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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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Room 400, City Hall

6

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

7

Tuesday, April 19, 2005, 10:30 a.m.

8

(Hearing continued from Monday, 4/18/05)

9

10 BILL 050003 - An Ordinance amending Section
11 19-1801 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
12 "Authorization of Tax," to further authorize
13 the Board of Education of the...

14 Bill 050005 - An Ordinance amending Chapter
15 19-1800 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
16 "School Tax Authorization," by amending
17 Section 19-1804, entitled "Authorization of
18 Net Income Tax," to further...

19 Bill 05006 - An Ordinance amending Chapter
20 19-1800 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
21 "School Tax Authorization," by amending
22 Section 19-1806, entitled "Authorization of
23 Realty Use and Occupancy Tax,".....

17 PRESENT:

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA
19 COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
20 COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY
21 COUNCILMAN JUAN F. RAMOS
22 COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO
23 COUNCILMAN FRANK DI CICCIO
24 COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
25 COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

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

5 I would like to make mention that
6 the testimony taken yesterday will certainly
7 be made part of the record, and I would ask
8 Mr. McPherson to please read the title of Bill
9 Nos. 050004, 050005 and 050006.

10 MR. MCPHERSON: Bill No.
11 050004, an Ordinance amending Section 19-1801
12 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
13 "Authorization of Tax," to further authorize
14 the Board of Education of the School District
15 of Philadelphia to impose a tax on real estate
16 within the City of Philadelphia; all under
17 certain terms and conditions.

18 Bill No. 050005, an Ordinance
19 amending Chapter 19-1800 of The Philadelphia
20 Code entitled "School Tax Authorization," by
21 amending Section 19-1804, entitled
22 "Authorization of Net Income Tax," to further
23 authorize the Board of Education of the School
24 District of Philadelphia to impose a tax on
25 net income from real property and tangible and

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2 intangible personal property of residents of
3 the School District of Philadelphia; all under
4 certain terms and conditions.

5 And Bill No. 050006, an Ordinance
6 amending Chapter 19-1800 of The Philadelphia
7 Code entitled "School Tax Authorization," by
8 amending Section 19-1806 entitled
9 "Authorization of Realty Use and Occupancy
10 Tax," to further authorize the Board of
11 Education of the School District of
12 Philadelphia to impose a tax on the use or
13 occupancy of real estate within the School
14 District of Philadelphia.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
16 Mr. Vallas, do you mind taking the witness
17 table.

18 Mr. Vallas, yesterday you testified
19 the District will serve 400 families through
20 the Parent/Child Home program. Would you mind
21 elaborating on that program, what it does?

22 MR. VALLAS: The Parent/Child
23 Home program is a program that about 22
24 districts across the state participate in, and
25 basically what we do is, we provide counselors

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2 to go into homes and to work with parents of
3 children who are not in pre-school or early
4 childhood programs to, in effect, teach them
5 how to support their children at home, in
6 effect, to do like -- it's a version of
7 pre-school home schooling, so to speak.

8 When they go to the homes, obviously
9 they focus on the child's academic
10 development, but they also try to coordinate
11 healthcare services, they try to make sure
12 that the children are registered for the Kid
13 Care program. If the family is in need of
14 additional social services, they try to
15 coordinate the delivery of those services.

16 But the program is actually a
17 state-wide program that school districts
18 participate in, and they've been doing it for
19 a number of years in districts outside of
20 Philadelphia. It also has a lot of support in
21 Harrisburg. We're hoping that it's a program
22 that the state legislature will eventually
23 provide more financial support.

24 But just to reiterate, what we will
25 be able to do with the reprogramming of the

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2 Comprehensive Day Care dollars is, we will be
3 able to shift the 240-plus children who will
4 be adversely affected into the same identical
5 programs provided by 500 state reimbursed
6 providers, and then we will be able to use the
7 savings to, in effect, place over 2,000 or
8 almost 2,000 additional children in a school
9 district funded and managed early childhood
10 program, which, in effect, will allow us to
11 get to about -- will allow us to approach
12 about 80 percent of the children who we've
13 identified as being in need of early childhood
14 care.

15 We're hoping, obviously, to address
16 the others through the state reimbursed
17 private providers, but there will be a net
18 increase and there will be 400 children who,
19 for the first time, will participate in this
20 program. Another 500 will participate through
21 our Cradle to the Classroom program that we
22 administer through ELECT. These are our
23 pregnant teens. So we'll go from about 900
24 pregnant teens -- I'm sorry; almost a thousand
25 pregnant teens in the program to 1,500. This

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2 is where the pregnant teens are provided
3 parental counseling, parental training. The
4 babies are put in day care, pre-school, et
5 cetera. And then the remaining students, well
6 over a thousand, will be added to the School
7 District's Head Start program.

8 So, in effect, when can you expand
9 services for 2,000 kids, for 2,000 children,
10 with the same amount of money and dramatically
11 improve the quality of those services? It
12 becomes a win-win situation.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
14 you very much.

15 The Chair recognizes Councilwoman
16 Brown.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
18 Madam President.

19 Good morning.

20 MR. VALLAS: Good morning.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Could you
22 please update us on the Center City district
23 idea/concept that's being talked about?

24 MR. VALLAS: Yes. For a number
25 of years, the School District organizational

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2 structure has been criticized because the
3 Central district and parts of the South Philly
4 district had too many schools. I think the
5 Center district had 51 schools.

6 So what we decided to do was to add
7 a tenth district and to draw that tenth
8 district. The district is called the Center
9 City district, but that's a little misleading,
10 because not all the schools in that district
11 one would consider to be traditionally part of
12 the Center City district. But this allows us
13 to reduce the district size, so all of our
14 districts have -- when you include charter
15 schools, have between about 30, 35 schools,
16 when you're including the charter. So now we
17 have ten districts, all of which are pretty
18 much balanced in terms of the number of
19 aggregate schools that they have.

20 Once again, the criticism in the
21 past was all of our districts have between 25
22 and 35 schools and then you had the --
23 including the charters, but then you had the
24 Central district that had like 56 schools.
25 And I don't think I'm even counting all the

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2 charters.

3 Now, when we drew the boundaries, we
4 did sit down with the local elected officials,
5 for example, to get feedback from them, and we
6 added a number of schools to the boundaries of
7 that district. For example, at the request
8 and after discussions with Representative
9 Thomas, who has always been the strongest
10 advocate in Harrisburg for the relieving of
11 the burden of the Central district being as
12 large as it was, but we now have ten
13 districts. And if you look at the diversity
14 in the Center City district, it's
15 extraordinarily diversified not only racially
16 but also racially, ethnically and also there's
17 economic diversity in the district, too. But,
18 again, it will give us ten very reasonably
19 sized districts that -- and no one district is
20 going to have too many schools.

21 We've also created, so you know, an
22 11th district, and this is our corrective
23 action district. And those are the schools
24 that have been persistently underperforming.
25 They have not met AYP for, I think, six years

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2 in a row, and they're in corrective action,
3 too. And No Child Left Behind mandates that
4 corrective action be taken in these schools.

5 We will have at least 11 schools in
6 that district. We may actually have more by
7 the time we reach our final conclusion. But
8 we have a separate administration. We have a
9 separate regional superintendent managing the
10 corrective action plans for those schools, and
11 there are schools -- and the corrective action
12 schools are scattered throughout the district.
13 So we think that -- it's modeled after the
14 Chancellor's district in New York. That's the
15 model that we're using, and the Chancellor's
16 district has received national claim as an
17 outstanding approach towards taking corrective
18 action in struggling schools.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

20 Under your leadership, what has been the
21 policy with regards to the shifting, the
22 movement of the regional superintendents?

23 MR. VALLAS: Well, we've
24 reassigned -- or we've replaced a number of
25 our regional superintendents. George Schuller

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2 recently retired. We recruited a new regional
3 superintendent for South Philly. We recruited
4 a new regional superintendent -- obviously
5 Janet Samuels is moving to the Center City
6 district. We've recruited a candidate to
7 replace Janet Samuels. We haven't announced
8 him officially yet, an outstanding candidate,
9 former superintendent with an impeccable
10 reputation. He's coming from, I think,
11 Seattle, right?

12 By way of Seattle. We'll be, as
13 soon as we've completed our extensive
14 background search, because we vet every
15 candidate coming in, we'll publicly announce
16 him.

17 We've brought Marilyn Perez in to
18 staff our CAR district, and there are at least
19 two other regional superintendentships which
20 are coming available which we have not
21 selected personnel for.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So I guess
23 the fact that personnel move out then forces
24 you to make, what do you call them,
25 reassignments, correct?

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2 MR. VALLAS: Yes. Most of our
3 superintendents, regional superintendents, who
4 have left have retired or in some cases moved
5 on to other districts. Dana Bedden became a
6 superintendent outside the district, just as
7 Craig Williams was recruited from St. Louis to
8 become a superintendent. We're becoming a
9 superintendent training academy here, I guess.
10 And George Schuller has retired. And Ellen
11 Linky is the only superintendent who, in
12 effect, is moving out who has not retired.
13 She's going to be running our gifted programs,
14 our accelerated learning programs.

15 So we've made -- we changed about a
16 little more than a third of our
17 superintendents, but most of them have moved
18 on or retired. So we're just not reassigning
19 them and then carrying them, with the
20 exception of Ellen Linky. We needed somebody
21 to manage our accelerated learning programs
22 and we feel that Ellen is very capable of
23 doing that.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

25 With the emerging scholar schools, would it be

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2 fair to say given their potential and what
3 that does in terms of the students in the
4 schools, that they then require a budget that
5 allows them to do those additional activities
6 and programs so that they can indeed be an
7 emerging scholar school?

8 MR. VALLAS: We're allocating
9 anywhere from \$75,000 to \$125, \$150,000 to
10 those schools just the first year alone. So
11 while there's a transition to the emerging
12 scholars, montessori, IB Prep, we've
13 appropriated \$5 million for the 50 schools
14 that will have the high achievement academy,
15 so to speak, accelerated learning academies.
16 So we feel that that is more than enough
17 start-up money to get those schools underway.

18 Because, again, one of the reasons
19 we've been able to successfully balance the
20 budgets and why we haven't come to you with
21 crisis after crisis is, the money is following
22 the kids, and we're spending our money in much
23 more practical ways. You know, if you
24 suddenly begin adding accelerated programs or
25 accelerated classes or AP honors, advanced

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2 placement, you need to spend a little more
3 money, but you don't need to spend a whole lot
4 of money, because at the end of the day, if
5 the money is following the kids and the kids
6 are flowing into more AP honors, advanced
7 placement classes, well, then you hire
8 teachers using the money that you're not
9 spending because there's fewer kids in non-AP
10 honors, advanced placement.

11 So while certainly our move towards
12 gifted and accelerated is being financed by
13 reprogramming dollars and allowing the money
14 to follow the kids, we are appropriating
15 additional money. On the average, it's going
16 to be about \$100,000 plus for each of the
17 schools that are going to be establishing the
18 accelerated learning academies.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
20 then. Thank you again.

21 Thank you, Madam Chair.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
23 You're welcome.

24 The Chair recognizes Councilman
25 Rizzo.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Good

3 morning, everyone. I have a couple questions,
4 and the one is about the sale of the
5 Headquarters building. It's not so much about
6 the transaction. It's about what goes with
7 it.

8 For years, the school districts had
9 the luxury of parking on, I think it's, Wood
10 Street outside the right-of-way, and I'm
11 wondering, has that area been obviously
12 excluded in this transaction that the
13 developers of that property, I would hope,
14 don't think that they're going to be able to
15 utilize public property to park? So I hope
16 that it's clear or what -- could someone
17 explain the arrangement with this sale, what
18 happens to the, I think, courtesy that's being
19 extended the School District to use public
20 space for parking.

21 MR. SIEFERT: This is Frank
22 Siefert. I'm the special assistant to the
23 SRC.

24 We closed on the buildings, the sale
25 of the buildings, last week, last Thursday,

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2 and what was sold was three of our buildings,
3 JFK, the Parkway and the Stevens building.

4 The parking that you mentioned,
5 Councilman Rizzo, outside of the Parkway is
6 not part of the sale. We are allowed, as part
7 of the agreement, to remain in the buildings
8 through the end of September and use that
9 parcel, but after that, that will go to the
10 developer.

11 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So I
12 understand for the record that when you move
13 out, the new developer will not be permitted
14 to use that area unless they work it out with
15 the City. That goes away, that parking, along
16 there.

17 MR. SIEFERT: That is correct.
18 And I know that Mr. Wilson is working closely
19 with the neighborhood groups regarding that.

20 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Because
21 that's one of the concerns that the neighbors
22 have come to me, that they -- I don't want to
23 use the word "tolerated" it while you were
24 there, because they realized they couldn't
25 fight City Hall on that one, but they realized

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2 that they can fight City Hall as it pertains
3 to a developer.

4 So that's good to hear, and I'll
5 communicate that, that that parking there will
6 cease after your departure.

7 MR. SIEFERT: If I could add
8 one more thing that may also allay some of
9 your fears. Part of the development of the
10 Parkway will include a garage underneath the
11 building.

12 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Are they
13 going to use any of the original structure at
14 all?

15 MR. SIEFERT: Yes. They're
16 going to use all of the original structure.
17 However, they're coming off the west side of
18 the building and going underneath with a
19 parking garage. To my knowledge, sir, that's
20 the plan.

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, I
22 don't know who to address this to, so I'll
23 just throw it out to the witness table. The
24 Recreation Department and the School District
25 have a relationship that I think needs some

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2 work. The relationship is the swimming pools
3 that they use for their programs that are
4 located within our schools. One particular I
5 believe is Sayre where that pool has been
6 closed, and I've talked to Vick Richard and
7 Deputy Commissioner Carapucci. I can read
8 people very well. They didn't say it, but I
9 could feel it, that they did not have the best
10 relationship in this arrangement that could
11 exist.

12 So, Mr. Vallas, what I'm asking is
13 that your people and the Recreation Department
14 get together, because it seems like it's a
15 struggle when there's issues that affect their
16 programs. I know the pools belong to you.
17 The maintenance is your responsibility, but to
18 have a pool shut down and be shut for six
19 months when it's one that's used for training
20 for summer lifeguards, et cetera -- and I
21 believe the information that I have is
22 accurate and honest, and I just think that
23 there needs to be some work that makes this
24 relationship better, because I feel that
25 there's some stress there and it doesn't work

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2 as well as it could be.

3 MR. VALLAS: Let me respond by
4 saying the School District has one -- on any
5 given day, 180 of our schools are open through
6 the dinner hour and we have programs. Some of
7 them are programs run by the Park district.
8 Some of them are programs run through Safe and
9 Sound. So that's about four times the number
10 of buildings that were open four, five years
11 ago.

12 So the relationship doesn't get any
13 better than that. In fact --

14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Honestly,
15 I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about
16 swimming pools.

17 MR. VALLAS: Let me say
18 something about the swimming pools. All of
19 our swimming pools are in need of repair.
20 Sayre is scheduled for, I believe, \$14 million
21 in capital renovations. It includes a
22 revamping of the swimming pool, which has been
23 leaking and has had problems for upwards of
24 five or six years. So it's always been like
25 closed and open and closed and open.

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2 So let me reassure you that all the
3 schools undergoing renovations with swimming
4 pools -- and, unfortunately, we don't have
5 enough schools with swimming pools. The
6 renovation of the pool is included in the
7 Sayre restructuring. So we hope to not only
8 open the pool, but to be able to open it so it
9 stays open.

10 So I just want to reassure you,
11 there may be some frustration over the closing
12 of the pool now, but if you look at the
13 capital plan, the design -- I think the
14 contract, the CM has already been awarded and
15 the design is already happening. We are,
16 obviously, waiting until the school closes,
17 because so much of the construction would be
18 disruptive of the educational process. But
19 the pool is one of the priority items. So I
20 want to assure you that the pool really by
21 September is going to be, hopefully earlier,
22 will be ready to be used again.

23 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Let me add
24 to this conversation this: When I first came
25 here, there was a lot of confusion. An

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2 example: Recreational Department and
3 Fairmount Park Commission, who was doing what,
4 little community parks, should the Recreation
5 Department should be cutting grass or should
6 it be Fairmount Park.

7 They got together and they worked it
8 out where Fairmount Park is better at doing
9 certain things than the Recreation Department.

10 Should we have a group assembled to
11 see if all this money for these capital
12 improvements for swimming pools and schools,
13 should we have an organization that maybe
14 schools aren't the best place for the pool,
15 maybe next door to the Recreation Department
16 should be the place for the pool? Why don't
17 we look at the entire issue to see if these --
18 and it's obviously going to be millions of
19 dollars that we're spending, are best spent in
20 the schools or in the Recreation Department.

21 My point is, now this relationship
22 with Fairmount Park and the Recreation
23 Department is so much better because they
24 looked at it and said, Yeah, the way we were
25 doing it isn't the best way.

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2 Should we look at this issue of
3 swimming pools City-wide?

4 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. Well, we
5 have so very few pools. Let me tell you, I
6 mean, we have so very few pools in the School
7 District. Of the new high schools under
8 design, I don't know if any have swimming
9 pools included in their budget. So let me
10 just say that we're not expanding the number
11 of pools available. We simply can't afford to
12 do that. What we are doing is, we're
13 renovating the pools that we have, the pool in
14 Lincoln, the pool in Sayre, the pool in the
15 Early Childhood Center in Councilman Clarke's
16 district. That pool was formerly managed by
17 the Park district and it's been closed for
18 about two years, and we house some of our
19 early childhood programs there and we took
20 over the building.

21 So our approach, I think we've
22 had -- we can always have a better
23 relationship, and obviously any better
24 coordination we would invite, but I want to
25 tell you, the last three years with the

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2 Mayor's Safe and Sound initiative, with the
3 Beacon program and with the Park district, we
4 have more coordinated activities going on in
5 our schools than any other school district in
6 the country. In fact, those coordinated
7 activities are taxing our buildings.

8 So there is very good coordination.
9 That doesn't mean that there's not some
10 tension in individual schools where a pool has
11 been closed or perhaps a school is undergoing
12 repair. But we meet with the Park district,
13 we meet with the Fairmount Park Commission,
14 President Nicks. The coordination on the
15 construction of the -- and the location and
16 the construction of the Microsoft School was
17 unprecedented.

18 So let me assure you, I think we
19 have excellent coordination, but obviously if
20 the City Council wanted to create an advisory
21 group or a task force to work on
22 coordination -- to work out improving
23 coordination, I mean --

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I don't
25 think Council, Mr. Vallas, has to do that. I

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2 think you and the Recreation Commissioner need
3 to get together and look at the issue of
4 swimming pools, whether they're best placed in
5 the existing schools or should the money be
6 spent to create a new recreation facility or
7 should the Recreation Department be
8 responsible for the pools and not have to come
9 to you with hat in hand and saying, The heater
10 is broken, we need to get it fixed. I mean,
11 it's sad to hear the stories that I've heard.

12 So my request to you is to have your
13 staff get together with the Recreation
14 Department and look at the issue of pools.
15 Hey, maybe the way we're doing it is the best
16 way.

17 MR. VALLAS: All right. You
18 got it.

19 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Everybody
20 said the relationship that they had with the
21 Fairmount Park Commission ten years ago was
22 the best way and it wasn't.

23 MR. VALLAS: Okay.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So that's my
25 request.

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2 MR. VALLAS: We'll get back to
3 you on that. Request granted.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: Thank you.

5 Thank you, Madam Chair.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

7 You're welcome.

8 Mr. Vallas, yesterday you indicated
9 that over the next 12 months, we will break
10 ground on new schools, one being Audenried,
11 and I believe you indicated yesterday that we
12 would see that happen in January or February.
13 When do you anticipate demolition of Audenried
14 taking place?

15 MR. VALLAS: Probably -- well,
16 definitely this summer. The reason we haven't
17 demolished Audenried is because the Audenried
18 boiler heats the school close by. But we have
19 a specific --

20 What's the specific date for that?

21 Do we have Pat here?

22 We will be advertising for the
23 demolition of the building this summer. We'll
24 have the building down before the end of the
25 year. We will then be advertising for the

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2 construction of the building. Of course, we
3 have a CM for that building right now. It's
4 Keatings Universal. So we should be breaking
5 ground on the school by February.

6 When is the date for completion?
7 Have we projected that?

8 December 2007 the building will be
9 complete. So we will probably -- what we
10 would then probably do in September of 2007 is
11 take a freshman class and house that freshman
12 class at a temporary facility so that when the
13 school reopens in December, we'll be able to
14 move the freshman class to the new building.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
16 Wonderful.

17 You also stated yesterday that there
18 will be major renovations at several of the
19 schools, one being GAMP. When do you see
20 those renovations being completed? When they
21 will start? When will they be completed?

22 MR. VALLAS: We'll give you the
23 exact dates here.

24 MR. HENWOOD: Hi. I'm Pat
25 Henwood, Director of Capital Programs.

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2 GAMP is currently scheduled for
3 advertisement in October for public bidding.
4 We expect construction to start March, and
5 completion by October of '07.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
7 think we're supposed to have another community
8 meeting, are we not, regarding GAMP?

9 MR. HENWOOD: Yes.

10 MR. VALLAS: Yes. We'll have
11 another one.

12 Let me point out on the GAMP
13 project, Madam President, as you're well
14 aware, there has been intensive community
15 involvement in that project.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
17 know.

18 MR. VALLAS: And the design has
19 been modified a couple times based on that
20 community involvement. Of course, the recent
21 recommendation was to also tear down the
22 modular, which we're more than willing to do.

23 So I just want us all to understand
24 that part of the delay is the desire to
25 provide the community with as much input as

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2 possible.

3 We've had 273, at last count,
4 community meetings on capital projects across
5 the City. So we've gone to great lengths to
6 involve the community in every project. We're
7 still meeting, as Councilwoman Blackwell will
8 point out, we're still meeting on the West
9 Philly site issue, and, of course, the
10 numerous meetings we've had with Microsoft or,
11 for that matter, the numerous meetings we've
12 had on the Lincoln replacement.

13 So we are -- being inclusive
14 sometimes delays projects, and I'm not saying
15 that as a point of criticism. At the end of
16 the day, the more community input, the more
17 support we have for the project. But I just
18 want to reassure you that we're eager to get
19 started on this building. We just want to
20 make sure that we've got all of our bases
21 covered.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
23 Wonderful. Thank you very much.
24 Again, the Chair recognizes
25 Councilman Rizzo.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you,
3 Madam President.

4 With all the conversations we're
5 having here in Council about libraries, could
6 you tell me, have you had any conversations
7 with the Free Library about the way you do
8 business and the way they do business; in
9 other words, again, coordination? In time of
10 tight budgets, what could you do or what have
11 you thought about to work with the system to
12 possibly, in some locations, create a library
13 that's good for the public in a school with,
14 obviously, security concerns out of the way?
15 But what could we do to work together with the
16 Library, the School District, to maybe come up
17 with some ways to improve service and maybe
18 save some money?

19 MR. VALLAS: We have had
20 conversations, Councilman, with the Library,
21 more than a few conversations. Obviously when
22 Library about a year and a half ago laid out
23 their long-term capital construction plan, we
24 had conversations with them on that plan.

25 Let me tell you what we've been

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2 doing. As you know, in all of our major high
3 school renovations, one of the priorities is
4 to renovate our existing libraries and convert
5 them to library multi-media centers and to
6 give the public access to those buildings.

7 In addition, all the new high
8 schools that we're designing, that are under
9 design, will have libraries that can be
10 accessible to the public and yet libraries
11 that will not allow the public to have access
12 to the larger building.

13 So, for example, when the new
14 Lincoln is built, when the new Fels is built,
15 when Microsoft is built, when the new
16 Audenried is built, the public will be able to
17 enter the building to use the gyms, to use the
18 cafeteria, to use the auditorium, to use the
19 library and not have the run of the building
20 like we have -- like Germantown. You're well
21 aware. You visited so many schools.
22 Germantown has 46 doors.

23 So they'll be able to access
24 facilities in the schools for public purposes
25 without basically having the full run of the

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2 school.

3 By doing this, this will lend
4 itself, this will allow us to do our new
5 school construction projects and retain the
6 option of turning that library into more than
7 just a school library. You see what I mean?
8 So as the Library Commission moves forward
9 addressing their issues and dealing with the
10 challenges that they face, the option will
11 always be open to perhaps picking one of these
12 schools and converting that library into a
13 smaller version of a Free Library in an area
14 that is underserved.

15 Another example, the Balsh building
16 right now, our partnership with the Franklin
17 Science Institute, MIT, New York Cyberson,
18 their magnet school, we're doing is Center
19 City magnet of a high school that will be open
20 not only to residents from Center City, but
21 will also be open to residents from anywhere
22 from Philadelphia. And it's really going to
23 be a spectacular school.

24 There is a free library in that
25 building. One of the options available is for

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2 the School District to, in effect, use that
3 library and potentially even manage that
4 library, oversee the library, assume the
5 responsibilities for that library, thus easing
6 the already concertable burden that the Free
7 Library has.

8 So we have done some coordination.
9 We need to do more, as you've pointed out.
10 We'll be as aggressive as we will be per your
11 directive on swimming pools, but we are
12 keeping our options open so that there is --
13 so that none of the new major construction
14 projects preclude us from converting a high
15 school library into kind of like a satellite
16 free library, something that the School
17 District could, in effect, maintain because
18 it's in one of our buildings.

19 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I think you
20 answered my next question indirectly, but I'd
21 like to ask more directly. I appreciate
22 hearing the School District's vision on this.
23 Is it also the vision of the Free Library?

24 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. That
25 question would be best put to them. What

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2 we're trying to do, though, is per feedback
3 that we've gotten from the community and the
4 Council is to have buildings that can be
5 accessed far beyond the close of school,
6 accessed on Saturdays, accessed on -- accessed
7 year round, and we're designing the school so
8 that that access really doesn't come at the
9 expense of the building as a whole.

10 So what we're doing is, we're
11 keeping our options open. We're going to be
12 flexible enough so that should the Free
13 Library or the Council say that this area is
14 being underserved and we would like to provide
15 more library services, we will have buildings
16 in the regions that can be used for that
17 purpose.

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, that's
19 good to hear, but I think that the Library has
20 got to be brought into this earlier than it
21 sounds as though -- your presentation sounds
22 as though that you're interested in this, the
23 Library should be interested, but what I want
24 to hear is the fact that there's some
25 legitimate conversation going on. Because a

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2 library, at least to my recollection, that
3 serves the school would not adequately serve
4 an adult population in the community based on
5 the inventory that it would have.

6 So I think that if we are building
7 these new schools and you are planning a
8 library that could become a community library,
9 that the library system, Elliot Shelkrot and
10 company, have to buy into it and have some
11 input on what their needs would be. Because,
12 again, going forward to try to run it as
13 efficiently as possible, the big picture, that
14 more people need to be talking. And, again, I
15 think I'd also appreciate having some more
16 dialogue about that, because never once when
17 the Library was here did we ever hear a word
18 that there possibly could be a new concept
19 down the road that would create community
20 libraries in our schools. Never once. So if
21 that was something that was on their radar, I
22 think they'd want be talking about it.

23 MR. VALLAS: Right. Well,
24 look, I'm not saying that they've signed off.
25 What we're doing is, we're trying to make our

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2 buildings accessible for recreational purpose.
3 We're trying to make our buildings accessible
4 for library purposes. We're trying to make
5 our buildings accessible for neighborhood
6 theatre, for community theatre, for community
7 plays, and still you have the flexibility
8 to -- so that you're not precluding any sort
9 of cooperation into the future.

10 But we'll be more than happy to
11 follow through with them on that and try to
12 work with them or at least push them to at
13 least tell us what their intents are, what
14 some of their options are. No problem.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

16 MR. VALLAS: You've got it.

17 MS. RENZULLI: Mr. Vallas, if I
18 could just add, we have been working --

19 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Tell them
20 your name.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
22 You're going to have to identify yourself for
23 the record.

24 MS. RENZULLI: Oh, I'm sorry.

25 Pat Renzulli. I'm Executive Vice-president of

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2 Technology for the School District.

3 One of the efforts that we've had
4 underway, and it's a fairly new one, is the
5 upgrading of the technology in all of our
6 libraries, and it's going to be a multi-year
7 project because we've just begun.

8 Part of that technology effort is
9 for us to give new research capabilities
10 within each school to not only search
11 collections that are within the school, but we
12 are working with the library, the City library
13 network, to share that technology to allow
14 search capabilities within the City libraries
15 themselves.

16 And to add to Mr. Vallas's point,
17 one of the things that we want to do within
18 those smaller school libraries is have the
19 school commit to keep the libraries open for
20 access to the community.

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: With the
22 announcement of Wi-Fi for the City, you have a
23 significant investment in hard-wired and -- it
24 sounds as though you have a plan right now to
25 do more. Are you going to get off of the

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2 wires and go to the wireless network?

3 MS. RENZULLI: Well, we are
4 such a large network. We currently are
5 connecting 300 building across the City. We
6 need the capacity for our own network. And we
7 will also be adding wireless capabilities
8 within each one of our schools. We will have
9 wireless capabilities in 100 of our schools by
10 the end of this school year.

11 Certainly part of that effort is to
12 reach out and engage the community, but we see
13 ourselves demanding so much capacity, that we
14 don't see substituting the City's network for
15 ours.

16 Where we see the benefit of the
17 City's Wi-Fi capacity is for our families to
18 access information that we're starting to
19 provide to them in a family outreach program,
20 so that information that we currently have
21 on-line to our teachers, for example, where
22 they can access student records, instructional
23 materials, we want to now start providing that
24 to our families, and our families would thus
25 require that wireless connectivity to the

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2 Internet.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: On the
4 wireless, the hundred buildings that you say
5 would be wireless, would they be wireless on
6 the City's Wi-Fi or are you suggesting another
7 wireless provider?

8 MS. RENZULLI: It's our own
9 proprietary network. We have a large wired
10 expansion underway that really brings us to a
11 state-of-the-art network, and it is funded
12 primarily by the federal government's eRate
13 program that we've made very good use of.

14 When the City had begun its wireless
15 effort, I had worked closely with Diana Neff.
16 We were hopeful that in some way that we could
17 be collaborative in optimizing the use of
18 those networks. However, we found that by
19 regulation, we were not permitted to use
20 networks that had been constructed using eRate
21 funds for anything other than School District
22 use.

23 So, again, we've been very excited
24 about the City's Wi-Fi effort, but we see the
25 beneficiaries of that being our families.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So you don't
3 plan to be one of the customers of Wi-Fi?

4 MS. RENZULLI: You're right,
5 Councilman.

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you,
7 Madam Chair.

8 MR. VALLAS: The eRate program
9 is very restricted in its application in what
10 we can do and what we can't do, who we can
11 contract with, who we can't. For that matter,
12 what we can use the funds for.

13 For example, we can use the funds to
14 do the things that Pat has articulated. We
15 can't use the funds to purchase computers. We
16 can't use the funds to provide training and
17 things like that.

18 The federal government is now
19 conducting hearings on the eRate program, and
20 we're lobbying and pushing for a modification,
21 because we really reached the point where
22 we've maxed out on our use of eRate funds to
23 begin to build our infrastructure. Now that
24 we have the infrastructure, we need to build
25 the building itself, and we're hoping that the

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2 eRate program, that there will be
3 modifications.

4 But for a program that four or five
5 years ago the industry who pays into eRate was
6 actually trying to kill, the mere fact that
7 the program is going to continue to survive,
8 even if it's in its restricted form, is a
9 positive thing.

10 I will tell you, Philadelphia is
11 ranked near the top, though, among school
12 districts who have, in effect, used eRate
13 money by federal definitions in the most
14 effective way possible. Pat has done an
15 extraordinary job, a job that she started
16 doing before my arrival, I might add. So I'm
17 just piggy-backing on her fame.

18 But recently the eRate Committee has
19 invited us -- they've invited us in the past
20 to testify to how eRate money can be used in
21 its most effective way. So I just want to
22 acknowledge and recognize her for laying a
23 good foundation.

24 But we are constricted by eRate
25 dollars.

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2 And I think we've been able to
3 access how much in eRate money over the last
4 three years?

5 MS. RENZULLI: About \$200
6 million. Wiring our buildings are very
7 expensive. Some of our largest high schools
8 have cost about \$2 million each. But we have
9 a state-of-the-art network that will serve us
10 well for many years to come, and what's
11 exciting about having built that foundation is
12 that we're designing a lot of systems that
13 really take technology to the classroom and
14 provide better information to our teachers.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: That's good.
16 Thank you very much.

17 Thank you, Madam Chair.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're
19 quite welcome.

20 Let me ask a question. Can you talk
21 a little bit about emergency transfers? We
22 get it on all ends. Sometimes parents say, I
23 don't want my child in this school, my child
24 was attacked, I don't think it's safe.
25 Sometimes you get it on the other end,

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2 obviously, where a kid has brought scissors to
3 school or something. But you have myriad
4 circumstances for transfers, and we handle
5 them different ways.

6 MR. VALLAS: We call them
7 extenuating circumstances, transfers for
8 extenuating circumstances, and we do about
9 1,500 a year, and they vary. They vary
10 anywhere from a child is being bullied,
11 threatened or intimidated to it's a parent,
12 the school is just not working, the child is
13 struggling, the child needs to be put in
14 another environment, to the family has moved
15 or the family is constantly moving.

16 A lot of times there will be a
17 request to transfer a child back to their
18 neighborhood school because the family has
19 moved and the child has been required to move
20 with the family, but the child is not
21 adjusting well to their neighborhood school.

22 But we do about 1,500 extenuating
23 circumstances transfers, and a lot of times
24 the extenuating circumstances transfers are
25 done for school safety reasons.

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2 Let me point out that the way it
3 works is, the extenuating circumstances
4 transfers can sometimes originate from the
5 school or the request for transfer can be made
6 to the regions or the request for transfer can
7 be made to the central office, to my office
8 specifically. Sometimes the request for
9 transfer comes through the Safe Schools line,
10 the 215-299-SAFE. That's our school hotline,
11 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week hotline.

12 But the way approval comes, it's
13 usually recommended or it's usually done at
14 the regional level, but, of course, parents
15 have the right to appeal to go beyond the
16 regions.

17 But 1,500 represents a very healthy
18 transfer rate. So we do work very hard to
19 transfer students.

20 Now, we will not transfer students
21 for disciplinary reasons. In other words, if
22 a child is a disciplinary problem, we will not
23 usually transfer that child. We'll rather
24 deal with the disciplinary problem in the
25 school itself. That doesn't mean if you have

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2 kids that are fighting or if there's tension
3 between children you won't transfer for
4 extenuating circumstances, but a violation of
5 the Zero Tolerance Policy results in the
6 ultimate transfer for extenuating
7 circumstances, and that's a transfer to a
8 disciplinary school. And we have, I think,
9 about 2,500 students enrolled in disciplinary
10 schools as we speak.

11 But one of the reasons why I think
12 under No Child Left Behind the number of
13 students electing to transfer under the No
14 Child Left Behind Act, if you're in a
15 persistently underperforming school, you have
16 the right to transfer to higher performing
17 schools -- we've been averaging maybe a
18 thousand transfers a year -- is because
19 parents have so much mobility through the
20 other means and because long before No Child
21 Left Behind said that a child could transfer
22 for extenuating circumstances or because they
23 felt their school was unsafe or they were
24 being bullied, the discipline was allowing
25 children to do just that.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you very much.

4 Are there further questions?
5 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.
7 Thank you, Madam Chair. Your question
8 triggered another for me.

9 Could you just state for us for the
10 record why the Bill that has been put forth by
11 Representative James Roebuck regarding the
12 need to lower the mandatory age for which
13 young people can start school is so important?

14 MR. VALLAS: Well, we have
15 about five, six percent of our kids who are
16 actually starting school a year or two older
17 than they should be. I think the number was
18 put at about 700 a year. And the problem is,
19 many of the children who start school at that
20 age are not children who have necessarily gone
21 through a home schooling program or, for that
22 matter, an early childhood or pre-school
23 program. Thus, they come to school not
24 academically ready, not socially ready, not
25 emotionally ready but physically more than

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2 ready.

3 So a lot of times the overage
4 children who are entering the earlier grades,
5 sometimes they become the more difficult
6 children to handle and sometimes they can --
7 they become the bullies or they become the
8 intimidators.

9 So I think Pennsylvania is one of
10 only -- is it two states, Tim?

11 One of only two states that does not
12 require that children start school until
13 they're eight years old. Only one of two
14 states. The majority of states, it's six. A
15 larger number of states, it's five.

16 So what we're trying to do is, for a
17 second year in a row, is, we're pushing
18 legislation to mandate that children be
19 enrolled in school by age six unless they're
20 legitimately being home schooled.

21 You know, if you have a child who
22 starts school at seven or even eight, and even
23 if it's a limited number of children, all it
24 takes is one child to disrupt a class. All it
25 takes is one child to be disruptive that

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2 entire school year. When you have a child
3 that much older, how can you use your
4 promotion policy effectively? Obviously you
5 can't retain the child, and if the child is
6 behind in the first place, you're just
7 magnifying and complicating the problem, you
8 see.

9 So we were pushing for the
10 legislation to have state-wide application. I
11 believe it has been amended to limit it to
12 Philadelphia.

13 While there is opposition from the
14 groups that have been resistant to this type
15 of legislative change in the past because they
16 view it as an impeachment on school choice or
17 parents have the right to start their kids in
18 school when their kids are old enough to
19 start, I guess ten is okay or nine is okay. I
20 mean, the bottom line is, you have to be
21 reasonable.

22 The opposition has not been really
23 vocal. The opposition slips are signed in,
24 but I think even the home school advocates who
25 normally have opposed this legislation in the

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2 past are sympathetic to the challenge that we
3 face and they have not been nearly as vocal as
4 they have been in the past.

5 Let me point out that there is
6 bipartisan sponsorship of this. There's
7 Representative Roebuck and Representative
8 Stairs, who has really been heroic in helping
9 us with this legislation. He's a republican
10 from Westmoreland.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So then
12 the prognosis is favorable that this may move?

13 MR. VALLAS: We're optimistic.
14 I think it's safe to say that the Speaker is
15 allowing the Bill to move forward and we're
16 optimistic. Once it gets to the Senate,
17 obviously the real test will come. But I
18 think as long as it's limited to Philadelphia
19 and as long as it has a very clear provision,
20 not in any way infringing on the rights of
21 parents who want to home school their children
22 in Pennsylvania, as one of the states most
23 aggressive at promoting home schooling, I
24 think we should be okay. It's an important
25 piece of legislation for us.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Point of
3 information.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
5 Madam Chair.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Point
7 of information, Councilman Rizzo.

8 You're welcome.

9 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: On the other
10 side, in Pennsylvania, what age can a person,
11 young person, stop going to school legally?

12 MR. VALLAS: It's 17.

13 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: 17?

14 MR. VALLAS: Yes, 17.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Is that
16 consistent throughout -- you talk about the
17 dropout rate. If we sent a message to young
18 people that at 17 you can just quit school and
19 not graduate, could you tell me, in other
20 states is the age higher, could we do
21 something together with the minimum age to
22 start versus making the age where they would
23 be out of school to -- when you say to a young
24 person -- and you hear them all the time, I
25 can't wait now that I know the age is 17 so I

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2 can quit. What could we do to make that age
3 18 so they would stay in school and possibly
4 not have an effect on the rest of their life?

5 MR. VALLAS: I believe that
6 most states --

7 In most states is it 18, Tim?

8 Most states have it as 18.

9 I will tell you this: We've
10 discussed the issue. So you know, we've
11 discussed the issue of raising it to 18. It's
12 like handle one end at a time. So I would
13 support going to 18. I don't know if there
14 would be support in the legislature to do
15 that. They would --

16 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Don't you
17 think though you have a bigger problem with
18 the dropouts, the dropout rate, than you do at
19 the earlier end? I mean --

20 MR. VALLAS: Well, if you have
21 600, 700 students who enter the school system
22 each year who are seven, eight years old and
23 you compound that, chances are most of them
24 will end up dropping out.

25 First of all, I support six years to

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2 18. The problem is, you're not going to get
3 enough support to get a lifting of the
4 18-year-old.

5 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: What's the
6 rationale not to? I just don't understand
7 why --

8 MR. VALLAS: First of all, a
9 lot of schools --

10 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I'd like to
11 know how many -- and I guess you have this at
12 the top of your head. How many people in
13 their senior year or at the age 17 leave the
14 system?

15 MR. VALLAS: Well, the state --
16 there's two or three points of opposition.
17 First of all, I support it, but you got to be
18 realistic on what you can push through the
19 legislature, because the attitude outside of
20 Philadelphia is choice, is choice and parents
21 should have the choice of -- let me just
22 finish.

23 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: What I'll
24 do -- I'm going beyond a point of information
25 here. I'll come back.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I

3 would think so. Thank you.

4 MR. VALLAS: But what I'm

5 saying, I support it. I just want to say to

6 it's clear, I support going to 18, but I'm not

7 going to push somebody to sponsor legislation

8 down there that will not even get out of

9 committee.

10 I will say this, though: The

11 opposition normally comes from two areas. One

12 is from those individuals who, for their

13 legitimate reasons, view more regulations as

14 infringing on choice, and obviously I don't

15 agree with that, but that's the political

16 reality.

17 Secondly, I do want to say this.

18 This is really important. There's a lot of

19 opposition among school districts, too,

20 because a lot of districts don't want to be,

21 in effect -- don't want that mandate because

22 of the cost that that mandate imposes.

23 My approach, though, is this: What

24 we've done is, we will provide educational

25 services for a child literally up to the age

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2 of 21. The reason that we're revamping our
3 evening schools, our twilight schools, our
4 late start schools, the reason we've opened
5 the accelerated schools, the school for
6 overage underachievers, where incidentally you
7 have to be 17 before you can get into that
8 school, is to basically tell students that if
9 it takes you a fifth year or, for that matter,
10 in some cases if it takes you a sixth year, we
11 don't care if you're 19 or 20 years old, we'll
12 find the educational setting for you.

13 But I'll tell you, we will do well
14 to do both ends, to get that age lowered to
15 six and to get that age raised to 18. And if
16 we get the six-year-old changed this year,
17 we'll be right back down there or over there
18 next year to try to push, even if it's limited
19 to Philadelphia, to try to push a raising of
20 the maximum age to 18. I support that 100
21 percent.

22 COUNCILMAN RIZZ0: Thank you.

23 Thank you for your indulgence,
24 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're

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2 welcome.

3 Councilwoman Brown?

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I'm done,

5 Madam Chair.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

7 you.

8 Councilwoman Miller?

9 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank

10 you, Madam President -- Madam Chair.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're

12 welcome.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Good

14 morning, Mr. Vallas and company.

15 MR. VALLAS: Good morning.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Yesterday

17 I did ask about some information regarding the

18 schools that are run by the private managers.

19 MR. VALLAS: Madam, we're

20 preparing the information. We'll get you the

21 information shortly, but I can answer any

22 specific questions on the performance of the

23 private managers from an academic standpoint

24 or I can -- obviously we can go through them

25 one by one.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I just
3 basically want to know how their faring
4 academically and is there a difference?

5 MR. VALLAS: Last year the
6 School District, using the School District's
7 standard, the School District saw an increase
8 in reading and math scores that doubled the
9 rate experienced by the state and about three
10 times the national rate among large urban
11 districts. The biggest increases were in
12 fifth and eighth grade where we had instituted
13 our curriculum reforms.

14 The private managers who most
15 closely matched the School District's gains
16 were Edison and Universal. In fact, Edison's
17 reading scores were actually, I think, one
18 percentage point higher in eighth grade than
19 our scores, but they literally mirrored us in
20 terms of our gains in reading and math.
21 Edison had double digit increases in their
22 reading scores.

23 Universal had similar increases,
24 very close to ours, almost seven, eight,
25 almost ten percent, almost double digit

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2 increases at the elementary school level.

3 The other providers did not fare as
4 well. The University providers did reasonably
5 well on their Terra Novas. They struggled and
6 they did not perform as well as the District
7 on the PSSA test, which is the state
8 administered exam.

9 Foundations did fairly well.
10 Victory struggled.

11 Let me say that all the EMO schools
12 showed gains last year. All of the EMO
13 schools showed aggregate gains in reading and
14 in math, but clearly the EMO schools that
15 performed most closely or that nearly matched
16 the School District's rather pronounced gains
17 were Edison and Universal.

18 I think that kind of covers it.

19 Go ahead, Greg, do you want to
20 comment?

21 MR. THORNTON: The test was
22 given to grades five and eight, and what we
23 tried to do was to lay out each provider and
24 then lay out the District as a control group.
25 The District outpaced everyone, with the

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2 exception of Edison, at the eighth grade in
3 reading, and they were very closely clustered
4 together. I think the group that we were
5 least pleased with was our own restructured
6 schools, and as a result of that, we've taken
7 some deliberate steps to restructure our
8 structured division to a corrective action
9 results region.

10 The other two that we pay real close
11 attention have been our university
12 partnerships with the University of
13 Pennsylvania and Temple, and as a result of
14 that partnership, we've made some
15 recommendations for next year.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.
17 There was a lot of very emotional feelings
18 here in Philadelphia when the whole private
19 management issue was presented. So for those
20 of us that follow this a little bit close, we
21 just want to know was it worth it? It sounds
22 like it did work.

23 MR. VALLAS: On the whole,
24 they're doing well. Look, you know me. I'm
25 accountability oriented. If someone is not

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2 performing, I'm going to get rid of them. If
3 someone is performing, I'm going to keep them.

4 The Edison schools have done well in
5 this district. They fared much better with
6 their elementary schools than their middle
7 schools. We struggle with our middle schools.
8 But I think the key to their success has been
9 their managed instructional system. They do
10 instructional management very well. They have
11 clear, definable objections. They use a
12 standardized curriculum. They provide
13 intensive training. Their data-driven
14 instructional program was better than ours
15 until we improved ours.

16 So the bottom line is, I think
17 they've done -- now, they've struggled on
18 school management and/or on school climate,
19 and we've worked with them very aggressively.
20 We've had a number of groups and organizations
21 helping them on the school management thing
22 and on the school climate thing. But you
23 can't argue against a ten percent increase in
24 reading scores. I mean, that was real stuff.
25 If they're able to sustain those gains over

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2 the next three or four years, I think they'll
3 have a good story to tell.

4 I'll also tell you that our charter
5 schools on the aggregate, while not performing
6 as well as the district scores as a whole, had
7 about five percent gain. So we had some
8 charter schools in particular that did
9 exceedingly well, while we had some charter
10 schools that were dead in the water.

11 So I think overall it was a good
12 year. But some of the EMOs did better than
13 others, and we're going to be making
14 adjustments in the number of schools that the
15 EMOs have based on their performance. That's
16 one of the things that Greg is doing, is we're
17 scrutinizing their performance. And whether
18 they gain schools or lose schools will be tied
19 directly to their performance.

20 We're not completing the third year
21 of our EMO contract. What the universities,
22 they're up and they have to be renewed,
23 because they were three-year contracts. With
24 the private providers, they're five-year
25 contracts. We renew them every year, but at

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2 the end of five years, we'll do an aggregate
3 assessment of the performance of the program
4 before determining whether or not we're going
5 to do more.

6 We did add one EMO or one full
7 management EMO to the group that was K-12, and
8 they managed the Hunter School, and that
9 school made AYP for the first time. So they
10 had a lot of success, and they are very, very
11 popular in that school. They're doing very
12 well. That's a largely Latino school. So
13 they met those challenges despite the fact
14 that there's some significant bilingual
15 challenges that they had to do.

16 What we've also done, though, is,
17 we've taken the EMO model and we've modified
18 it, and we've established a whole series of
19 management partnerships. Drexel is working
20 with us, with schools. Eastern University is
21 beginning to work with us, with Lamberton,
22 University of the sciences.

23 So we're going beyond the EMO model
24 and we're modifying the model to have more
25 management partners. So it seems to be just

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2 the five EMO providers. We're actually
3 increasing the number of management partners
4 that we've got with the schools, but we'll be
5 more than happy to -- we'll get you a summary
6 of the test score results before the end of
7 the day.

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: It sounds
9 very good.

10 Yesterday we talked about -- I don't
11 know the title, but the people that will be
12 dealing with school climate.

13 MR. VALLAS: We're creating a
14 position called classroom support assistant.
15 We haven't decided what acronym that will be
16 yet. Classroom support assistant. CSAs, I
17 like that.

18 We've created this position called
19 classroom support assistant. That's a
20 position that requires at minimum an
21 Associate's degree. It has specific training
22 requirements. It's a position that is
23 designed to be in compliance with No Child
24 Left Behind. In other words, the mandate, No
25 Child Left Behind mandate, that being that if

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2 you've got staff in schools, those staff need
3 to be certified. And we're giving the schools
4 the option of hiring classroom support
5 assistants if they elect not to fill NTA
6 positions, you see. So for the cost of one
7 NTA, one NTA vacancy -- and, once again, we're
8 talking about vacancies here -- a school could
9 hire at least two classroom support assistants
10 and they would have money left over to hire at
11 least one SSA.

12 So the goal here is to give the
13 schools more flexibility to bring more highly
14 trained personnel into the schools with the
15 money that they have available. So we view
16 the classroom support assistant as that type
17 of position. And they would be trained
18 specifically in school -- their
19 responsibilities would be clear. They would
20 be trained in school climate management.
21 There would be no confusion over what their
22 responsibilities are.

23 So they would be there to focus
24 solely on school discipline issues, which
25 means before the school starts, they would be

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2 out there in the school yard, they would be at
3 the entrance helping the children in. At the
4 end of the school day, they would be the last
5 to leave, helping clear the halls and get the
6 children out. During the school day, they
7 could be assigned to a specific classroom
8 where you had a group of disruptive kids.

9 So the objective here is to have a
10 cadre of support people in that school that
11 would be able to work as part of the school
12 climate team.

13 Same thing, last year, Madam
14 Councilwoman, we began to use -- we were
15 allowed to convert some TSS money in 50
16 schools and use the money to hire behavioral
17 support specialists. These are degreed and
18 Mastered degreed behavioral specialists, and
19 we assigned them to 50 schools, and they are
20 part of the school climate support team. So
21 our goal is to begin to have school climate
22 support teams.

23 Somebody next year in every K to 8
24 school will be in charge of school climate.
25 And then you'll have your NTA or your CSAs and

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2 your behavioral support specialist. So you've
3 got a cadre of individuals whose exclusive
4 responsibility is to focus on school climate
5 and to support those teachers on disciplinary
6 issues in the classroom.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

8 All right.

9 Thank you, Madam Chair.

10 Thank you, Mr. Vallas.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Your
12 welcome.

13 Councilman Rizzo, you had another
14 question?

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're
17 welcome.

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Mr. Vallas,
19 before I wrap up the questions, one more that
20 I would like to ask is -- I don't want to use
21 the word "controversy," but the issue with
22 school police. I know that you wanted to have
23 a more significant presence in the school
24 system, put it that way, and so I'd just like
25 for you to give us for the record a report on

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2 where we are with the school police, armed
3 police, et cetera.

4 MR. VALLAS: Well, we now have
5 one school police officer in every single
6 school. Prior to this here, most elementary
7 schools did not have a school police officer
8 and very few of the K to 5 schools did not
9 have a police officer.

10 So what we have done in the past
11 year or so, and we're joined by Dexter Green,
12 is, we assign at least one school police
13 officer in every school.

14 In addition to that school police
15 officer, we've embarked upon a campaign to
16 install surveillance cameras in all of our
17 schools, literally all of our schools. Most
18 of our high schools have adequate surveillance
19 cameras, but our goal here is to have
20 surveillance cameras in all the schools,
21 because some of our schools are four,
22 five-story buildings and we want to at least
23 be covering all those floors.

24 So that -- and with parents working
25 in schools, parent help desks, we can have

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2 retired people, we can have our parent stipend
3 workers monitoring the cameras. It just gives
4 us greater security. It allows us to look at
5 areas and look at hallways or look at
6 stairwells that obviously are not being
7 monitored by individuals, because some of our
8 buildings are too large to have a monitor in
9 every stairwell and a monitor in every floor.

10 What we would like to do, funding
11 permitting, and we have not secured the
12 funding yet, but my ultimate goal would be to
13 try to find a way to actually have at least
14 two police officers in at least all the K to 8
15 schools. And as you know, by '08, all but
16 eight of our non-high schools will be K to 8
17 institutions. So we'd love to do, what we'd
18 like to do is to get a second person in those
19 schools.

20 We have some schools that have more
21 than one, some elementary schools, some K to 8
22 schools that have more than one officer, but
23 we, the District, only purchases one officer
24 for each of the schools. We'd like to reach a
25 point where we can have two officers, two or

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2 three classroom support assistants, a team of
3 behavioral support specialists so you've got a
4 cadre of individuals working in that school.
5 But that's where we're at right now.

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: You just
7 threw me off there. Are you talking about
8 School District police in every school or are
9 you talking being Philadelphia police?

10 MR. VALLAS: No. School
11 District police in every school.

12 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: When you
13 said you purchased, I thought maybe you were
14 hiring --

15 MR. VALLAS: No; School
16 District police.

17 I can let Dexter speak to our
18 relationship with the Police Department, which
19 is a very good one and we're coordinating a
20 lot of activities, the Mayor's Safe Schools
21 initiative, exchanging information, giving
22 them access to our hotline, the roving patrols
23 that they have that can immediately respond to
24 any issue, any crisis in the schools. I mean,
25 Dexter can certainly speak to that.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: That's fine.

3 You're making it very clear.

4 MR. VALLAS: Okay?

5 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thanks.

6 Thank you, Madam Chair.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're

8 quite welcome.

9 Councilman Clarke, would you like

10 to -- wherever you'd like to speak from.

11 Okay, Councilman Clarke.

12 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Good

13 morning.

14 MR. VALLAS: Good morning, sir.

15 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I wasn't

16 privy to hear all the testimony. I don't know

17 if this came up or not.

18 MR. VALLAS: We talked about

19 swimming pools, which you and I have an

20 interest in.

21 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thanks.

22 MR. VALLAS: And word that's

23 coming.

24 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thanks.

25 You didn't have to bring it up in front of my

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2 colleagues.

3 I wanted to ask you about truancy.
4 First, what type of program we have, what's
5 the status? I know a couple of years ago
6 there was some discussion about aggressively
7 at the end of the day making the parents
8 responsible to the point we would actually do
9 something to the parents as it relates to
10 truancy.

11 Can you tell me where we are with
12 that? Because I'm just out in the
13 neighborhoods. Just whatever time of day I
14 see these kids walking around, hanging on
15 corners and they should be in school.

16 MR. VALLAS: First of all, let
17 me say that since we began our aggressive
18 anti-truancy efforts, which consisted of us
19 working with Family Court to set up a roving,
20 kind of a mobile satellite cart that goes, I
21 guess, from area to area to hear truancy
22 cases, which has included the Police
23 Department's very aggressive program of
24 picking up kids who are chronically truant and
25 bringing them to central drop-off points and

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2 which has included us contracting out with
3 community-based organizations who hire parents
4 and community members to serve in a truancy
5 officer capacity, we've seen about a 20
6 percent drop in our truancy rate just in the
7 last two years alone.

8 We've gone from, I think, about
9 12,500 daily truants to about 10,000 daily
10 truants. No, that, of course, is still high,
11 but any time over really an 18-month period
12 you can see that type of decline, we hope to
13 see that decline continue.

14 The parent truant officers are
15 working out of every region. They work
16 through the regional offices. They're
17 dispatched to schools. They are knocking on
18 doors. They are tracking kids down.
19 Sometimes they're tracking truant parents
20 down, because they'll make home visits to
21 reach out to parents who are not engaged and
22 not responsive when schools are having
23 problems with the children.

24 But we've seen a marked decline in
25 our truancy rate. We need to continue to get

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2 better, but I think that's a healthy decline.
3 If we can see about a 10 to 15 percent decline
4 each year, you'll see fewer kids hanging on
5 the street corner.

6 We've also very aggressively
7 approached truancy enforcement working with
8 Judge Myrna Field in Family Court. We
9 actually opened an office in Family Court to
10 coordinate with Family Court on issues
11 impacting kids and impacting the schools, and
12 that includes aggressively pursuing the cases
13 involving parents who have simply been
14 negligent about not responding to our calls to
15 help us address the truancy issue.

16 Do you have some statistics on
17 finance? Go ahead, you have to identify
18 yourself.

19 MS. REVERON: Good morning. My
20 name is Delia Reveron.

21 Regarding our truancy court, our
22 initiative with truancy court, this year
23 they've heard up to 7,760 hearings. We've had
24 7,760 hearings this year to date. The court
25 runs through June.

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2 Many of those students have returned
3 to school, and what happens basically at court
4 is that they're connected with resources so
5 that they can address the issue that's causing
6 the truancy, not necessarily a punitive
7 initiative, but we want to get to the bottom
8 of the truancy.

9 MR. VALLAS: You can be fined
10 up to \$300 for basically truancy --

11 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: The parent?

12 MR. VALLAS: For a parent. In
13 fact, it was interesting because after City
14 Council, I went to Ben Franklin yesterday
15 where I met with the Home and School Council
16 and at least two of the parents on the Council
17 had been visited by a truant officer. The
18 parents, God bless them, said that their
19 children were attending regularly, and they
20 probably were, but I was at least heartened to
21 know that the truant officers are out there
22 and they're making house calls.

23 But the bottom line is, the
24 existence of our office in Family Court helps
25 facilitate many of these cases being brought

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2 to court, 7,726 cases. Parents can face up to
3 a \$300 fine if their child -- for children who
4 are chronically guilty. And in some cases, a
5 court can send a negligent parent to jail if
6 they feel that the neglect is great enough.

7 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: This court,
8 this is Family Court?

9 MR. VALLAS: Family Court, yes.
10 Do we have a percentage of the
11 fines, how many have been fined?

12 We have to get that from the courts.

13 MS. REVERON: We have to get
14 that from the court. We're working on that
15 data, get that for you.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: You
17 mentioned earlier that there were some
18 community organizations that participate in
19 this?

20 MR. VALLAS: Yes. We can give
21 you a list. We'll give you a list of those
22 organizations.

23 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So are you
24 in contract with the community organization,
25 they subsequently hire --

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2 MS. REVERON: Yes. We have 14
3 community-based organizations that we contract
4 with.

5 MR. VALLAS: Who are some of
6 them?

7 MS. REVERON: We have Espida,
8 Ungraso, United Communities, Lutheran and
9 Children and Family Services, Presbyterian.

10 MR. VALLAS: A number of
11 faith-based organizations.

12 MS. REVERON: A number of
13 faith-based organizations. We have -- I don't
14 know off the top of my head. How many did I
15 say?

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: All right.
17 If you can get a list to the Chair.

18 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: And the
20 criteria associated with both the contracts
21 with the organization and also what criteria
22 is associated with the individual that group
23 hires --

24 MR. VALLAS: That's right.

25 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: -- to

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2 basically be a truant officer. Am I correct.

3 MS. REVERON: Yes.

4 MR. VALLAS: That's right.

5 This decline we've seen really the last two
6 years is actually after years of increase. So
7 we stopped the growth in truancy and now we're
8 seeing a meaningful reduction. And once it
9 gets down to 50 percent, then I'll call it a
10 significant reduction.

11 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: In terms of
12 your ongoing analysis of the program, if in
13 fact there was either a spike or lack of
14 improvement in a particular geographical area,
15 would the School District rethink its
16 contracting services and possibly shift the
17 focus to another area where there seems to be
18 a problem?

19 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely. We
20 actually deploy our resources that way. So
21 the size of the contract and the size of the
22 organization is in direct proportion to the
23 need. But, yes, absolutely.

24 We will submit -- as with all of our
25 programs, we do really very in-depth analysis

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2 which the School Reform Commission requires
3 before these contracts are renewed on a yearly
4 basis, very in-depth analysis on the
5 performance, and we can submit to the Chair a
6 breakdown on what all the companies are, how
7 many people they hire and where they deploy
8 their individuals. But it's something that --
9 we're beginning to have some success. We
10 still have too many kids that are truant, but
11 people are at least getting the message.
12 Cases are being brought to Family Court.
13 Fines are being levied and parents are being
14 visited.

15 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay.

16 Thank you.

17 Thank you, Madam Chair.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're
19 welcome.

20 Councilman Kenney?

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
22 Madam Chair.

23 Just on the issue of truancy
24 continuing along Councilman Clarke's line.
25 Are the truancy courts still being held in

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2 high schools? Do the courts move around with
3 the masters?

4 MS. REVERON: Yes.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I would
6 recommend Council members, if they haven't
7 been there already, to attend one or two of
8 those hearings. What you find is is that it's
9 very interesting that each individual case is
10 really different from -- there's really no one
11 boilerplate you could attach to the problem.
12 And I'll give you an example. I attended one
13 time. A mother was there. She had been
14 summoned by the court because her kid was
15 chronically truant, and the kid, the young
16 man, didn't go with her. And the master,
17 they're actually very well trained and
18 understanding of these various problems, said
19 to the woman, Where's your son? And she
20 said -- this was a petite lady. She said,
21 He's 6'2", 230. He said, I'm not going. She
22 said, I'm the only one in the house. I can't
23 physically get him out.

24 At that particular day, the Captain
25 of the district where he lives was nice enough

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2 to send a wagon and go get him and bring him
3 to the court. But you see some of the
4 problems that parents go through. Some of
5 them are negligent. Some of them don't care.
6 Some of them, the kids are negligent. Some of
7 the issues relevant to truancy have to do with
8 learning disabilities, the age of a student
9 who doesn't want to be in a classroom with
10 12-year-olds when he's 16, all those kind of
11 issues.

12 And the thing I found when you go
13 back again is that they continually keep
14 monitoring the child and bringing the parent
15 and child back. I've seen within wonderful
16 success stories where a child the first time
17 you saw her in the court was an absolute mess.
18 Six months later they bring her back for an
19 evaluation and she looked like a different
20 child. She was bright and clean and alert.
21 The mother was thrilled. And it really does
22 help.

23 What's interesting, though, is that
24 each individual case is really different and
25 they're on the corners and they're out of

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2 school for like various many, many reasons.

3 But I would recommend that any
4 Council member who has really an interest in
5 this to go and just sit in the back and just
6 kind of listen to the stories and listen to
7 the situations and see how these very talented
8 masters approach the problem. The School
9 District is engaged, the court is engaged. It
10 really gives you some belief that there's hope
11 for a lot of these kids.

12 MR. VALLAS: The School
13 District has -- the floating court that's been
14 set up, we've actually funded. So we put our
15 money where our mouth is on this.

16 I do want to say this, and this gets
17 to the heart of the kids starting school a
18 year or two older than they should be: If you
19 look at the children who get involved in
20 disruptive behavior, the overwhelming vast
21 majority of them are academically
22 underachieving and the majority of them have a
23 tendency to be not younger but slightly or
24 largely older than their classmates. Overage
25 underachievers.

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2 One of the reasons that we opened up
3 the accelerated schools for 16 and 17 -- for
4 16-year-old middle graders and 17-year-old
5 ninth graders was to take these overage
6 children who, as you pointed out, they're 16,
7 17 and they're --

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: They're
9 embarrassed to be there.

10 MR. VALLAS: -- in classrooms
11 with kids who are 13 and 14 and to put them in
12 a different setting.

13 The transformation is unbelievable.
14 I invite the Council to visit the three
15 accelerated school sites. It's a revelation.
16 Because here you have -- suddenly we have like
17 87, 88 percent attendance, no disciplinary
18 problems. I think we've had one weapon, it
19 was a knife, brought in or confiscated at the
20 three schools all year. I don't know if we've
21 had a disruptive incident. I'm not saying
22 that there hasn't been, but it's just nothing
23 on our radar screen. It's been
24 extraordinarily --

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: The other

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2 good thing about the program is that the
3 roving courts are held in the schools, which
4 makes it easier for the parents to get there,
5 it's not an imposing environment with a judge
6 with a robe on a big bench. It's in a
7 classroom. It's in an activity room, and it's
8 not as imposing. It's almost as if it's
9 decriminalizing it in some way and trying to
10 get to the social issues and the family issues
11 that create the problem in the first place.
12 So I would recommend it highly to anyone.

13 Thanks.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

15 Councilman Ramos?

16 Thank you, Councilman Kenney.

17 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair.

19 Mr. Vallas, last year you were kind
20 enough and you brought a number of people from
21 your staff to a meeting that I called in South
22 Philadelphia in Thomas Aquinas to talk to an
23 immigrant community, most of them Spanish
24 speaking, who wanted to know about a variety
25 of things, what services they were entitled

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2 to, what they weren't entitled to. A lot of
3 it had to do with their fears as new
4 immigrants into Philadelphia. And you talked
5 to them and you brought people from your
6 School District.

7 I want you to talk to us in this
8 public forum of what is your policy towards
9 immigrant children, your acceptance of them in
10 our schools, particularly what is your policy
11 towards undocumented children or children of
12 undocumented parents and what type of program,
13 if any, do you provide this new wave of
14 immigrants of which leads to my, and probably
15 limited knowledge, are undocumented in many
16 cases.

17 MR. VALLAS: Let me summarize
18 by saying, first, our policy is, if there's a
19 child in Philadelphia who is in need of
20 education, we're going to educate that child,
21 whether they're documented or not documented.
22 You know, our business is to educate children,
23 not to figure out what their documentation is.
24 And that's always been my position. That will
25 remain my position. And it extends to the

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2 universities on the whole controversy about
3 financial aid. The bottom line is, we're
4 educators. It's like we're doctors. We're
5 not going to pass judgment on documented,
6 undocumented. We're going to provide that
7 educational service.

8 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Mr. Vallas,
9 I'm sorry, I need to interrupt you just one or
10 two times. I don't mean to be disrespectful.

11 MR. VALLAS: Please.

12 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Are there
13 any state or federal laws that will go in
14 contrary or override your authority to accept
15 undocumented children?

16 MR. VALLAS: I'm not aware of
17 any state law that precludes us from doing
18 that. And so I'm asking staff that. We
19 haven't seen any obstacles. That doesn't mean
20 that there are, but if it hasn't, nobody sued
21 me over it yet. And, you know, sometimes I
22 wait until I'm sued before I -- as the lawyers
23 are cringing back there. There's an old
24 saying what's worth doing is worth getting
25 sued over.

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2 Right, Wendy? Right?

3 I always tell Wendy that.

4 Let me point out, though, we have
5 opened up three newcomer centers. One in
6 South Philly, which opened this year, two
7 under construction at Central East and North.
8 Those newcomer centers, the specific mission
9 of those newcomer centers is to, in effect,
10 deal with immigrants and migrants. So we're
11 simply not limiting -- we're just not limiting
12 it.

13 And those centers are not only
14 centers to provide parents with more effective
15 access to the School District's educational
16 services, but we run them like Ready Wrap.
17 Ready Wrap is our program of providing
18 wrap-around services for juveniles who are at
19 least from the detention centers, healthcare,
20 DCFS, Family Services, various public welfare
21 services.

22 Our mission there is to get the kids
23 enrolled in school, to sign them up for Kid
24 Care, to provide their families with the
25 social service outreach, if that's what the

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2 need is.

3 So the objective here is to have
4 three centers strategically located in
5 Philadelphia in areas where there is large
6 immigration and migration and to have those
7 centers as welcoming centers for immigrants
8 and for migrants.

9 The second thing we've tried to do,
10 and this we're trying to accomplish through
11 some of the flexibility we've given local
12 schools, we have given all of our schools
13 financial support to create what we call
14 parent help desks or parent help rooms. These
15 are intended to be like little welcoming
16 centers or little open centers in every single
17 school. They're supposed to be staffed by
18 parents and by individuals within the
19 community, and they are provided a stipend.
20 And they are trained to provide parents with
21 greater access to the school and to the school
22 services, as well as train to provide parents
23 with greater access to social services.

24 If you go to Edison High School, for
25 example, Mr. Lebron, because he is the model,

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2 he's got that parent help room and that parent
3 help desk that's always staffed by parents.
4 So when a newcomer comes to that school,
5 whether they're from abroad or they're a local
6 newcomer maybe coming from Northeast Philly or
7 South Philly, there are representatives from
8 the community there who can communicate to
9 them, in some cases translate to them, and
10 provide them with their services.

11 So we think between the newcomer
12 centers and the parent help desk and the
13 parent help rooms, which we mandated in every
14 school this year, of course. Sometimes it
15 takes two or three years to implement the
16 mandate. We hope to have in all the schools,
17 including the high schools next year, we think
18 that there will at least be a cadre of
19 individuals in those schools who can provide
20 the parents with the support, with the
21 coordinated services that they need and
22 obviously can also communicate to the parents.

23 And we're working not only in the
24 Latino community on this, but in Northeast
25 Philly where you have a growing Russian

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2 community, in South Philly and in Center City
3 and in Central Philly where we have a growing
4 Asian-American community.

5 So this is part of our design. We
6 think that this will provide us a vehicle to
7 get those individuals in tow.

8 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Are you
9 keeping statistics or are you tracking the
10 number of people that are coming from or the
11 number of the new immigrants coming into the
12 area? I mean, are you doing any of that?

13 MR. VALLAS: I don't know how
14 sensitive our tracking is, because the
15 newcomer centers we opened for the first -- we
16 know obviously our aggregate data in terms of
17 student population. I can give you student
18 population not only by district but by region
19 and by school and how many kids are new and
20 where those kids are from, are they Cambodian,
21 are they Korean, are they Japanese, are they
22 from Puerto Rico. There's a growing
23 Mexican-American population.

24 So we have that data. We're
25 tracking that data. We haven't set up what I

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2 would consider to be an adequate tracking
3 system for our newcomer centers yet. We only
4 have one open, and two are under construction.
5 But the parent help desks, we haven't
6 centralized any data collection through the
7 parent help desk, but it's certainly something
8 worth doing. It's something that we probably
9 need to do.

10 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Yes. I
11 would encourage you to take a look at that.
12 My colleague, Councilman Kenney, and I as a
13 co-sponsor have a Bill out there that have
14 stirred some things up around this town, but
15 it's something that we need to definitely look
16 at, because it's Philadelphia and it's
17 America, and how many of these children are we
18 taking care of, are now in our schools, are
19 they going to be able to make it, what are the
20 challenges and --

21 MR. VALLAS: Well, the idea
22 behind the newcomer centers actually came from
23 the City Council. It came from the article, I
24 think it was, in Philadelphia Magazine. I
25 remember I cut out the section and I said, Why

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2 can't we have some newcomer centers. So
3 believe we when I say this isn't our -- there
4 are no new ideas; just good ideas waiting to
5 be taken advantage of or implemented. So
6 absolutely.

7 Let me also point out that if you
8 look at the diversity of the leadership in the
9 schools, the management team has never been
10 more diverse. It is not diverse because we're
11 trying to be politically correct. It's
12 diverse because I recruit the most talented
13 people available, and I just happen to have an
14 extraordinary diverse and talented team.

15 But we now have -- three of our
16 regional superintendents are Latino. The new
17 regional sup in South Philly who came by way
18 of Houston and was born and raised in the
19 Bronx in New York and has a spectacular
20 history and background, and, of course,
21 bringing Marilyn Perez back to the district,
22 to the CAR district, and, of course, Lucy
23 Rodriguez, who is one of our regional
24 superintendents and, of course, the queen or
25 king of the entire region, our Chief Regional

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2 Superintendent who oversees all our director
3 of schools and regions and that's Nielson
4 Gonzales, who we're not going to let retire --

5 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: I heard
6 she's retiring.

7 MR. VALLAS: We won't let her.

8 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: She's too
9 young to retire.

10 MR. VALLAS: We won't let her
11 retire. We're not going to let her retire.

12 But that's an example of the degree
13 to which this District has gone beyond, and
14 you will find both in terms of Latinos in
15 positions of leadership, African-American
16 positions of leadership, women in positions of
17 leadership, dominant leadership in the School
18 District, that this is a very diversified and
19 talented team. And that makes a difference,
20 too.

21 Also, if you look at the number of
22 new principals being hired, at least
23 two-thirds of the principals I've appointed
24 over the last three years have been minority
25 principals, and there's a growing group of

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2 Latino principals in the school system. And
3 it's not because we're trying to be
4 politically correct. It's just we are now
5 producing that level of talent where there's a
6 talent there to be that diverse in your
7 hiring. So sometimes to effectuate change,
8 you need to have people running the programs
9 and implementing the policies who can relate
10 and in many respects have gone through the
11 same experiences. So I think we're making
12 some progress.

13 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Thank you,
14 Mr. Vallas.

15 Thank you, Madam Chair.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

17 Mr. Vallas, I don't have a question. I simply
18 have a comment. Apparently you're doing
19 something right. I sat here this morning
20 thinking, and many of my colleagues will
21 remember, when we had people up in the balcony
22 and down on the floor here screaming and
23 chanting that children needed more books and
24 about the horrible and deplorable condition of
25 many of the schools.

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2 I am told that we only have three
3 witnesses that have called this afternoon to
4 testify. So I would like to publicly thank
5 you. As I said, I know that we were here in
6 years past until close to 11 o'clock at night
7 listening to the complaints of the parents and
8 the teachers. So, as I said, I think you're
9 doing a great job and I congratulate you.

10 MR. VALLAS: Thank you so much.
11 Thank you for your kindness. Thanks everyone.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
14 Councilman Clarke and then Councilman DiCicco,
15 that should be it.

16 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: I'll ask
17 later.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You'll
19 ask at 1 o'clock? Because you know we'll be
20 back at 1:00. Okay. I mean 1:30. I keep
21 saying 1:00.

22 Councilman Clarke, do you want to
23 ask your question now or are you waiting until
24 1:30? It's your pleasure.

25 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Everybody

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2 is leaving.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
4 right. It seems that circumstances have taken
5 care of it.

6 This Committee will be recessed
7 until 1:30. Those few members of the public
8 who wanted to testify will be here as well and
9 we'll have Councilman Clarke and Councilman
10 DiCicco ask their questions. Thank you,
11 everyone.

12 (Recess from 12:00 to 2:10
13 p.m.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you for your patience. We will resume our
16 Committee of the Whole dealing with the School
17 District testimony.

18 The first individual on the list is
19 our friend, Ted Kirsch, President PFT, or
20 Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.
21 Certainly we see Jerry Jordan, Vice-President,
22 with him, and we are always happy to see you
23 and to have you. Again, forgive the delay.

24 Thank you. Please identify yourself
25 and begin your testimony.

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2 MR. KIRSCH: I'm Ted Kirsch,
3 President of the Philadelphia Federation of
4 Teachers, and it's indeed an honor to speak to
5 you today on behalf of our 18,000 dedicated
6 members who are working in the Philadelphia
7 public school system.

8 Good afternoon, Councilwoman
9 Blackwell, and I don't know if there's any
10 other greetings that should be in place at
11 this time. Oh, Councilman Rizzo.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm
13 sure they're listening in their offices.

14 MR. KIRSCH: That's fine.

15 For the past 15 years, I have come
16 before City Council to discuss with you what
17 teachers and students need to be successful.
18 We've talked about the need for high quality
19 early childhood programs for every
20 pre-schooler and the importance of reducing
21 class size to help children master reading and
22 math.

23 We've discussed the need for a
24 rigorous City-wide curriculum. We've
25 considered ways to make schools safer and to

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2 give troubled or disruptive students a second
3 chance.

4 We've discussed programs to recruit
5 talented, qualified teachers, and we've
6 explored ways to improve low-performing
7 schools.

8 Under the current administration,
9 test scores are improving. CEO Paul Vallas
10 has implemented several programs that PFT
11 members believed are crucial to turning around
12 struggling schools.

13 After nearly a decade of
14 decentralized management, which resulted in a
15 hodgepodge of programs and policies, the
16 School District finally adopted a rigorous,
17 grade-by-grade curriculum and is providing
18 ongoing professional development to help
19 teachers use the curriculum effectively.

20 There are plans to create new magnet
21 schools to attract the children of families
22 moving to Philadelphia. Advanced placement,
23 honors and gifted programs are expanding to
24 develop the talents of our youngsters, while
25 extended day, Saturday and summer programs are

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2 helping students who have fallen behind.

3 The PFT has worked with the District
4 on programs to strengthen middle and high
5 schools, and I applaud Paul Vallas for his
6 efforts to create high-quality alternative
7 education programs. These programs remove
8 disruptive students from traditional
9 classrooms and provide them with a second
10 chance to get an education and succeed in the
11 world.

12 In recent years, we have developed a
13 positive relationship with the administration.
14 Frequently, we have been able to head off
15 problems before they become crises. We don't
16 always agree, but we have mutual respect and
17 maintain a constructive dialogue on how to
18 improve teaching and learning in Philadelphia.

19 As President of the PFT and as a
20 teacher, I am proud of the progress our
21 members and our students are making. With a
22 district-wide curriculum and better
23 professional development for teachers and
24 staff, test scores are rising. But as we have
25 seen with reform efforts around the country,

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2 gains in academic achievement will plateau
3 unless specific proven reforms are put into
4 place in Philadelphia.

5 Among the reforms still needed in
6 the School District of Philadelphia are:
7 High-quality, universal early childhood
8 education programs; real class size reduction;
9 better retention of qualified, certified
10 teachers for every classroom; making schools
11 safe and orderly, both inside and outside;
12 spending less on private contractors, who make
13 a profit, and putting more money directly into
14 our classrooms; and, finally, creating
15 learning and work environments that support
16 both children and their parents.

17 Reduced class size: For two
18 decades, the PFT has argued that children can
19 do better in smaller classes. We've produced
20 irrefutable evidence documenting the life-long
21 benefits of reducing class size to 15 or 17
22 children to one teacher in kindergarten
23 through third grade. Despite an abundance of
24 research showing the benefits of reducing
25 class sizes, approximately two-thirds of the

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2 Philadelphia School District attend classes
3 with more than 24 students and a third are in
4 classes with 30 or more.

5 And now, class sizes are headed in
6 the wrong direction. At recent budget
7 meetings, some principals have been instructed
8 that class size in kindergarten and third
9 grade is to be 30 per classroom. This is
10 unacceptable. And I might add that just
11 within the hour, I spoke with Mr. Vallas in
12 the hallway and he is going to be looking into
13 what he believes was improper information
14 given to the principals regarding class size,
15 because it must be reduced for effectiveness.

16 If we're serious about improving
17 achievement and raising graduation rates in
18 the District, we must reduce class size, and
19 we have to have one certified teaching in
20 every classroom beginning with the lowest and
21 phasing in kindergarten to third grade
22 classes.

23 The District is eliminating the
24 Literacy Intern program next year and
25 replacing the interns with college students

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2 and part-time classroom assistants. While
3 helpful, this is not class size reduction and
4 will not produce life-long achievement gains
5 or higher graduation rates our children need.
6 We urge Council members to use their influence
7 to move the District's class size reduction
8 efforts in this direction, the direction that
9 research says benefits our students the most.

10 The Literacy Intern programs, we
11 have been negotiating with the School District
12 so that each of the individuals involved will
13 have alternatives so that they can remain
14 full-time employees of the School District.
15 We believe that the second-year interns will
16 be enabled to become interns to complete their
17 education as full-time teachers in classrooms.
18 The first-year interns, we believe, will be
19 given an opportunity to obtain an emergency
20 certificate, which will enable them to
21 continue their education so that they too can
22 become fully qualified under the No Child Left
23 Behind law.

24 It's unconscionable that District
25 funds have been earmarked for class size

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2 reduction or to eliminate educationally
3 indefensible split classes, in which a single
4 teacher must teach two grade levels
5 simultaneously. Some of this money is being
6 diverted for other purposes.

7 Again, we had the discussion in the
8 hall with Mr. Vallas and he's going to
9 investigate, because there shouldn't be any
10 split grades. It's impossible for a classroom
11 teacher to teach two different levels in the
12 same classroom. And although some funds have
13 been given to the schools to eliminate split
14 grades, we want to make sure that those funds
15 are used properly, that in September we have
16 no split grades in Philadelphia.

17 Regarding our Early Childhood
18 Education programs, the District and the PFT
19 agree there's no better place to start
20 children on the road to learning with early
21 childhood educations, and we applaud the goal
22 of having 80 percent of Philadelphia's
23 children in high-quality early childhood
24 programs by 2008. We don't, however, agree
25 with the way the District proposes to reach

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2 that goal.

3 The District has proposed
4 eliminating the Comprehensive Early Learning
5 Center program over the next two years. This
6 move will eliminate 162 jobs held by people
7 who live and work in Philadelphia this year
8 and another 80 jobs next year.

9 The CELC program is a unique program
10 that provides care and education for infants,
11 toddlers and pre-school children. It provides
12 before- and after-school care in clean, safe
13 and monitored settings for school-age children
14 as well. The program encompasses the
15 District's teen parent centers, which allow
16 public school students with infants and young
17 children to place them in a safe child care
18 setting while the parents finish high school.
19 Elimination of this program may discourage
20 some teen parents from completing their
21 education.

22 The District proposes eliminating
23 the Infant/Toddler program and the before; and
24 after-school program. This program serves
25 working families in Philadelphia who drop off

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2 their children as early as 6:30 a.m. and pick
3 them up as late as 6:30 p.m. The before- and
4 after-school programs provide children with a
5 safe haven where they can do homework and
6 socialize while their parents work. Hundreds
7 of working parents who rely on these services
8 will be hardpressed to find affordable,
9 competent and reliable caregivers.

10 The quick demise of this program
11 will send hundreds of working parents
12 scrambling for reliable child care and, as I
13 said, may discourage teen parents from
14 continuing their education.

15 We do not believe this plan will
16 save as much as the District hopes, and in
17 terms of lost jobs and reliable child care,
18 it's likely to cost the community more than
19 the District saves.

20 We need a program that allows
21 parents to go to work every day secure in the
22 knowledge that their children are in a safe,
23 supportive environment. The dedicated
24 employees of this program deserve reasonable
25 notice to allow them the time they need to

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2 meet changing criteria to keep their jobs
3 caring for our youngest families and their
4 children.

5 We all want better pre-school
6 education for children, but I implore Council
7 to look carefully at this plan and to make
8 sure it serves the needs and goals of infants,
9 children, parents and the community as a
10 whole.

11 On the issue of retaining qualified,
12 certified teachers, without qualified,
13 certified teachers in every classroom,
14 students won't achieve their full potential.
15 Research shows that hiring certified teachers
16 has a significant and positive impact on
17 student achievement. Studies indicated that
18 qualified teachers can help children overcome
19 severe disadvantages, including poverty and
20 language barriers and can help close the
21 achievement gap between white and minority
22 students.

23 The District has taken some steps to
24 recruit and retain qualified teachers.
25 However, the best way to attract and keep

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2 qualified teachers is to reduce class sizes so
3 the teachers are not overwhelmed by the needs
4 of 30 or more children, provide them with more
5 training and support for good classroom
6 management and offer salaries and working
7 conditions that are competitive with
8 neighboring school districts.

9 On the issue of making schools safe,
10 the District has made it clear to students,
11 staff, administration and the public that
12 violence will not be tolerated in our schools.
13 The stabbing of a female student at Kensington
14 High School yesterday and other acts of
15 violence on our campuses remind us that there
16 is always more work to be done.

17 PFT members continue to support
18 established high-quality alternative schools
19 for disruptive or violent students. Further,
20 our members tell us we must focus on civility
21 and order in schools so they can teach and
22 students can learn.

23 We cannot improve school safety by
24 eliminating nearly half of the 400
25 non-teaching assistants as some administrators

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2 have proposed in this budget.

3 Non-teaching assistants provide an
4 invaluable service to schools. They greet
5 students at the doors each day and they know
6 their names. They monitor hallways,
7 stairwells and bathrooms and assist in
8 lunchrooms and on playgrounds. NTAs know the
9 children and their families in the community
10 and are uniquely positioned to monitor and
11 correct student behavior problems in schools.

12 With fewer NTAs, schools will see
13 big increases in hall walkers, students who
14 skip classes and cause problems throughout the
15 buildings. In one middle school where NTAs
16 were temporarily eliminated, the school nurse
17 reported that 40 percent of the students
18 reporting to the health room were there
19 because of injuries caused by other students
20 in unsupervised hallways, bathrooms and
21 stairwells.

22 Instead of cutting full-time
23 employees who make our schools safe, we should
24 find ways to increase their ranks and augment
25 their training and effectiveness.

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2 Again, I'd like to point out that
3 just prior to my testimony, I spoke to
4 Mr. Vallas about this issue, and he's going to
5 continue discussions with the Federation and
6 look into some of the proposed budget cuts
7 that principals have made which we believe are
8 improper.

9 On the issue of privatization and
10 charter schools, I urge the Council to use
11 your influence to put an end to the expensive
12 charter school and privatization experiment in
13 Philadelphia.

14 We have seen little return on
15 investment in private management and
16 significantly less progress in achievement at
17 the ever-expanding number of charter schools.

18 We believe that close to \$60 million
19 are being spent on charter schools coming out
20 of the budget of the School District of
21 Philadelphia.

22 Test scores are making the greatest
23 gains at District-managed schools. Despite
24 spending more tax dollars on schools under
25 private management, these schools generally

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2 show smaller increases in student achievement.
3 And charter schools, with very few exceptions,
4 are gobbling up an increasing share of the
5 District's budget with no value added for the
6 students who attend them. This money would be
7 better spent improving instruction for all
8 students in all traditional public schools.

9 Privatization is spreading across
10 the district. Last year, PFT food service
11 managers and the PFT's negotiating team
12 successfully fought a plan to privatize food
13 services, only to find the proposal back in
14 this year's budget. Although food service
15 managers would not be laid off initially, we
16 see this as District trend that hurts
17 Philadelphia families, downgrading good-paying
18 jobs and benefits and replacing them with
19 lower-paying jobs.

20 The District's budget may be
21 balanced, but sometimes what's between the
22 lines doesn't add up for Philadelphia's kids
23 or their families. You can't claim to care
24 about kids when you take away the jobs of
25 their parents.

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2 We understand that times change and
3 programs must keep pace with new needs, but we
4 are seeing in this budget is more money going
5 to non-instructional uses, charter schools,
6 private management contracts and other
7 programs that don't help kids and don't help
8 Philadelphia.

9 Throughout the district, schools are
10 eliminating libraries and art and music
11 programs. Since the year 2000, the District
12 has lost 52 librarians and 27 library
13 assistants. Out of 264 schools, only 84 have
14 libraries staffed with professional librarians
15 who can help children navigate the complex
16 information age in which we live.

17 Libraries, as you well know, are not
18 frills. Art, music, sports, computer
19 education and libraries are the programs that
20 make school enjoyable for youngsters. They
21 are critical to developing well-rounded adults
22 as math, reading and science. As we strive to
23 raise student achievement, we cannot forego
24 the activities, subjects and services that
25 keep students interested, engaged and

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2 motivated.

3 We agree with many of the goals and
4 the overall vision of the administration. We
5 cannot condone program and personnel cuts that
6 hurt our students, our staff, our families and
7 our community.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you very much, Mr. Kirsch.

11 Mr. Jordan, would you like to have
12 something to say?

13 MR. JORDAN: No. No, thanks.
14 If there's questions, I am available to answer
15 them.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you. You mention NTAs versus that new
18 position, a person with an Associate, as
19 school climate.

20 MR. JORDAN: Climate support
21 assistant.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
23 Climate support assistant. Tell me what you
24 feel about that. Obviously we know it's a lot
25 more personnel, but I believe that person

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2 would trade off in terms of a principal
3 picking whether they want that person or a
4 teacher. Tell me what your thoughts are on
5 that position.

6 MR. JORDAN: We don't agree
7 with that position. That's a position that
8 will be replacing current non-teaching
9 assistants. It's a newly created position
10 that the District has probably advertised by
11 this time.

12 The salary that they are proposing
13 is \$23,000 a year. It will mean the layoff of
14 up to probably 200 current NTAs in the School
15 District, and the jobs would be almost
16 identical. They will be working monitoring
17 the hallways, the cafeterias, the yards, all
18 of the duties that NTAs currently perform.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I see.
20 So they won't be like teachers' aides and that
21 sort of thing, it's a whole different -- it's
22 like an NTA position.

23 MR. JORDAN: It is, when I read
24 the job description, absolutely, but at a
25 lower cost.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you very much.

4 Any questions?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you very much, and, again, thank you both for
8 your patience and for all that you always do.
9 Thank you.

10 Mike McGinley, Local 1201. After
11 Mr. McGinley is Shelly Yanoff. Shelly, are
12 you here?

13 MS. WARD: Yes.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

15 Good afternoon. Thank you for your
16 patience. Please identify yourself and begin
17 your testimony.

18 MR. MCGINLEY: Good afternoon.

19 Mike McGinley, Local 1201.

20 MR. BENNETT: Ernie Bennett,
21 Vice-President of Local 1201.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you.

24 MR. MCGINLEY: Good afternoon,
25 Majority Leader Blackwell, Council members,

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2 1201 members, parents and taxpayers, my name
3 is Michael McGinley. I am President of Local
4 1201, the union that represents 3,500
5 non-teaching School District employees. The
6 vast majority of our members are minorities
7 and females. They earn about \$24,000 per
8 year. They are an older group of employees
9 who will find it exceedingly difficult to find
10 new employment if you allow the School
11 District to lay them off.

12 They are your constituents. Nearly
13 100 percent of our members live in
14 Philadelphia. They pay Philadelphia taxes.
15 They vote in Philadelphia. Of the 225
16 employees who face Vallas directed layoff, 68
17 are single parents.

18 I sit before you to ask for your
19 support and for your understanding of what is
20 currently taking place in the operations of
21 the School District of Philadelphia.

22 Yesterday the School District CEO,
23 Mr. Paul Vallas, testified in this chamber.
24 He stated, in part, that he wanted to
25 privatize the jobs of 225 members of our union

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2 who are your constituents. His testimony was
3 not completely forthcoming or correct.

4 Benjamin Franklin said it best when
5 he stated that, "Half the truth is often a
6 great lie." I am here to set the record
7 straight.

8 Our members clean the school. When
9 they leave at 10 or 11 o'clock at night, the
10 schools are clean. The challenges they face
11 daily are daunting, graffiti, vandalism,
12 simply not paying attention to the rules that
13 principals don't enforce. But they get the
14 job even if it requires them to stay late or
15 work extra hours to complete the work of an
16 absent co-worker. They are proud of the job
17 they do. You can see that pride in the
18 pictures we have attached to my testimony.

19 We make no claim that the schools
20 are spotless, but within the system designed
21 by the School District, the system that the
22 School District negotiated over an 18-month
23 period, our members have more than met the
24 challenge. The majority of problems that
25 exist in the cleaning process are not the

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2 cleaners but the system itself.

3 In the last contract, we warned the
4 District that its square footage cleaning
5 requirements were too high for the number of
6 staff they assigned to the job. We told the
7 District that its square footage cleaning
8 requirements were way above industry average.
9 We told the District that forcing these square
10 footage cleaning requirements would lead to
11 burnout and absenteeism.

12 On the subject of absenteeism, we
13 offered to work with the District to reduce
14 the absenteeism. They ignored our offer.

15 Yesterday Mr. Vallas stated that
16 absenteeism was at 25 percent. That figure is
17 wrong. And under the same terms of the past
18 contracts and the current contract, there is a
19 system to reduce chronic absenteeism that the
20 School District ignores.

21 Mr. Vallas stated, "How bad is it to
22 have to walk into an unclean bathroom?" I've
23 been to the restrooms here in the City Hall
24 both yesterday and today. They are not clean
25 at noon time or mid afternoon. Not because

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2 the cleaners are absent, but because they are
3 not scheduled to work in the daytime when the
4 building sees heavy use. I might add that
5 City Hall bathrooms are the responsibility of
6 one of the same companies that have submitted
7 a bid to clean our high schools.

8 Yesterday Mr. Vallas stated publicly
9 that all fired cleaners would be absorbed into
10 the system and would not lose their jobs. In
11 private meetings with the School District, the
12 District made no such promise. In fact, they
13 stated that they would simply abide by the
14 terms of the contract, which would allow them
15 to lay these resident voter caretakers off
16 from their jobs and end their pension promises
17 if they gave proper notice.

18 Privatization of cleaning the public
19 schools has failed before. Failed miserably.

20 In 1992, ten schools were outsourced
21 to a for-profit private contractor. These
22 contractors performed below 1201 standards.
23 After 18 months, they walked away with
24 millions of taxpayer dollars. 1201 cleaners
25 were reinstalled.

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2 Firing 225 employees will not make
3 the schools any cleaner during the daylight
4 hours. Firing 225 employees will not make the
5 schools any cleaner at 10 o'clock at night or
6 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Changing the
7 system will make the schools cleaner. Proper
8 staffing, proper equipment and proper supplies
9 will make the schools cleaner.

10 This Local has a strong history of
11 stepping up to the challenge and solving
12 problems. For example, in 1995, there was
13 going to be no JV sports programs. While
14 others were pointing fingers and placing
15 blame, this Local found the solution. Our
16 members sacrificed their pay increase and
17 diverted their money to fund the sports
18 program. To date, we have given back over
19 \$4.5 million.

20 What we want is not a pat on the
21 back, just the opportunity to provide these
22 kids with a safe, clean and healthy
23 environment.

24 Involvement with the kids and the
25 schools won't occur with for-profit companies.

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2 For-profit companies are ultimately for the
3 shareholders, not the kids and the community.

4 We have offered to work with the
5 School District to keep these schools cleaner.
6 We are prepared to co-pay for a program to
7 teach the kids and school staff to be
8 responsible for the cleanliness of their own
9 schools. We have a solution for making the
10 schools cleaner. Give it a chance. Give it
11 support. Join us in working for a real
12 solution.

13 Today I end with an offer and a
14 challenge. This union will be happy to take
15 any or every member of Council to any school
16 to do a tour of what the schools look like
17 before our members arrive and a few hours
18 later we'll do another tour to inspect the
19 condition after our members have completed
20 their task. If you accept this offer, you
21 will walk away with a new appreciation of the
22 dedication and accomplishments of the work
23 these underpaid, understaffed minority public
24 servants succeed at every day.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you very much.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Are
6 there any questions?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
9 thank you for your excellent testimony and the
10 job you do. Thank you very much.

11 MR. MCGINLEY: Thank you.

12 MR. BENNETT: Thank you,
13 Councilman.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: My
15 pleasure.

16 Shelly Yanoff, PCCY.

17 Is Sasha Vann here or
18 representatives from Comprehensive Day Care?

19 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Yes.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
21 afternoon.

22 MS. WARD: Good afternoon,
23 Councilwoman Blackwell, Councilman Rizzo. I'm
24 Sharon Ward of PCCY. I'm here on behalf of --

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Spell

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2 your last name.

3 MS. WARD: W-A-R-D.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you.

6 MS. WARD: I'm here on behalf
7 of Shelly Yanoff. I'm the Child Care Policy
8 and Advocacy Director of Philadelphia Citizens
9 for Children and Youth. I'll give you my
10 testimony.

11 The issue of having to stretch
12 dollars is not new and it is particularly not
13 new to the School District. In fact, what is
14 new is that the District is undertaking an
15 enormous numbers of initiatives, from building
16 many new schools, to developing a variety of
17 options for children in every part of the
18 City, to setting a goal of providing almost
19 all three- and four-year-olds with an early
20 childhood program, to having some kind of
21 magnet school everywhere for almost every age,
22 every grade grouping.

23 We applaud these effort, as well as
24 the critical one of focusing on high schools,
25 making them small enough to develop the kind

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2 of learning climates that kids need and large
3 enough to provide the opportunities that life
4 demands.

5 We urge the District to work with
6 these communities in developing the schools.
7 Small schools are enhanced by community
8 planning and commitment. We at PCCY are
9 working with the District on developing a
10 school dedicated to the pursuit of peace and
11 conflict resolution. We are hopeful that the
12 school will open in September and be a model
13 for creating a more peaceful, less violent
14 climate for all in our community.

15 As proponents of more music and art
16 in schools, we applaud the announcement of a
17 new music program for 30 schools, as well as
18 the emphasis on the arts and the extended day
19 and Saturday day programs. But we are
20 concerned this will still leave many schools
21 without art and music as part of the regular
22 school day. At last count, there were more
23 than 50 elementary schools without a music or
24 art teacher. We believe that our children all
25 need art and music programs as part of their

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2 regular day.

3 We understand that the District is
4 proposing to convert many of its early
5 childhood programs to a new school day
6 pre-kindergarten program. While we applaud
7 the District's continued commitment to school
8 readiness, we are concerned that there are
9 many families and children who will lose out
10 during this conversion.

11 The Comprehensive Early Learning
12 Centers, which the District is scheduled to
13 phase out, provides valuable child care
14 services for almost 1,300 families. The
15 program has improved in recent years, and
16 research shows that it is particularly
17 effective at preparing children for success in
18 school. It is argued that the program is
19 expensive, but one of the reasons for the
20 expense of the program is that it really helps
21 provide child care for working parents.

22 Over 75 percent of the three- and
23 four-year-old children in this City have a
24 single parent or two parents who work, and
25 they need the hours that Comprehensive

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2 provides. Part day programs provide a
3 hardship on the parents and an unnecessary
4 transition for the children.

5 We are particularly concerned about
6 the closing of the Infant/Toddler programs,
7 which will affect 182 families this year. The
8 children of teen parents need quality child
9 care if they are to succeed. Without this
10 care, the teens will come to school when they
11 can and not when they should.

12 Moreover, providing high-quality
13 child care for the children of teen parents is
14 one of the pivotal pieces of the Cradle to
15 Classroom program in Chicago. Program
16 founders recognized that the kids of teen
17 parents are the most at risk. An intervention
18 with them early would help ensure their
19 success later on. A two-hour weekly home
20 visiting program that the District is
21 establishing instead a pale imitation and will
22 not produce comparable results.

23 We now have 40 years of evidence
24 that quality early childhood programs result
25 in substantial benefits to children and

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2 society. Children who participated in the
3 Abecedarian program; for example, the child
4 care program for children from six months to
5 five years, experienced substantially better
6 school performance and high school graduation
7 rates than those that didn't.

8 Investing in the early years is
9 critical. However, even the fourth year is
10 too late. The best predictor of a child's
11 reading ability in third grade is his or her
12 language development by age three.
13 Comprehensive Early Learning Centers provided
14 the early education necessary to get kids on
15 track and keep them there.

16 Research by the University of
17 Pennsylvania demonstrated two important facts,
18 that the CELC programs had great strengths and
19 that children who attended them performed
20 well, better than children from most
21 comparable programs. This translates into
22 dollars and cents for the District, saving
23 money in remedial programming later.

24 Comparable programs in Pittsburgh
25 reduced special education costs and grade

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2 retention substantially. Closing these
3 programs may appear to save money in the short
4 term but may cost more in the long run.

5 We disagree with this decision and
6 believe that there were steps the District
7 should and could have taken to improve the
8 marketing and shape the programs to be more
9 efficient. We urge that in undertaking this
10 step, the District commit to providing for the
11 infants of teen parents who need to be in
12 school. If the District must go forward with
13 its plan, we urge that it work with the state
14 and the community of providers to ensure that
15 no baby or toddler is left with a mom who
16 quits school because it was the only available
17 option to care with her baby.

18 We need as a community to support
19 and prepare families for the responsibilities
20 and opportunities of life. We need to ensure
21 that the District is sensitive to the needs of
22 working families and will help to ensure, if
23 not provide, full day, full year services.

24 The City and School District need to
25 work together to commit to helping our

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2 children arrive at school ready to learn. We
3 need to commit to providing the child care
4 that allows our parents to work. This takes a
5 willingness to plan and to work together.

6 Recently PCCY has, with a group of
7 community volunteers, been visiting schools
8 and looking at schools, and while our results
9 are preliminary, we do have some thoughts to
10 share with you today.

11 We found in our visits to schools
12 that there were not near enough substitute
13 teachers available to cover classes when
14 teachers were absent. We found that this lack
15 of substitutes lowered staff morale and
16 student learning. We urge the District and
17 believe they need to fund a cadre of
18 well-trained, well-supported substitutes.

19 We're pleased that there are many
20 new opportunities to have university students
21 in more of our classrooms, but we're concerned
22 that these are coming at the expense of the
23 Literacy Intern program, who seem to have been
24 at least in part responsible for both the
25 lower class size and the improvements in

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2 younger students' test scores.

3 The research that was developed as
4 the basis for the District's adoption of this
5 strategy was that the teaching assistants
6 without college degrees had not been near as
7 effective in teaching students as those with
8 college degrees who are in training to be
9 teachers. If the problem with the Literacy
10 Interns was that they needed to be placed in
11 middle grades to fulfill that need, then we
12 would urge that the interns be placed in the
13 middle schools.

14 Further, we believe that breaking
15 the promise of three years' employment as
16 interns to this cadre of people will hurt the
17 District in its effort to attract teachers,
18 particularly when their work seems to have
19 been responsible for student achievement the
20 District can claim credit for.

21 We understand that budgets always
22 require choices and that unfortunately our
23 school leaders have had to make harder choices
24 than do those in wealthier suburbs. You don't
25 find educators in Radnor or Merion or Bryn

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2 Mawr having to decide between reading teachers
3 or art and music programs, librarians or
4 adequate counselors, but Philadelphia
5 educators do.

6 We must all continue our work
7 together to support an adequate financial
8 formula for funding our schools.

9 In spite of these difficulties,
10 there is much to celebrate in these plans, but
11 lowering standards or changing programs that
12 have been shown to work is, at best, penny
13 wise and pound foolish.

14 We urge the City to support the
15 District's funding, and we urge the District
16 to reexamine these plans and to continue to
17 work with the community in pursuit of its
18 remarkable and visionary declaration of
19 education.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you very much. Any questions?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you.

5 Scott Yusem.

6 Vernard Johnson, are you still here?

7 You're next.

8 Welcome. Please identify yourself
9 for the record and begin your testimony.

10 MR. YUSEM: I am Scott Yusem, a
11 second-year literacy intern in Philadelphia
12 public school system. Good afternoon --

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
14 afternoon.

15 MR. YUSEM: -- Ms. Blackwell,
16 Mr. Rizzo, other Council members who are
17 listening, Mr. Kirsch and PFT representatives.
18 To my side is Vanette Capece, another
19 second-year literacy intern in Philadelphia
20 public schools, and we also have three
21 first-year interns accompanying us -- I'm
22 sorry; four. Excuse me.

23 Recently we have been offered
24 information by Mr. Vallas from yesterday's
25 proceedings where it appears to be misleading

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2 in regards to literacy interns being offered
3 extensions of their certifications to retain
4 their emergency certificates to teach in the
5 School District for the 2005-2006 school year.
6 As of right now, we have not received any such
7 promise from the School District, and we are
8 under the assumption that our positions will
9 be terminated June 30th, 2005 per a letter
10 received March 25th from the School District.

11 After speaking to Mr. Jordan of the
12 PFT prior to these proceedings, he has
13 informed us of options for the upcoming school
14 year that will be offered to second-year
15 literacy interns as well as first-year
16 literacy interns in positions other than
17 intern teaching. However, continuation of our
18 current positions was not mentioned by
19 Mr. Jordan.

20 We are here today to make the
21 Council aware that 450 interns are still
22 attempting to find out what is happening to
23 their positions for the following school year.
24 The clock is ticking. We only have about two
25 months left before our benefits will be

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2 terminated, our employment will be terminated
3 as per this letter from the School District
4 sent to us March 25th. The letter clearly
5 states that we will be separated effective
6 June 30th, 2005, as the School District is not
7 offering us positions.

8 We have tried diligently to contact
9 as many people as possible to find
10 clarification for what is happening to our
11 positions. We are in grades K through three.
12 We spend our days with children in
13 kindergarten, first, second and third grade.
14 We enjoy our jobs. We love going to work. We
15 have left other business opportunities and
16 employment opportunities to pursue a career in
17 teaching, knowing full well that it has been
18 an underappreciated field of employment.

19 Yet, we still have invested
20 thousands of dollars of our money into our
21 certification programs in graduate school, as
22 required by the School District to obtain this
23 position. We don't want that money to go to
24 waste. We want to pursue another year of
25 teaching and learning how to teach in the

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2 School District of Philadelphia.

3 We believe that telling 450 people
4 that a program that they were signed on for
5 three years is cancelled is not the best way
6 to retain and attract new certified teachers
7 in the School District that has been
8 struggling to keep teachers.

9 MS. CAPECE: Councilwoman
10 Blackwell, I just wanted to add --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Give
12 your name again, please.

13 MS. CAPECE: I'm sorry.
14 Vanette Capece, second-year intern at Mayfair
15 Elementary.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Spell
17 if for us.

18 MS. CAPECE: V-A-N-E-T-T-E,
19 last name C-A-P-E-C-E.

20 When we accepted this position with
21 the School District, current second-year
22 interns signed for three years. That was our
23 agreement and what was told to us by the
24 District, and current first-year interns were
25 told that they had two years, as long as we

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2 would all be certified by June 30th, 2006, and
3 now the District has decided to end this
4 program and is not -- they're not holding up
5 their end of the agreement. What we would
6 like is for the District to continue this
7 program for another year to allow us to
8 complete our certification and become highly
9 qualified as under No Child Left Behind.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
12 you very much.

13 Questions?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you.

17 MR. YUSEM: Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you. We're going to ask Mr. Jordan to come
20 back to clarify something on the record,
21 Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, long-time
22 supporter of children and schools.

23 MR. JORDAN: Thank you,
24 Councilwoman.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: My

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2 pleasure.

3 MR. JORDAN: We share the
4 concern of the literacy intern teachers here
5 and those in the classrooms, but we just want
6 to clarify one point. The testimony that was
7 given is that, yes, there was a letter sent to
8 literacy interns telling them that the program
9 would be ending this year, and the
10 administration and the union have sat down and
11 the administration has agreed to allow each of
12 the current lit intern teachers the
13 opportunity for alternative teaching
14 positions.

15 The District is eliminating the
16 program. That is correct. The District
17 eliminates any number of programs each year,
18 as you know, and I think that Ted pointed it
19 out in the testimony that he gave. There are
20 schools without a variety of programs.

21 However, these lit interns should be
22 assured that they will be offered, before the
23 end of the school year, a choice of various
24 positions in the School District to allow
25 them, as they have asked, for the opportunity

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2 to become fully certified by school year '06,
3 and that is going to happen.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's
5 exciting news.

6 So you all have heard Mr. Jordan
7 speak. We can all attest to his honesty. If
8 he says it, then certainly we believe him, and
9 he's back there on his way out. I see you
10 shaking your head. You should check with him,
11 and we're happy to go from there.

12 MR. JORDAN: The program is
13 being eliminated.

14 MS. HALPERN: I will get paid
15 \$35,000 and benefits and will be able to be in
16 the classroom for five days a week, go to
17 school at night. We have fabulous teachers
18 among other interns. It's unconscionable. I
19 go in there every single day and I teach --

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Ma'am,
21 you have speak at a mic. You can't speak from
22 behind the...

23 MS. HALPERN: I'm sorry about
24 speaking out of turn.

25 MR. JORDAN: Give your name

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2 first.

3 MS. HALPERN: My name is Pamela
4 Halpern, P-A-M-E-L-A, last name H-A-L-P-E-R-N.

5 What I was saying was that, yes, we
6 received a letter that had four options. All
7 of those four options were not equal to our
8 jobs. They were not the same job. We called
9 Kim Goodman at Human Resources. She did not
10 even know what one of them meant, and the name
11 that was given as a reference was call Kim
12 Goodman with any questions.

13 I left my job to come here to teach
14 for the School District because I thought I'd
15 be a good teacher, and you know what? I am,
16 and so are the other teachers here at Mayfair.
17 To tell us that you're going to turn your
18 backs on us is just wrong. I think you need
19 to reconsider what you want to tell people the
20 School District of Philadelphia is about.
21 Because I know when I teach my students, it's
22 about integrity. It's about doing the right
23 thing. And when you see something wrong, you
24 stand up and you don't take it or accept it.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We

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2 agree. That's what America is supposed to be
3 about. And certainly you have people from
4 Paul Vallas' office who are still here. You
5 have Mr. Jordan, PFT, and if he says that's
6 the negotiated position, I think that it would
7 behoove you to talk with him or talk with the
8 School District and see if we can't get some
9 understanding here. Would you be willing to
10 do that?

11 MS. HALPERN: Of course.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you. Thank you.

14 Would you speak with her, and then
15 Mr. Jordan is there.

16 MR. JORDAN: Thank you,
17 Councilwoman.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you both very much have. Thank you.

20 Vernard Johnson, concerned parent,
21 long-time defender of public education.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Good afternoon,
23 Councilwoman.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
25 Welcome.

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2 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I
3 hadn't made a decision to talk until today, so
4 I don't have a written statement, but I'll go
5 through this what I have quickly.

6 Right now I'm going to -- I'm
7 reading from the annual yearly progress report
8 where Philadelphia public schools stand done
9 by our Research for Action. It gives you
10 2004-2005 data around each school.

11 In my opinion, right now, I think
12 it's a good time for the EMOs to pack up and
13 go. I don't think that they can do a better
14 job than the District, and let me say that
15 this administration has been an administration
16 that --

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse
18 me, Mr. Johnson.

19 We don't want to miss good people.
20 We don't want to lose good people, so let's
21 hang in there and see what we can do. Thank
22 you. Thank you.

23 Continue, Mr. Johnson.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am. This
25 administration has given, I believe, parents

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2 more access to the administration and to the
3 decision-making process than other
4 administrations that I've been around for a
5 number of years, but there's still some things
6 that I think that this Council needs to be
7 made aware of, at least from my perspective,
8 and one of them is the work of EMOs. Their
9 work has been average, and I think the
10 District could do just as good a job as the
11 EMOs and I think that the money that the EMOs
12 are now getting could be better utilized if it
13 would go to the schools and to support other
14 needs of students.

15 I just want to read an explanation
16 of some data, some statistics that I'm going
17 to give. Corrective Action 2: If the school
18 continues to be identified as a need of
19 improvement, it necessitates creation of a new
20 plan to be carried out the following year,
21 including at least one radical change, could
22 be replacing the staff, converting to a
23 charter, turning management over -- the school
24 over to the state or private company or other
25 major management restructuring, and that

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2 parents must be involved in the decision about
3 the plan.

4 And I thought there would be other
5 Council people here, Councilwoman, but I'll
6 just read to you schools that I believe are in
7 your district or close to it. Tilden Middle
8 School is in Corrective Action 2. Only 18.6
9 percent of the kids there are reading at the
10 proficient level. Only 12.3 percent of the
11 children there are reading at the proficient
12 level.

13 Locke School, which is one of your
14 schools, I believe, is in Corrective Action 2
15 for the second year. 13 percent of the
16 children are reading at the proficient level.
17 15.6 percent of the children are reading at
18 the proficient level. That's a school,
19 Councilwoman, that I'm sure you're very
20 familiar with in terms of the social needs of
21 the children who attend that school. A lot of
22 the children who attend that school are living
23 in family shelters, some from the local public
24 housing development, and I'm going to get to
25 what I think is a way that if the District had

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2 more money, it could address the needs of
3 those children.

4 McMichael School is in Correction
5 Action 2 even though it's making progress.
6 31.9 percent of the kids are reading at the
7 proficient level and 17.9 percent of the
8 children are reading -- are doing math at the
9 proficient level. And if Council members
10 wanted to access this information for
11 themselves, they can go to www.thenotebook.org
12 and you can see this information for yourself.

13 And where I'm going with this is
14 that I believe that the CSAP is a critical
15 program for children that I believe is
16 seriously underfunded. It's the Comprehensive
17 Student Assistance Project. That's seriously
18 underfunded. And there are a couple of levels
19 of action that the District could take if it
20 had the appropriate amount of funding to carry
21 out CSAP to allow teachers more time, as
22 teachers would say, to allow teachers more
23 time to analyze the needs of the students, to
24 put supportive services around the needs
25 around the students and to also identify maybe

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2 community-based organizations who are agencies
3 that could provide a service to children that
4 would address their needs even before they get
5 to the level where they may end up in truancy
6 court, which was an issue today.

7 It's nice that the courts are
8 working with the School District, but I
9 believe there are things that can happen for
10 children and families way before they get to
11 truancy court.

12 So I just wanted to bring that point
13 out, that I think it's now time for those
14 organizations to pack up and go. And you
15 remember, Councilwoman, when we were here a
16 year or two ago our position has always been
17 around reform, and the question around Edison
18 was there and this chamber was full of people
19 and it wasn't too pleasant for my family and
20 other families that were here that day who
21 were advocating for full reform, which may
22 have included Edison. So they've had their
23 chance. I think Mr. Vallas and his
24 administration and the union, with the working
25 relationship that they have, can do a job

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2 without the EMOs.

3 I wanted to say, though, to
4 Councilman Rizzo, and I said it to him earlier
5 in private, that for me the dropout rate isn't
6 at 17 and 18 years old. Students stop coming
7 to school at eighth grade. The dropout rate
8 at ninth grade is high. You know that.
9 You've been around for a long time. The
10 dropout rate at ninth grade is high. Half
11 your class disappears. A 500-student ninth
12 grade class, it's gone by tenth grade, if not
13 by the second semester of ninth grade. And
14 that if a kid can make it until he's 17 years
15 old, he's probably made the cut if it's not in
16 ninth grade. He's probably made or she's made
17 the cut and they're going to graduate.

18 So, you know, I think that it needs
19 to be a solid plan around how you stop the
20 bleeding at the ninth grade level and how you
21 continue to get kids who may not be very
22 successful at eighth grade, how you get them
23 to come to school more regular so that we can
24 address their needs earlier on.

25 School climate, Mr. Vallas talked

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2 about school climate today and that if there
3 is a short side in his view of the EMOs, it's
4 around the management of schools. Well, if
5 they can't manage schools and keep schools
6 safe, then I don't know why they're still
7 here. And so if you look at Vare Middle
8 School, which comes under the management of
9 Universal Companies, friends of mine, I would
10 hope that they would think so, it's been on
11 the persistently dangerous list for three or
12 four years that they've been responsible. And
13 if you talk to principals and talk to
14 teachers, they're often confused about who
15 their boss is, is it the School District or is
16 it the EMO. And for me, it would be very easy
17 to define who the boss is if the EMO wasn't
18 there.

19 Truancy courts are a year behind.
20 They're a year behind. They do a good job,
21 but, again, they're a year behind, which shows
22 that we're still sending a lot of children to
23 truancy courts, and that isn't the answer by
24 itself, I don't believe.

25 So if you look at the 17th police

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2 district where my wife's company manages a
3 family center at the Peirce Middle School, the
4 truancy rate there is alarming, and they speak
5 about it at every safety climate meeting that
6 the South region has. Every month the
7 principals are concerned about the numbers of
8 students who are truant in that district.

9 And I'll close with these two
10 points: We're still going to advocate and
11 still advocating for quality health services
12 in all schools, that we believe that there
13 should be a full-time nurse in every school
14 every day, and that if the School District is
15 paying for a nurse three days a week and an
16 EMO gets anywhere maybe between \$800 and
17 \$1,000 per child, then two days a week the
18 EMO, in my view, has considerably put up
19 enough dollars to bring in a healthcare
20 professional to fill the void for two days a
21 week. And a lot of our children, for whatever
22 the reasons are, go to the school nurse for
23 primary care services, even though the nurse
24 isn't there for that, but they go to the nurse
25 for belly aches and headaches and for injuries

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2 that they sustain in the unmanageable schools,
3 some of these unmanageable schools in the
4 school yard where they're getting hurt, and
5 there often is a not a nurse on duty and we're
6 often concerned that children are taking
7 medication unsupervised and that injuries are
8 going untreated while the kids are in school.

9 And the last point I want to raise,
10 Councilwoman, is the need for a parent academy
11 in every region. One of the foundations --
12 I'm often confused about who it is -- just
13 funded a parent academy in three regions where
14 parents would work with parents to help
15 parents either advocate for their children or
16 help their children with homework, whatever it
17 takes to have a child be successful in school.

18 It now leaves six regions and soon
19 to be seven with the addition of the Center
20 City region that will not have a parent
21 academy, and if the School District doesn't
22 ask for dollars to support services to
23 parents, additional services to parents like
24 for a parent academy, then I don't have a
25 problem saying that I believe that the City

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2 when it looks at its budget and looks at what
3 it's going to send the School District for
4 dollars might want to increase what it
5 provides the School District around social
6 services, to increase healthcare services, to
7 increase education and parents, to make it
8 more possible that teachers and other people
9 in the schools can actually carry out the
10 responsibilities to serve children through the
11 state mandated CSAP program, and you know for
12 years I've always come here and objected to
13 the School District getting more money and
14 this time I don't think that they've been
15 aggressive in asking for additional dollars.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you, Mr. Johnson.

20 Mr. Johnson, Councilman Clarke has a
21 question for you. Mr. Johnson, thank you.

22 Councilman Clarke?

23 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're
25 welcome.

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2 COUNCILMAN CLARK: Good

3 afternoon, Mr. Johnson.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Hi.

5 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: First I'd
6 like to commend you for your diligence on the
7 School District issues. I see you in the
8 chambers, in the neighborhoods and hear you on
9 the radio, and I want to commend you for your
10 wonderful work that you do.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I did have
13 a couple of questions as it related to your
14 testimony. Actually, the earlier testimony
15 centering around truancy. You indicated that
16 you thought they were doing a good job, you
17 said, but they were a year behind, and we had
18 earlier questions for Mr. Vallas and his staff
19 about truancy, because I know we talked --
20 some parts of the district that I represent,
21 it appears on the street to be an extremely
22 high level of truancy, and they didn't have
23 the statistics that show geographically where
24 there were improvements and where there were
25 not improvements.

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2 Can you kind of give me a sense of
3 what your sentiment is on that?

4 MR. JOHNSON: Well, from my
5 view, the truancy sweeps mainly take place,
6 let's say, along the Broad Street line and
7 certainly in Center City. So when you look at
8 areas of Southwest Philadelphia that I'm
9 familiar with than your district, but when you
10 look at areas of Southwest Philadelphia and
11 areas of South Philadelphia where we work
12 every day, you see kids in the neighborhood
13 not in school, and that's a concern, that
14 they're really very visible in the
15 neighborhoods. And so those sweeps -- and I'm
16 not saying the sweeps are the answer by
17 themselves. Those sweeps are not taking place
18 to our satisfaction.

19 There's a group of community-based
20 organizations that I believe feel the same
21 way. Those sweeps are not taking place to our
22 satisfaction in the neighborhoods.

23 As an example, we had Mr. Vallas and
24 Ms. Averette, the Chief of Staff, out at
25 Southwest Philadelphia, the far Southwest

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2 where Pepper School is, and that question came
3 up about truancy and kids vandalizing
4 property, things like that. So in the
5 neighborhoods, it could be a greater effort, I
6 believe.

7 But on the other side of that, kids
8 are truant for reasons, and I think that if
9 you looked at -- and I'd be happy to provide
10 your office with these regulations and CSAP.
11 I believe if the District and the PFT worked
12 closely together to make sure that teachers,
13 if you take the teachers point of view, to
14 make sure that teachers have more time to do
15 the paperwork that's involved in CSAP and look
16 at the problems and the situations that kids
17 have every day, that we could begin to address
18 some issues of truancy that way. So they all
19 can't be addressed through the courts. And
20 fining parent's isn't going to help resolve
21 their family matters.

22 So I think that we, the community,
23 the parents, the School District, Council,
24 could do a far better job in serving kids.

25 Now, the dollars aren't there. Most

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2 of the dollars are going to the classroom.
3 And I'm not suggesting the dollars shouldn't
4 go into classrooms, but there are a number of
5 kids who we advocate for who are doing basic
6 and below work that have social problems that
7 need to be addressed. And if the only
8 measurement is going to be test scores, AYP
9 test scores, and you can move eight, ten, 15,
10 20 kids literally to the next level, the kids
11 who are maybe already advanced and you move
12 them to proficient, that's all you got to do
13 under No Child Left Behind. You look like
14 you're doing well, but then down the bottom
15 here, back in the neighborhood, you know,
16 standing on corners, you see these children.
17 So I think that's a problem.

18 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Right. You
19 mentioned that some of these community-based
20 organizations that are contracted with the
21 School District to provide, quote/unquote,
22 lack of a better term, truant officers that
23 are parents or community members. You
24 indicated that they're not necessarily
25 comfortable with the current process that

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2 focuses on Broad Street and Center City.

3 What levels of involvement do they
4 have in terms of the policy decisions in terms
5 where the sweeps are? I mean, are they at the
6 level where they can say, Well, we think you
7 need to focus your activities more in these
8 neighborhood areas or these neighborhood
9 commercial corridors as opposed to Broad
10 Street and some of the high visibility
11 locations, or are they just contracted with
12 the School District to provide one particular
13 service?

14 MR. JOHNSON: I don't know
15 anything about their contracts. What I was
16 referring to were the organizations like mine
17 that don't have a contract with the District
18 to provide -- to do truancy, and we've looked
19 at truancy. And so I'm not talking about the
20 contracted organizations. I don't know what
21 their --

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Are you
23 familiar with any of them?

24 MR. JOHNSON: Some. But I
25 don't know what they do day to day with the

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2 District, so I won't even attempt to answer
3 that question. But I know that on this end,
4 on the advocacy end, we believe that more work
5 needs to be done to work with children who are
6 truant every day and are in neighborhoods.

7 I mean, there are homes in the
8 communities where we know kids are. The
9 hoagie houses are truant homes, whatever you
10 call them, I believe we need to be going to
11 those houses and bringing those kids out and
12 working with those kids and their families and
13 warning the people, the adults who are
14 responsible for those homes that allow kids to
15 congregate in those homes, that if it
16 continues, then there's a consequence for
17 that, because that's a real problem in a lot
18 of the neighborhoods, is that kids are allowed
19 to hang out at certain homes.

20 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: What level
21 is your organization involved with the School
22 District as it relates to truancy? Any at
23 all, or informally?

24 MR. JOHNSON: We monthly attend
25 the safety and climate meetings, and I believe

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2 there's one in every region, of the South
3 region monthly. Our organization
4 represents -- I'm blessed these days. I don't
5 have a kid in school anymore, Councilwoman
6 Blackwell. So we're representing
7 community-based organizations and the interest
8 of community-based organizations at the South
9 region, but I believe every region has a
10 safety and climate meeting once a month. And
11 at those meetings, the Police district comes,
12 community-based organizations, parents, home
13 and school people, and those discussions are
14 held monthly at those meetings. And we have a
15 lot of input into what happens at the regional
16 level through those meetings, and we've
17 suggested to the people who run the meetings
18 in the South region that we need to pay more
19 attention to what goes on in the
20 neighborhoods, as well as in that corridor
21 that might represent the Broad Street line.

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay. Also
23 in your testimony you talked about the high
24 dropout rate, particularly among ninth
25 graders. The ultimate elimination of middle

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2 schools have some sort of continuum as it
3 relates to K to eight, then nine to 12. Do
4 you think that in any way, shape or form will
5 impact on the dropout rate in the,
6 quote/unquote, the disruptive years as was
7 indicated earlier in middle school? Do you
8 think the elimination of middle schools will
9 in any way, shape or form --

10 MR. JOHNSON: Well, I'm a
11 proponent of junior high schools. And
12 probably just because I became out of a junior
13 high school system. So I think that kids --
14 but the District isn't moving that way. I
15 think that kids -- but I think the state might
16 be moving that way.

17 But I think that kids who have an
18 opportunity to stay in elementary school until
19 sixth grade as opposed to moving in the old
20 system that we have now, the middle school
21 system, I think those kids fare better. I
22 think that kids, if given an opportunity at
23 ninth grade, especially kids that we deal
24 with -- and we're talking to the District
25 about this right now -- I think that kids if

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2 they stayed in a seven-eight-nine system, they
3 would have an opportunity to mature more and
4 grow up a little bit more and then move into
5 the high school at the tenth, eleventh and
6 twelfth grade level.

7 So in my thinking, we're on a
8 totally different track than the
9 administration is at this point. They're
10 moving through the K to eight system. I think
11 if you don't have the kind of building, the
12 kind of structure in the building to have
13 second, third graders be able to see what
14 seventh and eighth graders are doing, I don't
15 know that -- I don't like that type of system.
16 I wouldn't want my kids to be in that type of
17 system, especially if the building isn't
18 structured so that you could keep them
19 separated. If you have a -- I went to a K
20 through 12 system, actually, but the building
21 was structured so that K to six was there,
22 seven to nine was there, ten to 12 was there,
23 and if you ventured out of that area where
24 you're supposed to be, you had real problems.
25 So I'm still a proponent of the seven to nine

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2 system.

3 I think that we need to be reaching
4 kids -- and we have a program at Peirce, we
5 call it Move Up Move Forward, where we work
6 with the administration at Peirce School at
7 24th and Christian, South Philadelphia, where
8 we work with that school, and primarily our
9 work is with students who are overage. I
10 don't want to say they're achievers. I don't
11 think they've been challenged enough to have
12 that tag on them, that they're underachievers.
13 Kids are overage in schools for all kind of
14 reasons. Maybe they didn't start until they
15 were eight years old, maybe they were sick.
16 It doesn't mean that they don't have the
17 ability.

18 And so we've been able to work with
19 kids who might be a year behind and they're in
20 sixth grade or in seventh grade. I think if
21 we start waiting for kids to reach a number
22 where they're 16 in the ninth grade or
23 whatever that is, I think we wait too long.
24 So I think that we need to be working with
25 those kids and their families a lot sooner

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2 than the District is moving on it now. But no
3 one moved on it before, so I can't be too
4 critical of what they're attempting to do at
5 this point.

6 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you very much.

11 Mr. William Mackey from City Wide we
12 note is not here. Lewis Harris, Healthnastics
13 is not here.

14 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: No. He's
15 here.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Oh,
17 Lew, come on up, Mr. Harris.

18 And is Brenda Digiovannangelo here?
19 I didn't do badly with the name.

20 Okay. Mr. Harris, welcome. Please
21 identify yourself for the record and begin
22 your testimony.

23 MR. HARRIS: My name is Lewis
24 Harris, Jr., and I just want to say thank you
25 for giving me an opportunity to speak, because

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2 I wasn't planning to. I just listened to the
3 testimony earlier and I did have some concerns
4 about the NTA.

5 I think that's a critical piece that
6 they need to stick with, and I found -- I feel
7 that when I was listening to their testimony,
8 they made their testimony that indicated that
9 the schools would have a choice to have two
10 classroom assistants instead of an NTA and
11 they will save money, and that kind of
12 bothered me, because I feel that the NTAs do a
13 lot more than sit in a classroom setting
14 throughout the day, as well as the fact
15 that -- they indicated that the classroom
16 assistant will be able to go to the cafeteria
17 and do all of the things that an NTA would do,
18 but I feel that an NTA does far more than most
19 people really know. And I just had -- my wife
20 happened to be an NTA, and she's been one for
21 about 13 years, and every day I listen to all
22 of the stories, that she is so well versed on
23 the kids' names. I mean, she can indicate if
24 a kid come in and their face is not right.
25 She can tell that something is wrong with that

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2 kid and she can go over and talk to them
3 because she knows those children.

4 The problem I have with a classroom
5 assistant based on what they're saying is that
6 they would be actually mandated into a
7 classroom setting, and if they are mandated in
8 a classroom setting, that's a totally
9 different operation than the current NTAs,
10 because most NTAs float. They go from floor
11 to floor. They go from basement, they go to
12 cafeterias, they go through bathrooms, they go
13 through school yards. I mean, they do a
14 variety of things. They actually do
15 inventory. They load stock rooms. They make
16 sure that the teachers get their supplies.
17 It's a lot to do with NTAs. And what I was
18 concerned about is that they made it sound
19 like it was such a simple thing by having a
20 classroom assistant do the work of an NTA, and
21 I think that's a mistake.

22 The other problem I had with the NTA
23 piece is that I didn't see nothing or heard
24 anything mentioned about a career path for
25 them. In other words, if they're going to

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2 phase out an NTA who has been around for 13,
3 14, 15 years, why haven't they begin to offer
4 them career paths towards something else
5 that's relative to that field or give them the
6 opportunity to have some participation in the
7 training of the classroom aides, being that
8 they will be new, you know, as far as working
9 with kids.

10 And, also, I'd like to close with
11 saying that I'm concerned about the fact that
12 they are giving the illusion that that
13 position is going to stay viable, when I keep
14 hearing statements like they getting ready to
15 eliminate them, and I think it's only fair
16 that they can begin to start telling the NTAs
17 and them in advance to begin to position
18 themselves within the school system with maybe
19 more education or with some other alternative
20 so that they stay within the school system
21 until their retirement.

22 So basically that's what I wanted to
23 say, and I really wasn't prepared to speak and
24 I apologize for not having nothing in writing,
25 but it just hit me as I heard their

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2 conversation this morning.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you, Mr. Harris.

6 Any questions?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you very much.

10 Ms. Brenda Digiovannangelo and with
11 her, Anur Dalwaite. Not too bad or anyhow.

12 Is there anybody else here to
13 testify after these individuals?

14 Lenore Shelly, you're here. Is
15 there anybody else?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Then
18 Lenore Shelly will be our last.

19 Welcome. Good afternoon.

20 MS. DIGIOVANNANGELO: Good
21 afternoon. I'm a little bit nervous.

22 I am here on behalf of Comprehensive
23 Early Learning Centers. I've been with this
24 program for 26 and a half years. When I
25 started out back in 1979, we were 185 strong.

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2 We're now 45. Every year, no matter what we
3 try to teach, whatever came along, we always
4 taught the children. Always. They were
5 always our first concern.

6 Things have changed through the
7 years. We have learned ten times as much when
8 we first started out, but even from the
9 beginning, I always did lesson plans, always
10 had lessons. Now we have core standards that
11 we have to do.

12 Myself and six other teachers were
13 chosen to advocate the DLM program, which was
14 actually advocated to the Focus on Fours that
15 Mr. Paul Vallas introduced to us two years
16 ago. He had closed down Comprehensive
17 classrooms, left a lot of centers with one
18 classroom and after school age children. That
19 program, Focus on Four, failed. There's only
20 about five of them left. Now he wants to take
21 away all of the program.

22 When we introduced -- the parents
23 were hearing rumors and rumors when we first
24 saw the article in the paper yesterday, the
25 first thing our parents asked, What are we

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2 going to do with our children? We have to
3 work.

4 The difference between Comprehensive
5 Early Learning Centers and Head Start, our
6 parents are all working, they are in school
7 training to be able to go out into the work
8 field. Head Start, you do not have to work.

9 I have 23 children in my class and
10 we have 19 school-agers. Now, the parents'
11 concern is they want to know what day cares
12 are available, not at the times they've been
13 told. It's not suffice to them.

14 My program, my teaching, my children
15 always came first. My greatest story is what
16 I teach my children, the theme of whatever
17 month it is, whatever we're learning about,
18 for them to come back and repeat everything to
19 me.

20 I've gone to workshops, literacy
21 workshops, to teach our young, our three to
22 five-year-olds the beginning of reading. You
23 can walk in any one of my colleagues'
24 classrooms. We've all been going to the same
25 workshops. We do a message board every

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2 morning. The message board consists of
3 calling the child up, seeing if he recognizes
4 a letter.

5 We have workshops to learn how to
6 handle special needs children. We have a lot
7 of special needs children in our class.

8 I do many, many things with my
9 class. We just got done doing a life cycle of
10 a butterfly. Now we're doing a life cycle of
11 little chicks, watching them beginning to
12 hatch. If you could see the joys on the
13 children's faces. This is our future. If
14 we're not here to teach them and we're
15 nurturing -- I'm not baby-sitting. I have
16 never baby-sat my children. They learn.

17 Our children in the core, on the
18 core testing, we score higher than Head Start,
19 any other program that we score higher than.
20 My class scores are very high. It's just --
21 it makes no sense you want to close down a
22 program that is really doing children good.

23 Parents come in. I get children
24 6:30 in the morning, and sometimes the
25 children wake up on a bad side, they're upset,

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2 and when the parents leave them with myself
3 and my co-worker, they're happy. That's 6:30
4 in the morning. And we're there until 6
5 o'clock at night.

6 If this is our future, what is this
7 telling you we want to take away everything
8 from our children. It's just not fair. And
9 for me, it's the children. I have been asked
10 what is my main concern. The children. Where
11 is it going to leave the children? If we're
12 not there for them, who is going to be there?
13 There is really nothing out there.

14 I have private day cares of parents
15 and pulling them out left and right because
16 they have no structure. They have nothing.
17 And Mr. Vallas is saying there's going to be
18 plenty out there. No, there's not. Not in
19 the kind of care that we give.

20 He has never come up to my classroom
21 or any others. Whatever site he went to, we
22 know nothing of. But I want him to come to my
23 classroom and see what we do, how my children
24 learn and what they know.

25 Baby-sitting? No. If some of us

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2 are not certified but we have degrees, okay, I
3 don't have my certificate, but I do have my
4 degree and I have 26 and a half years behind
5 me of nurturing and loving and be able to
6 teach these children. And, Mr. Vallas, I'm
7 telling you right now, you're taking this
8 away. You're taking away what I love to do,
9 what I've done for 26 years. That's what
10 you're going to do.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you so much.

14 MS. DALWAITE: Hi. My name is
15 Anur Dalwaite and I'm --

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Say
17 your name again.

18 MS. DALWAITE: Anur Dalwaite.
19 I'm a center leader at Rhawnhurst Early
20 Learning Center. And as one of our
21 teachers -- she's not in my school, but this
22 is the teachers I see every day.

23 As I sit in here, I lost all my
24 thought after I seen a young teacher in tears.
25 I am older. I'm going to retire maybe this

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2 year or next year, but when I look at the
3 young generation that comes to School
4 District, wants to thrive, wants to teach,
5 wants to do something, they should not be
6 sitting in here and crying. They should not
7 be worrying about that they have no future in
8 school business. They should be proud of
9 themselves.

10 I don't think they will have enough
11 time to pay their fee bills, I guess. They
12 will be fired probably in the next month. So
13 this is really sad.

14 I try to write something to talk
15 about it today, but I have so much in my mind.
16 As I look at it, I said, Okay, let's start
17 with our President's slogan, No Child Left
18 Behind. I think we are leaving lots and lots
19 of children behind and we are leaving staff
20 behind. We are leaving parents behind.

21 This is a business that has a chain
22 reaction. It is not just we're going to get
23 rid of 644 students, could be infant or
24 after-school program. They could be two
25 months or they could be 11 years old. It

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2 doesn't mean how old they are. What it means
3 is, parents needs us. Children needs us.
4 Everybody needs the services.

5 I don't know where these people are
6 going to go, where this parents going to go.
7 I have been speaking with my parents yesterday
8 and today. They are very upset. "I must quit
9 my job. I can't go."

10 Number one, last year when we opened
11 this Focus on Four, it does not work for the
12 people who we deal with. Our parents is not
13 executive. Even they don't come home 3
14 o'clock. Mr. Paul wants to run the school
15 hours 8:00 to 3:00. Which parents comes home
16 2:30 or goes to work 9 o'clock? Some of my
17 parents goes to work 6:30 until 6 o'clock, and
18 I still don't have enough time to serve for
19 their needs. And they make maybe \$250 a week.
20 And you're asking me, these people going to
21 take the child from my center or any other
22 centers we have and just put them in some
23 lousy neighbor's house so it can get hurt,
24 killed, whatever, God knows what.

25 So these are issues that it is not

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2 just we're going to lose services, our staff
3 going to be jobless, it is the social issues.

4 My after-school program, my parents
5 like dying, "Please make sure, make sure they
6 have room for me," because they don't want
7 their children to go home by themselves after
8 3 o'clock. They want them to stay in my
9 school where they are safe.

10 Sure, they are learning. We are
11 educating. We are not just baby-sitting,
12 which seemed to me Mr. Vallas even himself
13 looked upon us we're a bunch of illiterates,
14 we're just baby-sitting. No, we are not.
15 Whether some of my staff are older, they do
16 not have the Bachelor's degree, but they have
17 the 20 years of knowledge, and they raise
18 their own children and they are pretty good
19 parents.

20 And I feel so sad to see these
21 learning centers will be closing. We're
22 talking about 35 centers -- 45 centers. He's
23 going to leave us with six centers. Where are
24 we going to 300 staff, from custodian to
25 center leader, of course. I don't know where

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2 we're going. I'm not worry about me because I
3 already put my retirement. I will leave. I
4 am here for the people who I am leaving
5 behind, because I do care what I do.

6 12 years ago I used to be a clinical
7 director and I left twice as much income to
8 join the School District just to help the
9 young children, because in this society,
10 children are dying. We lost our kids. And I
11 do not believe that we shall be shaping the
12 children when they are seven, eight, nine, ten
13 years old. They shall be shaped way before
14 the five, and that's our job. And we do very
15 well job. And I wish Mr. Vallas was in here
16 to see that crying teacher and to hear what we
17 are really seeing. Look at our eyes, what we
18 are saying it, because we are not joking in
19 here. This is a serious matter for the City
20 and this is a serious issue that has to be
21 dealt.

22 I cannot just retire and say, Oh,
23 well, I got what I want, it's your problem and
24 deal it. No. I still live in the City and
25 I'm proud to be a Philadelphian, and I love my

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2 children and I will not stay back and just
3 close my eyes. I will fight for this cause.
4 And, Mr. Vallas, hear me out, please. Sit
5 down and think. This is the richest country.
6 We always cry we're broke from here to
7 Washington. Well, when the things arise, we
8 found money, don't we? So find your money,
9 through your elected officials, through
10 whoever. You cannot keep cutting the
11 Comprehensive Learnings that make money. You
12 cannot get rid of the NTs or whoever works for
13 the children to make money. Please.
14 Understand the reality and the reality of what
15 we do all day in here. So respect us so we
16 can all respect each other.

17 Thank you very much.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our
20 next witness is Lenore Shelly.

21 MS. SHELLY: Hi. Good
22 afternoon my name is Lenore Shelly. I have
23 two children that attend the Comprehensive
24 Program on Belmont. It's Joseph Leidy School.
25 The Comprehensive program is the best in

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2 Philadelphia. I have let my children attend
3 private day cares, were the worst. The
4 Comprehensive program is structured and also
5 they do background checks. They just don't
6 let anybody work for them.

7 And, also, I would like to say that
8 my son who just turned five years old is
9 reading on a kindergarten level, which is
10 better than any school that he's ever been to
11 private, and I would like to urge Paul Vallas
12 not to end the program funding but to continue
13 the Comprehensive program. And that's all I
14 have to say.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do we
18 have anyone else that would like to testify?
19 You do want to testify?

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you. You're welcome, Mr. Ross.

22 MR. ROSS: Thank you, Madam
23 Chair, Mrs. President and Mr. Rizzo, my
24 friend. I just want to make some remarks.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse

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2 me one minute. We need you to introduce
3 yourself. We call him The General, but, John,
4 introduce your.

5 MR. ROSS: John Ross. I live
6 in West Philadelphia. I'm 71 years old.
7 Everybody says, You don't look 71. How are
8 you supposed to look at 71?

9 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: You don't.

10 MR. ROSS: I just want to
11 testify, Madam President and Ms. Chairman,
12 that in my experience in school, I hooked
13 school when I was a young fellow because I
14 didn't have the right clothes to wear at the
15 time, in 1949, 1948. However, I learned the
16 value of school in the Air Force. I also
17 learned the value of being a good boy in the
18 Air Force. I received at that time a top
19 secret clearance, which was very difficult to
20 get. However, I found out for the FBI agents
21 who checked my background, they also check
22 with the teachers for their remarks in their
23 little books to see how you behaved in class.

24 So I want a program started in the
25 public school system -- and I've stopped

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2 children from fighting, because I tell them,
3 number one, your background is very important.
4 You live in your background now. This is
5 important. If you go to get a steady state
6 job, federal job, city job, and if you look in
7 the paper, a lot of private jobs are requiring
8 background investigations. Background
9 investigations mean if you're in kindergarten,
10 first grade, fifth grade, they're going to
11 check your background.

12 I think more emphasis should be put
13 into the kids' curriculum as to what your
14 background means, the consequences of being
15 bad. These kids don't realize how important
16 it is to get a good education in addition to
17 being a good person. I was so glad I was a
18 good person to get that background
19 investigation clearance. You don't know what
20 it means. Then, too, as a police officer,
21 HIU, Headquarters Investigation Unit,
22 Mr. Zanoë (ph) know what I'm talking about,
23 they check your background. If you're a smart
24 aleck in class or act up in class, those
25 teachers' notes are not thrown away.

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2 So, Mr. Vallas, Mr. Green, those
3 people in charge, along with the school,
4 should make the kids aware of why they're
5 there, what they're there for and what the
6 consequences are when they get into trouble.
7 I'm quite sure a lot of them don't know. And
8 one thing, Madam Chairman, the ones I've
9 talked to did not know that that can depend on
10 your income, your promotion, where you're
11 hired. The state department doesn't want you.
12 A lot of departments will not accept you with
13 a bad reputation.

14 Now, this gentleman over here that
15 spoke about the parents/teachers thing should
16 emphasize that character is very important in
17 the school system, and I see nowhere where
18 it's taught.

19 Thank you, Madam President. Thank
20 you, Ms. Chairman.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
22 you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
24 Thanks, Mr. Ross, very much for all your
25 leadership over the years. Many of you who

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2 remember Senator Freeman Hankins and
3 Representative James Barber, he was their
4 right hand. So we've known each other a long,
5 long time, and he's loved our city and its
6 children a long, long time.

7 Thank you, General.

8 MR. ROSS: I don't want to go
9 back to the President's dad in South
10 Philadelphia.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: A
12 long time ago.

13 MS. ROSS: When I was a police
14 officer.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Are you sure
16 you're only 70?

17 MR. ROSS: Your dad was good to
18 me.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
20 you. Nice seeing you.

21 Is there anyone else to testify?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
24 Seeing no one, the Committee will stand in
25 recess until 5:30 this evening. Thank you.

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2 (Recess from 3:45 to 5:40 p.m.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good

4 evening, everyone. This is the continued
5 public hearing of the Committee of the Whole.

6 I would ask Mr. McPherson to please
7 call our first witness.

8 MR. MCPHERSON: The first
9 witness is Johanna Lanum.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Pull
11 the microphone closer to you, and I think
12 there's the button there; is there not?

13 MR. MCPHERSON: No.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
15 There's not.

16 Okay. Please identify yourself for
17 the record.

18 MS. LANUM: Good afternoon,
19 President. Good afternoon, Council members.
20 My name is Johanna Lanum, and I am here on
21 behalf of my Comprehensive Learning Center,
22 which is located at 6100 of Cobbs Creek
23 Parkway.

24 I am a working parent with three
25 children and I am truly concerned in reference

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2 to the closing of the Comprehensive Learning
3 Center. The accusations that Mr. Paul Vallas
4 had put across in the article in reference to
5 the Comprehensive Learning Center stating that
6 the Comprehensive Learning Center had no core
7 or no standards was false. I can speak as a
8 parent that the Comprehensive Learning Center
9 not only has a core curriculum, it also has
10 standards.

11 Taking away this program would take
12 away a big part of my working. The before and
13 after care is a big help to myself and my
14 husband, picking my children up from school
15 and taking them to school. I'm a parent that
16 has to be at work at 5 o'clock in the morning.
17 And I'm not talking about leaving the house at
18 5 o'clock in the morning. I mean I have to be
19 present at the Internal Revenue at 5:00 a.m.

20 I just ask that you guys review
21 every single document that you have in
22 reference to this program and please look
23 really hard into helping this program continue
24 to stay.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: What
3 time does your child go to the Comprehensive
4 Learning?

5 MS. LANUM: 6 o'clock in the
6 morning, ma'am.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
8 what time do you pick her up?

9 MS. LANUM: Normally between
10 5:45 and 6 o'clock.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.
12 I don't know whether someone from the School
13 District would want to address this.

14 No? Okay.

15 MS. AVERETTE: Mr. Vallas is
16 still meeting with the union and so --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Would
18 you just come to the witness table and say
19 that? Please identify yourself for the
20 record.

21 MS. AVERETTE: Hi. Good
22 evening. Claudia Averette, Chief of Staff.

23 I just responded that Mr. Vallas is
24 still working with the union on this issue so
25 there's no response at this time.

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2 MS. LANUM: Would she be able
3 to answer a question in reference to where
4 Mr. Vallas received the information in regards
5 to the Comprehensive Learning Center saying
6 that it had no standards and it had no core
7 curriculum?

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
9 don't know that she would be in a position to
10 respond to that.

11 MS. LANUM: Okay.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay?
13 I think that's something that Mr. Vallas would
14 have to address.

15 MS. LANUM: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
17 You're welcome.

18 Our next witness?

19 MR. MCPHERSON: Amy Miller.

20 MS. MILLER: Hi.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
22 evening.

23 MS. MILLER: I'm Amy Miller and
24 I am a first-year literacy intern at Arthur
25 Elementary School, and I'm just asking that

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2 the literacy intern program be saved, because
3 I know that it's up for being cut next year.
4 And I graduated from the University of
5 Pennsylvania last year, and I know that I
6 wouldn't have considered staying in
7 Philadelphia if not for the literacy intern
8 program. And then now I plan on continuing to
9 complete my certification and become a
10 stand-alone teacher next year and that I
11 really don't think I would have gone into
12 teaching if not for the literacy intern
13 program. That has been a great bridge into
14 teaching. So it's not head first as a
15 stand-alone, but I've been able to work for a
16 year with a mentor teacher.

17 I have spoken with a lot of other
18 literacy interns also who feel that they
19 wouldn't have gone into teaching if not for
20 the literacy intern program. And so I really
21 feel like it should be saved for next year.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
23 you very much.

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

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
4 you so much for coming in to testify.

5 MR. McPHERSON: The next
6 witness is Sherria Saunders.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
8 evening.

9 MS. SAUNDERS: Good evening.
10 How are you doing? My name is Sherria
11 Saunders and I'm here on behalf of the
12 Cleveland Early Learning Center.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: I'm
14 sorry. I can't hear you.

15 MS. SAUNDERS: My name is
16 Sherria Saunders and I'm here on behalf of
17 Cleveland Early Learning Center, and it's
18 located at 19th and Erie Avenue.

19 I have two children. We need our
20 Comprehensive Early Learning Center morning
21 and after-school care. It is very valuable to
22 us parents who work and who do not have anyone
23 to help us to take our children to school or
24 pick them up.

25 I have to be at work at 7:30 every

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2 morning. I drop both of my children off. I
3 just had a three-year-old and a five-year-old.
4 He's been there for two years and he has
5 learned a lot. And for him to want to close
6 the centers down is not right and it's not
7 fair to us parents who are working to take
8 care of our children.

9 We need this service. Not just for
10 them, but for us, to help us to stay and work
11 to be able to take care of our children. So
12 the services is needed for the inner city
13 schools, so please don't take it away.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
15 just want everyone to know that we do have
16 representatives from the School District here
17 that are hearing your plea, and though
18 Mr. Vallas himself is not here, they will
19 certainly report back to Mr. Vallas your
20 concerns.

21 MS. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank
22 you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
24 you very much.

25 MR. MCPHERSON: The next

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2 witness is Debra Nelson.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
4 evening.

5 MS. NELSON: Good evening, Ms.
6 President. My name is Debra Nelson. This is
7 my daughter, Crystal, and my granddaughter,
8 Lisa. Lisa attends the Germantown Learning
9 Center located in Germantown on Haines Street,
10 and my concern is that my daughter is in
11 college and if she doesn't have day care for
12 Lisa, then she won't be able to go. I have to
13 pay for it and it's very affordable right now
14 for me to be able to pay for the day care, as
15 well as pay for my daughter to go to college.
16 She's in her first year, so she still has
17 three more years to go, and if they take away
18 the day care, it's going to cause a lot of
19 problems for us. Not just locating another
20 one, but being able to afford another one.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: And
22 what time do you take your granddaughter to
23 day care?

24 MS. NELSON: She usually gets
25 there between 7:30 and 8 o'clock in the

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2 morning, and she's usually picked up between
3 5:30 and 6:00.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.
5 Are there any comments from members of the
6 Committee or questions?

7 The Chair recognizes Councilwoman
8 Miller.

9 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I really
10 don't have -- I just want to thank parents for
11 coming in. Day care is an issue that
12 certainly I'm familiar with, having been a
13 mother and knowing how important it is in our
14 lives where we're trying to work or go to
15 school.

16 Mr. Vallas did address the issues
17 yesterday, and I think some of us Council
18 members still have questions. I've always
19 seen the Comprehensive Day Care Learning
20 Centers as being a valuable resource to
21 people. Most recently my niece went to the
22 same one. You're talking about the one in
23 Germantown High School?

24 MS. NELSON: Mm-hmm.

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: My niece

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2 just had a daughter to go through there. In
3 fact, she was actually trying to get her
4 youngest son in that same Comprehensive
5 Learning Center. So I just want to thank you
6 for coming in.

7 There were questions yesterday as to
8 what options would be available to parents,
9 particularly those the children under three,
10 because it sounds like there will be some
11 alternative that the School District will run
12 for those three and above. So I guess we have
13 to continue to get information, too, from the
14 School District.

15 MS. NELSON: And I also wanted
16 to add that my granddaughter is reciting some
17 pretty remarkable things that she has learned
18 in this center. I don't know if she'll do it
19 now, but she is learning there, and I think
20 that it's great that at the age of 3 years old
21 she's able to repeat some of these really
22 positive things that they are putting into
23 her. So I think it's a good program.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
25 would offer the suggestion that many of the

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2 concerned parents that are coming before us
3 certainly go to the School Reform Commission
4 when they have their meeting.

5 Does anybody know when the meeting
6 will be held?

7 MR. SPREITZER: Tomorrow is the
8 next meeting.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
10 will this issue be one to be considered?
11 Should parents be going before the Commission
12 tomorrow?

13 MR. SPREITZER: It's Tim
14 Spreitzer (ph), Deputy Chief of Staff for the
15 School District of Philadelphia.

16 The School Reform Commission is
17 considering the School District's budget in
18 the May meeting. So parents and other
19 community members are certainly welcome to
20 attend. Those are the second and third
21 Wednesdays of the month. So I don't know the
22 date off the top of my head, but it's the
23 second and third Wednesday of the month in
24 May, and those meetings are 1 o'clock at the
25 School District headquarters at 2120 Winter

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2 Street.

3 MS. NELSON: 2120 what?

4 MR. SPREITZER: 2120 Winter
5 Street, 21st and the Parkway, 1 o'clock.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I have a
7 question of the School District. When are
8 they proposed to eliminate the Comprehensive
9 Learning Centers? When would they close?

10 MR. SPREITZER: Well, we can
11 get -- I can get you that information after
12 this session. I don't have it off the top of
13 my head. I don't want to give an incorrect
14 answer.

15 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Because I
16 think I'd like people to know that -- I don't
17 know about you, President Verna, but I
18 actually just found out about this yesterday.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
20 think we all did.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So it's
22 not something that we've known.

23 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Point of
24 information.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The

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2 Chair recognizes Councilman Ramos.

3 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Thank you,
4 Madam President.

5 If my memory doesn't fail me, I
6 believe that when Mr. Vallas brought this up,
7 he said that the Early Comprehensive Learning
8 Centers were going to be changed into
9 something else.

10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Called
11 Bright Futures.

12 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Right. Or
13 at least I got the impression that this
14 program was just going to change name and
15 maybe some changes in it, but it was not going
16 to be eliminated as such.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
18 think he also indicated that they would be
19 able to service more children.

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Well,
21 they did say that service more, with my
22 memory, three to four-year-olds and above,
23 pre-kindergarten, but I think the concern was
24 for children -- how old is your daughter?

25 MS. NELSON: My granddaughter.

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2 She's three years old.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: She's
4 three?

5 I think the concern was for the
6 children below three, because I think the
7 centers serve from zero to four or five years
8 old. I think it was the children under three
9 years of age.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is
11 that --

12 MR. SPREITZER: Again, I don't
13 want to give out inaccurate information. I
14 know in the briefing books that Council
15 members received, the issued papers, there's a
16 section and it does detail the movement to
17 these centers. So if you have that --
18 actually, I have mine with me. I just don't
19 want to give out inaccurate information.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
21 Again, I personally would encourage the
22 concerned parents to go before the School
23 Reform Commission, and as you heard, they meet
24 on the second and third Thursday in May at 1
25 o'clock.

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2 MR. SPREITZER: It's the second
3 and third Wednesday. So it's May 11th and May
4 18th, are the two meetings. And just the
5 public needs to register the day before at
6 4:30 and they can do so by just calling
7 215-299-7850.

8 I'll give you that.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Does
10 anybody want to jot that number down?

11 MR. SPREITZER: 215-299-7850.
12 And you have to register the day before by
13 4:30 p.m.

14 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: So there's
15 no meeting tomorrow, Tim?

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: No.

17 Mr. Spreitzer, I think Councilman
18 Ramos is asking you a question. Is there a
19 meeting tomorrow?

20 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: So there's
21 no meeting tomorrow?

22 MR. SPREITZER: There is a
23 meeting tomorrow, but speakers need to
24 register the day before by 4:30 p.m. So
25 there's a School Reform Commission meeting

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2 tomorrow, but as I was mentioning earlier, the
3 budget is being considered at the May SRC
4 meeting. The School Reform Commission is
5 adopting -- has plans to adopt the School
6 District's budget for '06 at the May meeting.
7 So if parents have concerns, they can do so
8 either at the May 11th or May 18th meeting.

9 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: But if they
10 wanted to attend the meeting tomorrow, they
11 certainly could?

12 MR. SPREITZER: Certainly they
13 can attend, yes, but to come and speak, they
14 have to register the day before at 4:30. The
15 School Reform Commission requires you to
16 register the day before at 4:30. So people
17 would have had to register today by 4:30.

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Council
19 President, in this booklet that was passed out
20 yesterday, it says, "Comprehensive Early
21 Learning Centers, one year phaseout," and then
22 it says "Bright Futures, 67 new classrooms
23 modeling Head Start will replace."

24 So, Councilman Ramos, certainly
25 you're correct that it would serve more

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2 children, at least in that particular age
3 category. I think the three's, the four's and
4 the five's -- well, by five, they may be in
5 kindergarten. And I believe the issue
6 yesterday was that the children under three
7 would be those that would be having to seek --
8 and someone did question Mr. Vallas about the
9 availability of day care for those children
10 that would not be able to go to Bright
11 Futures, and he did give an answer. I just
12 can't remember exactly what it was. Okay?
13 But it says here it's a one-year phaseout.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
15 you.

16 Councilwoman Tasco, I believe your
17 light is on.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Right.

19 Good afternoon. I just wanted to
20 say that I think the concern is for the
21 children/infants to three, what's going to
22 happen to those children. And Mr. Vallas did
23 say that there were other Comprehensive day
24 care programs in the City. They're run in
25 private homes. But what was happening in the

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2 private homes, they are limited to six
3 children, and if they go beyond that, we have
4 limited them in City Council, they have to go
5 get a variance, and in most instances, the
6 City and most of us oppose having those day
7 cares expanded to more than six because of
8 just the nature of the business.

9 So it is -- and also we raised the
10 issue of the quality of service, and the
11 School District certainly provides quality
12 service and education to the young people.
13 We're not sure that we get the same quality of
14 service in the home day care. Not that
15 they're not protected or well fed, but what is
16 the educational opportunities for these
17 children. And so that is a concern we have to
18 phase out of the program, what happens from
19 birth to three or four.

20 MR. SPREITZER: Okay.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.

22 You'll get back to us on that?

23 MR. SPREITZER: Yes.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
25 you.

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2 Thank you both for very much.

3 Do we have anyone else to testify?

4 Hello. Please identify yourself for
5 the record and proceed with your testimony.

6 MS. SIMMONS: My name is Latifa
7 Simmons.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

9 Latifa, please pull the microphone closer to
10 you.

11 MS. SIMMONS: Sure. My name is
12 Latifa Simmons. I'm a parent of my daughter,
13 Martina, which she's a five-year-old that goes
14 to Whittier Comprehensive Day Care at 27th and
15 Clearfield. What I wanted to say was, she
16 goes there for before and after school
17 basically. So I want to know what happened to
18 those five-year-olds and six-year-olds that
19 need before- and after-school care if they
20 close the day cares? I work until 5:00 in the
21 evening. I won't get to her until 5:45, and
22 then I have to be at work by 8:30 in the
23 morning. So that basically was the leeway for
24 me to get to work on time and still have her
25 in school and still pick her up and still be

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2 able to stay at work all day.

3 So I'm wondering, why are they
4 closing them if -- I'm a single parent. I
5 don't have anybody else to pick her up or
6 anything. So to me, closing them would be a
7 big inconvenience for a lot of single parents,
8 who really have nobody else to pick up their
9 child, who has to work an eight-hour day.
10 That's all I wanted to say.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: What
12 are you being told by the school or the
13 center?

14 MS. SIMMONS: What I've been
15 told is, they're just looking to close certain
16 ones of them. Certain ones are going to stay
17 open. I think about six of them. But after
18 that, the rest of them are going to be closed.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Did
20 they say whether yours is going to be closed?

21 MS. SIMMONS: Well, to my
22 knowledge, the teachers at the Comprehensive
23 Day Care are telling us that they're closing.
24 By June 30th, they're supposed to be closing.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well,

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2 again, I would encourage you to go before the
3 School Reform Commission and make your plea
4 there. It is our understanding that they do
5 meet on the second and third Wednesday in May.
6 That would be May the 11th and May the 18th at
7 1 o'clock. You would call them the day before
8 to let them know that you do want to testify.
9 I think this is an issue that certainly should
10 be brought before them and they should hear
11 what the concerns of the parents are.

12 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do
14 you have the telephone number to call?

15 MS. SIMMONS: Yes. I wrote
16 down the number.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Fine.

18 Councilman Ramos, your light is on.
19 Did you want to be recognized?

20 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Yes. Those
21 parents that have come out here this evening,
22 you've shown how much you are concerned about
23 the situation facing your little child. You
24 need to continue to do other things, like go
25 to this meeting and make sure that you're

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2 heard, because I'm sure that I can say then on
3 behalf of the members of City Council, you
4 were concerned about this situation.

5 We heard about it yesterday. It's
6 my understanding that there was going to be
7 someone else to replace it. It could very
8 well be, though, that the younger children
9 services will be discontinued.

10 So we want to find out as soon as
11 possible as well, and I'm quite sure that Tim
12 and the rest of the folks here from the School
13 District will get us an answer ASAP, please.
14 Thank you.

15 Thank you, Madam President.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
17 you.

18 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
20 you very much. We appreciate your coming in
21 to testify.

22 At the moment, do we have any other
23 witnesses to testify?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We

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2 are going to sit a while.

3 The Chair recognizes Councilwoman
4 Tasco.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I'd like
6 to know -- you can't answer it today, but I
7 would like to know how many Early Childhood
8 Centers there are presently operating. I'd
9 like to know the location. I'd like to know
10 the number of students/children in those day
11 cares, the early learning literacy centers
12 that you're proposing to close. I'd like to
13 know the population of the children from
14 infancy to four.

15 MR. SPRETIZER: Sure.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Now, the
17 after-school program, would they incorporate
18 the lady who has the child, she doesn't get
19 home until 6 o'clock? Would there be programs
20 for her child to participate in if she can't
21 find -- well, she needs a day care. She needs
22 a day care from 7:00 in the morning until 6:00
23 at night.

24 MR. SPREITZER: Right. Again,
25 I don't want to give inaccurate information,

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2 so we'll give you the full breakdown. I
3 believe there are 45 centers, and we'll give
4 you the location and the population per
5 center.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The other
7 thing is, has there been any dialogue with the
8 day care providers to see looking at the
9 geography of where these centers are located,
10 how they could be fed into those centers?

11 MR. SPREITZER: Yes. That I
12 know there has been. Donna Piekarski, who was
13 here earlier and she was asked some questions,
14 I know that they've had dialogue with the day
15 care center providers throughout the City in
16 anticipation of this programmatic change.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Okay.
18 That's what I'd like.

19 MR. SPREITZER: Yes.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
22 you.

23 The Chair recognizes Councilwoman
24 Miller. Do you want Mr. Spreitzer?

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Yes.

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2 Mr. Spreitzer, I think what we need
3 is clarity. For example, under early
4 literacy, it says 67 new classrooms, which
5 means additional children. However, what does
6 67 new classrooms mean? Where are they,
7 whether they're going to be spread out across
8 the City. And then in the briefing book that
9 you gave us, it does identify where -- well,
10 it says by numbers where they have day care
11 centers, but we don't know where in terms of
12 geographically across the City and which ones
13 are going to be eliminated and which ones will
14 ultimately be a part of this Bright Futures
15 and then it talks about Head Start. So it
16 doesn't really say specifically the where.

17 I don't know how many we have in
18 cross sections of the City, but that's
19 important to people when they're working. I
20 know that this Early Childhood Education
21 program run by the School District has always
22 been an excellent resource for parents for
23 before- and after-school care, and we need to
24 know more information about what's going to be
25 available.

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2 MR. SPREITZER: And through the
3 President's office, we will get the breakdown
4 of the current 45 centers and then the
5 proposed locations throughout the City.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Would
9 they have the schools in the same geographic
10 locations?

11 MR. SPREITZER: The proposed
12 sites?

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes.

14 MR. SPREITZER: I believe there
15 wouldn't be much variance to -- they would be
16 disbursed throughout the City, you know,
17 essentially the same. But, I mean, I think
18 we'll get the future breakdown for you, the
19 current and the future breakdown for the
20 Council.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

22 Great. Thank you.

23 Do we have any other witnesses that
24 would like to testify?

25 (No response.)

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We're
3 going to wait a while, because I think we had
4 originally said public testimony would be from
5 5:30 to 7:30. So I think we'll wait, because
6 it's still rather early, and we'll take people
7 as they come in. Okay? Thank you.

8 (Pause.)

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: This
10 Committee will stand in recess until Thursday,
11 April the 21st at 9:30 a.m. Thank you all
12 very much for your patience.

13 (Committee of the Whole public
14 testimony adjourned at 7:00 p.m.)

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