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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, February 6, 2007
10:15 a.m.

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PRESENT:

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COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, CHAIR

COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA

COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.

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COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE

COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

12

COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

13

COUNCILMAN DANIEL SAVAGE

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RESOLUTION 060807 - Resolution authorizing the
Committee on Education to investigate and
conduct hearings related to the reported
crisis faced by the City of Philadelphia
regarding the high dropout rate among public
school students prior to high school
graduation, for the purpose of examining the
reported data and exploring corrective
measures that can be taken to encourage high
school graduation.

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COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good morning. Let me thank you all for coming with regard to this important issue of the dropout rate in public schools and how it affects our city and what corrective measures in our schools can be taken.

We thank you all for being here. I see Ted Kirsch. Thank you, Mr. Kirsch, always. And we will begin this hearing with the Clerk reading the title of Resolution 060807. Before he does, let me note that to my left is Councilman Frank Rizzo. To my right, Councilman Greenlee. To his right, Councilman W. Wilson Goode.

The Clerk will now read the title of the resolution.

THE CLERK: Resolution 060807, authorizing the Committee on Education to investigate and conduct hearings related to the reported crisis faced by the City of Philadelphia regarding the high dropout rate among public school students

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 prior to high school graduation, for the
3 purpose of examining the reported data
4 and exploring corrective measures that
5 can be taken to encourage high school
6 graduation.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you very much. We will begin our
9 testimony today -- we have a list that
10 was prepared in the order it's requested,
11 but we're going to ask our friend, Ted
12 Kirsch, President of the Philadelphia
13 Federation of Teachers, to lead us off.

14 Thank you very much,
15 Mr. Kirsch. Thank you very much, always
16 a pleasure.

17 MR. KIRSCH: Thank you for
18 allowing me to speak at this time because
19 of my schedule. I appreciate it very
20 much.

21 Good morning, Chairwoman
22 Blackwell and members of City Council.
23 I'm Ted Kirsch, President of the
24 Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and
25 AFT Pennsylvania representing 40,000

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 elementary and secondary school teachers,
3 college professors and school support
4 employees.

5 Last year, in a study funded by
6 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,
7 researchers spoke to 16- to 24-year-old
8 high school dropouts, including some from
9 Philadelphia, to find out why they
10 dropped out of school and what might have
11 been done to encourage them to graduate.

12 The study confirmed findings by
13 John Hopkins University, the University
14 of Michigan, the Philadelphia Education
15 Fund and other respected institutions.

16 They found that one-third
17 dropped out because they were failing
18 schools; one-third left to get a job; 26
19 percent left school and became parents;
20 43 percent had missed so much school they
21 felt they would never catch up; and 45
22 percent said their elementary and middle
23 schools had not given them the background
24 and skills they needed to succeed in high
25 school.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Other studies show whether a
3 student graduates high school on time or
4 not at all is strongly affected by
5 poverty and race. Nearly half of
6 African-American students and 40 percent
7 of Latino students attend high schools
8 where graduation is not the norm. By
9 contrast, only 11 percent of white
10 students attend high schools with low
11 graduation rates, according to the 2004
12 John Hopkins study.

13 In the John Hopkins study,
14 Pennsylvania was among the 15 states that
15 produce 80 percent of the high schools
16 with the highest number of dropouts. The
17 study found that more than half of
18 African-American students in Illinois,
19 Ohio, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania
20 attend high school in which the majority
21 of students do not graduate on time, if
22 at all. This is a sad commentary on our
23 schools.

24 Dropping out is a complex,
25 multi-faceted problem whose solutions

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 must begin in early childhood and
3 continue with a broad range of policies
4 and programs across all institutions and
5 organizations, because research shows
6 that a wide variety of factors are
7 involved in dropping out. Among them,
8 poverty, poor academic performance,
9 substance abuse, pregnancy, legal
10 problems, family stress, poor command of
11 the English language, the education level
12 of parents and older siblings. No single
13 institution or agency can reduce the
14 number of dropouts.

15 However, there are various
16 points through childhood and young
17 adulthood at which we can intervene to
18 improve students' chances of graduating
19 from high school.

20 I would like to outline some
21 specific educational initiatives that
22 would help to reduce the dropout rate.

23 I think we must begin by
24 providing universal early childhood
25 education in Philadelphia. Nowhere is it

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 more evident than an ounce of prevention
3 is worth a pound of cure. The
4 correlation between high school
5 graduation and enrollment in early
6 childhood education programs is extremely
7 well documented. In Philadelphia, 28
8 percent of kindergartners did not
9 participate in any formal
10 pre-kindergarten program. As a
11 community, we must strive to enroll every
12 at-risk child in a high-quality early
13 education program by the age of four.

14 We must reduce class sizes in
15 grades K through three. Besides poverty,
16 a history of academic failure is the most
17 significant predictor of who will drop
18 out of school. Small class sizes -- and
19 we're talking about 15 to 17 pupils per
20 classroom -- in kindergarten through
21 grade three has been shown to help
22 disadvantaged and minority children
23 master basic skills. In Philadelphia, K
24 to 3 classrooms still have 30 children
25 per classroom, twice the size recommended

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 for effective instruction. Despite this,
3 there is no commitment by the city, state
4 or School District to reduce class sizes
5 in the early years or beyond. I urge you
6 to make funding available to lower class
7 sizes to help students succeed
8 academically.

9 Another important aspect or
10 program, we should transform high schools
11 by offering a variety of programs.
12 Students need to see the connection
13 between school and work. In a focus
14 group conducted in Philadelphia, one
15 former student reflected, "They make you
16 take classes in school that you're never
17 going to use in life." Unable to see the
18 relevance of what they are learning,
19 at-risk students gradually lose interest,
20 they start cutting classes, they fall
21 behind and eventually they drop out. One
22 way in which we can help them maintain an
23 interest in school is by offering more
24 work-study opportunities, alternative
25 programs, more relevant vocational

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 programs, better career and technical
3 training, and adult mentoring that helps
4 put the classroom learning to use.

5 Our vocational and technical
6 programs are in shambles today, poorly
7 equipped, badly marketed and so out of
8 date that many still resemble the
9 programs that were offered 30 or 40 years
10 ago. Not every student will attend
11 college, but every student will join the
12 labor force, and our schools must be
13 equipped to prepare them for work,
14 qualify them for advanced career and
15 technical training programs and, if they
16 choose, attend college. To be
17 successful, we must promote coordination
18 between employers and schools to ensure
19 that our programs prepare students for
20 jobs that exist in the region.

21 We must also improve the access
22 to high-level coursework. Most students
23 do better in schools where there are high
24 expectations and high-level courses. In
25 the Gates Foundation survey, a

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 Philadelphia student told researchers,
3 "The work wasn't even hard. Once I
4 figured out I wasn't going to get any
5 learning done in there, there wasn't any
6 need to go." High schools must expand
7 access to honors, advanced placement and
8 international baccalaureate courses, and
9 Philadelphia has already taken steps in
10 this area. Research shows that high
11 expectations, coupled with access to
12 advanced courses, will motivate students
13 to succeed. One high school graduate
14 said that she finished school not because
15 she was more talented than the other
16 students but because she was in the
17 honors program. "We were constantly
18 being made aware of the benefits of going
19 to college and provided the resources to
20 get there." Her small learning community
21 included classes that challenged her and
22 exposed her as early as middle school to
23 adults who helped her map out a four-year
24 educational plan that led to college.

25 We must also offer more

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 programmatic choices for students.
3 Students should be able to choose a high
4 school based on course offerings,
5 thematic orientation and extracurricular
6 activities that meet their particular
7 needs and interests. The era of large,
8 impersonal comprehensive high schools is
9 over. Research once again shows that
10 students perform better when large
11 schools are reorganized into smaller
12 academic communities where individual
13 student progress can be monitored for the
14 warning signs that a youngster is at risk
15 of dropping out. Sending a child to a
16 school just because it is the one closest
17 to his or her home doesn't make sense.
18 Students should be allowed to choose
19 among non-selective and selective high
20 schools that meet their individual needs.
21 We must also improve safety and
22 order and enforce rules with real
23 consequences. Not surprising, high
24 school dropouts complained that they had
25 too much freedom and not enough rules.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 "In middle school, you have to go to your
3 next class or they're going to get you.
4 In high school, if you don't go to class,
5 there isn't anybody who is going to get
6 you." And this is what a Philadelphia
7 dropout told researchers.

8 In the Gates study, students
9 said there were too many distractions and
10 many admitted they didn't have the
11 maturity to make good choices. They said
12 there were no consequences for roaming
13 hallways, cutting classes or performing
14 poorly. Two-thirds said that schools
15 need to do more to keep students from
16 cutting classes and said there should be
17 better discipline. More than half said
18 more is needed to be done to help
19 students feel safe. The issue of
20 discipline cannot be stressed enough,
21 particularly in large high schools. With
22 staffing cuts and large classes, our
23 schools need more adult supervision,
24 effective discipline policies, consistent
25 enforcement and fair consequences.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 We must also create a system of
3 middle grades testing and supports. We
4 can tell many years in advance which
5 students are likely to drop out. The
6 Philadelphia Education Fund, in
7 conjunction with John Hopkins University,
8 determined that by sixth grade a student
9 who has a poor attendance record, poor
10 behavior or is failing either math or
11 English has only a ten percent chance of
12 graduating from high school on time.
13 Armed with this information, we can
14 identify potential dropouts early and
15 provide them with intensive
16 interventions. Among the components that
17 are identified as successful are
18 involving families and parents as much as
19 possible; providing individual attention
20 and instruction, including tutoring and
21 outside mentoring; offering conflict
22 resolution, anger management and other
23 forms of counseling.

24 Middle schools should consider
25 implementing gateway testing at the end

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 of seventh grade, and students who test
3 below basic should be given special
4 support, tutoring and mentoring to
5 improve their study skills and
6 achievement levels prior to entering high
7 school. The middle grades play a crucial
8 role in preparing students for high
9 school and college. The best way to
10 lower dropout rates is to raise academic
11 skills at all levels.

12 We must also support teen
13 parents and struggling families. No
14 teenager should have to drop out of
15 school because of family
16 responsibilities. We need a social
17 service safety net that keeps students
18 from dropping out because they need a
19 job, must care for a family member or
20 because they become parents. In the case
21 of teen parents, Philadelphia's
22 Comprehensive Early Learning Center
23 program was once a model for cradle
24 through elementary school childcare,
25 providing nurturing, educational settings

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 for infants, children of teen parents and
3 after-school programs for children of
4 working parents. The program has all but
5 been dismantled, although it offered a
6 crucial link to keeping young parents on
7 track for graduation. A quarter of all
8 dropouts might stay in school if they had
9 access to in-school childcare, teen
10 parenting counseling and other social
11 services.

12 I think we must also raise the
13 level age at which students may drop out.
14 Students should not be allowed by state
15 law to drop out of school prior to age 17
16 in any circumstance. Currently,
17 Pennsylvania law includes exceptions that
18 allow students to leave school as early
19 as age 14.

20 Prior to dropping out, a
21 student's parents or guardian should be
22 required to sign the children out of
23 school after both student and family
24 receives counseling, information about
25 educational alternatives, such as

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 alternative schools or earning a GED, and
3 information on how to return to school
4 later if the student chooses. Seventy
5 percent of dropouts surveyed regret their
6 decision and had planned to return to
7 school. Sadly, only 11 percent in the
8 Gates study actually did so.

9 We must improve supervision and
10 access to counseling, mentoring and
11 tutoring. A Philadelphia man who had
12 dreamed of attending college but dropped
13 out and is now unemployed told
14 researchers, "There wasn't anybody to
15 keep me there." Students not only want
16 more engaging, relevant curriculum but
17 they also expressed a need for more adult
18 contact. In the Educational Testing
19 Service's groundbreaking study called
20 "One Third of a Nation," it found that
21 school counseling services nationwide are
22 thoroughly inadequate and that counselors
23 have so many other duties -- in
24 Philadelphia, we have them covering
25 classes -- that they can't advise too

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 many students. They have little time to
3 work with students at risk or dropping
4 out. Counselors and additional adult
5 supervision, including classroom
6 assistants, mentors from outside schools
7 and tutors, are crucial if we are to spot
8 warning signs and to offer support
9 mechanisms to stop students from dropping
10 out.

11 We must eliminate programs that
12 have not proven effective at reducing
13 dropout rates. Research has provided
14 information on what programs work, as
15 well as those that do not work. Among
16 those identified by researchers as
17 ineffective are government-mandated
18 promotion policies and requirements
19 without funding to implement them; making
20 students repeat grades, such as overage
21 middle and high school students are most
22 at risk for dropping out; early
23 interventions without follow-up; just
24 teaching basic skills alone; work
25 experience and on-the-job training

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 without adult mentoring and supervision;
3 increasing the number of attendance
4 officers without providing supports for
5 students who are returned to schools.

6 We should be wary of these
7 quick fixes, because they usually are
8 neither quick nor fix the problem.

9 School is where children grow
10 into young adults ready to contribute to
11 their communities. If schools are to
12 succeed, we must look for opportunities
13 at every age and grade level to identify
14 children who are at risk of dropping out
15 and provide them with the support and
16 programs that help them succeed and
17 graduate.

18 I appreciate the Council's
19 interest in this important subject and
20 the opportunity to speak with you today.
21 All of the initiatives I've mentioned are
22 backed up with research, and all of them
23 cost money. I urge the Council to take
24 the lead in coordinating the community's
25 resources and providing new funds

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 dedicated to creating the programs,
3 policies and supports necessary to keep
4 children in school.

5 Thank you. If there are any
6 questions.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

8 Mr. Kirsch, thank you for your excellent
9 testimony. I wanted to ask you, you
10 know, I remember when Hornbeck was a new
11 superintendent, and there's so many
12 things that we just talk about over and
13 over again. We had in 10 or 11 schools,
14 we had health agencies that went in
15 schools and served as counselors, and
16 their kids were telling them about abuse
17 situations, about parents fighting, about
18 all kinds of things they were going
19 through, and it was private because it
20 was a health agency. And at that point,
21 Mr. Hornbeck said he would have them in
22 all at least high schools, and we know
23 that obviously that didn't happen. I
24 note it because you mentioned counseling.

25 And, also, I'm going to pass

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 out to Committee -- I was looking through
3 a letter -- I was talking to Judge Doris
4 Smith and told her that we had quoted her
5 in a letter, a newsletter, January 1996.
6 I'm going to pass these out to members of
7 the Committee. In this letter on Page 2
8 we talk about violence and here we talk
9 about the same thing you just mentioned,
10 which is expanding conflict resolution,
11 peer mediation classes. And I dare say
12 that this was the January 1996
13 newsletter. So those of us who have been
14 around a while realize that the problems
15 have gotten worse, but the solutions that
16 we've talked about for many years are the
17 same.

18 But let me ask you your opinion
19 and then I'm going to ask you a Board
20 question really since Mr. Vallas is
21 caught up in these issues with buses this
22 morning.

23 People always tell us we need
24 cooking class and vocational ed, and I
25 thought we needed meaningful job training

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 vocational ed, but now given the fact
3 that we have so many children in our
4 system who come from dysfunctional
5 families in places where they haven't
6 learned basic skills, maybe the old
7 cooking classes at least get them
8 trained. We who grew up in homes where
9 it was taught took it for granted. And I
10 wanted your opinion. So maybe even some
11 of the old basic stuff may be helpful.

12 What's your opinion?

13 MR. KIRSCH: As a product of
14 the Philadelphia public school system and
15 a proud graduate, I might add, I remember
16 going through junior high school and one
17 of the programs that we were required to
18 do, we were given opportunities for
19 various shops, and there were skills that
20 we were exposed to. And I still
21 remember, because I tell my wife how
22 handy I am today, it's because I had
23 these shops, and she said, It's a shame
24 they didn't have a plumbing shop because
25 you can't do very much along with

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 plumbing. But I did learn some skills
3 that I still enjoy today, and I did take
4 cooking that you mentioned. And I make
5 reference to this because we were exposed
6 to a variety of other opportunities. How
7 many youngsters if they were exposed to
8 some of these other opportunities would
9 see that as a career path? And so just
10 because it was junior high school and we
11 were exposed, we had vocational schools
12 where students could go to follow
13 through.

14 You mentioned previously a
15 former administrator of the school system
16 who didn't have that philosophy, and so
17 our vocational schools de-emphasized
18 vocations, which were jobs for kids.
19 They were tracks that they could follow.
20 And I remember one particular high school
21 in South Philadelphia at 8th and Mifflin
22 that I won't mention the name of the
23 school, but that particular school
24 eliminated one of its most popular
25 programs, and that was hairdressing, that

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 young women who did not want to go on a
3 college track would have an opportunity
4 not only to learn a skill but they could
5 have their own business, and it was
6 eliminated.

7 We went through a period where
8 everything was computers. Well, there
9 are jobs available and skills that are
10 necessary. There's a skill and I
11 remember when they eliminated shoe
12 repair. Now, it may sound strange, but
13 there was a need and is a need for people
14 to have the skill, and we had programs in
15 some of our schools. It was eliminated.

16 So I think that the exposure to
17 vocational education and revamping some
18 of our programs is crucial, because
19 students have to see -- if they're in
20 school, they need to see a need to
21 continue. The programs have to be
22 relevant to what they believe is
23 important to them. Not everyone is going
24 to go to college.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 you very much. I remember one of the
3 courses we studied, those of us who
4 became school teachers, was Cardinal
5 Newman talking about a liberal education.
6 I always think about that course, so I
7 guess it worked all these years later.
8 When they talk about cutting out so many,
9 whether it be sports or art or music, I
10 always think about that course we learned
11 that we had. I guess I had that at St.
12 Joseph's University where we learned
13 about a liberal education and how
14 youngsters should be exposed to many
15 things.

16 Let me just ask you one more
17 question. This is really a Board
18 question, but I was --

19 MR. KIRSCH: I'd be glad to
20 answer for them.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you. In their Report Card 2006, they
23 list -- in fact, I have an extra -- I'm
24 sure you have your book. They talk about
25 truancy incidents and it's a big thing

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 about kids who drop out in four years,
3 juvenile victims of crime, who is
4 dependent, children receiving medical
5 assistance, youth in and out of home and
6 placement, all kinds of information here.
7 My question for you is, when they mention
8 truancy incidents, I understand the
9 number is 80,000, but I don't know what
10 that means. Is it 80,000 incidents in a
11 year? Is it children? I don't know what
12 it means in terms of truancy, because
13 truancy certainly and dropout rate are
14 linked. And I'm not even sure if truancy
15 means you're not in school three days
16 or -- I'm not really quite sure after
17 talking about it often, I realize that
18 I'm not quite sure how we define
19 "truancy" and to whom it applies.

20 MR. KIRSCH: Well, that's one
21 question I can't answer for them, because
22 they compiled the statistics, but I can
23 recall during my career as a public
24 school teacher that after the third day
25 of absence, we were required to fill in a

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 form, which was then called the SEH-14.
3 Do you remember?

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

5 MR. KIRSCH: And we had
6 employees who were called Home and School
7 Visitors that had to go and deal with the
8 home immediately to find out why that
9 youngster is not in school, and there was
10 direct contact. The presence of those
11 positions have all been eliminated, and
12 at this point, we don't really have
13 people with the direct connection to the
14 school to report.

15 But a link with the teacher --
16 now, I know there are some programs and
17 people are talking about hiring people to
18 get the students and bring them back, but
19 if you're going to get the students and
20 bring them back, we have to change the
21 very reasons that they dropped out, that
22 they're not there. So to pick them up
23 off the street, bring them back in and if
24 we're not going to change those
25 conditions, this problem is going to

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 continue.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yeah.

4 I hear many things today about how
5 children are notified. In one of our
6 school violence hearings in the past --
7 we've had three -- we talked about how
8 students are notified. And now I
9 understand they even have recordings
10 where they try to call the home. But as
11 is obvious, due to all our problems, we
12 have a serious disconnect between the
13 home, the school and the community.

14 So maybe Ms. Frattone, who is
15 going to speak for Paul Vallas, can
16 answer the questions when she comes
17 forward. We just want a real definition
18 of "truancy" while we're talking about
19 dropout rates.

20 And let me note that Councilman
21 Savage is here, as is Councilwoman
22 Reynolds Brown.

23 I'm taking enough time.

24 Councilman Rizzo, you wanted to ask
25 Mr. Kirsch a question?

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

3 Mr. Kirsch, there's two points
4 that I want to discuss with you. One is
5 the fact that learning how to do the shop
6 stuff I think is very important. And I'm
7 not sure where the automatic program was,
8 but I know, I know personally, young men
9 and women that went through that that are
10 working very successfully in car
11 dealerships today making very, very good
12 livings. Many of those young people were
13 sought out by those dealerships because
14 they went to that automotive program.
15 And the reason I'm asking the question, I
16 ran into a young man that works today for
17 Chrysler Corporation and he enters this
18 rodeo every year where they troubleshoot,
19 they booby trap a car and they find it
20 within minutes, the problem, a product of
21 the Philadelphia School District
22 automotive program. So I think it still
23 exists, but I don't know to what degree
24 it exists. And I agree with you, not
25 everybody goes to college, and to be able

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 to come out of high school and have the
3 ability to work with your hands and your
4 mind is very, very important.

5 The other issue, I've always
6 talked about the fact that I think it
7 isn't a good thing that we allow young
8 people to voluntarily leave school at the
9 age of 17. Today you said something that
10 I didn't know, that there are exceptions,
11 that they can leave even at an earlier
12 age.

13 Do you believe that the young
14 men and women that leave at the age of
15 17, if the age was 18, that that one year
16 could turn them around or keep them in
17 school because they can't leave?

18 I've always asked the question
19 why. Mr. Vallas even indicated that he
20 would look at the possibility of working
21 with the Legislature to see if changing
22 it to 18, but it's troubling today to
23 hear -- can you explain the exceptions
24 that allow them to leave at 14?

25 MR. KIRSCH: Well, I think

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 they're done on an individual basis, but
3 I think your point is well taken. If we
4 can keep them in an extra year -- but we
5 know who they are. We can identify them.
6 So that if we know that they're going to
7 be on this track of dropping out, we
8 should be changing the program. We
9 should be giving them what they're going
10 to need when they do leave. But to keep
11 them in the same roster, same classes,
12 that's what's driving them out. Because
13 we have the information that identifies
14 who they will be, we have to change the
15 programs to help them.

16 That was your second question.
17 I want to go back to your first question,
18 because it's interesting. We have in one
19 of our high schools, Edison High School,
20 a program where the auto shop program
21 works with the City of Philadelphia. The
22 City automotive agency is close by. And
23 some of the students, as part of their
24 program, do go on and work in the City
25 garage part time, and most of them, I

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 believe, are hired by the City. So they
3 have this training in high school, they
4 have this career link to get the
5 on-the-job experience, and then when they
6 prove to be successful, they're hired by
7 the City. And I think we need more of
8 those types of programs, the connection
9 between our vocational programs and the
10 real jobs that are out there.

11 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, it's
12 interesting you say that. I was just
13 approached by an airline that is having
14 difficulty finding technicians, not to
15 work necessarily on the aircraft, because
16 that's a different level, but they have
17 an immediate need to hire people that
18 know how to work on the ground support
19 equipment. So I'm working right now with
20 trying to have the School District work
21 with -- it's U.S. Airways that would love
22 to be able to train the technicians on
23 the type of equipment that they have so
24 there would be part-time and then
25 eventually full-time jobs from the School

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 District right to U.S. Airways.

3 So these creative things like
4 you mentioned, you have to have the young
5 people, especially that don't like
6 school, get a hot button that's something
7 that they like, and if maybe supporting
8 an international airline carrier on their
9 ground equipment to learn how to fix that
10 equipment in school and that gives them
11 an opportunity to go to work and they
12 make a good living is a success story.

13 So I'm just hoping that we can
14 turn some of the things that you
15 discussed today around and get back to
16 basics. Thank you.

17 Thank you, Madam Chair.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
19 also note, you can't mention automotive
20 without us talking about West
21 Philadelphia High School and their
22 national awards. We've even honored them
23 here.

24 MR. KIRSCH: Our champions.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 our champs. Thank you very much.

3 Councilwoman -- excuse me.

4 Council President Verna.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
6 you, Madam Chair.

7 Good morning. So nice seeing
8 you.

9 MR. KIRSCH: Good morning.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We
11 all know that truancy leads to dropouts,
12 and I think at our last hearing I spoke
13 about and I heard that children are bored
14 and consequently they drop out of school,
15 and I asked why wouldn't we have more
16 vocational schools.

17 Can you tell me exactly how
18 many vocational schools we have
19 throughout the City today?

20 MR. KIRSCH: Well, we basically
21 have the traditional what we refer to as
22 "the big three" historically, Bok,
23 Dobbins and Mastbaum, and there was the
24 addition of the Swenson Skills Center and
25 the Randolph Skills Center. And they

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 basically are the main focus of the
3 programs that exist.

4 Many of the programs were also
5 in our comprehensive high schools. So
6 you didn't have to necessarily go to a
7 vocational school; we had these programs
8 in our comprehensive high schools. And
9 many of them are dropping the programs,
10 and I think that is a major shortcoming
11 of the School District. And they will
12 probably say it's really due to funding,
13 that we just can't afford to have all of
14 these programs, but I think if we're
15 going to address the real issue of what
16 some of our youngsters need and would
17 like to have, we have to have the
18 programs for them.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do
20 you have any indication as to how many
21 students we have in the three vocational
22 schools?

23 MR. KIRSCH: I do not, but I am
24 sure that the School District has those
25 figures.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: I
3 guess I went through the Internet as you
4 did and I see that for the mandatory
5 starting age, it is absolutely
6 incredible, in just --

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: --
10 about every state youngsters start at six
11 or seven. It's only in Pennsylvania and
12 in Washington that they have to start at
13 eight years old. Now, is that a state
14 law?

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: And
17 would you recommend that we -- I think
18 you did -- recommend that we try to
19 change that?

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 eventually would help youngsters.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well,
4 I know that the high school dropout rates
5 have really become a national crisis and
6 it's something that has been existing,
7 and I think if we don't take some action,
8 it's going to continue to exist. And I
9 really appreciated your testimony. I did
10 go through the Internet and it's really
11 alarming to read much of the studies that
12 have been done. And I think if something
13 is not done and done soon, we're just
14 going to lose generations of youngsters
15 going to school.

16 But I want to thank you for
17 coming in to testify.

18 MR. KIRSCH: Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you, Madam President.

21 Councilman Greenlee and then
22 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
24 morning, Mr. Kirsch.

25 MR. KIRSCH: Good morning.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
3 for your testimony also. I have kind of
4 a general question, but there's obviously
5 a lot of things in here that seem to be
6 kind of common-sense recommendations.

7 Have there been any ongoing
8 discussions between the PFT and the
9 School District administration to deal
10 with these kind of issues? Because
11 obviously you guys are right there in the
12 inside, if you will. Have there been any
13 kind of ongoing discussions, and if so,
14 what kind of reactions have you been
15 getting?

16 MR. KIRSCH: Well, we have --
17 as advocates for our youngsters as well
18 as our members, people would be surprised
19 that much of the negotiations that take
20 place every several years really focuses
21 on improving education. You know, the
22 traditional salaries and health benefits,
23 that usually comes at the end of the
24 process, but we have for many years been
25 advocating all kinds of programs to

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 improve our schools, additional supports
3 for teachers, particularly because the
4 high schools are the biggest focal point
5 of dropouts. We have been advocating for
6 years to bringing back the department
7 heads that give greater supervision for
8 the teachers to enable them to do a
9 better job with their students.

10 And so these topics, the
11 vocational education, all of these topics
12 are something that we have been
13 advocating for many, many years. And the
14 response is basically from the School
15 District, Yes, you're right, we agree
16 with you, but we have no money.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And has
18 that been pretty consistent both with
19 this administration and previous? I
20 mean, is the answer pretty much that
21 kind?

22 MR. KIRSCH: In previous
23 administrations I think when they
24 eliminated programs, there was a shifting
25 that had taken place. Well, we're going

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 to take this money because we don't think
3 this is important. And clearly, we were
4 told there was a time when vocational
5 education wasn't important, and they just
6 took that money, shifted it somewhere
7 else. Well, over a period of years, the
8 money gets used for other reasons and it
9 doesn't even exist. You can't even put
10 it back, because it's not there anymore.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And has
12 this administration been -- has this
13 differed at all?

14 MR. KIRSCH: I think the
15 difference with this administration is
16 the lip service that we receive, and I
17 say that advisedly, because, yes, we're
18 right, yes, they agree with us, but there
19 has not been any action to take place.
20 And I'll give you a perfect example. I
21 have heard the superintendent -- I'm
22 sorry he's not here to hear me say this,
23 because I don't want it being delivered
24 to him in the wrong way. But from the
25 time he came here, he has talked about

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 class size reduction. I don't believe
3 that there is a public meeting or a
4 hearing that he has gone to that he
5 doesn't talk about the importance of
6 reducing class size.

7 We have a situation today where
8 under the present school administration
9 we have the highest number of oversized
10 classes that we have ever had in my
11 memory. And some of you know, I have --
12 so far, my memory is pretty good. I've
13 been around a long time.

14 We have the worst situation
15 today with oversized classes that we've
16 ever had, in my recollection. And I
17 should point out that I first went to
18 work for the union in 1970.

19 Number two, we have the highest
20 number of split grades today than we've
21 ever had. It is impossible for a teacher
22 to stand in front of a classroom with
23 youngsters in two different grades and
24 give them the programs that they need.
25 And the worst part of the split grades,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 most of them occur in the lower grades
3 when the most important part of the
4 youngsters' education is taking place.
5 Those grades one to three we have split
6 grades.

7 We as a union have been
8 complaining about this. It hasn't
9 worked, and I would hope that perhaps
10 some pressure from City Council can
11 address these two problems, because they
12 are connected. They are connected. When
13 you look at the research, we have
14 oversized classes, when research says
15 they should be smaller. We talk about
16 individualized attention, and we have
17 more youngsters than the teacher has the
18 time to deal with individually.

19 So I think even the present
20 problems that we're having, even with the
21 finances, that this problem, as President
22 Verna pointed out, it's going to get
23 worse. It's just going to continue
24 unless we begin to deal with these
25 problems now.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I

3 certainly agree with you.

4 Thank you, Madam Chair.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

6 you, Councilman.

7 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

9 Thank you, Madam Chair.

10 Good morning. Just a couple of

11 follow-ups first before I get to the

12 centerpiece of my discussion.

13 With regards to class size, in

14 more recent years has the practice or

15 procedure or agreement been that

16 principals make a determination on how

17 they want to spend their budget dollars

18 within their school and, therefore, make

19 a determination on how many teachers will

20 have X number of students? Is that

21 correct or not?

22 MR. KIRSCH: Well, partly,

23 partly in that principals have been given

24 more say over the money spending.

25 However, we have contractual agreements

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 in terms of the limitation of class size
3 and they cannot use discretion to violate
4 the agreement.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Principals
6 cannot?

7 MR. KIRSCH: No, they cannot.
8 And that's where we go to administration
9 and we say, In X school, class size is
10 limited to 30, say, in a first grade and
11 you have 33, that's wrong. There should
12 be given additional help. Additional
13 teachers should be hired to lower the
14 class size.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.
16 Let's go back to a couple of other
17 observations that you made.

18 You indicate that there was a
19 time when or a time came when there was a
20 shift of dollars from vocational programs
21 to other programs. Approximately when
22 was that?

23 MR. KIRSCH: I believe it took
24 place in the middle '90s or latter part
25 of the '90s. Just to give you a more

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 specific concrete example, the pot of
3 dollars is limited. We, most of us who
4 went through the public school system,
5 remember when there were eight school
6 regions -- or districts they were called.
7 Well, under that administration they
8 increased the number from eight to 22
9 administrative districts. So it means
10 the additional administrators that were
11 hired, the new offices that had to take
12 place. So the funding was shifted --

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I see.

14 MR. KIRSCH: -- from one place.
15 That's just one example. There were
16 other examples of where --

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that's
18 when the major shift -- well, there was
19 clear evidence of the decrease in the
20 amount of dollars for vocational
21 programs?

22 MR. KIRSCH: Yes. And at the
23 time, the person who was in charge of
24 vocational education, the philosophy was
25 that vocational education is not

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 important. Everything was computers, was
3 the only answer, and this is what they
4 publicly would say, We have to move to
5 computers, at that point.

6 I tried at that time to work
7 with the building trades unions and the
8 School District to create programs that
9 would give more opportunities. Now,
10 fortunately, in the past year those
11 relationships between the building trades
12 and the School District did come to
13 fruition, but they started back in the
14 latter part of the '90s and nothing
15 happened all those years.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. The
17 existing contract took place when? The
18 start of the existing contract, the start
19 date for that was when?

20 MR. KIRSCH: Which contract?

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: The
22 current contract.

23 MR. KIRSCH: With the
24 Federation and School District?

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MR. KIRSCH: I believe it was
3 2004, and it expires August 31, 2008.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: During
5 negotiations, was it proper, was there
6 consideration, did you negotiate the need
7 for what you just described, the need for
8 stylists, hairdressing types of options,
9 carpentry and related programs? Were
10 they a part of the 2004 negotiations?

11 MR. KIRSCH: We talked about
12 all kinds of educational programs and
13 made offers, but the School District does
14 not -- and, again, I don't want to be
15 speaking and advocating for them, but
16 they do not want to have in writing these
17 kinds of programs, because they feel that
18 they don't necessarily have the
19 flexibility. They want to be able to
20 make these decisions. So they don't want
21 to agree. They may verbally say that
22 they agree with us, but they don't want
23 to put anything in writing that ties
24 their hands.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: But the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 PFT did put those types of
3 considerations, program options, on the
4 table for review?

5 MR. KIRSCH: I'm not -- I don't
6 want to -- I'm going back a few years and
7 I can't recollect that necessarily they
8 were specific, but I know we talked about
9 vocational education, we talked about
10 opportunities. And I can't offhand say
11 that we talked about specific these
12 particular programs, because I
13 remember -- and the person that was the
14 spokesperson for the School District at
15 that time is no longer an employee. He
16 moved on to, I believe, St. Louis, and I
17 don't know where he is at this time. But
18 he did not agree.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So what
20 agreements were reached in the area of
21 vocational education?

22 MR. KIRSCH: There were none
23 specifically.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Were Home
25 and School Visitors negotiated in the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 last contract or the need for Home and
3 School Visitors?

4 MR. KIRSCH: They were
5 eliminated a number of years ago, several
6 other contracts.

7 Just keeping along talking
8 about negotiations, but we did advocate
9 for more NTAs, non-teaching assistants.
10 There's been a -- we talk about violence
11 in school, lack of adult supervision.
12 The School District has eliminated more
13 than half, practically all, of the
14 non-teaching assistants that supervised
15 students in the schools. In some of the
16 testimony where students said they can
17 walk around and nothing would happen,
18 it's true.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So has
20 that particular role or duty been
21 replaced with a professional who is no
22 longer identified as a non-teaching
23 assistant but performs the same duties
24 and responsibilities of an NTA?

25 MR. KIRSCH: Well, the School

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 District tries to tell us -- and we don't
3 accept everything that they say -- that
4 they have gone out into the communities
5 and they're bringing people in. But you
6 used the word "professional." If you
7 bring somebody in from the community to
8 take the job, they haven't been trained,
9 they don't have the relationship with the
10 student. So to say, Well, we're getting
11 rid of this one person and we're bringing
12 someone else in doesn't really add up,
13 because there are many shortcomings in
14 this particular program that is replacing
15 the non-teaching assistants.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And so you
17 believe, then, that training would make a
18 difference for those individuals
19 typically who are community-entrenched
20 parents?

21 MR. KIRSCH: In fact, in the
22 negotiations, that was one of the issues
23 that we did -- not only did we discuss,
24 but they agreed that training was
25 important, that non-teaching assistants

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 should be trained. They haven't
3 necessarily fulfilled that obligation,
4 but they agreed and it is in writing.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So they
6 have not fulfilled the obligation of
7 training?

8 MR. KIRSCH: Of the training.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: To use
10 Chairman of this Committee, Councilwoman
11 Blackwell's, expression, which I
12 completely agree with, some folks see the
13 glass as half empty and others see the
14 glass as half full. What would you say
15 does have value, does have merit
16 currently in what the School District is
17 doing around the issue of youth
18 opportunities and that link or not to
19 truancy and high school dropout?

20 MR. KIRSCH: I will give an
21 opinion, and I want to emphasize opinion,
22 because I know the School District is
23 going to disagree with me. But at this
24 point in time, I don't see that there are
25 any programs at all that are dealing with

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 the issue of dropping out. I don't see
3 where research tells us what should be
4 done that the School District is
5 necessarily doing what has to be done in
6 terms of the dropout issue.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And so
8 given the reality as you've just
9 portrayed it, what would you offer or
10 recommend or suggest good practice
11 programs that need to be looked at and
12 considered to address the issue this
13 Committee is dealing with?

14 MR. KIRSCH: I believe that we
15 cannot escape the fact that the School
16 District needs more money, and there have
17 been calls for the City to provide some
18 additional money. I think that if this
19 Committee and the Council believes and
20 agrees with me that money is needed, I
21 think that you don't give a blank check.
22 I don't think you just say, Here's 10,
23 20, 30 million dollars.

24 If we look at the research and
25 we know that something works, then the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 additional money should be given and
3 saying, You know what, class size, grades
4 one to three, that's where we want this
5 money being spent. You presently have
6 oversized classes, split grades. That
7 should be the first priority, rather than
8 say, Oh, we're just going to give you
9 money and then it just disappears and we
10 don't know -- we can't track, we can't
11 track where the money is today.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Sure.
13 Okay. You stated again in your testimony
14 that there needs to be, and I quote, "a
15 connection between curriculum and the
16 real jobs." Offer up an example that
17 speaks to that that would reflect that
18 opinion.

19 MR. KIRSCH: There are many
20 programs in the technology that's taking
21 place today, sometimes your head spins
22 when you realize the things that are
23 being worked on. I think we need to have
24 a closer link with the business community
25 and small businesses and high-tech

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 businesses. And just as Councilman Rizzo
3 said, there are jobs out there, but we
4 are not training our people for these
5 jobs. And I think we have to set up a
6 program where we talk to the business.
7 What is it you need, what type of
8 employee? What skills should they have?
9 And then we go to the schools and we
10 train youngsters to meet the needs of the
11 jobs that are out there, because the
12 marketplace is changing.

13 And we also -- and I have to
14 point out, some of our teachers need the
15 upgrading and the skills and the
16 training, and we have to have programs
17 that enable them that -- particularly in
18 the summer, and some companies have it --
19 where they take on teachers, even on a
20 part-time basis, so the teacher has a
21 much more realistic view of what the
22 workplace is like to help the students
23 with the skills they need.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: To your
25 point, link with the business community,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 talk that through. Do you believe that
3 the business community should step up and
4 put dollars on the table for training for
5 young people in Philadelphia public
6 schools if there can be an assurance that
7 those young people are then going to land
8 in real jobs once the business community
9 makes the investment? Do you believe the
10 business community should step up and put
11 dollars on the table?

12 MR. KIRSCH: I think they have
13 to do more, because I think you will find
14 there are programs -- and I can cite a
15 program called the Academy Program, where
16 in some of our comprehensive high schools
17 what I have described, it does exist,
18 where businesses are linked with the
19 schools and they do have their employees
20 come in to the schools, the youngsters
21 come out into the businesses and they do
22 help to fund. I think it's a program
23 that has to be expanded. It exists, it
24 works, and we have to use it more.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And in

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 that particular program, the business
3 community does indeed put dollars on the
4 table?

5 MR. KIRSCH: Yes, but the
6 dollars are more specific to the programs
7 in the schools, which makes sense.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:
9 Absolutely.

10 MR. KIRSCH: Helping to fund
11 equipment and training programs. Some of
12 them have part-time jobs for the
13 youngsters to work.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. Can
15 you see that we can get some background
16 information on the program you just
17 described, get that to the Chair of the
18 Committee?

19 MR. KIRSCH: I will have the
20 Director of the program get directly in
21 touch with you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That is
23 not to say I am unfamiliar with the
24 Academies Program. I'm very familiar
25 with it.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MR. KIRSCH: Yeah, but you want
3 more information.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes,
5 please.

6 MR. KIRSCH: In fact, I will
7 make a note of it so I don't forget.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
9 Mr. Kirsch, you're getting all this
10 because Paul Vallas isn't here. We hope
11 you don't mind.

12 MR. KIRSCH: No. I welcome the
13 opportunity. So often I give testimony
14 and the response is "thank you very much"
15 and I'm on my way. This is something
16 that -- I remember going back to when
17 Councilman Augusta Clark was Chairperson
18 of the Education Committee at the time
19 and when I gave my testimony, I knew I
20 was going to be here for a very long
21 time, and the other members of Council.

22 I do not in any way -- in fact,
23 I do appreciate the opportunity, because
24 the questions that you're raising moves
25 into other areas that was limited by the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 formal testimony.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Sure.

4 Then, finally, are you familiar with the
5 teen centers that are operating in a
6 number of the rec centers in the City?

7 MR. KIRSCH: Not really, other
8 than I know of their existence, but I
9 really don't know too much about the
10 operation.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I mention
12 them only because the thinking of the
13 Recreation Commissioner, which I applaud,
14 was that there were inadequate, the new
15 buzz word is, youth opportunities for
16 young people between the ages of 13 and
17 17, meaning that the way you program for
18 7- to 12-year-olds, if you want to
19 capture the attention of 13- to
20 17-year-olds, it required different
21 programming, and to that end, they found
22 dollars and opened up a number of teen
23 centers. In fact, the first of which was
24 in Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell's
25 community. And they were tied directly

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 to the juvenile delinquency numbers in
3 that part of the City.

4 MR. KIRSCH: I think the
5 difference is that with the schools,
6 youngsters are mandated to be there.
7 When you have programs in the various
8 recreation centers, it's more on a
9 voluntary basis, so it's almost a natural
10 selection. The people who are interested
11 tend to go, and very often it's the
12 people who don't go are the people that
13 we're referring to in terms of high
14 school dropouts.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I see. So
16 my final question is, we have to wait
17 until 2008 with the next round of
18 negotiations where the PFT can have
19 substantial input around vocational
20 education and why there needs to be a
21 greater number of vocational programs
22 because they become viable options for
23 young people on the brink or at risk of
24 dropping out?

25 MR. KIRSCH: I don't think we

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 have to wait until 2008. The School
3 District and the Federation does have
4 open dialogue on a regular basis. We do
5 meet with the various departments. In
6 fact, I see -- or he was here. He might
7 be behind me. But Mr. Al Bichner, who is
8 in charge of the high schools, and if
9 he's given an opportunity to speak, I'm
10 sure he can be much more specific about
11 the operation. But it's an ongoing
12 dialogue. It's not, Okay, let's wait for
13 2008.

14 I think many of you know that
15 myself and my colleagues, Mr. Jordan and
16 other members of the staff, that we're
17 not bashful. We don't wait. We don't
18 hesitate to speak out when we believe
19 things are wrong and need to be
20 corrected. So we're not setting a
21 timetable to say, We'll wait to talk
22 about it. We're talking about it now.
23 We believe now we should be making the
24 changes before it's too late.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you

2 very much for your testimony.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
5 Madam Chair.

8 Before Councilman Goode speaks,
9 let me note the presence of Councilwoman
10 Donna Miller. And let me note that all
11 these past years when we tried not to be
12 too hard on you and question you, I
13 didn't realize you missed it. But give
14 Jerry Jordan our best as well. He's
15 always excellent.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 one was '04 to '07. So now that we're
3 running, we'll end up doing another one
4 for the '08 -- after '08 election.

5 We've also done newsletters for
6 Dr. Charles Blockson, who just retired
7 December 31st from Temple. We've also
8 done newsletters for the Mayor's
9 Commission on African and Caribbean
10 Affairs.

11 So you should be proud. We're
12 trying to do our part where we see a
13 need. Nobody said you need to do
14 newsletters or you need to do City
15 Council books. After 9/11 we did a real
16 beautiful red, white and blue color. But
17 we try to fill in the void where we think
18 there is one. We believe in it. So
19 we're trying to do great things. It's
20 not easy, and all these things cost
21 money. So we're happy to contribute our
22 part to trying to make life better, and
23 we use it. It all comes from our
24 educational background, Mr. Kirsch, that
25 we continue to use in everything we do.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 you projected this throughout the
3 schools, the cost would be unreal, and I
4 don't -- we have to be realistic, but I
5 think the emphasis is the younger grades.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: My question
7 was not so much what is the ideal class
8 size but whether you have a specific
9 funding recommendation in terms of what
10 our next move should be. The Mayor's
11 Educational Task Force is about to come
12 out with funding recommendations and
13 other recommendations. My question is in
14 terms of all the things you've mentioned,
15 if we were to focus squarely on class
16 size, would you have a specific funding
17 recommendation related to that?

18 MR. KIRSCH: After class size?

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: If we were
20 to focus squarely on class size, would
21 you have a specific funding
22 recommendation related to that?

23 MR. KIRSCH: Well, my
24 recommendation would be whatever dollars
25 the Council felt would be appropriate to

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 recommend for the School District, that
3 it be given with strings attached, that
4 if you believe that it's important and we
5 give additional money, that the direction
6 is that the money should be used
7 specifically for the reduction in class
8 size, rather than just say School
9 District has a \$70 million crisis, just
10 we need money. I think --

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: But you have
12 no specific recommendation in terms of
13 dollar amount?

14 MR. KIRSCH: No, I don't. I
15 don't know the dollar numbers, so it
16 would be hard for me to do that.
17 Although we have people that could -- I
18 could get back to you and say this is
19 what it would cost.

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay. Thank
21 you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you very much. I neglected to note
24 before I call on Councilwoman Donna Reed
25 Miller that we've also printed

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 newsletters on an open classroom that
3 have been taken to five countries in
4 Africa, and they show that we can do
5 basic skills. We printed newsletters for
6 daycare providers who have daycare in
7 their homes, and this gives them an
8 academic basis so that children are able
9 to compete in regular school. And we've
10 taken these all over the world and found
11 out that this system works.

12 And so we have news -- we have
13 really been committed to doing our part
14 to enhance education, to get the word out
15 and to try to represent this Council
16 well.

17 Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller.

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
19 you.

20 Good morning, Mr. Kirsch.

21 MR. KIRSCH: Good morning.

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I just
23 wanted to talk just a little bit about
24 early childhood ed, because I really
25 believe that's where it starts. I

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 remember years ago there was a special
3 project up in Cheltenham at the mall
4 actually for preschoolers and the theme
5 and the mission was to teach children to
6 learn to love to learn. And I just
7 remember that because I used to take my
8 daughter there every Saturday, and I just
9 thought it was a good concept.

10 Do you think those are the
11 kinds of things we can do when we have
12 children in early ed or some type of
13 message that we can send? And when I say
14 "we," I mean everybody, because this is a
15 partnership between government and
16 parents and the community and religious
17 institutions.

18 I'm on the Mayor's Scholarship
19 Committee and I review the scholarship
20 applications for University of Penn, and
21 over the years it's changed in terms of
22 who the top students are from various
23 schools, and many of our students whose
24 parents were immigrants, particularly the
25 Asian population, are really outdoing a

19 MR. KIRSCH: I agree that
20 pre-school -- it's too late,
21 kindergarten. I mean, you can talk to
22 kindergarten teachers, and I remember
23 talking to some, saying that when some of
24 their youngsters came in kindergarten,
25 they had never used crayons before. I

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 mean, we just take it for granted because
3 some of us who have grandchildren and
4 just kind of they play with it at an
5 early age. But the skills are not and
6 opportunities aren't there.

7 I think that another suggestion
8 that we could make, and it's a non-cost
9 item, we should be encouraging parents to
10 read to their children. There's a
11 readiness. I mean, the stories, the
12 reading that has to take place. And I
13 believe that those that get to
14 pre-school, because we show that that
15 works, but not everyone has that
16 opportunity. We should be talking to
17 parents, young parents, teen parents that
18 haven't had an opportunity to get the
19 skills and the training, read, read, read
20 to these youngsters. And it really is
21 part of readiness for a school, and it
22 can't just start at kindergarten. It
23 starts at a very, very young age. In
24 fact, I remember reading at one time
25 about a suggestion -- and I don't know if

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 it's valid or not, but I did read about
3 it -- that when women are pregnant, that
4 people should begin to read to the woman
5 so that the baby will begin to be
6 exposed. I don't know whether that's an
7 old wives' tale or not.

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: We've all
9 heard that.

10 MR. KIRSCH: But I've read
11 about things like that. But reading is
12 important and it has to start even before
13 the youngsters really understand what's
14 being read to them, but it's that whole
15 concept that's the beginning that's
16 important to get them ready for school.

17 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: That's
18 true. And I see down here that you have
19 by high school, students need to see the
20 connection between school and work and
21 just school and life, period, education
22 and life, and I think that that's missing
23 a lot. When you think about children
24 that start kindergarten, their first day
25 of school or just their anticipation of

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 going to school, they are so excited. I
3 don't personally know any young child
4 that actually did not want to go to
5 school. They are really, really, really
6 excited. And if we could keep that
7 excitement level up and nurture them and
8 educate them and teach them that school
9 is not a punishment, it's someplace you
10 really have to go because there's an end
11 result somewhere, if we could teach it at
12 age appropriate levels and whatnot, I
13 just think that that's so important.
14 Because at some point, some children do
15 get peer pressure about being successful.
16 I don't want to sit here and talk about
17 stories, but I've heard too many things,
18 not just from my children but my family's
19 children, about being ridiculed because
20 they made the honor roll or something
21 like that.

22 Something is missing. We got
23 to figure this out, and I think we can be
24 a little bit more successful. Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any other

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 questions for this witness?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, then
5 we thank you, Mr. Ted Kirsch, President
6 of PFT for your time and your testimony.

7 MR. KIRSCH: Thank you, and I
8 will get back to you, Councilman Brown,
9 with the information about the Academy
10 Program. And to Councilman Goode, I made
11 a note to try to get some dollar figures
12 for you what it would cost to implement
13 the suggestion that I made.

14 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

15 MR. KIRSCH: Thank you very
16 much.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
18 for your testimony.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
21 They're trying to freeze us out of here,
22 but we're trying to prevail. That's one
23 way to get the hearing over with.

24 MR. KIRSCH: It's colder in the
25 schools.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Oh,
3 boy. I can't joke anymore. Mr. Kirsch
4 says it's colder in school, so that ends
5 my -- I was going to continue to joke,
6 but that's serious business.

7 All right. Thank you very
8 much, Mr. Kirsch. Give Jerry Jordan our
9 regards.

10 Laura Shubilla, Philadelphia
11 Youth Network. Did I pronounce your name
12 correctly?

13 MS. SHUBILLA: Yes.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
15 morning. Welcome.

16 If there's anyone here who is
17 not on the list, if you see John
18 Christmas, he'll make sure if you didn't
19 ask in advance to testify so that we can
20 introduce you.

21 I thought so, Mr. Johnson.

22 Good morning.

23 MS. SHUBILLA: Good morning.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
25 identify yourself for our record and

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 begin your testimony.

3 MS. SHUBILLA: Good morning.

4 My name is Laura Shubilla and I'm the
5 President of the Philadelphia Youth
6 Network, and we have Tracee Hunt and
7 Pamela Crawley, who were on our list to
8 testify a little bit later, who are going
9 to come up and testify with me since
10 their time is limited today.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we
12 owe Ms. Crawley certainly an apology.
13 Last time she stayed here a very long
14 time, and we really appreciate your time.
15 We understand the kind of schedule that
16 you have and how important you are to our
17 City.

18 MS. CRAWLEY: Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you. Thank you again for coming.

21 MS. SHUBILLA: So it is my
22 privilege to appear before you this
23 morning to discuss Philadelphia's work to
24 enhance educational opportunities for
25 struggling students and out-of-school

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 youth. I am speaking this morning first
3 on behalf and as a member of the Youth
4 Transitions Collaborative and second for
5 my organization, the Philadelphia Youth
6 Network.

7 Let me begin by recognizing and
8 thanking you, Madam Chair and
9 Councilmembers, for your leadership in
10 holding this hearing on such an important
11 issue. Your interest is both timely and
12 extremely important. Rarely have social,
13 economic and moral imperatives aligned so
14 clearly to urge our consideration and
15 action. I hope that this hearing will be
16 the first of many actions that will bring
17 attention and much-needed support to some
18 of our most vulnerable youth and that
19 will also shed light on the great
20 potential of our young people to become
21 active and productive citizens.

22 Just to give you a brief
23 background of the Philadelphia Youth
24 Network and of the Youth Transitions
25 Collaborative, the Philadelphia Youth

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 Network is a seven-year-old non-profit
3 dedicated to ensuring that Philadelphia's
4 young people take their rightful place in
5 the City's high-growth economy. To that
6 end, we manage over 20 million annually
7 from government, foundation and private
8 investments that support
9 employment-related programs and services
10 for almost 10,000 young people through
11 WorkReady Philadelphia and other related
12 programs. The Philadelphia Youth Network
13 also serves as the convening partner of
14 the Philadelphia Youth Transitions
15 Collaborative, a group of leaders from
16 the City's major public systems and youth
17 advocacy and support organizations,
18 including the School District of
19 Philadelphia and various City
20 departments. This Collaborative has been
21 in existence for the past 18 months.
22 Philadelphia was one of five cities that
23 was selected nationally to look at the
24 strategies to better serve out-of-school
25 youth.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 The Collaborative was formed in
3 2004 to oversee significant foundation
4 grants, including major support from the
5 William Penn Foundation, all designed to
6 expand the availability of high-quality
7 learning options for struggling students
8 and out-of-school youth. This morning
9 you're going to hear from a number of
10 members of the Collaborative who will
11 speak about the important work that has
12 been going on and will discuss
13 recommendations for citywide action.

14 Last October, the Collaborative
15 launched Project U-Turn, a citywide
16 campaign to bring attention to and
17 resolve Philadelphia's dropout crisis.

18 The statements on the poster to
19 the right express the vision and belief
20 that have guided the Collaborative's work
21 to date. More importantly, they start to
22 talk about a roadmap for our collective
23 action moving forward. At some point in
24 today's hearings, I hope that
25 Councilmembers will sign these

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 turn-around principles and commitments,
3 joining other distinguished
4 Philadelphians who have already expressed
5 their support.

6 At the Project U-Turn launch,
7 the Collaborative released two important
8 reports, both of which have been provided
9 to Councilmembers and staff. One of
10 these reports, "Unfulfilled Promise: The
11 Dimensions and Characteristic of
12 Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2000 to
13 2005," analyzes the status and condition
14 of Philadelphia's dropout population.
15 Dr. Ruth Curran Nield of Johns Hopkins
16 University, one of the report's authors,
17 will appear later this morning to give
18 you an overview of these findings.

19 A companion report, "Turning It
20 Around: A Collective Effort to
21 Understand and Resolve Philadelphia's
22 Dropout Crisis," serves as a call to
23 action for the City and includes a series
24 of broad-based recommendations for
25 actions to resolve the dropout crisis.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Taken together, these two
3 reports convey two very important
4 messages. The first is, at the time we
5 need every one of our students to master
6 sophisticated academic and occupational
7 skills for economic and social well-being
8 of our City and its citizens, we have
9 many young people who aren't making that.
10 We also learned that this is not
11 something that the School District can
12 handle alone. It will take a concerted
13 effort on the part of all partners,
14 including communities and parents and
15 business leaders, to ensure that all
16 youth can successfully graduate from high
17 school and move on to success.

18 Second, based on the work of
19 the Collaborative and the citywide
20 commitment it represents, there is every
21 reason to believe that we can in fact
22 formulate and put into place realistic
23 and practical solutions that will go a
24 long way toward addressing Philadelphia's
25 dropout crisis. We know a great deal

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 about the young people who drop out and
3 we've learned a great deal more over the
4 last 18 months. Armed with this
5 information and the leadership and
6 commitment of institutions and
7 organizations throughout the City, we
8 know we can create the right
9 interventions and we know we can bring
10 those interventions to scale, because I
11 think one of the things that we've
12 struggled with is that in many cases,
13 there are programs that get put into
14 place and those programs do begin to
15 work, but we never have the will,
16 capacity or resources to take those
17 interventions to scale.

18 We have learned many things,
19 and one of the things we've learned since
20 launching this campaign in October is how
21 desperately our young people want to
22 return to school. When we launched the
23 campaign, we also put a hotline number
24 into place. And since the hotline has
25 been up and since our work with the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 School District has begun on bringing
3 kids back to school, we've had hundreds
4 of calls from young people and their
5 families who are looking for educational
6 options and ways to get back into school.

7 We look forward to working with
8 Council in the months and years to come
9 on systemwide strategies to resolve the
10 dropout crisis, but while we are working
11 on these broad-based, longer-term
12 solutions, there are several steps that
13 we can begin to take right now. The
14 issue brief provided to Council
15 identifies four straightforward steps
16 that the City can take that will produce
17 significant benefits for our youth.

18 First, take every opportunity
19 through hearings, meetings with
20 constituents and your public comments to
21 increase the visibility of the dropout
22 crisis and to underscore the importance
23 of taking continued and sustained action
24 to resolve it.

25 Second, support efforts by the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 City's public care systems, such as
3 foster care, juvenile probation, abuse
4 and neglect and others, to help young
5 people stay in school and graduate.

6 One of the things you'll hear
7 later from Dr. Curran Nield is about the
8 outcomes for young people who have been
9 involved in the foster care system and in
10 the court system or who have been
11 pregnant or parenting themselves, and
12 their graduation rates are significantly
13 less than young people who aren't
14 involved in those systems, and she'll be
15 able to talk more about that data.

16 We've talked some this morning
17 about improving the career prospects for
18 young people by supporting high-quality
19 workplace internships, career and
20 technical education opportunities that
21 have the potential to improve academic
22 achievement and career success.

23 And, lastly, pay particular
24 attention to the needs of students with
25 children who are at grave risk of

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 dropping out.

3 My colleagues from the
4 Collaborative will have much more to say
5 on these different areas. The particular
6 focus of my organization is on the third
7 step, which is on the power of work and
8 work experiences to prepare young people
9 for academic and productive citizenship.
10 I would be happy to answer any questions
11 you have about this.

12 Through the work of the
13 Philadelphia Youth Network, we have been
14 involved in activities, since there was
15 so much discussion earlier about career
16 and technical education, from everything
17 from shadowing day, where a couple weeks
18 ago we had 1,500 ninth graders in 336
19 companies across the City getting their
20 first taste of exposure to what the world
21 of work is like. The young woman who
22 shadowed with me that day walked into my
23 office and the first thing she said is,
24 I've never been in an office building
25 before and I've never really had the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 opportunity to see an office in action.

3 She was so excited just by the chance to

4 come and see how the day was for us

5 there.

6 We also are very involved in

7 efforts that are underway with the

8 Chamber of Commerce and the United Way to

9 increase business participation in both

10 internships and vocational programming

11 with the School District of Philadelphia,

12 and we're hoping to dramatically increase

13 the number of job opportunities available

14 to youth.

15 And, third, we've had programs

16 with -- we talked some about the

17 different career and technical education

18 models. We work very closely with

19 Philadelphia Academies. We also work

20 with programs like the one at Lockheed

21 Martin, which was the first registered IT

22 apprenticeship program in the country,

23 works with four schools in the

24 Philadelphia School District, at this

25 point is on its fifth cohort, and has

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 employed about 60 percent of the young
3 people who have come out of that program
4 in full-time jobs with Lockheed Martin.

5 There are models with St.
6 Christopher's Hospital. There are models
7 with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.
8 The business community has worked with us
9 diligently to try to build real models
10 that actually result in real jobs and
11 real career and technical education for
12 young people, and we're looking for their
13 leadership to replicate the models where
14 they've worked and to bring more business
15 into the fold. And Pamela and Tracee are
16 going to talk a little bit more about
17 that.

18 We are also -- I'd like to
19 invite all of you -- on February 21st, we
20 are taking a group of leaders across the
21 City to go visit Lehigh Valley Career and
22 Technical Institute, which is about an
23 hour from here. We took about 20 people
24 there last Friday. It's one of the best
25 career and technical education systems in

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 the state definitely, probably in the
3 country. And not only is it valuable to
4 come and see the way they've set up their
5 offerings with 48 certification programs,
6 but it's really valuable to see the very
7 creative strategies they've used to
8 resource those programs. In fact, for a
9 state-of-the-art program and incredible
10 certification opportunities, it costs
11 only about \$5,600 for a full-time student
12 and about \$4,000 for a part-time student.
13 So there's a lot to learn from models
14 that are very close to us, and we'd love
15 for you all to join us on that trip on
16 February 21st if you're interested.

17 So I'd like to thank you again,
18 Madam Chair and Councilmembers, for
19 dedicating time and attention to our
20 City's struggling students and
21 out-of-school youth. Working together I
22 believe we can make real progress in
23 reducing the numbers of young people who
24 leave high school without a diploma for
25 their sake and for ours.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you very much.

5 Questions? Councilman Goode.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
7 Madam Chair.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
9 Certainly.

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Good
11 morning, Ms. Shubilla. Thank you for
12 your work and thank you for your
13 testimony and thank you for bringing
14 needed attention to this issue. And
15 while we are bringing attention to this
16 issue and looking at a systemwide
17 approach, in our previous hearing I think
18 you may be aware that I brought to the
19 forefront what I believe to be an even
20 bigger epidemic in terms of young black
21 males and how that may be committing to
22 crime and violence. I'd like to share
23 some statistics for the record,
24 information we've received since the last
25 hearing.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 homicides in Pennsylvania.

3 Since the last hearing, we
4 received graduation data for those
5 murdered. For those that we have data
6 on, the graduation rate was less than 25
7 percent.

8 We also have graduation data on
9 the perpetrators, and for those 127
10 perpetrators that we know about, only 23
11 graduated from high school. It was about
12 18 percent.

13 Can you please address the
14 correlation between the dropout rate and
15 getting shot?

16 MS. SHUBILLA: Well, I think
17 there's a number of negative consequences
18 to not graduating from high school, one
19 of them being feeling disconnected from
20 society and economic opportunities, and
21 once those opportunities for advancement
22 seem to be cut off to you, I think young
23 people tend to turn to all kinds of
24 different activities. As a result of
25 that, we have two young men who are going

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 to testify in a little while about their
3 experiences and why they dropped out of
4 school and what it took to get them back
5 on track.

6 But certainly there are many
7 negative consequences to not finishing
8 high school and not having the economic
9 opportunities that a high school diploma
10 offers you, and I think our programming
11 needs to take into account the
12 demographics of the young people who are
13 most impacted by the crisis that's at
14 hand and being able to look at what is
15 different about serving a young black
16 male versus serving a young woman with a
17 baby and what are the services that those
18 young people need and how do we not lump
19 everybody into one category, because
20 there are differences in what young
21 people need in order to be successful,
22 and we need to look at that and we need
23 to respond to that aggressively and
24 individually.

25 One of the things we've

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 learned, Philadelphia Youth Network works
3 with the City of Philadelphia on the
4 reintegration initiative, and we hold the
5 contracts for the three E3 centers, soon
6 to be five E3 centers. And those E3
7 centers that are run by community-based
8 organizations across the City serve
9 predominantly young men who are returning
10 from delinquent placement at the highest
11 risk of recidivism. And I think what the
12 community organizations have learned is
13 the kind of personal transformation that
14 needs to take place both from a
15 self-confidence perspective of valuing
16 yourself and what you can be in the world
17 and also being able to increase
18 educational skills so that young men in
19 particular feel that they can actually
20 support their families and get the kinds
21 of jobs that they need to support their
22 families. We had one young man who
23 testified -- I'm sorry he's not here
24 today -- who became very successful in
25 YouthBuild and he talked about his life

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 on the streets and the kinds of -- what
3 he did to make money for his family, and
4 he really felt like that was the most
5 important thing to him. And then he was
6 robbed in a very violent way one day by
7 his best friend, and it made him realize
8 that this wasn't the way for him and he
9 was able to get into YouthBuild Charter
10 School and now has graduated and is
11 moving on into employment.

12 So I think it's this
13 combination of having adults in people's
14 lives. You're going to hear from Men
15 United, I know, later on today and the
16 mentoring work that they're trying to do
17 and the connections they're trying to
18 make. And it's a combination of adult
19 connections, real opportunities and
20 programming that really does enhance
21 educational skills and helps young people
22 see themselves in a different place and
23 space in our society.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So you do
25 agree that in addition to having a

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 systemwide approach toward a 56 percent
3 graduation rate, that when we can look at
4 statistics from last year and there are
5 segments of the population those killing
6 or being killed that have 18 percent, 25
7 percent graduation rates, that there
8 needs to also be targeted programming?

9 MS. SHUBILLA: Absolutely. I
10 mean, I think part of what we learned
11 from doing the integration of data with
12 the School District data, child welfare
13 data, foster care data, court data is
14 that for young people who are coming out
15 of delinquent placements, the dropout
16 rate for those youth was 90 percent.
17 Clearly, there needs to be different
18 kinds of interventions.

19 I think the work that the Youth
20 Violence Reduction Partnership has been
21 doing, I think the work of the
22 reintegration initiative in the City, I
23 think there has been incredible outcomes
24 in some of these programs that warrant
25 our attention and learning, because we

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 certainly haven't figured it out yet. If
3 we had, we wouldn't be having this
4 discussion. But I do believe we've
5 learned things along the way that can
6 help us as we continue to expand our
7 efforts.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Just one
9 last question. Clearly, we need to make
10 a bigger investment within our schools
11 for dropout prevention, but as we look
12 toward some of these other particular
13 epidemics that exist within Philadelphia,
14 do you believe that some of that
15 investment also needs to be directed
16 toward community-based organizations and
17 strategies that exist outside of schools?

18 MS. SHUBILLA: Yes. I think
19 part of our work, the Philadelphia Youth
20 Network, through our federal and
21 foundation funding partners with about
22 100 community organizations that we fund
23 across the City to do partnerships with
24 schools and with different efforts to
25 stem the dropout crisis, what we've

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 learned from doing that is, it takes
3 partnerships with communities, employers,
4 parents. Young people themselves are
5 very important partners in this, the
6 School District and the City systems, and
7 everyone needs to have very clear roles.

8 I agree with what Mr. Kirsch
9 said earlier, is as we expand services
10 that are provided by our community
11 partners, by our City partners, we need
12 to try to make sure that we're doing what
13 works and that we're replicating what
14 gets good outcomes. And we've been
15 really lucky to have pretty amazing
16 community partners who have been willing
17 to sit at the table, think and rethink
18 the efforts that they're undertaking,
19 make changes along the way as we learn
20 more and continue to try to shoot towards
21 the same -- shoot is a bad word; to aim
22 towards the same outcomes, which are
23 really to graduate -- I'll be in the
24 paper tomorrow, Philadelphia Network
25 President -- to take aim at outcomes that

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 are high. Our standards have to be high.

3 One of the things that we've talked

4 increasingly about is, young people will

5 achieve the standard you set for them.

6 And if our stand is here, kids will rise

7 to here. If our standard is here, kids

8 will rise to here, with the necessary

9 supports. And I think what we believe is

10 all youth can achieve at high levels,

11 with the necessary supports in place.

12 And a lot of times we forget that

13 necessary supports piece and our

14 expectations are either low or our

15 expectations are high and the supports

16 needed to get there aren't in place.

17 So I think we know a lot and I

18 think it takes leadership and it takes

19 commitment and sustained perseverance to

20 make the kinds of changes that we need to

21 see happen in the City.

22 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

24 you.

25 Thank you, Councilman, for

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 those excellent statistics.

3 Are there any further
4 questions?

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes, Madam
6 Chair.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
8 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
10 morning, ladies.

11 At what juncture does the work
12 you do -- at what juncture do you capture
13 young people, meaning grade level,
14 typically?

15 MS. SHUBILLA: Most of our
16 programs -- and a lot of this is directed
17 by requirements related to the resources
18 we receive -- start with young people
19 when they're 14.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that
21 would be middle school?

22 MS. SHUBILLA: They are often
23 eighth graders, sometimes they're sixth
24 graders, depending on where they are in
25 their educational career. But the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 majority of them are in eighth grade,
3 eighth grade up to 24.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. How
5 do they come to your attention?

6 MS. SHUBILLA: They come to us
7 in any number of ways. They may come to
8 us through our hotline. They may come to
9 us through just a citywide referral
10 system that young people find out about
11 and their parents call into the
12 organization. They come to us through
13 our network of community agencies. So
14 the organizations that we fund are all
15 over the City and provide geographically
16 targeted services, as well as services
17 targeted to special populations of kids.
18 We also have programming in schools, and
19 so they come to us through the School
20 District and are connected with our
21 programs in that way as well.

22 One of the things that I feel
23 like we've been able to do is to try to
24 create as broad of a pipeline as possible
25 for young people to come into the

14 I always feel like kids vote
15 with their feet, and when programs have
16 waiting lists, it means we're doing
17 something right, and we need to figure
18 out how to capitalize on what we've
19 learned from programs that are able to
20 create that kind of demand among our
21 customer, which is the young person.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Surely.
23 Then you've answered my question with
24 regards to -- if you have waiting lists,
25 then it means that you simply don't have

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 the room to start younger, because one
3 thing I believe the institutions of
4 higher learning get right and do well is
5 that they capture young people as
6 12-year-olds and hold on to them and get
7 them in the pipeline so that they start
8 thinking about college as an option not
9 at 14 and 15 but at 12, and if they're
10 real smart in their recruiting, then they
11 get them to thinking about that
12 particular institution as their college
13 choice.

14 So to hear that you are
15 attempting to capture young people as
16 early as 14 is a good thing. I would be
17 curious to know at what time -- and only
18 the public schools could provide us this
19 kind of data. But when do you begin to
20 see a spike, if you will, in young people
21 who are truant, because there the signals
22 exist, and is there a link between when
23 you see those beginning signals and
24 linking that young person with programs
25 like the one you're talking about so that

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 we can hold on to them and keep them in
3 the school system? Any kind of connect
4 that way with the public school system?

5 MS. SHUBILLA: Yes.

6 Absolutely. I mean, we've -- Ruth is
7 going to talk a little bit in a minute
8 about the data, and what she's going to
9 talk to you about is what we learned
10 about truancy and the ages that it starts
11 and what we learned about the
12 relationship between truancy and dropping
13 out. So she has some really interesting
14 data for that.

15 With regard to how truancy
16 connects to some of the programs, I think
17 Mr. Kirsch expressed it well before,
18 which is that for many young people, they
19 want to see how their education connects
20 to what real-world experiences, the kinds
21 of things they want to do in their lives.
22 And what these programs provide an
23 opportunity for is to understand why an
24 education is going to be important to you
25 in the long term. I can't tell you the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 number of young people who have been in
3 our office and we've had them working on
4 projects and all the sudden it clicks why
5 what they were learning in math class the
6 other day actually matters, because this
7 is a project that they're interested in
8 that they can't complete if they don't
9 know percentages, and they really are
10 excited about being able to complete that
11 project.

12 The other very interesting
13 thing that workplace opportunities do is,
14 they provide a different kind of
15 mentoring for young people. The way we
16 set the programs up is that the adults
17 who are at the workplace are mentors in
18 addition to being supervisors. And the
19 power of an employment opportunity and
20 the connections that youth have made with
21 their mentors in the work sites have
22 lasted well through their college
23 experiences. For many of those youth who
24 have had summer jobs with employers,
25 they've been able to come back and work

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 at those jobs when they've had breaks
3 during their college breaks and things.
4 And so we've seen relationships that have
5 lasted quite a while. And as our
6 employers -- and they'll speak to this --
7 get their toe in the water, we always
8 say, Once you get connected with us,
9 you'll never leave. We will never let
10 you out of our grips. And there is no
11 obstacle you can present to us that we
12 can't tell you how we can overcome it.
13 And they'll tell you they believe that.

14 So often we'll start with
15 employers with shadowing day and they'll
16 say, Wow, this was great, we were
17 surprised how much -- we got as much out
18 of it as the young people did, and we're
19 interested in doing something else. And
20 we've also then been able to talk with --
21 and Tracee is going to talk about a model
22 they've put in place at Philly Coke where
23 when we start with internships and then
24 we say, You know, we have some young
25 people who aren't at the skill level

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 maybe that some of their high school
3 interns were, but they need
4 opportunities, so can we think about
5 other ways to involve those young people.
6 And after they work for a while with the
7 programs and with the youth, people are
8 more willing to take risks. They
9 understand more that they are part of the
10 educational process for that youth, and
11 it takes on a much, I think, deeper
12 relationship with the business partner
13 and the schools.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.
15 Thank you for your testimony.

16 Thank you, Madam Chair.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much.

19 Next witness, Tracee or
20 Ms. Crawley.

21 MS. CRAWLEY: Thank you. Good
22 morning, Madam Chair and members of City
23 Council.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
25 morning.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MS. CRAWLEY: My name is Pamela
3 Crawley. I am Senior Vice-President and
4 Director of Public Affairs for Citizens
5 Bank. I'm also the outgoing Chair of the
6 Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board,
7 a business-oriented committee appointed
8 by the Mayor to oversee workforce policy
9 and to approve federal workforce funding
10 for the City of Philadelphia. And from
11 2002 to 2005, I served as Chair of the
12 Philadelphia Youth Council, a committee
13 of the Workforce Board that develops
14 youth policy and recommends funding for
15 youth employment programs in the City.

16 I have several points that I
17 want to make this morning, but my
18 take-away message for you is very
19 straightforward. The young people of
20 this City can be its greatest asset, and
21 we must do everything we can do to ensure
22 that we nurture and grow those assets for
23 the future. This fact is indisputable
24 and must be considered beyond politics
25 and trends of the moment. For

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Philadelphia employers, this is a matter
3 of economic stability and long-term
4 growth and productivity. It also is a
5 matter of the future of the City. As we
6 go after the Olympic games and we go
7 after other national programs that lift
8 the profile of the City of Philadelphia,
9 we need not to have poverty levels of 24
10 percent. We need not to have 60 percent
11 functioning illiterate when we look at
12 the adults in the Philadelphia County.
13 And we need not to have the violent
14 statistics that are showing up on our
15 books right now.

16 So this is big for us, not just
17 in terms of what training and what
18 employers can get in terms of hiring
19 individuals, but for the City as a whole
20 and, ergo, for the future, it is
21 absolutely germane to our success that we
22 pay attention to these issues.

23 For the citizens of this City,
24 it is an issue that will affect their
25 quality and life, their safety and

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 security and the well-being of their
3 communities. And for many of our young
4 people, it is quite simply a matter of
5 life and death.

6 The Philadelphia Workforce
7 Investment Board and its Youth Council
8 have worked hard over the last six years
9 to build a system of youth workforce
10 preparation in the City that features
11 academically enriched workplace
12 experiences and career exploration
13 activities for youth and young adults who
14 are in school, as well as those who have
15 left high school without a diploma. We
16 took this broad-based approach to
17 workforce preparation for several
18 reasons.

19 First, there is no question
20 that our economy and the businesses that
21 fuel it need a continued flow of highly
22 skilled, well-educated employees. When I
23 was here last time, I saw several -- I
24 mean, there was a hundred kids up here,
25 and what I wanted to scream to them was,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Guess what, there are jobs here. If you
3 prepare yourself, if you are trained and
4 educated, you can have a future right
5 here in your neighborhood, in your
6 community.

7 Second, while we must continue
8 our efforts to attract the best and
9 brightest young professionals to relocate
10 to Philadelphia, we must also focus on
11 building and nurturing our own home-grown
12 high-skilled 21st century workforce.

13 You saw a couple of weeks ago
14 in the Inquirer -- and I hope you don't
15 mind me mentioning this, but in
16 Washington, DC, they're actually claiming
17 that their crime rate has dropped, but if
18 you take a very close look at that
19 picture, it's dropped because people who
20 are disadvantaged are being pushed out of
21 the city limits and so the crime rates
22 have dropped, because there's a direct
23 correlation between poverty and violence.
24 So we need to do it in an organic way, in
25 a real way that matters for the City of

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Philadelphia.

3 Next, we believe that providing
4 our young people with high-quality
5 workplace experiences is an extremely
6 effective way to help them understand the
7 value of academic preparation and skills
8 development, which in turn will help them
9 stay in school, graduate and go on to be
10 successful in college and careers.

11 Finally, we must be providing
12 opportunities for young people who have
13 dropped out of high school to reconnect
14 to educational programming where they can
15 prepare themselves to become active and
16 productive citizens.

17 When the Mayor appointed me to
18 Chair the Youth Council in 2002, my first
19 priority was to create a citywide system
20 of youth workforce preparation that would
21 not only coordinate and strengthen
22 existing youth employment programs but
23 also to encourage the business community
24 to develop employer-supported student
25 internships. It's their future, too, and

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 they have -- this is an investment. This
3 is not charity. This effort culminated
4 in the creation of WorkReady
5 Philadelphia, and now provides
6 workplace-related programs and
7 opportunities for almost 10,000 young
8 people each year. Importantly, young
9 WorkReady participants not only earn
10 money and gain valuable work experience,
11 almost three-quarters of them also earn
12 academic credit for projects and related
13 work they perform while in the WorkReady
14 program.

15 I am proud that Citizens Bank
16 has hired dozens of young WorkReady
17 interns, and I am particularly pleased
18 that Joe Frick, President and CEO of
19 Independence Blue Cross and Chair of the
20 Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce,
21 has made employer support for internships
22 one of his top priorities for his tenure
23 as Chamber Chair.

24 I am also proud of the Youth
25 Council's role in establishing the Youth

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 Transition Collaborative and Project
3 U-Turn. These efforts emerged from the
4 Council's increased attention and support
5 for out-of-school and other disconnected
6 youth. It is heartening to witness how
7 these efforts are now gaining traction
8 throughout the City and helping to inform
9 the thoughtful strategies and
10 recommendations to resolve the City's
11 dropout crisis that you are hearing about
12 today.

13 With all of that in mind and
14 based on my experiences as a private
15 employer and Chair of public workforce
16 bodies, let me offer a couple of
17 recommendations on these issues.

18 As you consider how to balance
19 the needs of young people and the fiscal
20 realities that confront us, please keep
21 in mind the importance of providing
22 high-quality workplace exposure and
23 career preparation as strategies that
24 both promote graduation and prevent
25 dropouts by helping students understand

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 the relevance of their academic studies.

3 Also, please appreciate that
4 many youth who have dropped out of school
5 now understand their mistakes and
6 desperately want to return to get the
7 education and skills that they need for
8 career success. Our support for their
9 efforts will not only benefit those young
10 people but the City as a whole.

11 Understand that the problems of
12 struggling students and out-of-school
13 youth are often too big for any single
14 institution to handle, even the School
15 District to tackle alone. Therefore,
16 your support for cross-system approaches
17 that bring together the resources and
18 strengths of public care systems can be a
19 key success for these young people.

20 And, finally, realize that you
21 are not alone in addressing these
22 challenges. My experiences as Chair of
23 the Youth Council and Workforce Board
24 convince me that the business community
25 is at the ready. Foundations and

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 community organizations are also paying
3 very close attention when they see what's
4 going on in our streets in terms of
5 violence. What we all know -- you talked
6 earlier about African-American males.
7 What we all know and the history of
8 Philadelphia, that immigrants coming into
9 this country who had the least had the
10 highest level of poverty and had the
11 highest level of violence. So it's not
12 an African-American issue; it is an
13 economic inclusion issue.

14 I'd like to thank you again so
15 much for allowing me to be here today and
16 thank you, Madam Chair, for the
17 opportunity to address these important
18 issues. I applaud your leadership and
19 commitment, and look forward to working
20 with you in the future on behalf of the
21 City of Philadelphia and our young
22 people.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you very much. And that was an important

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 statement. Your testimony was important.
3 Very important statement about inclusion.
4 Very important.

5 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.
6 Does anybody else have
7 questions for Ms. Crawley?

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
10 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
12 Madam Chair. Just a few questions.

13 Good afternoon. Let me first
14 begin by underscoring Recommendation No.
15 2, speaking to young people who dropped
16 out and really are searching and
17 screaming for a way back in. Last week
18 Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller had young
19 people in here speaking about guns and
20 the like. It was our first time where we
21 heard from young people. And the not
22 surprising but saddening observation was
23 many of those young people were dropouts,
24 and when we approached them in the
25 hallway, they were looking for a way back

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 into the system.

3 So it behooves us to be
4 inclusive to get our arms around all
5 young people and not just those who are
6 already on the right track, but those who
7 are at risk of being on the wrong track
8 if they're not captured in a big way.

9 Secondly, all of you have
10 spoken to the huge waiting lists. So how
11 possible is it that -- and let me say
12 this for the record: The leadership of
13 Joe Frick in making it clear that what he
14 wants his tenure to represent is
15 commendable. The letter that appeared in
16 the paper I thought was terrific and
17 unprecedented, that a business leader has
18 made it plain that they're going to do
19 better with regards to opportunities for
20 young people.

21 So given his leadership on the
22 issue and given the huge waiting lists
23 that exist, how real is it that the
24 business community will redouble its
25 efforts? Because that's what needs to

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 happen. We have a few leaders in the
3 companies represented at the table, but
4 when we hear of the huge waiting lists
5 and we hear of the stats facing
6 African-American men, how realistic is it
7 that the business community will double
8 up on its efforts?

9 MS. CRAWLEY: First of all, to
10 your earlier point when you talk about
11 out-of-school youth, I just want to
12 mention that when you talked to them in
13 the hallways and when you get a chance to
14 interact with them, I was absolutely
15 struck at how bright these kids are.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

17 MS. CRAWLEY: These are not
18 children who are incapable of achieving.
19 These are young people who are very
20 bright, and we really owe them an
21 opportunity.

22 She spoke of a young woman who
23 was in her office and had never been in
24 an office before. The stories I've heard
25 of kids who have never been on an

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 elevator is absolutely striking to me,
3 and it strikes me that as adults we owe
4 them so much more.

5 With regards to redoubling our
6 effort, when we first started WorkReady,
7 I thought we could put a thousand kids in
8 jobs with corporations, and we really
9 struggled and, quite frankly, we had --
10 we found ourselves begging organization
11 by organization. Well, will you take
12 one? Will you take two? Well, if you
13 can't take anyone, can you give us money
14 so that somebody else can have them?

15 But I think that what we have
16 learned through this process in the last
17 three years is that we have learned to
18 speak the language of business, and
19 speaking the language of business means
20 letting them know, because business -- I
21 come from a corporate background -- is
22 quarter by quarter, but we have to let
23 them know what's in it for them. So now
24 that Joe Frick has -- and we were all
25 thrilled, all of us involved in

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Workforce. We were cheering at Joe
3 Frick's speech. We believe that when
4 businesses, CEOs start talking to each
5 other, that it's a different level of
6 communications, and we really do believe
7 that we will redouble our efforts and
8 that we will have other corporations come
9 to the table. And I have not seen
10 anything like this in the years that I've
11 been with the Workforce group; that is,
12 businesses are eager, they are realizing
13 how important it is for the future of
14 their businesses to get involved in this
15 effort. So I do think we're going to see
16 success and improvement in our work
17 programs.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What would
19 you offer up as a better or bigger role
20 for government in what you're talking
21 about? How would you advise those of us
22 on this said of the table with regards to
23 the needed goal to redouble the efforts
24 in the business community?

25 MS. CRAWLEY: You know, I think

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 one of the issues facing children -- and,
3 Laura, you can please feel free to jump
4 in, but this is my view -- that we need
5 to give children hope. And I think that
6 when you read in the newspapers the lack
7 of opportunities for people who live in
8 the City, economic job opportunities,
9 that these are these children's parents.
10 And so when they go home and they see
11 issues that have to deal with
12 hopelessness of what am I in this for --
13 do you know what I'm saying -- if I get
14 my high school education? Well, my dad
15 has his high school education, he's
16 unemployed.

17 I think that we need to make
18 the issue, given our populations, I think
19 we need to -- I think economic inclusion
20 is absolutely imperative, because it
21 sends a message of hope throughout our
22 community. And none of us like getting
23 up at 6 o'clock in the morning to show up
24 for school, but we all had hope that
25 there was a future, that we were making

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 an investment in our lives, and I think
3 that is the important role that
4 government can play in this.

5 And, Laura?

6 MS. SHUBILLA: And I would also
7 add, I think there is a financial role
8 that government can play in this, which
9 is -- and Tracee is going to talk some to
10 this in her testimony -- we're facing a
11 couple things coming up this summer.
12 There's been an increase in minimum wage
13 requirements. The second phase of that
14 increase in minimum wage is going to hit
15 on July 1st. The outcome of that
16 increase in minimum wage is going to mean
17 that at a time when we need these
18 opportunities more than ever, when we
19 haven't gotten rid of the waiting lists
20 yet, we're on target to lose about 1,200
21 summer youth employment opportunities
22 because of needing to increase the
23 minimum wage for kids in these programs.
24 We're looking into whether or not there's
25 an option to provide a training wage to

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 younger youth, but even if we're able to
3 do that, we're still looking at about a
4 1,200 job loss.

5 So one of the specific "asks"
6 that's in your briefing paper is around
7 asking the City to contribute \$3.5
8 million, which would do two things. It
9 would offset the loss that would cost us
10 about \$1.3 million in summer jobs this
11 year and it would also allow us to build
12 some capacity to get kids off the waiting
13 lists. But as we bring up these new
14 alternative educational offerings, we
15 know that we need to include workforce
16 opportunities connected to those
17 offerings in order for them to be
18 successful. So it would allow us to
19 build out the workforce and social
20 service support to some of our new
21 educational programming as well.

22 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Point of
23 information.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
25 have a point of information. Councilman

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Goode.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

4 There is a need for more
5 economic inclusion, but there's economic
6 inclusion and then there's economic
7 inclusion. And economic inclusion does
8 impact young African-American males more
9 than anyone else in a way separate and
10 distinct. So I don't want that message
11 to be lost. And the reason why I raise
12 it in the context of your statements now
13 is, as there were crime summits convened
14 in the City and as we begin to discuss
15 solutions and people begin to look at
16 employment opportunities as one of the
17 major focuses that need to take place,
18 two distinct ideas came out. One was my
19 employer tax credit for ex-offenders,
20 which reaches anyone who qualifies as an
21 ex-offender. The other was a tax credit
22 at the state level for workplace interns,
23 which I believe probably is still moving
24 and will be moved and will address some
25 of those issues.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 The two things I don't want to
3 be lost here is, one, that we have to
4 continue to look at this problem in both
5 ways, that we're dealing with a very
6 general problem and we're dealing with a
7 very specific problem. And as much as I
8 support what Mr. Frisk has done, I think
9 it's true leadership, I think that it
10 helps focus on the general problem and
11 hopefully leads toward a greater focus on
12 the more acute problem. I'm just to say
13 for the record in my normal style, no one
14 believes that those young people in
15 danger of being shot are going to be
16 those placed in those workplace
17 internships. And in terms of the City
18 contributing in terms of more resources,
19 I can definitely support that, but it's
20 my understanding that the first thing
21 that the Chamber of Commerce and other
22 people lobbied for was in fact to make
23 sure that there was a tax credit in place
24 for those businesses to deal with those
25 costs.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MS. SHUBILLA: And the Chamber,
3 I know, is lobbying for the tax credit to
4 go through.

5 I think there's two things that
6 play here. The 40 percent increase in
7 minimum wage, even if the Chamber is
8 successful in the tax credit and at
9 increasing the number of internships,
10 it's the state and federal resources and
11 foundation resources that are in the
12 program aren't growing to absorb the 40
13 percent increase in the minimum wage. So
14 as --

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I guess my
16 question as the point of information was,
17 how much of the new cost for workplace
18 internships will be covered by the new
19 state tax credit and the existing federal
20 tax credits that exist?

21 MS. SHUBILLA: There's no way
22 to know for sure how many companies will
23 take advantage of the tax credit once
24 it's passed. Our experience with tax
25 credits in the past has been that larger

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 companies who hire more youth tend to be
3 the ones to take advantage of the tax
4 credit, that smaller businesses who don't
5 always have the capacity to file for the
6 tax credit as quickly, they don't tend to
7 take advantage of them as much as some of
8 our larger companies do here in the City.
9 So I think every strategy helps. No
10 strategy in isolation solves the whole
11 problem. So I think there is -- the tax
12 credit strategy is certainly going to
13 bring new internships to the table. The
14 Chamber's leadership is going to bring
15 new internships to the table. And even
16 with that, I still anticipate that
17 because of the increase overall in
18 minimum wage, even if those efforts are
19 successful, we're still going to see an
20 overall decline in the number of
21 opportunities that are going to be
22 available this summer. That may not be
23 true over the long term. We also don't
24 know at what point the tax credit is
25 going to go through and whether it will

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 be ready and available for this summer's
3 program or if it's going to not come into
4 play yet.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: My only
6 suggestion, not to be cynical about it,
7 but as the Chamber of Commerce continues
8 to pat itself on the back and its new
9 Chairman for creating workplace
10 internships, maybe they should do a more
11 heavy lobbying in Harrisburg to make sure
12 the tax credits go through, and if
13 there's a problem in terms of the need
14 for wage subsidies in addition to tax
15 credits, particularly for this year, they
16 just show that leadership and make sure
17 that they're actually addressing that
18 problem, but we also at the same time
19 keep in mind that those workplace
20 internships, while they were highlighted
21 as being related to our crime and
22 violence problem, are not necessarily
23 directly related to our crime and
24 violence problem and still calling the
25 Chamber of Commerce to do what I just

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 I think we'd go a long, long way. And
3 one of the things government can do is to
4 open up the offices, even though we've
5 been very successful in calling, we've
6 had judges, we've had Councilmembers
7 willing to take on these summer interns,
8 because it's a valuable experience for
9 them. And, you know, sometimes people
10 don't want to put in the supervision
11 hours or whatnot. It's a little taxing
12 at times, but it can be fun and very
13 rewarding, and I wanted to say that.

14 But the other point I wanted to
15 bring up, it's important that young
16 children have good role models right in
17 their home, and I do believe that Bilal
18 Qayyum has asked the Chamber of Commerce
19 to help give people a second chance by
20 encouraging employers to hire
21 ex-offenders. If you have a father at
22 home working, it goes a long way.

23 So I just want to make sure we
24 put that on the record. I know that Men
25 United, they're pretty big with one of

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 the answers to violence -- and we all
3 know this -- is to help people get
4 employed. So I just want to put that on
5 the record that it's something that I
6 strongly support also. If we have these
7 fathers out here working, you'd be
8 surprised how, I believe, we can decrease
9 the violence in our communities and the
10 crime.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much. Those were points of
14 information.

15 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown,
16 you're still on, and after you're
17 finished, we will have Councilman Rizzo.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
19 Madam Chair.

20 I have one final question. And
21 it is interesting, Councilman Goode and I
22 came here at the same time, and I always
23 find it quite amusing when his question
24 goes right to the last question I wanted
25 to raise, which was he's addressed and

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 revealed a very acute problem that we're
3 all very, very aware of, and so when we
4 hear the new leadership at the Chamber,
5 is there an opportunity in your
6 organizations for a policy shift to
7 happen where there are tangible,
8 aggressive recruitment efforts towards,
9 for African-American males? I have
10 interns in my office 365 days out of the
11 year, several interns on any one day.
12 And the saddening part of that for me is,
13 those who come to me for internship
14 opportunities are seldom speaking for
15 African-American males. So it suggests
16 to me given what we know with the stats
17 that Councilman Goode has presented, that
18 organizations like yours and others,
19 there's an opportunity for us to do more
20 and better when it comes to
21 African-American boys.

22 MS. SHUBILLA: I think the
23 demographics of most of our programs,
24 interestingly enough, are pretty evenly
25 split between young men and young women,

14 So I think the answer is yes.
15 I think we need to figure out strategies
16 that better engage and will provide the
17 right kinds of opportunities for young
18 men, and do that in partnership with
19 other groups who can also help to provide
20 the whole set of services. Because I
21 agree with you, a lot of the private
22 sector internships aren't going to serve
23 necessarily the population that we're
24 talking about here.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MS. SHUBILLA: They can as part
3 of -- yes, and I believe that part of
4 that is working with businesses to set up
5 the kinds of programs like the secondary
6 merchandising program and other
7 opportunities that are not just six-week
8 internships but are longer-term training,
9 support, employment programs working with
10 groups who are also providing the
11 mentoring and the street outreach and
12 those kinds of opportunities.

13 I don't think any one group can
14 do this alone. Our organization has a
15 very specific role to play in this, but
16 we can't do it by ourselves. So we've
17 got to work in partnership with other
18 groups who are having more success
19 reaching that particular group of young
20 men and making sure we connect our
21 opportunities better with what they're
22 trying to do.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What
24 percentage of those young men are
25 African-American boys?

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MS. SHUBILLA: Of the entire
3 population that we serve?

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: If you had
5 to wager an estimate, yes.

6 MS. SHUBILLA: Eighty percent
7 of all of our -- more than that, probably
8 85 percent of all of the kids in the
9 programs are African-American. So my
10 guess is that would be reflected in the
11 demographics of males and females. I can
12 get you all the numbers, but by and
13 large, we serve a predominately
14 African-American population of students.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So are we
16 hearing that there is a willingness to
17 reexamine or consideration for a policy
18 shift to tackle that particular
19 constituency given the realities we've
20 heard around truancy, dropout and crime
21 rate?

22 MS. SHUBILLA: I think we
23 should absolutely be targeting our
24 resources where there's the greatest
25 need. And I also believe we should be

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 building a continuum so that while at one
3 side we're looking at where there's the
4 greatest need and, as we said before,
5 tailoring our interventions to really
6 meet the needs of the specific
7 demographics and populations of kids
8 we're serving, we also need to not forget
9 about the fact that if we're successful
10 doing that, we need the Lockheed Martin
11 programs and we need all of these other
12 programs at the other end of the
13 continuum, because you need kids to be
14 able to move through into those
15 opportunities. They may not start there,
16 but our hope is they end up there.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Sure.

18 MS. SHUBILLA: And so we have
19 to build from across an entire continuum
20 of programs and opportunities so that
21 kids can move between and among them
22 successfully.

23 MS. CRAWLEY: And as an
24 employer, it just seems, in our
25 experience, that the girls, no offense to

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 the Councilmen here today, but the girls
3 are interviewing better. And so when I
4 talk to a member of my staff who is
5 responsible for the interviews and she
6 gives me four girls, I have to go back
7 and say, I want to see some young men.
8 Because I think it's a maturity issue.

9 You know much better than I do.

10 But the girls are interviewing
11 better than the boys are, so we have to
12 make a concerted effort to ask the
13 question we need some balance here, some
14 gender balance.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

16 That's leadership.

17 MS. CRAWLEY: That's right.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

19 Thank you all for your testimony.

20 MS. CRAWLEY: Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much.

23 Councilman Rizzo.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

25 It reminded me that we

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 mentioned the reentry program and I see
3 my colleague, Councilman Wilson Goode,
4 that helped me with a significant hurdle.
5 Now that the budget process is in front
6 of us -- and this is to my colleagues --
7 I'm going to need some help, because I
8 have an interest and Councilman Goode
9 does on a program that I identified, the
10 worker release -- the inmate program. We
11 have men and women incarcerated that have
12 been processed, have gone through a
13 thorough background check and thorough
14 look at them to allow them to leave the
15 jail during the day or evening to go
16 work. Unfortunately, there's no jobs.
17 As you know, we have the tax credit for
18 the reentry program, and Councilman Goode
19 was able to communicate with the
20 Administration --

21 Am I right, Councilman?

22 -- (continued) and include the
23 worker inmate program and qualify for the
24 tax credit. So we have 85, 90 inmates
25 that sit in the jail every day that have

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 no jobs. And we have convinced the
3 Fairmount Park Commission. The Zoo is
4 looking at an opportunity to employ the
5 inmates.

6 We're not talking about just
7 sending people down there. I want to
8 send these inmates -- when they leave
9 incarceration, I want them to leave there
10 with some money in their pockets so they
11 possibly don't go back to what got them
12 there.

13 So we are going to need -- and
14 we're not talking a lot of money. We're
15 talking less than \$200,000 in the next
16 budget to get this program working and
17 hopefully to get the inmates that are
18 sitting there with no opportunities that
19 could be there 17, 18, 19 months with a
20 job.

21 The professionals up there have
22 told me that people that get a job after
23 leaving incarceration rarely come back.
24 It's the ones that come back that don't
25 have a job. So if they can get

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 experience working in the Fairmount Park,
3 the Zoo, working with some of the
4 subcontractors, they will have job
5 opportunities, especially when an
6 employer can see their performance during
7 the time that they're in the program.

8 So my colleagues, I'm going to
9 be asking the Administration to put money
10 in the budget to make sure that this
11 works. And we're not talking about a lot
12 of money. The program initially was
13 going to be funded by an individual or at
14 least help get it started, and that
15 individual is ill now and unfortunately
16 not able to contribute that money that
17 was going to get the program started. So
18 the Administration keeps saying to me,
19 Well, we need the money. Well, we're
20 going to have to work to get that money
21 for that program, because I think it will
22 be so valuable to help a hundred inmates
23 up there to be able to leave, go to work,
24 come back at night and prepare them for
25 when they do eventually reenter.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you, Councilman.

4 Ms. Hunt.

5 MS. HUNT: Madam Chairman and
6 members of the --

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
8 pull your microphone up. We can't hear
9 you. Identify yourself again.

10 MS. HUNT: I'm sorry. Madam
11 Chairman and members of the Philadelphia
12 City Council, my name is Tracee Hunt. I
13 am Vice-President of Human Resources at
14 the Philadelphia Coca-Cola Bottling
15 Company and I currently serve as the
16 Chair of the Philadelphia Youth Council.
17 I'll add in there at this point that we
18 employ over 1,200 people in the
19 Philadelphia region and we do have a
20 predominately male workforce. So I'll
21 just make sure that that is added there.

22 The Youth Council is mandated
23 by the federal Workforce Investment Act
24 as a subgroup of the Philadelphia
25 Workforce Investment Board and makes

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 recommendations on the allocation and
3 expenditure of approximately 10 million
4 in youth workforce development funding
5 each year.

6 The Youth Council has two
7 primary objectives: WorkReady
8 Philadelphia, the City's system to
9 coordinate existing youth workforce
10 programming and to expand the overall
11 number of high-quality workplace
12 experiences, and Project U-Turn, a
13 citywide effort led by the Youth
14 Transitions Collaborative to resolve
15 Philadelphia's dropout crisis. Both of
16 these initiatives focus squarely on
17 preparing Philadelphia youth to become
18 our City and region's highly skilled
19 workforce of the future.

20 Like my colleague, Pamela
21 Crawley, whom I succeeded as Youth
22 Council Chair, I strongly believe that
23 our young people are the keys to our
24 City's social and economic success. As
25 Youth Council Chair and as an employer of

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 young people, again, as I said,
3 predominately male, through WorkReady
4 Philadelphia, I have had the opportunity
5 to see the potential of our young people
6 and to observe firsthand the absolute
7 importance of providing high-quality
8 opportunities that enable them to apply
9 their academic learning to real-world
10 workplace experience.

11 I'm proud that the Philadelphia
12 Workforce Investment Board and its Youth
13 Council are recognized as national
14 leaders in providing these types of
15 high-quality workplace experiences. But
16 despite these efforts, each year we are
17 forced to turn away as many as 3,000
18 young people who seek high-quality
19 workplace internships due to a lack of
20 resources. This situation is likely to
21 be exacerbated beginning this coming
22 summer due to the recently enacted
23 changes in the minimum wage law. The
24 additional cost that it represents will
25 cause a significant reduction in the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 number of available internships, which
3 will force us to turn away even more
4 youth. In fact, we could lose between
5 1,200 and 1,700 employment opportunities,
6 as Laura already expressed to you, this
7 year.

8 We know that these workplace
9 experiences are extremely important for
10 our youth. They offer them the potential
11 to increase academic performance by
12 demonstrating how learning is relevant to
13 careers. Research tells us that
14 low-income urban youth have less access
15 to these valuable workplace experiences
16 than their more affluent suburban peers.

17 These youth are all around us,
18 working hard to overcome barriers and
19 striving to get the skills they need.
20 Some are still in classrooms moving
21 towards graduation, post-secondary
22 education and careers. Others who left
23 school without a diploma, however, in my
24 opinion, have found the courage to
25 reconnect to learning opportunities

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 because they have come to the realization
3 that education is the key to economic
4 self-sufficiency.

5 As an employer, I can tell you
6 firsthand that our City and its economy
7 desperately need young people who are
8 preparing themselves to become the
9 greater Philadelphia region's highly
10 skilled 21st century workforce.

11 There's plenty of opportunity
12 for such young people, but most will need
13 a helping hand to turn their lives around
14 and to become the active and productive
15 citizens we want and need them to be.

16 Workplace internships can
17 provide the kind of transformational
18 experience that makes education relevant,
19 as well as providing them with mentoring
20 opportunities. So it's critical that
21 while we are working to build
22 high-quality learning opportunities for
23 more of our young people, we must also
24 provide workplace opportunities that give
25 form and substance to their academic

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 work.

3 It is for these reasons that I
4 urge Council to support workplace
5 internships for our young people. Our
6 request would offset the loss of slots
7 associated with minimum wage increases
8 and also expand the number of available
9 opportunities, enabling us both to reduce
10 our waiting lists and also to dedicate
11 internships to the vulnerable young
12 people returning to school.

13 Thank you again, Madam Chairman
14 and Councilmembers, for the opportunity
15 to present testimony this morning on such
16 an important topic. I look forward to
17 working with you to create new
18 opportunities for our young people.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you very much, and thank you, Madam
21 Chair.

22 Councilman Goode.

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

24 Who currently covers the costs
25 of the program?

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MS. HUNT: At Philadelphia
3 Coca-Cola or for Philadelphia Youth
4 Council?

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Philadelphia
6 Youth Council.

7 MS. HUNT: The Youth Council
8 actually is mandated by the federal
9 Workforce Investment Act as a subgroup
10 and they allocate the expenditures of
11 that \$10 million that I spoke about
12 earlier on.

13 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So is this a
14 fully government-funded program?

15 MS. HUNT: TANF also.

16 MS. SHUBILLA: There's three
17 partners to it. There's federal, U.S.
18 Department of Labor Workforce Investment
19 Act money, there's state TANF money and
20 then there's about \$2.8 million in
21 private money from foundations and the
22 corporate sector, and the School District
23 for the last few years has put in an
24 additional between 6 and 8 hundred
25 thousand dollars.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So do the
3 employers themselves actually pay for any
4 of the internships?

5 MS. HUNT: Yes.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And they are
7 eligible for federal tax credits for
8 that?

9 MS. HUNT: No. Actually, the
10 way it works is, they are either
11 subsidized or they're unsubsidized.

12 MS. CRAWLEY: So the WorkReady
13 program is unsubsidized. These are
14 commitments from the corporate community
15 to hire these children, young people,
16 young adults.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So they're
18 not eligible for federal tax credits?

19 MS. HUNT: No, not under this
20 particular program.

21 MS. CRAWLEY: Not under this
22 program, no.

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Why not?

24 MS. HUNT: That was not how it
25 was designed, according to my

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 understanding, from the beginning.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Whether it's
4 how it's designed or not, what makes it
5 ineligible for federal tax credits?

6 MS. CRAWLEY: I don't know that
7 it is ineligible. When we put WorkReady
8 together, it was really about looking for
9 unsubsidized investments in our youth.
10 So that's why we put it together that
11 way. I think the Chamber is now
12 addressing the tax credit issue and
13 trying to get more people involved. So
14 there is going to be --

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I was
16 starting with the federal tax credit. I
17 was about to move to the state tax
18 credit. But they're not ineligible for a
19 federal tax credit?

20 MS. SHUBILLA: If they meet the
21 criteria, if the kids who are in the
22 placements meet the various criterias;
23 for instance, living in empowerment zones
24 or there's various qualifications that
25 the employee itself would have to -- him

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 or herself would have to meet.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: But there's
4 a work opportunity tax credit for youth.

5 MS. SHUBILLA: Some of the
6 companies take advantage of it and some
7 of the companies -- the biggest tax
8 credit we find that employers take
9 advantage of is the state tax credit
10 around the education improvement tax
11 credit. That's the one that most
12 companies who work with us have utilized.

13 COUNCILMAN GOODE: The work
14 opportunity tax credit for youth, do you
15 know what that is?

16 MS. SHUBILLA: I don't know all
17 the details of it, no.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And the
19 state credit that the Chamber is
20 advocating for covers what percentage of
21 the businesses' costs?

22 MS. SHUBILLA: I believe
23 they're looking for a 70 percent tax
24 credit.

25 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So the state

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 tax credit would cover 70 percent of
3 their costs and then on top of that they
4 may be eligible for a federal tax credit?

5 MS. SHUBILLA: I'm not sure if
6 they would be eligible for both or not.

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I believe
8 they would be eligible for both. And if
9 they were hiring an ex-offender who
10 happens to be a youth, they'd possibly be
11 eligible for a City tax credit as well.

12 MS. SHUBILLA: Yes.

13 MS. CRAWLEY: That's a good
14 point.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you, Councilman.

17 Any further questions for these
18 witnesses?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you all very much. You're doing a fine
22 job. We appreciate it.

23 MS. SHUBILLA: We're going to
24 ask that the next person to testify be
25 our only youth who is left at this

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 point -- all the other youth left -- is
3 Brad Johnson, and he has to leave at
4 12:45 for a job. So we want to let him
5 go on. Thanks.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you.

8 Brad Johnson, we welcome you,
9 and we're sorry everybody else had to
10 leave. Time is always an issue at our
11 hearings on these very important
12 subjects.

13 Brad, welcome. Please identify
14 yourself for the record, and we're happy
15 that you are present. We understand that
16 Traci Money, Andrew Broggins and Dolores
17 Shaw had to leave. So you represent
18 everybody.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you. Welcome.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Good afternoon,
23 members of Philadelphia City Council.
24 Thank you for giving me the opportunity
25 to testify at today's hearing. Let me

21 Some of the things that I hear
22 that the City is trying to do is build on
23 the outer appearance of schools to make
24 them look presentable to the outside
25 world. What we need is more books and

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 qualified teachers to instruct us. We
3 need better equipment. We need things
4 that students will actually use.

5 Without the school being
6 challenging or interesting, we're only
7 there to show that people have jobs,
8 nothing more. Most of us drop out of
9 school either from boredom, peer
10 pressure, stress or parenting.

11 My opportunity came when I
12 applied to Job Corps where I was referred
13 to the E3 center at Parkside branch. But
14 how did I just out of the blue want to
15 change? There's a moment in every
16 person's life that inspires them to
17 change. For me it happened when I found
18 out I was going to be a parent.

19 So now that I'm a father and
20 I've been connected with many positive
21 programs, I plan to go far with my life.
22 I'm scheduled to take the GED test next
23 week. I'm confident I'm going to pass.
24 I'm currently ranked No. 2 on the
25 Adolescent Career Employment Services

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 program, and my immediate goal is to take
3 the No. 1 spot. My long-range goal is to
4 own a technical engineering conglomerate
5 where you can bring any mechanical
6 appliance and get it fixed.

7 For out-of-school youth like me
8 programs like Job Corps and the E3
9 centers are very important. The E3
10 center helped get my life on track. I
11 will no longer get kicked out of
12 anything. And so I ask the Philadelphia
13 City Council to consider supporting the
14 provision of case management services to
15 pregnant and parenting teens by expanding
16 the Health Department's contracts with
17 community-based programs.

18 Thank you for listening to my
19 story.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you for coming to bring it. May we ask
22 how old you are?

23 MR. JOHNSON: I'm 18 years old.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: My
25 goodness. All that and you're only 18.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Questions from members of the
3 Committee?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
6 say that we thank you. We look forward
7 to working with you in any way we can.
8 We're willing. You've heard Councilman
9 Goode talk about his work with youth and
10 at-risk youth. And certainly you can
11 come to any of us in our offices and
12 we're happy to support you and work with
13 you in any way we can.

14 MR. JOHNSON: All right.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: God
16 bless you and good luck.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you very much.

20 Ruth Nield. Did I pronounce
21 your name correctly?

22 MS. NIELD: Ruth Nield.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Ruth
24 Nield, okay. Ruth Nield, John Hopkins
25 University. Thank you. And after you,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 we have Heather Frattone.

3 Thank you. Thank you for your
4 patience. Please identify yourself for
5 the record and begin your testimony.

6 MS. NIELD: Yes. Good morning.
7 My name is Ruth Curran Nield. I am a
8 Research Scientist at Johns Hopkins
9 University and an Assistant Professor on
10 leave at the University of Pennsylvania
11 Graduate School of Education. I am one
12 of the authors of "Unfulfilled Promises,"
13 which is the report --

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Pull
15 the mike closer.

16 MS. NIELD: Sure. I'm one of
17 the authors of "Unfulfilled Promises,"
18 which is the report on dropout in
19 Philadelphia that was issued by the
20 Philadelphia Youth Network in October
21 2006.

22 I've also asked Dr. Liza Herzog
23 to join me. She was here for the
24 hearings anyway, and some of the
25 questions that were brought up earlier

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 about truancy, particularly when truancy
3 begins to spike in children's educational
4 careers, made me think that she might
5 have something important to contribute to
6 the discussion. She's done quite a bit
7 of research on truancy, particularly in
8 early adolescence.

9 So what I would like to tell
10 you about are some highlights of the
11 research that has been reported in the
12 report that was published by the
13 Philadelphia Youth Network. And so far
14 in the testimony we have been talking
15 about solutions, what kinds of things
16 could be done to reduce the dropout
17 problem, and I'm going to be talking
18 about some of the dimensions of the
19 problem. I don't want us to feel like in
20 some way we're kind of stepping back from
21 the solutions, going back to sort of
22 admiring the problem, and so the way I'd
23 like to frame it is that some of the
24 research that we'll be talking about
25 really emphasizes the particular groups

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 that are at high risk of dropping out.

3 And I think that the themes that have

4 come out already about ways in which

5 services and supports need to be targeted

6 are themes that I would like to continue,

7 and I hope you'll sort of pick up as I

8 proceed with my testimony.

9 We used data for this report

10 from the Kids Data Infrastructure, which

11 is at the University of Pennsylvania's

12 Cartographic Modeling Lab. What's very

13 unique about this dataset is that it

14 merges data from a number of City

15 agencies and it produces de-identified

16 data so that individuals cannot be

17 identified but that we can learn many new

18 things about dropout. So, for example,

19 we were able to get data from the School

20 District of Philadelphia, from the

21 Department of Human Services, from vital

22 statistics, and we were able to learn a

23 lot of new things that hadn't been known

24 about dropouts before.

25 Here are some of the things

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 that we found: We found that in a single
3 school year, about ten percent of the
4 students in grades six through twelve
5 either become official dropouts or they
6 attend so infrequently -- and, that is,
7 less than 50 percent of the time -- that
8 for all practical purposes, they really
9 are dropouts. Some of these students
10 return to school in a subsequent year,
11 but most of them do not.

12 We also examined some cohorts
13 of students. These are students who
14 begin ninth grade together, and you
15 examine what percentage of those students
16 complete high school within four or five
17 or six years. And in none of the six
18 cohorts that we examined did we find that
19 more than 60 percent of the freshmen who
20 started high school together had
21 graduated six years later. Over six
22 cohorts from 2000, the class of 2000, to
23 the class of 2005, about 30,000 of
24 Philadelphia's youth dropped out of high
25 school and we have no record of them

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 earning a diploma.

3 We found that while there are
4 differences in the rate of dropout among
5 Philadelphia's neighborhoods and among
6 Council districts, high school dropout
7 affects every neighborhood and every
8 Council district. It affects every
9 racial or ethnic group in the City. It
10 affects males and females.

11 In many cases, the similarities
12 are more striking than the differences,
13 although I don't mean to underplay the
14 differences at all. Contrary to what
15 many people might have thought, most high
16 school dropouts were not in foster care
17 during high school. They did not have a
18 substantiated case of abuse or neglect
19 during high school. They did not receive
20 the juvenile justice system's most severe
21 sanctions; that is, an out-of-home
22 placement, and they did not give birth,
23 for females, to a baby within four years
24 of starting high school. They may have
25 had many struggles and difficulties in

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 their lives, but as a group, they would
3 not rank as the City's most severely
4 troubled or difficult to reach youth.

5 So, for example, only three
6 percent of the dropouts have a
7 substantiated case of abuse or neglect in
8 high school. Seven percent of the
9 dropouts had a foster care placement
10 during high school. Twenty-three percent
11 of the male dropouts had an out-of-home
12 juvenile justice placement during high
13 school. And that's not to minimize that
14 that's almost one quarter, but it is to
15 say that it's not the majority of
16 dropouts, which I think was a surprise to
17 many people who didn't know much about
18 the dropout situation in Philadelphia.
19 And 33 percent of the female dropouts
20 gave birth within four years of starting
21 high school.

22 While those who are agency
23 involved are not the majority high school
24 dropouts, there are some who are under
25 the care or supervision of City agencies

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 like the Department of Human Services
3 while they were in high school, and we
4 found that dropout rates for these
5 students were extremely high. And this
6 is where we sort of get back to the idea
7 that there are some students who really
8 need targeted services, that these
9 different subgroups are very important.

10 Of those who had a
11 substantiated case of abuse or neglect
12 during high school, we found that 70
13 percent did not complete high school. Of
14 those with a foster care placement, 75
15 percent did not complete. Of those with
16 a juvenile justice placement, 90 percent
17 dropped out. Of those who gave birth
18 within four years of high school, 68
19 percent dropped out. So while those
20 students who had those agency
21 involvements or had that kind of
22 characteristic were not the majority of
23 dropouts, of those who did have those
24 characteristics, the dropout rate was
25 extremely high.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 I want to be very clear -- and
3 we tried to be clear in the report --
4 that we are not saying that being
5 involved with an agency caused high
6 school dropout. There is a correlation,
7 obviously. There's an association, but
8 we're not saying that that caused it.
9 However, young people who become involved
10 with City agencies often already have
11 many characteristics that put them at
12 risk of dropping out of high school.
13 What the data do tell us, however, is
14 that the current level of support being
15 offered to these students is not
16 sufficient to allow them to earn a basic
17 academic credential that they will need
18 for economic survival and participation
19 in civic life.

20 We also found that about half
21 of the dropouts, agency involved or not,
22 were giving strong signals of their path
23 to dropping out prior to entering high
24 school. More than half of the students
25 who eventually dropped out had earned a

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 failing grade in either math or English
3 during eighth grade and/or they attended
4 school less than 80 percent of the time.

5 An additional 30 percent of the
6 eventual dropouts did not fail math, they
7 did not fail English in eighth grade,
8 they attended school more than 80 percent
9 of the time, but they had a very
10 difficult time in ninth grade, which is
11 known as -- the transition to high school
12 is known as a tough year, particularly
13 for students in urban areas. And these
14 students that earned very few credits and
15 they attended less than 70 percent of the
16 time.

17 By using just these criteria,
18 the criteria in eighth grade and the
19 criteria in ninth grade, we can identify
20 80 percent of the dropouts, 80 percent of
21 the students who would eventually drop
22 out by the end of their first year in
23 high school. These data tell us several
24 things. First of all, the dropout
25 problem in Philadelphia's public schools

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 is real and it's severe. It is not a new
3 crisis. The dropout rate has been
4 approximately stable over the past ten
5 years. And Philadelphia is not unique
6 among large cities in its high dropout
7 rate, but like other cities with these
8 sorts of educational outcomes,
9 Philadelphia cannot be an economically
10 and civically vibrant city of the 21st
11 century with continued educational
12 outcomes like these.

13 The data also tell us that
14 there are some ways to tackle the
15 problem. We can start by figuring out
16 how to support the education of students
17 who are under the care or under the
18 supervision of City agencies. We can use
19 data -- and, of course, as a researcher I
20 like to talk about data and I think it's
21 important. We can use data to discover
22 baselines to set goals and benchmarks and
23 to measure our progress over time against
24 these benchmarks. And I think we could
25 do this for particular groups of students

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 who are at risk, and there's a number of
3 ways that those subgroups could be
4 defined and their progress could be
5 measured and followed over time.

6 Second, we can work on
7 identifying adolescents who are at risk
8 of dropping out. Now, whenever we
9 mention high-risk adolescents and
10 identifying them, somebody always says,
11 Well, wouldn't it really be better to
12 invest in early childhood and elementary
13 education? And, of course, we agree.
14 That is very important to make those
15 investments to get students on the right
16 path, but I think even if we have those
17 kinds of investments, adolescence is
18 always going to do a number on some
19 students. And not all students are going
20 to get the skills that they need in
21 elementary school. Therefore, we need to
22 have interventions all along the way. We
23 need to be able to tell students, It's
24 not too late for you. It's not too late
25 if you're an eighth grader who has failed

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 a major subject. It's not too late for
3 you if you're a ninth grader who has
4 failed every course. And it's not too
5 late for you if you already dropped out
6 of school. In fact, it's your time, and
7 here are some options for you.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you. Very important testimony. My late
11 husband used to say -- I've said this
12 before -- that if you're 16 and you drop
13 out of school, he used to say drop back
14 in at 17, because you could have been 16
15 five times. So we agree. Very
16 important. We have to have something for
17 everybody at any age. Thank you.
18 Important testimony.

19 Ms. Herzog.

20 MS. HERZOG: Yes. Thank you,
21 Madam Chair, members. I'm Liza Herzog
22 and I'm the Senior Researcher at the
23 Philadelphia Education Fund. And a
24 little bit about the Ed Fund: For the
25 past 21 years, we've been providing

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 educational program and research on
3 behalf of young people in Philadelphia,
4 and we thank you for your continued
5 attention to a critically important issue
6 that touches the lives of all of us.

7 We know the by-products of
8 dropping out of school can make for a
9 severely distressed city. So I'm going
10 to talk about our research that we've
11 done together with Johns Hopkins and to
12 which Mr. Kirsch referred earlier this
13 morning in his testimony, "Keeping Middle
14 Grade Students on Track to Graduation."

15 We were lucky in this research
16 to have the uncommon advantage of having
17 both local and longitudinal data. These
18 are our kids, our Philadelphia kids, over
19 time. So we were able to track sixth
20 graders in Philadelphia public schools
21 forward eight years, to a year beyond
22 their expected graduation. We designed
23 it in this way because reported annual
24 dropout rates can be difficult to
25 understand, as we know, and compare,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 because, first, dropout status changes
3 over time. We know that some students
4 who initially drop out drop back in,
5 reenter at some point, sometimes at
6 multiple points to complete their degree
7 requirements. And until we have a
8 uniform definition of "dropout,"
9 different bodies, be it School District,
10 state agencies, researchers, will
11 continue to develop their own operational
12 definitions. Our design allows us to
13 look at what happens to the same group
14 over time and gives us what we believe to
15 be a very reliable picture of what's
16 happening to our students.

17 A little bit about the design:
18 We surveyed more than 20 variables,
19 outcome variables -- test scores, whether
20 the students were overage, course grades,
21 their attendance patterns, suspensions,
22 behavior marks, special ed designation --
23 to see which, if any, could identify who
24 was at the highest risk for falling off
25 track to graduation. We looked for those

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 with a high yield, meaning 75 percent or
3 more of the kids with this particular
4 characteristic did not make it to the
5 twelfth grade with their class, and we
6 found the most powerful predictors of the
7 Philadelphia kids for falling off track
8 to graduation to be attending school 80
9 percent or less of the time in the sixth
10 grade, receiving a poor final behavior
11 mark in the sixth grade, failing math in
12 the sixth grade and failing English in
13 the sixth grade. In other words, the
14 odds of a sixth grader making it with his
15 or her class if she has one of these risk
16 factors, if you're a low attender, you
17 have just a one-in-five chance; poorly
18 behaved, a one-in-four chance; failed
19 sixth grade math, one-in-five chance;
20 failed sixth grade English, a
21 one-in-eight chance.

22 What we were able to do is
23 identify 40 percent of eventual dropouts.
24 Ruth talked about with the research that
25 she's done with Bob Balfanz of Johns

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Hopkins and the Project U-Turn report,
3 they were able to identify 80 percent of
4 eventual dropouts by the ninth grade.
5 What we did, knowing that and knowing
6 that we could identify up to 40 percent
7 in the sixth grade, who of these at-risk
8 sixth graders were also in the group of
9 at-risk eighth and ninth graders, and we
10 found that about two-thirds of them were
11 the same youth.

12 Ruth also talked about
13 adolescence as being a particular
14 troubling time for our children, and we
15 found that the nexus of adolescence being
16 11 or 12 years old and living in
17 neighborhoods of concentrated poverty has
18 a very deep, negative impact on a
19 student's relationship to school, which
20 is why supports at that stage is so
21 critical.

22 The best thing about doing this
23 work for me is applying it, and at the Ed
24 Fund we have the opportunity to turn
25 these findings into real supports for

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 real kids. So we're currently in our
3 design year in the north region and are
4 working with schools to co-design
5 interventions for sixth graders who are
6 at risk of dropping out. Our work with
7 schools there corroborates our finding
8 that there are significant numbers of
9 sixth graders who are really struggling.

10 In fact, what we found in the
11 research was that each year between 1,000
12 and 2,000 sixth graders in Philadelphia
13 has each one of the big four risk
14 factors, and it's become alarmingly clear
15 that we really need to work -- "we" as
16 the Ed Fund -- need to work together with
17 principals and their teams on these
18 tiered supports, whole school supports
19 for the entire sixth grade, targeted
20 supports for groups of 10 to 15 students
21 who need more targeted attention, and
22 intensive supports, which are very
23 expensive but which are one-on-one, to
24 increase the chances that these kids will
25 make it to graduation with their

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 classmates.

3 I'd like to say that these
4 patterns, these at-risk patterns, are in
5 place well before our kids show up at the
6 high school door. And students who enter
7 high school, we know from Ruth's
8 research, two or more -- if they enter
9 high school two or more years behind
10 grade level in math and literacy, they
11 only have a 50/50 chance of making it to
12 the tenth grade on time. And repeating
13 ninth grade is one of the strongest
14 predictors for dropping out. So it just
15 compounds as kids move up the pipeline.

16 So what we think is what
17 amounts to an early identification system
18 that triggers appropriate supports as
19 early as possible is vital to student
20 success and will help us shrink this pool
21 of children who are at extreme
22 disadvantage the minute they walk through
23 the door.

24 So I think what we can do as a
25 city is help schools and cross-sector

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 partners use this information
3 effectively, take the lead in providing
4 in- and out-of-school supports for the
5 youth of Philadelphia beginning in the
6 sixth grade or if they're out of school,
7 at the age at which they would be in the
8 sixth grade. And we would advocate for
9 increased public awareness, continued
10 public awareness about the dropout crisis
11 by continuing to hold hearings and speak
12 to your constituents, track progress of
13 the children as they move through school
14 so that our schools remain places where
15 your youth can grow and learn and enjoy.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much.

19 Have you done any work or be
20 interested or know of someone who has on
21 children who take Ritalin and
22 behavior-altering drugs? It's been an
23 issue I've been interested in for many
24 years, and as you know, the students who
25 go to charter schools and other schools,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 this is a group that it's kind of on the
3 parent or the grandparents or whomever to
4 deal with it as an issue, and I really
5 think it's part of a great question and I
6 don't know how much research there is on
7 it.

8 MS. HERZOG: I'll answer first.
9 I personally have not. I think it is --
10 it goes to why -- and this behavior mark
11 has since been done away with, and there
12 is a series of variables that are
13 reported by Teachers Narrative that now
14 supplants that behavior mark, but what
15 really goes into that behavior mark, what
16 is causing -- what is behind being at
17 risk. And I think that is an interesting
18 question that we can look more into, and
19 whether or not a child is taking Ritalin
20 could be a very significant part of that
21 work. I have not had any experience
22 doing any work.

23 Have you, Ruth?

24 MS. NIELD: No.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We've

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 been interested in it for a long time
3 because, as you know, when a child hits
4 puberty, if their drugs don't change,
5 they become suicidal and such. It just
6 changes everything. And there are so
7 many complications with this, and the
8 pharmaceutical company, Chad, that gets
9 it and children get a lot more money,
10 their patients do, if they can get SSI if
11 they're taking these drugs as opposed to
12 just getting a welfare check.

13 So there's so many
14 complications, and I've not over the
15 years -- oh, I don't know, 15 years or
16 more -- been able to really get somebody
17 other than the pharmaceuticals who
18 benefit to deal with this as an issue and
19 how it affects young people. So I'd
20 appreciate it if you could just --

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: --
23 consider it, if you would. Thank you
24 very much.

25 Councilman Goode.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
3 Madam Chair.

4 Ms. Nield, in your testimony
5 you state "contrary to what many people
6 might have thought, most high school
7 dropouts were not in foster care during
8 high school, did not have a substantial
9 case of abuse or neglect, did not receive
10 the juvenile justice system's most severe
11 sanction; that is, an out-of-home
12 placement, and did not give birth to a
13 baby within four years of starting high
14 school."

15 How many have prior arrests?

16 MS. NIELD: We do not have
17 access to juvenile justice data involving
18 arrests, for example, that did not result
19 in an out-of-home placement. The only
20 information we were able to have was
21 about individuals who had a placement.
22 So I think what you're tapping into is
23 that there's other individuals who had
24 some sort of interaction with the law
25 that are not being picked up here, and

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 that's right.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: It's
4 probably a huge number if the data you
5 present says that 23 percent of male
6 dropouts had an out-of-home juvenile
7 justice placement during high school when
8 that seems to be only one out of four,
9 but of those in juvenile justice
10 placement, 90 percent dropped out. The
11 appearance is definitely that there are
12 any number of people with prior arrests
13 that are already caught up in a system,
14 without blaming anyone of where they're
15 caught up in the system, that essentially
16 that continues to contribute to their
17 dropping out.

18 MS. NIELD: Right, and one
19 of -- that's exactly right, and one of
20 the things that we're trying to do going
21 forward is to look exactly at that issue
22 for the same reasons that you're
23 articulating. So the Kids Dataset at the
24 time we were doing the research did not
25 have an agreement so that we could access

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 arrest data or anything other than these
3 out-of-home placements. But we recognize
4 that this is a huge issue, and it's a
5 huge issue for males in particular
6 clearly, although females also have these
7 out-of-home placements as well.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Because I
9 did not cite arrest data for the murder
10 victims and perpetrators because I didn't
11 think it was totally germane to this
12 hearing, but we do know that 80 percent,
13 around 75, 80 percent, of those who were
14 killed or did the killing last year had
15 prior arrests.

16 MS. NIELD: Right. That makes
17 sense. And I think that the word you
18 used earlier in a related question was
19 "correlation," and that's exactly the
20 right word to be using, because you see
21 this association between these two
22 things. What's, I think, challenging is
23 to find -- to estimate in some way what's
24 the effect of legal involvement as
25 opposed to some of the other kinds of

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 factors that propel students initially
3 into being involved. In other words,
4 there's a whole lot of factors that go
5 into somebody ultimately becoming
6 involved in the legal system. Some of
7 those are related to what happened in
8 high school, some of those things are
9 related to what happened years and years
10 and years and --

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: My ultimate
12 goal is not to paint a picture of cause
13 and effect but of correlation and the
14 fact that there is a cycle, and the
15 biggest reason to try to focus on that is
16 to be able to identify people for
17 intervention. And so essentially we need
18 as much data as possible.

19 MS. NIELD: Yeah. That's
20 exactly right. And what Liza was talking
21 about is trying to find indicators where
22 if you happen to have this
23 characteristic, you have a very high risk
24 of dropping out. And one of the reasons
25 for trying to get that high threshold is

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 to be able to target resources
3 appropriately. So that's another reason
4 why looking at individuals who have an
5 out-of-home placement -- and it may be
6 true for kids who have arrests, too. We
7 just don't know this, but you can look at
8 those kids and say, If we don't do
9 something with these kids, they've got a
10 nine-out-of-ten chance of dropping out of
11 high school. And so it's a good way of
12 targeting -- you know you're using your
13 resources, you're at least targeting in
14 the right direction rather than maybe
15 spreading them over individuals who might
16 not have that same level of risk.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you very much. Thank you both for your
20 testimony.

21 Heather Frattone. And I
22 understand you're going to bring Paul
23 Vallas' testimony. After Ms. Frattone,
24 we'll have the Alternative Pathways
25 panel, Courtney Collins-Shapiro, School

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 District; Meredith Malloy, YouthBuild;
3 Marcus Delgado, Principal, Fairhill
4 Community High School; Judi Taylor-Dunn,
5 Center for Literacy. Are you all still
6 here?

7 (Yes.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you.

10 Good morning. Thank you for
11 your patience.

12 MS. FRATTONE: Good morning.
13 My name is Heather Frattone. I'm the
14 Executive Director for Policy and
15 Planning at the School District of
16 Philadelphia.

17 First, I'd like to apologize
18 for Mr. Vallas not being here today. As
19 you may have heard, we had a District
20 staff person killed in a bus accident
21 this morning, so Mr. Vallas was attending
22 to that. I am going to read his
23 testimony for the record and then do the
24 best I can to answer any questions that
25 you might have.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you.

4 MS. FRATTONE: Good morning,
5 Councilwoman Blackwell and members of the
6 Committee on Education. I appreciate the
7 opportunity to testify this morning on
8 ways in which the District working with
9 others can work to stem the dropout
10 crisis. In my brief testimony, I will
11 outline the importance of a systemic
12 approach, necessary preventative and
13 intervention methods, and recommendations
14 for the Committee's consideration.

15 The Youth Transitions
16 Collaborative represents a citywide,
17 cross-sector partnership focused on data
18 collection and program development needed
19 to make progress towards reconnecting
20 struggling students and out-of-school
21 youth to high-quality educational
22 options. The District is a lead partner
23 in the Collaborative and has been
24 committed to the work of the
25 Collaborative from the beginning.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 You have heard from many
3 members of the Collaborative today, but
4 let me simply say that the Collaborative
5 is precisely the kind of citywide,
6 cross-sector partnership that is needed
7 to make true progress towards
8 reconnecting struggling students and
9 out-of-school youth.

10 The Collaborative is supporting
11 our efforts by improving our capacity to
12 analyze and act on data; identifying the
13 state and local policies that contribute
14 to the problem and recommending changes
15 that would better support our young
16 people; supporting our efforts to build
17 new high-quality educational programming
18 and bringing the public, including young
19 people and their families, directly into
20 the process of planning and shaping these
21 efforts. Other members of the
22 Collaborative are here to talk to you
23 about the work of the partnership and the
24 data collection and analysis. I will
25 focus my remarks on the District's

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 current dropout prevention and recovery
3 initiatives and the components necessary
4 to take these initiatives to the next
5 level.

6 As you have heard this morning,
7 early intervention and parental
8 engagement are critical to a student's
9 academic success. The District provides
10 educational, social service support and
11 parenting skills training to pregnant and
12 parenting teens, as well as
13 pre-kindergarten programs for students
14 ages three and four.

15 The District has standardized
16 its curriculum for grades pre-K through
17 twelve to increase instructional time on
18 task and provide students with the skills
19 necessary to maintain grade level
20 achievement.

21 In Philadelphia, experience has
22 taught us that addressing the needs of
23 struggling students and out-of-school
24 youth must be an essential component of
25 our overall secondary school reform

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 efforts. These efforts include a variety
3 of approaches aimed at disconnected
4 youth, such as multiple pathways, which
5 you'll hear more about from Courtney
6 Collins-Shapiro, that are intended to
7 provide equivalently rigorous academic
8 programs in a variety of settings and an
9 array of pedagogies.

10 Let me give you a few examples.

11 Research tells us that some
12 students do not fare well in large high
13 schools that too often create a sense of
14 isolation and alienation. To address
15 this issue, we're in the midst of a major
16 construction and renovation effort that
17 will create dozens of new smaller high
18 schools either by dividing our large
19 comprehensive schools into two or more
20 separate administrative units or by
21 building entirely new schools. In the
22 long run, we believe that these small
23 schools will provide for more supportive
24 environments and pave the way for
25 rigorous and innovative teaching

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 approaches that will engage more of our
3 young people and move them successfully
4 towards graduation.

5 As a part of our high school
6 reform, the District is also working to
7 provide more opportunities for seniors to
8 graduate early, earn college credits
9 while in high school, gain work
10 experience through paid internships and
11 receive more college scholarships.

12 As you also know, the District
13 partners with the Department of Human
14 Services, Philadelphia Police and SEPTA
15 to combat chronic truancy. The truancy
16 reduction initiatives include the use of
17 parent truant officers, truancy courts
18 and truancy pick-ups.

19 One of the things that we've
20 started to focus on is also prevention
21 and recovery initiatives. So through
22 funding from the Philadelphia delegation
23 of the Pennsylvania Senate Democrats, the
24 District launched the Middle Grades
25 Accelerated Program in all regions of the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 City to focus on creating special schools
3 within a school for overage eighth grade
4 students. The programs place an intense
5 focus on reading and math, interactive
6 instructional materials and intense
7 wrap-around supports to address social
8 needs.

9 The District has been
10 recognized as a national leader in
11 developing alternative education
12 programs. We have Twilight Schools,
13 which are now called Educational Options.
14 They were originally designed to provide
15 credit recovery during non-school hours
16 for overage undercredentialed youth who
17 were behind in school or who had already
18 dropped out. The Educational Option
19 program currently has the capacity to
20 serve about 2,000 students. The lessons
21 learned from these efforts are now
22 helping to shape the redesign of our next
23 generation of high-quality educational
24 options for young people who return
25 seeking a diploma. And Courtney can

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 speak to you a little bit about some of
3 the stuff that we're doing to redesign
4 the Educational Options program to better
5 meet the needs of our students.

6 Another important issue for
7 many out-of-school youth is their
8 distance from graduation and their need
9 to accumulate credits as quickly as they
10 can. To address this issue, in 2004-2005
11 the District launched three accelerated
12 high schools to enable hundreds of
13 overage and undercredentialed youth, many
14 of whom are former dropouts or are
15 involved in social services or juvenile
16 justice systems, to earn the credits they
17 need to graduate. We added an additional
18 program this year and we currently have
19 the capacity to serve 775 students, and
20 we have long waiting lists at each of the
21 programs.

22 Again, thanks to the support of
23 the Philadelphia delegation of the
24 Philadelphia Senate Democrats, the
25 District is in the process of placing

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Dropout and Recovery Specialists in seven
3 high schools with the highest dropout
4 rates in the City. These specialists
5 will handle a caseload of students at
6 risk of dropping out and will serve as a
7 liaison for students returning to school
8 from dropping out.

9 New research is suggesting that
10 it's possible for out-of-school youth to
11 succeed in classrooms that actually blend
12 secondary and post-secondary coursework.
13 In late 2005, Community College of
14 Philadelphia and the District received
15 funding support from national foundations
16 to replicate the nationally recognized
17 Gateway to College program, pioneered at
18 Portland Community College, that enables
19 out-of-school youth to attend community
20 college where they earn credits toward
21 both a high school diploma and a
22 post-secondary credential. The program
23 eventually will serve 400 students over
24 the next three years.

25 The Collaborative has developed

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 policy and funding recommendations for
3 consideration by the City, so I will
4 leave the fuller discussion on these
5 matters to other speakers. I would,
6 however, like to offer two
7 recommendations for the Committee's
8 consideration as you deliberate on these
9 important issues.

10 I suggest expanding the City's
11 commitment to alternative education
12 funding in ways that would enable the
13 District to create and tailor programs to
14 meet the individual needs of young people
15 who are currently not succeeding in a
16 traditional classroom. The District
17 currently serves approximately 2,800
18 students through the Educational Options
19 program and the transitional high
20 schools. With increased alternative ed
21 funding from the City, the District will
22 work with the state and workforce
23 development agencies to braid other
24 funding streams to serve 5,000 students
25 through these programs.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 I also suggest appropriating
3 funds to sustain and expand workplace
4 internships for youth in Philadelphia.
5 As you may know, the City is expected to
6 lose 1,200 youth internships due to the
7 higher costs associated with the new
8 minimum wage increases. With an
9 appropriation from the City, we could
10 sustain the current number of youth
11 internships and possibly create new
12 workplace opportunities, including
13 dedicated slots for former dropouts who
14 enroll in School District
15 diploma-granting programs.

16 Thank you for the opportunity
17 to present testimony before the Committee
18 this afternoon. The importance of
19 ensuring that all our young people
20 graduate from high school ready for
21 college and careers has never been
22 greater.

23 Thank you.

24 I also have responses or
25 general responses to some questions that

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 were raised earlier when Ted Kirsch was
3 testifying. One of the questions was
4 around the cost for reduced class size,
5 and I have some general figures, and we
6 can provide you with a more detailed
7 analysis in writing. But we believe it
8 will take close to 900 teachers, about
9 876 additional teachers, to move us to 25
10 kids in a classroom for grades K through
11 eight at a cost of somewhere between \$70
12 and \$80 million. And we can provide you
13 with a detailed analysis of this, but I
14 did want to give you the general numbers.

15 There were also some specific
16 questions about the number of vocational
17 schools. We have eight vocational
18 schools, and we have vocational -- or
19 career and technical education courses in
20 all of our high schools, and the programs
21 currently serve approximately 14,000
22 students.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you. Do you have any information on
25 defining "truancy"?

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MS. FRATTONE: On defining
3 "truancy"?

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
5 I mean, 80,000 is what? Is it 80,000
6 people, cases or what; do you know?

7 MS. FRATTONE: The report I
8 think you were speaking from this morning
9 was the Safe and Sound report that was
10 issued last year. So I don't know the
11 criteria that they used, but I can talk
12 to you a little bit about what we do.

13 Ted Kirsch was right. After
14 three absences, we do fill out the -- we
15 start interventions for students who are
16 truant after three unexcused absences.
17 So we start with the form that Ted Kirsch
18 talked about. I believe that the next
19 intervention level is five absences, then
20 eight absences, then ten absences. But I
21 can get you sort of a summary of what
22 interventions students receive at what
23 level. But we do start at three
24 absences.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 what the 80,000 means. Is that cases,
3 people, whatever.

4 MS. FRATTONE: Yeah. I mean,
5 we can work with Safe and Sound to better
6 understand their methodology on that.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
8 right. And we will make available -- in
9 fact, we met with Mr. Vallas as recently
10 as Friday, and we're concerned about two
11 programs, one in new West Philadelphia
12 High School --

13 Thank you, Mr. Bichner, who is
14 here, Al Bichner. And thank you, Leigh
15 Whitaker, who is here.

16 And so we have a letter ready
17 for him that I will give you today so
18 that maybe when we deal with the budget
19 in April -- April 24th you're due back --
20 we can have some discussion, because
21 there's some issue over funding and also
22 for a community center, Lucien E.
23 Blackwell Community Center between
24 Sulzberger and Martha Washington that
25 would enable the Board to make Sulzberger

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 High School and Martha Washington K to
3 eight before September when we'll have a
4 lot of pressure with the work at
5 University City High School. Al Bichner
6 knows. And I'll just make my letter
7 available to you and we'll have further
8 discussion on that when budget time
9 comes.

10 Thank you.

11 Councilman Goode.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair.

14 Good afternoon.

15 MS. FRATTONE: Good afternoon.

16 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Just going
17 through some statistics again. Last year
18 there were 406 murders in Philadelphia.
19 Over 60 percent of them were black males,
20 and over 60 percent of those black males
21 were under the age of 25. I thank the
22 District for providing the data that I
23 asked for, or at least one piece of the
24 data that I asked for, regarding the
25 murder victims and the perpetrators. And

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 based upon that data, for those that we
3 do have information on, we know the
4 graduation rate for those murdered was
5 less than 25 percent. I believe it was
6 24 percent. And we know of those who
7 were the accused perpetrators, we have
8 data for 127 of them. Only 23 graduated.
9 That's about 18 percent.

10 Is the District now willing to
11 admit that there is some correlation
12 between dropout rate and the murder rate?

13 MS. FRATTONE: I think what
14 you've heard today, the testimony from
15 Ruth and from Laura, is that there are
16 many factors that contribute to students
17 dropping out, and I think Ruth's
18 testimony, especially around the 90
19 percent of students that are involved in
20 the -- who have been in a delinquency
21 placement eventually drop out of school.
22 I think, yes, there is a correlation.

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Actually,
24 let me restate the question because
25 actually I've been stating the question

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 wrong about there being a correlation
3 between the dropout rate and the murder
4 rate. I guess the way I should ask the
5 question, is there a correlation between
6 the murder rate and the dropout rate, is
7 a better way to ask the question. Of
8 those people who are being murdered, we
9 know that most of them are -- most of the
10 murders are victim specific, that the
11 people actually knew each other. So, in
12 fact, if the epidemic within this City in
13 terms of murder rate is related to
14 victim-specific crimes and we then look
15 at the data related to the victims and
16 the perpetrators and see that the
17 overwhelming majority of both dropped out
18 and know the overwhelming majority of
19 both had prior arrests, is there a way to
20 better address this problem with that new
21 information and with that new focus?

22 MS. FRATTONE: Well, I think
23 one of the things that we are currently
24 doing with the City, at least as far as
25 with the delinquency system, is working

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 very closely with the new after-care
3 program through RETI-WRAP, which is the
4 transition program that students have to
5 attend when they're returning from
6 delinquent court placements, to do a
7 comprehensive assessment of them, so not
8 only of where they are academically but
9 also of what some of their social service
10 needs may be so that we can then work to
11 find them an appropriate school
12 placement. I mean, one of the things
13 that we worry about when a child is
14 returning from delinquent placement is if
15 they go back to the school where they
16 were before or back into the community
17 without the additional supports that they
18 need, they may fall back into those old
19 behaviors.

20 So we have been working very
21 closely and we will continue to work very
22 closely with our City partners in
23 assessing the students and doing the best
24 that we can to get them the supports they
25 need and put them in appropriate

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 educational programs. So it may be that
3 going back to a more traditional high
4 school environment isn't the right place
5 for them; they need to enroll in one of
6 the transition high schools. It may be
7 that a program like Job Corps might be
8 more appropriate for them, and really
9 looking at the individual student to
10 assess what might be the appropriate
11 placement for them.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: There were
13 two requests for information that I made
14 at the last hearing. One was for
15 graduation data for the victims and
16 perpetrators of murders last year. The
17 other was for a tracking of performance,
18 academic performance, of young black
19 males. That information has not been
20 forthcoming.

21 MS. FRATTONE: You didn't get
22 the stuff on the academic performance of
23 African-American males?

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I did not.

25 MS. FRATTONE: We can get that

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 for you.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

4 Lastly, you began to explain
5 and I may have interrupted you. Please
6 tell me what is the School District's
7 position now in terms of the correlation
8 between those people who were murdered
9 last year, committed murders last year
10 and their graduation rates, which is the
11 best way I can phrase it.

12 MS. FRATTONE: Yeah. I'm not
13 all that clear on the question and I'm
14 not sure I'm the best person to answer
15 it. I mean, I think as we learn from the
16 research, there are many factors that
17 contribute to a student dropping out of
18 school. We learn that it isn't just one
19 event or one cause, that we really have
20 to look at all of the circumstances for
21 that individual to figure out how to
22 better program for them.

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Actually, I
24 did turn the question around. I didn't
25 use the word "dropout." I said does the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 School District know yet or have a new
3 perspective yet on what it means that
4 those people who were murdered last year
5 and who committed murders last year share
6 extremely low graduation rates, between
7 18 and 24 percent, as compared to the
8 overall graduation rate of the School
9 District at 56 percent? I mean, does
10 that mean anything to the School
11 District?

12 MS. FRATTONE: The best I can
13 say, I think the School District has long
14 participated in the Youth Homicide Review
15 Committee, which has been looking at the
16 young men and women under the age of, I
17 think it's, 14 to 25, or whatever, who
18 are murdered or commit murders in the
19 City of Philadelphia and what their
20 circumstances are, so what systems were
21 they involved in, how successful were
22 they in school.

23 So the best way that I can
24 answer that is that the School District
25 has always been aware of a student's

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 academic progress and how that academic
3 progress may impact what happens in the
4 future of their lives and specifically
5 around murdering or being murdered in
6 Philadelphia. We've been an active
7 participant in that and will continue to
8 do so.

9 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Are you
10 participating in it for out-of-school
11 youth?

12 MS. FRATTONE: Yes. I mean, my
13 understanding of the committee, and I can
14 confirm this, is that it deals with any
15 person between the ages -- it's either 14
16 to 25 -- it goes up to 25, who was
17 murdered or murdered someone in the City,
18 and it's a cross-sector group that looks
19 at those individuals, and it helps
20 inform, I believe, some of the YVRP and
21 AVRP stuff that the City has been working
22 on over the last couple of years.

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So I guess
24 the better question is, so based upon the
25 activity you've already been involved in,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 where are you?

3 MS. FRATTONE: I'm not clear on
4 exactly what you're asking.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You said the
6 School District has been involved in this
7 activity in terms of reviewing data.
8 What does that tell you at this point?
9 Where are you in terms of --

10 MS. FRATTONE: Well, I think it
11 tells us what we've always known, which
12 is a young person's academic success or
13 lack of academic success has implications
14 on what will happen for them in the
15 future, whether it's being involved in
16 the adult prison system, murdering, being
17 murdered, being able to find employment,
18 being able to pursue career
19 opportunities. I think it's a more
20 comprehensive look that we've been trying
21 to make.

22 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So a more
23 comprehensive look at it, but what
24 conclusions have you drawn, what new
25 approaches are you taking? I notice in

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Mr. Vallas' testimony the first
3 highlighted area is the importance of a
4 systemic citywide approach, and I'm
5 assuming that that is toward the 56
6 percent graduation rate, not the much
7 lower graduation rate associated with
8 those people killing and being killed.

9 MS. FRATTONE: Around our
10 students who are returning from
11 delinquent court placement or who are
12 involved in the delinquency system, we do
13 work very closely with DHS and the
14 after-care system to figure out for those
15 students not only what an appropriate
16 educational placement would be but what
17 other social supports those kids need,
18 those young people need.

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: That was
20 part of my previous question. So is your
21 work really just associated with those
22 students who are still within the School
23 District, or how are you involved in
24 terms of out-of-school youth?

25 MS. FRATTONE: Well, I mean,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 some of those students returning from
3 delinquent court placement may have been
4 out of school before they were placed and
5 they come back to us when they return
6 from placement. I believe that for the
7 ones that are under 18 years of age, a
8 condition of their probation is that they
9 enroll in school. It may be -- I don't
10 know if Candace is still here. She may
11 be able to answer that question.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I guess my
13 question is also related to those
14 out-of-school youth that are not required
15 by age to be in school.

16 MS. FRATTONE: Right. So
17 that's why we're a part of this. And we
18 are using -- one of the big parts of
19 Project U-Turn is to increase awareness
20 and outreach to students who are out of
21 school, to young people who are out of
22 school, and to create not only ways for
23 them to find out what is available for
24 them but to also create more
25 opportunities, more appropriate

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 educational placements for them.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

4 MS. FRATTONE: Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you, Councilman.

7 Councilman Greenlee.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
9 afternoon, Ms. Frattone. How are you?

10 MS. FRATTONE: Good afternoon,
11 Councilman.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: The
13 disciplinary schools, I know there are a
14 number of incidents where students get
15 put in a disciplinary school when they,
16 for example, have a weapon. Sometimes
17 they at least make the argument they
18 didn't realize they had the weapon, it
19 was dad's coat or something like that.
20 Do you know if being put in those
21 schools, has that sometimes -- obviously
22 inadvertently on the School District's
23 part -- pushed them totally out of the
24 system; in other words, pushed them into
25 the dropout category? Do you know?

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MS. FRATTONE: We have -- so as
3 you may know, the District has a number
4 of disciplinary schools. They are now
5 run all by outside providers. We used to
6 run some of them ourselves and we
7 determined that we could find providers
8 to do it better than we did. Our largest
9 provider is Community Education Partners,
10 and we did -- Temple University, through
11 the Laboratory for Student Success, did a
12 longitudinal study on the students at CEP
13 and how they did while they were there
14 and how they did when they went back to
15 their schools. We would be more than
16 happy to provide you with a copy of that
17 study.

18 We are taking a closer look at
19 students who -- and hopefully we've
20 started to talk through the Collaborative
21 about how we may be able to do some of
22 this through the research with the
23 University, with the Kids Dataset and
24 Johns Hopkins and Ruth to really assess.
25 So the kids who don't make it all the way

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 through the disciplinary program and they
3 end up dropping out, what happened, where
4 did we lose them, was it because of
5 something that happened at the program,
6 was it because of where they were
7 academically, was it because of something
8 else that happened in their lives, and
9 how do we find ways to reconnect them.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Because
11 the reason I ask that, in my previous
12 life as a staff member, I used to hear
13 from a lot of parents who were saying,
14 You send my kid to this school, he or she
15 is going to be scared, they're not going
16 to stay there. And I guess that's what
17 I'm getting at.

18 Have you seen, without going
19 into a lot of specifics, have you seen
20 that that's a problem? And I guess the
21 second part, if it is, is there any
22 possible solution to it?

23 MS. FRATTONE: I think the
24 problem may be perception more than
25 reality. I mean, we encourage families

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 who have those concerns to at least give
3 the school a try, to go and enroll their
4 child so that they can see if in fact
5 that is true for them or not.

6 One of the other things we do
7 is that if we have a specific request
8 from a family that this school is too big
9 or this school is too far away, we try
10 and work with them and place them in
11 another alternative environment that may
12 be more appropriate for them.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

14 Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Frattone.

15 Thanks, Madam Chair.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you very much.

18 Any further questions?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you.

22 MS. FRATTONE: Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: The
24 Alternative Pathways panel, if you are
25 still here. Again, Courtney

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 Collins-Shapiro from the School District;
3 Meredith Malloy, YouthBuild; Marcus
4 Delgado, Principal, Fairhill Community
5 High School; and Judi Taylor-Dunn, Center
6 for Literacy.

7 Welcome. Thank you for your
8 patience.

9 Is Candace Bell here today?

10 MS. BELL: Yes, I am.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BELL: Okay.

12 You're next.

13 Thank you for your patience.
14 Good afternoon. Would you identify
15 yourself for the record and begin your
16 testimony.

17 MS. COLLINS-SHAPIRO: Good
18 afternoon, Councilwoman Blackwell and
19 members of the Committee. My name is
20 Courtney Collins-Shapiro and I'm the
21 Director of the School District's Office
22 of Multiple Pathways to Graduation. As
23 you heard Heather Frattone deliver
24 Mr. Vallas' testimony, I'm going to
25 explore some of the things that the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 School District has been doing to address
3 the out-of-school youth and at-risk youth
4 problem within the District. I'm going
5 to really talk about five promising
6 programs that we've begun or retooled
7 within the past 18 months.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
9 pull your mike up. It's hard to hear
10 you.

11 MS. COLLINS-SHAPIRO: Sure.

12 So the first type of program we
13 have are our accelerated high schools.
14 You talked earlier when Councilwoman
15 Reynolds Brown was here, she was talking
16 about hearing from the students who have
17 been here for some of the violence
18 panels, about students speaking about the
19 need to get back into school, that
20 they're there, they want to get back in
21 but they don't feel like there's an
22 option for them. We've created
23 accelerated schools within the District
24 that focus on meeting the needs of
25 students, remediating literacy and math

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 deficiencies, and moving these students
3 through the coursework required for
4 graduation at an accelerated pace. These
5 schools focus on high school dropouts
6 ages 16 to 21 who are at least one full
7 year behind in school. In many cases,
8 they're two or three years behind
9 academically. They also many times have
10 literacy deficiencies, where they're
11 reading at third, fourth or fifth grade
12 levels.

13 This year, 775 students from
14 all sections of the City are enrolled in
15 four accelerated high schools. However,
16 right now we have more than 800 students
17 who are on voluntary wait lists for these
18 schools, and we get more than 20 phone
19 calls every single week on our Project
20 U-Turn hotline from students and parents
21 looking to get into an accelerated
22 school. We believe that with new funding
23 earmarked for accelerated school
24 expansion, the members of the Youth
25 Transitions Collaborative could fill

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 2,000 seats in these schools within 30
3 days of opening. This is the most
4 significant thing we can do to see a drop
5 in our dropout rate immediately, get
6 these students back into school and on
7 the road to success.

8 The second program I want to
9 talk about is the Educational Options
10 program, formerly known as Twilight.
11 Again, today we're serving 2,000 youth
12 and adults ages 17 to 65 in this
13 afternoon and evening program in ten
14 different locations across the City. The
15 goal of this program is for students to
16 earn their diploma. Most students are
17 coming to us a little bit farther along,
18 so they maybe dropped out when they were
19 a junior or a senior in high school and
20 now they just need to complete their
21 diploma.

22 Low literacy remains a key
23 issue in this program. So a student may
24 have dropped out at junior year, but
25 unfortunately they're still reading two

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 or three years below grade level. So
3 this year, with the assistance of the
4 William Penn Foundation and the Center
5 for Literacy, we're launching a low
6 literacy hub within one of our programs.
7 We're starting that program actually next
8 week, where we will be focusing on
9 students who have taken literacy exams
10 and tested several years below grade
11 level and working with them on an
12 individual literacy instruction program
13 to see if we can help increase their
14 literacy gains.

15 We're proposing within the
16 District that we expand both the seats
17 and the locations of these programs so we
18 can, again, have more seats across the
19 City for students who are looking to
20 reconnect to school.

21 The Gateway to College program
22 is the newest program that we have for
23 out-of-school and at-risk youth. This
24 program currently enrolls 100 students
25 who were formerly dropouts. They are

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 enrolled completely at the Community
3 College of Philadelphia. They take all
4 their classes there, and they count for
5 both high school and college credits.
6 Most of these students will not only earn
7 a diploma but will earn most or all of
8 their credits towards an Associate's
9 degree. And we're seeing high demand for
10 that program. One of our challenges is,
11 that program requires an eighth grade
12 reading level. So many of the dropouts
13 who are looking to reconnect and see that
14 program as a very impressive option are
15 far below the literacy level needed to
16 participate. So we're starting to create
17 concepts for sort of a bridge to the
18 Gateway program so we can focus on
19 literacy for students who want to be
20 enrolled in that program.

21 In all three of the above
22 programs, we know the potential applicant
23 pool to be much larger than the current
24 combined capacity of 2,800 seats. Using
25 Dr. Nield's research and current School

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 District data, the current pool of
3 students includes roughly the 8,200
4 students that drop out of school every
5 year, and right now on the rolls we have
6 7,100 students ages 16 to 19 who are
7 enrolled in high schools but who are
8 overage for their grade and are at least
9 one full year in credits behind. These
10 students are in the next class of
11 dropouts if we do not act immediately to
12 find them and help them be successful.

13 The remaining two strategies
14 for students who are currently on the
15 verge of dropping out are preventative in
16 nature. The first I'll touch on are the
17 Student Success Centers. Again, with
18 help from the William Penn Foundation,
19 the District created these one-stop
20 centers within eight neighborhood high
21 schools with some of the highest dropout
22 rates in the City. By leveraging
23 resources and staff from the School
24 District and other partner agencies,
25 we've been able to provide comprehensive

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 college, career, academic and social
3 support services for all students within
4 these schools.

5 So you've heard many speakers
6 talk about providing those wrap-around
7 supports that students need beyond just
8 the academic preparation, and we do that
9 through these centers.

10 These centers are a logical hub
11 for dropout prevention services and are
12 easily replicable within accelerated
13 schools and other neighborhood high
14 schools. In fact, we've been invited to
15 New York by the Annenberg Center at the
16 end of this month to talk about New York
17 City public schools replicating this
18 model there.

19 For students who are
20 considering dropping out, the promise of
21 assistance with college preparation, a
22 trained adult to help them addressing
23 personal problems or linkages to paid
24 employment through internships are strong
25 incentives to stay in school. Included

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 in the Youth Transitions Collaborative
3 request to Council for additional funding
4 to support internships for youth is the
5 funding to bolster the workforce
6 development aspects of this model and to
7 connect the students most at risk of
8 dropping out directly to the workforce.

9 When Councilman Goode had
10 spoken earlier about how do we know that
11 we can guarantee we're going to target
12 those most at-risk students for those
13 jobs, those students who are juvenile
14 offenders, I can guarantee you that if
15 you target those funds and attach them to
16 accelerated schools and our at-risk youth
17 in the high schools, they're going to be
18 those students in those populations.
19 It's going to be children aging out of
20 foster care, it's going to be teen
21 parents, it's going to be students who
22 were once in delinquent placement,
23 because that's who is in our accelerated
24 schools.

25 This effort will support the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 success in our model that's already in
3 place. It will expand similar student
4 employment models for our accelerated
5 high schools, and I strongly urge Council
6 to consider funding a portion of the
7 citywide youth internship and workforce
8 development program that is linked to
9 accelerated and neighborhood schools as a
10 significant way to attract dropouts and
11 at-risk youth back to school.

12 Finally, our Dropout Prevention
13 Specialists. Social workers with a
14 background in working with at-risk teens
15 began working in seven neighborhood high
16 schools with high dropout rates just this
17 month. These specialists are targeting
18 the students most at risk of dropping out
19 using the data that we know to be the
20 most sort of the target factors from
21 Dr. Nield's research. So we're pulling
22 monthly drop-downs of data so we can
23 target the students who are absolutely at
24 risk of dropping out in these schools.

25 In addition, they'll be charged

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 with creating a support network of caring
3 adults in these buildings for each of
4 these youth to help increase their
5 chances of on-time graduation. A similar
6 program in Boston is showing promise of
7 early results in helping students return
8 to school, stay in school and connect to
9 the services that many of these students
10 need outside of school in order to remove
11 barriers to participating in education.
12 I am joining other members of the
13 Collaborative in asking Council to
14 consider our request to provide funding
15 to put at least one Dropout Prevention
16 Specialist in every neighborhood high
17 school to stem the tide of dropping out
18 as soon as possible.

19 In closing, I'd like to share
20 that Philadelphia is being viewed as one
21 of the leading cities nationally on the
22 issue of dropout prevention and recovery.
23 The District and the members of the
24 Collaborative are doing everything we can
25 within our limited fiscal means to create

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 new, viable educational pathways for this
3 very important group of youth. We are
4 now asking the City to join us by
5 providing us with some of the fiscal
6 resources needed to turn the dropout
7 problem around and to really become the
8 national leader on this issue. These
9 youth live in every councilmanic district
10 and they are out there in our communities
11 asking for more educational pathways to
12 success. Tangible things like more slots
13 in accelerated high schools, Dropout
14 Prevention Specialists and internships
15 for at-risk youth are immediate ways that
16 the City can invest in its future and
17 make an immediate impact on the lives of
18 thousands of young Philadelphians.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you very much.

22 Any questions?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 MS. TAYLOR-DUNN: Hi. My name
3 is Judi Taylor-Dunn and I'm the Director
4 of Education Services for the Center for
5 Literacy. I'm actually reading the
6 testimony of JoAnn Weinberger, our
7 President, Executive Director.

8 On behalf of the Center for
9 Literacy, I am pleased to be here today
10 to discuss the needs of youth at risk of
11 dropping out of school or those who have
12 already dropped out because of low
13 literacy levels. During the 2005-2006
14 fiscal year, CFL worked with over 1,000
15 young people ages 16 to 21. These were
16 high school dropouts, both male and
17 female, representing all races. These
18 young people came to CFL with goals,
19 wanting a high school diploma or GED. As
20 one so aptly stated, "There's somebody I
21 want to be."

22 Who are these youth? They are
23 under 21, and 77 percent were reading
24 below a sixth grade level. Eighty-seven
25 and a half percent had math skills below

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 the sixth grade level. Some were in
3 special education, while others were low
4 achievers. Many have adult
5 responsibilities as parents and workers
6 and need support as they search for
7 housing and strive to overcome barriers.
8 In many instances, their case worker or
9 parent calls CFL or the School District
10 to find out about the opportunities
11 available to them.

12 The Center for Literacy's
13 citywide programs are open to these youth
14 in the neighborhood centers, in community
15 programs and in family literacy programs.
16 Some of the classes are designed
17 particularly with youth in mind. In
18 others, the youth are integrated with
19 adult learners of all ages. Starting in
20 July 2005, literacy coaching was
21 available in the E3 centers.

22 At the same time, the Center
23 for Literacy was developing a Toolkit for
24 Serving Out-of-School Youth with Low
25 Literacy Levels as part of the City of

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Philadelphia's response to the challenge
3 of working with struggling youth using
4 funding from the Youth Transition Funders
5 Group collaborative. The research and
6 professional literature were analyzed for
7 this project and it can be summarized as
8 follows: Serving the literacy needs of
9 out-of-school youth, particularly those
10 reading below the sixth grade level, is a
11 complex task. Adolescence is a time for
12 upheaval for the vast majority of people,
13 and it is made more difficult by the
14 kinds of situations that require youth to
15 leave school early and require further
16 literacy training. However, if teachers
17 serving the out-of-school youth
18 population come to better understand how
19 adolescents develop, how they are
20 different from adults and how to provide
21 quality reading instruction to meet their
22 needs, these learners will be better
23 served regardless of the educational
24 setting.

25 In implementing this toolkit

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 that we created, we found out two items.
3 First of all, in order for students to be
4 successful in diploma-granting programs,
5 they must first be equipped with the
6 necessary skill base. Without these
7 foundational skills, they are likely to
8 once again become disengaged.

9 Second, to enable these youth
10 to continue in the program, they require
11 a system of providing caring adult
12 guidance. The underfunded adult
13 education system does not enable the
14 small class size or the supportive case
15 management that these youth require. The
16 School District needs to both, A, welcome
17 them back and, B, provide options or what
18 is being called multiple pathways. The
19 E3 centers and other special
20 out-of-school youth programs, including a
21 literacy hub model and a bridge program,
22 offer great promise in getting into place
23 the critical elements that lead to
24 success for these youth.

25 There is a great deal of work

22 Today, I specifically thank you
23 for holding this hearing and ask you to,
24 one, increase public awareness about the
25 dropout crisis by continuing to address

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 this issue by tracking progress and, two,
3 create high-quality workplace internships
4 for Philadelphia youth, including the
5 overaged and undercredentialed. The 3.5
6 million invested in these internships
7 have the potential to improve academic
8 achievement while increasing access to
9 adult mentoring and job readiness.

10 Thank you for the opportunity
11 to provide testimony.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much. Thank you.

14 Any questions?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you.

18 MS. MALLOY: My name is
19 Meredith Malloy and I'm with YouthBuild
20 Philadelphia Charter School. YouthBuild
21 Philadelphia Charter School is an
22 innovative academic and job-training
23 program that reengages young adults who
24 are 18 to 21 who have dropped out of high
25 school and puts them on the path to

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 future success. Students spend half of
3 their time on the work sites learning job
4 skills as they rehabilitate abandoned
5 houses for low-income families and the
6 other half in the classrooms where they
7 receive individualized academic attention
8 as they work toward their high school
9 diploma. Students also provide hundreds
10 of hours of community service every year.

Our students have rehabilitated over 60 houses since its inception. Our program has successfully mobilized at-risk out-of-school youth to become a positive workforce in Philadelphia. YouthBuild provides real and tangible benefits to the entire Philadelphia community.

Through our 14 years of experience, we know that out-of-school youth truly can turn their lives around if they are provided with the right resources and opportunities. At YouthBuild we put a real investment into our students, not just through academics

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 and job training but individualized care
3 through case management, life skills and
4 transition services to ensure that each
5 student knows they can be successful.

6 Every year YouthBuild receives
7 four times as many applications as
8 available positions, proving that when
9 you make a valuable opportunity
10 available, young people will show up to
11 take advantage of it.

12 When we invest in our youth,
13 lives truly can change. However, the
14 level of service that YouthBuild provides
15 cannot be sustained without a financial
16 commitment from our community. Our
17 community needs to support the transition
18 of these students into responsible
19 adulthood by providing high-quality
20 internships, living wage jobs and career
21 tracks. To truly reconnect to the
22 education and succeed in programs like
23 YouthBuild, young people need to be shown
24 that they can have a bright future and a
25 quality career. By providing support

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 from local tax dollars for youth
3 workforce development activities, we can
4 provide these students with the best
5 transition possible, ensuring that the
6 commitment to their future will not end
7 with a high school diploma.

8 In June 2007, we expect another
9 120 former dropouts to graduate from our
10 program. We would like for each of those
11 graduates to have a real plan in place
12 for their future success with
13 high-quality jobs and internships in the
14 community waiting for them. We would
15 love to be able to tell each and every
16 one of those graduates that their next
17 step is planned because their city
18 invested in them and because we all
19 believe that they can succeed.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much.

23 Any questions?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 know there are only a few of you left,
3 but we have to let the stenographer take
4 a moment break. So we will recess for
5 about three minutes and then we'll be
6 right back. Five minutes. Thank you.

7 (Short recess.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you very much. We'll resume our hearing.
10 And it wasn't even five minutes.

11 The next two people are already
12 at our table, at the witness table, and
13 we will allow them, Ms. LeBron and Ms.
14 Shipler, is it, to introduce themselves
15 to our record and begin their testimony.
16 Thank you for your patience.

17 MS. LeBRON: Good afternoon,
18 Councilwoman Blackwell --

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
20 afternoon.

21 MS. LeBRON: -- and other
22 members of Council present. My name is
23 Carmen Maria LeBron. I'm a leader with
24 the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing
25 Project and a member of the Incarnation

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 of Our Lord Catholic Church in the Olney
3 section of Philadelphia. EPOP is a
4 faith-based non-profit organization of
5 neighborhood institutions, churches and
6 schools. EPOP has been working with the
7 parents improving schools since its
8 founding in 1993. For the past two
9 years, EPOP has been a member of the
10 out-of-school youth collaborative working
11 together to reduce this City's escalating
12 dropout problem.

13 Each year thousands of our
14 young people leave school before
15 realizing the promise of a bright future
16 an education offers. They leave school
17 without ever being connected with the
18 assistance they need to turn their lives
19 around. All too often they become angry
20 and frustrated, turning to lives on the
21 streets or low-paying jobs. Overworked
22 and overwhelmed parents feel they have
23 nowhere to turn to help them. We need to
24 connect them with multiple pathways to
25 education that are here to help their

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 children.

3 We are here today to ask City
4 Council to support the Office of
5 Educational Support within the Department
6 of Human Services. The purpose of this
7 office would be to aid these thousands of
8 young people currently dropped out of
9 school to get back to the path to
10 success. This office would provide them
11 with the assistance they need to return
12 to school by matching them with programs
13 that meet their needs. Additional
14 support would be offered at high-risk
15 high schools to provide a roadmap to the
16 additional resources and support to begin
17 to turn around this serious problem.

18 As a parent of a young man who
19 dropped out of school at age 15, with the
20 reading level of twelfth grade, I know
21 the importance of connecting young people
22 to the services they need through one
23 central location. He recently returned
24 to school and received his GED at the
25 Keystone Job Corps located in Drums,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 knowing that Latino communities have
3 unique challenges and they're a growing
4 population in Philadelphia. Since 1990,
5 the Latino population in Philadelphia has
6 increased by over 65 percent, and that's
7 actually probably underrepresented. And
8 more than half of the Latino population
9 is younger than 25 years of age.

10 This point is really important,
11 and it's tremendously important when
12 compounded by the following startling
13 statistic: Latino males have the lowest
14 on-time graduation rate of any group in
15 Philadelphia, 29.3 percent to 38.2
16 percent. Less than 40 percent of our
17 population in eastern North Philadelphia
18 has graduated from high school. So we
19 see it not only among our at-risk youth,
20 but we see it in our adult population as
21 well. So the dropout crisis is really
22 real for all of our youth but especially
23 so for Latinos.

24 Given the language and cultural
25 barriers and the poverty that faces the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Latino community, Latinos are very
3 vulnerable to dropping out of school. So
4 how do we tackle this in an effective,
5 streamlined manner, factoring in all of
6 the stakeholders who can potentially
7 contribute to transformational change?
8 That's the question that we're constantly
9 asking. And we've been in the community
10 for 30 years. Our services reach more
11 than 10,000 youth per year, and most of
12 them are in eastern North Philadelphia,
13 but they do cover the whole gamut of the
14 City. And we view the schools as the
15 heart of the community, and as such, we
16 have strategically aligned many of our
17 youth programs within the educational
18 system.

19 Our contribution to the school
20 system provides supports to prevent high
21 school dropouts, and that's where most of
22 our programs focus. Even outside of the
23 school system we attempt to attack the
24 root causes that lead youth to drop out
25 of school, because prevention strategies

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 are paramount, but we realize these
3 strategies aren't enough. There are many
4 youth already out of school who
5 desperately need the larger community's
6 support, and that's why we're here today
7 to focus on this. And in response to
8 this, we are one of the community-based
9 organizations charged with managing one
10 of the City's E3 centers, which you keep
11 hearing about, and I'll go into a little
12 more detail.

13 The E3 centers were designed as
14 an intensive career preparation program
15 for youth age 14 to 21. Students who
16 drop out of school are very unlikely to
17 return. As such, the E3 centers were
18 designed to provide an appropriate and
19 youth-driven context, which is a really
20 important point, within which to educate
21 clients toward a high school equivalency
22 diploma and to build the essential skills
23 they need to enter the workforce.
24 Members work with our staff to identify
25 their career interests, they set goals,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 they have life plans, and they try and
3 gain skills that they need to achieve
4 those goals.

5 But this is hard work and it
6 takes extensive dedication to each of the
7 youth to ensure that they meet the goals
8 set out for them. This is especially so
9 for the youth who have entered into the
10 juvenile justice system, because as
11 you've heard, approximately 90 percent of
12 them drop out of school.

13 On average currently, \$3,000 is
14 dedicated to each youth slot in an E3
15 center, and this is an amount that
16 differs quite dramatically from the
17 upwards of 40,000 that can be spent on
18 youth placement residential treatment.

19 One of the most important
20 investments in the E3 center and in many
21 of our youth programs is human capital.
22 Our career advisors and instructors are
23 vital investments, because research
24 demonstrates that the primary critical
25 factor in successfully intervening with

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 these youth is a caring adult, another
3 point that you've already heard today.

4 Nevertheless, under the current
5 funding structure at \$3,000 per youth, we
6 must often make difficult choices
7 regarding providing social or
8 instructional supports. So we're finding
9 that the needs are much more than just
10 education and workforce development.
11 When we have to make those difficult
12 choices, we fail to give the youth
13 comprehensive support, resulting in very
14 few gains leading to a degree or an
15 employment. So we're really talking
16 about wrap-around services here. As
17 such, we propose increased capacity
18 within the current centers to fully
19 address the myriad needs that each of our
20 clients present.

21 Another essential need for our
22 centers is the entree for more workplace
23 internships for our clients, as real-time
24 experience not limited to the classroom
25 is often the essential ingredient that

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 motivates the youth to change his or her
3 life. We respectfully request your
4 partnership in supporting workplace
5 internships for our youth for the
6 upcoming fiscal year.

7 With an emphasis on quality
8 over quantity, we will more likely ensure
9 real positive change in the lives of our
10 clients we serve. We have seen in the
11 year that we have operated the E3 center
12 the absolutely essential component of
13 personal connections with an adult in the
14 center. And, again, an adult connection
15 is one of the most influential
16 components.

17 So I just want to quickly share
18 an example of one of our clients with
19 you. This is a client story. Her name
20 is Christina and she's a 17-year-old
21 Latina who dropped out of school when she
22 was 14. She was in the ninth grade. She
23 had become pregnant, and when her baby
24 was born, her mother kicked her out of
25 the house. Fourteen, pregnant, kicked

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 out of the house.

3 So where does this leave
4 Christina? She doesn't have consistent
5 childcare. She has been evicted three
6 times from housing. She doesn't have
7 relationships with her parents, the
8 father of her daughter or other
9 relatives. So she's very alone. She's
10 an only child. And she's currently
11 looking for work, but because of her
12 childcare situation, she hasn't been able
13 to hold down a job for very long. And
14 this is one of our clients. This is a
15 real person. And she's not an exception,
16 this is the rule.

17 She's connected to the E3
18 center last January. So she's been with
19 us for a year. And so far, Christina has
20 improved from fourth grade reading to
21 seventh grade reading and math levels.
22 She's currently in one of our GED
23 classes, and she's completed a six-week
24 program in computer repair program within
25 the center. She works about 15 to 20

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 hours per week in the program. So it's
3 an internship in-house. But just as
4 important, through case management she
5 has found more stable housing and
6 childcare. She's built better peer and
7 social networks and she's working toward
8 involving the father of her daughter in
9 their lives.

10 The connection she has made
11 with her case manager and the direction
12 the case manager has been able to provide
13 her have been successful keys in bringing
14 her toward self-sufficiency. She's not
15 quite there, though. More time,
16 committed focus and resources will be
17 dedicated to Christina so that she
18 actually receives her GED and works in a
19 more sustainable job, and we're committed
20 to getting her there.

21 So just, again, to focus on the
22 need for wrap-around services, when you
23 have no family support, you have
24 childcare issues, you have housing issues
25 and you're only 17 years old, the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 supports that these children need -- and
3 she is still a child even though she is a
4 mother -- the supports that they need are
5 pretty great. So the wrap-around
6 services at the E3 centers are really
7 important and need to be emphasized.

8 And there are many Christinas
9 in Philadelphia. We aim to provide
10 quality outcomes-based results that will
11 lead our clients toward self-sufficiency.
12 The collaboration of all of these
13 organizations that have been here today
14 is significant and need support.

15 In addition to financial
16 support from City Council, like other
17 people have mentioned, public education
18 efforts around the issue of dropouts and
19 increased community collaboration for a
20 proposed solution on your behalf would
21 assist us immeasurably. With such
22 limited time to discuss these really
23 important issues, we invite you, any and
24 all City Councilmembers, if you would
25 like to view our E3 center, we're right

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 at Girard and 5th if you'd like to come
3 out and to see any of our youth programs
4 so that you can more ultimately see the
5 important supports we offer to enhance
6 the work in and out of our schools.
7 We're committed partners, and we really
8 thank you for your time.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you very much. Thank you.

11 Thanks for your patience, too.

12 MS. BELL: I'd like to commend
13 you, Councilwoman Blackwell, and your
14 Committee for having us all here for the
15 second time to run through our testimony
16 more completely. My name is Candace Bell
17 and I'm a Program Officer at the William
18 Penn Foundation and I'm here to speak in
19 support of Project U-Turn.

20 As you know, William Penn's
21 commitment to education in Philadelphia
22 is both longstanding and substantial, as
23 is our commitment to ensuring the
24 economic and social well-being of the
25 City. The dropout crisis is described in

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 the Project U-Turn report and testified
3 to by those who have already spoken is
4 one that has serious implications beyond
5 school reform or quality of life in our
6 neighborhoods. Philadelphia cannot move
7 into the 21st century with close to 50
8 percent of its young adults not having a
9 twelfth grade level of educational
10 proficiency. What employer is going to
11 want to move here with half of the
12 workforce unqualified for jobs in this
13 new high-tech economy? This is a ball
14 and chain on progress at all levels that
15 cannot be ignored any longer. It impacts
16 the City's economy, its tax burden, its
17 safety, its quality of life and civic
18 life. And some of this we've already
19 discussed this afternoon.

20 The Foundation first became
21 involved with this issue through a
22 national funders affinity group called
23 the Youth Transition Funders Group in
24 2002. We participated in the design and
25 funding of the seven-city initiative that

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 has produced Project U-Turn here in
3 Philadelphia and in similar initiatives
4 in Boston, New York, Portland, San Jose,
5 Washington, DC and Las Vegas. Locally,
6 the Foundation has invested \$2.4 million
7 to date on this issue as part of the
8 local matching funds that are required by
9 the nationals for the initiative.

10 We feel a critical element to
11 the success of Project U-Turn has been
12 the participation of multiple systems in
13 the initiative, because we feel this is a
14 problem that goes beyond what the
15 District can do on its own, and I think
16 that the testimony from Congreso
17 certainly underscores that in a big way.

18 We're proud of the fact that
19 the District, DHS, Family Court and the
20 Youth Council have set aside politics and
21 brought their best minds to bear on this
22 issue. Not surprisingly, Philadelphia
23 stands out among the other cities in its
24 progress to date, astonishingly enough.
25 I have a colleague who sometimes says

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 it's like being the tallest midget in the
3 circus, but this is a big issue and we've
4 just started working on it. So we should
5 realize our progress but realize there's
6 a lot more to be done. And, in fact,
7 Philadelphia has an opportunity with
8 Council's support to be a national leader
9 on this issue. There are several actions
10 Council can take that will support this
11 work.

12 First of all, create an office
13 of education within DHS to help youth in
14 their care earn a high school diploma.
15 That 90 percent dropout rate is just
16 outrageous, right, and something needs to
17 be done about that.

18 Provide resources to place
19 social workers in schools with low
20 graduation rates and/or a large number of
21 students in DHS's care.

22 Three, expand the number of
23 paid student workplace internships, as
24 discussed by Laura Shubilla earlier.

25 And, No. 4, support pregnant

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 and parenting teens in finishing their
3 high school education by providing case
4 management services to pregnant and
5 parenting teens.

6 The William Penn Foundation for
7 its part is committed to supporting
8 Project U-Turn going forward. National
9 foundation investment will also continue
10 through the Youth Transition Funders
11 Group, provided the City systems and the
12 District continue to work together and
13 prioritize this problem for investment.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you very much.

17 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
19 for your testimony and for your
20 recommendations.

21 Have you had a chance to share
22 Recommendation No. 1 with DHS, might you
23 have had an opportunity to be a part of
24 the year's past work with the Blue Ribbon
25 Commission, which really took a wholistic

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 it on behalf of the Foundation in an
3 official sense, but that has certainly
4 been a recommendation I know that has
5 been given to DHS as part of our
6 collaborative efforts both on the
7 behavioral health side and also on the
8 Youth Transitions Collaborative work.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

10 MS. BELL: So two ways.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

12 Well, thanks again for your important
13 testimony.

14 MS. BELL: Thank you very much
15 for having me.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Nice to
17 meet you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you very much.

20 I believe we have three people
21 left. I will name them. If there's
22 someone else who would like to testify,
23 please let us know.

24 Shelly Yanoff, Philadelphia
25 Citizens for Children and Youth, and we

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 thank her on all that she's done to
3 organize today the speakers and all that
4 was concerned. Great job.

5 Leola Stowall Muse, are you
6 here?

7 MS. STOWALL MUSE: Yes, I am.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
9 Vernard Johnson. I know Vernard.

10 Anyone else who would like to
11 testify?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
14 right. That will be our last -- yes,
15 sir. Okay. We'll get you next. Okay.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. YANOFF: Thank you. Good
18 afternoon. Before starting, also I want
19 to thank John Christmas from your office,
20 Councilwoman, for his help in setting
21 this up, and I want to thank Councilman
22 Greenlee and Councilwoman Blondell
23 Reynolds Brown and Councilman Goode, who
24 was here earlier, and even Councilwoman
25 Verna, President Verna, for really

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 recognizing the critical importance of
3 this issue to the City, to the youth and
4 to our community.

5 I also wanted to just note
6 before I forget, since Councilman Goode
7 keeps raising the issue of the number of
8 kids who have been either murdered or
9 murdered who are African-American male
10 and what was their education, what was
11 their dropout rate, the first issue that
12 the public school Notebook did -- and I
13 wrote one of the articles and titled it
14 "What Gets Counted Counts," and the
15 reality is that unless we continue to
16 count how many kids are dropping out,
17 what's their story and what can we do to
18 change that story and to make it better,
19 we're going to continually be behind. We
20 can do this. So Councilman Goode's
21 questions, while they're uncomfortable,
22 they are -- in many ways we need to be
23 uncomfortable in order to look closely at
24 this issue, and we need to have the
25 police make their data on arrests

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 available to the Kids Data Group so that
3 in fact we can answer how many kids were
4 arrested who had dropped out, who dropped
5 out, who were in foster care.

6 One of the issues that this
7 collaborative has been really pushing has
8 been combining and collaborating all of
9 the systems' work so that we can look at
10 a child not just because he's in DHS's
11 care, but we should know how is he doing
12 in school, what's happening to him in the
13 rest of his life, and too often we only
14 look at kids through one perspective. So
15 the young women who are pregnant and
16 parenting, they get prenatal care, but
17 the prenatal care people do not have the
18 time or wherewithal to connect them back
19 to school or to ask about that. One of
20 the things that we can do, that Council
21 can do is to really support the
22 collaborative effort.

23 So it's not just counting
24 wholistically, but it's also saying,
25 Let's put social workers in high schools

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 that have high foster care, high number
3 of kids in foster care, or low graduation
4 rates. Because we know that kids who
5 drop out often say they don't have
6 anybody to talk with, they don't have
7 anybody that they can turn to with their
8 problems. Well, we know these kids have
9 problems. Let's put the social workers
10 there. You can support that.

11 We know that the health
12 centers -- and we know that you have been
13 fighting for more support in health
14 centers. We want you to keep fighting
15 for that, because all of Philadelphia
16 needs our health centers to be able to
17 treat people who need to be treated, but
18 we need -- when young women go for
19 prenatal care, we need them to have the
20 ability in those centers and we need to
21 have teams to expand our teams of
22 nurse-family partnerships and maternity
23 care coalitions so that people can
24 actually help these young women who are
25 pregnant go back to school or stay in

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 successful projects for kids in
3 transition, whether it's in transition
4 back from juvenile delinquency or back
5 from foster care or back from having a
6 child or just back from not having been
7 successful in school. Those transition
8 times are very, very important.

9 We need a collaboration between
10 the City, the state, the School District
11 and community. This is a problem shared
12 by all, and it cannot be solved unless we
13 all work together.

14 So we believe that we are close
15 to an epidemic, and we believe that with
16 your help, we can treat it seriously, but
17 that help will require budget time
18 serious negotiations. We need you to
19 fight for 45, 48 percent of the kids in
20 the City, and when you fight for them,
21 you'll be fighting for the City's future.

22 I thank you very much.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much. Again, we thank you for
25 all that you've done today. And I know

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 we have probation officers in more
3 schools. We need counselors, probation
4 officers.

5 MS. YANOFF: Exactly.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
7 certainly more health professionals, as
8 we mentioned, people that kids can talk
9 to. Thank you very, very much.

10 Leola Stowall Muse.

11 Thank you, Shelly.

12 MS. YANOFF: I just want to
13 make sure that you have this, the
14 breakdown.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you.

17 Ms. Leola Stowall Muse. Thank
18 you.

19 I know your name and it just
20 slipped my head. Thank you as well.
21 William Butcher.

22 MS. STOWALL MUSE: Thank you,
23 Council Chair Lady. Before I read my
24 testimony, I would like for the record
25 the date of this testimony corrected from

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 be placed on the District's calendar.

3 Consenting men and women may
4 practice gay and lesbian acts on top of
5 Billy Penn's hat if they choose to.
6 However, almighty God will be the judge.
7 However, our babies should not be
8 subjected to this.

9 On January 23rd of this year,
10 NBC 10 conducted a poll regarding same
11 sex relationships being taught in school.
12 Eighty-seven percent were opposed. On
13 CNN last week they showed a clip in which
14 two men entered a home where a party was
15 being held hosted by young gay men.
16 Seven of the young men were slain. It
17 was stated by the commentator this
18 occurred because the men did not want
19 this in their community around their
20 children. The commentator stated this
21 took place in Chicago. I pray this does
22 not happen in Philadelphia.

23 Councilmembers, as members of
24 the Education Committee of this Council,
25 I respectfully ask you to tell Mr. Vallas

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 that your constituents do not want Gay
3 and Lesbian History Month placed on the
4 2007-2008 school calendar.

5 Mr. Vallas is the Goliath and
6 we/I are David, only we are not armored
7 with a slingshot or a stone. We are
8 armored with the words of almighty God,
9 "The battle is the Lord's and He will
10 give us the victory."

11 If the request regarding the
12 calendar and other pertinent issues
13 regarding our children attending the
14 public schools are not honored, we will
15 revert back to the days of the late
16 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King and
17 Mother Rosa Parks and attempt to launch
18 in this city the Philadelphia public
19 school system boycott.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much. Thank you for your
23 patience. Thank you for contacting us
24 about this issue and your willingness to
25 come to the hearing to voice your

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 continuing concerns. Thank you very
3 much.

4 MS. STOWALL MUSE: You're
5 welcome. And Chair Lady and members of
6 this Education Committee, I am
7 prayerfully hoping that you will meet
8 again. I know you were kind enough to
9 get in touch with Mr. Vallas as you
10 stated. You were the only Councilmember
11 that we heard anything back from. We
12 contacted all of the Councilpersons that
13 were on the Education Committee. You
14 were the only one to get back to us in
15 regards to this issue.

16 I know that your constituency
17 has a large amount of gay and lesbians in
18 your constituency. We are not attacking
19 the gay and lesbian community. We are
20 saying to tell Mr. Vallas that this
21 should not be taught in our schools to
22 our small children.

23 One of the people in our
24 committee stood by the door of one of the
25 gay teachers and this is what they are

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 teaching our schools, and they are lying
3 when they say that they are not, because
4 we planted somebody there so that we have
5 the evidence whereas these people are
6 teaching this stuff to our babies. And I
7 know that you have children, Councilwoman
8 Blondell Reynolds Brown. I don't know if
9 you have any, Mr. Greenlee, but I do know
10 that you would not want gay and lesbian
11 history taught to your children, and this
12 is what we are saying we don't want with
13 ours. And this is our last time tomorrow
14 to go before Mr. Vallas and the SRC. If
15 they do not comply with removing this
16 abomination from this calendar, it is on.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you again very much. Thank you.

19 Mr. Butcher.

20 MR. BUTCHER: Yes. Madam
21 Chairman and members of the Board, the
22 lady next to me mentioned about the Gay
23 and Lesbian History Month. I just want
24 to make a small comment on that.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Your

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 first name is William; is it not?

3 MR. BUTCHER: Yes, ma'am.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Right.

5 MR. BUTCHER: It has Gay and
6 Lesbian History Month. For a long time
7 in the school system, with 65 to 70
8 percent of the children being of
9 African-American heritage, there's no
10 black history really. So they want to
11 have a gay history month, but they're not
12 giving the children, which are 65 to 70
13 percent, black history studies, which I
14 think should be mandatory.

15 I live in Philadelphia. I
16 cannot go to Bryn Mawr, Devon, Lower
17 Merion, Upper Merion, sit on one of their
18 Boards saying, No more white history,
19 we're going to bring in black history.
20 They'd run me out of town. I could not
21 even sit on one of those Boards, but we
22 have Boards coming from out of town -- I
23 mean people, I'm sorry, which I have no
24 problem with these people personally, but
25 I think what goes on in Philadelphia

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 should be done by Philadelphians. I feel
3 that we should have an elected school
4 Board and just -- Leon is not here. He's
5 a nice guy, whatever, but I went out
6 to --

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: He was
8 invited and said he would be here.

9 MR. BUTCHER: I saw that. I
10 saw that. But I just want to say this:
11 I was kind of -- not depressed. I don't
12 know the right word for it. But Leon
13 gave a press conference about two weeks
14 ago and they were supposed to elect or --
15 no; appoint a member to the Board. So
16 they said they would make that decision
17 around the middle of February. Well,
18 this was back in January when they had
19 this press conference. But that morning,
20 the Governor or someone appointed a
21 qualified black female to the Board.
22 Leon was -- and the people there were
23 looking for a black qualified male to the
24 Board. So I think that was underhand
25 with the state.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Now, the last time -- that's
3 what I have to say about that.

4 Now, the last time I was here
5 was the violence, youth violence, which
6 is a year ago just about. It was on
7 February the 8th. And at that meeting,
8 Councilman Blackwell, what came out of
9 that? Is any report of all the testimony
10 that you have, is that somewhere where I
11 could read those things?

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: As you
13 see, we have a stenographer. Everything
14 is a matter of public record, and we
15 can -- that copy is available for you.

16 MR. BUTCHER: Okay. There was
17 a resolution or something?

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: From
19 our violence hearings, yes. We came back
20 and we made a recommendation to the full
21 Council from the Education Committee that
22 they adopt it. I'll pull that for you.
23 Mr. Christmas will make that available to
24 you.

25 MR. BUTCHER: Thank you. And

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 I'm going to try to be brief what I have
3 to say, but what was so beautiful that
4 came out of that meeting -- in fact, I
5 told you, girlfriend, that was a long
6 day, you know. I mean, I just loved you
7 more, you know.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you.

10 MR. BUTCHER: But there's a
11 lady, a Dr. Geralyn Radcliffe. She's a
12 Ph.D., an ABPP, whatever that is, but
13 she's got all these lists of things she's
14 done, but her recommendations -- and she
15 said, As I move forward, I respectfully
16 offer these recommendations to Council or
17 whoever. Number one, it says consider
18 implementing empirical validated programs
19 to reduce violence in a thoughtful way.

20 Now, empirically means
21 hands-on, not the theory that we get in
22 the school. It's like seeing and
23 touching. Just to give you an example
24 was the children at West Philadelphia
25 High School in their motor shop or

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 whatever you call it. They competed with
3 other universities and General Motors
4 themselves to create this motor that did
5 something that they couldn't do. Now,
6 these were just teenagers, but the theory
7 was there but they also had the ability
8 to have a hands-on.

9 So I think that within this
10 problem we have with dropouts, there's a
11 chart here that comes from a kids count,
12 the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and it
13 states here that children in poverty in
14 Philadelphia are 36 percent compared to
15 the 50 city averages, other cities, 50 of
16 them, with only 28 percent of poverty.
17 Then it goes on to children in
18 single-parent families, city average, 50
19 city average, 43 percent; children in
20 Philadelphia, 58 percent. And there's a
21 last one that I just want to read off is
22 children with no parents in the labor
23 force, 50 city average, 14 percent;
24 Philadelphia, 26 percent.

25 Now, I'm with alumni of

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Sulzberger and they gave me the task of
3 dealing with poverty. I'm putting
4 together a committee for that, and
5 violence -- no. They wanted me to do the
6 violence thing, but I put poverty there
7 because I feel they both go together.
8 And the way it is now in the school
9 system we have, our children are not --
10 they're not ready for work because
11 they're not getting the proper education.

12 So when there's a problem in a
13 city, in a country -- in the Civil Rights
14 Movement I'll speak on, that's history,
15 and we had the Kings and the Jacksons,
16 but the ones that were out there going to
17 jail more than the Kings and the Jacksons
18 were the students. The students are
19 really the ones that made that work.
20 They made it happen. They didn't sit
21 next to President Johnson when he was
22 signing all those bills, but they were
23 the ones that did it, and even you and
24 other people who are in City government
25 in high positions might not have gotten

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 there without those children. Maybe you
3 would; maybe you wouldn't.

4 So the children are looking at
5 history, and I'm talking about mainly the
6 black children. They're looking at the
7 history that there was children involved
8 in the Civil Rights Movement. There's
9 going to have to be children involved in
10 the Children's Rights Movement, the right
11 to have a better life. The movement
12 means that there will be health looked
13 at, education looked at and their welfare
14 involved. Those three things. And they
15 feel that they have given enough through
16 the politicians or the parents, because,
17 see, the children can't borrow money,
18 they cannot sign a contract under 18,
19 they cannot vote, and they can't work
20 9:00 to 5:00. It's against the law for
21 the children to be involved in those four
22 things. But there's something they can
23 be involved in. They can be involved
24 legally in going into business.

25 In Philadelphia, we have

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 650,000 supposedly people of
3 African-American heritage, and less than
4 one percent are in business. There's no
5 way that that should be that way. But
6 who are the childrens blaming? Not City
7 Council. They're blaming their parents.
8 And this Children's Rights Movement will
9 not come down to City Hall and raise
10 hell, so to speak. They're going to go
11 to their parents and say, Mother, Father,
12 Uncle, whatever, friends, we got a
13 problem, but I tell you what, we have a
14 plan. The children have a children
15 empowerment plan, and it's a little bit
16 of Martin Luther King in it, a little bit
17 of Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey. This is
18 Black History Month I'm talking about.
19 And WB Dubois. But mainly they're going
20 to have a whole lot of Donald Trump and
21 Bill Gates and the rest of those
22 republican corporations.
23 See, the children know that
24 their parents, whatever it is, vote --
25 most of them vote democrat. The majority

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 vote democrat. But the majority of their
3 parents spend money with republican
4 corporations. And they do not appreciate
5 them, because what they do is outsource
6 to make a better profit. You can't even
7 get an x-ray in most hospitals and get it
8 back. It has to go to India or China and
9 then bounce back over here.

10 So the point is that where are
11 our children going? Who has a solution?
12 Well, the children have a solution. They
13 are going into business.

14 Now, you might think that it's
15 kind of silly, but children are smarter
16 than we think they are. But here's the
17 deal: They can't run a business, but
18 they can own it, but they can also have
19 an advisory board to advise them on their
20 employees or whoever. They'll have MBAs
21 on the advisory board, CPAs. They even
22 going to have doctors on the board or
23 dieticians, because they're going to eat
24 different food in the school system now.
25 That grease is going. They even going to

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 tell their parents to have different food
3 in their house.

4 So what's going to make this
5 work, they're going to have a union.
6 See, the teachers are educated. They
7 have a union. You have all these strong
8 men, trash collectors, SEPTA drivers,
9 government workers, they have a union.
10 So the children are going to have a
11 union, and as a union, you don't have to
12 be afraid of them striking, walking out
13 of the classroom. It's the Philadelphia
14 Student Achievement Union, and the person
15 they're going to speak to will be their
16 parents, not you guys. They will tell
17 their parents what they want, and then
18 with their union they will negotiate with
19 the state.

20 Now, just to go this way:
21 Lower Merion, Devon, Bryn Mawr, children
22 out there get 14, 15, I don't know, a
23 thousand dollars a year compared to eight
24 or nine here in Philadelphia. Out there
25 they pay six percent sales tax. They're

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 affluent. The poverty-stricken people
3 here pay seven percent. People who work
4 in Philadelphia that live outside of
5 Philadelphia pay a lower rate of City
6 wage tax because, Well, we don't live
7 here, we just work here. But when
8 someone goes out to Radnor, wherever,
9 outside of the City, on their payroll
10 they pay City wage tax and they don't
11 work in the City. So it seems that the
12 affluent has a better deal than our
13 little babies.

14 So in closing, I would like to
15 say there is a union already. We have
16 not come up with anything new. There's
17 something called a Philadelphia Student
18 Union. They have about five or six high
19 schools. And this report is a few years
20 old, but they have an operating budget of
21 like \$320,000. I'm quite sure it's more
22 than that now. But 73 percent of that
23 goes to salaries. Now, that's salaries.
24 That's not rent for the building on
25 Locust Street. That's not for office

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 supplies or whatever. So there's not
3 very much left over, as I can see, for
4 the students, but, of course, they get 90
5 percent of their money is raised through
6 foundation and grants they get.

7 Now, these people that came
8 here before me are all -- they're
9 subsidized by federal and state
10 governments and private foundations or
11 whatever to represent mostly black
12 children. Is it a job or is it something
13 that's helping the children? I don't
14 know. We are not here -- well, first of
15 all, I forgot to introduce myself. My
16 name is William Butcher. Maybe I didn't
17 say that. And I'm a children's lobbyist.
18 That's why I'm so into this, because I
19 lobby for the children.

20 So I'm here to let you know
21 that next February of Black History Month
22 I would like to come and not say one
23 word, but have the children make a
24 presentation of what they have acquired
25 in a year with their plan.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 So I would like to thank each
3 and every one of you for giving me the
4 opportunity to speak.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you, Mr. Butcher.

7 Mr. Vernard Johnson.

8 MR. VERNARD JOHNSON: Hi,
9 Councilwoman.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Hi.

11 MR. VERNARD JOHNSON: And
12 Councilwoman Brown. And I don't know the
13 new Councilman's name.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Greenlee.

15 MR. VERNARD JOHNSON: How are
16 you, sir?

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: How are
18 you?

19 MR. VERNARD JOHNSON: Good. I
20 just want to make a few comments.

21 If you pull up the report that
22 I gave you at the last hearing,
23 Councilwoman, if you look at that
24 report -- and maybe if you could find it,
25 you might share it with the other two

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 Councilpeople up there. But if you look
3 at that report that's minus names, you'll
4 find maybe 50 or 60 students that the
5 School District -- I'm sorry Mr. Bichner
6 left -- that the School District was
7 aware of since -- they were aware those
8 children had problems since I've known
9 those children in fifth grade. They're
10 now tenth graders.

11 We did a quick history of those
12 children by just pulling the profile,
13 with the cooperation of the principal,
14 and we were able to pull profiles of 50
15 or 60 children, Mr. Bruce and myself and
16 the principal of Peirce School. It's
17 time to start calling names of schools.
18 And we were able to do that in 15 or 20
19 minutes. We were able to collect all
20 that data that went all the way back to
21 kindergarten, analyzed the days that
22 children missed from kindergarten to, in
23 that case, it was eighth grade -- seventh
24 grade, and then we broke out eighth grade
25 by itself. And some of the students have

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 missed two, three, four hundred days of
3 school from kindergarten to eighth grade.
4 And no one did anything about it? No one
5 said anything about it? I don't
6 understand. And it didn't take any money
7 to do it. And now those students are in
8 high school. And I'm told the other day
9 by Dr. Thornton, the Chief Academic
10 Officer, is that we've done those
11 children an injustice over there in that
12 high school. But they knew about those
13 kids, and they did absolutely nothing.
14 They did absolutely nothing about their
15 attendance.

16 It wasn't -- last year it
17 wasn't until students were being referred
18 to Truancy Court last year when they had
19 about 40 or 50 days of absenteeism.
20 That's a long way from what I heard today
21 when they talk about three days. The
22 Truancy Court was backed up to the point
23 that they weren't even able to get those
24 kids in from the year before. So it's
25 probably a good move on the part of the

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 Mayor to have that meeting at Temple and
3 kind of like give everybody -- whatever
4 you call it, you know, just wrote it off
5 if you came to the meeting, because the
6 courts couldn't keep up with it anyway,
7 because they weren't doing anything. I
8 mean, we know that.

9 So I talked to the lady from
10 Hopkins and said, What's the action plan?
11 We got the data. Now what do you do with
12 it? It doesn't make any sense to me. It
13 seems like people were coming to talk
14 about how to get their organization
15 funded, and we need to be talking about
16 how to support the kids in the School
17 District and how to support the families
18 of the children in the school. Just my
19 view.

20 So I just want to say this:
21 There's a budget hearing committee
22 meeting tonight made up of community
23 folks like me and other community folks
24 and parents. It's at 5 o'clock in
25 Mr. Vallas' conference room. I've said

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 to Mr. Vallas, I think someone from the
3 Education Committee should be invited to
4 be a part of that meeting, taking the
5 privilege to do that. But anyway, it's
6 tonight at 5 o'clock. And we're told
7 that if the School District gets the type
8 of money that it needs to balance this
9 budget and go into next year, that it
10 will use the money towards classroom
11 reduction size, towards programs around
12 dropout prevention and towards classroom
13 modernization. And I just -- I want to
14 add a few pieces onto there. There needs
15 to be a full-time nurse in every
16 building. Our children are coming to
17 school ill. Their parents aren't -- or
18 lots of parents, not all, aren't getting
19 those well baby visits, those well child
20 visits, and so lots of our kids are in
21 school ill. And so a school nurse to
22 help the kid through the school day but
23 also to educate the parent about the
24 importance of getting those well visits
25 could maybe help in improving attendance.

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 People have already talked
3 about social workers in schools, and I
4 think we do need social workers in
5 schools to deal with the kind of problems
6 and challenges that our students and
7 children are facing every day. And maybe
8 we could look at social workers that are
9 coming out of Lincoln and Cheyney and
10 Delaware State, as well as social workers
11 who are coming out of St. Joe's and
12 Temple and places like that. The reason
13 why I say that is because maybe some of
14 those students who are graduating from
15 those historically black colleges and
16 universities might have some roots in a
17 city like Philadelphia and be more
18 understanding of our children and not
19 take so long to understand their
20 challenges that they have in front of
21 them.

22 And the last part that I'd like
23 to make some recommendations on is more
24 academic coaching. As they continue to
25 raise the bar, our kids aren't being

13 And in closing, I'd like to
14 suggest that when Mr. Vallas came here,
15 he said he was going to make sure this
16 happened, because in a lot of schools
17 that we visit and that we work in, it's
18 not happening. There needs to be more
19 coordination of services. A DHS worker
20 might come in and say, Did Vernard come
21 to school today? You say yes or you say
22 no and they're out the door. Or a
23 probation officer might come in and ask a
24 question about Jannie Blackwell, and you
25 say yeah, she was here, she wasn't here,

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807
2 and you're out the door, and no one
3 really understands why that probation
4 officer or why that DHS worker or some
5 other worker might be in the life of that
6 kid. And Mr. Vallas said that when he
7 first came that he was going to make sure
8 that more services were coordinated so
9 that the School District would understand
10 what's going on in the life of a child.
11 And I think the CSAP process, if CSAP was
12 used, that we'd get to -- at least we'd
13 find out if it was workable. But it's
14 supposed to bring all the resources
15 together so that you can look at a child
16 from an academic perspective. And that's
17 why I stayed here to say that.

18 Thank you very much.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you. Mr. Johnson, excellent statement.
21 I'm glad you let us know about that
22 meeting tonight.

23 And let me say that these have
24 been very important hearings today.
25 Again, we apologize for Mr. Vallas. Due

1 2/6/07 - EDUCATION - RES. 060807

2 to the accident that happened where
3 someone was killed by a bus, he is not
4 here. Jackie Barnett from the Mayor's
5 office is with him, Secretary of
6 Education. We regret that the Mayor
7 couldn't be here. He said he would do
8 the best he could.

9 We also want to submit for the
10 record the written testimony of
11 Dr. Leonard Finkelstein and Honorable
12 James R. Roebuck, our State
13 Representative.

14 Are there any other questions
15 or concerns?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That
18 will conclude our hearing. We will
19 recess subject to the call of the Chair.
20 Again, thank you, everybody. And I will
21 not have hearings in this room, this cold
22 room, like this again. It's too hard.

23 Thank you.

24 (Committee on Education
25 adjourned at 2:45 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY that the

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proceedings, evidence and objections are

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contained fully and accurately in the

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stenographic notes taken by me upon the

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foregoing matter on February 6, 2007, and that

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this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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MICHELE L. MURPHY

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RPR-Notary Public

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