, there's two factors. One,
20 have some more immediate feedback to the teacher because
21 assessment is not meant to punish. It's meant for us to
22 understand where the student is at and how to bring them to
23 the next step.

24 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Yes.

25 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: And second,

1 rather than these high-stress days of testing, we're better
2 off on a continuing type of response from students. We
3 don't have to go on task actually. They're just seeing
4 where the student is at. Am I correct in that assumption?

5 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Exactly.

6 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: Well, I
7 appreciate your comments. I thank you for the excellent
8 work you've done. And your statement today, it's been very
9 helpful.

10 Though there's one last thing.

11 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Sure.

12 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: If we had to
13 do one thing or the Legislature had to do one thing or the
14 Department of Education had to do one thing to help you or
15 the schools in your area, what would it be?

16 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: I truly believe that for us
17 to together develop a plan that actually grows teacher
18 practice in Pennsylvania would be enormous.

19 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: So any type
20 -- so as we look at the question of teacher evaluation --

21 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Um-hmm.

22 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: -- it's not
23 meant to punish. It's not meant to be arbitrary, just as
24 we don't want testing for students to punish or be
25 arbitrary, but how we can use positive factors to encourage

1 our student growth and our teacher growth.

2 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: So as I said, build on Act
3 82 what strong teacher support models look like just like
4 we just heard about.

5 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: Right.

6 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: We talked about
7 professional learning communities. How many schools really
8 have those?

9 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: Right.

10 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Not a lot.

11 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: In fact, as a
12 concluding comment, let me say that we often compare and
13 look at countries such as Finland.

14 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Um-hmm.

15 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: And that's
16 exactly what Finland has done.

17 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Yeah.

18 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: And they put
19 the money up to do it. In other words, the teacher is
20 looked at as the professional. And the learning community
21 is an intrinsic part of what happens, the learning
22 community for the teachers and the students, and you create
23 a culture of learning.

24 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Um-hmm.

25 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: And that's

1 how you change things.

2 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Yeah. And that's what I
3 believe.

4 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: Thank you.

5 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: You're welcome.

6 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Very good.

9 Senator Smucker.

10 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: I'd just like
11 to build on that because I was about to make the same point
12 that Senator Dinniman just made. And that is we had a
13 forum for legislators, I think last year, where an
14 individual who looked at the school systems in other
15 countries found that one of the areas that they seem to do
16 better was to allow for more time for teacher planning and
17 working on teacher performance, I guess.

18 And then your comments, Ms. Lane, in regards to
19 our professional development. I think if I understood you
20 correctly, you believe much of it, or at least some of it,
21 is ineffective. But then we heard as well of the
22 professional learning communities where you seem to have
23 developed some system that better addresses that.

24 So I guess I'd like to hear a little bit more
25 about what is working, what isn't working, and whether we

1 would need to change legislation in order to provide
2 schools more flexibility to build a better system or
3 whether it can be done within our current structure.

4 I'd like to hear from both of you on that.

5 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: I do believe that it is
6 possible, first, so I think this is doable. I know what we
7 are doing right now is working with the people who actually
8 provide professional learning to teachers and to school
9 leaders to reshape the way they do it.

10 And I'll speak personally on how I've changed my
11 practice because of this.

12 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Okay.

13 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: It used to be I would go
14 into the school, walk around with the principal. We'd step
15 out in the hall and I'd say to them, you know, well, I
16 think I'm concerned about this or that was good and
17 basically tell them what I think.

18 I don't do that anymore. I step out in the
19 hallway with the principal and say, what did you see? And
20 then we begin to debrief that way as colleagues, not
21 superior to subordinate.

22 And I have had some of the more powerful
23 instructional moments with our principals this year since
24 I've changed my own practice than I've ever had. And it's
25 the same thing with principals and teachers when a

1 principal goes in. You know, talk to the teacher about
2 what did you observe? and hear them first. Because I do
3 believe the way people learn is to help them think.

4 And honestly, some of those principals came up
5 with better things than I had in my own head because I
6 didn't tell them what to do. But we, as teachers of
7 adults, often believe, get them in a room and tell them
8 what to do. And it just isn't that way. It's harder than
9 that. But it takes changing how you do it in order to make
10 that difference.

11 Professional learning communities do that because
12 that's what they do. There's not somebody in charge that
13 tells everybody else what they're supposed to be doing.
14 Teachers talk together and together they come up with
15 solutions. Well, you know, he does really well in your
16 class. So what are you doing that's different that I might
17 do?

18 You know, those kinds of conversations take
19 place.

20 PRINCIPAL CARRION: One of the first things I did
21 when I became principal, I met with teachers during the
22 summer and I'd ask, what were some of the things that they
23 wanted to see happening in the school. And the majority of
24 them talked about the lack of collaboration that they were
25 having in the past.

1 So I worked on a schedule where every day we do
2 have time for professional learning communities. I mean,
3 that has made a humongous impact on our environment in our
4 school. So teachers are able to sit down and collaborate
5 and look at data.

6 So, you know, we use the Development of Reading
7 Assessment, a DRA. We have the AIMS web diagnostic tools.
8 And teachers now are able to look at data every single day,
9 plan instruction, collaborate on what works, what doesn't
10 work.

11 We were fortunate that the District has partnered
12 with the Children's Literacy Initiative. And we have an
13 early literacy specialist in our building, which has made a
14 tremendous impact on our early literacy practices starting
15 with children in kindergarten.

16 And, you know, we went from students after the
17 first year of -- last year was my first year there --
18 having only about 30 percent of students reading on level.
19 We're currently close to maybe over 50 percent of our
20 students that are reaching the target level in reading.

21 That is just happening because we are getting the
22 chance to sit down and plan. It takes a while. It took a
23 while for the teachers to get ahold of what it is we're
24 going to plan about. We structured, you know, the time for
25 them. And now they run with it.

1 So the biggest component is that time for
2 teachers to meet, discuss, and have realtime professional
3 development, because, yes, in the past we would have
4 professional development once a month, once every two
5 months. But that's not enough. So this is realtime every
6 day. Teachers are meeting. Teachers are collaborating.

7 And that leads to better instructional practices.
8 That leads to student learning, learning better.
9 Achievement is on its way up. We're excited about that.

10 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: So how much
11 time each day do your teachers spend in professional
12 learning?

13 PRINCIPAL CARRION: So every day we have a
14 different professional learning community. And they are
15 spending 75 minutes a day in instructional time -- in
16 meeting time. Sorry. They spend 75 minutes a day.

17 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Each teacher
18 is spending 75 minutes per day?

19 PRINCIPAL CARRION: So we'll have kindergarten
20 one day, first grade. We're K-5. So every day we have a
21 band of teachers that meet for 75 minutes.

22 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Okay. So not
23 every teacher meets every day?

24 PRINCIPAL CARRION: Right.

25 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: So in a week,

1 how much time would a teacher spend?

2 PRINCIPAL CARRION: So they have their 75 minutes
3 of professional learning community time for their grade
4 band. And then the teachers have their own preparation
5 time where they also take their time. That's another 45
6 minutes.

7 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Did that
8 impact the number of teachers that -- did you have to hire
9 more teachers to cover that time?

10 PRINCIPAL CARRION: Yes. That's a good question.
11 That does impact. Because we need more specialists to be
12 able to cover classes.

13 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Right.

14 PRINCIPAL CARRION: So currently we're okay doing
15 that. But if there are any budget cuts, then we would have
16 an issue with that.

17 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Yeah. All
18 right.

19 Thank you.

20 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
21 Rapp.

22 REPRESENTATIVE RAPP: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 I found your testimony very interesting this
24 morning and also concerning. When you talk about the
25 teacher development, it seems like we've spent a lot of

1 money, the State has, on teacher development. And it
2 really has not been something where we've really gotten
3 what we've needed, like the bang for the buck, I guess.

4 You talked about testing, Ms. Lane, the frequent
5 low-stress testing. And we hear a lot about, you know,
6 going back to the basics. I went to school a long time
7 ago, elementary, especially.

8 Actually, you know, I grew up in an impoverished
9 family. I actually went to a one-room schoolhouse with a
10 coal stove in rural Pennsylvania where the teacher had to
11 come in and put coal in the stove before we started our
12 day. That was before teacher unions, obviously.

13 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Yes.

14 REPRESENTATIVE RAPP: But the fact is we learned.
15 And what you were saying was the frequent low-stress
16 testing -- and by the way, I think they did okay, you know,
17 academically because I had an excellent teacher who taught
18 three grades in one school setting.

19 But when I think about my school experience in
20 public school and even my children before No Child Left
21 Behind, it was the kind of evaluation of students and
22 teachers based on the constant quizzing, the chapter tests,
23 maybe the midyear final and then the final. Certainly we
24 didn't hinge graduation on one test, which I think is
25 absolutely appalling.

1 So what I'm hearing really from you -- please
2 correct me if I'm wrong. We've spent a lot of time here in
3 this committee talking about graduation rates, dropout
4 rates. And I am a firm believer that this testing is the
5 cause of some of the dropout rate that we are seeing in our
6 State because if students feel they can't achieve and pass
7 that test, they're smart enough to say, I'm just going to
8 drop out because I can't pass. I'm not going to get my
9 diploma because I can't pass the test.

10 Then I wanted you to address also when you talked
11 about our reading coaches provide a better return on
12 investment than our instructional teacher leaders. It was
13 because of the time they had to work with teachers that
14 made the difference.

15 And I'm assuming -- and again, please correct me
16 -- a reading coach is going to go in and actually spend
17 that time on the reading needs of a student. So in my
18 mind, what you're saying is those reading coaches are
19 addressing a specific need to specific students.

20 And if I'm hearing you correctly, that's one of
21 the reasons they're succeeding, because they're addressing
22 a very specific need.

23 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Well, I was trying to track
24 the things you brought up. So if I miss something, please
25 say so. I would ask one thing. I have a hearing

1 impairment. And when your mouth is covered, it's difficult
2 for me. So that if that hand could go down, it would help
3 me a lot. Thank you.

4 The 42 million. The 42 million is a significant
5 spin. There's no doubt about it. But there's some things
6 here that are doing a great job. And I'll give you an
7 example. We have a group called Promise-Readiness Corps.
8 And it's not in all of our high schools, but we did
9 increase Promise-Readiness Corps teachers in many of them
10 this year. Why? Because we had evidence it was working.

11 One of the pieces of evidence we have is an
12 increased graduation rate over five years. And so
13 Promise-Readiness Corps, teachers were working specifically
14 with each other in the morning before school to talk about
15 students and how they were doing and keep track of them.

16 So was that a great investment? Absolutely.
17 Absolutely. Because getting kids through high school, as
18 we all know, has to come before being college and career
19 ready.

20 But you talked about the instructional teacher
21 leaders and the reading coaches. Our reading coaches were
22 actually working more with the teacher, less with the
23 child. But when we look at the actual schedule of the
24 instructional teacher leaders, the variability and the time
25 they had to work with teachers, which is what they were

1 supposed to be doing part time and teaching part time, was
2 enormous.

3 And so again, it's an implementation issue that
4 if we're going to make that investment, it's important that
5 teachers be given the time for the purpose, which is to
6 actually work with their colleagues.

7 But again, it's all about digging into your data
8 in some really hard ways. And if it hadn't been that we
9 had supplemental funds from outside of the District to pay
10 for somebody to come in and figure all that out for us, we
11 wouldn't have been able to do that. But at the State
12 level, there may be some ways that those kinds of studies
13 could happen that could help inform us.

14 So as far as testing and the dropout rate, as I
15 said, our graduation rate has actually improved. I do
16 think that putting a test as a barrier to graduate from
17 high school is tough. I mean, I struggle with that. Why?
18 Not because I'm saying children shouldn't be proficient
19 when they graduate. You know, I think we all agree with
20 that.

21 REPRESENTATIVE RAPP: Um-hmm.

22 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: But I also know what the
23 result of that would be. And the natural result of that
24 will be more kids dropping out and especially children of
25 color. So until we have the back end fixed so that it's

1 less of an issue -- our job is getting ready to pass every
2 test, not just the Keystone. I want them to do well on the
3 ACT and the SAT and the LSAT and the MCAT and every other
4 test that you have to take throughout a career depending on
5 what you want to do.

6 So our job is to prepare them to be able to do
7 well on those. But I do believe that at this point when we
8 know what the natural result would be, it would be a tough
9 call for me to say, oh, yeah, stop them. Don't let them
10 graduate.

11 REPRESENTATIVE RAPP: Thank you.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 PRINCIPAL CARRION: I just wanted to say you
14 asked about the coaching. And one of the things in the
15 School District of Philadelphia, actually they began a
16 summer literacy institute for schools. And it's a
17 three-year program where all the schools will have
18 opportunities for teachers to go to an institute and then
19 receive the coaching.

20 That has been an enormous good opportunity for us
21 to have the literacy specialist in the building because the
22 individual is coaching teachers. So the individual goes in
23 the classrooms, sees teachers, and is able to sit down and
24 coach teachers on best practices.

25 And then this year we were fortunate. We were

1 going to hire a reading specialist whose job is to work
2 with those struggling students that we identified using our
3 RDAs, those students that are one or two years below grade
4 level. So we're targeting them.

5 And that has also been something that's been very
6 helpful. But it's all going back to helping teachers. You
7 know, we have someone that coaches teachers. And then we
8 have the support for teachers with the reading specialist
9 that helps out as well.

10 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I have several
11 questions.

12 One, I had a conversation in November with the
13 Superintendent of Orange County School District in
14 California. I think there's about 187,000 students in her
15 District. She actually does superintendent visits with
16 students, particularly minority poverty students, to
17 encourage them to take AP courses. And she lets them know
18 that if they have a problem once they take the AP course,
19 because she's encouraged them to do that, that they come to
20 her for assistance.

21 I guess the question for both of you is,
22 particularly because we know in the minority community that
23 that is a challenge of AP courses and there's a real need
24 to do better in that area, what can we do in Pennsylvania
25 to encourage, to make sure that students in minority and

1 poverty areas are taking these kind of courses? And what
2 assistance can Pennsylvania, through our new education
3 policies, develop that assists students?

4 I mean, Dr. Lane, you had talked about mental
5 health, which I want to talk about a little bit more, too,
6 but could both of you talk about that a little bit?

7 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: On the AP courses issue,
8 I'd love to send you all something on our program to
9 increase AP enrollment of all kids, especially children of
10 color. We have dramatically increased not only the number
11 of children of color through their taking AP courses but
12 also the number of children that are passing their AP so
13 that they get a passing score and get a college credit.

14 One of the big pieces that has helped that, we
15 have a summer program that is kind of pre-AP. So they go
16 on a campus somewhere. They've been at Carnegie-Mellon. I
17 think they have been to the University of Pittsburgh as
18 well to participate. This is how an AP class works. And
19 they actually sit with questions off that test and talk
20 about responses and analyze what made for a good response,
21 who really cited evidence in their response.

22 So if you teach them, they can learn, right? So
23 the fact of the matter is that has been just amazing. You
24 know, having gone over there and visited these students
25 every summer has been, as I said, just amazing.

1 We've also had a grant from National Math and
2 Science Foundation and (inaudible) high school was actually
3 honored for the largest increase in AP last year. So there
4 are ways to do it.

5 But again, like everything, it takes funding to
6 do it. But if you set that as a goal, there are -- you
7 know, we have examples of programs that are working. I'll
8 send you more on that. Because if there's anyone, you
9 know, across the Commonwealth who would be interested in
10 how that works, we'd be happy to share.

11 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I know you have
12 elementary. Any comments on that?

13 PRINCIPAL CARRION: I was just going to say we'll
14 ask the Superintendent's office to send you some
15 information on that.

16 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Okay.

17 Another question I have is, one of the things
18 I've taken notice to is -- you know, I'm a big sports fan.
19 But I also have noticed that as we have gone through
20 things, that we have cut the arts in our schools. I've got
21 to be honest, in my home school district of Red Lion, we've
22 seen the arts teaching special needs students as well as
23 other students how to accomplish math, which was amazing to
24 me.

25 Mrs. Corbett toured it with me. I've seen a

1 young child in Allentown who was going to commit suicide,
2 attempted suicide, and what saved him was they got him
3 involved in the music program. And he is like a newborn
4 child.

5 The arts to me is like baseball and football and
6 lacrosse and soccer for a lot of the kids that don't have
7 the talent to have supports. They have an option. And
8 it's what keeps them in schools.

9 I guess my question to you is, why are we not
10 equating sports and arts in the same way? To me, that is
11 something that is so critical in our schools. If we're
12 serving -- I know we need to have sports because that helps
13 us keep a lot of kids there that would drop out otherwise.
14 But the same thing is true with our arts.

15 And it seems like school districts across
16 Pennsylvania don't understand the importance of having a
17 balance for all the students to make sure that they're
18 achieving. And I know there's the money issues. But if
19 there's a money issue, I don't see the sports program being
20 cut. Let me make that comment.

21 Go ahead.

22 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Thank you.

23 I love this particular topic because I know
24 there's a myriad out there like in Pittsburgh. Just during
25 the spring we had CAPA High School get ten Kelly Awards for

1 high school musical. We had two more Kelly Awards for
2 another high school and a young lady who is now a
3 three-time winner and is headed to New York for the
4 national competition.

5 We had one of the Pittsburgh elementary schools
6 get the award for Arts Integration. And that's the Charles
7 Gray Award. We had our annual art show in downtown
8 Pittsburgh where kids from all over the District brought in
9 their pieces.

10 One of the big changes we made three years ago,
11 we had given out money to the schools, use it the way you
12 want to. And what had happened we got this huge
13 variability in how much arts kids got. Some kids had a
14 full-time art teacher because the principal decided we're
15 going to have a full-time art teacher. And then other kids
16 didn't have any.

17 So what we did is pulled all those positions back
18 in centrally and allocated a backout so that all kids would
19 not need to get as much arts as we would like, but
20 everybody is getting some. Everybody is getting some.

21 The other thing just for next year -- because as
22 everyone is aware, we're in a better fiscal position than
23 we had been. We had reduced K-8 instrumental music three
24 years ago, I believe it was. It's coming back. It's
25 coming back.

1 So starting this fall -- and, you know, of all
2 the things that we managed to get done this year, this one
3 is one I'm so excited about -- kids are going to -- we're
4 going to have instrumental music in our K-8 schools.

5 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Any comment at
6 all?

7 PRINCIPAL CARRION: Well, yeah.

8 I could say, you know, in Philadelphia we do have
9 some great schools that are performing arts schools. There
10 is a big push. I think when it comes down to the
11 elementary schools, it comes down to the fact that we have
12 the money to be able to, you know, have a music teacher or
13 a classroom teacher or a reading specialist.

14 Sometimes we have to weigh our options as
15 principals. And, you know, we are given the opportunity to
16 pick. We would love to have them all, but sometimes we
17 just can't have them all.

18 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Very good.

19 And I understand that in the elementary schools
20 sometimes. But, you know, the high school level, the
21 middle school level, I think it's so important that we have
22 a balanced approach, just as we did with women's sports,
23 making sure with the Federal rules that everything is
24 balanced. I think we need to make sure that all students
25 have the opportunity to utilize different forms of, you

1 know, achievement.

2 The other thing is, you know, the three of us sit
3 on the Board of Education. And I've been advocating that
4 the PSSA tests need to be cut to 4 hours instead of 12
5 hours. What I'd like to know from you is, as I advocate,
6 whether I'm right or wrong, first of all, from your
7 perspective and, No. 2, is when should we give those tests?
8 And how can we make sure that those tests then are used to
9 benefit the students and not just help testing companies
10 make more profits?

11 I have no problem with testing. But what I have
12 a problem with is if we're only testing and we're not using
13 those results to help our children. How can we do better
14 at that as we rewrite the rules here in Pennsylvania?

15 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: I totally agree cutting the
16 time would be a significant benefit.

17 I don't know that people realize fully what a
18 stress-out period that is for our schools and our kids and
19 the teachers and everyone. And because the tests now are
20 more difficult, frankly, we gave -- you know, obviously not
21 the exact test questions; those are confidential -- some
22 examples to our Board about how much more difficult this is
23 than it used to be when you can eliminate A, you can
24 eliminate B, you can kind of narrow it down kind of a
25 thing.

1 It takes a lot of just plain persistence. And
2 that's kind of what we learned last year with our youngest
3 kids. They were just like -- they gave up. It was just
4 too hard. It took so much brain power and emotional energy
5 to keep persevering through that thing.

6 So my message to our schools this year was -- and
7 every year frankly -- please don't stress out here. You
8 know, we've worked hard all year. Just tell the kids, do
9 your best. That's it. That's all we're asking from you.
10 And don't give up. Do your best. Don't give up.

11 Not, oh, my gosh, this is a PSSA. We don't want
12 that. As I said, it should be high stress for me. It is
13 high stakes. I know that. But it shouldn't be high stakes
14 for them. You know, it's not high stakes for them. It
15 shouldn't be. And we shouldn't transfer our concern to
16 them. We need to protect them from that. I truly believe
17 that. I don't think it's going to enhance their
18 performance anyway.

19 So I think the idea of reducing that down. Now
20 how to do that and not enrich testing companies and seeing
21 that play out across the country has been very interesting
22 with all the difficulty with these two big companies that
23 got these pretty hefty contracts and all kinds of issues
24 have arisen with both of them, as far as I know.

25 So thinking about that, one of the things that I

1 know would be helpful, if we could get to something that
2 had some feedback pretty immediately, to take the test in
3 the spring and, you know, we'll probably see some
4 preliminary data here in not too much longer. But school
5 will be out probably. And then by the time we have to go
6 back and clean up data, you know, because we got kids at
7 the wrong place and all that kind of thing, and get the
8 attributions right and then by the time we report it to our
9 Board, it's generally September.

10 Now some of the teachers that gave those tests
11 aren't even here anymore. Some of the teachers are in a
12 different school. Some of the principals are not there.
13 Some are in a different school. And so it loses its
14 potency, frankly, in terms of being a feedback instrument
15 for people just because of the lag time.

16 So that's why I'm saying, as you say, shorten it.
17 That would help to be able to turn it around. Because when
18 schools are writing their school plan or trying to revise
19 it and don't have that yet, it's -- you know, as I said,
20 it's difficult. And to write a school plan for the current
21 school year after the school year starts, I mean, no, we
22 can't do it that way.

23 PRINCIPAL CARRION: The PSSA time is really
24 stressful for teachers and students. And as the Doctor was
25 speaking, I was thinking of when I was a student probably

1 in 4th or 5th Grade, I used to take the California
2 Achievement Test. And I thought that was pretty exciting.
3 I was happy with that.

4 But I see students today with the PSSAs and
5 they're like, oh, again, another day. It is a very long
6 and stressful test. And I think that the issue is, yes,
7 you don't have that immediate feedback. So, you know,
8 students take the test in April and we don't get the
9 feedback and students might go to another school. I mean,
10 again, teachers aren't there. Maybe some principals aren't
11 there.

12 The School District of Philadelphia has benchmark
13 assessments that we give three times a year. And that
14 gives us immediate feedback and that really helps. You
15 know, a child takes a test today and tomorrow the teacher
16 is analyzing the data.

17 I'm not sure what can be done with the PSSAs.
18 But it would be more helpful if we had immediate feedback
19 or feedback faster than what we have. That way the
20 assessment should be informing instruction. Unfortunately,
21 we can't do anything when we're getting it four or five
22 months later.

23 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Just a yes or no
24 to this. If we did the test, should we keep it in April or
25 move it to May? And when you get back the information from

1 those test results for the students, the individual
2 students, how long does it take you? Do you need the
3 results back by July or August to be able to make sure that
4 that student, if he has a weakness in English or Math, is
5 getting that attention in the new school year?

6 Does that sound okay? I mean, giving the test in
7 April and having the results by July 30th? I mean, I'm
8 just trying to get a sense of how -- you both are from
9 different school districts.

10 PRINCIPAL CARRION: Right.

11 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I realize you're
12 not a superintendent, you're a principal. But I think the
13 problem with testing is we're not helping students with the
14 testing.

15 PRINCIPAL CARRION: Um-hmm.

16 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: You know, you've
17 got eight-year-old kids taking a 12-hour test.

18 PRINCIPAL CARRION: Right.

19 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: And to me, I
20 want to go off to college. I take the SATs and I do it in
21 four hours. It makes no sense to me.

22 So, you know, again, maybe I'm completely wrong
23 in this. But I'm just trying to figure out if we're going
24 to rewrite our education policy in Pennsylvania with this
25 new Federal law, we want to get it right. It will probably

1 be a long time before things change again.

2 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: I apologize for drifting
3 off. My daughter-in-law was in having a C-section this
4 morning. I just got a picture of the baby on that so I
5 apologize for that.

6 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: No problem.

7 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: The thing that I think
8 would be helpful is if we could have it before the children
9 leave the school. And I know how hard that would be.

10 I think the only way to get there is to have it
11 -- to the extent possible, that it's taken online because
12 then the scoring would be a little faster.

13 But the problem I think you have is as long as we
14 have sections of the test where teachers or students are
15 going to be writing, you know, a human being is going to
16 have to do that. And that's a lot of work. That's a lot
17 of work.

18 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Sure.

19 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: So thinking about how we
20 might be able to maybe -- and this might be -- even if we
21 could just have the response questions that could have been
22 done online done first and then the others, I don't know if
23 that might be a way to get there.

24 But I just wonder if there are some other ways
25 that we would be able to -- other states or others that

1 have figured this one out. I don't think there are because
2 frankly I think we would have heard about it. But perhaps
3 we could be the ones to do that.

4 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Excellent.

5 PRINCIPAL CARRION: That would be great if we
6 could get the results before they go on summer break. You
7 know, that would help for students that we refer to summer
8 programs for intervention and enrichment. And even if we
9 had it before the school year started so we can know how to
10 instruct students when the school year starts.

11 Again, we're receiving the scores and we already
12 have students in classrooms and set up with certain
13 teachers and certain things that are going on and then we
14 get the results. It's kind of -- you know, we're doing it
15 backwards.

16 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: My last
17 question. I apologize for a lot of questions here but you
18 guys are perfect to ask questions to on some of this stuff.
19 You both come from two large school districts.

20 The last question is basically -- again, it has
21 to do with some of the schools I visited. I visited a
22 school in Allentown. The Executive Officer is Jennifer
23 Mann, former officer of the Democratic Caucus here in the
24 House.

25 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Um-hmm.

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HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Outstanding school.

SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Um-hmm.

HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: And I found it interesting while I was there, the day I was there, that a young student texted the principal he wouldn't be in to school. And I thought that was amazing that an administrator had given the students his phone number, cell phone number, that they could text in case of danger.

SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Um-hmm.

HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: The child in this case, the boyfriend of his mom was coming to the house to attack or kill her. The police had locked him down and was moving. The principal offered to go get him.

But what I found was amazing was not just the principal's willingness to go pick the child up and bring him to school to protect him but the fact that the child had an opportunity in a stressful mental health issue, which you talked about earlier. And I think that's the question for a lot of things.

I'm a real believer that it's about management. Having been a small businessperson, to me it's what you do, Ms. Lane and Jason, what you do in that teachers can be at fault for any number of things. I don't know that that's always the problem.

1 But I also see that we're not really doing some
2 of the things we need in management to make sure our
3 schools are working. Because I see areas of poverty where
4 schools -- I visited the Kensington Academy, a public
5 school in Philly. Outstanding. I actually started to
6 believe in cloning human beings when meeting Mr. Williams,
7 the principal there, who has done an outstanding job.

8 I guess my concern is that I hear what you're
9 saying in Philadelphia about your school next year will not
10 be in this turnaround program and there will be four more
11 coming on, I believe. But my real concern is there are a
12 lot of students who won't be in that turnaround program who
13 need those opportunities now.

14 And I'm concerned in all the school districts
15 that are failing right now, how do we get better and
16 quicker? Why should a generation of students in certain
17 districts in Philadelphia or any other school district -- I
18 don't know about Pittsburgh. But in Philadelphia you have
19 to wait five years, ten years, until their school is turned
20 around when they've already moved on to another school.

21 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Um-hmm.

22 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: That is my
23 concern that we're not addressing. We're saying, well,
24 we're going to save this group of kids here. But we're
25 going to let these groups of kids fail and go to prison or

1 get involved in drugs or whatever it may be.

2 I don't see us doing enough to change things
3 today for all students. We're only doing it for those who
4 happen to live in the right neighborhoods or with the right
5 politicians or we're picking and choosing.

6 And I don't think that's right for us to allow
7 students to not all have the same opportunities, the same
8 computers, the same textbooks, and the same opportunities
9 to succeed.

10 And you're a principal. You're not the
11 Superintendent of Philadelphia. But that is my concern. I
12 think what I know of your school district, it's
13 outstanding. You've done a fantastic job. I want to
14 compliment you on it. And Mr. Williams has done the same
15 thing in his school district.

16 But I do have a concern -- and, Ms. Lane, you're
17 welcome to comment. I'm not as familiar with Pittsburgh
18 because I have not visited Pittsburgh yet. I have visited
19 many schools in Philly.

20 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Um-hmm.

21 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: My concern is
22 we're missing this opportunity for a lot of those children
23 in poverty who have to wait until some politician comes
24 around and says, oh, well, we're going to fix your school.
25 There are far too many schools.

1 I'll ask both you or -- Ms. Lane, maybe you're
2 the best because I don't know.

3 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Yeah.

4 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: As a
5 superintendent, why are we picking and choosing schools and
6 letting other schools -- if we can't do it in the public
7 schools, there are charter schools who can pick up that
8 weight or Catholic or Christian schools or any number of
9 other schools who can pick up that weight to help those
10 kids now.

11 Why are we not? Why are we fighting and saying,
12 well, you know what, we'll get to them at some point. Why
13 are we not giving parents and those children an opportunity
14 to succeed now rather than sitting and saying, well, this
15 neighborhood is getting a better school, a turnaround
16 school, or whatever?

17 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: First, back to your first
18 comment about the importance of management. I totally
19 agree. And if any of my remarks were construed to say,
20 this is all just teaching, absolutely not. The role of the
21 leader in the school is incredibly important. The role of
22 the District office is how well do we support that school.
23 We have a job here, too. It's on all of us.

24 So I certainly believe that in my role, you know,
25 it's on me. So that is really important.

1 But back to the issue of same. There is a
2 difference between equal and equity. And equal means we
3 all get the same stuff. Equity means we get what we need.
4 And we have some children whose needs are different than
5 other children.

6 And in districts like ours, we see that pretty
7 dramatically. And this is not a Pittsburgh story. This is
8 my previous school district. But I was in a school that
9 had a lot of low-income children and a lot of high-income
10 children. And I had kids in my class, some of whom would
11 come back with tags on their little jackets from winter
12 break from Vail, Colorado. And I had other kids that
13 didn't have a jacket.

14 And so to say everybody is going to get a jacket,
15 you wouldn't do that, right? Yeah. Because if I'm going
16 to Vail, clearly I can get my own jacket.

17 So thinking about how can we help reach the needs
18 of the children we have. Our District and our Board has
19 approved a number of charter schools. And the variability
20 is there in our charters as well. We have some stellar
21 charter schools in our District. And we also have some
22 charters outside of our District that children in
23 Pittsburgh attend that are good as well.

24 But they have variability, too. You know, some
25 are getting it done and others aren't. We commend the ones

1 that are getting it done and like to learn from them. And
2 we try to help the ones who are struggling.

3 So thinking about -- and I'll just go here. I
4 think it is important that at some point we remove some of
5 the angst between charter and public schools. Because
6 originally, as I understand it -- and I wasn't in
7 Pennsylvania when the law passed -- the goal was to have
8 the charter serve as models that tried out some things.
9 Let's see what works and learn.

10 But because of the way we're set up
11 competitively, it makes it hard to share. And I've done
12 some outreach, you know, to some of our charter schools.
13 Frankly, I had some pretty good responses from some of our
14 charter school principals.

15 But the politics of the situation have been very
16 difficult, very difficult. And if there would be a way to
17 remove that natural, you know,
18 you're-taking-money-away-from-us kind of point of view,
19 that could really help us work together better and on
20 behalf of kids.

21 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you.

22 SENATE MINORITY CHAIRMAN DINNIMAN: The magnitude
23 of the arts, in which you were very articulate about, is
24 also an essential in this new economy in the sense that, as
25 you know, today the way you make money is to identify and

1 solve problems through knowledge.

2 The Chinese, who have insisted on this continuous
3 testing, are now rejecting that because they said --
4 instead they want the American broad curriculum. They said
5 we created technocrats, not people who had the creative
6 ability to identify and solve problems.

7 So you're so right, Chairman Saylor, about giving
8 children choices. But it also fits into the whole economy
9 today.

10 And the second thing for us to realize -- because
11 I just finished doing this work. This year while students
12 don't have coats in Philadelphia, we knew students didn't
13 have the right textbooks at Overbrook High School for the
14 biology test and they haven't had a lab open in five years
15 and didn't even have a certified teacher in biology. The
16 Commonwealth this last 12 months has spent \$228 million in
17 testing contracts while our schools are sitting there
18 suffering without instruction.

19 So, again, to assert what you have been saying
20 about testing and what it's costing this Commonwealth and
21 where the money could be going to students for instruction
22 so they would do better on any type of test we would have
23 in the future.

24 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: May I add one thing about

1 arts that I didn't mention? And that's Science,
2 Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics, STEAM. We
3 opened three STEAM schools this year in Pittsburgh. One is
4 a middle school; two are elementary schools.

5 We learned about STEAM from -- we have a Remake
6 Learning Council in Pittsburgh. But we also had some
7 districts around us that were just doing some fabulous
8 things. Elizabeth Forward was one and some others have
9 been just extremely generous with us with time, ideas, this
10 is how we're doing this.

11 And, you know, in my tenure in the District, this
12 is the first time we've actually had those kind of
13 linkages. And I think that's a thing that the State can do
14 for us, tie us together.

15 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Representative
16 Saylor hit on exactly the question that I was thinking in
17 my head and that is, you know, we're talking about
18 turnaround schools. And really what we're talking about in
19 turnaround schools is ensuring that every child is prepared
20 for college, career, military, whatever they decide to do.
21 And we know schools where that just isn't the case and
22 hasn't been the case for many years.

23 At the same time we also know -- and a lot of
24 those schools, by the way, are in the districts that you
25 represent. On the other hand, we also know that there are

1 school buildings and schools within your districts that are
2 performing exceptionally well where the buildings have been
3 turned around and students do have that opportunity.

4 Sounds like, Mr. Carrion, your school is one of
5 those.

6 But to Stan's point, you know, what is it that is
7 preventing us from doing that in replicating that model in
8 other schools? We still have schools where we're not
9 seeing that occur.

10 And as we're looking at responding to ESSA, we're
11 looking at rewriting how we talk about turnaround schools
12 and the turnaround school program that we have, what would
13 you say it is that we ought to be thinking about? What are
14 the biggest barriers that you see to implementing the kind
15 of model that we're seeing work successfully in some areas,
16 whether it is a charter school or whether it is the
17 District schools? It can be either.

18 But what do we as legislators need to be thinking
19 about in terms of the top things that we ought to be
20 implementing or including as a part of a rewrite to assist,
21 to ensure that we see that happen across the board?

22 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Our enemy in our District
23 is variability.

24 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Is what?

25 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Variability.

1 Schools that are here, schools that are here.
2 And so the average, you know, you're kind of in the middle.
3 But the average does not describe what's really going on.
4 You know, we have some very high-performing schools.

5 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Right.

6 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: I was at one just
7 yesterday. I mean, they've got it going on. And then we
8 have some that are struggling.

9 I think one thing that I would suggest -- you
10 asked what to think about. I don't think it's going to be
11 possible to go to a school like you just heard about this
12 morning and say, okay, this is what they did. Let's put
13 that on this school over here.

14 It's a little more complicated. Every school,
15 like every city, every district, every neighborhood, has
16 their own culture and their own context. And so thinking
17 about both, you know, what are some things -- going back to
18 those highest-performing, high-poverty schools in the
19 Commonwealth, what are some things, if we got all those
20 principals and teachers together to just pick their brains
21 about what are some of the things they believe really
22 contributed to their success, and then also address the
23 school over here that is struggling and really analyze what
24 they are doing, what they are not doing, what you see, all
25 of that, and then bring that together, rather than just

1 say, well, this works, so you go do it.

2 I haven't seen anything yet that works all the
3 time every place. And it would be great if it did.

4 Because then we could write a little recipe book and this
5 would be easy.

6 But, you know, certainly so many things play into
7 it. And, you know, we've got some schools where, you know,
8 there's a lot of poverty in an area or a neighborhood and
9 the parents are highly engaged and, you know, we can work
10 with them. And then we have some others where principals
11 might be struggling to work with some of the parents.

12 So thinking about that -- one gives a patient a
13 thorough physical before he decides what medicine to give
14 them, because the fact that it helped somebody get well
15 doesn't mean it helps everybody get well.

16 PRINCIPAL CARRION: That's a big question.

17 You know, in speaking with some of my colleagues,
18 as principals, I think that a lot of the things we usually
19 talk about is things that are really, you know, more
20 teacher development preparation to be in turnaround
21 situations, turnaround schools.

22 There are great teachers, but sometimes they --
23 you know, you're not the right fit for every school you're
24 at. So I think that teacher preparation and some of the
25 new teachers coming, I think there's some universities that

1 are doing a great job preparing teachers to come into the
2 field.

3 And I think that our district has really stepped
4 it up into preparing teachers that are currently in the
5 district. That's a big component.

6 So I think that, yes, every school is unique.
7 Every school is different. But I think that one of the
8 things that really needs to be looked at is how the
9 teachers are being developed and making sure that every
10 district has a plan to professionally continue to develop
11 teachers because it's not a one-shot deal. It has to be
12 continuously occurring because of so many variables every
13 day.

14 Also principal preparation as well. You know,
15 principals need to be prepared when you go into a
16 situation. Every school is different. You know, I just
17 went through some of the program courses, Pell programs,
18 that principals have to take.

19 It was refreshing to go and see principals from
20 all the areas. And I just finished a coaching institute,
21 which was great. And as a principal, think that you're a
22 coach more than an evaluator. So I think that's something
23 that also principals need to have.

24 And I think emphasizing that on principals and
25 teachers, I think that's one way to get started.

1 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Building on that point, I
2 think it's also going to be important to remember that for
3 the first time, I believe the teacher shortage is real,
4 especially in Science. We have had a heck of a time
5 filling Science positions this year. We lost Science
6 teachers in the middle of the year. The teacher shortage
7 is real. So thinking about the work that we're discussing
8 this morning and some of that, some thought and attention
9 has to be devoted to that.

10 I was in Washington, D.C., I think maybe a couple
11 of weeks ago. And I think it was the Deputy Secretary of
12 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was giving a report on --
13 because the session was around teachers of color. And the
14 problem, part of the problem, is the pool itself is
15 smaller. And so the teachers-of-color issue is more
16 intense, of course, but the whole pool is smaller.

17 And so as we talk about how important it is to
18 have teachers that are well prepared and those kinds of
19 things, I think we have to think about -- I agree with the
20 whole how do we prepare? How do we make teaching an
21 attractive profession for people? We're beginning to learn
22 that I think some of our younger staff members' traditions
23 have changed a little bit in terms of if I'm going to do
24 this for 35 years.

25 That's how when I started you did it. You know,

1 you just kept going.

2 But I know some of the people -- not in my
3 generation -- that we've been working with, you know,
4 they're going to go do something else. That changes what
5 we've depended on, for people to stay.

6 So the work around working with higher ed,
7 teacher practice, is very important.

8 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Thank you.

9 I appreciate both of you being here. Thank you
10 so much. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

11 SUPERINTENDENT LANE: Thank you.

12 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: And with that,
13 we'll ask the next panel to come to the front.

14 Before we start with this panel, I do want to
15 also mention that we have received some written testimony
16 as well from Pamela Gordon, who is the Principal at Francis
17 McClure Intermediate School in McKeesport Area School
18 District. We'll share that with committee members and with
19 others as well.

20 So thank you to the panel for being here. If you
21 just want to -- we're running a little behind -- dive right
22 into it in the order you'd like. Just introduce yourself
23 at the beginning of your testimony.

24 Thank you .

25 DR. WERTHEIMER: Good morning.

1 Thank you very much for allowing me to speak here
2 this morning.

3 My name is Richard Wertheimer. I'm a retired
4 educator from Pittsburgh, 35 years. I spent 25 of those
5 years working in the Pittsburgh public schools as a Math
6 teacher, high school Math supervisor, coordinator of
7 Instructional Technology.

8 I was in the Union. I was in the Administrator's
9 Association. And then for my last ten years, I was the
10 Cofounder and CEO and principal of City Charter High School
11 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. So I've seen public education
12 from a variety of viewpoints.

13 One thing is for sure. I've lived in Wilkinsburg
14 for 35 years. I've been working with impoverished
15 communities and children for 35 years. So I'm guessing
16 that's why you invited me here today.

17 I have four things I want to talk about, four
18 truths that I've learned in 35 years in education that
19 pertain specifically to the 5 percent of schools that are
20 the discussion today and what ESSA is all about.

21 So the first thing -- let me start by saying the
22 first thing I want to mention -- and it's been alluded to
23 this morning -- is that the bottom 5 percent of
24 Pennsylvania schools work with students that are devastated
25 by life's circumstances.

1 So what do I mean by devastated? Students who
2 attend the lowest-achieving schools are suffering from
3 poverty; family disintegration; mental, physical, and
4 emotional health deficits; poor nutrition; lack of hope;
5 and lack of successful role models.

6 These students are often living in conditions
7 that one might compare to a war zone: Daily gunfire,
8 violence, and crime. Many are suffering from depression,
9 anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. Students at
10 the lowest-achieving schools feel abandoned.

11 Sometimes in our discussions of education about
12 the 5 percent, we drift into the middle. And I'm going to
13 talk about the 5 percent today because that's who I've
14 worked with.

15 Quick informal data study that we did at City
16 High early on when the school was founded in 2002, we
17 realized that we were dealing with the students who had
18 difficult, difficult, traumatic lives. So I did a quick
19 survey, looked in our student membership, and found the
20 following:

21 75 percent of our students did not have a father
22 in their lives at home.

23 25 percent of our students did not live with
24 their mother or their father. They were living with a
25 relative, most often a grandmother.

1 4 percent of our students -- and this was after
2 the 2008 economic downturn. 4 percent of our students were
3 homeless. That meant that out of a population of 600
4 students, somewhere between 20 and 30 students were
5 homeless at any given point in time, really homeless,
6 living in the backs of cars, living in centers, living in
7 their buddies' basements.

8 Two-thirds were on free and reduced lunch and 14
9 percent had special needs.

10 We have a big mental health approach at our
11 school. We have two full-time social workers, a full-time
12 nurse, four administrators, two of whom have counseling
13 degrees in drug and alcohol.

14 When we took a look at how many kids were
15 availing themselves of our social work services, meaning
16 drop in anytime, get help, we found that over 70 -- close
17 to 70 percent of our students were seeing the social
18 workers more than once during the year, 70 percent.

19 We found that many of them saw them once a week.
20 And a small group of kids, I would say 10 to 20 kids, were
21 seeing them daily, checking in with the social worker
22 daily.

23 We thought naively that they were talking to the
24 social workers about what I would call the usual adolescent
25 issues such as bullying, peer pressure, struggling with

1 parents, managing a sibling, or depression. But I'm afraid
2 to say that was not the case. Most of the social workers'
3 time is spent helping students deal with sexual abuse in
4 the home, physical abuse, self-abuse, death of a sibling or
5 relative, drug addiction, mental illness, personality
6 disorders, and homelessness.

7 I guess the picture I'm painting, too, is that
8 this is an extremely sad story. And it is a population
9 that is devastated. I've given you written testimony where
10 I have a lot of things that fill this in.

11 So the question is, what are the assumptions that
12 we should make when designing a school that's going to deal
13 with these children? What should that school look like?
14 Well, here's some assumptions that you should consider.

15 Students that are in deep poverty will not
16 respond to adults unless they trust them, respect them, and
17 are treated in a caring manner by them. They don't walk
18 into school assuming that the adult is going to take care
19 of them.

20 Students whose families have a history of failure
21 in schools, such as dropouts, live in fear of failure,
22 embarrassment, and feelings of inadequacy. Students cannot
23 rely on home for support. This is not due to lack of love
24 or concern or anything by their mother or father or whoever
25 they are living with. It's because of lack of resources,

1 time, and availability.

2 Invariably the single parent is working two or
3 three jobs. I was a high school teacher. The child is
4 going home and making dinner for the other siblings and
5 managing the other siblings. So that's the problem.

6 School must be a safe zone, emotionally,
7 physically, mentally, and educationally. Mental and
8 physical and emotional support must be provided at the
9 school in realtime. Students must learn how -- students
10 need consistent adult relationships over multiple years.
11 Students must learn how to interact, collaborate, and rely
12 on other people, including their peers.

13 Students must learn how to self-advocate and take
14 ownership of learning. And there's a longer list that you
15 can take a look at.

16 But, in essence, what I'm doing on this first
17 item is saying to you that a public school cannot simply be
18 an accredited institution of learning. It has to be a safe
19 haven that meeting the physical, emotional, behavioral, and
20 cognitive needs of all children. Point 1.

21 Point 2, traditional schools are simply not
22 designed to address this population. They are not ready
23 for this. Let's think about one of the Representatives who
24 talked about her schooling experience. What was our
25 schooling experience? We went to an elementary school.

1 There was a teacher there. There were 25 kids in the
2 classroom. We all learned at the same pace. We all
3 learned the same thing. There wasn't a lot of
4 differentiation that was going on.

5 We were all relatively the same. We grew up in
6 the same neighborhood, generally similar race, ethnicity,
7 religion. We looked and sounded the same. We all spoke
8 English more often than not. You know, we may have come
9 from immigrant families, where our parents may not have.

10 And there were very little special services in
11 school, particularly if the family was struggling or the
12 kid had special needs or he couldn't sit still.

13 Consider the high school you went to, I went to.
14 Seven periods a day, 45 minutes per period, an academic
15 track, a vocational track. You moved from class to class
16 to class. Homework was done at home. We had different
17 teachers every year. We seldom built relationships with
18 our teachers. Maybe you had one or two that really struck
19 a chord. But in general, it was a factory is what it was.

20 And it was up to the student alone to rise to the
21 challenge and succeed. And if the student was starting to
22 fall apart, it was the parents, the community, and the
23 common support of friends and family that would not allow
24 the students to fail.

25 That doesn't exist in these schools. Traditional

1 schools have a very difficult time dealing with this needy
2 population. How can a school be focused on content,
3 one-size-fits-all school, a school where teachers present
4 information and students absorb it, possibly attend to the
5 needs of a student body whose life experience is one of
6 poverty, abuse, and lost hopes. It can't.

7 And the reform efforts that I've seen in 35 years
8 in education such as school tutoring programs, Saturday
9 make-up classes, an iPad for every student, and so on and
10 so forth have little or no effect in the schools that we're
11 talking about.

12 And the schools that we're talking about in
13 Pittsburgh -- I live in Wilkinsburg. We're talking about
14 Wilkinsburg, we're talking about Duquesne, we're talking
15 about Clarion. You know what we're talking about. We
16 don't need a test to tell us what we're talking about. We
17 know already who we're talking about.

18 What happens to this school, this traditional
19 school, is when they attempt to try and teach this group of
20 kids, things really begin to fall apart very quickly
21 because the teachers have been trained to expect certain
22 behaviors or certain attitudes. And when these don't
23 exist, the teachers aren't sure what to do.

24 As traditional schools in poor neighborhoods
25 slide into mediocrity, two things happen. First, students

1 learn to accept low expectations, bad behavior, and
2 failure. Second, failure permeates the school and
3 eventually drags the staff down to the point of despair.
4 The staff feels abandoned just like the students do.

5 And since the teachers get blamed for low test
6 scores, they leave the school or they leave education
7 entirely. And you know the statistics on teachers leaving
8 schools, particularly in the urban core where we have these
9 types of situations. So that's the second point.

10 Traditional schools are not set up to help these children.

11 Our third point is a point that seems radical
12 because a lot of people don't believe it when I say it.
13 But we know what a quality school looks like. If we had
14 nothing but time, I would take you on a tour across
15 Pittsburgh, Philly, the country, and show you quality
16 schools that work with the lowest 5 percent of kids.

17 We know what they look like. We know what they
18 look like. And what they look like -- and this goes to a
19 question you just asked. This is an issue of the culture
20 of the school. It's not the curriculum. It's not the
21 content. It's not -- it's about the culture of the school.
22 It's about the values and beliefs that everybody brings to
23 it.

24 And I'm not going to go through this list. I
25 have a list of 16, 17, 18 things that are consistent among

1 all of these quality schools. Please read them if you have
2 a moment.

3 What I will say is that quality schools that work
4 with high-poverty students across America can be public or
5 private, union or nonunion, charter or independent, secular
6 or religious. What is common to all these schools is they
7 are built on a student-centered culture and a
8 success-at-all-costs approach. You got that impression
9 from the principal who was just sitting right here. He's
10 that kind of school.

11 The modern successful school must have a
12 student-centered culture if it hopes to address the
13 circumstances that exist in the toughest schools in the
14 poorest communities. So that's my third point. I'm not
15 sure everybody agrees with it. But I'm telling you I've
16 been to 50 of these schools and I ran one for ten years.
17 And I've seen huge commonalities between them all.

18 Finally, the fourth point is it is likely that
19 the word turnaround is the wrong word. Now this is a point
20 that I'm going to make today that I'm not sure too many
21 folks necessarily agree with. I do not believe you can
22 turn around a school.

23 I've seen a few turnaround schools in the
24 Pittsburgh public schools. They always had amazing
25 leaders, an amazing charismatic leader who, with all due

1 respect, didn't pay attention to what Harrisburg said and
2 didn't pay attention to what Bellfield said. What they did
3 was they ran an incredible school. They gave their phone
4 numbers out. They love those children. They empowered
5 their teachers. And they created an amazing place.

6 Doris Brevard ran that many, many years ago at
7 Vann Elementary School in the Hill District and was written
8 up nationally as achieving great things.

9 I believe turnaround is the wrong word. Let me
10 tell you why I think turnaround is the wrong word. You
11 want -- you go to a school. You go to Duquesne, you go to
12 Wilkinsburg, you know, Chester Upland, and you want to
13 change this school and you want to turn it around.

14 However, here are the problems. Often teachers
15 in the lowest-achieving schools, existing teachers, have
16 little or no experience with poverty, students of color, or
17 failing communities. They are working with a group that
18 they don't understand.

19 Staff attitudes are often entrenched in a belief
20 that what worked for me should work for my children.
21 Doesn't work. Most of us are white, middle-class people
22 who went to college and had a life given to us.

23 Existing policies, handbooks, curriculum guides,
24 and ways of doing things are deeply embedded in the
25 school's operation. It's hard to change all these things

1 that are deeply embedded.

2 Politically existing adversarial relationships,
3 Union versus Administration, Administration versus School
4 Board, educators versus community, central staff versus
5 school staff, are hard to overcome. It's hard to change
6 these things.

7 Past issues pertaining to trust, honesty, and
8 working as a team are often impossible to overcome.
9 Pressure to provide test scores may trump any local effort
10 to help students grow and gain confidence as leaders.

11 With all due respect to your question about the
12 arts, the minute the PSSAs came -- the minute NCLB came,
13 the arts, Phys Ed, foreign language went out the window
14 because there's only so much money and time in the day.
15 And when my school is going to be on the front page of the
16 newspaper in the lowest 5 percent, we're not doing the
17 arts, even though you are absolutely correct that the arts,
18 sir, are the key to success in these schools.

19 And leadership turnover destroys any reform
20 efforts. How many times have I seen a reform effort go to
21 a school and then the principal gets removed or leaves or
22 does whatever.

23 So I would suggest the word turnaround needs to
24 be recreate or reimagine or startup.

25 Finally -- and I apologize. I don't want to run

1 over. You asked for two policy things that you might do.
2 I'm going to give you two policy things you might do.

3 The thing that you do mainly is take Title 1
4 funds and apply them to the SIG program, the School
5 Improvement Grants. That's the main way that we've been
6 attacking the schools. You have 4 percent and now I
7 believe you have 7 percent, if you so choose. The new ESSA
8 allows you to put more money towards that.

9 In my opinion -- and I think you're going to back
10 these up with your statistics today -- it hasn't worked. I
11 would turn the whole thing on its ear. I would say, No. 1,
12 we're not going to give the money out unless you change
13 your school, unless you reinvent your school, unless you
14 close it down and open it up.

15 I would suggest -- the first thing I would
16 suggest is that, No. 1, we look at all the models that are
17 working, whether it's Mastery Charter High School or City
18 Charter or whatever or go in and look at SciTech High in
19 Pittsburgh, amazing schools. They are magnet s. But
20 they're doing great jobs with 70 percent poverty
21 populations.

22 I would say that before I would give money -- if
23 I were sitting in your position, before I would give money
24 to a school, they would have to say, we're closing it.
25 We're restaffing it. We're going to open up staffing for

1 everybody. We are going to give you a substantial amount
2 of money over five years. You have to use a model that is
3 proven. We're not going to reinvent the wheel. We have
4 plenty of models that are proven out there. You have to
5 use a model that's proven. And you need sign-offs by
6 everybody. The Union needs to sign off. The Board needs
7 to sign off. Everybody needs to sign off and agree to it.

8 So I would do it as a request for proposal,
9 create competition, see if you can get four or five schools
10 that can do this. And then with success and a lot of
11 support from schools that do this, you would then have a
12 model that could be promulgated throughout other schools
13 through the SIG program. That's Option No. 1.

14 Option No. 2 is close them and have the school
15 districts charter them. A charter allows for a much
16 quicker uptake. And to be honest, most people thought
17 charters were going to deal with the nicest, most wonderful
18 kids in America. And what we found out is that charters
19 became the vehicle for the have-nots to have some school
20 choice. And they are working in the inner cities.

21 And Dr. Lane is absolutely correct. There are
22 some bad ones. And there are some great ones. And there's
23 a bunch in the middle. We need to go to the good ones. We
24 need to emulate them. And we would be crazy, crazy not to
25 go to them and have them start some of these schools if the

1 district can't figure out a way to redo it on their own.

2 Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

3 MR. CETEL: Is it still morning? I believe it
4 is. Good morning, Chairman Smucker and Chairman Saylor.

5 One quick note. I think I heard you say earlier
6 that you visited a lot of schools in Philadelphia but you
7 haven't yet visited a school in Pittsburgh. I really
8 recommend going to see City Charter High. Everything he
9 said is true. It's the real deal. It's a school that I go
10 to often and it inspires me.

11 We are going to do something a little different.
12 You have our written testimony. I hope you read our
13 written testimony. But what I want to do is instead walk
14 through five slides. You have those.

15 When Mike and I were coordinating, we realized a
16 lot of our messages were the same. And because we believe
17 in efficiency, we figured it would be easiest if we combine
18 our presentations. So if you don't mind, that's how we're
19 going to go ahead and do this.

20 MR. WANG: Good morning. My name is Mike Wang.
21 I'm the Executive Director of the Philadelphia School
22 Advocacy Partners. We're the non-profit organization that
23 works statewide in Philadelphia and here in Harrisburg to
24 help create the policy conditions for great schools to
25 thrive.

1 And I'm pleased to be sitting with my colleague
2 Jon from PennCAN.

3 Our sister organization, the Philadelphia School
4 Partnership, has philanthropically invested over \$50
5 million in the last five years in dozens of schools of all
6 types in Philadelphia, serving low-income students, the
7 kind that Mr. Wertheimer described. And that includes
8 traditional district schools, charter schools, and
9 non-public schools.

10 I think the key point as it relates to this
11 hearing is a very large share of our investments have been
12 in school turnarounds. And we've invested in all types, so
13 traditionally run district schools that are turning around
14 and continuing as district schools, charter school
15 turnarounds, and non-public school turnarounds.

16 So we bring a perspective on that that we're
17 happy to share with you this morning.

18 MR. CETEL: Great. Look at that. The technology
19 is up.

20 So Slide 2, this is a whole lot of information.
21 I'm only going to focus in on one point, which is that
22 middle column, the last thing. It shows that despite all
23 the flexibility -- that's the headline of ESSA, right? You
24 have all this new flexibility. The Feds are pushing it
25 down to the State.

1 You still have a requirement to measure and
2 identify the lowest-performing schools and you still have
3 to intervene in them. So that is a non-negotiable and I
4 think it's important to remember.

5 What's changed is now you have flexibility to
6 determine, what is the bottom? How do you measure the
7 bottom 5 percent of schools? And what is the right and
8 appropriate intervention? And so most of our testimony
9 today is going to focus on that latter question, which is,
10 what is the appropriate intervention?

11 MR. WANG: Right. So to Jon's point, a key
12 question that we know you're grappling with is, how do you
13 measure what's the matrix to use? I know you've elicited a
14 lot of testimony from varying groups, a lot of perspectives
15 on that.

16 We're not going to engage much in that question.
17 And part of the reason why is because of this next slide.
18 While it's an important question, no doubt, what the data
19 shows is that when it comes to the schools that are lowest
20 performing, it almost doesn't matter what metric you use.

21 The amount of consistency in that lowest tier is
22 remarkable, whether you use traditional test scoring, math
23 and reading proficiency, or if you use other measures such
24 as attendance, teacher attendance, if you use matrixes such
25 as exposure to violent incidents. What you find is real

1 stagnation among those schools that are in the bottom.

2 And what's interesting is that's true
3 historically as well. If you look back to 2004-2005, so
4 long before some of the recent budget struggles, only 25
5 percent of the students who are currently attending schools
6 that are in the bottom 1 percent statewide were on grade
7 level in math, so about one in four students. This is back
8 in 2004-2005.

9 Despite the fact that the per-pupil increase has
10 gone up 35 percent during that time in Philadelphia, the
11 number is only 24 percent today. So outcomes have actually
12 gotten worse for those bottom-tier schools despite an
13 increase in funding.

14 In Philadelphia, 28 of the 32 schools that were
15 lowest performing in 2004 and 2005 were again this year
16 rated in that lowest-performing category. So you don't see
17 a lot of movement despite a whole lot of different
18 interventions.

19 Of course, this is incredibly costly to both
20 children and the taxpayers. We spend \$1.6 billion of
21 taxpayer money a year in this State on schools in the
22 bottom 5 percent. And only 28 percent of those students
23 have passed the State math exam.

24 In the bottom 5 percent of high schools across
25 the State of Pennsylvania, students are nearly ten times

1 more likely to drop out of school than they are to pass the
2 State math test. And when they drop out, that costs about
3 \$6 billion of productivity, future economic productivity,
4 to the State.

5 These are extraordinary financial costs. But all
6 these financial costs, of course, pale in comparison to the
7 real costs, which is the social and opportunity costs for
8 students and for Pennsylvania's most vulnerable families.

9 Now most organizations and advocates from all
10 sides of the political spectrum, those who are sort of more
11 invested in the status quo, those who are more on the
12 reform side, agree that this bottom set of schools pose a
13 real challenge.

14 And it's not as if we haven't done anything.
15 We've actually tried over the last few years to deal with
16 these schools. But to emphasize the point that
17 Mr. Wertheimer said, we've largely come up short.

18 And Jon is going to talk a little bit about why
19 that is.

20 MR. CETEL: And we didn't coordinate this. We
21 promise. But he hit it right on the head, which is the
22 next two slides are going to be cautionary tales of what
23 happens.

24 We invested \$101 million in 46 schools. That's
25 \$2.2 million per school. And they had to do one of four

1 types of interventions. I won't identify the other three,
2 just to say that the other three were bold and ambitious.
3 And there was one that was a little bit more cosmetic, a
4 little bit what I call turnaround types. You didn't have
5 to do some of the robust changes.

6 And, you know, it's not surprising that in most
7 districts, most schools chose to implement the least
8 aggressive reform.

9 So after this huge infusion of cash after all
10 this time, what kind of changes did we see? It's those
11 last two points. I want to read them. Actually, I'm going
12 to read it twice because you need it to sink in.

13 On average, math proficiency decreased by 3.2
14 percentage points and reading proficiency decreased by 2.2
15 percentage points. That means, again, \$2.2 million per
16 school. And we actually saw results go down.

17 Now what does this say? I think it shows, one,
18 that money is absolutely necessary. You know, this
19 Chamber, this Legislature, took a major step in the right
20 direction in signing a funding formula and I'm excited
21 about that. But money alone is not a school improvement
22 plan, right?

23 The second thing it shows is that when given
24 multiple options, districts are almost always going to
25 choose the path of least resistance. So this is an example

1 of where we actually did the right thing. We gave money to
2 districts, more money to struggling schools. That's the
3 right thing. And we required the intervention. The
4 problem here was we allowed them to kind of cop out without
5 making the big wholesale changes.

6 But the other cautionary tale -- actually
7 skipping a slide here -- is some of the members here might
8 be much more familiar with this scenario, 40 miles away in
9 the city of York. This slide in the actual quote from the
10 last page of the amended recovery plan for York City School
11 District.

12 So I'm just going to read that last sentence.
13 Ultimately, school buildings that fail to meet the
14 performance measurement criteria will be subject to more
15 intensive interventions. So there's two points to pull out
16 here.

17 One, notice what year we're going to start the
18 intensive intervention. It says 2018-'19. So we're going
19 to wait three school years before we do anything. Now,
20 that could be justified. The concern I have is we don't
21 identify what those intensive interventions are. They're
22 absolutely ambiguous.

23 My belief is we need to pull those out in the
24 beginning and have that conversation on the front end of
25 what kind of interventions we should be doing in our

1 schools.

2 MR. WANG: Okay. So an example of how we spend a
3 lot of money and have gotten worse outcomes, an example in
4 effect is what we've done is plan for five years.
5 Meanwhile kids are struggling.

6 Compare that with a much more transformative
7 effort that's undertaken in Philadelphia over the last
8 eight years.

9 In 2010-'11, the School District of Philadelphia
10 transferred seven of its worst schools to proven charter
11 school operators. It's part of what's called the
12 Renaissance Turnaround Initiative.

13 While overall district proficiency decreased in
14 the time since that transfer, in other words, scores went
15 down, all seven of those schools went up by at least 9
16 percentage points in reading and at least 10 percentage
17 points in math.

18 So again, while schools statewide and across
19 Philadelphia went down, even the schools that were
20 receiving boatloads of more money, these schools actually
21 turned around and went the opposite direction.

22 What's more is if you look at some of the more
23 mature Renaissance schools, the ones that have been in
24 existence for now seven or eight years, they're actually
25 getting outcomes that are close to being on par with some

1 of the wealthier suburbs surrounding Philadelphia, Bucks,
2 Montgomery, Chester, Delaware Counties, which is
3 remarkable.

4 And to be clear, not every Renaissance school has
5 been successful. School turnaround is extremely difficult,
6 as, you know, I'm sure you've heard from many folks engaged
7 in the work.

8 But there is a clear message here, which is if we
9 really are focused on changing outcomes as opposed to just
10 compliance with the Federal law, if we really want to
11 change the Life Pac and change the opportunities for kids,
12 we can't nibble at the edges. We have to be bold. We have
13 to be comprehensive in the approach.

14 And what's more is we have to fundamentally shift
15 the way schools are run. You cannot tack on additional
16 supports and hope that that's going to be enough to really
17 change it.

18 MR. CETEL: So what do we mean when we throw this
19 word out, bold, ambitious, meaningful interventions. Let's
20 break that down a little. I think there's three basic
21 things that when you're looking at successful programs,
22 whether it's the Philadelphia Renaissance or the examples
23 across the country of where there has been some successful
24 turnaround work, we think there's three -- and, you know
25 what, I'll clarify that. We don't think. The research

1 shows that there's three things that are necessary
2 conditions. The first is that you have a comprehensive
3 transformative approach that's aligned the unique needs of
4 that school. Every school is different. Therefore, every
5 school is going to need a different kind of intervention.
6 And the plan is not, oh, we're going to have a small
7 literacy plan, we're going to have a small after-school
8 curriculum. It's a full plan that's going to change the
9 instructional culture of that building.

10 The second thing, in order to execute a plan like
11 that, you need some real tools at your disposal. And one
12 that's very important to us is staffing flexibility.

13 You heard Dr. Lane say this earlier. She was
14 talking about the issue of mutual consent, which is
15 principals at turnaround schools should be able to make
16 sure that the principal wants to be at that school and the
17 teachers want to be in that building. Too often large
18 urban districts -- and actually in all districts -- we have
19 what's called forced transfers where teachers don't want to
20 be in that building. But that's just one type of
21 flexibility .

22 Obviously, you're familiar with the layoff issue
23 around staffing, but there's others. That's all aligned
24 towards the goal of how do we make sure there's a great
25 leader with a great team in the building.

1 And a third is there has to be -- the charter
2 option has to be an option. It doesn't mean that every
3 single turnaround should be a charter by no means. I said
4 in the beginning that the plan has to align with the unique
5 needs of that community. It might not be the right option.
6 But if you take the chartering option off the table, you're
7 taking away one of the key types of interventions that
8 we've seen success in other cities.

9 MR. WANG: So to start to wrap this up, we think
10 Pennsylvania has a chance to really be ahead of the curve
11 on this. Unlike a lot of states, Pennsylvania has already
12 begun deliberations.

13 In fact, many of the tenets of school turnaround
14 that are included in ESSA and are included in what you're
15 hearing from Mr. Wertheimer and from others are necessary
16 are built into a piece of legislation that this body has
17 been looking at for the last year, Senate Bill 6 and House
18 Bill 1225, which, of course, passed out of the Senate and
19 is now awaiting consideration in the House.

20 Like ESSA, Senate Bill 6 would require the State
21 to identify the bottom 5 percent of schools and would
22 require those schools to improve with either district-led
23 or State-led interventions in a designated time frame and
24 would require the types of transformative interventions
25 that we know work.

1 Now, to build on Jon's point, some have argued
2 that we should take charter schools out of the discussion.
3 In other words, it's controversial. Why include charter
4 schools in the discussion?

5 Very simply, while chartering is not the only
6 solution, the data is crystal clear on this. It is by far
7 the most impactful strategy with the students we are most
8 looking to serve, low-income, minority students.

9 In fact, the 2015 study from the objective
10 non-partisan CREDO Center out of Stanford looked at urban
11 charter schools in Philadelphia and saw that in
12 Philadelphia charter schools, African-American students in
13 poverty received the equivalent of an additional 43 days of
14 instruction in both reading and math compared with district
15 schools. That's basically six weeks extra of school each
16 year for those hardest to serve students.

17 And so to Jon's point, if we were to unilaterally
18 take charter schools out of the mix, in effect what we're
19 saying is that we are not going to engage in the one
20 solution that's been proven to produce the most results for
21 these particular students.

22 MR. CETEL: So let's conclude with what I'm
23 calling a cautionary reminder of why I think the most
24 important responsibility, as you are working with the
25 Administration to develop an ESSA statewide plan, is to

1 codify some real accountability provisions, to make sure
2 it's real. And it's this one example of the Wilkinsburg
3 Westinghouse merger.

4 So obviously you recently passed more than \$200
5 million and sent that to schools. We think that's a great
6 first start. But what we have seen is that those dollars
7 are not going to actually enter into the classrooms that
8 need it most and produce the kind of transformational
9 change.

10 There was an opportunity to do something
11 recently. And let's walk through this data real quick.
12 Wilkinsburg has an SPP of 40. Zero percent of its students
13 were proficient on the Keystone. It's the
14 lowest-performing school in Allegheny County.

15 The deal that was struck ended with sending those
16 students to the lowest-performing high school in the city
17 of Pittsburgh that actually has a lower SPP. And as part
18 of that 200 million, we sent \$3 million to those schools,
19 which is \$15,000 per pupil, and there was no accountability
20 provisions attached.

21 Dr. Lane shared some of the work that's
22 happening. I am certainly rooting for Westinghouse to be
23 able to provide the options for Wilkinsburg students. But
24 again, if you look at the data, if you look at what's
25 happening in York, if you look at what's happening with the

1 School Improvement Grants, unless you give real tools,
2 unless there's real accountability provisions, we end up
3 seeing more of the same. That's not fair to taxpayers.
4 That's not fair to families.

5 So I just want to leave you all with that
6 thought. We are happy to take some questions.

7 DR. WERTHEIMER: Earlier in the discussion part
8 prior to us coming up, you asked some of the good things
9 that are done in a school and what makes change.

10 And the gentleman, Jason Carrion, talked about
11 teacher collaboration. And there was discussion about
12 building in professional development into the day. It was
13 spectacular. It's exactly -- it's wonderful.

14 At our school, we did the same thing. But I'm
15 now going to juxtapose what he has to do in a limited
16 situation, meaning that he's in a confined -- he's got a
17 union contract. He's got a lot of things that are stopping
18 -- that he's banging up against.

19 As a charter, we didn't have that. At our
20 school, every single teacher, every single day, has 120
21 minutes for professional development.

22 And the answer to the question is -- and no one
23 is taken out of class. We dare not take anybody out of
24 class. So the question is, where did they come from? It
25 was actually relatively simple.

1 We started the charter school and the work day
2 for teachers is eight and a half hours, half-hour lunch.
3 It's an eight-hour day. So we added an hour and a half to
4 the school day but we didn't make them teach during it.

5 We gave them the opportunity to collaborate and
6 learn during that time. And the collaboration even becomes
7 more powerful because we do a program called looping so
8 that teachers stay together for four years with the same
9 group of students. So they're all in the same faculty room
10 and they're all off at -- English, Social Studies, Title 1.
11 They're off at the same time. So they have two hours off
12 at the same time during the day.

13 Same idea. No different. Not smarter or
14 anything. We just didn't bang into existing structures.
15 And that's how a good idea becomes a great idea because
16 you're free to start something from scratch.

17 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: Thank you for
18 being here. We very much appreciate it.

19 Do you have anything?

20 HOUSE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: No. I'm good.

21 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: I see we've
22 lost most of our members.

23 MR. WANG: That was Jon, not me, who drove them
24 away.

25 SENATE MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SMUCKER: We really look

1 forward to continuing to work with you as we work with the
2 Administration in responding to ESSA.

3 We appreciate all the input that you provided
4 here and in the past.

5 Thank you to all of you for being here.

6 That concludes our hearing. Thank you.

7 (The following are written remarks submitted by
8 Pamela Gordon, Principal, Francis McClure Intermediate
9 School.)

10 Francis McClure Intermediate School is one of
11 three elementary schools located in the McKeesport Area
12 School District. McKeesport Area School District receives
13 students from five communities: Dravosburg, White Oak,
14 McKeesport, South Versailles and Versailles, and it is
15 located in the Mon Valley region right outside of
16 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

17 The district is proud of its accomplishments and
18 has always strived to provide a quality education for all
19 students. The median household income in our district is
20 \$34,000. The median value of a home is \$56,000 and the
21 poverty rate is so high that all of the students in the
22 district are eligible to receive free breakfast and lunch.

23 During the 2012-2013 school year, Francis McClure
24 Intermediate School was one of many schools within the
25 McKeesport Area School District that underwent a major

1 renovation. The conditions of the school buildings were
2 not good, so the district closed four schools and renovated
3 and/or built two new facilities to educate the students
4 that had attended the now closed schools.

5 At that time, Francis McClure Intermediate School
6 student population consisted of all 5th and 6th Grade
7 students within the district and a third of all Grade 4
8 students. During that school year, renovations occurred in
9 various sections of the building, which resulted in having
10 to relocate students within the building several times so
11 that renovations could continue. Student safety had to be
12 the greatest priority during the 2012-2013 school year,
13 which resulted in instruction becoming the second priority.

14 Due to the renovations, the movement of students
15 and many other factors that made the 2012-2013 school year
16 difficult and chaotic, our school was designated a Focus
17 School for the upcoming 2013-2014 school year.

18 Francis McClure Intermediate School's building
19 level academic score for the 2012-2013 school year was 51.1
20 according to the PA School Performance Profile. The
21 documents revealed that only 48 percent of our students
22 scored proficient or advanced on the PSSA math, and only 38
23 scored proficient or advanced in reading. These results
24 showed that we needed to drastically change what we were
25 teaching and how we were teaching.

1 The renovations were completed for the beginning
2 of the 2013–2014 school year and, as a result, the student
3 grade configurations changed. Francis McClure Intermediate
4 School's student population now consisted of half of the
5 McKeesport Area School District's Grades 3, 4, and 5.

6 The students came from a variety of backgrounds,
7 which included a mix of urban and suburban students. We
8 also serve all of the students who reside in the two
9 McKeesport Public Housing plans located within the school
10 district.

11 The information obtained from the PA School
12 Performance Profile created a sense of urgency that
13 required immediate attention. A School Improvement
14 Committee consisting of teachers, support staff, parents,
15 administrators, and community stakeholders was developed to
16 draft a plan for improvement.

17 The plan provided our school with a road map that
18 could be immediately implemented. We used the data from
19 several assessments, PLATO, Grade, Dibels, and DAZE, to
20 guide all decisions that were connected to instruction . A
21 daily 40-minute reading enrichment/intervention period was
22 put into place to group students for targeted skill
23 instruction based on assessment and progress monitoring
24 data.

25 The instruction that students receive is targeted

1 to address their academic deficits. For example, if the
2 data exposed that a student has a comprehension issue,
3 during the enrichment period the teacher will work with the
4 students on a specific strategy.

5 The teacher explains to students why the strategy
6 helps comprehension and when to apply the strategy. The
7 teacher models or demonstrates how to apply the strategy,
8 usually by thinking aloud while reading the text that the
9 students are using.

10 The teacher guides and assists students as they
11 learn how and when to apply the strategy. The teacher
12 helps students practice the strategy until they can apply
13 it independently.

14 A math enrichment period was also implemented
15 three days out of a six-day rotation for all students. The
16 math enrichment operated in the same manner as the reading
17 enrichment period.

18 Francis McClure Intermediate School's School
19 Improvement Committee worked collectively with the school
20 district's Administration and the Teachers' Association to
21 change the building schedule to add a 30-minute time block
22 in the morning to provide the teachers time to meet daily.

23 Regular teacher meetings were held for teachers
24 to review reading and math progress, monitor formative
25 assessment data to re-evaluate student needs and make

1 adjustments to teaching. Student learning data was also
2 shared more frequently with teachers, students, and
3 students' family members to set goals for continued
4 progress.

5 With the focus placed solely on instruction,
6 2013-2014 Francis McClure Intermediate's school performance
7 profile score was released and drastic improvement was
8 shown. The building level academic score rose to 72.6 with
9 62 percent of our students scoring proficient or advanced
10 on the PSSA math and 50 percent of our students scoring
11 proficient or advanced in reading.

12 Indicators of growth were 100 percent for math
13 and 88 for reading. Although the scores rose, more work
14 still needed to be done.

15 During the 2014-2015 school year, teacher
16 professional development continued to be a major focus and
17 a one-year plan was developed. To make sure that the plan
18 was adhered to, monthly planning calendars were provided to
19 teachers indicating dates for all reading and math meetings
20 along with the dates for buildingwide, SAS, Standards
21 Aligned System, training.

22 This calendar was added as an addition to the
23 plans written during the prior school year. The focus of
24 all the professional development sessions was to assist the
25 teachers in better understanding what should be taught,

1 when it should be taught and how to teach it.

2 For our SAS trainings that year, a book was
3 purchased, The Common Core Lesson Book, K-5: Working with
4 Increasingly Complex Literature, Informational Text, and
5 Foundational Reading Skills Book written by Gretchen
6 Owocki.

7 This book provided staff with a consistent
8 understanding and an implementation mechanism of the PA
9 Core Standards for English Language Arts. One or two
10 monthly planning meetings were held for the reading
11 coordinator, building principal, and Title 1 Reading
12 Specialist to develop the agenda for future staff meetings.

13 These individuals would then facilitate meetings
14 for all staff to focus on one ELA standard for reading
15 literature and reading informational text. The standard
16 was unpacked and teachers were provided resources found on
17 pdesas.org, including lesson ideas, posters, read aloud
18 books titles, questions, etc.

19 These meetings were instrumental for increasing
20 collaboration amongst teachers and ensuring more consistent
21 instructional approaches for meeting PA core standard s.

22 Although the State did not release an SPP score
23 for the 2014-2015 school year, our students continued to
24 make growth according to our individual PSSA student
25 reports and our overall building PVAAS data in 4th Grade.

1 In Math, the 2015 PVAAS data stated that there was
2 significant evidence that the students exceeded the
3 standard for PA academic growth. Similarly, in 4th Grade
4 Reading, the PVAAS data stated that there was evidence that
5 the students met the standard for PA academic growth.

6 In 5th Grade Math, the 2015 PVAAS data stated
7 that there was evidence that the students met the standard
8 for PA academic growth.

9 Using the morning meeting format for professional
10 development continues to be a positive structured way to
11 gather the teachers to inform them about teaching
12 strategies and anchors.

13 In addition to reviewing the ELA anchors, writing
14 has been added. Building-wide writing strategies and
15 common writing assessments have informed us about areas of
16 concern so that instruction can be targeted to increase
17 writing proficiency for all students.

18 The staff has embraced the direction that our
19 plan of improvement has taken our school. Parent meetings
20 are often held to teach the parents about the strategies
21 that the teachers are using in school. The students'
22 academic improvement has been mostly due to our school
23 staff remaining focused on our plan of improvement and all
24 decisions that are made are based on data.

25 The financial support that we have received to

1 fund small class sizes via Title IIA, along with money from
2 the Keystones to Opportunity Grant helped to improve
3 literacy outcomes for all students. Title 1 funding,
4 special education funding as well as local revenue provided
5 additional staff to meet the needs of our struggling
6 learners.

7 Those funds also provided additional learning
8 materials to address the gaps in instruction that were
9 exposed via our ongoing citizen assessments. All of the
10 items listed above are vital for us to continue to
11 implement our building school improvement plan.

12 Although all of our students have not reached the
13 100 benchmark, we will continue to use the data as our
14 guide and make revisions to our original plan to address
15 the academic deficits of all our students.

16 The threat of losing funding that provides
17 personnel, programming, and supplies to meet our students'
18 needs looms daily. Community members and parents recognize
19 that we are improving our building scores but want us to
20 increase them faster.

21 We are losing our students because some of our
22 parents want smaller class size and more focused attention
23 on their child. Without financial support it would be
24 impossible to continue with the plan that we put in place
25 during the 2012-2013 school year.

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We need a continued commitment so that our students can receive what they deserve so that they can grow up with the tools that they need to be productive citizens. All children have the right to be literate and we are obligated to ensure that we do everything in our power to ensure that right.

The recommendations that can be made to any district that is striving to make improvement is find the direction that the data takes you, put a committee together to write a plan, revisit it often, revise it when the data dictates to do so and stick to it no matter what.

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I hereby certify that the proceedings and
evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes
taken by me on the within proceedings and that this is a
correct transcript of the same.

Jean M. Davis
Notary Public