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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, April 5, 2006
10:25 a.m.

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PRESENT:

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA

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COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL

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COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE

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COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY

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COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

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COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER

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COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

17

COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

18

COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

19

BILLS 060001, 060002, 060003, 060004, 060006,
060007, 060008, 060014, 060089, 060090

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RESOLUTIONS 060019, 060099, 060100, 060119,
060172

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good morning, everyone. This is the continued public hearing of the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Vallas, would you please approach the witness table.

I am told that there were letters that were distributed this morning from your office.

MR. VALLAS: Yes. I can summarize the material that we're circulating in response to the --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: That would be fine.

MR. VALLAS: Great. First of all, we're going to be providing Councilman Nutter -- and obviously we're going to make a copy available to the Committee, too -- with the transportation RFP, with directions on the transportation contracts that were awarded. We can't give any information on the bidders or the specific contract award until the School Reform Commission

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2 has voted for it. We'd be violating
3 disclosure laws on that. But we are
4 going to provide him with everything
5 else.

6 We're also going to be
7 providing a copy of the School Bus
8 Operators Training Manual. We're also
9 going to be circulating a copy of our
10 drop-out testimony before Representative
11 Roebuck's committee. The drop-out
12 testimony explained the issue, talked
13 about the collaborative, identified the
14 problem and the scope of the problem, and
15 then laid out the things that we were
16 doing and that we were recommending. It
17 is very comprehensive, and I think you'll
18 find it -- while it's very comprehensive,
19 it's not a thick presentation. It's one
20 of our more economical presentations, but
21 it's straight and to the point. So we'll
22 circulate that and make that available to
23 the Councilwoman who requested it and to
24 the Committee as a whole.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: If

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2 you don't mind, Mr. Vallas, whatever
3 responses that you're going to be sending
4 in, would you send them to the Chair --

5 MR. VALLAS: That's automatic.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: --
7 and we'll make certain that they're
8 distributed. Thank you.

9 MR. VALLAS: Also, two more
10 things, the behavioral supports and
11 enhanced partnerships with the City.
12 We're circulating copies of that. And
13 the John Hopkins report on drop-outs.

14 John Hopkins is going to make
15 that report public on Saturday. We're
16 going to distribute copies, but we're
17 going to ask that those copies be
18 embargoed until Saturday when they have
19 their press conference. This is their
20 report. It's an independent report that
21 we've been a big part of, but it's still
22 just as a courtesy to them.

23 They said we could distribute
24 it, but they do not want it to be made
25 public until Saturday when they have

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2 their event.

3 We are also finalizing the
4 breakdown that you asked for in that
5 specific line. It's going to take us a
6 just a little longer, but we'll get it to
7 you before the end of the day.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
9 Chair recognizes Councilman Kenney.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
11 Madam President.

12 First, I'd just like to comment
13 or ask you a question on how come you
14 were so wrong on that PIAA thing you did.

15 MR. VALLAS: Well --

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I mean, our
17 kids can't compete today. Why can they?

18 MR. VALLAS: No. I guess they
19 can't.

20 Let me point out, though, I
21 mentioned yesterday, Councilman Kenney,
22 that not only did we obviously do very
23 well in two categories and the team that
24 finished second actually could have
25 easily competed at the small school

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2 level, but they went up two levels
3 because they felt their team was more
4 competitive. But that same week, we sent
5 nine Odyssey of the Mind academic
6 decathlon teams to the state finals, and
7 we're sending two of our teams to
8 national competitions in chess. And, of
9 course, there was just something in the
10 paper today about the mock trial, about
11 our successes with mock trials.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So I guess
13 the rest of the state knows who we are
14 now, right?

15 MR. VALLAS: That's right. And
16 there's talk --

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is that the
18 reason why we lost the 25 million, you
19 think?

20 MR. VALLAS: You know, there's
21 an argument to be made for anonymity.

22 The Archdiocese, of course, has
23 talked about or there's been stories
24 about them contemplating joining the
25 PIAA, too, so we're excited about that.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: On a
3 serious note, I wonder if you could go
4 through a little bit on the \$25 million
5 loss and what it means and what's in the
6 works to try to restore it or to try to
7 mitigate the loss and what could we do.

8 MR. VALLAS: Well, I've been
9 told by leadership in Harrisburg that the
10 \$25 million is going to be there and that
11 they're going to work to make sure that
12 it's there.

13 That said and done, let me say
14 that when I was recruited to Philadelphia
15 and I met with representatives from the
16 legislature and I also met with the
17 Governor at the time, Governor Schweiker,
18 no one ever said that a portion of that
19 money was going to be permanent. So this
20 is totally news to us. And Governor
21 Schweiker as recently as two weeks ago
22 had told me that that money was intended
23 to be permanent.

24 So the whole idea that that
25 money was temporary is simply incorrect,

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2 or at least if it was temporary, it was
3 never communicated to us, certainly not
4 communicated to me.

5 Secondly, I made a commitment
6 when we negotiated with the legislature
7 on how that money would be used, that I
8 would earmark that money for the private
9 partnerships, and that's where the money
10 is going. It's going to the private
11 partnerships.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So do you
13 think that this is an initial kind of
14 posturing and maybe there's a good chance
15 that leadership can kind of get that back
16 in some form?

17 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. You know, I
18 think it's --

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It's not
20 time to panic yet?

21 MR. VALLAS: I think it's
22 posturing. I mean, people want to put
23 other people on the spot. They want to
24 say, Look, you're giving more money to
25 Philadelphia. And, you know, they want

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2 to do that to the Governor. They may
3 want to do that to the Speaker, who has
4 always been an advocate for Philadelphia.
5 So I think that that's a part of it.

6 I'll also tell you, a comment
7 was made that, Well, Philadelphia gets 18
8 percent of the money and they have 13, 14
9 percent of the population. Well, that's
10 what funding formulas are about. They're
11 about earmarking money to the districts
12 that are most in need. I mean, that's
13 what funding formulas are supposed to
14 have elements of equity in them, and the
15 School District has the vast majority
16 of -- I mean, 85 percent of our kids are
17 eligible for the free and reduced school
18 lunch program.

19 Rather than going in and
20 cutting the funding for one district, why
21 don't you raise the funding for all the
22 districts, you see? I mean, districts
23 outside Philadelphia do not benefit when
24 Philadelphia is cut. Simply saying
25 districts who are complaining that

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2 they're underfunded, you're not going to
3 solve their problem by cutting funding to
4 another district. You solve their
5 problem by doing real school funding
6 reform and providing real and providing
7 meaningful increases in funding.

8 States across the nation are
9 addressing this issue of school funding.
10 Texas is doing it again. New York State
11 is doing it. California is doing it. I
12 mean, we need to do it here.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So at this
14 point now, you believe that your lobbying
15 efforts in Harrisburg are going in the
16 right direction that we don't have to
17 push the panic button and really don't
18 need any type --

19 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. I think
20 it's early in the process, and I don't
21 think we need to be panicking at this
22 point. I think you have to let the
23 legislature play things out, and
24 sometimes the less said, the better.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: If we can

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2 help, please let us know.

3 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

5 Thank you, Madam Chair.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you, Councilman.

8 Mr. Vallas, let me ask a
9 question. In terms of after-school
10 programs and expanded after school, we're
11 continuing on with them. I mean, there's
12 no threat that they're being cancelled?

13 MR. VALLAS: No. Despite the
14 apparent elimination of the federal
15 earmarks, our after-school and summer
16 school programs have been worked into our
17 general budget. And in the past, we used
18 part of the Specter money to fund
19 after-school and summer school programs.
20 We have reprogrammed existing dollars so
21 we can sustain those programs.

22 If we get the Specter earmarks
23 restored, and the Senator is working very
24 hard to restore that money -- he's been
25 responsible for adding \$7 billion to the

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2 health education and human resources
3 budget. If we are able to get additional
4 money, I will use that money for our
5 alternative schools and our transition
6 schools; in other words, our drop-out
7 prevention and drop-out intervention
8 programs. So if that money is available.

9 So the after-school, summer
10 school program money is there. It's in
11 the budget. It's going to remain in the
12 budget regardless of what happens in
13 Harrisburg with the 25 million. And any
14 money that we get from the federal
15 government, if we get the federal
16 earmarks restored, we'll use that money
17 for drop-out prevention and drop-out
18 intervention.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you.

21 Councilman Kenney, are you
22 finished?

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Yes.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you very much.

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2 Councilman Rizzo.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you,

4 Madam Chair.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're

6 welcome.

7 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Good morning

8 again, everyone.

9 MR. VALLAS: Good morning.

10 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Did I hear

11 yesterday, Mr. Vallas, that -- and maybe

12 your transportation person can come to

13 the table, if necessary. Maybe you can

14 answer the question.

15 Did I hear you say we have

16 30,000 students that we transport?

17 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. I think the

18 number was 33,000.

19 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, I say

20 this in gest, but it seems some mornings

21 and afternoons that we have a bus for

22 each of the 33,000.

23 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. We also bus

24 for the parochial and private school kids

25 and we bus for all the charter school

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2 kids.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: The point
4 that I want to make today is that I know
5 that this isn't a science, but it seems
6 to me that something needs to be done,
7 when I look up at a bus at the beginning
8 or midway through their day when there's
9 two or three students on a bus that has
10 the capacity to haul 40 children or more.
11 And I don't know about your own buses,
12 but the ones that we -- if we're paying a
13 vendor to provide a school bus that
14 provides transportation for 40 people and
15 we're putting ten students on the bus,
16 something is wrong with that picture.

17 When can we get to the point
18 where we can size the vehicle --
19 especially with the cost of fuel, diesel
20 fuel now, and these buses are all diesel.
21 It's starting to skyrocket. I think we
22 need to adjust and adjust quickly. We
23 can't, in my opinion, transport a half a
24 dozen, a dozen students in a vehicle
25 that's probably getting six, seven miles

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2 to a gallon of diesel fuel when it has
3 the capacity of transporting 40.

4 So I think one of the missions
5 immediately should be that we start
6 supplying vehicles to meet the need
7 rather than one size fits all.

8 MR. VALLAS: Right. Let me
9 respond, because I've been wrestling with
10 bussing issues for years.

11 When it comes to the general
12 population, you'll rarely find a bus with
13 35, 40 kids. If you do see a bus with
14 three or four students on it or five or
15 six students, you get that bus number,
16 that driver's license, and you send it to
17 us, and we'll tell you whether or not
18 it's a special education bus or a general
19 population bus.

20 If you see a bus with a more
21 limited number of students, a lot of
22 times we have to bus for IEPs. In fact,
23 we have to bus -- we bus some kids ten
24 miles out of the City for an IEP. There
25 are instances where we have to bus a

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2 single individual. Now, hopefully
3 they're not a large -- they're in a
4 special ed bus. In some cases, they're
5 in a taxi cab. But the IEPs drive a lot
6 of our bussing, too.

7 When we do our general bus
8 route pick-ups, whether it's public
9 school, parochial and private, there are
10 a number of pick-up routes, and we do the
11 routing so that we can maximize the
12 number of kids on the bus so that we can,
13 in effect, fill the buses so that we can
14 control our costs.

15 But we have to bus thousands of
16 special education kids for their specific
17 IEPs. And a lot of times we cannot mix
18 the general population kids with the
19 special education kids. You see what I
20 mean? So some of those buses may be
21 buses for special ed or special needs
22 kids.

23 But I'm going to ask -- I don't
24 know if you have an additional comment,
25 but I'll be more than happy to give you a

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2 breakdown of buses and the number of kids
3 who are routed on the bus.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: Honestly, I
5 don't need to nit-pick in that detail.
6 All I'm saying --

7 MR. VALLAS: Good point.

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: -- as a
9 citizen, when I gested about having one
10 bus for each student, at night you go to
11 some major intersections -- what made me
12 think of this, I was in the Northeast at
13 the intersection five points where all
14 those intersections come together. It's
15 Rising Sun, Cottman. Without
16 exaggeration, I just looked around the
17 intersection. There were a dozen school
18 buses, one at every intersection at that
19 location. It just looked like there was
20 just nothing but school buses. And I
21 looked around and I didn't see one of
22 them that was full. One location there
23 were three in a line.

24 It just seems to me that based
25 on transportation costs today, that we

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2 need to -- whether we can do it in-house
3 or have to get a consultant involved in
4 reworking.

5 Three or four years ago at this
6 hearing, SEPTA became receptive of
7 working with the School District. I know
8 there are certain restrictions that SEPTA
9 cannot do, but they opened the door a
10 crack to say, Come to us. Maybe they
11 could also be a vendor of school bus
12 services to the School District, because
13 they have the equipment, that they are
14 local, that maybe that could bring down
15 your cost.

16 SEPTA never said no. They said
17 they needed to talk about it. And I
18 asked the people at SEPTA, and they said
19 that there was no conversation with them
20 about potentially transporting some of
21 your students.

22 I understand that there was a
23 time when they were prohibited from doing
24 that. I don't know if anything changed.
25 Maybe they're still not permitted to.

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2 But, again, they didn't slam the door in
3 my face on that one. They said, Hey,
4 look, we could talk about it.

5 So I don't know whether that
6 would be a value to you to have SEPTA
7 involved in this process.

8 MR. VALLAS: We can certainly
9 talk to SEPTA again, but let me point out
10 because I don't want -- first of all, all
11 your points are well taken, but I don't
12 want to create any impressions that buses
13 are driving around half full.

14 If you are a general bus for
15 our general bus services, we route
16 specifically to maximize the number of
17 kids on those buses. I know. We meet
18 regularly on transportation, trying to
19 identify additional transportation cost
20 savings, and we've done most of the
21 routing that needs to be done.

22 I will tell you this: Up in
23 the Northeast, that's where we store many
24 of our buses, and a lot of buses after
25 they've done their routes make their way

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2 to the bus barn on the Shelcroft property
3 in the Northeast. So if you're in
4 Northeast Philadelphia an hour and a half
5 after the school day ends, you're going
6 to see a lot of buses with maybe a
7 handful of kids, because they have
8 multiple routes and they'll be dropping
9 those children out on multiple routes.

10 But that said and done, your
11 point is well taken. We'll get back to
12 you. We'll explore that again.

13 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: In all
14 fairness, I think I started my
15 conversation saying that, look, I could
16 have caught it at the end of the run. I
17 could have caught it in the middle. Not
18 really an accurate observation, but all I
19 know is that if we have some areas where
20 we don't fill every seat.

21 To your transportation person,
22 my last question is, there's some media
23 reports recently that seatbelts might be
24 coming and other protective devices for
25 school buses. Are we monitoring that

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2 very closely? I know it's interesting to
3 me why we still don't have protective
4 restraints in school buses.

5 Where are we with that and
6 would we be permitted to install
7 seatbelts in our buses today or do we
8 have to wait for the legislation?

9 MR. RINEER: Right now we're
10 restricted from installing because of the
11 type of seat and fastening devices that
12 need to be in the buses are not in the
13 old buses. So when they pass the
14 legislation -- and, like you said, they
15 talk every year about this, and we attend
16 the national conferences and we do pay
17 close attention to that. When it
18 happens, we'll be ready, and it will
19 probably come in with legislation that
20 new buses will have it and they probably
21 won't do a retrofit just because of the
22 structural devices needed to hold the
23 seatbelts.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Could I ask
25 you to consider this, because from what I

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2 hear, it's very close to happening: If
3 we buy any new buses, could we buy them
4 so they could be retrofitted, could the
5 anchorage be put in? In other words,
6 could we have a vehicle that would be
7 relatively inexpensive, because I hate to
8 have a vehicle in our fleet that would
9 maybe have a longevity of eight, ten
10 years and we say, Oh, unfortunately, we
11 bought it in 2006 or 7 and we didn't put
12 the anchoring plates in that we need for
13 belts. So even if we don't, I don't
14 think it will be much of an upcharge to
15 have a vehicle that could be retrofitted,
16 or check on the possibility of us being
17 able to put seatbelts in those vehicles
18 even though the legislation doesn't
19 require.

20 MR. RINEER: I wanted to
21 mention, in the last three years, we have
22 purchased -- we have about 600 buses. We
23 have purchased 50 small buses now for the
24 routes that you were talking about that
25 only have nine, ten students. So we now

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2 have 50 of the small buses. And federal
3 law requires those buses to have
4 seatbelts. So all of those 50 out of our
5 600 do have seatbelts. So the students
6 are becoming used to seeing seatbelts and
7 learning about how to use them.

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Great. And,
9 again, my observations are strictly based
10 as a layman, with no knowledge of how it
11 works other than -- and, again, I learned
12 something today. I could be just
13 witnessing that particular intersection
14 as one that all the buses pass through.
15 But it seems we have a tremendous amount
16 of buses.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. VALLAS: Good point. Just
19 to make a general point about
20 transportation, we spend upwards to \$95
21 million in transportation, and we only
22 get -- we're only reimbursed on the
23 average about one-third. So that
24 scenario, as we look to bring more
25 efficiencies, that scenario, we're

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2 struggling to get more efficiencies. And
3 I'll tell you, we transport for
4 everybody, everybody. So, I mean, it is
5 a huge financial burden. When you
6 consider that, that's about four percent
7 of the entire budget. So any savings in
8 that area is savings that can go directly
9 into the classroom.

10 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: One other
11 area that I think that you could possibly
12 reconsider is that for years, we've been
13 talking about more of a relationship with
14 our Fleet Management people, and we
15 talked about that for many years, and
16 from what I understand, our Fleet
17 Management people have very little
18 interaction with the School District.
19 There were some thoughts that you
20 probably could save a few bucks if our
21 Fleet Management and your fleet people
22 got together in areas of maintenance and
23 areas of part purchases, that that could
24 also drive down your cost. Because Fleet
25 Management was very interested in joining

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2 hands with you, but, again, I understand
3 from Fleet Management that there was very
4 little movement, if not some resistance,
5 in doing that.

6 MR. VALLAS: Okay. We'll
7 follow up on that.

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you,
9 Madam Chair.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
11 You're welcome.

12 The Chair recognizes
13 Councilwoman Brown.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
15 Madam President.

16 Good morning, everyone. Could
17 we please go to Page 30 of the document
18 that you shared with us, walk through a
19 couple of those items regarding
20 additional savings and efficiencies.

21 The first, with the new
22 teaching hiring bonus being eliminated,
23 please provide the why and what has been
24 the impact.

25 MR. VALLAS: It's going forward

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2 and there's really no impact, in part
3 because we have three applications for
4 every single vacancy. So what we're
5 doing with that six-month bonus is,
6 we're -- there's a three-year bonus of
7 about \$3,500. We're actually going to be
8 looking at establishing a single bonus
9 that would cover the teachers in Year 3
10 and to give the teachers either an option
11 of getting the bonus or actually having
12 their Master's degree paid for.

13 So, in effect, what was the
14 point of giving someone a bonus after
15 five months? I call it the "being there"
16 bonus, particularly when we have more
17 applicants than we have positions for.
18 Rather, let's backload the third year
19 bonus, because we want teachers to be
20 here for two or three years, and then
21 let's give the students the option of
22 either taking the bonus or having their
23 Master's degree subsidized.

24 We're actually negotiating with
25 an institution right now that would, in

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2 effect, provide -- that would put
3 teachers in an 18-month Master's degree
4 program that would guarantee that they
5 were highly qualified long term, and the
6 cost of that program would not be much
7 more than the cost of the individual
8 bonus.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

10 MR. VALLAS: So it's simply
11 kind of a reprogramming and a
12 reprioritizing.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

14 Thank you for --

15 MR. VALLAS: Oh, let me also
16 point out, this doesn't affect the -- we
17 still have the hard-to-fill bonuses. So
18 all the schools -- teachers who locate in
19 tough schools are teachers who locate
20 in -- who are teachers who are filling
21 hard-to-fill positions, those bonuses
22 start immediately. Those bonuses impact
23 them the first day on the job. So the
24 only bonuses we're looking at
25 consolidating are those that really went

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2 for just the general teachers. So rather
3 than do it in the fifth month, we want to
4 make sure that the teachers are here for
5 three years, and then we give them the
6 option of taking the bonus or getting the
7 School District to subsidize their
8 Master's degree. But there's no impact
9 on hard-to-fill positions or at-risk
10 positions, at-risk schools.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Hard to
12 fill are defined as a skill set, like
13 math and science, purely?

14 MR. VALLAS: That's right.
15 Physics, math and science, ESL, things
16 like that.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right.

18 MR. VALLAS: Of course, special
19 ed.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: To
21 principals -- let me first say thank you
22 for responding to my letter regarding
23 what I saw as a need for African-American
24 male principals in our schools.

25 Speak to us about the process

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2 for getting men of color in the pipeline
3 so that you have more teachers who move
4 to leadership as principals to be in our
5 schools.

6 MR. VALLAS: Sure. Let me make
7 a general comment that this year for the
8 first time, the majority of principals in
9 our system were basically minority
10 principals, and the overwhelming vast
11 majority of our African-American
12 principals or -- well, when I talk about
13 minority, the majority of our principals
14 right now are African-American
15 principals. And the ratio of male to
16 female principals is improving. In other
17 words, we are getting more male
18 principals in. The District has, I don't
19 think, ever had that threshold.

20 On the teaching side, about a
21 third of the teachers in the school
22 system are African-American teachers, and
23 that number has held steady the past
24 couple of years.

25 Let me point out that we are

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2 recruiting more African-American
3 teachers, higher percentage, but over the
4 last three years, we've had, through
5 early retirements, people leaving the
6 system, taking retirement, taking the
7 early retirement program, we had a large
8 number of teachers leave, and a good
9 percentage of those teachers who left
10 were basically African-American teachers.

11 So I think last year --

12 What were our recruiting
13 numbers for African-American teachers?

14 MR. HANNA: Good morning.
15 Tomas Hanna, Office of Human Resources.

16 Our recruitment of total
17 teachers of color last year was, about 23
18 percent of the new teachers we brought in
19 were teachers of color.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:
21 Twenty-three percent?

22 MR. HANNA: Twenty-three
23 percent, that's correct. Which is a
24 number upon which we must improve, and to
25 that end, the District has put forth the

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2 Teacher Diversity Campaign, which we're
3 actually wrapping up and plan to present
4 to Mr. Vallas and to the SRC a series of
5 recommendations that will sort of get us
6 in a better place with regard to
7 sourcing, to marketing the District, to
8 ensuring that these populations that,
9 call them underserved, we've got to do a
10 better job of attracting.

11 What we realize is that many of
12 our future teachers of color are not in
13 colleges of education. That's a
14 challenge. And so we're looking at other
15 opportunities, other sourcing
16 opportunities, where might we find folks
17 who are African-American, who are Latino,
18 who are bilingual, who are Asian. It is
19 a large population.

20 Our District, as you're aware,
21 is about 85 percent students of color,
22 and our teaching population is about 40
23 percent. So we have to sort of deal with
24 that.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So on

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2 that, let me just put on the record at
3 the time you deem appropriate, could you
4 please forward some semblance of that
5 report to the Chair --

6 MR. VALLAS: Sure.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- so that
8 we could be better informed and hopefully
9 reduce the questions around that?

10 So, again, back to principals.
11 What type of incentives, initiatives,
12 recruitment strategies do you use to get
13 men of color in the pipeline so that they
14 move to leadership?

15 MR. VALLAS: Well, what we do,
16 let me -- before I answer that question,
17 let me give you a statistic.

18 I think about the most recent
19 statistics I've looked at is, the
20 colleges of education nationwide, I think
21 about ten percent of the teachers that
22 they graduate from the colleges of
23 education are African-American teachers.
24 So the struggle here is going to where
25 the African-American teacher candidates

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2 are.

3 Even the local universities, if
4 you look at the percentage of teachers
5 that they're graduating from the local
6 colleges, they're embarrassingly low. So
7 we have got to recruit nationally. So
8 one of the things we do when it comes to
9 recruiting new teachers, one of the
10 things that we do when it comes to
11 recruiting new principals is, we simply
12 don't recruit locally. We recruit
13 nationally.

14 We've also begun to
15 subsidize -- we set up a program last
16 year where we subsidized student
17 teachers. We have a student teacher
18 subsidy program. We take student
19 teachers and, in effect, we provide them
20 with a subsidy. We give them pay. But
21 in return, they have to go through all
22 the training that a first-year teacher
23 goes through, 100 hours of professional
24 development training. They also then do
25 extra duties in the schools, and many of

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2 them work in the after-school and summer
3 school program.

4 This has allowed us to triple
5 the number of student teachers who work
6 in our system in a given year. This has
7 also allowed us to recruit a much broader
8 pool of student teachers and increase the
9 diversity of our student teacher pool.

10 So we think this program alone
11 will help us improve those numbers,
12 because if you have 1,100 student
13 teachers, 1,200 student teachers in your
14 system during the course of the year --
15 it used to be 300, 350 -- and maybe 250,
16 300 are basically teachers of color, it
17 gives you a lot of flexibility to recruit
18 those individuals into permanent
19 positions and improve your diversity
20 numbers.

21 Let me speak to principals.
22 Fifty-two percent of our principals, they
23 just gave me the statistics, are
24 African-American. And I think in part
25 it's because three years ago we set up a

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2 program where we created a Teachers
3 Academy. That Teachers Academy has now
4 evolved into the School District's
5 Leadership Academy, and we just recently
6 received a \$4.2 million grant from the
7 Broad Foundation to support that academy.
8 And what we're doing every year is, we
9 are identifying 30 to 40 top principal
10 candidates and we are, in effect,
11 training them, putting them through a
12 year-long training program to train them
13 to be principals. And obviously when we
14 recruit our principal candidates, we have
15 much greater flexibility when it comes to
16 recruiting and advancing our diversity
17 goals, too.

18 So if you would look at our
19 graduating class from the Principals
20 Academy over the last three years, over
21 half of the graduates have been basically
22 minority principal candidates. Most of
23 those principal candidates find their way
24 into principal vacancies in the School
25 District.

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2 So that has helped us, because,
3 in effect, we're growing our own. We're
4 identifying high-quality teachers,
5 teacher leaders, assistant principals who
6 have great track records, and we're
7 putting them in an intensive training
8 program to train them to be principals.
9 We are certainly recruiting with
10 diversity in mind, and as a result, we
11 have a much broader and more diverse pool
12 when it comes to selecting new leaders
13 for our schools.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. I
15 am encouraged by that, but when we look
16 at the discussion yesterday raised by
17 Councilman Goode on the plight of
18 African-American boys and when we know
19 what research tells us about the need for
20 role models for African-American boys,
21 then the thinking might follow then that
22 there needs to be an added aggressive
23 reach for African-American men leaders so
24 that you have them in the schools to be
25 role models for these boys, because that

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2 all contributes to their ultimate success
3 or lack thereof.

4 So I'm encouraged to hear about
5 African-American -- the numbers, but my
6 principal question again is, what added
7 strategies are being considered to
8 recruit African-American male principals?

9 MR. HANNA: One of the
10 strategies that we're putting forth in
11 the Teacher Diversity Campaign is
12 identifying best practices around the
13 country. You may be aware of the Call Me
14 Mister Program out of South Carolina
15 that --

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What is it
17 called?

18 MR. HANNA: It's called the
19 Call Me Mister Program in South Carolina
20 and it attracts African-American males
21 into teaching, but with the focus of down
22 the line looking at them as potential
23 leaders in schools. And when you see the
24 report, you'll see that it's based on
25 some of those best practices in terms of

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2 what we might be able to do in the
3 District. That's one major issue that
4 we're looking at.

5 The second one is, when we look
6 at recruiting teachers from outside the
7 District, we have a program called the
8 Philadelphia Teaching Fellows, and it's a
9 contract with an organization called the
10 New Teacher Project, and built into that
11 contract in fact is a goal of 35 to 40
12 percent teachers of color being brought
13 in.

14 So we've built that into that
15 contract and understanding that that is a
16 major goal of the District.

17 So those are two major issues.
18 As you asked, we'll forward the report to
19 you with regard to how that's looking.
20 And the Teaching Fellows is an
21 alternative certification program. So
22 all of our alternative certification
23 programs have that goal in mind.

24 Beyond that, there are two
25 other areas. One, we're looking at

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2 enhancing our work with power
3 professionals. Seventy-six percent of
4 our power professionals are people of
5 color, and we believe that a large number
6 of them are highly qualified already,
7 have an Associate's degree or 60 credits
8 or more, and they're in our schools
9 currently. They understand our District.
10 They understand our City, understand our
11 children. And so we want to build
12 relationships with them. Understand that
13 it's going to take a little while, but
14 they're already with us and it's an area
15 that we want to follow up on.

16 Lastly, the Philadelphia High
17 School Academies, Inc. has an Urban
18 Education Academy and there are a number
19 of these academies in our high schools.
20 So it's not just looking at power
21 professionals. It's also looking at our
22 current high school population and
23 instilling in them the love for teaching
24 and an opportunity to go to college and
25 to come back to Philadelphia and work

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2 here.

3 We're poised, as these young
4 men and women come out of the programs
5 and go into college, in essence, to offer
6 a job guarantee. If you were a District
7 student and you've gone through this
8 program and you're certified, we're
9 prepared to offer you a position.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Has there
11 been an inventory amongst the
12 African-American male teachers in the
13 school system wherein you could find out
14 which of those want to move to leadership
15 principal positions? Has that kind of
16 inventory taken place?

17 MR. VALLAS: The inventory is
18 less of an inventory and more us
19 identifying top educators through our
20 principals. And also, the Principals
21 Training Academy is so well known and so
22 popular, top-performing teachers will
23 apply for admissions into the Principals
24 Training Academy.

25 So we have no shortage of

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2 candidates who want to enter the
3 Principal Academy. So we are literally
4 able to be very selective, and we only
5 select the highest quality candidates
6 with the most potential.

7 Also, the real good news here
8 is, we get a diversity of applicants. So
9 we've been able to enroll in the academy
10 with an eye towards diversity. It's been
11 much easier for us to make our
12 administrators core much more diverse
13 than it has been the rank and file
14 teachers, in part because it's a smaller
15 group. But the bottom line here is, once
16 again, just to point to the leadership
17 statistics -- first of all, diversity of
18 my management team is well known, but
19 among the principals, 52 percent of the
20 principals are African-American and I
21 think over 60 percent of the principals
22 who I have appointed since I've been
23 here, since 2002, are African-American.

24 So we've been experiencing a
25 lot of success in recruiting minority

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2 educators to positions of leadership in
3 the School District's central office,
4 regional office, at the same time also at
5 the local school level.

6 The greater challenge for us
7 obviously is the rank and file teachers,
8 but I think we've got the programs in
9 place to do that. I think our numbers
10 are going to improve, despite the fact
11 that the colleges of education are not
12 aggressive about recruiting potential
13 teacher candidates for their colleges of
14 education.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: There have
16 been some informal discussions about
17 that. Has there been a sit-down with the
18 Deans of the Department of Education in
19 the local universities to respond to this
20 phenomena?

21 MR. THORNTON: Certainly.
22 We've met with approximately 13
23 universities to talk about the whole
24 issue with respect to teacher
25 recruitment, and what we're saying to the

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2 universities is that we really want and
3 value a diverse teaching force, and we're
4 asking them to provide opportunities to
5 somewhat put the finger on the scale to
6 provide some incentives to increase the
7 numbers in the college of education.

8 I think there are two issues.
9 It's not so much around recruitment, but
10 there's an issue around retention of
11 folk, and our efforts have been
12 two-pronged. Not only to recruit,
13 because I think we've cast our net wide
14 with national searches. This year for
15 the first time in many years, we employed
16 an executive search firm to identify
17 quality leaders of color. We are
18 beginning to recruit in places such as
19 NABSE. National Association of Black
20 School Educators is a frequent place
21 we're looking.

22 We've developed partnerships
23 and we continue to develop partnerships
24 with the historically black universities
25 who have that formal alumni network that

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2 we can certainly reach out to.

3 But the other work is around
4 once we attract folk to the City, how do
5 we keep folk, and we've begun to put in
6 systems. Mr. Vallas and I meet with a
7 group of senior African-American leaders
8 monthly to talk about support systems
9 that we can provide administrators coming
10 in, mentors and things of that nature.
11 So the effort is two-pronged, recruitment
12 as well as retention.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What has
14 been the response, reaction, level of
15 commitment from the college Deans in the
16 local universities?

17 MR. THORNTON: The world is
18 pulling at them. I mean, the reality of
19 it is that when you look at many
20 universities -- and one that comes to
21 mind is Spellman. When we talked with
22 the folks in Spellman, they graduated 17
23 educators. Spellman is a very well known
24 liberal arts school in Georgia. And
25 probably what the Deans are telling us in

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2 places like that, there are probably 200
3 to 300 school districts that are after
4 those 17 folks.

5 So certainly one of the things
6 we're going to begin, and I think
7 Mr. Hanna spoke to it, is the fact that
8 to grow your own really appears to be the
9 most effective strategy for people coming
10 to the City and staying in the City. I
11 think that's a vital piece.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So I need
13 to ask the question again. What has been
14 the reaction, the level of commitment
15 from the Deans of the college of
16 educations of the local universities?

17 MR. THORNTON: Very positive.
18 The state university system has talked
19 about the fact that even constructing a
20 dormitory in Philadelphia which would
21 allow this to be a regional center.
22 Specific conversations with Temple have
23 been very, very positive. St. Joseph's
24 has been very, very positive. So we're
25 very encouraged.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So
3 positive means what?

4 MR. THORNTON: That they're
5 willing to work and partner with us to
6 provide, in the critical areas, folk of
7 color by allowing and putting their
8 finger on recruitment efforts for them
9 bringing young people into the college.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

11 MR. VALLAS: But I'll tell you
12 this: There are wrestling issues that go
13 far beyond the diversity issues. They're
14 wrestling with accountability issues.
15 They're wrestling with increasing
16 pressure on the part of the United States
17 Department of Education to now require
18 tougher standards for the colleges and
19 universities.

20 I mean, believe me, they're
21 being tugged in multiple directions, too.
22 Plus, many universities have shaken up
23 their own Departments of Education and
24 have made leadership changes in their own
25 Education Department.

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2 So believe me when I say the
3 best way -- we need to work on a
4 grow-our-own strategy, but ultimately our
5 most effective programs to recruit
6 minority teachers are alternative
7 certification, are programs like Teach
8 America, are programs like the student
9 teacher subsidy program, because that
10 allows us to get a very large pool of
11 teacher students, and the larger the
12 pool, the more diverse that pool is going
13 to be or the larger number of minority
14 teachers you're going to have in that
15 pool.

16 I mean, those are the type of
17 things ultimately that are going to --
18 and then recruiting nationwide. You
19 know, one of the reasons we've been
20 strengthening our relationship with the
21 United Negro College Fund is so that we
22 can be more effective about recruiting on
23 the campuses of Howard University and
24 other universities, you see?

25 So those are the things

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2 ultimately that are going to help us
3 improve our numbers.

4 One final point to make, too,
5 is, the introduction of site selection
6 into the School District's union
7 contracts is also, I think, going to have
8 a long-term positive effect on making our
9 teaching core more diverse. Why?
10 Because now teachers can be selected just
11 not based on seniority. And if the
12 majority of your principals are
13 African-American; in other words, the
14 majority of the individuals who are
15 making decisions about teacher selection,
16 and they can make selections based on
17 talent, based on need, based on the need
18 for a talented minority teacher, based on
19 the need to have a male teacher in the
20 school, they're not going to be blocked
21 by rigid seniority rules. They're going
22 to be able to make that decision based on
23 what the best need for the school is.

24 Last year, we recruited how
25 many new teachers through site selection?

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2 MR. HANNA: Through site
3 selection, we brought in about 700 new
4 teachers, and I will tell you that during
5 the site selection process, 40 percent of
6 the new teachers who were hired prior to
7 August were in fact teachers of color.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: How many
9 were men, men of color?

10 MR. HANNA: That data I don't
11 have currently. I can get that for you.
12 That's a good point, though.

13 MR. VALLAS: There's a big
14 shortage of men.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: In all
16 areas, right.

17 MR. VALLAS: We're talking
18 about we have a shortage of white men,
19 Latino men, African-American men. We're
20 outnumbered.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Of all the
22 arena, there's a shortage of
23 African-American men. All right.

24 MR. VALLAS: Some people would
25 say that's good.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: It would
3 depend upon who you're talking to.

4 A few years ago, you discussed
5 this innovative out-of-the-box measure
6 where you were recruiting former men in
7 the Armed Services. What's the status,
8 developments, update on that?

9 MR. VALLAS: You mean besides
10 the fact that many of their tours of duty
11 have been extended? Believe it. I'm not
12 exaggerating. I mean, there's been a lot
13 of retirements that have been postponed
14 or a lot of individuals -- they've
15 referred to it as a back-door draft,
16 where individuals have not been allowed
17 to leave the Service because of the
18 severe shortages. It's called Troops to
19 Teachers, and we're not getting the
20 numbers we'd like.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Is it
22 because of this new reality over there?

23 MR. VALLAS: That's right.
24 That's right. We think that there's a
25 lot of reasons for that. Part of the

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2 reason is, tours of duty are being
3 extended. It's not that people are
4 re-upped. It's this back-door draft
5 where people's tours of duty are being
6 extended.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I was
8 excited about that program.

9 Let's move now to student
10 trainees saving 4 million. What will be
11 done to meet the need of the nurse, the
12 psychologist, the bilingual ESOL and
13 other professionals since you're
14 moving -- you're filling them with
15 student trainees; is that what this
16 means?

17 MR. VALLAS: Well, what we're
18 doing is -- we have shortages in those
19 areas that we've had difficulty filling,
20 and so what we're doing is, we're
21 expanding our apprenticeship program so
22 that we can significantly increase the
23 numbers and address our shortages.

24 For example, counselors, we
25 have a ratio of counselors one to 450,

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2 one to 500. Incidentally, it used to be
3 one to 1,000. So we would like to hire
4 more counselors, but we don't have the
5 money to hire more counselors. So what
6 we've decided to do is, we've decided to
7 recruit on the college campuses and the
8 various related departments that provide
9 individuals with the counseling training.

10 Our goal this year is to
11 recruit about 150 counselors, and the
12 ability to do that ultimately is going to
13 save us money, as opposed to if we went
14 out and we hired 30 full-time counselors.

15 So we're referring to
16 efficiencies not so much that we're going
17 to replace existing counselors with
18 university counselors, but rather more
19 that we're going to try to increase our
20 numbers by expanding our university
21 intern and apprenticeship programs, thus
22 bringing efficiencies to those.

23 So we're able to take the
24 numbers up a notch, get the ratios down
25 and not incur the cost that we would have

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2 to incur if we were simply going out
3 there and hiring additional
4 professionals.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And the
6 same, I would imagine, would apply for
7 nurses.

8 MR. VALLAS: We're doing it in
9 all areas. For example, there's a lot of
10 student nurses. The dental programs here
11 have -- we've been talking to the various
12 dental programs about getting dental
13 services out to our schools. We have a
14 relationship with the Philadelphia
15 College of Optometry, and they work with
16 our nurses to provide eye exams.

17 Now, these are their students
18 providing the eye exams. But we're just
19 not doing vision screenings. We're now
20 doing eye exams. I mean, one of the
21 things that I did in Chicago in '97-'98,
22 I decided to look at the students who had
23 faced retention and to look at their
24 vision problems. Because if I take off
25 my glasses, I can't recognize anybody on

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2 the floor here, and I didn't find out
3 that I had this horrendous eyesight issue
4 until I was like in 8th grade.

5 So anyway, I decided that I
6 would test all the 8th graders, and we
7 discovered that 20 percent of all the 8th
8 graders who had failed failed their eye
9 exams, not just failed their screening.
10 Thirty percent failed their screening.
11 Two-thirds of the 30 percent ultimately
12 failed their exam.

13 So we decided to embark upon
14 this campaign to give thousands of kids
15 eye exams. And I don't know. To date,
16 we've given probably 6,000, 7,000 kids
17 eye exams, and they actually buy them
18 glasses if they failed their eye exams.

19 We could never do this
20 in-house. We don't have the nurses and
21 the in-house staff to do it. We could
22 not hire the professional ophthalmologist
23 to do it, so we've worked out
24 relationships with the universities.
25 Their students go in and they serve

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2 their -- they do their medical
3 apprenticeships. They get the
4 experience. They get the training. We,
5 in turn, get the discounted eye
6 examinations.

7 So we're trying to do this with
8 psychologists, counselors, social
9 workers, in addition to the student
10 teachers.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

12 Madam President, I have many
13 more questions, and yesterday you had the
14 ten-minute rule. So I just have one
15 follow-up question on the eye piece and
16 then I need to participate in this
17 ten-minute round.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: So
19 this will be your last question.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Follow-up
21 eye question.

22 The Eagles initiative, is that
23 system-wide?

24 MR. VALLAS: The Philadelphia
25 Eagle eye --

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

3 MR. VALLAS: Well, it's
4 system-wide in that they go from school
5 to school, but they don't have the
6 resources to address all of our needs.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So is it
8 just elementary schools, then?

9 MR. VALLAS: No. It's all
10 schools.

11 Brenda is coming.

12 The eye initiative with the
13 College of Optometry is costing us about
14 a half a million. If we did this through
15 the various ophthalmologist
16 professionals, it would probably cost us
17 upwards of \$2, \$3 million to have those
18 types of exams done.

19 MS. TAYLOR: Good morning.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
21 morning.

22 MS. TAYLOR: We actually
23 screened about 170,000 students this past
24 school year, and out of that number,
25 21,000, a little over 21,000, failed the

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2 vision screening. And what the Eagle Eye
3 Mobile does, it actually goes out and it
4 follows up with the screening and it
5 actually fits children for glasses.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: It's an
7 outstanding program.

8 MS. TAYLOR: Yeah. The College
9 of Optometry also fits children for
10 glasses, not one but two pair so that
11 they have a back-up pair as well.

12 We've served approximately
13 21,200 students this past year.

14 MR. VALLAS: Through the
15 glasses. Those are children that we're
16 getting glasses for and who in the past
17 would never get glasses.

18 I was screened every other year
19 when I was in school, but no one ever
20 took me to the eye doctor, and it wasn't
21 like I was neglected at home. I had two
22 parents. I had grandparents who lived
23 with us for about 20 years, and the
24 Eisenharts upstairs who thought we were
25 their kids, too. So we had all sorts of

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2 parents, but nobody ever took -- no one
3 ever asked the question that, Well, does
4 he have vision problems, is he struggling
5 academically because he has vision
6 problems. So it wasn't until 8th grade
7 that I got my glasses. And now I wear my
8 glasses constantly.

9 So 21,000 kids who would not
10 have glasses have glasses today because
11 not only obviously the Eye Mobile, but
12 also the work of the Philadelphia College
13 of Optometry.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So finally
15 on this issue then, given the number of
16 children that were diagnosed and need
17 glasses, that becomes a one-time saving
18 grace for them. What kind of follow-up
19 is done with parents to help them get it,
20 that young people need to be evaluated
21 every two years, whatever the profession
22 says?

23 MR. VALLAS: We screen. We
24 screen. We are required by law to screen
25 all the time. So if you screen, you fail

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2 your screening, we look to see if you
3 have glasses. If you don't have glasses,
4 boom, you're, in effect, provided with an
5 eye exam and you're provided with
6 glasses.

7 So the screening is done all
8 the time. It's just not
9 once-in-a-lifetime screening. We're
10 supposed to screen -- it's an annual
11 screening that we do. So that's helping
12 us.

13 I'll tell you, there was a case
14 two years ago where through the eye exam
15 we discovered that a student had a brain
16 tumor, and we were able to have that
17 student treated and the student was able
18 to recover. The student would have died
19 had it not been for the eye examination.

20 So there are just -- there's
21 some great stories as a result of this
22 effort. But we would never be able to do
23 it if we weren't taking advantage of
24 these university partnerships and if we
25 didn't -- because, once again, I think

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2 the university system in the Philadelphia
3 metropolitan area is one of its greatest
4 resources.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Indeed.

6 MR. VALLAS: We didn't have a
7 College of Optometry when we were in
8 Chicago that we could just go to to do
9 this type of partnership. We had to do
10 it with all these individual providers.
11 We had a contract out with groups like
12 Mobile Vision to go in and to do eye
13 exams in individual schools.

14 So we're very fortunate that we
15 have this initiative, and I think Brenda
16 has done a superb job, which we're
17 beginning to try to do the same thing
18 with dentistry. We're making some
19 progress and there's a lot of interest in
20 that. And so now we have this mobile
21 dental program that goes from school to
22 school. They spend about two weeks in
23 the school and they check all the kids'
24 teeth. And so we're moving in that
25 direction.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very good.

3 Thank you, Madam President.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

5 You're welcome.

6 The Chair recognizes

7 Councilwoman Miller.

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank

9 you, Madam President.

10 Good morning, Mr. Vallas and

11 company. I just have a few questions.

12 Mr. Vallas, I can't remember
13 the category of schools. The only thing
14 I can remember is a reconstructed school.
15 But the schools that were low performing
16 and caused the state takeover, what do
17 you call those?

18 MR. VALLAS: Well, restructured
19 schools.

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So I was
21 wondering if any of those schools have
22 progress to the point that the academic
23 performance is progress to the point that
24 maybe the category might change?

25 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. When the

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2 state takeover occurred and I arrived, we
3 put some schools under the private
4 managers, the universities incidentally,
5 and then we had a group of schools that
6 we put in the restructured categories.
7 These were like School District-managed
8 failing schools.

9 Many of those; in fact, well
10 over half of those schools that we put in
11 our restructured school category,
12 actually made AYP and they moved out of
13 the restructured school category. Many
14 of the schools taken over by the private
15 managers have in fact made AYP and have
16 moved out of that category of low
17 performing or struggling schools.

18 So all told, we've gone from 22
19 schools in 2002 making adequate yearly
20 progress, the No Child Left Behind
21 definition for improving schools, to 132
22 schools making adequate yearly progress,
23 and the number of schools making adequate
24 yearly progress two years or more has
25 grown to 108. In fact, it more than

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2 doubled just last year alone.

3 So the answer to it all is,
4 yes, there are many schools that are no
5 longer in that like lowest performing
6 category and they've moved out.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: That's
8 really good to know.

9 Do we have a list of who those
10 schools are?

11 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely. We
12 could get you that list. We'll submit
13 the list.

14 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.
15 Great.

16 Yesterday and in reviewing your
17 testimony, one of the things you said,
18 and you said something similar today,
19 yesterday I had a question that said what
20 is a highly qualified teacher. What
21 certifies that a person is highly
22 qualified or top performing? Is there a
23 test? Are there evaluations? How do we
24 know who is and who isn't?

25 MR. VALLAS: There are so many

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2 definitions.

3 MR. HANNA: Tomas Hanna, Office
4 of Human Resources.

5 Highly qualified is a moniker
6 that's been labeled by the federal
7 government under No Child Left Behind.
8 That means a person who is either
9 certified, has passed a test that
10 demonstrates the candidate's proficiency
11 in that subject matter. So they have to
12 have a Bachelor's degree, be certified
13 and have taken some sort of test that
14 determines that they are highly qualified
15 in their content area.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So they
17 could be highly qualified coming in the
18 door?

19 MR. HANNA: That is correct.

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: It has
21 nothing to do with experience, classroom
22 performance, test scores?

23 MR. HANNA: Typically full
24 certification is akin to being highly
25 qualified, correct.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Does that
3 also include top performing? What's top
4 performing? What's a top-performing
5 teacher, which is a term that's been used
6 here by the School District, specifically
7 Mr. Vallas, top-performing teachers?

8 MR. VALLAS: I think I used the
9 term "highly qualified" synonymously with
10 a top-qualified teacher, highly qualified
11 teacher.

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. So
13 now if a teacher comes in with all the
14 certification and the college education
15 and has passed a test and maybe they're
16 not performing, I mean, what happens?
17 How do you know that? Who monitors that?

18 MR. THORNTON: We have a number
19 of ways in which to monitor. Our
20 biggest -- the way that I think we get at
21 it best is around student effectiveness.
22 We have put together a very strong
23 instructional management system which
24 allows us to take a look at youngsters
25 every six weeks to see if youngsters are

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2 developing at a pace.

3 Then we put together a series
4 of interventions and supports. Just as
5 we have intervention and supports for
6 students when they're not performing at a
7 level in which they need, we have those
8 same types of interventions for teachers,
9 and they can range in having a mentor
10 teacher or a new teacher coach working
11 with them, to visitations, to even
12 strategic coursework to allow the teacher
13 to make the gains that are necessary for
14 student effectiveness.

15 And eventually certainly on
16 some rare occasions sometimes we just are
17 unable to make those interventions and
18 sometimes we may ask the teacher to
19 leave.

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So I
21 guess one day we'll read that we have so
22 many students in Philadelphia schools
23 really performing well. I think that's
24 the goal that we all have.

25 Based on the number of charter

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2 students, how many Philadelphia public
3 school students do we now have? It's
4 about 225,000?

5 MR. THORNTON: It varies from
6 day to day, as you can imagine. We're in
7 the neighborhood of 225 to 275, correct.

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.
9 And I think that after-school programs
10 really help, not so much the academic
11 programs but also the extracurricular
12 activities. I think it really helps
13 children buy into and feel better about
14 that individual school. So I was really
15 glad -- I did see Germantown High's band
16 out there practicing one day, and we were
17 really shocked. I mean, we parked the
18 car and sat there and watched for a long
19 time, because we thought it was really
20 good.

21 Do you have music instruction
22 in some of the schools other than the
23 bands?

24 MR. THORNTON: Most definitely.
25 Throughout the region, certainly we don't

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2 have as much as we'd like. One of the
3 things we've done is began to take a
4 regional perspective with respect to
5 having programs in each region, which
6 allows us to, where we don't have
7 concrete programs in each school, to
8 regionally get together. We have more
9 bands now than we've ever had. We've
10 increased our bands threefold in the last
11 48 months.

12 MR. VALLAS: But, Councilwoman,
13 to answer your question about specific
14 music and art programs, yeah, there are
15 music and art programs in the schools.
16 To address the issue of lack of funding,
17 what we've done -- before last year or
18 entering into last year, there were about
19 40 schools without an art teacher and/or
20 music teacher. So what we did was, we
21 created a number of programs, a number of
22 contract programs. One of those programs
23 was called the Artist and Residency
24 Program. In effect, what we did was, we
25 contracted out with community-based

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2 organizations, like Germantown School of
3 Music and things like that, and
4 universities. Once again, the university
5 model.

6 What we did was, we would be
7 able to send artists and music teachers
8 to schools, where they would spend about
9 on the average two days a week in that
10 school working on art and music programs.
11 So it was an attempt to make sure that
12 everybody was covered.

13 So if the question is does
14 every elementary school have a full-time,
15 five-day-a-week art teacher and a
16 full-time, five-day-a-week music teacher,
17 the answer is no. But does every school
18 have an art and music teacher at least
19 part time working in that school during
20 the school year? The answer is yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Good.
22 And what about the instruments? I know
23 that my daughter when she was in public
24 school and joined -- and she had a music
25 teacher that came a couple times a

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2 week -- we had to purchase her
3 instrument, which prevented a lot of
4 children from being involved in the
5 instruction.

6 MR. VALLAS: In addition to the
7 full-time and part-time music teachers in
8 the schools, we have the itinerant
9 teachers, who, incidentally, will spend
10 at least a half a day to a day in every
11 school teaching individual students
12 musical instruments. These are the
13 specialized music teachers. So we still
14 have those. I think there's still about
15 70 of them who go from school to school.

16 But when it comes to musical
17 instruments, there's no problem there,
18 because we used the sports facility
19 authority money that has been allocated
20 to us to issue what we call a school
21 equity bond, and we've used a portion of
22 that proceeds to purchase art, music and
23 sports equipment. We've purchased, I
24 think, upwards to \$2 million in band and
25 musical instruments just in the last

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2 couple years alone. I can give you an
3 exact number.

4 So what we've told schools is,
5 if you need musical instruments, we'll
6 give them to you. So believe me when I
7 say -- and that's a direct result of the
8 leadership of the Council.

9 Blondell Reynolds Brown, I
10 believe, Councilwoman Brown, that was the
11 initiative you pushed about getting the
12 stadiums to earmark money to schools.
13 We've used that money, obviously
14 supported by the Council as a whole,
15 we've used that proceeds to replenish our
16 equipment.

17 So I'd like to think from an
18 equipment standpoint when it comes to
19 instruments, when it comes to sports
20 equipment, things like that, we're close
21 to being on par with some of our suburban
22 counterparts. We still have shortages in
23 individual schools that may not have a
24 full-time, five-day-a-week music and art
25 teacher, but I think we're making strides

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2 by having these part-time teachers in the
3 schools.

4 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
5 you.

6 Thank you, Madam President.
7 Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
9 You're welcome.

10 The Chair recognizes Councilman
11 Nutter.

12 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair.

14 Good morning, Mr. Vallas,
15 Ms. Olanipekun-Lewis and Mr. Thornton.
16 First, thank you for the wealth of
17 information that you provided, which I
18 will read through, regarding yesterday's
19 discussion about school buses. And for
20 all of the District employees who spent,
21 I'm sure, the better part of last night
22 trying to put all those materials
23 together, I extend my apologies to you
24 and your families, and hopefully we can
25 still remain friends. I'll get through

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2 those materials, but I do appreciate the
3 quick turnaround.

4 I had some questions from
5 yesterday and then, of course, some new
6 ones from today. The first is, let me
7 start in the binders that I know one
8 person spent a lot of time putting
9 together, so she'd be very upset if I
10 didn't walk you through all 15 tabs.

11 Tab 9 I believe is health
12 services, student health services. You
13 had already gone through the issue of the
14 vision screenings and the eyeglasses. I
15 commend you for that activity. What I'd
16 like to know is, how many school nurses
17 do we have?

18 MS. TAYLOR: Good morning.

19 We have approximately 300
20 school nurses. We have a nurse shortage,
21 so we also have a contract of services
22 for our shortage. We service the
23 parochial schools, as well as our public
24 schools, and we staff the parochial
25 schools at one to 1,500 students, and we

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2 staff --

3 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I'm sorry.

4 That was parochial schools is one to

5 1,500?

6 MS. TAYLOR: Yes.

7 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Public

8 schools are?

9 MS. TAYLOR: Approximately one
10 to 800 students.

11 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And who
12 provides school nurse services for the
13 charter schools?

14 MS. OLANIPEKUN-LEWIS: They
15 provide their own.

16 MR. VALLAS: They provide their
17 own services.

18 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Does each
19 charter school have a nurse?

20 MR. VALLAS: I doubt it. I
21 don't know, but I would assume not.

22 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Well,
23 what's --

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Point of
25 information, Madam President.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
3 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Brown for a
4 point of information.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: On the
6 issue of charter schools and nurses, who
7 makes the decisions?

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
9 Charter schools are public schools.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Right. So
11 who makes the decisions on how a charter
12 school spends its dollars that it
13 receives?

14 MR. VALLAS: The charter
15 school.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

17 MR. VALLAS: All we can do is
18 hold charter schools accountable for
19 performance.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Academic
21 performance?

22 MR. VALLAS: Academically or
23 financial performance or if there are
24 issues involving life safety, but we
25 cannot go in and tell charter schools

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2 that they have to hire a music teacher,
3 an art teacher, that they have to reduce
4 class size. We can't tell them what
5 programs to add. We can't tell them what
6 curriculum to use. They're really
7 independent, autonomous schools.

8 We provide the number. We
9 provide the money. We provide the
10 transportation, but we cannot provide
11 them with -- and we hold them
12 accountable, and that's the limit to what
13 we can do. And the state law is very,
14 very specific; in fact, very restrictive,
15 on our ability to interfere with
16 charters.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
18 Councilman Nutter.

19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Well, okay.
20 But having said all that, I mean, where
21 does this school health program fit in
22 with regard to the general dictates of
23 what you have to have in the school?
24 School health is not an essential
25 service?

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2 MR. VALLAS: There are state
3 mandates, school health-related mandates,
4 that the state puts down that the
5 charters have to implement; for example,
6 the mandatory vision screening and things
7 like that, the vaccinations, the various
8 exams that are mandated. But we are not
9 supposed to provide those services.

10 The charters are given roughly
11 the same funding allocation that our
12 individual schools have, including the
13 Title 1 and Chapter 1 and discretionary
14 money, and it's really up to them to make
15 a determination how they're going to meet
16 those needs.

17 So the state kind of lays out
18 what their mandates are, like they lay
19 out what our healthcare mandates are, and
20 then it's up to them to implement the
21 mandates. I can't go in, for example,
22 and look at a charter and tell them that
23 they have to do this and this and this on
24 the healthcare side. Our oversight is
25 really restricted to academics and

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2 financial. Beyond that, the law is
3 pretty clear about our -- and even that,
4 we can't do -- we can only do academics
5 on a year-to-year basis. I can only do
6 financial on an every five-year basis.

7 So our ability to go in and
8 really monitor them and micromanage them
9 is limited. They've got the mandates.
10 The legislature's attitude is, they've
11 got the mandates, they've got the money,
12 now they've got to implement the
13 mandates.

14 MS. TAYLOR: The public school
15 code mandates a certified nurse, one
16 nurse, for every 1,500 students. So they
17 have to follow those guidelines.

18 MR. VALLAS: Which means if
19 they have 800 students, they may have a
20 part-time nurse.

21 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Let me ask
22 this question: Just in the public school
23 setting, one to 800. We have 300 nurses.
24 Those are School District employees?

25 MS. TAYLOR: We have 278 School

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2 District-employed nurses and then we had
3 contracted services, but we also provide
4 services for private and parochial
5 schools.

6 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: On a
7 contracted basis?

8 MS. TAYLOR: Both. We have
9 both in there. We have public school
10 nurses in there and we have contracted
11 services.

12 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: So where
13 does the 278 number come in versus the
14 300 that you gave me earlier?

15 MS. TAYLOR: The 278 are
16 actually District-hired nurses. Then the
17 balance are contracted services, because
18 we have a shortage of nurses.

19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: So you have
20 22 people under contract?

21 MS. TAYLOR: Yes.

22 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And those
23 300 people are covering -- is the number
24 still 264? Do we still have 264 schools?

25 MR. VALLAS: Well, public

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2 school kids here, we have 175,000 public
3 school children and we have -- there's
4 close to 30,000 charter school children.
5 And then I'm not sure how many parochial
6 school children. There are about 264,
7 265 schools, give or take a few.

8 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Public
9 schools?

10 MR. VALLAS: Yes, public
11 schools.

12 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: So you're
13 covering 264 public schools. How many
14 parochial schools?

15 MR. VALLAS: I don't want to --
16 a number comes to my head. I don't want
17 to throw it out because it might be
18 wrong.

19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: So how many
20 days a week does each school have a nurse
21 in the building and for how long?

22 MS. TAYLOR: Some schools have
23 full-time nurses. It's based also on the
24 student population and the need of that
25 population. If there are medically

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2 fragile students assigned to a particular
3 building or programs with medically
4 fragile students, we may assign a nurse
5 more frequently than others. But every
6 school in the District has at least the
7 part-time service of a nurse.

8 And there's also a plan in
9 place on the day that the nurse is not in
10 the school, the nurse assigned to that
11 school has a back-up plan in place. If
12 she or he needs to get there immediately,
13 they will get there, but there's a health
14 service plan in each school that the
15 building administrator and the health
16 team has access to.

17 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Well, is
18 there ever an occasion where there's not
19 a school nurse in the building?

20 MS. TAYLOR: There are
21 occasions when there's no school nurse in
22 the building. On that occasion, if a
23 medical emergency occurs, there's a
24 back-up plan, and the nurse in the
25 neighboring area is sent for or the nurse

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2 assigned to that school. What we try to
3 do is assign a nurse to schools in the
4 general vicinity so that he or she can
5 get there immediately.

6 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: What's the
7 nature of our relationship with the
8 various nursing schools in Philadelphia
9 and the surrounding counties similar to,
10 I think -- of course, many of our schools
11 have college teachers.

12 MS. TAYLOR: Nursing programs.
13 And we --

14 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: College
15 students who are finishing up their
16 education and then they, I guess, either
17 do internships or rotations. They get
18 some --

19 MS. TAYLOR: We have student
20 nurses in our schools now who are working
21 with our nurses on a rotating basis, and
22 we've also been in conversation with
23 Community College with their nurse
24 training program as well.

25 MR. VALLAS: We've reached out

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2 and we've been reaching out to really all
3 the colleges of nursing; in fact, all of
4 the universities that have medical
5 colleges, whether it's the College of
6 Dentistry, College of Nursing, et cetera,
7 to in fact get student nurses, get dental
8 students, get physicians who need to do
9 their internships or apprenticeships in
10 our schools. We've been, likewise,
11 reaching out to the university hospitals,
12 because a lot of times the hospitals will
13 have physicians doing their residencies
14 in those hospitals and try to get the
15 individual School District itself, the
16 individual schools, included in those
17 residencies.

18 So we're trying to do the same
19 thing with the medical colleges, the
20 nursing colleges, the dental colleges.
21 We are trying to do the same thing with
22 them that we're trying to do with the
23 student teacher program; in other words,
24 subsidize them to come in, work in our
25 schools and, in effect, expand our ranks.

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2 We're doing the same thing with
3 musicians. You have a number of colleges
4 and universities here with schools of
5 music, to get the musicians in and to do
6 their apprenticeships or to do their
7 internships with us.

8 So the relationship is
9 improving. I'm not saying we have a
10 relationship with everyone yet, but our
11 goal this year is to dramatically expand
12 the relationships so we can get -- we'd
13 like to have a nurse in our schools.

14 You do run into liability
15 problems when you have -- a student nurse
16 is not like a student teacher, although
17 one would argue that you might have
18 liability problems with a student teacher
19 who is not competent. But you do have
20 liability problems when you bring nurses
21 in and physicians in. They always have
22 to be operating under a supervising
23 nurse. But in a big --

24 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I
25 understand that. I don't think we're

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2 going to ask them to perform open heart
3 surgery or something, but at least
4 certainly at probably the junior, if not
5 the senior, level. I mean --

6 MR. VALLAS: They can do a lot
7 of work. They can do a lot of small
8 things.

9 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: They
10 probably know enough that they're not
11 going to hurt anybody.

12 MS. TAYLOR: Right. And they
13 can provide the screenings.

14 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And they'll
15 also be smart enough not to go beyond
16 their own level of competency.

17 MR. VALLAS: Right.

18 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: So with all
19 of these partnerships between the people
20 on the payroll and the student support or
21 college students, will you get to the
22 point of being able to put together, for
23 lack of a better term, a roster that
24 allows you to have coverage at each
25 school virtually every day?

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2 MS. TAYLOR: That's our goal.

3 That's our goal.

4 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I got lots
5 of goals.

6 MS. TAYLOR: When you look at a
7 student nurse, you're looking at a person
8 who needs to be supervised. So when you
9 have that person, that person can provide
10 screenings, can man certain health
11 initiatives, but that person needs the
12 back-up of a certified school nurse. So
13 you may have a student nurse at a
14 facility, but that person needs the
15 supervision and the oversight of one of
16 our nurses.

17 MR. VALLAS: I think one goal
18 that is possible that is not unrealistic
19 is to at least have a full-time nurse or
20 a student nurse on duty just, if for no
21 other reason, coordination purposes,
22 because as Brenda pointed out, there are
23 a lot of basic things that student nurses
24 can do. If the type of intervention is
25 of a more critical nature, you can always

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2 then contact that fully certified nurse
3 at that neighborhood school.

4 But I think there's enough
5 colleges and universities and medical
6 institutions to at least put the School
7 District in the position where maybe some
8 day in the very near future, within the
9 next couple years, we will have someone
10 in that building five days a week, either
11 a nurse or an apprentice nurse working in
12 that building. I think that's well
13 within the possibility. And in some of
14 the bigger schools where we have a
15 full-time nurse, having a nurse
16 apprentice working under that full-time
17 nurse.

18 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Lastly on
19 this, could you provide to the Chair a
20 list of all of the charter schools and,
21 to the best of your knowledge and
22 information, whether or not a particular
23 school has a nurse as a part of their
24 school health plan.

25 It is a little disturbing,

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2 notwithstanding whatever the law is and
3 whatever you're allowed to do or not do
4 in accordance with the statute, it seems
5 a little strange that we would allow
6 schools to operate possibly with no plan
7 and -- I mean, I guess at a minimum, as
8 schools go through the charter process --
9 and I certainly don't mean to tell the
10 SRC how to improve charters or not, but
11 maybe that would just be one of the
12 questions --

13 MR. VALLAS: Good point. Very
14 good point.

15 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: -- up front
16 or upon renewal of the charter, Do you
17 have a nurse, yes or no.

18 MR. VALLAS: It's something we
19 can -- we could add it to the rating,
20 because we grade the charters.

21 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: If the
22 answer is no, then tell me why, and how
23 do you plan to provide that kind of
24 service.

25 MR. VALLAS: We can incorporate

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2 that into the rating. When we approve
3 charters, the charters are valued by an
4 independent review board and we give them
5 points for the quality of their charter.
6 We can certainly -- and I don't know. It
7 may be in there already. I don't think
8 the nursing thing is. We can have a
9 healthcare component and we can require
10 certain minimal things. I think that's
11 an excellent suggestion.

12 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you.

13 MS. TAYLOR: They're required
14 to provide health services. That's part
15 of the mandate.

16 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: What does
17 that mean?

18 MS. TAYLOR: That would mean a
19 nurse, but not necessarily on a full-time
20 basis.

21 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. I
22 think it would be helpful for us to know.

23 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely.

24 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I guess in
25 the same area, we've talked in the past

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2 and any number of members here have had
3 concerns about issues of attrition. The
4 District has taken many steps, from the
5 great controversy about sodas to
6 improvements in the food offerings.
7 There have been stories in the paper, and
8 I get infrequent reports about the food
9 offerings from time to time at home.

10 What I want to ask you about
11 now is the issue of either exercise or
12 physical education. How often do
13 students have what any of us -- Mr.
14 Vallas?

15 MR. VALLAS: I'm looking for
16 Margie Wiesner.

17 Al, come on up.

18 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Your folks
19 are operating at a very high level. They
20 know what they're doing. Even though you
21 can't see them, they are moving around,
22 trying to provide you all of the support
23 services that you might need.

24 MR. VALLAS: Well, you know, we
25 like to get those answers right away. We

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2 don't like to say, We'll get back to you
3 tomorrow, because sometimes tomorrow
4 never comes.

5 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: They're
6 already anticipating.

7 MR. BICHNER: Good morning,
8 President Verna, Councilman Nutter.
9 Albert Bichner, Deputy Chief Academic
10 Officer.

11 MR. VALLAS: He hasn't asked a
12 question yet.

13 Go ahead. We are anticipating
14 the question.

15 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: That's a
16 first. Maybe he was looking over my
17 shoulder. He's got the questions
18 already. That's that Al Bichner.

19 For whatever it might be
20 called, whether it's exercise, physical
21 or PE, but commonly referred to as gym,
22 how often do students have gym?

23 MR. BICHNER: Councilman,
24 health and physical education is a 1.5
25 credit requirement in the State of

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2 Pennsylvania. Currently at high school
3 levels, students take health and physical
4 education in 9th grade. It is then in
5 other years offered as an elective.

6 MR. VALLAS: And at the
7 elementary school level, I think they're
8 required to have it one day a week.

9 MR. BICHNER: That is correct.

10 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: One day a
11 week?

12 MR. BICHNER: That's the state
13 mandate.

14 MR. THORNTON: Many of the
15 schools are as many as three, depending
16 on staffings there, but a minimum of one
17 in all K-to-8's.

18 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Is that
19 throughout the entire school year?

20 MR. THORNTON: That's
21 throughout the entire school year, yes.

22 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: One day a
23 week?

24 MR. THORNTON: Minimum as many
25 as three in some buildings.

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2 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Are there
3 any circumstances or situations that you
4 might be aware of that the students may
5 have gym once a week for a certain number
6 of months at a time and then no gym for a
7 while and then it possibly comes back at
8 a later point in time?

9 MR. THORNTON: I've been made
10 aware of two, and corrective action has
11 been taken on both of those instances
12 where what the particular principal was
13 doing, for example, first market period
14 was gym, it was twice a week. Second
15 marking period, it was nothing. Third
16 marking period was nothing. Come back
17 with two days a week. At the end, the
18 tally came out the same. However, we
19 thought it was important to have that
20 part of the youngster's weekly routine,
21 and it's been corrected in the two
22 instances that I've been made aware of.

23 COUNCILMAN NUTTER:
24 Notwithstanding the state requirement, I
25 think we're all aware of a rather

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2 national phenomenon of childhood obesity.
3 And I know they keep changing these
4 things, but my recollection is, the most
5 recent USDA chart, which I guess used to
6 be a pyramid and might be some other
7 shape by now, seemed to indicate that
8 young people and teenagers should have 30
9 to 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

10 How does our health and
11 physical education program match up with
12 what the experts are telling us kids
13 should be getting?

14 MR. VALLAS: It doesn't. I
15 think most schools offer gym about one
16 hour a week. It was interesting, in
17 Illinois, a lot of school superintendents
18 used to complain because PE was required
19 every single day. In fact, PE was
20 required in high school 9 through 12, and
21 Illinois was one of, I think, three or
22 four states that had that mandate. Most
23 states have the one day a week or one
24 period a week or in the high schools have
25 the 9th through maybe the 10th grade

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2 mandate.

3 So we don't stack up. Now,
4 that begs the question, What would it
5 take for you to stack up? It would take
6 us negotiating a longer school day,
7 because the question is -- we now are
8 spending two hours a day on reading at
9 the primary grade level, 90 minutes on
10 math and 45 minutes on science, and at
11 the middle grade levels, it's an hour and
12 a half reading -- 90 reading, 90 math, 45
13 minutes in science. And with our
14 curriculum offerings at the high school
15 level, imposing another four-year mandate
16 obviously crowds out some of the other
17 courses.

18 So about the only way to
19 address that issue would be to, in
20 effect, lengthen the day so you could add
21 more instructional time, and that really
22 becomes a collective bargaining issue.

23 What we've tried to do is,
24 we've tried to address that issue through
25 our after-school and extended-day

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2 program, as we're doing on so many
3 things. We've tried to put gifted and
4 accelerated into all of our schools by
5 doing gifted and accelerated extended
6 day. We've tried to address the issue of
7 English language immersion by doing
8 after-school and extended-day English
9 language immersion to help our ESL
10 population.

11 Most of our after-school
12 programs have one hour of academics,
13 strict academics, and then one hour of
14 enrichment, and sometimes it's
15 recreational, sometimes it's
16 intellectually recreational, like the
17 Odyssey of the Mind Program.

18 So that is about the only way
19 we can address this issue. That, and our
20 Saturday programs. But trying to fit PE
21 in every single day would force us to
22 sacrifice some of our time devoted to the
23 core curriculum mandates.

24 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I
25 understand that, and for the moment, I'm

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2 certainly not suggesting, notwithstanding
3 what the USDA recommends, that we should
4 have gym every day, but I guess we're now
5 in a situation where somewhere between
6 none after 9th grade and every day, on
7 the other extreme, and I guess I don't
8 really understand if the student is
9 performing at age and on grade, at the
10 age of 14 when students, I think, if I'm
11 remembering biology and physiology,
12 physiology in any way, shape or form -- I
13 mean, they're about to go through
14 probably the greatest physical, mental,
15 physiological changes in their lives.
16 Why we would only require gym or some
17 physical education? Some activity that
18 might help to calm some of the other
19 stuff that's raging through various parts
20 of their bodies just for 9th grade seems
21 a little strange to me, even if it were
22 just for once a week.

23 How many young people are
24 signing up for gym after 9th grade?

25 MR. VALLAS: I can certainly

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2 give you those numbers.

3 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay.

4 Forget about the state mandate.

5 MR. VALLAS: You'll get no
6 argument from me, but my response is the
7 same. At the elementary school level,
8 you're restricted by -- your day goes to
9 3:15, 3:30, depending on the school --

10 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: 3:19.

11 MR. VALLAS: -- which is why
12 we're doing extended day. We have
13 extended-day sports and recreation, which
14 is why we're expanding our athletic
15 programs in our middle school, so that
16 there are more extracurricular athletic
17 activities for kids to be involved in.

18 Just, for example, with middle
19 schools alone, we've gone from 152 sport
20 teams in the middle schools to 336 sport
21 teams, and by next year, we'll be at 461.

22 So we're expanding the number
23 of extracurricular athletic activities in
24 the schools. We're doing the same thing
25 with high school athletics. We've gone

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2 from 473 to 664. Next year, we'll be at
3 773.

4 So we're trying to address that
5 issue by, in effect, lengthening our day
6 in the form of after-school and
7 extended-day. But I'd love to have a
8 stronger PE mandate, but financial
9 constraints and contractual time
10 constraints force us to provide those
11 services in an extended-day format.

12 So it's a case where I agree
13 with you 100 percent, but the contract
14 and obviously the financial restrictions
15 and the unwillingness to trade off, to do
16 the trade-offs which we would have to do,
17 without any additional resources or, for
18 that matter, without more radical changes
19 to the contract, which would cost us
20 obviously, precludes us from doing it.

21 So we're going to continue to
22 focus on our after-school, extended-day
23 programs and our summer school programs
24 as a way to provide more extracurricular
25 athletic activities.

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2 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Has it
3 always been an elective after 9th grade?

4 MR. VALLAS: It's always been a
5 mandate. It's always been an elective
6 mandate at the state level.

7 MR. BICHNER: In general,
8 Councilman Nutter, even with experience
9 in the suburban districts, it's very,
10 very difficult with all the No Child Left
11 Behind mandates and credits and demands
12 on AYP to have electives. It has to be
13 strongly encouraged. And, in general,
14 most school districts run their health
15 and physical education credits in the 9th
16 grade year and, once again, are heavily
17 dependent on electives, and, once again,
18 you have to carve out scheduling time to
19 provide meaningful electives and
20 attractive electives for young people.

21 So, for example, health and
22 weight training, aerobic exercise are
23 some of the electives that you can
24 develop to attract young people to take
25 meaningful courses.

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2 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Well, okay.

3 I mean, it sounds like a bit of the
4 age-old dilemma here of the difference
5 between what's in the kid's interest
6 versus what's in the adult's interest.
7 And I thought for the most part we were
8 trying to do things that were more in the
9 kids' interest.

10 MR. VALLAS: Let me respond by
11 that's -- we are doing things that are in
12 the kids' interest.

13 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: That's not
14 a criticism of you or what you're trying
15 to get done. I'm saying you got time,
16 money, contracts. I mean, these are --
17 so I put all of those -- those are all
18 the adult issues.

19 MR. VALLAS: You're right.

20 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: That's
21 about adults.

22 MR. VALLAS: You're right. I
23 agree with you on that.

24 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: It's about
25 money. It's about time. It's about how

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2 I'm going to spend what I do. And you
3 and I have had discussions about the
4 issue of is the tail wagging the dog. I
5 thought this was a system that was set up
6 to educate young people --

7 MR. VALLAS: Yeah.

8 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: -- versus
9 an employment system.

10 MR. VALLAS: And a lot of the
11 mandates are dictated for reasons other
12 than what's in the best interest of the
13 children. There are a lot of mandates
14 that probably should be changed.

15 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. I'd
16 like to have a fuller discussion. This
17 was already in my notes. But has any
18 independent evaluation been done of
19 comparison over time between the
20 performance of public schools versus
21 charter schools?

22 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. Every year
23 when we issue our report, our
24 accountability report, we look at the
25 performance of the public schools, the

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2 privately managed schools and the charter
3 schools, and we actually do comparisons.
4 In fact, the media always asks when we
5 release our test scores and when we
6 release -- and when the state releases
7 its PSSA scores and its AYP schools, they
8 always ask us to actually give them that
9 specific comparison.

10 So, yeah. We've done
11 three-year comparisons on how the
12 District traditional public schools stand
13 up to the privately managed schools and
14 the charter schools, and that is very
15 detailed. There's no mandate. That's
16 where we have a strong mandate over the
17 charters.

18 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: This is a
19 District analysis?

20 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely. Well,
21 it's actually -- on the PSSA, it's the
22 state information. We lay it out for
23 comparative purposes, but the state on
24 the PSSA test scores, it's really their
25 analysis. It's their information.

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2 On the TerraNovas, we do our
3 own in-house analysis. TerraNova
4 actually puts it out, the TerraNova
5 testing company. We display it in a way
6 so that you can look at comparisons.

7 One other thing is the ARC,
8 which is the Accountability Review
9 Council, independent council, created by
10 the legislature to oversee the School
11 District's performance to look at the
12 School District results and to determine
13 whether or not what the School District
14 is putting out is legitimate. They've
15 now done a two-year analysis of the
16 School District. They are actually
17 gearing up to do a comprehensive analysis
18 of EMO schools and the charter schools,
19 an analysis that they're going to
20 complete in the coming year. So that
21 will be the first, what I call, forensic
22 analysis of how charters are doing
23 vis-a-vis the public -- they'll go beyond
24 the test scores. This is an examination
25 of charter school and privately managed

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2 school performance beyond the test
3 scores.

4 And then, finally, there have
5 been some independent studies that have
6 been done on the performance of these
7 so-called EMOs by Research for Action and
8 by the Rand Corporation, et cetera, where
9 they've looked at the EMOs and they've
10 looked at the EMO performance.

11 Rand, I think, was actually
12 financed by Edison. So you can make your
13 determination as to whether or not that's
14 an analysis you want to be making
15 referral to, although Rand does have a
16 very, very good reputation.

17 But Research for Action has
18 done their own analysis or they've done
19 their own study into EMOs.

20 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And do you
21 agree with their analysis?

22 MR. VALLAS: By and large, I
23 do. I do. And if I can characterize
24 their analysis -- well, even the analysis
25 done by Rand, which is a more intensive,

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2 deeper analysis, I think the EMOs have --
3 they have not performed as well as
4 District schools as a whole, but their
5 test scores have not been far below that
6 of the District's.

7 I'll also point out that the
8 charters have done well in aggregate both
9 on the PSSAs and the TerraNovas, and
10 while the charters have not performed as
11 well as District schools, there are many
12 individual charters that have performed
13 as well and, in some cases, better than
14 District schools, while there's many
15 charters that have performed far worse
16 than District schools.

17 I will tell you this, though:
18 All the EMO schools, Councilman, and all
19 the charter schools have outperformed the
20 state in terms of the overall growth. So
21 the growth among public schools, charter
22 schools, privately managed schools, it's
23 close. The public schools have performed
24 the best in aggregate, the EMOs second,
25 the charter schools first. But the

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2 aggregate growth in test scores on PSSA
3 and TerraNova in all three categories has
4 been very, very solid, and in all three
5 categories, we have outperformed the
6 state.

7 So, by and large, I'm generally
8 satisfied with the progress that has been
9 made on the part of most of the EMO-run
10 schools. And I'm a supporter of
11 charters, and there are clearly a large
12 number of charters that are doing very
13 well. There's a significant number of
14 charters that are not doing so well
15 either, and obviously that day of
16 reckoning will come when the charters
17 come before the School Reform Commission
18 for renewal.

19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay.

20 Madam Chair, what I'd like to
21 do is, I have four questions, which I'd
22 like to put on the record, to which I do
23 not need an answer at this moment. But
24 between our own record-keeping and the
25 tremendous resources of Mr. Vallas and

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2 his team, what I'd like to ask is if they
3 could just get back to me, forward the
4 answers back to the Chair.

5 This will be very painful for
6 you, Mr. Vallas, but I'm going to ask
7 these questions, and if I could rely on
8 Ms. Lewis next to you to restrain you, I
9 do not want you to attempt to respond.

10 Okay. The first is regarding
11 the high school reform agenda. I'd like
12 to get a better sense of what the plan is
13 for our overall high school reform. In
14 specifics, I'd like to get better
15 information about issues of safety, the
16 relevance of the current high school
17 curriculum to what's going on in the
18 workforce, where the job growth is or
19 where we anticipate it to be. School
20 culture issues, just how are students
21 functioning in the school environment.
22 You have plans for smaller high schools.
23 I'd like to know how that's going, as
24 well as promotion policies. Have there
25 been any changes in promotion policy and

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2 what are we doing with students who are
3 reaching 18 plus and are still in school.

4 Second, how is the high school
5 reform agenda in line with the Governor's
6 commission on college and career success
7 and, of course, the 720 project and the
8 like, college and career preparedness and
9 awareness opportunities for going to
10 college or being ready for the workforce.

11 The third question is around
12 the budget for high schools specifically.
13 How is your funding in concert with the
14 kinds of reforms that you're trying to
15 make, where do you have the dollars to do
16 what you need to do and where there are
17 shortfalls.

18 You have an Office of College
19 and Career Awareness. I'd like to know
20 specifically what their budget is, how
21 many people, and what the impact is in
22 relationship to the high school reform
23 agenda.

24 There's a section in this book
25 tabbed 5, the extended learning

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2 opportunities. I'd like to know what the
3 costs or funding levels are for each of
4 those items for this year and anything
5 that you know you're expecting to get for
6 the future, as well as your funding for
7 the smaller high school initiative.

8 Lastly, facilities and capital
9 improvements. I've had a briefing with
10 you about schools in my Councilmanic
11 District, but I'm particularly interested
12 in the science area. I'd like to know
13 about the condition of laboratories. It
14 is my understanding that some of the
15 schools may not have fully functioning
16 labs. I'd like to get an update on
17 what's going on with those. And your
18 evaluation of when you're able to
19 implement fully the capital improvement
20 program, what the status of our
21 infrastructure will be. That's it.
22 Thank you.

23 Thank you, Madam Chair.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

25 You're welcome.

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2 I know that Councilman Rizzo
3 has been anxiously awaiting his turn, but
4 I do have, Councilman, just two questions
5 I would like to ask. I haven't had my
6 turn yet today.

7 Mr. Vallas, on the budget
8 detail, Page 63, the graph on employee
9 benefits jumps from 30.4 percent in FY05
10 to 42.9 percent in FY06. Can you explain
11 how this increase by 12.5 percent is --
12 how could that be in one year?

13 MR. HARRIS: Wayne Harris,
14 Budget Director.

15 There's three things happening
16 that drive that jump. The first one is
17 that we, unlike the City of Philadelphia,
18 we do not run our own pension plan.
19 We're part of the Piecers Plan through
20 the state. They tell us what the rate
21 must be, and we pay in the employer's
22 share directly to them. That jumps from
23 4.69 percent to 6.46 percent in one year,
24 and that's a fairly significant jump.

25 The other two things that are

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2 driving the jump is that our salaries are
3 basically growing at three percent. We
4 have annual three percent raises, but our
5 healthcare costs are jumping at 12
6 percent, because we have a 12 percent
7 Independence Blue Cross cap on our
8 contract. And as part of our contracts
9 with almost all of our unions, we have an
10 11 or an 11 and a half percent increase
11 for dental, optical and prescription.

12 So those are those costs.

13 Plus, in FY05, we had sort of a slightly
14 one-time benefit of suppression of the
15 costs, because as part of the contract
16 negotiations with the PFT, we received a
17 six percent pre-payment discount with
18 Independence Blue Cross that lowered our
19 healthcare costs radically, and we
20 also -- actually, they rolled back the
21 cost of the healthcare when the contract
22 was signed in late October or early
23 November.

24 So it's something of a
25 combination of an artificially low number

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2 in '05 and then a return to usual in '06.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: But
4 according to the information presented,
5 it would appear that the largest increase
6 is because of workers' comp.

7 MR. HARRIS: Yes. That's
8 another point. The workers' comp number
9 is the result of a bond issue that we
10 issued. We issued a \$20 million bond
11 issue in Fiscal Year '05. That is not
12 for normal workers' comp costs, but it
13 has to flow through our budget. That's
14 what the accountants make us do. So \$5.7
15 million was paid out --

16 MR. VALLAS: They're
17 settlements.

18 MR. HARRIS: Right --
19 (continued) in '05 and 14.3 million will
20 be paid out in '06 in order to settle
21 with people who have been on workers'
22 comp for a very long time. I believe we
23 refer to them as aged accounts. And so
24 what that does is, it lowers our ongoing
25 workers' comp costs by more than two and

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2 a half million dollars a year, which is
3 significantly more than the cost of the
4 bonds, which is why we did it, but it
5 creates a slightly artificial look.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It's
7 over \$29 million estimated. I think if
8 you look at Page 62.

9 MR. HARRIS: No, but that \$29
10 million is made up of two pieces. It's
11 made up of a 14.3 million of
12 extraordinary payouts from the bond and
13 then the remainder, which would be in the
14 neighborhood of 15.2 million, is the
15 regular workers' comp that we're paying
16 out to people who are on workers'
17 compensation on a regular basis.

18 MR. VALLAS: See, what we did
19 was, we issued a bond to, in effect, get
20 people to have settlements, to get people
21 off our workmen's comp roll. We're doing
22 about \$14 million in payouts in
23 settlements. The cost of the \$14 million
24 bond is -- I don't know. What is it, 2
25 million a year or something like that?

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2 MR. HARRIS: I think it's less.

3 MR. VALLAS: It's less than
4 that. The annual debt service of that
5 bond is, I don't know, a million and a
6 half, 2 million a year, but in return,
7 we're knocking significant numbers of
8 people off our workmen's comp rolls. I
9 think the average annualized savings is
10 about 5.5 million a year and growing.

11 Overall, we've been able to
12 reduce our workmen's comp expenditures
13 actually by about, in terms of getting
14 people off the rolls, by about \$7
15 million. Our goal is to reduce our
16 expenditures by about 10 million. In the
17 meantime, though, at least during the
18 initial years of this, we are paying off
19 people -- we're paying off people, that's
20 the wrong word to say. We are basically
21 paying -- we're doing settlements. Some
22 of these settlements are sometimes
23 \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, sometimes
24 more. But the bottom line here is -- and
25 I can submit to the Chair or I can submit

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2 to the Council President's office the
3 analysis of our workmen's comp claim
4 settlements, and I think you'll see that
5 we're realizing significant savings.
6 We're almost where we've projected, but
7 this big jump in that line is due
8 specifically to these settlements.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
10 you.

11 Also, can you summarize the
12 stadium agreement revenues you received,
13 and why are the funds doubling in FY07?
14 And I am looking at Page 70. Apparently
15 in FY06, it was 1.1 million. In FY07, it
16 would be 2.9 million.

17 MR. HARRIS: Right. There are,
18 I believe, three different stadiums that
19 are involved in the agreement through --
20 it was obviously through City Council
21 getting this for us, and I think that
22 what happened is that the first one to
23 come online was the Wachovia Center, and
24 that's the 1.1 million. And the Lincoln
25 Financial Field and the Citizens Bank

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2 Park agreements just kick in, and that's
3 why the jump in the amount happened. So
4 you go from having one stadium agreement
5 to three.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Why
7 would it be just this year? Hasn't
8 Citizens Park been open for three years
9 now?

10 MS. OLANIPEKUN-LEWIS: It's the
11 way the agreements were structured, is my
12 understanding, that each one -- each of
13 the agreements had a year specific in
14 which we would receive the portion of the
15 pilot payment to the School District.
16 They did not all kick in on the same
17 year, according to the way the agreements
18 were structured.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Would
20 that be an indefinite --

21 MS. OLANIPEKUN-LEWIS: It is.
22 It is. And it's indefinite because we
23 did -- it's part of the agreement. And
24 that's why we were able to successfully
25 bond offer, because it is an indefinite

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2 agreement.

3 Last year, we issued a \$30
4 million bond, for which the proceeds we
5 used went to all of athletic supplies.

6 MR. VALLAS: Athletic, music,
7 our supersites, our gyms. It was the
8 reference that I made to Councilwoman
9 Brown's Council-wide initiative.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I was
11 questioning the increase, because it's
12 quite a bit of money.

13 Councilman Rizzo, I thank you
14 for giving me the opportunity.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: You're the
16 boss.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It's
18 your turn.

19 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Mr. Vallas,
20 I'm not suggesting that this is your
21 responsibility, but occasionally I talk
22 to people, especially in the business
23 community, that people come from high
24 school and they don't have some of the
25 basic skills. I'm not talking about the

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2 arithmetic, the writing and all the other
3 academics, but some of the basic stuff.

4 Years ago, I understand there
5 was a program, there was a relationship
6 with a bank that bankers came into the
7 school -- and I understand there may be
8 something with Wachovia in this area --
9 where young people are disciplined and
10 they get a checking account, they learn
11 how to write a check, they learn how to
12 do some of the things that prepare them
13 for the work world.

14 A few years ago, we discussed
15 and had some banks interested in and gave
16 it to the School District. And I ran
17 into one of those people, and they said
18 to me they never had heard a word back
19 from the School District. Because they
20 wanted to come in and even possibly open
21 accounts for some of the students, match
22 the deposits that they make into the
23 accounts. I'm wondering if you could
24 brief me or one of your staff tell me, do
25 we have something that resembles what

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2 I've just described in the School
3 District, and, if not, couldn't we do
4 something in the District to again
5 prepare some of our graduates for the
6 real world and the very basic thing?

7 I know we're getting away from
8 check-writing. We're doing a lot of
9 things electronically, but even if it's
10 electronics, if it's the computer
11 programs that teach them how to manage
12 money online or write a check. Because I
13 know that there are many banking
14 institutions in this region that would
15 love to partner with you and be able to
16 come to the various schools, especially
17 when young people, maybe in their
18 freshman year, by the time they graduate
19 with a program, they'd have a few bucks
20 in their pocket and the ability to manage
21 that money.

22 Maybe you can tell me, is there
23 something going on? Does Wachovia have
24 some relationship?

25 MR. VALLAS: I remember meeting

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2 with Wachovia on this initiative. Let me
3 point out that the new high school
4 graduation requirements not only require
5 obviously meeting the state standards for
6 graduation, but we also now require that
7 students have a technology certification.
8 It could be like Microsoft Office or the
9 International Driver's License. We are
10 also requiring what we call our version
11 of a financial literacy certification,
12 which means that when students graduate,
13 they have to have gone through a
14 financial literacy program. For example,
15 the stock market game. All the 12th
16 graders right now, in social studies,
17 they go through the stock market game.
18 And it's just not to teach the stock
19 market, it's to teach financial literacy.

20 Merrill Lynch has been pushing
21 the stock market game nationally. It's
22 generated a lot of publicity.

23 So what we're trying to do with
24 our high school kids is, when they
25 graduate, we want them to have the

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2 following things: We want them to have a
3 state-recognized diploma, meaning all the
4 state standards, hopefully quality AP
5 courses, things like that, so when the
6 university looks at the transcript, they
7 go, Oh, yeah, that's college AP, that's
8 not some local invented gift program.

9 Number two, we want all the
10 students to have a technology
11 certification, preferably the
12 International Driver's License, which is
13 recognized everywhere, ICDL.

14 Third, we want them to have a
15 financial literacy certification; in
16 other words, have been through a
17 financial literacy program so they know
18 about savings, investments, mortgages,
19 things like that. There's a specific
20 comprehensive curriculum for that.

21 Fourth, we want them to have
22 their driver's license, which is why
23 we've dramatically expanded driver's ed.
24 We haven't brought driver's ed to all the
25 schools, but all the kids can participate

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2 in a driver's ed program. We have
3 Saturday driver's ed throughout the year
4 at a growing number of sites.

5 And, fifth, we want them if
6 they're 18 years old to be registered to
7 vote, which is why we have our voter
8 registration campaign, where the
9 objective is to register every
10 18-year-old.

11 Those are the five things.
12 Does that mean every single student this
13 year is going to have all five things?
14 No. Does this mean every single incoming
15 freshman and sophomore by the time they
16 graduate in three years and in two years
17 will have that? The answer is yes.
18 Because we began to impose these
19 mandates -- we've imposed these mandates
20 over the last two years for the incoming
21 freshmen. So we're doing the very things
22 we're talking about.

23 I'm particularly obsessed with
24 the financial literacy thing, because I
25 think the financial -- our children don't

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2 know how to save. They have no sense of
3 basic finances.

4 So you're right on target. It
5 is a critical thing.

6 I remember when I met with the
7 Wachovia people, I actually hooked them
8 up with, prior to Al's arrival, with
9 Craig Williams, and I encouraged Craig to
10 include them with the Merrill Lynch stock
11 market program. And there's actually two
12 other programs we're working at in the
13 schools. So we're looking at doing that.

14 At the middle grade level,
15 we're looking at doing something at the
16 middle grades level. There are some
17 models out there for middle grade
18 instruction. It's kind of a take-off of
19 the whole micro society model. So we're
20 not there yet, but we'd like to do
21 something similar to middle grades.

22 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: I assure you
23 that the banking community in this City
24 would love to support a program that
25 would at the -- the educational

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2 professionals are the ones that would
3 have to decide.

4 At what point, like you just
5 said, the middle school -- which we're
6 not going to have soon, right?

7 MR. VALLAS: Savings accounts,
8 6th, 7th and 8th grade.

9 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Exactly.
10 Can you imagine an institution -- and one
11 of the interesting things, why they have
12 such appeal, one of the things that
13 people don't change a lot in their
14 lifetime is their banking relationship.
15 So if they get them young and they match
16 some of the deposits that they make,
17 those young people will have a loyalty to
18 that institution. And, again, the
19 statistics show -- and, I mean, I look at
20 myself. I haven't changed my bank since
21 I think my first account, I was 13, and I
22 still have it.

23 So I would love to --

24 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely.

25 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: -- revisit

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 this issue.

3 MR. VALLAS: We will.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Talk to the
5 Bank of America, talk to again Wachovia,
6 because I believe -- I'm trying to think
7 of the gentleman's name with Wachovia
8 that does this.

9 MR. VALLAS: Don Scott.

10 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Don Scott,
11 with the business relationship with the
12 City. So I'd like to get that back on
13 track, because I think it would be good
14 for our local banks and also for a young
15 person. Because I was just talking about
16 this yesterday, and believe it or not, I
17 went back and I found my passbook that I
18 still have. I never tossed it as a young
19 person when I first opened it, and then
20 they went away.

21 The other issue -- and I'll get
22 with whoever you think is the appropriate
23 person on getting that.

24 MR. VALLAS: We'll follow
25 through on the banking issue. There's a

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2 program out of New York that I just read
3 about in the New York Times -- or New
4 York Post the other day where these banks
5 will open accounts for children as small
6 as \$5, \$10, and then the parents actually
7 give them the first \$10, they give them a
8 couple dollars a month. There's some
9 very good models out there.

10 So we'll move beyond the
11 financial literacy thing and we'll
12 approach the banks again, and I'll give
13 you a status report. And we certainly
14 can do more with the financial
15 institutions in town.

16 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Terrific.

17 The last thing that I would
18 like to -- and I stick to my ten minutes.

19 Could you bring us current on
20 GAMP? I know that recently I've gotten
21 some communications that there were some
22 budget -- and since this is what we're
23 here about, the budget. Is everything
24 back on track with GAMP?

25 MR. VALLAS: What happened at

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2 GAMP, because the Council President asked
3 me the very same question yesterday --

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Oh, I'm
5 sorry.

6 MR. VALLAS: No, no. Very
7 quickly, the answer to GAMP is, we went
8 out to bid on GAMP and the bid came in
9 about \$6 million, \$7 million higher than
10 had been projected. We've made a slight
11 adjustment in that bid that I don't think
12 really undermines the project, but there
13 was one provider -- it was the case of
14 the steel. You had to be a certified
15 steel erector to, in effect -- this was
16 not a mandate. This was in the RFP. You
17 had to be a certified steel erector as
18 part of the RFP compliance. Well,
19 apparently we discovered there's only one
20 like certified steel erector, I don't
21 know, in the metropolitan area or in the
22 state. So he figured, I've got a
23 monopoly, I'm going to charge the
24 District whatever the heck I want to
25 charge the District.

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2 We went back and we changed
3 that, and believe me, it's not in any way
4 jeopardizing the quality of the project,
5 and we removed that certified steel
6 erector provision.

7 And that, in itself, will save
8 us how much?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Roughly
10 a million is the estimate.

11 MR. VALLAS: So there were
12 little items like that where we went in
13 and we modified the bid somewhat.

14 I don't believe that the --
15 we're not going to change the substance
16 of the project.

17 And when are we supposed to get
18 the bids back?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We're
20 supposed to advertise in May.

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, I'll
22 read the transcript. I apologize.
23 Rarely I duck out of here, but I must
24 have ducked out yesterday when that
25 question was asked. So I apologize for

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 having --

3 MR. VALLAS: We are getting
4 some -- because there's so much
5 construction going on in the City, it's
6 kind of a sellers' market now, and so we
7 are experiencing some cases where the
8 bids are coming in higher than we had
9 projected. If they come in too high,
10 we'll go out and we'll rebid. We think
11 GAMP was too high. We think some of the
12 responses were not serious responses.

13 We know we're probably going to
14 still pay more, but we're not going to
15 undermine the substance of the addition.

16 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So GAMP, in
17 a nutshell, GAMP is on track?

18 MR. VALLAS: Well, if we are
19 able to break ground on GAMP before the
20 end of the summer, we will have GAMP --
21 it will take how many years construction?
22 Two years?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It will
24 take roughly 20 months for construction.

25 MR. VALLAS: So we're talking

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 about '08, September of '08.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: That's
4 terrific. And in the event I don't have
5 an opportunity to discuss issues with
6 you, the one really from yesterday that I
7 really want to stay on track with is the
8 fact that -- I thought about this all
9 night. The City trying to charge you the
10 market value for the buildings, the land
11 for where you want to build schools, I
12 think is not an appropriate thing, and
13 I'd like us to stay on that. And
14 whatever we can do -- I'm sure I can
15 speak for my colleagues, Council,
16 myself -- to help resolve this issue,
17 because I think it puts a burden on you
18 that's unnecessary.

19 MR. VALLAS: We'll give you the
20 details.

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Would you
22 keep us posted on that?

23 MR. VALLAS: We'll give you the
24 details on all those outstanding issues.
25 We'll submit it to you. We'll submit it

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 to the Council President for
3 distribution.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: Great. I
5 appreciate that.

6 Thank you, Madam President.
7 Eight minutes and ten seconds.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We're
9 timing you.

10 The Chair recognizes
11 Councilwoman Blackwell.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you, Madam President.

14 I'm aware and support all our
15 transitional programs. Would you repeat
16 to me what you said about -- because
17 truancy is not a simple issue anymore. I
18 guess it's tied to the attendance model.
19 How do you determine it? And certainly
20 truancy and drop-out rates, I was just
21 reading through a student notebook from
22 '05 where they talked about students who
23 are not in school and who haven't
24 formally dropped out.

25 But how do we deal with the

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2 term "truancy" in schools today? I'm
3 sure it's tied to public school, and how
4 do we deal with that outreach?

5 MR. VALLAS: I've been
6 neglectful on this. We were supposed to
7 have a breakdown of what the process is
8 for determining -- my truancy person
9 isn't here. She should have been here.
10 I'll give you --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You
12 can get back to the Chair and then we
13 can --

14 MR. VALLAS: Let me get back to
15 you on that. Again, someone isn't
16 declared truant unless they have, I
17 believe, been absent from school for
18 something like six consecutive days, or
19 it's six days unexcused, then they become
20 truant. But let me give you the
21 sequence. In fact, I'll try to get you
22 the sequence before the close of
23 questioning today, and then we can
24 certainly read it into the record.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And

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2 truancy versus drop-out rates, how we
3 know when it starts.

4 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely. We'll
5 get you those numbers.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
7 whether or not we have truant officers.

8 MR. VALLAS: Okay. Because
9 that question was asked, I think, twice
10 yesterday, and I should have had an
11 answer on that.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's
13 all right. As the President says, if we
14 have them and if we do, how many and how
15 they're distributed.

16 MR. VALLAS: We do. Just for
17 my team, we need to, number one, get the
18 steps by which -- in other words, when is
19 a parent called at home, when is the home
20 visited and when is someone declared a
21 truant and when do we go to Family Court.

22 And then we'll also get you the
23 statistics, because someone else asked us
24 about the percentage increase or decrease
25 in the truancy rate. We'll get you the

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2 attendance over the last three or four
3 years and we'll get you truancy rates.
4 I'll try to get them to you before the
5 afternoon.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you. And that ties into the whole issue
8 of community court. We know we have
9 community court, and I don't know your
10 relationship to that, if you all
11 participate in that or if it's just the
12 court process, and just where all that
13 stuff starts and stops when it comes to
14 attendance.

15 MR. VALLAS: We deal with
16 Family Court, and Family Court has a
17 roving court that holds truancy hearings
18 in the individual community, and I
19 believe we're still subsidizing that.

20 MR. THORNTON: Correct.

21 MR. VALLAS: So we work
22 obviously very closely with Family Court.
23 We actually have an office over in Family
24 Court so that we could coordinate our
25 efforts. And then, of course, we have

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2 this roving court that goes into the
3 communities and holds truancy hearings,
4 and I think --

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's
6 probably community court. They had a
7 meeting on a Friday, but they invited me
8 to it. I know Judge Panepinto.
9 Panepinto used to be involved. I know
10 Judge Dougherty and Dumas are involved in
11 a lot of these youth issues. So maybe
12 you can direct us.

13 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely. We
14 can get you the details on that.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you.

17 MR. VALLAS: We do subsidize
18 that.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
22 you.

23 The Chair recognizes
24 Councilwoman Brown.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 Madam President.

3 A couple remaining items. If
4 you do not have it today, please forward
5 to the Chair the progress that's been
6 made with regards to the provision of art
7 and music teachers and what's
8 outstanding, particularly in the
9 elementary school level.

10 MR. VALLAS: Sure.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Again,
12 looking at research where it says if you
13 capture their attention early in those
14 areas, it just helps in so many other
15 ways later on down the line.

16 Secondly, a number of questions
17 were posed to the Streets Commissioner
18 regarding the proposed allocation from
19 Congressman Fattah for installation of
20 school traffic lights, and from what I
21 understand, because those dollars are not
22 in hand, either the School District or
23 the Streets Department cannot proceed
24 with the installation of lights with the
25 next schools that are on the list.

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2 MR. VALLAS: We'll try to give
3 you an update on that, too.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please.

5 And --

6 MR. VALLAS: We provided a
7 million dollars in capital dollars for
8 those traffic lights, I believe, last
9 year. So we at least put some money.
10 And they're done.

11 Can we give her a status report
12 now on the traffic lights?

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please.

14 MR. VALLAS: Or do you need to
15 get the information?

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You can
17 forward it.

18 MR. VALLAS: We'll forward it
19 to you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And then,
21 finally, we are scheduled to have another
22 hearing on Wireless Philadelphia and
23 EarthLink come April 20th.

24 MR. VALLAS: Great.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So we

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2 don't want to miss the opportunity for
3 the School District to provide to the
4 Chair specifics about how --

5 MR. VALLAS: The classroom
6 modernization.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Exactly.
8 So if you could provide the details, that
9 helps us going forward.

10 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely. We'll
11 be prepared, if you'd like, we'll be
12 prepared to make a very brief
13 presentation on the classroom
14 modernization and show you a physical
15 model of what the classroom will look
16 like.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

18 MR. VALLAS: We'll get that to
19 you ahead of time, and then you can
20 decide whether or not you want us just to
21 submit it to the group or make a formal
22 presentation on April 20th.

23 We have April 20th? Okay.

24 Pat Renzulli, our Director of
25 Technology.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Finally,
3 we know that the School District has been
4 a leader with regards to MBE/WBE
5 participation. My question is, what are
6 the call-back provisions for prime
7 contractors of professional firms who
8 don't get it and don't honor up to the
9 agreements they make with the subs?

10 MR. VALLAS: I'm going to ask
11 Kim Sangster from Contracts and
12 Procurement.

13 I will tell you this: Just
14 very quickly, if they don't honor those
15 provisions, they're barred from future
16 business. So that can be a
17 disqualification for future business, not
18 to mention the fact that we're just not
19 going to allow them to complete the
20 project without pressing them to respond.

21 So it's a zero tolerance
22 policy. It's the same thing with -- as
23 you know, we're very aggressive about
24 hiring firms, and we have a Small
25 Contractors Program. Likewise, if

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2 someone comes in and they're not paying
3 prevailing wage, they can be barred from
4 getting future work, too. But if you
5 indulge us a few minutes, I'll ask Kim to
6 give you an update.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

8 MS. SANGSTER: Kimberly
9 Sangster, Procurement Services.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
11 afternoon.

12 MS. SANGSTER: Good afternoon,
13 Councilwoman.

14 In terms of the MBE program at
15 the School District of Philadelphia, we
16 consistently over the past three years
17 have had over 20 percent participation in
18 our contracts.

19 In terms of contract
20 compliance, that is one of our highest
21 priorities right now, and we have
22 implemented various tools to assist us in
23 contract compliance. We have asked our
24 contractors to report on a monthly basis
25 the levels of participation and dollar

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2 values that have been awarded to the
3 contractors.

4 We also have implemented a
5 mechanism for us to evaluate by
6 contacting our contractors on a regular
7 basis to see if the performance levels of
8 those contracts have been satisfactory.

9 We do have sanctions in our
10 policies and procedures in the event that
11 contractors don't comply. We can de-bar
12 the vendors from participating further in
13 contracts. We can also withhold payment
14 from those vendors until they comply with
15 the contract provisions, as they have
16 made commitments to the District. We can
17 also issue warning letters to them.

18 So we have different tools that
19 we've been using so far, but with any
20 effort, there are some challenges that
21 we've encountered with some of our
22 contractors. So we have to use an extra
23 effort on occasion to get our contractors
24 to comply and understand the
25 responsibilities that they have for our

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2 program.

3 In terms of our construction
4 program, that's going very well. We're
5 over 30 percent participation right now
6 with our contracts. Part of that was a
7 result of the Small Contractors Program
8 that was initiated this past summer in
9 conjunction with the Finance Office,
10 Design and Construction, Risk Management
11 and Procurement, where we were able to
12 award 55 contracts to various small
13 minority and women-owned businesses in
14 the tune of over \$3 million for
15 maintenance and repair of our schools.
16 That project was on time and under budget
17 and really is serving as a model for
18 continued progress in terms of
19 participation of our small and minority
20 and women-owned contractors in the City
21 of Philadelphia.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
23 very much for your testimony. That also
24 serves as a model that is possible for
25 other City agencies sometimes, where we

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 get a different kind of feedback on the
3 results. So I thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Mr. Vallas, I thank you and
6 your team of professionals for all that
7 you're doing on behalf of our City's
8 children.

9 Thank you, Madam President.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

11 You're welcome. Thank you.

12 Any other questions?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

15 Seeing none, the Committee will stand in
16 recess until 1:45, at which time we will
17 have public testimony.

18 And, Mr. Vallas, if you are
19 personally unable to be here, I would ask
20 that someone from your office be here so
21 that questions could be answered.

22 MR. VALLAS: We will be well
23 staffed. We will have a number of people
24 here.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 you so much. See you then.

3 (Short recess.)

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
5 afternoon, everyone. The Committee of
6 the Whole is now reconvened.

7 Our first witness will be
8 Shelly Yanoff.

9 Good afternoon. Please
10 identify yourself for the record and
11 proceed with your testimony.

12 MS. YANOFF: Good afternoon.
13 I'm Shelly Yanoff and I am Executive
14 Director of the region's major child
15 advocacy organization, Philadelphia
16 Citizens for Children and Youth, and I've
17 been testifying on behalf of the region's
18 children to you and to the leadership of
19 the School District for a very long time.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes,
21 indeed.

22 MS. YANOFF: I am pleased to
23 note the many improvements that the
24 School District has discussed with you
25 earlier. For the fourth year in a row,

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 the budget, if the state does what it
3 should do, is balanced and student test
4 scores are showing improvements.

5 For the first time in decades,
6 there is actually a capital program that
7 promises to replace some buildings that
8 should have been replaced long ago and to
9 fix up others that have been crying out
10 to be repaired. For the first time in
11 years, we have few vacancies and many
12 more certified and qualified faculty
13 members throughout the District. We
14 celebrate these and other advances.

15 Beginning at the beginning, our
16 schools have more effective early
17 childhood programs and are embarking on
18 important connections with parents of
19 young children. The District has been
20 providing after-school and summer school
21 supports for many students and has
22 established, in collaboration with the
23 City, a variety of behavioral health
24 programs for young as well as middle and
25 high school students who need them. We

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2 are pleased to learn of the promise of
3 new climate managers and teacher coaches
4 in high schools and believe they can help
5 create improved learning environments and
6 new possibilities for students.

7 We commend the expanded
8 educational options for young people at
9 risk of dropping out, but here, as
10 elsewhere in the budget, we need to do
11 much more. There's a waiting list for
12 these programs, and the City's future
13 depends on our being better able to
14 respond to the needs of thousands of
15 these young people. We urge the City and
16 the School District to share your
17 resources and work together on this
18 critical issue.

19 We applaud many of the new
20 programs, starting real partnerships
21 between colleges and high schools,
22 creating international baccalaureate and
23 other spectacular high schools, breaking
24 up the large high schools that were
25 unsuccessful and developing smaller ones

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2 in their places, conducting home visits
3 to parents and offering interventions
4 when students start to fall behind. But
5 there are ongoing needs that are not new,
6 like lowering the counselor-to-student
7 ratio, like providing more art and music
8 and drama, like increasing the number and
9 quality of substitute teachers, like
10 smaller class size. We need to do these
11 things as well.

12 If Philadelphia is truly to be
13 "the next great city," we have to do much
14 more and much more quickly about many of
15 our schools. We should not be taking
16 away programs from schools that are
17 working. Rather, we should be supporting
18 them and expanding what has worked for
19 them, whether it's an extra teacher, an
20 extra counselor or a school newspaper.
21 We should be moving even more quickly to
22 do something for those schools that by
23 most measures are not working at all.

24 There are several steps that
25 Council can take to strengthen the

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2 collaboration and the City's future.

3 The children at Willard School
4 should not have to wait while grown-ups
5 who would never send their children to a
6 school in that condition continue to
7 debate. We urge City Council to pass a
8 resolution or to otherwise use your
9 strength to see that the land for Willard
10 is turned over to the School District at
11 no cost so long as the work is begun
12 immediately. Too many children have
13 waited too long.

14 The School Administration and
15 the City have undertaken many joint
16 initiatives, but we believe the City must
17 now assist more. These are, after all,
18 our children, and the success and failure
19 of our schools impact significantly on
20 the future of the City.

21 We recently finished surveying
22 most of the neighborhood high school
23 principals, asking about the schools'
24 needs and strengths. These are the
25 schools that have been left behind. Many

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2 are struggling mightily under difficult
3 conditions. Many of the facilities are
4 severely wanting, with inadequate
5 ventilation, poorly equipped libraries,
6 questionable water supplies, leaking
7 roofs. Many of the students have mental
8 and behavioral health needs. Some are
9 grieving with lives that have been
10 scarred by violence. Their behaviors
11 often reflect the turmoil in their lives.
12 We avoid dealing with these behaviors at
13 serious costs to our schools, the
14 students and our society.

15 The City must support more
16 behavioral health programs in schools.

17 In the middle of almost every
18 one of these schools with great poverty
19 and with pupils with deep familial
20 problems, there is some magic happening.
21 There is a choir or an exceptional
22 after-school program or someone on the
23 staff that talks to and is listened to by
24 many kids. We urge the City to help this
25 magic grow -- should I stop?

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Just
3 a minute, please.

4 (Pause.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm
6 sorry. Please continue.

7 MS. YANOFF: In the middle of
8 almost every one of these troubled
9 schools with great poverty and with
10 pupils with deep familial problems, there
11 is some magic happening. There is a
12 choir or an exceptional after-school
13 program or someone on the staff that
14 talks to and is listened to by many kids.
15 We urge the City to help this magic grow,
16 to support some extra people in those
17 schools, to support more counselors, more
18 social workers, more behavioral health
19 programs. We have a core curriculum. We
20 need to help schools provide more core
21 support. The City has done this with
22 some programs. We need to do it more.

23 In a City that is a cultural
24 center, we have little art and music in
25 many of our schools. In a City with a

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2 growing immigrant population, we need
3 more bilingual books, as well as
4 adequately equipped other resources. In
5 a City that is about to be wireless, we
6 have school buildings that cannot handle
7 technology and do not have enough
8 computers. In one school, for example,
9 we found that kids were learning tax
10 preparation skills, but the computers
11 were too old or out of date to use the
12 required program.

13 In a City that has built a
14 great downtown, this city of
15 neighborhoods needs more support from
16 you, particularly for neighborhood
17 schools. They are where the workforce of
18 the future will or will not be developed.
19 It makes sense for you to invest in them.

20 In the last several years, the
21 City has offered a host of property tax
22 incentives and tax abatements to
23 stimulate more real estate development.
24 While eventually the schools will be able
25 to secure some additional revenue from

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2 this added development, eventually is a
3 long time coming for these kids. Our
4 schools and our children need much more
5 help from the City and the State, and
6 they need it now. We ask Council to hold
7 the schools totally harmless from any
8 present or future tax abatement or
9 incentive consideration and to seek ways
10 to have the schools secure lost support
11 from those that are in place.

12 In testimony earlier, one
13 Councilman asked, What would it take to
14 provide all of our young children with a
15 good early childhood program? At another
16 time, another Councilperson has asked,
17 What would it take to provide a good arts
18 program in all our schools?

19 We have wondered, What would it
20 take to be able to have enough counselors
21 and social workers, teachers, parent
22 support and behavioral health programs
23 for all our kids to assist them, to help
24 them stay in school and learn enough to
25 grow up ready to be who we need them to

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2 be?

3 We can make our schools safe
4 places where teaching and learning take
5 place, where our kids and staff have the
6 technology to become a part of and
7 leaders in this new information age,
8 where our people and our buildings get
9 the supports and resources they need to
10 make sure that each and every school in
11 every region of the City makes AYP and
12 each of its students graduates tomorrow's
13 leaders and citizens, but only if the
14 City actually does provide more support.

15 Thank you. I also have, I
16 think --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

18 Drop-Out Crisis?

19 MS. YANOFF: -- the report on
20 the Drop-Out Crisis.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It
22 looks very interesting. Thank you very
23 much.

24 Are there any questions from
25 members of the Committee?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

4 Seeing none, again, I thank you.

5 Oh, I'm sorry. Councilman

6 Clarke. Your light is not on.

7 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I'm sorry,

8 Madam President.

9 Hi. How are you doing?

10 MS. YANOFF: Good.

11 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: This is not
12 necessarily a question. It's a
13 statement. I just want to commend you
14 and your organization for continuing to
15 do the wonderful work for our young
16 people.

17 One of the issues that I know
18 you were working with us on was violence,
19 school violence, and I just want to say
20 that we had a very fruitful conversation
21 with Mr. Vallas and his team about
22 possibly merging some of our activities
23 on video surveillance around some of our
24 schools. He expressed some real support
25 for the potential of being able to do

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2 that in a way that ensured the perimeters
3 of the school would, at a minimum, be
4 secure as it related to some of the
5 violence that has been taking place.

6 He also indicated that a
7 substantial amount of the school violence
8 is really on the exterior of the school,
9 and there's been a reduction, reasonable
10 reduction, on the interior.

11 So as we move forward through
12 this process of working on our
13 surveillance systems -- and I know you've
14 expressed an interest on that and then
15 also the gun issue. And by the way,
16 you'll be hearing something very
17 interesting on the gun issue in about
18 another week. We look forward to having
19 you a part of that process as we move
20 towards implementation of that particular
21 program.

22 MS. YANOFF: Thank you,
23 Councilman Clarke, and thank you for all
24 you're doing in terms of the gun piece,
25 and we certainly want to work with you on

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2 it.

3 I do want to underscore that
4 there have been -- and I think you all
5 got a copy of it. There have been some
6 programs that the City has supported that
7 work inside the schools to provide
8 behavioral health programs. Those are
9 good programs, but there are not near
10 enough of them. We are at a point where
11 we can really reduce violence if we can
12 treat these kids, not lock them up, not
13 another -- in all due respect, we can't
14 arrest our way out of this problem.

15 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I agree.

16 MS. YANOFF: These kids need
17 more support and more help. You all have
18 some control that you can exercise in
19 terms of the City budget to get more
20 mental health programs in schools. It's
21 really important. It would make a big
22 difference.

23 There are fewer grown-ups in
24 schools that can help talk down kids than
25 we used to have. We need them back.

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2 So I hope with your leadership
3 we can really understand that the things
4 that happen inside the schools are the
5 City's purview as well.

6 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I agree. I
7 think the preventive measures are
8 probably the most important aspects of
9 what we try to do as we reduce violence,
10 and we mentor our children in a way that
11 will cause them to be the most productive
12 citizens in our City. So I agree with
13 you that it's more important on the front
14 end as opposed to the back end to make
15 the appropriate resources available.

16 MS. YANOFF: Yes. Thank you.
17 I just do want to, take another minute
18 since there aren't many people, to note
19 that even in -- I mentioned it earlier in
20 the testimony. I don't know if you heard
21 it, but even in some of the schools that
22 you really struggle with, that when you
23 read about them it's almost always bad
24 news, there are fabulous things happening
25 in those corners. What can we do to make

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2 sure that all kids have an opportunity
3 for music and art, that all kids can go
4 and win a debating team, that we can
5 really all kind of figure out what makes
6 sense for kids, what makes it likable.

7 It's not -- what makes school
8 exciting and interesting is not all
9 passing the test. That's important. But
10 there's a whole lot of other ways to get
11 to educating kids, and we strip it down
12 and get rid of them at our peril.

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I agree.

14 MS. YANOFF: So thank you very
15 much.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you
17 very much.

18 Thank you, Madam President.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
20 Chair recognizes Councilman Rizzo.

21 Just a moment, please.

22 MS. YANOFF: I'm sorry.

23 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: There might
24 only be a few of us, but...

25 The issue that you mentioned

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2 about the price of the land that --

3 MS. YANOFF: Willard School.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: Especially
5 the excess land, I agree with you
6 totally, that either even close to or
7 market value is not a good thing, not a
8 good policy. It's not good public
9 policy. And what I plan to do is -- I'm
10 going to think it over a bit before I
11 actually commit, but maybe do a
12 resolution from Council to the
13 Administration asking them to reconsider
14 that position, because I think it puts a
15 burden, a financial burden, that's
16 unnecessary. Because, in my opinion, the
17 students, parents in most cases pay -- in
18 most all cases I think they pay taxes,
19 and it seems like it's inappropriate to
20 charge the dollar amounts that I've been
21 hearing lately for some of the land that
22 new schools especially are being built
23 on.

24 So I appreciate you reminding
25 me again of that, and that I'm going to

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.
2 consider a resolution and hopefully get a
3 majority of my colleagues' support on
4 that.

5 MS. YANOFF: Thank you. I
6 think that this Administration and the
7 City and the School District has done a
8 lot together, but right now they're
9 acting as if they should be at arm's
10 length. And that's a good term for
11 lawyers, but it's not for those that are
12 responsible for kids.

13 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: Thank you
14 again.

15 MS. YANOFF: So thank you
16 again.

17 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
20 You're welcome.

21 Thank you, Ms. Yanoff.

22 MR. McPHERSON: The next
23 witness is Anthony Ottobre.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It's
25 been a long time. How have you been?

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2 MR. OTTOBRE: I've been better.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good.

4 MR. OTTOBRE: My name is

5 Anthony Ottobre. President Verna,

6 Councilmen Clarke and Rizzo, you may

7 remember me as President of Local 1201

8 from the School District. I was

9 President for 15 years.

10 Today I'm not here in any

11 capacity with the union. I'm here as a

12 somewhat angry taxpayer over things that

13 have been going on at the School

14 District. And what I'm going to speak on

15 I'm going to say is mostly fact until

16 someone proves me different, and I would

17 hope that Council, maybe the newspapers

18 or the television would do some

19 investigating in some of these items.

20 And my charge to Council is

21 very simply maybe two statements. Did

22 you know that these things were happening

23 or don't you care? And I mean that very

24 seriously.

25 Did you know that Marge Adler,

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2 who was former Personnel Director, I
3 believe works in Florida now, was
4 receiving paychecks months after she left
5 there, a regular paycheck, pension
6 contributions?

7 Did you know that Charles
8 Saragian, former Director of Facilities,
9 who was terminated, took lawsuit, he was
10 terminated with never being written up,
11 no arguments or anything, but he settled
12 for six months' salary?

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: What
14 was his name?

15 MR. OTTOBRE: Charles Saragian.

16 To give you an idea of how
17 Facilities is managed, Local 1201 has won
18 some arbitrations that are pretty costly.
19 They won one with -- it was called the
20 Trap Gang, individuals who were hired to
21 replace the steam traps, \$125,000. That
22 money is going to go to three
23 individuals.

24 They won one with the Rhoads
25 fire a couple of years ago where the

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2 District hired a contractor, I think, for
3 three or four days' work. They paid a
4 million and a half dollars. The union
5 filed an arbitration. They received a
6 \$500,000 award.

7 When we negotiated salary
8 changes with the School District and
9 there was implementation afterwards,
10 there was violations there. The union
11 won a million dollar settlement.

12 There was another arbitration
13 with locksmiths. The union won \$99,000.

14 Now, these are items of
15 mismanagement that money could be spent
16 elsewhere. There are other arbitrations,
17 but not as significant.

18 Waste Management, when they
19 first had the program, I oversaw the
20 operation of it, and during Christmas
21 week, the District basically shuts down.
22 So if they're closed for a week, there's
23 a trash pick-up, say, on Friday and I
24 cancelled the service for the rest of the
25 week. When the bill came in, they

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2 charged for every day. I refused to sign
3 the bill for a period of three or four
4 months. I was finally ordered,
5 threatened to prove payment.

6 How can you pay for service
7 you're not getting? I would assume that
8 practice is still going on.

9 On the issue of privatization,
10 the School District recently privatized,
11 I believe, up to 22 high schools, they
12 may have awarded 16, at a cost of \$12
13 million.

14 I had done a study for then
15 Governor Ridge at the request of a
16 consultant for the School District on
17 time to task, which was every task that
18 the cleaning personnel do and a time to
19 it. It took me about almost four months.
20 The report showed at that time that the
21 man hours -- the workload exceeded the
22 man hours. And I didn't have all of the
23 accurate information because there was
24 little schoolhouses that wasn't -- they
25 didn't have accurate footage on that.

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2 The District privatized under
3 the pretense -- I don't know if its
4 monetary issue or they just wanted to
5 privatize to try something different. My
6 understanding is that the union did
7 submit a proposal, I think, on one school
8 and the union's proposal was cheaper than
9 what the District would have paid. The
10 District chose not to honor that. They
11 contracted out.

12 When you get hired at the
13 School District as an employee, you have
14 to go through a criminal check. I don't
15 know if this company has the same
16 criteria. I do know that on three
17 different occasions --

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: What
19 company are you referring to?

20 MR. OTTOBRE: I believe it's
21 Sadesco it's called. I'm not sure.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I beg
23 your pardon?

24 MR. OTTOBRE: Sadesco. I don't
25 know the proper spelling.

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2 At Ben Franklin High, two of
3 their employees were observed smoking
4 marijuana. It was reported to their
5 supervisor. The supervisor came over the
6 building, reassigned them to William Penn
7 the next evening.

8 There's an individual who works
9 at William Penn High who has to leave
10 early, that he has to go to a halfway
11 house.

12 There's another individual
13 working at either West Philadelphia or
14 Overbrook, wears an ankle bracelet. He's
15 under house arrest.

16 Now, if we're hiring these type
17 of people and the people that the
18 District hires has to go through
19 different criteria, there's something
20 wrong there.

21 The District entered into an
22 agreement with Elliot Lewis to manage
23 their new building, two and a half
24 million dollars.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: What

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 building is this?

3 MR. OTTOBRE: 440.

4 I believe the District entered
5 into an agreement with some consultants
6 in architect and design for \$30 million
7 for three years, and they may be done
8 about six months. We're just starting to
9 see maybe some of the projects they were
10 hired for. I would like to know how many
11 consultants that we do have and what are
12 their functions.

13 It's my understanding that the
14 building engineers, they are allocated
15 money to buy supplies and stuff. They
16 allocate each building engineer, I
17 believe, \$500 for the year. That's not
18 going to cover the cost of light bulbs.
19 If they buy mercury vapor lights for the
20 boiler room, they're \$50 each. That
21 division has been cut back so
22 dramatically over the past two or three
23 years. I believe this year they may have
24 cut every vacancy they had. So you have
25 a shortage in engineering positions.

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2 And last year, there were some
3 comments made, I believe, by Councilman
4 Nutter questioning the District's intent
5 with building engineers. The District's
6 position is that they currently under the
7 law do not need licensed personnel. I
8 believe if you were to look at the
9 ordinance, it currently reads boilers in
10 excess of 15 pounds and 30 horsepower.
11 Someone changed that today. It used to
12 read 15 pounds or 30 horsepower.

13 Now, as Councilpeople, do you
14 want them buildings to be monitored by
15 non-licensed personnel, with an average
16 age of 70 years old, the buildings?

17 And last year, there were
18 comments made, I believe Councilman
19 Mariano asked my good friend Jimmy Lewis
20 who works for the District about the need
21 for licenses, and Mr. Lewis responded
22 they are just like your home heater.

23 Now, if anybody in their right
24 mind believes that a school boiler runs
25 like your own boiler in a school, there's

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2 something wrong. Maybe in principle,
3 that they give heat.

4 The District has no preventive
5 maintenance program due to the shortage
6 of personnel. So we spend money over
7 there that you don't have to spend if you
8 had a proper maintenance program.

9 A couple of other items. There
10 were comments made yesterday, I believe,
11 by the Chief Financial Officer as to the
12 cost that they wrote off in this year's
13 budget of 5 million of the sale price of
14 21st Street. I believe last year Michael
15 Harris, who was the then Chief Financial
16 Officer, stated that they wrote off the
17 whole 28 million for three buildings that
18 they sold. So how can you write off 28
19 million last year and then charge off 5
20 million this year?

21 These are pointed questions I
22 think somebody has to answer.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And I
24 totally agree with you. Somebody has to
25 answer them.

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2 MR. OTTOBRE: But --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Go
4 ahead.

5 MR. OTTOBRE: I know the law,
6 Act 83, gives Mr. Vallas -- and I'm going
7 to categorize him as a carpet-bagger,
8 because the Philadelphia School District
9 no longer is known as that. It's known
10 as Chicago East. Many of the employees
11 over there have come from Chicago. Some
12 of them worked on his political campaign.

13 But the law gives them so much
14 power to the extent of hiring people,
15 they have to have no criteria. They hire
16 who they want at the salary they want.
17 There have been instances over there
18 where people have been called in at the
19 end of the workday and terminated,
20 escorted out of the building. Within a
21 week, you may see two or three people
22 coming in to replace them at higher
23 salaries than they were making. Nobody
24 questions it.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: But I

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2 think I do recall reading in the paper
3 something similar to what you're just
4 testifying to --

5 MR. OTTOBRE: They had the
6 lawsuit with the purchasing.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: --
8 and didn't the individuals go to court
9 and they won?

10 MR. OTTOBRE: Four individuals
11 in purchasing won. Yeah, they got
12 rehired, but there have been other
13 individuals called in. You're there 30
14 years. You're called in tomorrow. You
15 make \$20,000 less or you don't have a
16 job.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Don't
18 the people have a right to appeal?

19 MR. OTTOBRE: It depends if
20 you're non-rep. Non-rep you have no
21 rights.

22 There were other individuals
23 hired over the past couple of years. I
24 don't know the title of the job, but I
25 believe there was ten of them, and their

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2 purpose was to basically be a building
3 manager to coordinate liaison between the
4 principal and maintenance at \$100,000
5 per. I would venture to say that if you
6 would look at these ten individuals, they
7 don't have no experience. And then I
8 would question, Why do you need somebody
9 for \$100,000 to coordinate between the
10 principal and maintenance for repairs or
11 whatever when you have divisions that do
12 that?

13 So I'm just upset that what is
14 perceived to be a functioning system that
15 is making huge gains, if you were to look
16 at the history of Chicago, you would see
17 a much similar pattern of initial
18 success, leveling off and then running
19 out of town or being run out of town.

20 So I just hope that somebody is
21 listening. It would be nice if
22 Councilmembers would attend the public
23 hearings, because people may have
24 something to say.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: There

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 are Councilmembers in their offices who
3 are listening to most of the testimony.

4 MR. OTTOBRE: Well, I hope that
5 you can --

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

7 Mr. Ottobre, let me ask you a question,
8 if I may.

9 How many years did you work for
10 the School District?

11 MR. OTTOBRE: Thirty-one.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

13 Thirty-one years?

14 MR. OTTOBRE: I was President
15 15, then I went out on disability.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Now,
17 I know that you mentioned people like
18 Marge Adler and Charles Saragi, or
19 whatever.

20 MR. OTTOBRE: Saragian.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I do
22 remember Ms. Adler. I don't know how far
23 back you're going. I don't know what the
24 circumstances of her getting a paycheck
25 after she left would be, whether she was

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.
2 entitled to in fact vacation time or
3 accumulated time.

4 MR. OTTOBRE: This was normal
5 paycheck, every two weeks, for a period
6 of months. I don't know what the
7 agreement is or was.

8 I know Mr. Saragian filed a
9 lawsuit, and they settled for six months'
10 salary. But I don't know what her
11 circumstances were, but I do know that
12 she was receiving checks while working in
13 Florida.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well,
15 you don't know what the circumstances are
16 and neither do we. However, I truly
17 believe that you are really truly
18 interested and you certainly don't want
19 to see any of this waste. And I know
20 that you're extremely aware that the
21 School Reform Commission meets monthly,
22 and these are issues that certainly
23 should be brought to their attention.

24 If you have all of this
25 information, if you have the questions

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2 and the data and the dates as to when
3 this all occurred, I would suggest the
4 School Reform Commission will be meeting
5 on April the 19th at 1 o'clock, and I am
6 informed that if you were to call them on
7 April the 18th before 4 o'clock -- and
8 their number is 215-400-4040 -- I think
9 that you would be given the opportunity
10 to address the Commission and have them
11 investigate many of the issues that you
12 are bringing up before us, if you're
13 going directly to the people who can do
14 something about it and have the
15 information or can get the information
16 within a minute's notice.

17 MR. OTTOBRE: They're the ones
18 that are approving.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: But
20 why did they approve it? You're asking
21 that question. Why did they approve
22 Ms. Adler or this gentleman getting paid
23 after they left? I know we have City
24 employees who leave and if in fact they
25 have vacation time, AL days --

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2 MR. OTTOBRE: I'm aware of
3 that. My understanding is, this was a
4 regular normal paycheck.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: --
6 they can get paid afterwards. So I don't
7 know what the circumstances are here.

8 MR. OTTOBRE: Neither do I.
9 That's why I'm asking.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
11 neither do you, and the only people that
12 can give you the information that you are
13 seeking and they can do that within a
14 moment's notice, and we have people from
15 the School District that are here.

16 Whoever is here representing
17 Mr. Vallas, can you please raise your
18 hand?

19 Can you come to the table,
20 please?

21 Would you please identify
22 yourself for the record?

23 MS. AVERETTE: Good afternoon.
24 Claudia Averette, Chief of Staff, School
25 District of Philadelphia.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
3 your title?

4 MS. AVERETTE: Chief of Staff.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
6 how long have you been with the School
7 District?

8 MS. AVERETTE: Eleven years.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: You
10 have heard Mr. Ottobre's testimony?

11 MS. AVERETTE: Yes, I have.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
13 don't know that you could give us any
14 answers off the top of your head.

15 MS. AVERETTE: What I'd like to
16 ask, with your permission, is to be given
17 the opportunity to investigate the
18 allegations, and we'll get the responses
19 back to you.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: So
21 you will get them back to us?

22 MS. AVERETTE: Yes.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do
24 you have all of the allegations written
25 down?

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2 MS. AVERETTE: Yes. We were
3 taking the notes.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good.

5 MR. OTTOBRE: Can I ask a
6 question?

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
8 Certainly.

9 MR. OTTOBRE: On the
10 contractors, the privatized schools, now
11 the three things that I stated are
12 basically --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm
14 sorry. You're going to have to speak
15 into the microphone. We can't hear you.

16 MR. OTTOBRE: The three things
17 that I stated about the individuals with
18 the smoking the pot and the halfway house
19 and the bracelet, are the employees of
20 that company mandated to the same thing
21 that a District employee has to go
22 through prior to be hiring?

23 MS. AVERETTE: We have Jimmy
24 Lewis, Madam President.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 Please identify yourself for the record.

3 MR. LEWIS: My name is James
4 Lewis, Director of General Services.

5 The answer to that question is
6 yes. All the background checks and
7 criminal and child abuse, all the
8 requirements that our employees have were
9 required under this contract.

10 MR. OTTOBRE: Is it a practice
11 to hire people who are under house
12 arrest? I mean, we both know. We both
13 come from the same division and we know
14 what it's like when people have criminal
15 records, and I just question that -- the
16 worst one was the two people who reported
17 smoking pot and the supervisor came over
18 and reassigned them to William Penn. And
19 that's common knowledge within your
20 division.

21 MS. LEWIS: I will respond if
22 you're bringing to our attention that
23 there are employees that are smoking
24 marijuana, I'm sure that our Office of
25 Climate and Security will investigate it.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.

3 Mr. Ottobre, I want you to categorically
4 make sure that the School District has
5 all of the information you have brought
6 before us today.

7 MR. OTTOBRE: I'll sit with
8 them right now if they want to go over
9 it.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: That
11 would be fine. They could write it down
12 to make sure that you have everything.

13 I don't think that we can just
14 sit here and listen to some of the
15 accusations that have been made and just
16 turn a deaf ear. I don't think that
17 Mr. Vallas would sit here and turn a deaf
18 ear. And I certainly hope that all that
19 Mr. Ottobre has said today is also taken.
20 And I think it behooves him, even after
21 you have responded to his accusations,
22 that he appear before the School Reform
23 Commission on April the 14th.

24 MR. OTTOBRE: 19th.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm

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2 sorry; 19th. I think it behooves you to
3 do that.

4 And I know that you said that
5 you were with the School District for 31
6 years. I know that you've appeared
7 before us many, many, many times wanting
8 to make the school system better. Well,
9 today I'm shocked to hear of some of the
10 things that you have said. There is
11 nothing that we can personally do about
12 it today, but we are asking definitely
13 for a full report on this. And in spite
14 of the report being submitted to us,
15 again, I'm going to reiterate, I do
16 believe that you personally should appear
17 before them on the 19th, and it would
18 necessitate you to call them the day
19 before before 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

20 MR. OTTOBRE: I will.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
22 you so much for coming in, and please get
23 together so that you have all of the info
24 that you need.

25 MS. AVERETTE: Yes, I will.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
3 you.

4 MR. McPHERSON: The next
5 witness is Jim Orr.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
7 afternoon. Please identify yourself for
8 the record and proceed with your
9 testimony.

10 MR. ORR: Good afternoon. My
11 name is Jim Orr, and I appreciate you
12 letting me have this opportunity to
13 speak.

14 I know a lot more parents would
15 like to have been here today, but given
16 the public 24 hours notice to respond to
17 the school budget is just wrong. To my
18 perspective, it shows the School Board
19 knows that they have a bad budget, but
20 they want to push it through before
21 anybody realizes it or has a chance to
22 respond to it. If I didn't know better,
23 I would think that I was on Capitol Hill.

24 I'm a parent of a Meredith
25 student. Before I start to rant, I would

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2 like to congratulate the principal of
3 Meredith, Mr. Cooperstein, and his group
4 of wonderful teachers and staff members,
5 who have taught and nurtured their
6 students. They all know that learning is
7 not just about memorization, math and
8 science formulas, but about building
9 self-esteem and imagination through other
10 curriculum such as dance, drama, music
11 and art. And it's because of this
12 well-rounded education that these
13 students thrive. The William Meredith
14 student constantly has some of the
15 highest average test scores in the
16 Philadelphia area.

17 Meredith gives our neighborhood
18 a sense of pride, because along with Mr.
19 Cooperstein and faculty, all of us who
20 have sent our children there over the
21 years and who are active with the school
22 have helped to make it what it is today,
23 the gold standard.

24 The Bella Vista/Queen Village
25 area over the past decade has become, in

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 my opinion, one of the greatest areas to
3 live in Philadelphia. Councilman DiCicco
4 should be proud of the area that he
5 helped build. It is a feather in his
6 cap. But if you ask parents why they
7 moved to this area, they will say, It's
8 because Meredith is such a great school
9 and Mr. Cooperstein is a wonderful
10 principal.

11 The school is the mortar that
12 holds the community together and keeps it
13 strong. If you break this school, the
14 neighborhood will also break. You will
15 hear the rumbling of moving trucks all
16 through the neighborhoods. Mine will be
17 right in front, because, honestly, like
18 many other families in this neighborhood,
19 I can't afford the proposed increased
20 property tax, along with my business
21 privilege tax and my resident income tax
22 and send my child to private school. I
23 will be forced to take my family and
24 business out of Philadelphia, because
25 education comes first.

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2 Now, you would think that a
3 school like Meredith with such high
4 rankings would be rewarded because they
5 have proved themselves diligent to the
6 quest for educational excellence while at
7 the same time being frugal with every
8 cent given to them by the School
9 District. You would think that, but you
10 would be wrong, dead wrong. Because not
11 only are they not being rewarded, they
12 are being penalized.

13 Between this year and last
14 year, the proposed budget has been cut
15 \$485,000. Operating expenses, which
16 include disintegration, special ed,
17 gifted support and Title 1, has lost
18 \$116,591. This does not include an
19 additional \$50,000 which will be cut from
20 supportive services, assistant line item.
21 That brings the total cuts to \$166,591.

22 Now, Mr. Vallas may argue, as
23 he did in yesterday's Philadelphia
24 Inquirer, that \$50,000 won't be needed
25 because college students will be placed

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.
2 in the classroom, alleviating the need
3 for the SSAs. These are college
4 students, not seasoned teachers. If
5 these students are such good teachers,
6 why not replace all of Philadelphia's
7 teachers with these kids? Why? Because
8 it would be stupid. Just as replacing
9 the SSA teachers with students is stupid.
10 The idea is wrong. Mr. Vallas and the
11 School Board are wrong.

12 By the way, if you account for
13 inflation, the stripping away of funds is
14 even more severe. What does the other
15 \$116,591 from the operating budget
16 represent? It represents the loss of
17 one, possibly two teachers.

18 Now, the last time I checked,
19 Meredith did not have an extra teacher
20 hanging around. In fact, Meredith, like
21 other schools, has already been forced to
22 double up between grades. For example,
23 groups of 6th graders are forced to take
24 classes with 5th graders. How would you
25 feel if your 6th grader was taking

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 classes with 5th graders? How do you
3 think the child feels? Do you think it
4 builds his or her self-esteem? It
5 doesn't, and it's wrong.

6 Let's see what else the School
7 Board under the direction of Mr. Vallas
8 has in store for one of Philadelphia's
9 finest schools. How about increasing the
10 class size to 30 students? Right now the
11 classes have around 20 pupils.

12 Some of the new students will
13 be bussed in from the lower-scoring
14 districts, because they get preference to
15 transfer to higher-ranking schools
16 because of No Child Left Behind.

17 So let's recap. Cut teachers,
18 add more students. This does not seem to
19 make a lot of sense. But that's not all.
20 Because of the teacher cuts, our gifted
21 children will not have a teacher to
22 facilitate their program, and this is at
23 a time when the number of gifted children
24 is growing in our school and the program
25 requires more funds.

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2 The gifted program is mandated
3 by federal law. So cutting this program
4 is actually illegal. So how is there
5 going to be a gifted program if there's
6 no money to fund it? We'll have to ask
7 Mr. Vallas, is he willing to leave our
8 gifted children behind?

9 The proposed budget represents
10 a train wreck for the Meredith School, a
11 train wreck for a school that should be
12 the gold standard for all the other
13 school districts to strive towards. The
14 result will be catastrophic for our
15 community, a community that its people,
16 along with Councilman DiCicco, have
17 helped to build and maintain.

18 The School Board should be
19 embarrassed by this proposal. If they
20 aren't, I'm sure they will be by the time
21 the news media gets through with them.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
24 you very much, Mr. Orr.

25 Mr. Orr, I just want you to

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 know that it is the responsibility of
3 City Council to reauthorize the school
4 taxes. We really have no real input with
5 the school's decisions. And you
6 indicated that there were only two days'
7 notice of the public hearing. I think we
8 started advertising back in February
9 regarding the public hearings.

10 Also, I think your testimony is
11 very good, very informative, and I do
12 believe that the School Reform Commission
13 will be having budget hearings, and I
14 certainly would encourage you to at that
15 time appear before them and testify. If
16 you'll bear with me.

17 When are the hearings
18 scheduled? Does anybody from the School
19 District know?

20 MR. THORNTON: I think --

21 MS. AVERETTE: We meet on the
22 12th and the 19th.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think
24 it's going to be the 12th after the
25 regular Board meeting.

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: So
3 this gentleman would be able to call
4 either the 11th -- what does the 11th
5 fall on?

6 MS. AVERETTE: We meet on
7 Wednesday.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: You
9 meet on Wednesday. So the 11th would be
10 a Tuesday, where you'd be able to call
11 them on the 18th.

12 MR. ORR: I will do my best to
13 make it a point.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm
15 sorry?

16 MR. ORR: I will make it a
17 point.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do
19 you have their number?

20 MR. ORR: I will get it.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'll
22 give it to you now.

23 MR. ORR: I didn't bring a pen
24 up with me.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 have pens. That's no problem. We will
3 give you the number. I think you should
4 definitely appear before them and make
5 your feelings known.

6 MR. ORR: Thank you very much,
7 Madam President.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And I
9 want to thank you for coming in. We
10 appreciate your testimony. Thank you
11 very much.

12 Our next witness is Judd Aaron.

13 Good afternoon. Please
14 identify yourself for the record and
15 proceed with your testimony.

16 MR. AARON: Good afternoon,
17 President Verna, Councilwoman Blackwell,
18 Councilman Rizzo. My name is Judd Aaron.
19 I'm the father of a second grader at
20 Meredith School, a K through 8 school at
21 5th and Fitzwater Streets. It's in
22 Councilman DiCicco's district.

23 A proposed budget cut of
24 \$165,000 in next year's Meredith School
25 budget will have the following

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.
2 devastating results on this school: One,
3 we will lose a full-time teacher. Two,
4 at the same time, Meredith School will
5 lose each and every one of its classroom
6 aides. Three, at the same time, the
7 average classroom size at Meredith
8 School, which is now approximately 25
9 students, will increase to 30 to 33
10 students. Four, the lower grades at the
11 same time will be combined. That's just
12 a polite way of saying they'll be merged.
13 The first and second graders will be
14 merged into one classroom and they will
15 be taught by the same teacher at the same
16 time in the same classroom, and the same
17 merger will happen with the third and
18 fourth graders.

19 And, five, and this is
20 important, there will be insufficient
21 gifted student funding for approximately
22 50 students; that is, insufficient
23 funding for almost half of the students
24 who have tested into the gifted program
25 at Meredith School.

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2 Now, I don't know what the
3 Councilmembers know about Meredith
4 School, but I can tell you that this is a
5 school that works. This is the kind of
6 school we aspire to.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It
8 has an excellent reputation.

9 MR. AARON: And it's well
10 deserved. It's an excellent school.
11 This is a school with a safe learning
12 environment, with some of the highest
13 test scores in the state. It's amazing.
14 Check out the test scores.

15 Our principal who is unequalled
16 in the school system, committed and
17 engaged teachers, involved parents,
18 enthusiastic and well-behaved children.
19 This is a school that works, and that
20 environment is seriously threatened by
21 Mr. Vallas's proposed budget cuts for
22 next year.

23 Now, I read yesterday's
24 Inquirer and Daily News in which
25 Mr. Vallas was quoted as saying that this

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.
2 proposed budget furthers the goals of
3 school reform. Well, the parents of
4 Meredith School children beg to differ,
5 because for Meredith School and for
6 schools like it, this proposed budget
7 spells academic disaster. And I'd like
8 to take just one minute just to
9 summarize, to grade this proposed budget
10 cut for next year, just as the schools
11 grade our children on their work product.
12 Because fair is fair, isn't it?

13 Problem No. 1, this budget cut
14 will result in an overnight and
15 unacceptable increase in average class
16 size. That's a failing grade on Issue
17 No. 1.

18 Issue No. 2, the merger of the
19 lower school classes will result in the
20 combined teaching of students whose
21 social development and academic skills
22 are so vastly different that under no
23 sound theory of education should they
24 ever be taught together in the same
25 classroom at the same time by the same

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2 teacher. A failing grade.

3 Issue No. 3, we'll have
4 overburdened teachers who will be
5 struggling to teach first graders the sum
6 of, say, two plus two at the very same
7 time in the same classroom that they're
8 trying to teach second graders who have
9 already moved on to their fractions.
10 We'll have teachers trying to teach first
11 graders their A-B-C's at the same time
12 they're trying to teach second graders
13 who are already reading chapter books. A
14 one-room schoolhouse, a one-room
15 schoolhouse is what our first through
16 fourth graders will attend as a result of
17 these budget cuts. That is unacceptable
18 and that is a failing grade.

19 Problem No. 4, there will be
20 insufficient funds for students who have
21 tested into the gifted program. It's
22 funding to which they are entitled by
23 law. That's a failing grade.

24 And, finally, the fifth problem
25 is that parents who have invested in this

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2 City will throw in the towel and will
3 leave the City or leave the City schools.
4 And the parents of Meredith School are
5 giving this proposed budget a failing
6 grade.

7 Now, I know we all want the
8 same thing for our children. We want
9 better schools. We all want better
10 schools. But this proposed budget
11 threatens our children's educations. It
12 threatens the ability of parents to
13 remain engaged in the City schools, and
14 ultimately it threatens the future of our
15 City. And I don't think that I am
16 overstating our case.

17 And so we're asking City
18 Council, although we know you don't
19 approve the budget, to support our
20 children by voicing your opposition to
21 these ill-conceived budget cuts. And I
22 know that Mr. Vallas isn't here, but I
23 believe his representatives are here.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
25 think his Chief of Staff is here.

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2 I wish you would come further.

3 MR. AARON: And I would like to
4 say --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And I
6 don't know, do you have any knowledge of
7 what is being discussed here?

8 MR. THORNTON: Yes, I do.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
10 wish you would come up to the table. I
11 had asked Mr. Vallas to make certain that
12 he had someone here when we have public
13 testimony that would be able to answer
14 any and all questions that may come up.

15 MR. THORNTON: Certainly.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Now,
17 I think you have heard the plea of two
18 parents, and I think that they're going
19 to have to let their voices be made loud
20 and clear, because I think that they have
21 genuine concerns, and I truly believe
22 that this is probably one of the better
23 schools that we have in the City. Now,
24 if we start turning a deaf ear to parents
25 who really care, we're headed in the

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2 wrong direction.

3 Now, if you can share with us
4 any knowledge that you have and how this
5 program as being proposed can be stopped,
6 then I'd like to hear it.

7 MR. THORNTON: Certainly.

8 Thank you very much.

9 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Point of
10 information before they start, please.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes,
12 sir.

13 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: What I'd
14 like to know also, Madam President, is,
15 is this targeted at one school? Are we
16 learning that this might be consistent
17 through various areas? I mean, I really
18 need the School District to explain why
19 such a substantial cut in one particular
20 school budget.

21 Thank you, Madam President.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

23 That's what we'll hear.

24 MR. THORNTON: Thank you.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

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2 Identify yourself for the record.

3 MR. HARRIS: Wayne Harris. I'm
4 the School District's Budget Director.

5 There's a series of different
6 reasons for some of the issues. I can't
7 confirm the numbers for what they said
8 for Meredith, but there is a series of
9 different reasons for what is happening
10 here, and I can speak to them.

11 First of all, as Mr. Vallas
12 said repeatedly, there is going to be a
13 hold harmless provision to help the
14 hardest hit schools in the District. We
15 always do that. We always have done
16 that. And the key is that Meredith, as
17 was the case with Powel, are both some of
18 the smaller elementary schools in the
19 District, and generally when we do hold
20 harmlessness, they focus on the smallest
21 elementary schools, because the smallest
22 elementary schools are the schools that
23 have the least give in their budgets and
24 can have the most trouble from things
25 like this. So they would be two of the

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2 schools that would be most likely to be
3 focused on.

4 Another issue is the issue of
5 the number of teachers. The School
6 District does not level down teachers
7 like we used to at the beginning of the
8 year, and what that means is, when we
9 reach the end of October, we provide -- I
10 mean the end of September, we provide
11 additional teachers where they are
12 needed, but we do not take any teachers
13 away from schools that have more than
14 they would have been allotted if we had
15 projected more accurately.

16 So basically because we do that
17 that way, we do a very, very careful and
18 lean allocation of teachers at this time.
19 So for a school to conclude that they are
20 going to be short a teacher based on the
21 teachers that have been allotted to them
22 in April is jumping to quite a
23 conclusion, because basically we have to
24 be very careful on our allocation at this
25 time of year and then we add and don't

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 take away any teachers when we reach the
3 beginning of October.

4 So there's going to be a hold
5 harmless that will help with this school.
6 There's going to be teachers added in
7 October if they are needed.

8 The third point is, a big chunk
9 of the money that they lost was in Title
10 1. And Title 1, as Mr. Vallas said
11 yesterday, has always had a \$75,000
12 minimum. Meredith School, both because
13 it's a small school and because it is a
14 school that has a relatively low level of
15 poverty -- it still has some serious
16 poverty, but relative to the rest of the
17 District schools has a low level of
18 poverty -- in our Title 1 allocation,
19 which is required to be based on the
20 concentration of poverty, they generally
21 will not receive a very large Title 1
22 allocation.

23 They would have been receiving
24 \$75,000 in the past. When we increased
25 it to 250,000, they saw a big jump up to

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2 250,000. When we basically had to back
3 down with a lawsuit gunned to our head,
4 we negotiated with the people who were
5 threatening us a 25 percent a year
6 backdown so the schools could adjust, and
7 we also negotiated that we would only
8 have to go down to 100,000 instead of
9 75,000. So we've moved from 250 down to
10 187.5 down to 140, which was last year,
11 and this year we're going down into the
12 \$110,000 range.

13 We really have no choice under
14 the law but to do that. And under the
15 law of Title 1, which has a rule called
16 Comparability, we also cannot legally
17 make up the difference to the school,
18 because if you make up the difference in
19 Title 1 funding so that there's no
20 difference between poverty schools, high
21 poverty schools and low poverty schools,
22 you are expressly breaking the Title 1
23 law and they have a test for that called
24 Comparability, in which case they fine
25 the District very heavily.

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2 So there's only so much we can
3 do in that situation. There was
4 virtually -- there was an extremely small
5 change in the gifted allocation, and
6 there should not be any impact whatsoever
7 on the gifted program at Meredith. I do
8 not understand that issue.

9 In addition, Meredith, I
10 believe, has one of the -- so, I mean,
11 there's a lot of issues and it's
12 complicated, but basically that the sum
13 total is that concluding from what
14 they're looking at their budget on April
15 5th is going to lead to disaster on
16 September 3rd is not the way it's going
17 to work out.

18 MR. AARON: President Verna,
19 may I respond very briefly?

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I was
21 hoping that you would.

22 MR. AARON: Thank you.

23 First of all, I think that
24 Mr. Vallas's representative -- I'm sorry.
25 I didn't catch your name.

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2 MR. HARRIS: Wayne Harris.

3 MR. AARON: I think Mr. Harris
4 has mischaracterized my testimony. I
5 didn't say that Meredith School is going
6 to be short a teacher. What I said is
7 that Meredith School will lose a
8 full-time teacher. That's a fact.
9 That's an inarguable fact. And it's also
10 a fact that when a school with 18
11 teachers loses one of its full-time
12 teachers, it is a weaker school as a
13 result. It is not a stronger school.
14 And these Center City schools are not
15 good schools because Mr. Vallas and his
16 representatives say it is so. They are
17 strong schools because they make it so
18 and we're asking that they make it so.
19 You're not making that so by taking away
20 a teacher. So I sort of resent the
21 mischaracterization of my testimony.

22 The other thing I wanted to
23 respond to is, Mr. Harris says he has no
24 knowledge that the gifted allocation is
25 short, and I'm sure he doesn't, but we're

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2 capable of running the numbers, too, and
3 we've done that, and the fact is that the
4 allocation for gifted students is
5 approximately \$50,000 to \$75,000 short.
6 That is, there won't be gifted funding
7 for about 50 students, almost half of the
8 students who have already tested into the
9 gifted program, not to even mention those
10 students who are on the waiting list and
11 may well test into the gifted program.

12 So there is going to be a
13 shortage of gifted funding. We've run
14 those numbers.

15 MR. THORNTON: Greg Thornton,
16 Chief Academic Officer of the School
17 District. I'd like to thank Mr. Orr for
18 sharing his concerns.

19 A couple things. It is an
20 arguable fact with respect to this being
21 April and the school opening in September
22 with respect to the staff and
23 appropriation. That's adjusted
24 throughout the period between now and
25 opening school. Our staff appropriations

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2 are done on a per student enrollment, and
3 throughout the school year, not only at
4 the beginning of the school year,
5 adjustments are made. So if the
6 population designates an additional
7 teacher, that teacher will be placed
8 there.

9 Issue No. 1 with respect to the
10 law, the law says that you have to make
11 accommodations for gifted youngsters, and
12 that can be done in a number of ways. It
13 can be done through a pull-out program or
14 a differentiated program, and that
15 accommodation is being done at Meredith.

16 Issue No. 2, I hope I'm in the
17 order that he talked about with respect
18 to gifted education. It's absolutely
19 correct, the appropriation is different
20 this year, but what the appropriation
21 doesn't take and entail, that we placed a
22 program called Emerging Scholars at
23 Meredith, and in that program, the
24 appropriation was approximately \$50,000
25 last year and approximately \$50,000 this

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2 year.

3 In addition, what we've done,
4 what we've attempted to do is to reach
5 more gifted children. We don't want to
6 leave gifted kids behind. We want to
7 spring those youngsters forward. In an
8 attempt, we have created extended
9 learning opportunities in the afternoon
10 where youngsters will have an opportunity
11 to participate in, as well as Saturday
12 programs.

13 The issue that was talked about
14 with respect to ability grouping, it is
15 not best practice, but a very common
16 practice in educational arenas for two
17 grades to be combined. What we strive to
18 do very clearly is not to have two
19 combinations with respect to in a K-5
20 environment. But I don't think it
21 resembles the one-room schoolhouse. I
22 think it's a very sound educational
23 practice if a very skilled teacher can
24 differentiate to meet the challenges of
25 youngsters.

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2 Issue No. 5 I believe was with
3 respect to reduced class size. I think
4 if you were to take a really good look at
5 the research, what it says is that class
6 size is very important, but they also
7 speak to the fact of student-teacher
8 ratio, and what we've attempted to do
9 with the SSAs and with the student
10 teaching initiative is to basically
11 reduce class size.

12 I would be less than honest if
13 I sat here to say and wished -- we're
14 very hopeful we could have all the
15 funding that we needed, but I would like
16 to also point out this was not a targeted
17 Meredith effort. This is a formula
18 that's gone across the City and every
19 school in the City are receiving these
20 particular cuts.

21 But I would be more than glad
22 to work with Mr. Orr and to talk and also
23 as well as his principal, as well as his
24 regional superintendent to take a look at
25 how we can get the most mileage out of

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2 his school budget.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Yes.

4 Mr. Aaron?

5 MR. AARON: And, Your Honor, I
6 didn't mean to suggest that these cuts
7 were targeted at Meredith School. It
8 just happens that that's where my son
9 goes to school and that's where these
10 parents' children go to school, and that
11 happens to be the numbers that we're
12 familiar with.

13 I guess the bottom line is
14 this: I don't see when we increase class
15 size, reduce the number of teachers,
16 combine first, second grade classes and
17 third, fourth grade classes and have a
18 shortage of gifted funding how we can say
19 that a school is as good as it used to
20 be, because objectively it simply is not,
21 and that's our point.

22 President Verna, thank you very
23 much for hearing us out.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

25 Mr. Aaron, I want you to wait just a

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2 minute. I'm really very impressed and
3 very touched by your appearance today, as
4 I am with Mr. Orr. It's been my
5 contention with a number of problems that
6 we face in the City that we don't have
7 the parental interest that you and I
8 probably had growing up, and I say that
9 no matter what we do, if parents are not
10 involved, nothing, nothing we do will
11 ever be successful.

12 I cannot see myself having both
13 of you gentlemen walking out of this
14 Chamber -- and I know that you've been
15 sitting here for quite some time and I
16 know that you deeply are concerned about
17 the education of your children. I cannot
18 sit here and allow you to walk out of
19 here without having some commitment from
20 the School District -- and I am sure that
21 there are many parents at Meredith that
22 are just as concerned and worried about
23 what will happen in September.

24 I want a commitment from the
25 School District that before long they

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2 will meet with the parents of the school
3 and hopefully we could get whatever
4 problems there are existing out there
5 resolved. Can I have a commitment --

6 MR. THORNTON: You have --

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: --
8 that Mr. Vallas, et al. will personally
9 go to the school and meet with the
10 parents?

11 MR. THORNTON: You have that
12 commitment.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
14 will that commitment be before we pass
15 the budget?

16 MR. THORNTON: The final budget
17 passing is when, ma'am?

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
19 believe it's April the 5th. Well, ours
20 is April 5th. We have to reauthorize the
21 taxes by the end of the month.

22 MR. THORNTON: Yes, ma'am.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: So
24 there's no reason why there can't be a
25 meeting before the end of the month.

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2 MR. THORNTON: We look forward
3 to the meeting.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
5 we really appreciate your coming in. I
6 cannot tell you how much I appreciate the
7 parents coming in and expressing their
8 concern and their views.

9 We understand your plight and
10 we want to help you in whatever way we
11 can, and I am sure that the School
12 District wants to help you. They want
13 you to remain in the City and they want
14 your children to continue to go to their
15 schools. So there is no problem that is
16 so large that it cannot be resolved.

17 So I am asking the School
18 District to please, please, please -- I
19 have your commitment --

20 MR. THORNTON: You have it.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: --
22 that you will in fact meet with the --
23 and I want Mr. Vallas there. I want
24 Mr. Vallas there. And I know that there
25 is a holiday coming up.

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2 MR. THORNTON: He makes an
3 effort to attend every community meeting.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: He
5 can make time, believe me.

6 MR. THORNTON: He will make a
7 commitment to do that.

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Madam
9 President.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes,
11 sir.

12 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Madam
13 President, I want to echo exactly and go
14 on record here to be absolutely in
15 lockstep with you on this. What I heard
16 today does not satisfy my -- there's just
17 not satisfactory answers. And everything
18 that you said, I totally agree with.

19 And I thank you, sir, for
20 coming here today, and I would do
21 everything -- I will stick right with
22 you, Madam President, because I wouldn't
23 want to be part of an authorization of a
24 tax that supports the school system when
25 this issue is not resolved, and I would

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2 appeal to my colleagues to be supportive
3 of us.

4 Thank you, Madam President.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
6 you. And it's my understanding that
7 Councilman DiCicco is aware of the
8 situation.

9 MR. AARON: That's correct.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
11 he definitely wants to be included at the
12 meeting that will be held at the school.

13 MR. AARON: Absolutely.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: So it
15 behooves you to let him know. I just
16 don't know what his schedule is, but I
17 think he would make himself available,
18 but I think you owe him the courtesy also
19 of giving him advanced time.

20 MR. AARON: And we did call
21 Mr. DiCicco's office. I understand he's
22 at a zoning meeting today, but we spoke
23 to Mr. Abernathy and he told us that
24 Councilman DiCicco is aware of this.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well,

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2 you're very fortunate to have someone
3 like Councilman DiCicco representing you.

4 MR. AARON: You're right. We
5 are. Thank you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And I
7 know that he will do everything he can to
8 be of assistance, as we will.

9 MR. AARON: Thank you. And
10 President Verna and Councilman Rizzo,
11 your sentiments are very encouraging to a
12 group of disheartened parents. Thank you
13 very much.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
15 luck.

16 MR. AARON: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
18 luck.

19 Thank you. And please just
20 stay close by.

21 MS. AVERETTE: We are.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Helen
23 Matthews.

24 Good afternoon. Kindly
25 identify yourself for the record and

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 proceed with your testimony.

3 MS. MATTHEWS: My name is Helen
4 Matthews. And a short continuation on
5 the same topic, but directly more towards
6 City Council.

7 Thank you, City Council, for
8 allowing me to express my concerns about
9 the proposed school budget. I live in
10 the Bella Vista neighborhood and this is
11 the fifth year that my children have
12 attended Meredith Elementary School.

13 Having Meredith Elementary
14 School as our neighborhood public school
15 has enabled my family to continue living
16 in Center City. Although the proposed
17 budget reflects an overall increase in
18 spending, my children's school faces deep
19 budget cuts. Meredith Elementary School
20 has already absorbed budget cuts year
21 after year, and now we are being asked to
22 do without an additional \$165,000. This
23 will result in the loss of at least one
24 classroom teacher and two school staff
25 assistants. For our children, this means

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2 larger class sizes, split grades and
3 limited contact with an instruction by
4 our teachers.

5 Through the combined efforts of
6 our dedicated teachers and hard-working
7 students, 47 percent of whom are from
8 low-income families, Meredith Elementary
9 has weathered previous budget cuts, but
10 this time, it is simply too much to bear.
11 This type of profound budget cut will
12 result in lower achievement by our
13 students, who have consistently posted
14 top PSSA scores and fulfilled the
15 requirements of No Child Left Behind.

16 For families like mine who own
17 homes in the City, work in the City, pay
18 thousands of dollars every year in
19 property and City wage taxes, these
20 recurrent school budget shortfalls become
21 not just a nuisance, but a threat to the
22 welfare of our children. Our ability and
23 willingness to remain in the City is
24 threatened. Our children come first. I
25 hope you feel the same and work to not

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 only restore it, but to actually increase
3 the overall funding to our public
4 schools.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you very much.

8 Any questions?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you.

12 Heidi Segal?

13 Is there anyone else to testify
14 after Ms. Segal?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you. Please identify yourself for the
18 record and begin your testimony.

19 MS. SEGAL: Hi. My name is
20 Heidi Segal and I'm the President of the
21 Home and School Association.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
23 pull your mike closer. We can't hear
24 you.

25 MS. SEGAL: I'm Heidi Segal.

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2 I'm the President of the Home and School
3 at Bache-Martin Elementary in Fairmount,
4 and I'm actually just going to make a few
5 points.

6 One, I wanted to thank all the
7 other parents who came out today, and I
8 also want to thank the School District,
9 because as a member organization of the
10 School District of Philadelphia, they
11 provided me, as the Home and School
12 President, with a fair amount of
13 information prior to these budget
14 hearings that have enabled us at
15 Bache-Martin to manage our budget, keep
16 our gifted program, keep all of our
17 teachers and continue to run our school
18 the way we parents want it run.

19 We have to be creative and look
20 for these kinds of solutions, and I think
21 that they equipped us this year with the
22 information that we needed. So I want to
23 thank them for that.

24 Unfortunately, the only
25 negative that I have today in my

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2 testimony is geared towards the City of
3 Philadelphia, which, unfortunately,
4 doesn't seem to have its priorities in
5 order when it comes to funding our
6 education. If you think about a
7 three-pronged approach where we have
8 funding coming from the federal
9 government, the state government and
10 local government, the City of
11 Philadelphia's funding seems to be
12 awfully low in comparison to other
13 municipalities. I mean, the easiest
14 comparison is to look at school districts
15 like Haddon Township, Cherry Hill and
16 Lower Merion. And I think it's just our
17 priorities, and I think that the City
18 needs to rethink what it does when it
19 thinks about education and whose life it
20 doesn't touch when it makes education the
21 number one priority.

22 So I'm asking the City of
23 Philadelphia to reconsider how it
24 prioritizes its own budget when it
25 considers the School District in its

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2 funding.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

5 you very much.

6 Are there any questions?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Is

9 there anyone else who would like to
10 testify?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Seeing

13 none, we will be recessed until 5:30,

14 when we will have our evening testimony

15 for the School District. So we'll see

16 you all at 5:30.

17 Sir, I called twice. You want

18 to testify? Come forward. We will break

19 our rules because we just recessed, but

20 we welcome you to testify.

21 Please identify yourself for

22 the record and begin your testimony.

23 MR. PAYNE: My name is Deacon

24 Payne, and I came down here today

25 because, yes, I think the teachers should

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2 get more money for what they're doing,
3 and at the same time, I think that
4 schools shouldn't have to fight for an
5 extra dime when there's plenty of money.
6 And at the same time, I don't think that
7 a school who has a CEO, or
8 whatever-have-you, can continue to
9 implement having -- enforcing rules for
10 children to obey the laws and stuff like
11 that and not at the same time enforce
12 them themselves. And I say that because
13 of a particular reason.

14 Some teachers were moved from a
15 school that I was a victim of police
16 brutality in front of because I went to
17 write down the officer's name and his
18 badge number. And I have a problem with
19 a school because they acted together, so
20 it was a conspiracy that came together
21 and took place for them. Two teachers
22 were moved, and the teacher was upset.
23 Because she typed a letter up for me
24 because she saw everything that went on
25 outside of that school. And I wanted to

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2 get that officer's name because of his
3 demeanor that day so I could go talk to
4 this principal. But guess what? The
5 principal has retired.

6 I have three discs in my neck
7 pushing on my nerves today. And my son
8 asks me every day, Are you all right,
9 Dad?

10 And ya'll give the teachers so
11 much of a hard time because they want to
12 do right? I think that they should do
13 right all the time. I have one at
14 Masterman and I have one at the Science
15 and Mathematics School across from the
16 Board of Education, and they're both "A"
17 students. And right now they send me
18 down to a federal judge because they
19 don't want me to go to court because I
20 know too much. I got false police
21 reports and everything from this
22 incident, but they want to keep it under
23 the cover.

24 That's why I came down here
25 today. Because I was fed up with these

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2 things that are going on, and then we
3 continue to pour more money in, pour more
4 money in. You know what needs to be
5 done? They need to reevaluate what's
6 going on with the School District,
7 because there's a lot of things going on
8 that's not being talked about, and
9 teachers are concerned. And I'm a man of
10 God, and I'm concerned. I'm a parent.
11 I'm concerned. I'm an action leader for
12 Philadelphia Interfaith Action. I'm
13 concerned.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Deacon
16 Payne, thank you. Was this a school
17 police officer?

18 Sir.

19 MR. PAYNE: No. This was a
20 Philadelphia Police officer, Badge No.
21 1592.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: If you
23 want to give us some information --

24 MR. PAYNE: I already did. I
25 came yesterday, gave some information

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2 downstairs after I found out where it was
3 at. I went to Blackwell's office, gave
4 some information.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's
6 me. That's my office.

7 MR. PAYNE: Okay. Then I went
8 to your office. I never met you before,
9 but how you doing?

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Fine.
11 Fine, Deacon Payne. All right. Well,
12 then I'll check with my staff on it.
13 Okay. Thank you. We were here
14 yesterday.

15 All right. Is there anyone
16 else?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Then
19 we will recess until 5:30, where we have
20 some individuals who are due to be here
21 for a night session, about a half a dozen
22 individuals. So we'll see you all then.
23 Thank you.

24 (Short recess.)

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good

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2 evening, everyone. This is the continued
3 public hearing of the Committee of the
4 Whole.

5 Our first witnesses will be
6 William Mackey, with several students.

7 Good evening. Please identify
8 yourself for the record and proceed with
9 your testimony.

10 MR. HARDY: Hi. My name is
11 Kashif Hardy, K-A-S-H-I-F, Hardy,
12 H-A-R-D-Y.

13 MR. KELLAM: My name is Milton
14 Kellam.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
16 Milton Keller?

17 MR. KELLAM: Kellam,
18 K-E-L-L-A-M.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
20 you.

21 MR. MACKEY: William Mackey.
22 I'm sorry. M-A-C-K-E-Y. And I want to
23 say thanks to the Council and Council
24 President and the Councilmembers for
25 letting City Wide come for our tenth year

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2 in a row to the public hearing on
3 education. And I will turn the mike over
4 to two young gentlemen. I'd also like to
5 recognize the youth of City Wide, who are
6 doing something positive.

7 Would you please stand up.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: If
9 they will stand, we'll be happy to
10 recognize you. Welcome.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: All
13 right. Who is going to testify?

14 MR. HARDY: Okay. Well, as I
15 said, my name is Kashif, and I actually
16 started the program about 11 years ago.
17 I came through the middle school program
18 when I was about 11 years old. And, you
19 know, City Wide is a very good program
20 and it kept me off the streets. You
21 know, I come from not one of the good
22 neighborhoods in the City, and, you know,
23 I came home from City Wide on numerous
24 occasions and found out something
25 happened on the streets or anything,

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2 where I know I probably would have been
3 outside during that time.

4 So basically I came through the
5 program. I came through the YLTI
6 program, the high school, and then I
7 eventually became junior staff. And
8 currently two years ago, I became a
9 full-time staff member at City Wide Youth
10 Leadership Agency, and I'm the Community
11 Service Coordinator. And recently I've
12 been working with young people, helping
13 them get on the right track or stay on
14 the right track, because a lot of the
15 youth in our program are positive young
16 people. And basically recently what me
17 and my co-worker, Mr. Milton, have been
18 working on is the Philadelphia Youth
19 Crime Commission. I'm one of the
20 co-founders of the program, and that's
21 basically a program put together to have
22 a different outlook or a different
23 perspective of a lot of the violence, the
24 violence epidemic that's going on in the
25 City.

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2 I know there's a lot of adult
3 groups and a lot of older people who are
4 talking about crime and the statistics
5 and everything that's going on, but as
6 far as the teen-on-teen violence, City
7 Wide is a program that's geared towards
8 youth leadership. So we have a group of
9 young people, teenagers, 15, 16, 17, who
10 are going out and talking to other youth
11 in six different neighborhoods in the
12 City to put together six different
13 chapters of the Youth Crime Commission.
14 And so that way, we're going to
15 collaborate throughout the whole City,
16 planning events to keep youth off the
17 street, little block parties. And I
18 myself, I'm working on the national part
19 of it, and we're reaching out to ten
20 cities all over the country who also have
21 high crime rates, and that's cities as
22 far as Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit,
23 Michigan; Phoenix, Arizona; New York; San
24 Antonio; San Diego; and Los Angeles and a
25 few other cities. And they're actually

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2 responding back, letting us know that
3 they understand what we're doing, that
4 they think it's a great idea. They're
5 ready to go full speed on whatever we
6 want to do.

7 We're planning a national tour,
8 where we're going to take our Crime
9 Commission to all ten cities and have a
10 tour and also do research on things that
11 are going on in their cities, and at the
12 end of the summer during our National
13 Youth Week, we're going to have at least
14 two youth from each city that we're
15 talking to come here for a National Crime
16 Convention.

17 So we're trying to get all this
18 off the ground. We're just trying to get
19 funding for it right now. And we're also
20 going to be doing a lot of the
21 Philadelphia Youth Crime Commission work
22 out of our new facility at 1100 West
23 Girard, where we're also going to have
24 our "Hip Hop, Not Violence" shop, and
25 that's going to be like a little mecca

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2 for youth to come, a state-of-the-art
3 facility that we're putting together.
4 There's going to be a little lounge. You
5 can come do work on the Internet. We're
6 going to have like a studio set up. It's
7 just going to be sort of like a radio
8 station type of environment.

9 So that's a couple of things
10 that we're working on right now with the
11 Youth Crime Commission.

12 MR. KELLAM: As I stated
13 before, my name is Milton Kellam. I also
14 came through the City Wide Youth
15 Leadership Program. I started when I was
16 in 9th grade. I was also in the summer
17 camp, and I'm a full-time staff member.

18 As he told you, we're working
19 on the Philadelphia Youth Crime
20 Commission. The purpose of the
21 Commission is to basically engage youth
22 in positive change. And with the
23 Commission, we are also trying to get
24 18,000 internships, funded internships,
25 across the City of Philadelphia to engage

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2 youth in something positive. The
3 internships will be based on their career
4 goals.

5 MR. MACKEY: Hi. My name is
6 William Mackey again, and I'd just like
7 to round up and say, we are located in
8 the 15th Councilmanic District, and we
9 are extremely proud of our Councilperson,
10 Councilperson Darrell Clarke.

11 City Wide, could we give our
12 Councilperson a round of applause.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. MACKEY: When we ride
15 through North Philadelphia through the
16 Fifth District, we see a lot of
17 development, and when we ride through the
18 City, we see a lot of development, and we
19 are really proud. This Council is a lot
20 different than other Councils, where we
21 have access. This is a place where we
22 really feel access and change. And I can
23 just tell you right now that when you
24 bring young people together to engage for
25 themselves, I believe that's the way

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2 we're going to have to combat this youth
3 violent effort. We have to get the
4 resources to young people and create new
5 leadership.

6 And my point to the School
7 District tonight is, we have this new
8 facility that's 85 percent completed. We
9 need the School District's help. We know
10 the School District right now is
11 struggling for funding. We all are
12 struggling for funding, and decisions
13 have to be made.

14 Last week, if you look in our
15 Crime Commission brochure, you will see
16 we met with leadership last week. We met
17 with the Majority Leader office last
18 week. And we understand about the
19 funding. We understand that the \$25
20 million is probably going to be restored
21 that came out of the School District's
22 budget yesterday, last night. However,
23 we just don't think in this time of age
24 when we're creating this 21st century
25 facility, electronic mini university, a

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2 state-of-the-art computer lab, a mini
3 theatre where there's going to be a
4 positive youth -- serve like a studio, we
5 are creating a positive atmosphere. On
6 the first floor, there's going to be six
7 to eight stores. And for nine years, we
8 came here asking for money for a youth
9 mall, and I can tell you today we are 15
10 percent away from completion of this
11 youth mall.

12 I am so proud, but I am not
13 proud when we cannot have accessibility.
14 The School District is doing a good job.
15 They have helped City Wide with some
16 other things. Mr. Bichner and his staff
17 have been great. However, we need the
18 School District to step up and make an
19 investment interest in this project.

20 There's no way, there's no way
21 the School District cannot accept this
22 and adopt this project as a model. This
23 is a model. And we need the School
24 District to make a decision.

25 There's very few people in this

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2 City who has not had someone to come
3 through City Wide Youth Leadership.

4 I don't know many people who
5 have not come through City Wide and have
6 not had a positive change. We are
7 requesting tonight for Council President
8 and this Council -- we had the pleasure
9 of Councilman Rizzo spending a morning
10 with us the other week at the facility.

11 Everything in here is youth
12 driven, with professional management.
13 This place is different. It's a
14 state-of-the-art facility, and this
15 School District cannot say no to this
16 project with these young people leading
17 the effort.

18 We have an agreement with
19 Temple University to serve as
20 contractors. This is not a Temple
21 University project, but this is a
22 state-of-the-art facility. It is in the
23 Fifth Councilman District. We are proud
24 of it, and we want to finish construction
25 and have this facility ready.

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2 Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell,
3 it's about three months of construction
4 to finish this project, three months.
5 And there's no way this School District
6 cannot go back and look at their budget
7 and find some revenue to help us.

8 Thank you, Council President
9 Ann Verna.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: How
11 much revenue are you looking for?

12 MR. MACKEY: Well, you're
13 asking Mackey, so I want to be
14 respectful. The reality of it is --

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: You
16 have to say what you're asking for.

17 MR. MACKEY: That's right. We
18 have a request into the School District
19 for \$7,000 per student.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: How
21 many students do you have?

22 MR. MACKEY: The first year it
23 would be 120 students, and moving into
24 the second students, 220 students.

25 On Page 2 of the letter to

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 Mr. Bichner, the outline is outlined on
3 Page 2. Year 1 is 1.4 million. Year 2
4 is 2.2 million.

5 And I don't think for \$7,000 a
6 cause per student, with graduate students
7 from Temple University and my fine young
8 colleagues here, with the other
9 leaderships that -- young people that we
10 have developed you're going to get a
11 better \$7,000 per cost. The facility is
12 ready to go, and it's all that.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.

14 Any questions or comments from
15 members of the Committee?

16 The Chair recognizes Councilman
17 Clarke.

18 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
19 Madam President.

20 Madam President, I would be
21 remiss after that rousing ovation that I
22 got to not talk about the wonderful work
23 that City Wide and all of the members of
24 the City Wide Youth organization have
25 done over the number of years, and I just

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 want to congratulate you for your
3 continued and sustained presence in the
4 community, not only working with young
5 people but working with businesses and
6 residents in the community. So I want to
7 commend you, and keep on doing the good
8 work.

9 MR. MACKEY: Thank you,
10 Councilman.

11 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: You're
12 welcome.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
14 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.
16 Madam President and Mr. Mackey, I just
17 want to congratulate you on the fine work
18 that you do with the young people. I
19 certainly admire your tenacity and your
20 stick-to-itiveness, because you've been
21 working with these groups for many, many
22 years and it takes a lot of patience and
23 understanding to work in this environment
24 with young people, but you've been
25 successful and we congratulate you.

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2 MR. MACKEY: Thank you. I just
3 want to say that working with young
4 people is very hard, but it's very
5 challenging. When a young person puts a
6 project together and writes their own
7 proposal and young people go out and
8 solicit for the resources that they need,
9 it's so rewarding, when you put that TV
10 on at night and see young people doing
11 positive things.

12 It's just a bad time. We are
13 looking at ten other cities throughout
14 the country, and the violence epidemic is
15 just so mirror-like with the other
16 cities. It's unbelievable. But to stay
17 positive today, to say that these young
18 people have been with us since '92 in
19 this year-round program and we've been
20 coming here for ten years talking about a
21 youth mall, we are really close. This is
22 an educational mecca. It is different,
23 and I really need this Council to help us
24 with the School District to find some
25 resources. I really appreciate the

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 effort, though, and the compliments.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Let me ask
5 you a question. You do not characterize
6 this project as a charter school?

7 MR. MACKEY: We do not.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: So it's
9 more of a program, and you need
10 independent funding?

11 MR. MACKEY: Correct. It's an
12 alternative school, because we looked at
13 some of the -- it's a program, correct.
14 Yes, ma'am.

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Okay.

16 MR. MACKEY: We have a
17 difference with charter schools. It's
18 just -- I think with a good Board of
19 Directors -- I had a mandate about three
20 years ago from a good friend of mine to
21 put together a real organization.
22 Sometimes we do work and we don't have
23 good structure. I think we have the
24 necessary structure and resources in
25 place that we can run an alternative

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2 school with the right programatics in
3 place and make a difference.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Now, is
5 there a precedent where the School
6 District funded alternative schools like
7 this that are not characterized as a
8 charter school?

9 MR. MACKEY: I think the School
10 District has many other spin-off
11 programs. Well, Larry Adenoff used to
12 run -- the name escapes right now. But
13 over the years, they have funded other
14 projects independently. Through the
15 Urban Coalition even, they fund projects.
16 And I believe with the best interest of
17 the -- there's a partnership more or
18 less, like with Temple University has
19 adopted some schools. University of Penn
20 has adopted some schools. This is just
21 more of a community-based driven
22 component.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Okay.
24 Thank you.

25 MR. MACKEY: Thank you.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

3 You're welcome.

4 Are there any other questions
5 or comments from -- the Chair recognizes
6 Councilwoman Miller.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
8 you, Madam President.

9 I just want to say, William,
10 that I met you years ago when you put
11 your first state application in when I
12 worked for Dave Richardson, and I just
13 want to commend you on your growth and
14 your development and your
15 stick-to-itiveness. I mean, you've stuck
16 in there a long time at this
17 organization. And when I read things,
18 I'm really proud of you.

19 MR. MACKEY: Thank you. Thank
20 you very much.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
22 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Brown.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
24 Madam Chair.

25 I'd be remiss also -- I was

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 listening upstairs, and to go on record
3 to acknowledge the tremendous improvement
4 and progress the organization has made
5 and how you, in a very unique way, have a
6 way of connecting with young people,
7 unlike those of us of another generation.

8 So I just need to acknowledge
9 that you do that in a magnificent way,
10 and the work that you do is important.

11 Please give me a read now how
12 many young people you're currently
13 serving.

14 MR. MACKEY: Right now our
15 resources is at a minimum. I think right
16 now realistically about 80 young people.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: How are
18 they recruited?

19 MR. MACKEY: Word of mouth
20 mostly, but last weekend, we did a
21 non-violence rally, and since then, we
22 have had how many students come in?

23 MR. KELLAM: 36.

24 MR. MACKEY: This week we had
25 36 new recruits this week alone.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Average
3 age of the young people?

4 MR. HARDY: 16.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Are we
6 talking high school students or middle
7 school?

8 MR. MACKEY: High school right
9 now, yes, ma'am.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And you're
11 housed where?

12 MR. MACKEY: We're housed in
13 William Penn High School and we're housed
14 in our facility at 1352 West Girard, and
15 we pay rent at both places, but the
16 School District picked the tab up this
17 year once again. So I do want to say
18 thanks to Mr. Bichner.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And the
20 type of services, activities you provide
21 for young people are?

22 MR. MACKEY: We have six
23 training components: Business, law,
24 health, architect, computer, and arts and
25 culture. And we have graduate students

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 from Temple University that come over and
3 do the academic enrichment and the career
4 development.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: In those
6 areas you just mentioned?

7 MR. MACKEY: Yes, ma'am.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
9 for your testimony.

10 MR. MACKEY: And I want to say
11 thank you for years ago one of the
12 persons that was very frank to us saying
13 that, Mackey, you have to organize and be
14 a little bit more professional with this
15 if you want to go to the next level. So
16 I do want to say thank you to you as
17 well.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
19 welcome.

20 MR. MACKEY: Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
22 Madam Chair.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
24 You're welcome.

25 Any other questions or comments

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 from members of the Committee?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
5 you very much.

6 MR. MACKEY: Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
8 you, gentlemen.

9 MR. MCPHERSON: The next
10 witness is Helen Gym.

11 MS. GYM: Hi. Good evening.
12 Thank you very much.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
14 evening. Welcome.

15 MS. GYM: My name is Helen Gym.
16 I'm a parent at Powel Elementary School,
17 and I came here to talk about Powel where
18 my daughter is currently in the third
19 grade.

20 In the newspapers, we've been
21 reading about how the School District of
22 Philadelphia has been doing budget cuts
23 that will impact upon schools around five
24 percent, and some of the tenor about the
25 discussion has been around the sense that

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2 these are extracurricular kinds of
3 activities, special programs and things
4 that may not impact upon the regular
5 education of children. And I am here as
6 a parent to tell you that those are
7 absolutely false.

8 Powel Elementary School will be
9 losing \$190,000 out of its budget. It is
10 a drop of 25 percent of its income from
11 last year. It is also a drop, more
12 importantly, of almost 38 percent in the
13 last three years.

14 The thing is is that I know
15 that Powel School is not alone in this
16 suffering. Powel School, like many
17 schools across the City, have been seeing
18 their budgets slashed. These are not
19 extracurricular programs or after-school
20 programs. When you are talking about 25
21 percent of the school's budget, we are
22 talking fundamentally about teachers,
23 about fundamental programs, about
24 personnel that are responsible for the
25 safety, the education and the nurturing

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2 of our children.

3 No school can survive, nor
4 should they be asked to decide between a
5 library or a teacher. No school should
6 ever be asked to choose between an
7 after-school care program or a noontime
8 aide. No school should be asked to close
9 down its libraries to get rid of the
10 personnel that watch our children and
11 keep them safe. But Powel is being asked
12 to do that today.

13 I would also ask you to look
14 very closely at the School District
15 budget and check the other schools. I
16 have heard that there were parents from
17 Meredith Elementary School who were here
18 this afternoon that testified very
19 similarly.

20 Powel and Meredith may be very
21 fortunate in the sense that they share
22 one thing, we do share a very active and
23 engaged parent body. We have a good
24 relationship with our principal, who is
25 able to share information with us. But I

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2 don't believe that all schools in this
3 City are as well organized, nor should we
4 assume that they have the same kind of
5 relationship or access to information at
6 the schools.

7 So I would ask you as City
8 Council members to take a serious look at
9 the budget. This is not a five percent
10 drop. It is something that is deeply
11 impacting every single school across this
12 City. And please don't assume that if
13 they cannot come out to these public
14 hearings today at this time to testify in
15 front of you, that they are not suffering
16 under the budget cuts as well.

17 For Powel School in particular,
18 I just wanted to point out that \$200,000
19 out of a school that serves less than 270
20 students K to 4 is a devastating effect.
21 Small schools cannot absorb that kind of
22 loss.

23 The other thing that I wanted
24 to point out is at this time that we
25 should point out that contracting has

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2 become the number one game in the School
3 District of Philadelphia. We have
4 millions of dollars in contracts going to
5 places like Caplan, Princeton Review,
6 Elliot Lewis, Sodexo and, of course,
7 K-12, and we do know what the management
8 of K-12 has once said about Philadelphia
9 and many other urban children. But we
10 give them millions of dollars, and in the
11 meantime, we cut those same millions from
12 our schools.

13 We guarantee contracts for
14 corporations, but we don't guarantee
15 contracts for our children, and that is a
16 crime in Philadelphia. We have said that
17 time and time again, why is it that
18 Edison schools should get \$750 more per
19 child for being a private contractor than
20 other public school students receive.
21 They are no less valuable. And Edison
22 surely cannot be worth that kind of
23 money.

24 So contracting has become --
25 and what we want to know about the

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2 contractors is, when these budget cuts
3 come down like this, when schools are
4 asked to choose between teachers and
5 libraries, are these contractors also
6 sharing our pain? Are they getting the
7 budget cuts? Do their contracts get
8 renewed and increased? I don't think
9 that they do, because we haven't seen
10 that happen.

11 So there's a tremendous amount
12 of outrage that's brewing within
13 Philadelphia schools, amongst our parents
14 and communities, and I only ask that City
15 Council has a moral and deeply fiscal
16 responsibility to the children of
17 Philadelphia to ask those questions of
18 the School District.

19 Thank you very much.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
21 you very much -- just a moment, please.
22 I want to thank you very much for coming
23 in to testify, but I want you to also
24 understand that we in Council do not
25 approve the School District budget. It

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 is simply our responsibility to
3 reauthorize the taxes.

4 I think that your plea is very
5 touching, and I think you should really
6 be making this plea to the School Reform
7 Commission. And it is my understanding
8 that they will be having hearings on
9 April the 19th at 1:00 p.m. In order for
10 you to testify, I am told that you would
11 have to call the day before, April the
12 18th, before 4 o'clock in order that your
13 name be put on the list. And if you'd
14 like -- do you have a pencil -- I'll be
15 happy to give you the number, the
16 telephone number for you to call.
17 215-400-4040.

18 MS. GYM: Thank you very much,
19 President Verna.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
21 You're welcome.

22 MS. GYM: I just wanted to add
23 that I do realize that you don't have the
24 power to approve or condone, but what you
25 do have the power to do that we parents

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 apparently do not is, you have the power
3 to ask the questions. You have the power
4 to investigate and to review and to ask
5 the School District in a very public way
6 to be accountable for the numbers that
7 they're putting out that are causing so
8 many schools and children to suffer under
9 this budget. Parents have very -- we
10 have a tremendous amount of power, I do
11 know that, but from an oversight angle,
12 given that we do not even have local
13 authority over our School District, that
14 it is a state-appointed board that is
15 there, the City Council is the local form
16 of government that we ask for to ask you
17 to help us as community people and as
18 parents to please ask for accountability
19 and oversight and to ask some critical
20 questions about where the money is going,
21 because it's not coming to our children.

22 And the only other thing that I
23 would like to add is, we appreciate the
24 fact that City Council has allowed for
25 evening hearings, even though not

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.
2 everybody is here from the Council, but
3 the School District only has its hearings
4 at 1:00 p.m. in the middle of the school
5 day. Children cannot attend. Parents
6 cannot attend, and neither can teachers.
7 And so it becomes a very difficult thing.
8 So we appreciate the space that you've
9 provided for people.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
12 you. Just a moment, please.

13 The Chair recognizes
14 Councilwoman Brown.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
16 Madam President.

17 Good afternoon. Madam
18 President and Councilmembers, I would be
19 remiss not to go on record to acknowledge
20 Powel School, where there is everything
21 that this parent has indicated, a strong
22 principal, an active engaged diverse Home
23 and School Association, all the things
24 that we could wish for and hope for in
25 schools.

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 You should be encouraged to
3 know that the very questions were raised
4 with the leadership and Paul Vallas and
5 his team of professionals over the past
6 two days to the questions you have
7 raised, why the seemingly discrepancy
8 with the 95 percent with most schools and
9 the 75 percent at Powel. And he has
10 attempted to address that I think in a
11 fair way on the record.

12 So know that the questions were
13 asked on the record over the past two
14 days and know that he gave an
15 explanation. And seize President Verna's
16 recommendation that you appear before the
17 SRC on the date designated so that you
18 can hear the direct answers up close and
19 personal from the leadership at the
20 School District. But know that we're
21 paying attention where we sit. And to
22 all of the parents and little people from
23 Powel School, hats off to you for your
24 presence today.

25 MS. GYM: Thank you.

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
3 very much, Madam President.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
5 You're welcome.

6 The Chair recognizes Councilman
7 Nutter.

8 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you,
9 Madam Chair.

10 Good afternoon. I would echo
11 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown's comments.
12 I did ask at least some of those
13 questions yesterday. I'm glad that you
14 are here, and I see other parents and the
15 students. And as the Council President
16 laid out, while it is certainly true that
17 we don't determine the individual school
18 funding and we actually do not vote on
19 the School District's budget, I think the
20 District doesn't come over here just
21 because they don't have anything to do
22 with themselves. There is some ability
23 to get, at a minimum, some focused
24 attention on some of these issues, not
25 just with regard to Powell but any of the

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 other 264 schools or 263 schools in the
3 District and charter schools and the
4 like.

5 So whether it's a perfect
6 process or not or whether we have
7 authority over someone or not, we
8 certainly have our seats and, more
9 importantly, our voices to raise these
10 issues.

11 Mr. Vallas indicated yesterday
12 that he thought there was going to be
13 some change. He wasn't exactly sure
14 where the \$190,000 cut figure came from.
15 And I think that there are any number of
16 School District representatives still
17 here with us this afternoon. I'd
18 strongly encourage you before leaving to
19 make your presence known to them and try
20 to get the detailed information that you
21 need.

22 I'm just pleased that you
23 decided to come out and express yourself
24 for the one school, but know that when
25 you raise these issues, often it takes us

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.
2 into other areas and you might be raising
3 the same issue for another school and not
4 even realize that others are laboring
5 under the same difficulties.

6 So thank you very much for
7 coming out. We care about Powel and we
8 care about a whole host of other schools,
9 but I'm glad to see the Powel Owls are
10 here this afternoon. I know the shirts
11 well.

12 Thank you.

13 MS. GYM: Thank you.

14 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you,
15 Madam President.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
17 You're welcome.

18 Thank you very much.

19 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
20 witness is Carina Flaherty.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
22 Welcome. Please identify yourself for
23 the record. What is your name?

24 CARINA FLAHERTY: Good evening.
25 My name is Carina Flaherty and I am in

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 third grade at Powel School.

3 All of us students are here
4 from Powel's third grade because we want
5 to ask you a question. Why are you
6 allowing money to be taken away from
7 Powel?

8 My teacher's name is Teacher
9 Chris. He is very kind and he does not
10 screech at the top of his lungs. Teacher
11 Chris teaches us very well and we learn a
12 lot. I am very proud I learn fractions.
13 I learn that if you take one-fourth of a
14 school's money away, that doesn't leave a
15 lot left. Our library might be lost. I
16 love biography books, and if the library
17 loses those or if we can't go to the
18 library because there's no librarian,
19 then I will be very angry and very sad.

20 All of the students in Powel's
21 third grade have written you letters. I
22 hope you will read them. Please at least
23 give us a little of what we want.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 You're welcome.

3 Our next speaker is?

4 EMILY JENSEN: My name is Emily
5 Jensen.

6 I truly love the school. I
7 love the teachers. I love my classroom.
8 I love everything. But what I love most
9 of all is how successful we've been with
10 the money we've had. I like when we do
11 art in the classroom. I like our
12 playground equipment. I don't think it's
13 right that we are punished for being a
14 great school. If we lose money, we won't
15 be a safe or sanitary school, and if that
16 happens, parents will probably put their
17 kids out of the school. So think about
18 it. Do you want to give money or not?

19 Thank you.

20 RUBY JANE ANDERSON: Hi.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

22 Hello. Welcome.

23 RUBY JANE ANDERSON: Hi. My
24 name is Ruby Jane Anderson and I go to
25 Powel Elementary. You know, the school

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.
2 you're taking \$190,000 from. I would
3 like to ask you how we are supposed to
4 learn things if you are taking so much
5 money from us. Do you want the future
6 lawyers, doctors, actors, singers and
7 judges to have to throw away their dreams
8 because they can't get a good education?

9 It was kindergarten at Powel
10 Elementary when I learned to read. Now I
11 read at the seventh th grade level. It
12 was first grade when I understood
13 fractions. It was second grade when I
14 became such a great speller. Now in the
15 third grade, I am getting a wonderful
16 education with Teacher Tia, my teacher.

17 Your budget cuts will hurt our
18 learning environment a whole lot.
19 Remember, when you hurt children, you
20 hurt the future.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
23 you.

24 TOM FRY: Hello. My name is
25 Tom Fry.

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 I like Powel School, and I
3 don't want to lose two teachers with the
4 \$100,000 you're cutting from our school.
5 I like the character portrayals I'm doing
6 in the library, and I don't want to lose
7 anything there. I like the education
8 Powel is giving me. If the recess
9 teachers were gone, we would not have
10 recess. I don't want to miss the only
11 time to go outside at school.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
14 you.

15 ARIANNA TYNES: My name is
16 Arianna Tynes, and I start by saying how
17 are you? Well, I hope you're doing fine.
18 Right now I'm going to say all the things
19 that matter to me in the whole school
20 that might be taken away because our
21 school doesn't have enough money.

22 Well, we might not have recess
23 without our recess teachers and get no
24 fresh air. Our school also likes the
25 fact that we have a library, because it's

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 a place where children can read and pick
3 up books, and a lot of children in our
4 school love to read. But most of all,
5 our school might lose my teacher, Teacher
6 Chris, and the other third grade teacher,
7 Teacher Tia, that my sister has. The
8 school may not have enough money to pay
9 the teachers and supply them with enough
10 material.

11 So please, City Council, please
12 help our school.

13 Thank you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
15 you.

16 May I say that your teachers
17 and your parents have to be so very, very
18 proud of all of you, and thank you for
19 coming in. We really appreciate it.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. MCPHERSON: Our next
22 witness is Aissia Richardson.

23 (No response.)

24 MR. MCPHERSON: Aissia
25 Richardson.

1 4/5/06 - WHOLE - BILL 060001, ETC.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is
3 Ms. Richardson here?

4 (No response.)

5 MR. MCPHERSON: Michael
6 Flannigan.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
8 evening. Welcome. Please identify
9 yourself for the record and proceed with
10 your testimony.

11 MR. FLANNIGAN: My name is
12 Michael Flannigan. I'm a parent of a
13 kindergartner at Meredith School, and
14 obviously the budget cuts are disturbing.
15 Having really just become a member of the
16 family at Meredith, it's amazing what
17 they're able to do currently with rather
18 limited resources, making significant
19 gains every year and keeping ahead of
20 state and federal requirements for
21 education. Cutting funds obviously would
22 put that progress at risk.

23 The questions and comments that
24 I have are really not about expanding
25 budget, but prioritizing how the monies

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2 are spent. And in having read through
3 some articles and such, the District
4 talks about allocating \$8 million, the
5 same number that is targeted to be cut
6 from discretionary funding programs, and
7 adding those to fund new charter schools.
8 The questions I have are really related
9 to, I guess, the priorities of funding
10 charter schools at the expense of
11 existing schools that are achieving. And
12 it's a little disconcerting to me in
13 reading some information from the Penn
14 Graduate School of Education. They say
15 charter schools have lagged behind
16 District schools, with less than half
17 making adequate yearly progress. Yet,
18 the District wants to add \$8 million
19 worth of funding for new charter schools.

20 Another article says that of 46
21 charter schools, 36 of those charter
22 schools made no progress. The Inquirer
23 wrote that 30 of 59 charter schools in
24 Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania near
25 suburbs, 30 of 59 charters not meeting

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2 academic standards. And a quote from
3 Mr. Vallas in 2003 on the topic of
4 charter schools and not making adequate
5 progress was, "I think what you can
6 expect is to see more charters
7 decertified. It's simple. If charters
8 are not performing, they will be
9 decertified."

10 So I guess I pick one point to
11 challenge of a budget that is large
12 numbers obviously. Eight million dollars
13 is rather a small part. So if you take
14 the \$8 million that are going to be taken
15 from discretionary budgets, if you look
16 at where they're going, to charters, I
17 question that priority.

18 I also question why there could
19 not be some pencil sharpening or
20 negotiating of budgets that are
21 allocated, 720 million capital budget.
22 If you take one percent and you negotiate
23 contracts more with a little bit more
24 rigor, could you not save one percent in
25 reallocate it back to the budgets that

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2 are targeted to be cut?

3 Just regarding the
4 discretionary budgets for principals at
5 Meredith, I'm very confident that those
6 funds are being put to good use. I can't
7 say that for other schools, but I can't
8 imagine that they're neglectfully
9 spending that money on programs that
10 don't make sense.

11 So it seems to make sense to me
12 that the monies that are put in the
13 principals' care are probably very likely
14 to be well spent and cherished, I think,
15 because they see day to day like these
16 kids the kind of impact that a dollar can
17 have here and there.

18 So I guess just to recap, my
19 question is not about the issue of
20 balancing a budget. I'm for that. I
21 think that's responsible. It's just more
22 a question of how you allocate those
23 funds and where those dollars are going.
24 I think they should stay more where they
25 are, in the principals' hands, than

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2 elsewhere.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
4 you, Mr. Flannigan. I just want you to
5 know that earlier today when we had
6 public testimony, there were parents very
7 concerned about Meredith School. We did
8 give a commitment that Mr. Vallas would
9 personally have a meeting, along with
10 Councilman DiCicco, with parents at the
11 school so that hopefully, as you said,
12 maybe pencils could be sharpened and
13 there could be some conclusion to the
14 problems at that hearing. But I think
15 that that meeting -- any indication as to
16 when the meeting will be held?

17 MS. AVERETTE: We have a
18 contact person. They're going to call us
19 with the schedules of the parents.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
21 That's wonderful.

22 MS. AVERETTE: And we would
23 like to offer the same for the Powel
24 parents as well.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.

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2 Did they leave?

3 MS. AVERETTE: No. I think
4 some of them are here, and I know Helen
5 and I can actually go to her.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
7 Wonderful.

8 So, Mr. Flannigan, as I said, I
9 would encourage you to go to the meeting.
10 Mr. Vallas will personally be there. And
11 if you're so inclined, the School Reform
12 Commission will be having their budget
13 hearings on April the 19th.

14 MS. AVERETTE: Actually, on
15 April the 12th. He would just need to
16 schedule by the 11th.

17 MR. HARRIS: The hearing is on
18 the 12th and then the regular meeting is
19 on the 19th.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well,
21 then the hearing is on the 12th. We were
22 told the 19th.

23 The 12th. Mr. Flannigan, if
24 you are interested in testifying at the
25 time, you would have to call the day

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2 before prior to 4 o'clock in the
3 afternoon.

4 MR. FLANNIGAN: Great.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: If
6 you have a paper and pencil, I'll be
7 happy to give you the telephone number
8 now.

9 MR. FLANNIGAN: I don't have a
10 pen.

11 MR. McPHERSON: I'll just write
12 him the number down.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
14 215-400-4040.

15 MR. FLANNIGAN: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
17 you. And we appreciate your coming in to
18 offer your feelings. Thank you so much.

19 MR. FLANNIGAN: Thank you.

20 MR. McPHERSON: Aissia
21 Richardson.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
23 evening. Welcome. Please identify
24 yourself for the record.

25 MS. RICHARDSON: Good evening.

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2 My name is Aissia Richardson. Thank you
3 very much for giving me the opportunity
4 to speak here today to you about an
5 important issue that's affecting all of
6 our children here at Powel Elementary
7 School.

8 My daughter, Yasmina, is a
9 third grader at Powel.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Hi.

11 MS. RICHARDSON: And she came
12 today because she's directly affected by
13 the budget cuts to the School District.
14 My name is Aissia Richardson, again. I'm
15 the President of the Home and School
16 Association at Samuel Powel Elementary
17 School, which is at 301 North 36th
18 Street. And as you know, the
19 Philadelphia School District has asked
20 the school principals to cut their
21 discretionary budgets by five percent.
22 While we understand the overall
23 constraints facing the School District,
24 we at the Powel School are being asked to
25 accept disproportionately large cuts to

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2 our budget.

3 Powel is a small and excellent
4 elementary school. We have made AYP
5 every year, and we have traditionally had
6 excellent standardized test scores.
7 We're facing a cut of close to \$200,000
8 to our budget, which represents nearly 25
9 percent of our total budget. A loss of
10 this kind will make it extraordinarily
11 difficult for our school to maintain the
12 excellent standards we have set. A cut
13 of \$150,000 could result in the potential
14 loss of two teachers, and these are our
15 two third grade teachers, which were site
16 selected. I personally spent a month
17 interviewing and reviewing resumes for
18 site-selected teachers, and these two
19 teachers are in a critical grade, the
20 third grade.

21 The loss of two teachers in a
22 school of our size represents a 12
23 percent cut to our staff, our teaching
24 staff. Should we choose to retain these
25 two teachers, we would need to sacrifice

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2 all of our support staff. We would need
3 to close our library, eliminate our
4 accommodation room and eliminate our two
5 kindergarten assistants, in addition to
6 making other reductions.

7 In today's dollars, we're
8 facing a cumulative budget cut over the
9 past four years of 38 percent. We really
10 need your help. Something is obviously
11 awry with a formula used to allocate
12 funds to elementary schools, especially
13 small elementary schools such as ours.
14 In the long term, there needs to be an
15 equitable formula to allocate dollars to
16 schools such as ours, which are small and
17 successful. In the short term, we're
18 begging you to advocate for fair funding
19 for the Philadelphia School District.

20 Thank you very much.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

22 You're welcome. Ms. Richardson, so that
23 you're aware, several of the students
24 were in earlier. They were absolutely
25 darling, and they did in fact testify.

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2 We have Mr. Vallas's Chief of Staff here.

3 Do you want to please come to
4 the table and make an announcement so
5 that the other parents can also know that
6 Mr. Vallas will in fact be meeting with
7 the parents from Powel.

8 MS. AVERETTE: Good evening.

9 Claudia Averette, Chief of Staff.

10 I would just like to say for
11 the record that we are committed to
12 meeting with the parents who have
13 questions about the budget, and we will
14 walk through it with you so that you can
15 understand where the funding is going to
16 be allocated and where there will be loss
17 in discretionary dollars. And we made
18 that same commitment earlier this evening
19 to the other Meredith parents as well.

20 And I will work with Ms.
21 Richardson, who I know very well, with
22 the Home and School. We work very
23 closely together.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

25 Wonderful.

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2 MS. RICHARDSON: Thank you very
3 much.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
5 we are all hoping that this can all be
6 ironed out and everyone will be very
7 happy, because I know that I was
8 personally impressed with the children
9 that testified earlier. They were
10 absolutely beautiful.

11 MS. RICHARDSON: We're very
12 proud of our school. We have an
13 excellent principal. We have a great
14 committed Home and School Association and
15 School Council, and as you can see, our
16 children are also involved in the way
17 that the school is operated. So we feel
18 like we're one of the good schools in
19 Philadelphia and we don't want to be
20 penalized for being good.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well,
22 you have an excellent reputation. Thank
23 you. Thank you so much for coming in.

24 MR. MCPHERSON: Our next
25 witness is Jamal Washington.

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is

4 Jamal Washington here?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is

7 there anyone else that would like to

8 testify?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do we

11 have anyone else in the audience that

12 would like to testify?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

15 Seeing no one, this will conclude our

16 public hearing, and Council will stand in

17 recess until 9:30 tomorrow morning.

18 Thank you all very much. We

19 appreciate your coming in.

20 (Committee of the Whole

21 adjourned at 6:25 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter on April 5, 2006, and that
this is a true and correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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