

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 1

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, February 4, 2015
1:10 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

RESOLUTION 140975 - A resolution authorizing Philadelphia City Council's Committee on Education to conduct public hearings to evaluate the benefits and effectiveness of the Philadelphia Talent Collaborative and other programs that help improve educational outcomes and the economic viability of the City of Philadelphia.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
3 afternoon. Let me thank everyone for
4 coming. Thank you again, all who are
5 here and all who have come to hear about
6 more information about this important
7 issue with regard to education.

8 So the Education Committee is
9 called into session, and we will ask the
10 Clerk to read the title of Resolution No.
11 140975.

12 THE CLERK: Resolution
13 authorizing Philadelphia City Council's
14 Committee on Education to conduct public
15 hearings to evaluate the benefits and
16 effectiveness of the Philadelphia Talent
17 Collaborative and other programs that
18 help improve educational outcomes and the
19 economic viability of the City of
20 Philadelphia.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much.

23 Having said that, let me thank
24 all responsible for the wonderful
25 information and the way it was prepared.

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

As you all see, this Philadelphia Talent Collaborative publication is just wonderful. A great job has been done. I'd like to say I did it all myself, but it just wouldn't be true. We are very, very pleased for everything that all of you have done to help get us prepared and to come together to testify on this issue.

We thank Councilman Wilson Goode for being here. Others are in their offices and on their way. And we want to ask Graduate! Philadelphia, Executive Director, Barbara Mattleman; Jim Mergiotti, President of Peirce College; Kevin Drayton, Peirce College graduate; Kimberly Lowe-Sawyer, Chestnut Hill College graduate; and Alexander James, Graduate! Philadelphia Board member.

We will invite them to come forward and to begin their testimony. Again, we thank you all and we're very pleased and impressed to have you here to

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975
2 talk about all the exciting work that
3 you're doing for our city and for
4 students individually one at a time to
5 try to help them be good students,
6 successful adults, and to get the support
7 they need.

8 (Witnesses approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you again. And for Ms. Mattleman, let me
12 say the tree doesn't fall far -- the
13 fruit doesn't fall far from the tree, and
14 Lucien Blackwell worked with her parents.
15 I still work with them, her mother
16 especially, and now I get the opportunity
17 to work with her. Thank you.

18 MS. MATTLEMAN: Thank you so
19 much. I just want to say before I get
20 started, we have one person who is not
21 here yet and one person who is running
22 late. So if we look like we're shifting
23 around a little bit, I apologize for the
24 disruption.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Not a

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 problem.

3 MS. MATTLEMAN: Good afternoon.

4 I'm Barbara Mattleman, Executive Director
5 of Graduate! Philadelphia. Thank you so
6 much, Councilwoman Blackwell and the
7 members of the Education Committee and
8 other Councilmembers and staff, for
9 welcoming me here today along with my
10 colleagues from Campus Philly,
11 PhillyGoes2College, and the Graduation
12 Coach Campaign.

13 Our four organizations formed
14 the Talent Collaborative, and together we
15 address all phases of the college-going
16 pipeline in Philadelphia, driving more
17 Philadelphians to get their college
18 degrees, keeping more college students in
19 the City after graduation, and raising
20 college attainment in Philadelphia, which
21 generates economic stability for families
22 and economic growth for the City.

23 Our impact and success can be
24 seen in the growth of college graduates
25 in Philadelphia over the past ten years,

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 with college attainment raising from --
3 rising from 22 percent to 28.4 percent,
4 or an additional 63,620 residents with
5 college degrees. And we know that 58
6 percent of the City's economic success is
7 directly attributable to the percent of
8 adults with college degrees. Working in
9 close partnership will only help get us
10 there faster.

11 With small staff and budgets,
12 our four organizations are at full
13 capacity. We've asked the Commerce
14 Department of the City of Philadelphia to
15 provide increased support for our
16 programs so we can truly function as a
17 collaborative, serve more Philadelphians,
18 and achieve greater impact.

19 We wanted the members of City
20 Council, some of whom we've had the
21 opportunity to work closely with, to be
22 aware of our goal to function as a true
23 collaborative and the need for additional
24 resources to do that. So what we seek to
25 achieve includes engaging college

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

students in the work of the Graduation Coach Campaign and PhillyGoes2College to serve as mentors and advisors to current high school students; accelerating internships for college students and adults returning to college so that they are workforce ready when they complete their degrees; reaching more adults who have some college but no degree by combining the efforts of the Graduation Coach Campaign and Graduate! Philadelphia in their outreach and training for adults.

Through these and other collaborative activities, our goal is to raise college attainment from 24 percent to 30 percent by 2018, and we believe with additional resources to reach out into the community, we have the program, expertise, and proven track record to achieve this goal.

We will each be telling you some specifics about our programs and hope we have your support in our efforts

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 to reach and serve more Philadelphians.

3 Now I'd like to focus my
4 attention on my organization, Graduate!
5 Philadelphia. Graduate! Philadelphia
6 works with comebackers, adults who have
7 some college credit and want to complete
8 their college degree. In Philadelphia,
9 there are over 70,000 adults in this
10 situation. Over 70 percent of the
11 comebackers we serve are African
12 American, female, and heads of household.
13 Eighty-eight percent are ages 19 to 55,
14 and 90 percent earn less than \$42,000,
15 with half earning less than \$24,000.

16 As you can see from the
17 materials in the packet of information we
18 have provided to Council, we've worked
19 with over 4,500 adults, including 3,700
20 Philadelphia residents, and we've had
21 over 600 of our students graduate.

22 Philadelphia is the fifth
23 largest city in the country, yet it ranks
24 86th out of the 100 largest cities in
25 educational attainment. And as you know,

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

low college completion rates are correlated with higher individual debt and higher unemployment. We are the only organization in Philadelphia working with adult comebackers, and we provide free advising services to and through degree completion. Helping adults get their degree enables them to apply for jobs with family-sustaining wages. The return on investment for our city is well worth our efforts, as this is really about economic development.

Comebackers stuck out for many reasons. As you recognize, they're stuck. They've invested time and money in college, but cannot reap the benefits. As a society, we started to support them with federal and state financial aid, but when they stopped out, mostly because life happens, there were almost no resources to help them get back on track. We need to help them figure out not only how they can finance their education, but also the best college fit, which might

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

include either in-person or online
classes, and the best course of study
which will lead to a career where there
are jobs available.

Many adults take four to six
years to complete their degree.
Oftentimes students come to us with two
or three transcripts to review. They
might have tried to return to school
before, but just didn't finish. After an
initial visit, we are in contact either
through additional in-person meetings,
e-mail or phone calls, and we support our
students all the way through graduation.
We work in close partnership with ten
colleges and universities that are
experienced in working with adult
students to co-provide advising services.
It's not enough to just help our students
re-enroll. We need to guide them until
they get their diploma.

With support from Graduate!
Philadelphia, we know that students can
be successful. Looking at our five-year

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

cohort from the 2008-2009 class, we know that students who persisted, meaning they took a class every single semester, had a 79 percent graduation rate. Without our help, they probably would not have finished with their degree at all. Our work is really that important.

So, for example, several years ago, prior to my working at Graduate! Philadelphia, I ran into a former babysitter who I knew had stopped out of college a few years before. She met a guy, got married, had a few kids, but I knew from her mother that she was concerned about what kind of role model she would be for her kids when it came time for them to go off to college. When I told her about Graduate! Philadelphia, she started to cry, and my first thought was I had stepped over the line into her private business and she was angry at me for butting in. I couldn't have been more wrong. Two weeks later she called to tell me that she had registered for

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

school and was going back to college.

She specifically said she had wanted to do that for a while, but just didn't know how, and Graduate! Philadelphia's advisors were there to help her get started.

I applaud the work that's being done to assure that our children get to college and complete their degree. Much of my past work has included this sector. However, largely missing from the conversation is the issue of the huge number of adults who either haven't started or haven't completed their college degree and the effect that has on their children. We know that the single largest risk factor for students not completing a degree is not having a parent or an adult in their lives who has also completed. Therefore, every adult we help helps the people in their family and social circle succeed.

Graduate! Philadelphia is working closely with the organizations

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 you will hear from today in an effort to
3 enhance all of our work by serving
4 Philadelphians along the educational
5 pipeline. Helping students from middle
6 school to high school to college, no
7 matter what their age, and on to careers
8 is our goal, and by working closely
9 together, our collaboration makes our
10 impact even stronger. We are true
11 partners, and we look forward to working
12 even more closely in the upcoming year.

13 Today you'll hear from two of
14 Graduate! Philadelphia's Board members
15 and two of our comebackers who will share
16 their personal stories of success. We
17 couldn't be more proud of their
18 accomplishments, not only for completing
19 their degree but mostly for overcoming
20 significant barriers and not letting any
21 setbacks deter them from graduating.
22 Their stories are truly inspiring.

23 Thank you for being here today
24 and showing your support for our work and
25 for all the students in Philadelphia who

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 benefit from our work.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you very much.

6 Let me note again we already
7 mentioned Councilman W. Wilson Goode. To
8 his right is Councilman Mark Squilla, and
9 to my left is Councilman David Oh. Thank
10 you all for being here.

11 Are there any questions or
12 comments?

13 (No response.)

14 MS. MATTLEMAN: Next we're
15 going to hear from Kimberly Lowe-Sawyer.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
17 Welcome. Good afternoon. Please
18 identify yourself for the record and then
19 begin your testimony.

20 MS. LOWE-SAWYER: My name is
21 Kimberly Lowe-Sawyer.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Great.

23 MS. LOWE-SAWYER: Good
24 afternoon, everyone. My name is Kimberly
25 Lowe-Sawyer.

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Completing my education has
3 impacted my life in numerous ways. As my
4 daughter's first role model and teacher,
5 I have been instilling a value system
6 consisting of resilience and
7 self-preservation. As my daughter was
8 entering first grade, I felt this was an
9 ideal time for both mother and daughter
10 to go to school. Therefore, in the
11 summer of 2007, I decided to visit the
12 Graduate! Philadelphia Center City
13 office.

14 Time and opportunity presented
15 itself on that day. The atmosphere was
16 warm and receptive. The staff was
17 inviting and genuine in their desire to
18 answer questions. They were quite
19 resourceful. The college representatives
20 were present on site, which made the
21 legwork minimal. A few questions later,
22 I was preparing for enrollment at
23 Chestnut Hill College. The transition
24 between inquiring about returning to
25 college and actually becoming a student

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

was easier than ever expected.

While pursuing my Bachelor's degree at Chestnut Hill College, Graduate! Philadelphia continued to support me throughout my educational journey. Graduate! Philadelphia, along with family and friends, has shared my excitement in going back to school. They have become part of my village. It has rewarded me good grades, a place on the Dean's List, and the confidence to further my degree program beyond a Bachelor's degree. I completed my Bachelor's degree in 2011, and in 2012, I completed my Master's degree in Administration of Human Services. Currently, I am a third-year doctorate student at Holy Family University. My major is in the field of education, with a concentration in leadership and professional studies. My research is focusing on the adult learner in higher education. Simply, my research mimics my life.

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

It is my goal to use my experience in education to speak about the importance of social support for adults pursuing a college degree.

Personal fulfillment is one example of how completing my education will impact my life. Financial security is surely another. Having a solid career where I can earn a comfortable salary is quite an incentive for an aspiring college graduate. A college degree may also enable me to choose an occupation with a flexible work schedule. Extended hours away from home should not be the norm, especially for parents.

Maintaining a nurturing, consistent, and attentive approach to the upbringing of my child is paramount. Now that our country has its first African American President, I truly believe I can go as far as I can dream. There are no more excuses.

Poor self-esteem and lack of motivation has hindered many people from

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

living at their fullest potential. I was that person. I desire a career as a motivational speaker. I want to assist the homeless, the unemployed, and the other individuals who may be experiencing despair find the appropriate resources to get back on track.

In closing, I will mention the overall impact of achieving this academic milestone. Being a first-generation college graduate will hopefully inspire a new tradition in my family. When looking for new employment, a college degree will give me an extra boost of confidence and an advantage. Regardless of past circumstances, I intend to convey to other adults that it's never too late to further your education and pursue your dreams. I am so grateful for Graduate! Philadelphia, for they have given me the opportunity to speak about this wonderful program that changed my life.

Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 you very much.

3 Are there any questions or
4 comments?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you.

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I'd like
9 to make one comment, Ms. Chairwoman.

10 I just want to say thank you.
11 I think you're an inspiration to all of
12 us here in Philadelphia and what it
13 means. I think you should be looked up
14 to from a lot of the young people here in
15 the City of Philadelphia, knowing that if
16 you have the heart and desire and we have
17 organizations like this to help you, that
18 anything could be achieved.

19 So thank you for coming here
20 and testifying today. I appreciate it.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much. We certainly agree.

23 Mr. James.

24 MR. JAMES: Good afternoon,
25 honorable members of City Council. Thank

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

you for allowing me the time to speak
with you about Graduate! Philadelphia.
My name is Alexander James and I, as one
of their Board members, am happy to speak
with you about the important work we do
to support adults who have some college
credits and want to complete their
degree.

First, I would like to share
some personal thoughts. As I journeyed
through college, I had both support and
encouragement. In addition to family,
there were those in the school who
assisted in helping me navigate my
educational path. Fortunately, I was
able to graduate in four years. As a
result, I enjoyed the benefit associated
with college education through career
advancement and smooth transitions during
challenging economic times. I can attest
to the financial benefit and job
opportunities a college degree has
afforded me.

As a single parent, I often

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

shared my experience with my daughter and encouraged her to likewise pursue a post-secondary education. Like many students, she started college at Temple University right out of high school and then chose to stop out for a bit before returning to school to complete her degree in 2013. I was fortunate enough to be able to provide her with both guidance and financial support. However, there are thousands who like my daughter step away from school every day, but lack the information and support to return to complete their degree. These are the adults that Graduate! Philadelphia serves.

We all know someone who started their undergraduate degree and because life happened, they stopped. Some tried to return to school, but without family and financial help, it is difficult to successfully return and finish your degree. Many private corporations offer financial assistance through tuition

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

reimbursement programs, but many longtime employees never elect to tap into these benefits because they don't know how to get started, and most working adults don't even have these benefits and need to find a way to finance their education through grants, scholarships, and loans. The weight of financing their degree and juggling coursework and family commitments often serve to discourage them. The result is unrealized potential of employees and the lack of internal promotional opportunities. I know this firsthand having spent my entire career in the private sector working for large corporations. If we want our employees to be able to earn family-sustaining wages and have job growth opportunities, we have to help them to return to school and finish their college degree so they can get ahead in life.

Graduate! Philadelphia's unique model of supporting adults to and through degree completion assures that once

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 adults take that all-important first step
3 toward returning to school, that they
4 continually get the advising service and
5 guidance they need to be successful.
6 Without support, most won't complete
7 their degree. Outreach efforts to over
8 70,000 Philadelphians who started their
9 degree and never finished is the key to
10 getting students to work with this
11 outstanding organization, and we are
12 grateful to work with City Council
13 members and their staffs to make sure
14 that anyone who wants to finish their
15 degree can get the help they need.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much, Mr. James. Thank you.

19 MR. DRAYTON: Good afternoon,
20 honorable members of City Council. My
21 name is Kevin C. Drayton and I received
22 both my Associate's degree and Bachelor's
23 degree from Peirce College with honors.

24 There is a popular saying,
25 "Give a man a fish, he will eat for a

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

day. Teach him how to fish, he will eat for a lifetime." The advisors at Graduate! Philadelphia understood or understand this philosophy and they understand that it has involved -- it needed to evolve, that you need to provide more support and empower adults to do more. Basically, Graduate! Philadelphia gave me a morning wake-up call, held my hand when I needed to go to the right pond to catch those fish, and even showed me the best bait for the fish I was hoping to catch. They gave me hands-on support. Without their assistance, it would have been very difficult, next to impossible, to navigate my path to achieve my educational goal.

Graduate! Philadelphia knew that you must change your mindset, one's habits to embrace a new challenge, a new goal. They helped me develop a different way of thinking and helped me to step out of my comfort zone. For me, Graduate!

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

Philadelphia's attention to the details about my needs resulted in a perfect match. Peirce College wasn't just a school I wanted to attend. Peirce was the college I needed to attend. Graduate! Philadelphia helped me to discover what was the best fit -- what the best fit was for me and, more importantly, what I needed.

Thanks to the outstanding support and encouragement from Graduate! Philadelphia and, of course, Peirce College, I stayed on course and completed that goal on June 9th, 2014, graduating with honors, an elected member of Delta Mu Delta National Honor Society, and also fortunately recognized in Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges.

I completed all this despite my greatest challenge after losing two family members in my final semester. I couldn't be more proud of my accomplishments and, as you can tell, the

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 work of Graduate! Philadelphia.

3 By the way, my graduation from
4 Peirce College wasn't the end. It was
5 the beginning of a new goal, a new
6 business to support those head of
7 household single mothers in the City of
8 Philadelphia. And I'm also hoping to
9 pursue my MBA degree.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you very much. You're proud and we're
12 very, very proud of you and your
13 accomplishments as well.

14 The Chair notes that the Vice
15 Chair is here, Councilwoman Blondell
16 Reynolds Brown. Thank you.

17 MS. MATTLEMAN: This is where
18 we're going to change up the program a
19 little bit. Jim Mergioti couldn't be
20 here. He had to attend a funeral, and
21 Michael Schirmer from Peirce College will
22 be reading his testimony.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much. Welcome. Give us your
25 name again.

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 27

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 MR. SCHIRMER: Thank you. My
3 name is Michael Schirmer.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Spell
5 your last name.

6 MR. SCHIRMER: S-C-H-I-R-M-E-R.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you.

9 MR. SCHIRMER: Thank you. And
10 good afternoon, members of City Council.
11 As I mentioned, my name is Michael
12 Schirmer and I am a resident of District
13 1 and an Associate Professor of Business
14 Administration and the Chair of the
15 Business Division at Peirce College, and
16 I want to thank you for allowing me the
17 time today to testify on behalf of
18 Graduate! Philadelphia.

19 Although I am here today for
20 this purpose, I would also like to note
21 that Peirce College is one of Campus
22 Philly's partners as well.

23 As was mentioned, I'm also
24 speaking on behalf of the President of
25 Peirce College, Jim Mergiotti.

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Mr. Mergiotti is also a Graduate!
3 Philadelphia Board member.

4 As it has been for most of its
5 150-year existence, Peirce College is
6 focused on serving the older adult
7 student with career-oriented programs.
8 Today, 90 percent of Peirce College's
9 2,600-plus students are 25 years of age
10 or older. Nearly 80 percent of those
11 live in the City of Philadelphia. The
12 large majority are first-generation
13 college students trying to fit the
14 acquisition of employer-valued skills and
15 credentials into a schedule dominated by
16 professional and personal
17 responsibilities. Most seek a college
18 degree as a means of staying above the
19 poverty line, and many do so to spawn
20 future generations of college graduates
21 in their families.

22 As was mentioned previously,
23 these students are called comebackers.
24 Not because they were all previously in
25 college, but because they are returning

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

to education as a means to achieve their goal of earning a middle-class sustaining wage. Some had the chance to attend college earlier in life and they did not complete. Many never had the opportunity to attend college. In both cases, they may not have had the navigation skills and support necessary to achieve success.

These students are every bit as important to the City's workforce and economic development as our traditional age students. Most still have 30-plus years of career runway ahead of them. They learn in Philadelphia, live in Philadelphia, work in Philadelphia, and pay taxes in Philadelphia. They provide something that cannot be imported; in other words, workforce supply for \$40,000 to \$70,000 annual jobs that make Philadelphia businesses go and grow. They also generate a multiplier effect. When they earn a college degree and become a skilled worker, so do their children and often so do others in their

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 communities who witness the benefits of
3 their success.

4 Peirce College joined Graduate!
5 Philadelphia as a founding partner at its
6 inception back in 2005. Graduate!
7 Philadelphia focuses on providing that
8 all-important bridge for older adults
9 seeking to complete college degrees.
10 Systems, policies, and programs at
11 colleges and universities and related
12 agencies are almost exclusively focused
13 on facilitating recent high school grads
14 transitioning to college. Adult
15 comebackers seeking paths to college have
16 more complex situations and far less
17 support. These folks have far more
18 advanced work and life issues to manage.
19 Moreover, they do not have guidance
20 counselors or parents to assist them.
21 Graduate! Philadelphia fills that gap and
22 more with free advising services on
23 successfully choosing a college, seeking
24 admission, and applying for financial
25 aid. Many of these folks have

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 significant family responsibilities and
3 financial stresses to balance. They lack
4 essential information about available
5 programs and time management skills
6 needed to complete a college degree.

7 Graduate! Philadelphia, with
8 its emphasis on eliminating those
9 barriers in a very supportive, nurturing
10 way, is the perfect solution for this
11 very important comebacker population in
12 Philadelphia.

13 Older students that matriculate
14 at Peirce College through the Graduate!
15 Philadelphia program perform extremely
16 well. There are several examples, and
17 you have already heard from Kevin Drayton
18 about his experience. They have the
19 support systems and, most importantly,
20 the navigation skills to utilize them
21 effectively.

22 Mr. Mergiotti joined the
23 Graduate! Philadelphia Board a few years
24 ago in order to participate personally in
25 the organization's mission, which is so

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 closely tied to Philadelphia's workforce
3 and economic development. He believes
4 passionately in the organization's work
5 and regrets deeply that inadequate
6 funding has not permitted scaling up to
7 reach more Philadelphians to date. We
8 come to you today to tell you about our
9 important work and thank you for your
10 continued support of this program which
11 is vital to Philadelphia's battles
12 against poverty and for maintaining a
13 strong local workforce that can grow
14 existing businesses and attract new ones.
15 Providing financial support to Graduate!
16 Philadelphia is a great investment with a
17 strong return on that investment for our
18 city.

19 Thank you again for allowing me
20 the time to testify on Graduate!
21 Philadelphia's behalf.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you very much.

24 Any comments or questions?

25 (No response.)

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you.

4 MS. MATTLEMAN: I just wanted
5 to add that the President at Peirce
6 College, Jim Mergioti, just ran in. So
7 if there's any questions. I just wanted
8 to thank him. I know he was dealing with
9 a lot of things today to get here. He
10 had wanted to give the testimony himself.

11 Thank you very much for coming
12 today.

13 If you have questions about
14 Peirce, Mr. Mergioti would be happy to
15 answer them.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you.

18 Thank you, Mr. President, for
19 rushing to be here. We understand you
20 had a funeral, and we appreciate your
21 support.

22 Any comments or questions for
23 the President?

24 Blondell Reynolds Brown.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Madam Chairwoman.

3 Good afternoon. Could you
4 please share with us any financial level
5 of partnership that you are in with
6 PhillyGoes2College, Peirce?

7 MR. SCHIRMER: Would you like
8 to speak?

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I'd be
10 curious to know of the partners that are
11 partners what is the financial commitment
12 attached to the actual mission of this
13 effort.

14 MS. MATTLEMAN: So for all the
15 partners?

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.
17 (Witness approached witness
18 table.)

19 MR. MERGIOTTI: Good afternoon.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
21 afternoon, Mr. President.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
23 afternoon. Please identify yourself for
24 us for the record.

25 MR. MERGIOTTI: Sure. I'm Jim

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Mergiotti. I'm the President of Peirce
3 College.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you.

6 MR. MERGIOTTI: And we do have
7 an annual financial commitment that we
8 make to Graduate! Philadelphia. I
9 believe it's about \$9,500 per year --

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I see.

11 MR. MERGIOTTI: -- that we
12 provide as members of that organization,
13 members of that institution.

14 You asked about
15 PhillyGoes2College as well?

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

17 MR. MERGIOTTI: The
18 PhillyGoes2College I don't believe we pay
19 an annual fee for, but one of the things
20 that Peirce was able to do when that
21 organization was started was, we
22 contributed computers and also provided
23 some training in the utilization system,
24 in-kind support for the development of
25 that organization on behalf of the

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 36

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Mayor's Administration.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All of
4 that has great value as well.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you, Councilwoman.

7 Councilman Oh.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes. Thank
9 you. Thank you all for being here. I
10 would be remiss if I did not thank the
11 President of Peirce College, Jim
12 Mergioti. Every year when we hold our
13 Youth Non-Profit Symposium, he provides
14 the space for free, and it's a wonderful
15 service. So thank you very much.

16 MR. MERGIOTTI: We're honored
17 to do that, Councilman, and thank you for
18 your service.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you.

21 Any other questions or
22 comments?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you. Thank you again.

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 37

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 MS. MATTLEMAN: Thank you very
3 much.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
5 Graduation Coach Campaign.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Madam
7 Chair?

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm
9 sorry.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Just ask
11 Barbara Mattleman to come back, please.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
13 Absolutely. You wanted to ask Barbara
14 Mattleman a question?

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
17 Barbara, question. Councilwoman Blondell
18 Reynolds Brown wants to ask you a
19 question.

20 MS. MATTLEMAN: Yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So I'm
22 trying to get a handle based on graphics
23 and testimony here that Graduation Coach,
24 Campus Philly, Graduate! Philadelphia,
25 the Talent Collaborative are all under

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 the Mayor's Office of Education?

3 MS. MATTLEMAN: No. No.

4 Graduate! Philadelphia is its own
5 separate organization.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:

7 Stand-alone 501(c)(3)?

8 MS. MATTLEMAN: Yes. We are
9 under the graduate network. We're a
10 program of the graduate network. The
11 Campus Philly is its own private as well.
12 The Graduation Coach Campaign and
13 PhillyGoes2College are in the Mayor's
14 Office of Education. So maybe you're
15 confused because I used to be the
16 Director of those programs.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I am
18 confused.

19 MS. MATTLEMAN: Sorry. That's
20 why -- so I'm at Graduate! Philadelphia
21 now. I'm no longer with the City.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. So
23 with the list of testifiers, there's
24 someone here from the Mayor's Office of
25 Education?

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 MS. MATTLEMAN: Yes. That
3 would be PhillyGoes2College and the
4 Graduation Coach Campaign. They're both
5 in the Mayor's Office of Education.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And
7 somewhere in these documents are the
8 budgets?

9 MS. MATTLEMAN: We did not
10 provide the budgets for the individual
11 organizations. That's something that we
12 can give you if you're interested in
13 that.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes. If
15 you could get that information to the
16 Chair and what the City is contributing
17 through the Mayor's Office of Education
18 and what the non-profits are contributing
19 to these efforts, these organizations
20 that you -- I'm looking to see where the
21 linkages are.

22 MS. MATTLEMAN: Yes.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And you
24 can't tell by this.

25 MS. MATTLEMAN: So the linkages

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 that we're talking about today are not
3 monetary. I can tell you for Graduate!
4 Philadelphia and the other people
5 testifying, we have prepared that
6 information to talk about. For Graduate!
7 Philadelphia, our annual budget is eight
8 hundred and --

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I need to
10 see it in writing because I'm not going
11 to remember the numbers. So if you would
12 just forward that to the Chair.

13 MS. MATTLEMAN: Okay. So just
14 so you know, though, we are not
15 financially bound to each other.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
17 then. Thank you.

18 Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you as well.

21 Graduation Coach Campaign:
22 Sayeh Hormozi, Director; Linda Maldonado,
23 Philadelphia School District, Parent and
24 Family Coordinator; Quanisha Smith,
25 Graduation Coach Campaign Trainer; and

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Sahaba Thompson, Graduation Coach.

3 (Witnesses approached witness
4 table.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

6 Welcome and thank you very much.

7 MS. HORMOZI: Thank you. I
8 just wanted to make a quick note that
9 Linda Maldonado's mother passed away and
10 so she could not be here with us today
11 and Caroline La Rochelle will be reading
12 her testimony for her. And then also
13 Sahaba Thompson was ill this morning.
14 His daughter also has the flu. So he
15 will not be here and he did not provide
16 his testimony in advance. So he will not
17 be nor will his testimony be part of the
18 record.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
20 right. So we'll note when each person
21 speaks, we'll make the substitution.
22 Thank you.

23 Feel free to identify yourself
24 for the record and begin your testimony.

25 MS. HORMOZI: Good afternoon,

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

Chairwoman Blackwell and distinguished
members of Council's Education Committee.

My name is Sayeh Hormozi and I am the
Director of the Graduation Coach
Campaign. Thank you for the opportunity
to speak with you about the Graduation
Coach Campaign, which is one of the four
talent development organizations which
form the Philadelphia Talent
Collaborative.

I'd like to begin by telling
you a little bit about my road to this
seat today. I was born in Iran in 1980,
one year after the Iranian revolution
that led to the capture of hostages at
the American Embassy and three months
before the start of the Iran-Iraq War.
Brand new parents, my mother and father
were faced with a decision, stay in their
home country near their families in hopes
that the situation would improve despite
growing more grim and terrifying each day
or flee to America, the place where my
father had started college years before,

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

a place where they had no family, but where they knew their daughter could grow up with a future, one that Iran could no longer provide her.

They chose the U.S., and immediately after immigrating, my parents worked two to three jobs while they learned English and cared for me. Yet it wasn't long before my father started his own computer business and my mother opened her own beauty salon after graduating from beauty school. We were the epitome of the American dream.

However, despite how resourceful my parents were and despite how much they stressed education in my home, they were frequently incapable of giving me any practical advice or help when it came to school. They did not go to high school in the U.S. and my father never finished his degree. They couldn't help me with my homework. They couldn't tell me what the SAT was, let alone when I should be taking it. They wanted me to

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

go to college, but they had no idea how to help get me there. I felt behind my peers with American parents and frustrated and lost in school. Overwhelmed with the process of going to college and not knowing where to start, I retreated inside and began to proclaim that I didn't care about graduating high school and I didn't want to go to college anyway. I was completely dejected, and my parents were helpless.

It wasn't until Mrs. Carroll, a neighbor and a mother of a classmate, noticed our struggle and reached out to my parents and talked with me. A former teacher herself, she began by doing the simplest thing, asking me questions. How was I doing in school? How was I feeling about my future? What did I want for my life after high school? And many more. It wasn't until she engaged my family and me that she was able to figure out how to help. She reassured me that although things were seeming overwhelming, it

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

wasn't too late to turn things around and that she would walk me through everything I needed to do. I will never forget sitting at her kitchen table, strewn with college materials, while she walked me through the application process.

Mrs. Carroll did not intensively mentor me for an extended period of time. She did not sit down and do homework with me after school or shoot hoops with me. She simply asked me the right questions at a time when I needed help and pointed me in the right direction. Mrs. Carroll was my graduation coach even though she didn't realize it at the time. And it's because of her that I am here. It's because of her that I am so passionate about the Graduation Coach Campaign and the impact that I know it can have firsthand.

The Campaign wants every Philadelphia student to have a Mrs. Carroll in his or her life, someone who will talk to them, answer their

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

questions, and give them the support they need. The Campaign seeks to support parents like mine, to teach them how to support their students, to teach them how to navigate complicated processes that may be foreign to them because perhaps they themselves are foreign or foreigners or because they never finished school or because it's been so long since they did that the new landscape feels foreign to them, no matter where they are from.

We want every adult in this city to feel compelled to do what Mrs. Carroll did, to reach out to a student and his or her family who so clearly need help and talk to them, ask them the right questions and point them in the right direction.

At the Campaign, we believe every successful person can point to at least one adult who changed the course of their lives when they were a youth, an adult who helped support and guide them through a pivotal time, someone who

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

planted a seed in their minds that they
could excel and achieve.

The Graduation Coach Campaign
is not a prescribed mentorship program.
We do not match adults or give them a
curriculum to follow. Instead, we
believe that every adult knows at least
one student, be it their own child, a
niece, a nephew, a student they coach on
a sports team or a young person they
encounter every week bagging their
groceries. We believe that empowering
and educating these adults to approach
and engage these students, we can send
all young people in Philadelphia the same
message, that they can graduate from high
school and move on to some type of
post-secondary attainment that will
enable them to get and keep
family-sustaining jobs. Also that there
are adults in their network that can help
them along this journey.

The Campaign does this in three
ways. The first is by conducting

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 in-person training sessions, which we
3 call training camps. And if I could
4 please turn your attention to the screen
5 to your left, you're going to watch a
6 brief video that explains it much better
7 than I can.

8 (Video played.)

9 MS. HORMOZI: So in addition to
10 the training camp showcased in the video,
11 we also have a college-specific training
12 camp that helps adults filter through the
13 sea of conflicting information they
14 encounter about the college-going process
15 so that they can give their students the
16 best advice for their individual
17 circumstances. To date, we have trained
18 5,490 coaches. If you look at the map to
19 your right, which is also included in
20 your packets, you can see exactly where
21 those training camps have taken place by
22 councilmanic district and where coaches
23 currently reside. Not pictured on this
24 map but also included in your packets are
25 two other maps which break down our

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

workshops by areas of need, neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of poverty and lowest concentrations of high school diplomas. We are incredibly proud of the work that we've done in the four short years that we've been in existence, but are looking forward to seeing more blue dots and purple dots for the Spanish-speaking workshops in all Philadelphia districts and neighborhoods.

The second way we train our adults is through our video game plans. Many of our coaches have jobs with long hours, along with child care concerns, that make it difficult for them to attend one of our training camps in person. So it became quickly evident to us that we needed to meet coaches where they are, on their phones, tablets, laptops, and television sets. The 10- to 15-minute video game plans allow us to not only reach a wider audience, but to also go in depth on issues in a way that is difficult to do in a 90-minute training

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 camp.

3 To create the game plans, we
4 partner with local organizations that are
5 experts in the content area that we aim
6 to explain to our coaches. It is through
7 this partnership strategy that we have
8 been able to expose our coaches to the
9 myriad programs in the City that might be
10 able to serve them. The game plans are
11 mobile ready and available on YouTube,
12 Comcast On Demand, Philly In Focus, and
13 our very own Channel 64.

14 If you could please return your
15 attention to the screen, I have a quick
16 clip of our game plan called Five Key
17 Skills Your Student Needs to Succeed. In
18 this clip we explain the research-based
19 importance of resilience and how to
20 cultivate it in a student.

21 (Video played.)

22 MS. HORMOZI: Thank you. We
23 have one final clip. That is from our
24 partnership with Clarifi College. This
25 helps students and their families make

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

wise financial decisions when it comes to
getting their degrees.

(Video played.)

MS. HORMOZI: So since
September of 2014 when our game plans
officially launched, we have garnered
over 2,800 views on YouTube. With
promotional help from our partners,
social media, and scholarship contests
which incentivize viewing the game plans,
we hope to see these numbers only
continue to rise.

The third and final tier to the
Graduation Coach Campaign strategy is a
grassroots approach in the Kensington
area, Councilman Squilla and Councilwoman
Quinones-Sanchez's districts. With help
from geographic information systems, we
identified Kensington as an area with low
rates of home Internet access so they
wouldn't be able to see our game plans,
high poverty, and low college attainment
rates.

In response, we have been

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

strategically distributing
education-related information and
resources in print to community members
by canvassing while wearing red caps and
gowns, placing information in our
signature red graduation station kiosks,
in corner stores, barber shops, salons,
health centers, and laundromats. We also
attend community meetings, back-to-school
nights, cleanups, graduations, and local
talent shows. We are always there to
help adults in that community help their
students.

If you look at the map to your
right, this is an updated map of the
Kensington area, and you will see exactly
where we have focused our efforts in
Kensington. We have attended 43
meetings, events, and cleanups in the
area. To date, we have distributed more
than 16,000 printed resources in both
English and Spanish, which include not
only our resource guide, which there's an
example of that in your packet, but also

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 materials from other government agencies
3 and non-profits.

4 We have seen great success with
5 this grassroots approach, as community
6 members have come to recognize us and ask
7 us for help, sometimes education related,
8 sometimes not. Regardless, we always
9 follow up with responses to the questions
10 we know the answers to and referrals for
11 the questions that we don't.

12 It is on that note that I'd
13 like to introduce you to Caroline La
14 Rochelle. She is our Outreach Manager,
15 and she is going to be reading the
16 testimony of Linda Maldonado, whose
17 mother passed away and could not be with
18 us today. Next will be Quanisha Smith, a
19 certified Graduation Coach Campaign
20 Trainer who will tell you about her
21 experience conducting our training camps
22 firsthand.

23 Our impact and success can be
24 seen in the stories that Quanisha and
25 Caroline will share that -- in a steady

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 rise of graduation rates from 57 percent
3 when the Campaign started to 64 percent
4 today. And while that increase is
5 heartening, we have more work to do.
6 Nationwide mentoring relationships, the
7 kind encouraged and supported by the
8 Graduation Coach Campaign, have been
9 found to increase students' chances of
10 graduating by 1.53 times and to increase
11 their chances of attending college by
12 1.65 times. Students with natural
13 mentors are more likely to say they enjoy
14 school and feel that it is important and
15 that they believe that they can succeed
16 even when their school work is hard.
17 This model works, and we see it in the
18 City's increasing graduation rate and we
19 hear it from our coaches.

20 We hope to continue to send
21 even more graduates to our partners at
22 PhillyGoes2College for helping -- to help
23 get their degrees, to Graduate!
24 Philadelphia if they encounter
25 roadblocks, and to Campus Philly to

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975
2 encourage them to stay here and
3 contribute to our tax base once they do
4 earn their degrees.

5 So Chairwoman Blackwell,
6 distinguished members of the Education
7 Committee, thank you for your time and
8 for all you do to support education in
9 the City of Philadelphia and for your
10 continued support of the Graduation Coach
11 Campaign.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you.

14 MS. LA ROCHELLE: Thank you so
15 much for hearing us, honorary
16 Councilmembers. My name is Caroline La
17 Rochelle and I am the Outreach Manager --

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Spell
19 your last name.

20 MS. LA ROCHELLE: La Rochelle,
21 L-A space R-O-C-H-E-L-L-E.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: One
23 more time.

24 MS. LA ROCHELLE: L-A space
25 R-O-C-H-E-L-L-E. Caroline La Rochelle.

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 But today I will be reading the testimony
3 of Linda Maldonado.

4 Dear members of City Council, I
5 started working at the School District of
6 Philadelphia as a Parent Coordinator in
7 September of 2013, and since then I was
8 able to attend different events and
9 workshops for parents. One of them was
10 the Graduation Coach Workshop that was
11 presented at the Parent Resource Center
12 of the School District.

13 I am from Guatemala, and as an
14 immigrant, I have dreams too. I'm a
15 mother of two teenagers. My older one
16 graduated from high school in 2014 and my
17 younger one will graduate this year from
18 W.B. Saul High School. I did not have
19 any information about the college
20 application process, so attending the
21 Graduation Coach Workshop was very useful
22 for me and for my daughter.

23 The college application process
24 is overwhelming for everybody, parents,
25 students, counselors, especially among

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 the minority communities. We learn the
3 process step by step, information about
4 colleges, careers, statistics, resources,
5 deadlines, scholarships and more.

6 Personally for us the Graduation Coach
7 Campaign was our guide through the whole
8 process.

9 I didn't know, but I became the
10 coach for my own daughter. I learned the
11 process. I was thinking about the
12 deadlines. I helped her to collect
13 documents. I encouraged her to write the
14 essays on time. I told her to call the
15 administration office of the colleges for
16 updates. And I encouraged my daughter to
17 check her e-mail often. So I implemented
18 all the things that I learned from the
19 Graduation Coach Campaign.

20 My daughter was successfully
21 accepted at Penn State University Main
22 Campus where she currently is a freshman
23 majoring in journalism. Recently she was
24 awarded three different scholarships,
25 which we learned about through the

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Graduation Coach Campaign. Suddenly I
3 spread this information to the
4 counselors, principals, and parents in
5 the schools that I work with. During my
6 parents' meetings, I always encourage
7 them to attend these workshops,
8 especially since they are able to conduct
9 the workshops in English and Spanish as
10 well. I distribute materials to the
11 parents and students in both languages.
12 Later I started bringing the Graduation
13 Coach Workshop to the high schools for
14 parents and students, at which they were
15 able to ask questions and learn more from
16 them directly.

17 Programs like the Graduation
18 Coach Campaign are so important to keep
19 in our community for one major reason.
20 There are many organizations that provide
21 information about colleges. There are
22 many written resources out there about
23 the process. There are many educational
24 entities who conduct general workshops to
25 parents, et cetera. However, the

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

Graduation Coach Campaign is unique in the sense that it shows you how to become a coach.

I have learned from my own experience that students don't go to college many times not because they don't know the process, not because they don't get the information, not because they don't have the money, not because they don't have good grades. They don't go to college because they don't have a coach.

Students need help. They need support. They need to have somebody close to them to guide them through the process. They need somebody to help them to organize and submit documents. They need somebody close to them to push them and motivate them, somebody to help with the essays, somebody to help them watch the deadlines, to have somebody keep them on the right track. Only a coach can do that, and a graduation coach can be a mother, like me, a friend, a neighbor, a teacher, a leader of the church, a leader

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975
2 of the community, et cetera.

3 As we know, most of the public
4 schools are short in personnel. They
5 don't have enough counselors who guide
6 the students through this process. The
7 Graduation Coach Campaign is necessary
8 and they play a very important role in
9 our schools and in our community. They
10 teach you how you can become a coach.

11 Remember, if we want to
12 increase the number of students going to
13 college, the key is that every student
14 needs a coach. I just lost my mother,
15 and she said the best heritage that you
16 can leave your kids is education.

17 Thank you, members of City
18 Council, for your time. Linda Maldonado.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you very much.

21 MS. SMITH: Good afternoon,
22 Councilwoman Blackwell and Councilman Oh
23 and the rest of the Education Committee
24 members. My name is Quanisha Smith, and
25 thank you for the opportunity to testify

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 today. I've had the pleasure of coming
3 before the Education Committee and the
4 Philadelphia City Council on a few other
5 occasions through my role as the former
6 Co-Executive Director of Action United as
7 well as a spokesperson for PCAPS, the
8 Philadelphia Collation Advocating for
9 Public Schools. And today I'm here in
10 support of the Philadelphia Graduation
11 Coach Campaign.

12 I was introduced to the
13 Campaign when I chose to participate in a
14 workshop, now what we refer to as
15 training camps, at the United Way. One
16 thing I didn't include in my written
17 testimony was that I too am a
18 first-generation college student and
19 depending on adults and lots of other
20 people to really get on to college and to
21 graduate. So I first thought that this
22 was a mentoring program, as I was looking
23 for an opportunity to do that, but I
24 found out that it was a citywide
25 initiative to increase the capacity of

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

adults to assist young people on their journey to high school graduation and beyond. I joined the workshop already having ten years of professional experience and training in youth development, and I was blown away by the information I received.

The training camp not only increased my understanding of the skills and strengths that youth need to exceed and be competent today in our global workforce, but also strengthen my capacity to facilitate what the Campaign calls key conversations.

So in these training camps, we teach adults how to use active listening skills and effective methods of praise so that they can have meaningful and productive and purposeful conversations with the young people in their lives, so with their students. We help our coaches to discover and develop students' interest, as well as how to foster these teachable moments to lead the students to

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 success. So through my participation in
3 the training as well as because of my
4 professional background, the trainer that
5 day invited me to the Train the Trainer
6 preparation, and since 2011, I've been an
7 active Graduation Coach Trainer and a
8 huge proponent of the Campaign.

9 Over the past four years, I
10 facilitated workshops in a variety of
11 settings with a range of adults. So this
12 includes community-based social service
13 organizations, with their leadership and
14 staff; District and charter schools with
15 their teachers, school staff, parents,
16 and even high school students; and youth
17 agencies with their direct service
18 counselors. With all these groups
19 ranging in professional experience and
20 access to information, I've only received
21 positive feedback about the quality of
22 the training camps. Every attendee
23 walked away with new information about
24 the graduation and job situation here in
25 the City, the skills and strengths

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

students need today to succeed, key strategies for effective coaching, as well as information about City-run and local education support resources.

And every workshop, no matter the population, I've heard adults exclaim how they did not know certain resources existed in the City. I've experienced youth -- and we've all probably heard this -- coming to the training camps proclaiming college is not for everyone, and they leave vocalizing their new-found understanding of how post-secondary education can impact their earning potential.

As someone who has been on the front line of this campaign in various capacities, I urge you today to really maintain support for this programming and even grant enough support so that it can increase its capacity to operate. The Graduation Coach Campaign fulfills a vast need in our city for support and information, as well as it demystifies

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 the process of what it takes for youth to
3 graduate from high school and succeed
4 after it. Most importantly, the
5 Campaign's leadership, a lot of the folks
6 here today, they remain current on
7 effective strategies for outreach in
8 order to support this effort. Just in
9 the last year, the Campaign revamped the
10 workshops and the printed materials, and
11 my favorite new strategy, which you got
12 to see today, is the launch of a video
13 campaign through YouTube where coaches
14 can acquire more in-depth information and
15 instruction on such topics as that middle
16 and high school transition, college
17 application process, and skills for
18 success. They constantly evolve and
19 respond to the changing needs of both the
20 adults and the youth in the City.

21 The Graduation Coach Campaign
22 is a necessary component to guaranteeing
23 the success of Philadelphia students by
24 educating family members and all the
25 adults that touch these young people's

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 lives. The biggest problem contributing
3 to the opportunity gap is access to
4 information and resources, including
5 human resources. The Campaign acts as a
6 community-organizing effort to engage a
7 range of communities, including those
8 most underserved, to make sure we are
9 completely supporting and guaranteeing
10 the current and future success of
11 Philadelphia youth.

12 I encourage you to maintain the
13 support in this Campaign, as it's
14 working. Philadelphia's graduation rate
15 increased 7 percent over the past five
16 years, and this is one of the proven
17 programs contributing to that change.

18 Thank you for your time.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you very much.

21 Any questions?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you. Thank you very much.

25 (Thank you.)

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Great.

3 Thank you.

4 Campus Philly: Deborah

5 Diamond, President; Keyonna Butler,

6 student, Community College of

7 Philadelphia; Jalen Blot, student,

8 Temple; Ravin Rijhsinghani, student,

9 Haverford College; David Silver, Temple

10 '13, Social Communities Administrator,

11 Bentley Systems; Amanda Beardall, Bryn

12 Mawr College, class of '14, Welcoming

13 Community Coordinator, Liberty Lutheran.

14 (Witnesses approached witness
15 table.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you very much. Please identify yourself
18 and begin your testimony.

19 MS. DIAMOND: Thank you,
20 Chairwoman Blackwell. My name is Deborah
21 Diamond. I'm the President of Campus
22 Philly. Thank you to President Clarke,
23 to Education Committee Chairwoman
24 Blackwell, and all distinguished members
25 of City Council. I am the President of

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Campus Philly, as I said, and I'm pleased
3 to have this opportunity to tell you
4 about Campus Philly's mission, our
5 service to students, and our impact.

6 More than ten years ago, a
7 group of City higher education and civic
8 leaders came together to address a
9 challenge that Philadelphia had. We were
10 a college town that didn't feel like a
11 college town. With so many colleges and
12 universities in the City and surrounding
13 suburbs, Philadelphia should have been
14 teeming with college students' influence
15 and involvement. They should have been
16 volunteering for our non-profits,
17 attending our arts and culture venues,
18 and connecting to our employers for jobs
19 so that they could stay after they
20 graduated. None of this was happening in
21 a strategic or organized way and, as a
22 result, students didn't have a great
23 impression of Philadelphia. They were
24 not invested in the place they lived for
25 their four years of college, and they

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 didn't see themselves living here after
3 they graduated.

4 Much of that has changed in the
5 ten years since Campus Philly became an
6 independent non-profit. We started our
7 work with seven or eight college partners
8 and now we have more than 30. We visit
9 campuses more than 100 times each year
10 for new student orientations, trainings
11 for residents' life staff, and career
12 events. We're in touch with more than
13 100,000 college students throughout the
14 year through social media, our e-mail
15 newsletter to 25,110 students, visits to
16 campusphilly.org, and in-person events
17 like our CollegeFest. And the result is
18 a transformed college experience for
19 students in Philadelphia and a
20 transformed Philadelphia.

21 Now when you come to college in
22 Philadelphia, arts and culture comes free
23 with Campus Philly's Open Arts program,
24 which was started with a Knight Arts
25 Challenge Grant and continues to receive

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

operating support from Comcast.

Forty-three arts and culture partners have offered 4,618 tickets for free to 5,188 student members since the program was launched in September 2013. More venues, students, and ticket offers are added each week. Any college student at a Campus Philly partner institution is able to enroll in the program.

Campus Philly also works to ensure that students are prepared for the workforce through our internship programs. In 2010, only 63 percent of college students had internships as part of their college experience. By 2014, that figure was 81 percent. It's our goal that coming to college in Philadelphia means having an internship experience in college that prepares you for the workforce and connects you to the City and regional employers for a post-graduation job.

Campus Philly provides the only regional internship matching website

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 where internship positions just for our
3 college students are posted. The site is
4 free for both employers and students, and
5 over the past year, 4,257 students were
6 active on the site searching for 3,565
7 opportunities posted. We educate
8 students about industries that are strong
9 in Philadelphia through in-person events
10 with employers. In the past year alone,
11 we focused on careers in finance, the
12 creative economy, and tech, and have
13 partnered with the African American
14 Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Choice
15 Awards, the Independence Business
16 Alliance, and all of our partner colleges
17 and universities to introduce a wide
18 range of students to employers, LGBT
19 college students, students of color, and
20 others.

21 Finally, when students come to
22 school in Philadelphia, we want them to
23 be able to see themselves here as
24 residents and citizens, and they do. In
25 2010, only 55 percent of college students

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

said they would recommend Philadelphia as a place to live. In 2014, that figure was 73 percent. And 64 percent of recent graduates in 2014 stayed in Philadelphia after they graduated.

Philadelphia has been transformed by the influx of young college-educated residents, and many of these new residents are graduating from our colleges and universities. Campus Philly can do even more in the coming years to ensure that Philadelphia thrives as a college town and post-graduation choice for college graduates. We have three specific goals for the coming years:

Accelerate internships so that we see 90 percent of students having an internship experience in college up from the current level of 81 percent, including adult college students like those served by Graduate! Philadelphia and increasing specifically paid internship programs. Most of those 81

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

percent of students with internships did not have paid internships, and that hampers some students from having that internship experience altogether;

Develop collaborations with Philadelphia's only citywide college access programs, PhillyGoes2College and the Graduation Coach Campaign, to serve our high school students once they enter college to let them know there's a Campus Philly to help them with their college success;

Create a civic engagement track to Campus Philly programming that parallels Open Arts and arts and culture and our internship programming so that students have a way of volunteering, getting involved, and transforming the Philadelphia they go to school in.

We look forward to continuing and expanding our work in the coming year and keeping you informed about the difference we're making in the lives of students and the impact we're having on

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 educational attainment and the workforce
3 in Philadelphia. We have three current
4 students and one recent graduate here
5 with us today to tell their stories of
6 how Campus Philly has helped them to get
7 to know, get involved, and launch their
8 career in Philadelphia.

9 Thank you very much for the
10 opportunity.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
12 you.

13 MS. BUTLER: Good afternoon.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
15 afternoon.

16 MS. BUTLER: My name is Keyonna
17 Butler and I'm a student at Community
18 College of Philadelphia. I want to thank
19 City Council President Clarke, Education
20 Committee Chairwoman Blackwell, and all
21 of the distinguished members of City
22 Council for providing me with the
23 opportunity to speak about Campus Philly.

24 I was born in North
25 Philadelphia and moved to West

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Philadelphia when I was young. After
3 being home-schooled for part of my high
4 school education, I enrolled at Community
5 College of Philadelphia, where I'm now a
6 student and about to graduate in May
7 2015. I will graduate with my
8 Associate's degree, and I plan to pursue
9 my Bachelor's degree in Fashion Design at
10 either Moore College for Art and Design
11 or Philadelphia University.

12 When I started as a student at
13 CCP, I immediately got involved in
14 student leadership activities through the
15 Philadelphia Lead program, and I now
16 serve as First Vice President of Student
17 Government Association. I got involved
18 in student leadership at CCP because I
19 wanted to be a part of and shape my own
20 college experience. I have been involved
21 with Campus Philly because I wanted to be
22 a part of and shape my Philadelphia
23 experience as well.

24 I met Campus Philly through the
25 Black and Gold Bash, an event CCP holds

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 to introduce students to groups on campus
3 as well as off campus that they might
4 want to get involved with. Since then, I
5 have been involved and volunteered for a
6 number of Campus Philly programs,
7 including the College Day on the Parkway,
8 their fall finance career event, and the
9 arts and culture program, Open Arts.

10 Though I grew up in
11 Philadelphia, I found it easy to stay in
12 my comfort zone as a new college student.
13 When I got involved in Campus Philly
14 programs, it led me out of my comfort
15 zone to experience things I didn't think
16 I would have on my own. From learning
17 more about how to network with employers
18 to experience the arts and cultures of
19 the City, Campus Philly has taught me
20 things that I didn't learn growing up
21 here and didn't think I would experience
22 through my class work. I feel more a
23 part of the city I call home and more
24 ready to be someone who takes advantage
25 of all that Philadelphia has to offer

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

because of Campus Philly.

I'm just one student, but that day Campus Philly came to Black and Gold Bash, they met hundreds of CCP students. Some of them are interested in arts and cultures like me and have joined Open Arts. Some of them are focused on getting an internship and have been to Campus Philly's career events, but all of them have been better connected to Philadelphia and more opportunities to build their futures here because of Campus Philly.

I'd like to thank my school, Community College of Philadelphia, for investing in Campus Philly as a partner so that I have access to their programs. I would like to thank City Council and the City of Philadelphia for their support for Campus Philly so that students like me can launch their futures in Philadelphia. And I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with you today.

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you very much. Wish you the best.

5 MS. BUTLER: Thank you.

6 MR. BLOT: Good afternoon. My
7 name is Jalen Blot and I'm a senior at
8 Temple University. I first want to thank
9 the distinguished members of the City
10 Council for providing me with the
11 opportunity to speak about being a
12 college student in Philadelphia and about
13 Campus Philly. So to give a little
14 background, I was born in New York and my
15 family moved to the Poconos when I was
16 younger, and when it came time for
17 college, football brought me to Temple,
18 but the opportunities that Temple
19 provided allowed me to grow as a student
20 in Philadelphia in the four years of my
21 undergraduate tenure.

22 Though my academics are
23 extremely important to me, as I'll be
24 headed to a Ph.D. program in
25 organizational behavior this fall, what I

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

have learned is the student in
Philadelphia goes beyond the classroom.

In fact, all of Philadelphia
has become my classroom. I have
participated in social entrepreneur-led
hackathons to solve city issues. I run
the Lucy Fund, a non-profit focused on
making metastatic cancer chronic, not
deadly. I've organized an event called
Battle on Broad, a musical event seeking
to combine college campuses and the art
of dance to raise money. And I serve as
Director of Campus Life and Diversity
through Temple Student Government. What
these and other experiences have taught
me is that Philadelphia truly is the City
of Brotherly Love. Philadelphia
encompasses so many different
professional, social, and college
communities that you might think it's
difficult to build connections and be a
part of other groups, but what I found in
Philadelphia is that people from
different communities are remarkably open

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 and welcoming to newcomers and students
3 in particular.

4 Campus Philly has been very
5 pivotal in unlocking the various
6 communities that exist in Philadelphia.
7 When I was organizing the Battle on Broad
8 event, they were the first organization I
9 contacted to get students in dance groups
10 from other schools aware of the event and
11 on board. When I was a summer intern at
12 Lincoln Financial Group, Campus Philly's
13 My Philly Summer party connected me with
14 other students interning at other
15 employers that summer and I learned even
16 more about the range of opportunity in
17 Philadelphia. Though Lincoln Financial
18 Group wanted me back as an intern the
19 next summer, that My Philly Summer event
20 made me think of all the other
21 professional experiences I could have in
22 consequent summers and that was one
23 reason why I chose to do something
24 different every summer since then.

25 My academic work focuses on

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

organizational behavior and the way that
marginalized workers or groups can become
part of a workplace in a more welcoming
and effective way. One reason I find
that such an interesting topic is because
my experience as a student in
Philadelphia has enlarged. I have
knocked on various doors of employers,
professional associations, non-profits on
the campuses, and I have had those doors
open wide for me. One thing Philadelphia
does extremely well is provide access to
opportunity if you take the time and
initiative to find out what's out there.

Campus Philly is an example of
that. No other city thought to create an
organization that helped college students
meet other college students and meet
Philadelphia at the same time. But when
Philadelphia did that ten years ago, it
made it possible for students like me to
have an experience as a student that I
don't think I would have gotten any other
place, not any other city or location.

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 I have loved my experience as a
3 Temple student and a Philadelphian over
4 the past four years and I'm grateful to
5 the City for supporting Campus Philly and
6 making so many varied and important
7 impactful experiences possible for me.

8 Thank you for your time and the
9 opportunity to speak to you today.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you very much.

12 The Chair notes that Councilman
13 Brian O'Neill is here. Thank you.

14 Any comments or questions?

15 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
17 morning -- good afternoon. The second
18 shift has not kicked in yet.

19 Let me say that as a former
20 higher ed professional, having worked in
21 higher education as an admissions
22 director for Penn State University for
23 the Philadelphia region, I have enormous
24 respect for what Campus Philly is doing
25 and have paid a lot of attention to it

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 over the past ten years. And so when we
3 can walk through Center City in the
4 evening and see the influx of millennials
5 and college kids, it's quite an
6 affirmation that we are a hip city and
7 now the world knows about it.

8 What I'm interested in knowing
9 is what are some of your immediate --
10 when I hear the percentages of where you
11 want to get to, from 81 percent to 90
12 percent is what I heard, what are a
13 couple of the strategic ideas you plan to
14 implement to move you towards that
15 number?

16 MS. DIAMOND: Yes. We use an
17 online platform to connect students to
18 internship opportunities. It's something
19 that Campus Philly actually inherited in
20 2004 from Innovation Philadelphia, and
21 we've been maintaining it the past ten
22 years. Technology has changed over the
23 past ten years and we are about to
24 relaunch a new internship matching
25 platform in the fall of 2015.

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 In addition, one thing that
3 Campus Philly has created over the last,
4 I'd say, three years are more in-person
5 programs to introduce students to
6 employers. One challenge that
7 Philadelphia has relative to other cities
8 drawing our talent away is that we don't
9 have a signature industry, like New York
10 has finance or the West Coast has
11 technology or entertainment, and for our
12 college students, what we found is that
13 we have to demonstrate to them, show them
14 the employers, let them hear from recent
15 graduates who are in industries that are
16 strong and growing, like finance, like
17 tech, like healthcare. So over the last
18 few years, we've produced more of those
19 events.

20 So what we see for the next few
21 years is, with a relaunched online
22 platform, we'll have the capacity to
23 highlight and feature more businesses,
24 more industry sectors, and to create more
25 programs around those businesses and

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 industry sectors that do the in-person
3 introductions that students and employers
4 need.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So what
6 linkages exist with the Greater
7 Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce or with
8 PIDC that really have a pulse on what the
9 future holds?

10 MS. DIAMOND: There are two
11 primary connections, one our Board
12 member, Carol de Fries, is here and she's
13 a Vice President at PIDC, so we have that
14 linkage at the leadership level.
15 Similarly, the Director of the CEO
16 Council for Growth, Claire Greenwood,
17 sits on our Board. So at the leadership
18 level, we have the opportunity to share
19 initiatives and impact.

20 Through PIDC, we hear about
21 companies that are looking to locate in
22 Philadelphia, including companies that
23 are looking to open satellite offices,
24 and you'll hear soon from a recent
25 graduate who is working for one of those

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

companies, Bentley Systems. And so we work with Ivy Olesh at PIDC and with Carol de Fries at PIDC to learn about those companies coming into the City and talk to them about Campus Philly and the access to talent we provide.

With the Chamber of Commerce, we've actually started a conversation with them about, with the relaunched website, the opportunity that provides to their membership to post for interns and even to leverage the technical expertise that Campus Philly has. And I believe Jen Devor is here, our internship expert on staff, is here, and she provides technical assistance, especially to small and medium-sized companies that don't really know how to create an internship position and how to make it valuable. So when we talk about accelerating internships, we really mean increasing the number of companies that are offering internships, and sometimes that means showing them and holding their hand a bit

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 in how to do that in a way that's cost
3 effective for them, benefits the student,
4 and provides a pipeline for a future
5 employee.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: How is
7 Campus Philly funded?

8 MS. DIAMOND: We have four main
9 funding streams. The colleges and
10 universities, the 31 colleges and
11 universities that are partners pay in and
12 invest in Campus Philly. We have a
13 corporate membership program, because
14 ultimately they're the beneficiaries of
15 our success. So we have a corporate
16 membership program that provides a
17 significant portion of our funding.
18 Grants funds, specific things like Open
19 Arts, and the new internship matching
20 platform is provided by a grant from
21 Bentley Systems and the Knight
22 Foundation, and then the City of
23 Philadelphia.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What
25 percentage is the City's contribution?

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 MS. DIAMOND: It's about a
3 third.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And it
5 comes through the Department of
6 Education, the Office of Education?

7 MS. DIAMOND: No. We're funded
8 through the Commerce Department.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. All
10 right, then. Thank you.

11 Thank you, Madam Chair.

12 MS. DIAMOND: We have two
13 more -- another student.

14 MR. RIJHSINGHANI: Good
15 afternoon. To Council President Clarke,
16 Education Committee Chairwoman Blackwell,
17 and members of City Council, thank you
18 for the opportunity to speak with you
19 this afternoon. My name is Ravin
20 Rijhsinghani and I am a senior at
21 Haverford College.

22 My story begins in Freehold,
23 New Jersey where I grew up. My family
24 and I visited Philadelphia a number of
25 times as tourists when I was growing up,

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 and my feeling about the City from those
3 visits was that it was a youthful city
4 with a lot of great sites to see and a
5 lot of great colleges to attend. When I
6 was accepted at Haverford College, I was
7 very glad that Philadelphia would be part
8 of my extended college experience.

9 Little did I know how much
10 attending school so close to Philadelphia
11 would mean to me. I had thoughts of
12 medical school when I entered college and
13 of majoring in biology, but after my
14 sophomore year, I knew that wasn't for me
15 and I was trying to figure out what
16 direction I wanted to go in. Through my
17 Career Service Office at Haverford, I
18 learned of a Campus Philly program called
19 Philly Startup Scholars. The program
20 matched college students with paid summer
21 internships at Philadelphia startups and
22 provided interns with access to Campus
23 Philly's My Philly Summer programming and
24 even a luncheon with Mayor Nutter.

25 After applying for and being

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

chosen for the program, I learned that it was made possible by a StartupPHL grant provided by the City of Philadelphia. So thank you.

My internship took place at Real Win Win, a startup at 19th and Arch Street founded by a Wharton MBA. The company assists its clients in capturing utility rebates from utility companies for upgrading to energy efficient measures. That summer experience was truly eye-opening for me. I lived in West Philadelphia and came to work each day to an incredible environment. Another intern and I redesigned Real Win Win's website. I produced financial reports for the company and structured the databases to make them more user-friendly. The work was collaborative, meaningful, and engaging, and it showed me that I had an exciting future even if I didn't become a biology major and head to medical school.

My focus in college changed

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 after that summer. I became a math major
3 and have had the opportunity to take
4 classes at the University of Pennsylvania
5 to further my knowledge in math and
6 finance. I participated this past fall
7 in Campus Philly's event for students
8 interested in finance careers and learned
9 even more about the range of opportunity
10 available in Philadelphia for a career in
11 finance.

12 There were so many things I
13 didn't know when I was choosing a college
14 at the age of 18, but now from my
15 perspective as a senior, I am very
16 grateful to my 18-year-old self for
17 choosing Haverford College and
18 Philadelphia as a place to go to school.
19 Though my college is a small one, Campus
20 Philly was there to open my world up to
21 larger opportunities. From my internship
22 at Real Win Win to being able to take
23 classes at Penn, to learning more about
24 finance careers in Philadelphia, my
25 experience in college has been

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 transformed by the opportunities that
3 Philadelphia provides to students and
4 that Campus Philly is there to connect me
5 and others to.

6 Thank you for your time and for
7 the opportunity to speak with you today.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you very much.

10 MR. SILVER: Good afternoon.
11 My name is David Silver and I'm the
12 Social Communities Administrator at
13 Bentley Systems, a global
14 Philadelphia-based engineering firm with
15 offices in Malvern and more recently in
16 Center City Philadelphia. I graduated
17 from Temple University in 2013. I wanted
18 to thank City Council President Clarke,
19 Education Committee Chairwoman Blackwell,
20 and all the distinguished members of City
21 Council for providing me with the
22 opportunity to speak about being a
23 college student in Philadelphia and about
24 Campus Philly.

25 I can confidently say that I

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 would not be where I am today were it not
3 for Campus Philly. In 2012, Campus
4 Philly produced its second Campus Philly
5 Crawl. It was a unique career event that
6 took college students on a walk through
7 University City to see startup and
8 incubator companies and introduce
9 students to the startup ecosystem that
10 was growing in Philadelphia. I was
11 already interested in entrepreneurship
12 from my startup of Broad Street Music
13 Group and I was excited to see other
14 college students interested in startups
15 and to see the infrastructure for
16 entrepreneurs growing.

17 Bentley Systems was one of the
18 companies involved in the Campus Philly
19 Crawl and I was able to meet their human
20 resource leader, Robin Brendza. After
21 talking with Robin about the business
22 that I had started and my advertising and
23 communications major in college, she
24 thought there might be an opportunity for
25 me at Bentley. I had a job offer from

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

Bentley before I graduated, and for the past year and a half, I have managed Bentley's social media presence, applying what I learned in college and in my business to expand Bentley's presence on social media.

My story is just one of many. Campus Philly produces five or six career events each year like the Campus Philly Crawl that I attended, and hundreds or more of students attended each of these events. Philadelphia isn't easily identified with a signature industry, like New York is with finance or LA is with entertainment. As a result, students might not realize the depth and diversity of employment opportunities that exists for them in Philadelphia. Campus Philly's career events change all that for students. They let us know that there are vibrant industries with employers eager to hire college students for exciting jobs. And as in my case, these events provide students with

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 introductions to employers that are
3 invaluable for getting hired.

4 In 2013, the year I graduated,
5 unemployment for college graduates
6 between 25 and 34 was only 3.6 percent.
7 The opportunity for college graduates in
8 Philadelphia is vast. But finding that
9 right opportunity is not always easy.
10 Applying for jobs online can sometimes
11 feel like a black hole, and as a college
12 student, you don't really have the
13 network to rely on to tell you about
14 entry-level opportunities. Campus Philly
15 really functions as that network,
16 informing us about growing industry
17 sectors and making the introductions that
18 we need to get hired.

19 I'm a big technology fan and I
20 make a living through technology, but in
21 the end, my future was paved through an
22 in-person event and an in-person
23 introduction, and a Campus Philly program
24 made it all possible. I'm grateful to
25 the City for supporting the existence of

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Campus Philly and to Campus Philly itself
3 for helping me build a life here in
4 Philadelphia.

5 Thank you for your time and the
6 opportunity to speak with you today.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you very much.

9 Are there any questions or
10 comments?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you all very much.

14 Our last group,
15 PhillyGoes2College: Leana Cabral,
16 Director; Cathey White, Technical
17 Assistance Manager; Malik Brown,
18 Diversified Community Services; and
19 Lauren Baumann, PhillyGoes2College
20 Fellow.

21 Let me thank everyone on the
22 Committee for their patience. This is
23 our last group and then we will conclude
24 our hearing.

25 (Witnesses approached witness

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 table.)

3 MS. HORMOZI: Hello again. I
4 am not Leana Cabral. I will be
5 testifying on her behalf because she is
6 in the final weeks of her parental leave.
7 This is her testimony. I will just be
8 reading it for her today.

9 So thank you again for having
10 us and thank you for the opportunity to
11 speak with you about PhillyGoes2College.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
13 Identify yourself again.

14 MS. HORMOZI: My name is Sayeh
15 Hormozi and I am here on behalf of Leana
16 Cabral, the Director of
17 PhillyGoes2College.

18 Today, only 25 percent of the
19 residents of Philadelphia hold a college
20 degree, and that has risen from 18
21 percent in 2010. This alarming statistic
22 illustrates a long-term challenge to not
23 only the City's economic viability in the
24 21st century economy but also its
25 reputation as a vibrant cultural hub.

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 According to census data,
3 Philadelphia is now ranked 71st out of
4 100 of the largest metropolitan areas in
5 the U.S. in baccalaureate degree
6 attainment. That has risen from 92nd in
7 2008. We've made some progress, but we
8 have a long way to go. It is essential
9 that Philadelphia's residents continue to
10 pursue academic excellence because the
11 City's economy is becoming more reliant
12 on these highly skilled, high-paying
13 jobs, which are only obtainable for those
14 with college degrees.

15 PhillyGoes2College was launched
16 in 2010 and served as a crucial citywide
17 resource for residents of any age who
18 would like a college degree. We promote
19 and support a college-going culture among
20 citizens by providing high-quality
21 college access information that is
22 current, comprehensive, and accessible.
23 We do everything we can to reach out to
24 Philadelphia residents, encourage them to
25 attain a college degree, and connect them

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

with the information to make it happen.

PhillyGoes2College provides a clearinghouse of quality and vetted resources, which are also truly comprehensive. Our website, print materials, and workshops offer information to low-income students, first-generation students, undocumented students, veterans, students with disabilities, returning citizens and more.

Since 2010, PhillyGoes2College has engaged more than 30,000 students, parents, and mentors through in-person workshops and presentations, along with innumerable phone calls, website hits, and in-person visits to our office. Over time, PG2C has evolved into a unique and critical initiative that engages with Philadelphia residents unlike any other resource in the City. We do this in three core ways:

First, we offer workshops directly to citizens, meeting them where

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 they are, in schools, libraries,
3 after-school programs, and faith-based
4 organizations, to name a few. We also
5 train the staff at various organizations,
6 bolstering their services to include
7 college access.

8 The second thing we do is offer
9 three main citywide events, including
10 Students With a Goal or SWAG Week, Top of
11 the Class, and College Awareness Month,
12 which are outlined in more detail in your
13 packets you received before the testimony
14 today.

15 The third is our new initiative
16 launched this past October, which is
17 called Connect2College, a new service
18 delivery model in response to the lack of
19 citywide college access services, the
20 cuts of counselors, and student success
21 centers and the low college attainment
22 rates of Philadelphians.

23 While Philadelphia has a
24 vibrant college prep community, only a
25 fraction of students and parents needing

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 support are served by these programs.

3 Most of these college prep programs serve
4 niche populations or students who meet
5 specific eligibility requirements.

6 Connect2College fills this gap
7 and is now the only citywide initiative
8 providing comprehensive services to all
9 Philadelphians. It is a three-pronged
10 approach.

11 The first is a model of
12 partnering with already existing
13 community-based organizations and their
14 staffs. These organizations are already
15 serving members of the communities in
16 which they are located. We've created
17 and implemented training, materials, and
18 technical assistance to the staff at the
19 computer labs in these organizations so
20 that they can add college access to the
21 services they already provide. In order
22 to do this, we have leveraged existing
23 City investments in Keyspots and Library
24 Hotspots.

25 In October, Connect2College

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

launched with 20 of these partner sites.
Partner sites provide citywide drop-in
services covering college search, college
application support, application essay
writing, scholarship searches and
applications, and financial aid.

The second mode of service is
an interactive text message service. We
know that more and more Philadelphians
are accessing information on their phones
through text message alerts.

PhillyGoes2College has, therefore,
leveraged those digital avenues to
provide instantaneous and customized
college access information to all
residents. We have partnered with a
local firm, Textizen, and are now sending
targeted demographic-specific text
messages which will connect users to
resources for scholarships and other
vital college access information most
applicable to their circumstances, as
well as connect text message recipients
with college access organizations closest

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 to their zip code where they live and
3 best equipped to address their needs.

4 Our third mode of service is
5 through our newly redesigned website. On
6 this site we created a route-finding tool
7 which will direct Philadelphia residents
8 again to customized college access
9 resources based on their individual
10 needs.

11 PhillyGoes2College has adapted
12 to the needs of Philadelphians. The
13 funding crisis and lack of citywide
14 college access services that precipitated
15 this call to action is troubling, but it
16 also demanded that we rethink our college
17 access work. And in doing so, we have
18 come together to create a more efficient,
19 diversified, and relevant approach.
20 Philadelphia residents now have access to
21 college-going support and information in
22 convenient and familiar places. The
23 notion that college is a viable option
24 for all residents will become normalized
25 as this new model and the knowledge it

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 holds spreads.

3 As this initiative grows and as
4 it becomes further embedded into the
5 City, the services will only improve and
6 expand, and a communal sense of
7 responsibility around offering this
8 information to all Philadelphia residents
9 will hopefully be embraced.

10 PhillyGoes2College is at the forefront of
11 this movement.

12 Thank you again, Chairwoman
13 Blackwell and members of the Education
14 Committee, for your time and your
15 continued support. Next I'd like to
16 introduce Malik Brown, who is the
17 Director of Dixon House, one of our
18 Connect2College partner labs, who will
19 speak about his partnership with us, and
20 then Cathey White, one of our Technical
21 Assistance Managers who provides that
22 assistance to those partner labs, and
23 finally Lauren Baumann, one of our
24 PhillyGoes2College Fellows who has
25 facilitated our college-going workshop to

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975
2 over 1,300 students, including all of the
3 high schools students in the Parks and
4 Recreation summer program and all of the
5 Philly youth networks Work Ready
6 participants, and she'll testify about
7 her experience as well.

8 Thank you for your time.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you.

11 Feel free to identify yourself,
12 welcome, and begin your testimony.

13 MR. BROWN: Yes. Good
14 afternoon. My name is Malik Brown. I am
15 here speaking on behalf of Diversified
16 Community Services.

17 Chairwoman Blackwell and
18 distinguished Councilmembers of the
19 Education Committee, good afternoon. My
20 name is Malik Brown. I am the Director
21 of Diversified Community Services' Dixon
22 House. Our Executive Director, Otis
23 Bullock, sends his regards. Thank you
24 for the opportunity to testify today. We
25 are thrilled to be a part of the

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

Connect2College initiative.

On October 28th, 2014, we were honored to host Mayor Nutter and other City leaders at the Dixon House to launch this citywide initiative. Allow me to take a moment to share a little bit about Diversified Community Services. We are a community-based multi-purpose agency in Point Breeze. We serve nearly 8,000 children, youth, and adults each year. We provide a comprehensive array of services to children and adults in South Philadelphia, including early childhood education, out-of-school-time services for youth, IPS services for vulnerable youth, safety net services, housing, and workforce development.

Our vision is a diverse, prosperous, and vibrant Point Breeze community where all residents are treated with dignity and respect, a community where the impact of poverty are acknowledged and action is taken to empower those in need. To help move

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 adults and families towards financial
3 stability and self-sufficiency, we
4 provide workforce education and training
5 through our KEYSLOT computer lab. Over
6 the last three years, we have helped
7 close to 500 adults with resume
8 development, job search techniques, and
9 interview preparation.

10 In our current program year, we
11 have helped 50 adults secure full-time
12 employment. While we are encouraged by
13 these numbers, we know that we have a lot
14 more work to do to move the needle and to
15 create real community impact. Many of
16 our clients are low income and low
17 skilled. Moreover, many of these adults
18 do not have a post-secondary education or
19 any type of industry credential. We
20 strongly believe that Connect2College is
21 a targeted and effective workforce
22 solution that complements our current
23 program offerings and capabilities.
24 Unquestionably, the same clients who come
25 to our Dixon House Community Center for

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

help with utility assistance or for
closure mitigation counseling or resume
preparation could benefit from our
Connect2College program offering.
Financial literacy alone will not lift
our community out of poverty. Job
training alone will not move our adults
and families to economic independence.
These interventions combined with
accessibility and attainability of a
post-secondary education will more
strongly position struggling families to
achieve their life financial and
professional goals. Our partnership with
Connect2College is a win-win for all
parties. Our goals, values, and
interests are all aligned. With mutually
reinforcing activities across all
Connect2College sites, our combined
efforts will yield a more competitive and
more nimble workforce.

Diversified Community Services
has served South Philadelphia since the
early part of the 20th century. More

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 than 100 years later, Diversified's Dixon
3 House Community Center is still one of
4 the go-to places for adults and families
5 to receive assistance. Every year close
6 to 2,000 adults and families walk through
7 our community center doors. No matter
8 what part of the City they come from, we
9 have an open-door policy and commitment
10 to high-quality customer service. The
11 vast majority of adults and families who
12 come through our doors are not looking
13 for a hand out, but they're looking for a
14 hand up. They are desperately seeking a
15 better life for their children. Many are
16 unemployed or underemployed. Some are
17 reentering society for the first time in
18 many years. The common thread for many
19 of our clients is a lack of access,
20 awareness, and information about higher
21 education. Connect2College represents a
22 complementary solution that we can offer
23 to community members and families.

24 From the moment that the
25 program was launched, we have received an

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

overwhelming flood of interest from
community stakeholders and partners.
Adults and families are eager to learn
more about higher education opportunities
and to obtain guidance around what to do
and how to get started. We are thrilled
to be a part of this very exciting
initiative.

On a personal note, my first
year of college was in 1996. I graduated
in 2000 with a BA in Economics and in
2002 with an MBA. When I first applied
to college, I recall having a number of
mentors and resources at my disposal. I
was fortunate to have engaged parents, an
older brother who paved the way, and
supportive guidance counselors. For so
many individuals, however, across
multiple generations, these kinds of
provisions are missing. On a number of
occasions, I've had members of my own
family reach out to me, eager to attain
higher education, but completely
oblivious to how to get started. This is

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 a common problem that permeates many
3 households and communities across
4 Philadelphia. The work and intent of
5 Connect2College represents a significant
6 leap forward in providing the most
7 relevant and reliable information in
8 order to connect our clients with the
9 information they need.

10 Dixon House looks forward to a
11 continued strong partnership with
12 PhillyGoes2College on such a necessary
13 citywide college infrastructure.

14 Thank you, Chairwoman Blackwell
15 and Councilmembers of the Education
16 Committee, for your continued support of
17 PhillyGoes2College and the
18 Connect2College initiative.

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

22 MS. WHITE: Chairwoman
23 Blackwell and distinguished
24 Councilmembers of the Education
25 Committee, thank you for allowing me to

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

speak with you today about my work at PhillyGoes2College. My name is Cathey White and I am the Technical Assistance Manager for PhillyGoes2College's Connect2College or C2C initiative.

In October 2014, the last of Philadelphia's community-based College Access Centers closed its doors. I'm the former manager of that center, so I have firsthand knowledge of how its closing impacts college access in the Philadelphia community.

While managing the center, over 3,000 Philadelphians visited every year to utilize its services. Residents of all ages in Philadelphia could drop into the center and receive information assistance on the college-going process. In my role, I encountered a variety of students that had unique backgrounds, making post-secondary access a challenge. Many students were first-generation students. Although these students' families may be supportive of them

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 attending college, they are often not
3 familiar with the process and, therefore,
4 unable to support their students through
5 it.

6 Many adults utilized the center
7 as a place to receive personal and
8 patient guidance to access post-secondary
9 education. They were often looking to
10 post-secondary education for the first
11 time to help advance their employment and
12 career. I have also worked with
13 returning citizens that are looking to
14 further their education after
15 incarceration. All of these students
16 need an advocate to point them in the
17 right direction, let them know the
18 available options, and provide
19 information about how education can
20 benefit the beginning of a new life for
21 themselves and their families.

22 Students and families came in
23 year after year as the center was a place
24 they had come to know as the go-to for
25 individual help in the college-going

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 process. I have worked with people like
3 Karen Beaufort, who started working with
4 me on her Associate's degree, then her
5 Bachelor's degree and most recently her
6 Master's degree. Karen is now taking
7 more courses and recently reached out to
8 me after finding out the center had
9 closed. Through the Connect2College
10 initiative, I'm able to continue to
11 assist her at one of our new C2C partner
12 sites right in her neighborhood. Karen
13 stated, "Without the one-on-one
14 assistance, I don't think I could have
15 made it through school. So many people I
16 know have been misled and misguided in
17 the process. Both my daughter Shayla and
18 I can say we have been successful due to
19 help we received at the College Access
20 Center. I'm happy that even though the
21 center closed, we will still have
22 somewhere to get the support we need. It
23 means a lot, and we're truly grateful."

24 The Connect2College initiative
25 is filling the gap left behind by the

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

closing of the College Access Center. I am in a unique position to be able to speak to how the C2C model has the potential to reach an even greater audience than the College Access Center due to its strategically placed 20 partner sites throughout the City as well as the technology of our website and texting app. In training the staff of the various Keypots, Hotpots, and community-based organizations, the staff express how useful the material and resources we have put together will be for their communities. Many of the sites have stated that this is a component that will enhance the services they already provide. One staff member at one of the Keypot sites spoke to me about the many teens that come to her recreation center on a daily basis that just need the extra push to go further in their education. She is excited to be able to provide accurate college-going information to them as well as to have the support of

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 PhillyGoes2College staff for college
3 access expertise.

4 As the Technical Assistance
5 Manager, I am able to provide one-on-one
6 appointments, constant support and help
7 in planning college-related events at
8 individual sites. For example, I met
9 Ms. Rhonda Gibson and her daughter Sefra
10 when facilitating a financial aid
11 presentation at Parkway Center City High
12 School in December. While there, I also
13 spoke about the new Connect2College
14 initiative and was contacted by
15 Ms. Gibson the next day. Ms. Gibson
16 stayed in touch via text, and in January,
17 we met at People's Emergency Center in
18 Chairwoman Blackwell's district, a
19 partner site in Ms. Gibson's
20 neighborhood. I sat with her and her
21 daughter and we went through the process
22 step by step. I will be meeting
23 Ms. Gibson again this week to follow up
24 the work we started. Ms. Gibson made
25 this statement about the Connect2College

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

initiative: "I feel great because I was able to get the help I needed to help my daughter further her education. My mother wasn't able to send me to college, and I appreciate that Cathey was reliable and patient with us going through this process for the first time. I was able to get all of my questions answered.

This service is definitely needed by this city and I hope it continues to grow."

Ms. Gibson made a personal connection, and that's what this initiative is about.

In the first few months of C2C's launch, I have been attending and speaking at various organizational events about the new initiative. There has been an outpouring of organizations that have shown interest in what we are doing, but do not have the capacity to serve members of the public as a partner site. In response, we have developed what are now known as resource partners. We currently have three resource partners, including JEVS Human Services, Philadelphia Housing

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 Authority, and the Free Library College
3 Prep Team. These partners receive
4 regular trainings and utilize the
5 comprehensive binder of materials we
6 provide for use with the clients they
7 already serve. We are expecting the
8 amount of resource partners to continue
9 to grow, allowing for residents of
10 Philadelphia to receive consistent,
11 relevant, and reliable information about
12 the post-secondary and educational
13 opportunities available to them.

14 We are now working on promoting
15 Connect2College through various marketing
16 efforts. We have printed materials that
17 will be disseminated throughout
18 Philadelphia schools, community-based
19 organizations, and C2C partner sites. We
20 are working with SEPTA to advertise the
21 service along the Broad Street and
22 Market-Frankford lines. Each site will
23 receive signage promoting the service at
24 their location, and we will be hosting
25 Connect2College nights at our partner

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 sites to introduce the initiative to the
3 community. These events will be an
4 opportunity for community members to
5 learn about C2C, utilize our website, and
6 try out the texting app.

7 PhillyGoes2College staff will be on site
8 for assistance with college application
9 and financial aid completion. In
10 addition, there will be tables hosted by
11 a small group of college admission
12 representatives and Philadelphia
13 resources.

14 This work is very important to
15 me personally because I'm a Philadelphia
16 native and was a first-generation
17 low-income student. I know firsthand how
18 a college degree can change a person's
19 life. I realize my entire life's path
20 was changed by the college experience. I
21 was born in the badlands of Philadelphia
22 and was a troubled youth. I was
23 fortunate to have one person point me in
24 the right direction and give me the right
25 information. Today I stand before you as

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

a productive member of my Philadelphia community. I am passionate about giving that experience back. It is important that Philadelphia continues to support programs such as PhillyGoes2College so that others like myself have the opportunity to succeed.

Chairwoman Blackwell and Councilmembers of the Education Committee, thank you again for your continued support of this worthwhile cause and program.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

MS. BAUMANN: Hello and good afternoon. So good afternoon, Councilwoman Blackwell and distinguished members of the Council's Committee on Education. My name is Lauren Baumann and I am a Fellow at PhillyGoes2College since fall of 2013 as well as a current college student at Drexel University.

It is an honor to speak with you today on my work with

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

PhillyGoes2College and the incredible impact it has on our community. Through sharing my experience, I hope to further elaborate the important work PhillyGoes2College does for the City to support both students and adults with higher education aspirations as well as personal and career development.

I first became involved with PhillyGoes2College through a student leadership organization at Drexel University. What drew me to the program was its immediate and crucial impact on one of the most important factors that determines one's quality of life: education. As a third-generation college student with a supportive family and easy access to college resources, my story is an anomaly. Education inequality still exists, especially relating to college access, but through the work done at PhillyGoes2College, students and adults are given the resources to start to fill those gaps.

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 To best show the impact of
3 PhillyGoes2College, I will share a story
4 of providing services in the field.

5 Over the past summer, I
6 supported Work Ready doing presentations
7 for different departments as well as
8 providing college readiness information
9 at their closing ceremony. Specifically,
10 I did a lot of work bouncing around to
11 different Parks and Recreation Work Ready
12 presentations all across the City. I
13 spoke to nearly 1,000 students, answering
14 questions about the difference between
15 grants and loans, where to find
16 scholarships, and where to get support
17 with SAT and ACT prep. At the end, the
18 Director of Parks and Recreation Work
19 Ready program enthusiastically expressed
20 to me how impressed he was with the
21 presentations and PhillyGoes2College's
22 dedication to our community.

23 I share this story to show how
24 important PhillyGoes2College is both to
25 individual Philadelphians and the

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 community as a whole. PhillyGoes2College
3 supports schools all across the City as
4 well as organizations and programs just
5 like Work Ready by providing high-quality
6 and reliable presentations on college
7 access. We reach a broad range of
8 students and help students on an
9 individual level through answering
10 questions during presentations and
11 tabling events, providing materials on
12 college readiness for students and
13 adults, and answering e-mails and phone
14 calls. Through this work it has become
15 clear that the community appreciates our
16 work and needs our program.

17 PhillyGoes2College is intrinsic
18 to the spreading of college preparation
19 information around the City. With
20 teachers and counselors stretched thin
21 with work as well as the devastating
22 closure of the College Access Center,
23 Philadelphia needs college access
24 resources. Most Philadelphia students do
25 not share my story. They can't rely on

2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

their families and their schools alone in college preparation. If as a city we want to continue to challenge our youth to be engaged and educated citizens, we need not only to continue to support programs like PhillyGoes2College, but invest more in educational, professional, and personal development programs.

It is my hope to see PhillyGoes2College continue to grow over the next few years. Great development has already occurred this past fall with the creation of Connect2College and should continue through the creation of more programs focused on specific college access needs. This can include more financial aid resources and workshops and college essay tutoring.

Thank you all for your hard work advocating for the best education system for Philadelphia's youth and listening to my experience with PhillyGoes2College. It is through your support that we can continue to help our

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 community succeed in college preparation.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you very much.

6 I thank you all for your
7 wonderful testimony today.

8 Is there anyone else who would
9 like to testify today?

10 (No response.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
12 let me thank you. We have heard you
13 well. We're very, very proud of all that
14 you do and all that you have informed us
15 about today, and certainly we'll do our
16 part to certainly support this wonderful,
17 wonderful program.

18 Any comments from members of
19 the Committee?

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes, Madam
21 Chair.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
23 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: A couple
25 questions. Briefly talk about the

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 faith-based piece briefly, and when is
3 College Awareness Month?

4 MS. HORMOZI: College Awareness
5 Month -- well, you want to answer that?

6 College Awareness Month was
7 last month. So what we did was, we
8 created a calendar that is accessible on
9 our website. And so we are in touch with
10 all of the college-going organizations in
11 the City to find out when they're having
12 FASFA workshops, when they're having
13 college fairs. All of the college-going
14 events that are happening in the City we
15 compile and make available through social
16 media and our website. So that was last
17 month. And we actually do that every
18 month. One month is called College
19 Awareness Month, but really every day is
20 College Awareness Day at
21 PhillyGoes2College. That's what we do
22 every day, every week, every month
23 through our website, through social
24 media.

25 And in terms of faith-based

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 organizations --

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very
4 specifically, how many churches are
5 involved and what pockets are they in?

6 MS. HORMOZI: So I'm not the
7 Director of PhillyGoes2College. I'm just
8 here testifying on her behalf. So I
9 don't have those numbers in front of me,
10 but I am happy to get those numbers --
11 she returns on Monday -- and to submit
12 them to Chairwoman Blackwell's office so
13 that you can have specifically those
14 numbers and where they're located.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please.

16 MS. WHITE: I can speak as far
17 as Connect2College because we're in the
18 marketing phases. I do know that for us
19 there are some faith-based organizations
20 that we're strategically targeting, and
21 those are some of the mega churches, like
22 Enon Tabernacle. So those would be
23 places that we would be targeting to make
24 sure that we're disseminating information
25 about partner sites that are in their

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 area, and we are in Northwest
3 Philadelphia in the West Oak Lane branch
4 library and then we're also in Mallery
5 Recreation and Waterview Recreation. So
6 we are in that area and we will be
7 targeting them.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. All
9 right. So if you could please submit to
10 the Chair, I need to see the budgets of
11 all these programs and where the links
12 are, the links, the connectors are with
13 the programs from a budget standpoint.
14 We have the narrative, but I need to see
15 the budget.

16 MS. HORMOZI: So I can say to
17 you that currently right now there is no
18 budgetary link between each of our
19 programs, and that's one of the reasons
20 why we're here. We work separately when
21 you look at our finances, but we work
22 together consistently in partnership, but
23 we're not resourced to do so. So that's
24 part of what we're here to talk with you
25 about today, because we are

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975
2 consistently -- we are a pipeline and
3 have been operating as a pipeline
4 unofficially ad hoc for a very long time,
5 but we have not been able to optimize
6 those partnerships because we're not --
7 there is no linkage resource.

8 So that hopefully answers your
9 question. But we can submit our
10 individual budgets and where we get our
11 funding individually, which is not linked
12 to you, as soon as this hearing is over.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.
14 Coupled with the information from the
15 Commerce Department. Did I not hear that
16 one-third of someone's budget comes from
17 the Commerce Department?

18 MS. HORMOZI: Yes.

19 MS. MATTLEMAN: Graduate!
20 Philadelphia comes right from Commerce.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So the
22 broader question is, I'd like to see the
23 budgets of all programs that testified
24 here today, and if any linkages exist,
25 then show that by way of the submitted

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 130

1 2/4/15 - EDUCATION - RES. 140975

2 documents.

3 MS. HORMOZI: Sure. Not a
4 problem.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
6 very much.

7 MS. HORMOZI: Thank you very
8 much.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we
10 thank you all for coming, and we're very
11 glad that you have come together to
12 realize all that you have in common, all
13 that you share to help students move
14 forward.

15 Having said that, again, we
16 thank you.

17 This will conclude our public
18 hearing, and thank you all for being
19 here.

20 Thank you, members of the
21 Committee.

22 (Committee on Education
23 concluded at 3:15 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter, and that this is a true and
correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 1

A	accomplish...	119:11	113:16	23:2 30:8	apply 9:9	101:18	attentive
able 20:17	13:18 25:25	admissions	advocating	allow 49:22	131:20	104:21,22	17:18
21:10 22:18	26:13	82:21	61:8 124:21	106:6	applying	108:2 109:5	attest 20:21
35:20 44:23	accurate	adult 9:6	affirmation	allowed 78:19	30:24 89:25	112:4,19	attract 32:14
50:8,10	115:24	10:18 12:20	83:6	allowing 20:2	94:4 95:10	114:14	attributable
51:22 56:8	accurately	12:21 16:23	afforded	27:16 32:19	appointme...	116:4 119:8	6:7
58:8,15	131:5	28:6 30:14	20:24	111:25	116:6	assisted 20:15	audience
70:10 71:23	achieve 6:18	46:13,22,24	african 8:11	118:9	appreciate	assists 90:9	49:23 115:6
91:22 93:19	6:25 7:22	47:8 72:22	17:20 71:13	altogether	19:20 33:20	associate	authority
114:10	24:18 29:2	adults 4:6 6:8	afternoon 2:3	73:5	117:6	27:13	118:2
115:3,23	29:9 47:3	7:7,9,14 8:6	5:3 14:17	amanda	appreciates	associated	authorizing
116:5 117:3	108:14	8:9,19 9:8	14:24 19:24	67:11	123:15	20:18	1:14 2:13
117:5,8	achieved	10:6 12:14	23:19 27:10	america	approach	associates	available
129:5	19:18	17:5 18:18	34:3,19,21	42:24	17:18 47:14	23:22 75:8	10:5 31:4
absolutely	achieving	20:7 21:16	34:23 41:25	american	51:16 53:5	114:4	50:11 91:10
37:13	18:10	22:5,24	60:21 74:13	8:12 17:20	101:10	association	113:18
academic	acknowledg...	23:2 24:8	74:15 78:6	25:19 42:17	103:19	75:17	118:13
18:10 80:25	106:24	30:8 47:6	82:17 88:15	43:14 44:4	approached	associations	126:15
98:10	acquire 65:14	47:14,22	88:19 92:10	71:13	4:8 34:17	81:10	avenues
academics	acquisition	48:12 49:13	105:14,19	amount 118:8	41:3 67:14	assure 12:9	102:14
78:22	28:14	52:13 61:19	120:17,17	angry 11:22	96:25	assures 22:25	awarded
accelerate	act 122:17	62:2,17	afterschool	annual 29:20	appropriate	atmosphere	57:24
72:18	action 61:6	63:11 64:7	100:3	35:7,19	18:7	15:15	awards 71:15
accelerating	103:15	65:20,25	age 13:7 28:9	40:7	arch 90:7	attached	aware 6:22
7:5 86:21	106:24	106:11,13	29:13 91:14	anomaly	area 50:5	34:12	80:10
accepted	active 62:17	107:2,7,11	98:17	121:20	51:17,20	attain 98:25	awareness
57:21 89:6	63:7 71:6	107:17	agencies	answer 15:18	52:17,21	110:23	100:11
access 51:21	activities 7:16	108:8 109:4	30:12 53:2	33:15 45:25	128:2,6	attainability	109:20
63:20 66:3	75:14	109:6,11	63:17	126:5	areas 49:2	108:11	126:3,4,6
73:8 77:18	108:19	110:4 113:6	agency 106:9	answered	98:4	attainment	126:19,20
81:13 86:7	acts 66:5	121:7,23	ages 8:13	117:9	array 106:12	5:20 6:2	
89:22 98:21	actual 34:12	123:13	112:17	answering	art 75:10	7:17 8:25	B
100:7,19	ad 129:4	advance	ago 11:10	122:13	79:12	47:19 51:23	b 56:18
101:20	adapted	41:16	31:24 68:6	123:9,13	arts 68:17	74:2 98:6	ba 110:12
102:16,22	103:11	113:11	81:21	answers	69:22,23,24	100:21	babysitter
102:25	add 33:5	advanced	agree 19:22	53:10 129:8	70:3 73:16	attend 25:5,6	11:12
103:8,14,17	101:20	30:18	ahead 22:22	anyway 44:11	73:16 76:9	26:20 29:4	baccalaure...
103:20	added 70:8	advancement	29:14	apologize	76:9,18	29:7 49:16	98:5
109:19	addition	20:20	aid 9:19	4:23	77:6,8	52:10 56:8	bachelors
112:9,12,22	20:13 48:9	advantage	30:25 102:7	app 115:10	87:19	58:7 89:5	16:3,14,15
113:8	84:2 119:10	18:16 76:24	116:10	119:6	asked 6:13	attended	23:22 75:9
114:19	additional	advertise	119:9	applaud 12:8	35:14 45:12	52:19 94:11	114:5
115:2,6	6:4,23 7:19	118:20	124:18	applicable	asking 44:18	94:12	back 9:22
116:3	10:13	advertising	aim 50:5	102:23	aspirations	attendee	12:2 16:9
121:19,22	address 5:15	93:22	alarming	application	121:8	63:22	18:8 30:6
123:7,22,23	68:8 103:3	advice 43:19	97:21	45:7 56:20	aspiring	attending	37:11 80:18
124:17	administrat...	48:16	alerts 102:12	56:23 65:17	17:11	54:11 56:20	120:4
accessibility	16:17 27:14	advising 9:7	alexander	102:5,5	assist 18:4	68:17 89:10	background
108:11	36:2 57:15	10:19 23:4	3:19 20:4	119:8	30:20 62:2	113:2	63:4 78:14
accessible	administrat...	30:22	aligned	applications	114:11	117:15	backgrounds
98:22 126:8	67:10 92:12	advisors 7:4	108:18	102:7	assistance	attention 8:4	112:21
accessing	admission	12:6 24:3	alliance 71:16	applied	21:25 24:16	25:2 48:4	backtoschool
102:11	30:24	advocate	allimportant	110:13	86:17 96:17	50:15 82:25	52:10
							badlands

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 2

119:21 bagging 47:12 bait 24:13 balance 31:3 barbara 3:15 5:4 37:11 37:13,17 barber 52:8 barriers 13:20 31:9 base 55:3 based 37:22 103:9 bash 75:25 77:5 basically 24:9 basis 115:21 battle 79:11 80:7 battles 32:11 baumann 96:19 104:23 120:16,20 beardall 67:11 beaufort 114:3 beauty 43:12 43:13 becoming 15:25 98:11 began 44:8 44:17 beginning 26:5 113:20 begins 88:22 behalf 27:17 27:24 32:21 35:25 97:5 97:15 105:15 127:8 behavior 78:25 81:2 believe 7:18 17:21 35:9 35:18 46:20 47:8,13 54:15 86:14 107:20 believes 32:3	beneficiaries 87:14 benefit 14:2 20:18,22 108:4 113:20 benefits 1:16 2:15 9:17 22:4,6 30:2 87:3 bentley 67:11 86:2 87:21 92:13 93:17 93:25 94:2 bentleys 94:4 94:6 best 9:25 10:3 24:13 25:8 25:9 48:16 60:15 78:4 103:3 122:2 124:21 better 48:6 77:11 109:15 beyond 16:13 62:4 79:3 big 95:19 biggest 66:2 binder 118:5 biology 89:13 90:23 bit 4:23 21:7 26:19 29:10 42:13 86:25 106:7 black 75:25 77:4 95:11 blackwell 1:10 2:2,21 4:10,14,25 5:6 14:4,16 14:22 18:25 19:6,21 23:17 26:10 26:23 27:4 27:7 32:22 33:2,16 34:22 35:4 36:5,19,24 37:4,8,12 37:16 40:19 41:5,19	42:2 55:5 55:12,18,22 60:19,22 66:19,23 67:2,16,20 67:24 74:11 74:14,20 78:3 82:10 88:16 92:8 92:19 96:7 96:12 97:12 104:13 105:9,17 111:14,19 111:23 120:9,14,18 125:4,11,22 130:9 blackwells 116:18 127:12 blondell 1:12 26:15 33:24 37:17 blot 67:7 78:6 78:7 blown 62:7 blue 49:9 board 3:20 13:14 20:5 28:3 31:23 80:11 85:11 85:17 bolstering 100:6 boost 18:15 born 42:14 74:24 78:14 119:21 bouncing 122:10 bound 40:15 branch 128:3 brand 42:19 break 48:25 breeze 106:10 106:20 brendza 93:20 brian 1:11 82:13 bridge 30:8 brief 48:6	briefly 125:25 126:2 bringing 58:12 broad 79:11 80:7 93:12 118:21 123:7 broader 129:22 brother 110:17 brotherly 79:18 brought 78:17 brown 1:12 26:16 33:24 33:25 34:9 34:16,20 35:10,16 36:3 37:6 37:10,15,18 37:21 38:6 38:17,22 39:6,14,23 40:9,16 82:15,16 85:5 87:6 87:24 88:4 88:9 96:17 104:16 105:13,14 105:20 125:20,23 125:24 127:3,15 128:8 129:13,21 130:5 bryn 67:11 budget 40:7 128:13,15 129:16 budgetary 128:18 budgets 6:11 39:8,10 128:10 129:10,23 build 77:13 79:22 96:3	bullock 105:23 business 11:22 26:6 27:13,15 43:11 71:15 93:21 94:6 businesses 29:21 32:14 84:23,25 butler 67:5 74:13,16,17 78:5 butting 11:23 C c 23:21 38:7 c2c 112:6 114:11 115:4 118:19 119:5 c2cs 117:15 cabral 96:15 97:4,16 calendar 126:8 call 24:11 48:3 57:14 76:23 103:15 called 2:9 11:24 28:23 50:16 79:10 89:18 100:17 126:18 calls 10:14 62:15 99:17 123:14 camp 48:10 48:12 50:2 62:9 campaign 5:12 7:3,12 37:5 38:12 39:4 40:21 40:25 42:6 42:8 45:20 45:22 46:3 46:20 47:4 47:24 51:15 53:19 54:3 54:8 55:11	57:7,19 58:2,18 59:2 60:7 61:11,13 62:14 63:8 64:18,23 65:9,13,21 66:5,13 73:9 campaigns 65:5 camp 48:3 48:21 49:17 53:21 61:15 62:16 63:22 64:11 campus 5:10 27:21 37:24 38:11 54:25 57:22 67:4 67:21 68:2 68:4 69:5 69:23 70:9 70:11,24 72:11 73:11 73:15 74:6 74:23 75:21 75:24 76:2 76:3,6,13 76:19 77:2 77:4,10,14 77:17,21 78:13 79:14 80:4,12 81:16 82:5 82:24 83:19 84:3 86:6 86:14 87:7 87:12 89:18 89:22 91:7 91:19 92:4 92:24 93:3 93:3,4,18 94:9,10,20 95:14,23 96:2,2 campuses 69:9 79:12 81:11 campusphilly 69:16 cancer 79:9 cant 39:24	123:25 canvassing 52:5 capabilities 107:23 capacities 64:19 capacity 6:13 61:25 62:14 64:22 84:22 117:20 caps 52:5 capture 42:16 capturing 90:9 care 44:9 49:15 cared 43:9 career 10:4 17:9 18:3 20:19 22:15 29:14 69:11 74:8 76:8 77:10 89:17 91:10 93:5 94:9,20 113:12 121:9 careerorien... 28:7 careers 13:7 57:4 71:11 91:8,24 carol 85:12 86:4 caroline 41:11 53:13 53:25 55:16 55:25 carroll 44:13 45:8,15,24 46:15 case 94:24 cases 29:7 catch 24:12 24:14 cathey 96:16 104:20 112:3 117:6 cause 120:13 ccp 75:13,18 75:25 77:5 census 98:2	center 15:12 56:11 83:3 92:16 107:25 109:3,7 112:10,14 112:18 113:6,23 114:8,20,21 115:2,6,20 116:11,17 123:22 centers 52:9 100:21 112:9 century 97:24 108:25 ceo 85:15 ceremony 122:9 certain 64:8 certainly 19:22 125:15,16 certificate 131:2 certification 131:19 certified 53:19 certify 131:3 certifying 131:23 cetera 58:25 60:2 chair 1:10 26:14,15 27:14 37:7 39:16 40:12 82:12 88:11 125:21 128:10 chairwoman 19:9 34:2 40:18 42:2 55:5 67:20 67:23 74:20 88:16 92:19 104:12 105:17 111:14,22 116:18 120:9
--	--	--	--	--	---	--	--

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 3

challenge 24:22 25:22 68:9 69:25 84:6 97:22 112:22 124:4	circle 12:23 circumstan... 18:17 48:17 102:23 cities 8:24 84:7 citizens 71:24 98:20 99:11 99:25 113:13 124:5 city 1:2,6,15 1:18 2:13 2:19 4:3 5:19,22 6:14,19 8:23 9:11 15:12 19:15 19:25 23:12 23:20 26:7 27:10 28:11 32:18 38:21 39:16 46:14 50:9 55:9 56:4 60:17 61:4 63:25 64:9,24 65:20 67:25 68:7,12 70:22 74:19 74:21 76:19 76:23 77:19 77:20 78:9 79:7,17 81:17,25 82:5 83:3,6 86:5 87:22 88:17 89:2 89:3 90:4 92:16,18,20 93:7 95:25 99:22 101:23 104:5 106:5 109:8 115:8 116:11 117:11 121:6 122:12 123:3,19 124:3 126:11,14 cityrun 64:4	citys 6:6 29:11 54:18 87:25 97:23 98:11 citywide 61:24 73:7 98:16 100:9 100:19 101:7 102:3 103:13 106:6 111:13 civic 68:7 73:14 claire 85:16 clarifi 50:24 clarke 67:22 74:19 88:15 92:18 class 11:2,4 67:12 76:22 100:11 classes 10:3 91:4,23 classmate 44:14 classroom 79:3,5 cleanups 52:11,20 clear 123:15 clearinghou... 99:4 clearly 46:17 clerk 2:10,12 clients 90:9 107:16,24 109:19 111:8 118:6 clip 50:16,18 50:23 close 6:9 10:16 59:15 59:18 89:10 107:7 109:5 closed 112:9 114:9,21 closely 6:21 12:25 13:8 13:12 32:2 closest 102:25 closing 18:9 112:11	115:2 122:9 closure 108:3 123:22 coach 5:12 7:3,12 37:5 37:23 38:12 39:4 40:21 40:25 41:2 42:5,8 45:16,20 47:4,10 51:15 53:19 54:8 55:10 56:10,21 57:6,10,19 58:2,13,18 59:2,4,12 59:22,23 60:7,10,14 61:11 63:7 64:23 65:21 73:9 coaches 48:18 48:22 49:14 49:19 50:6 50:8 54:19 62:22 65:13 coaching 64:3 coast 84:10 code 103:2 coexecutive 61:6 cohort 11:2 collaboration 13:9 collaboratio... 73:6 collaborative 1:16 2:17 3:3 5:14 6:17,23 7:16 37:25 42:11 90:21 collation 61:8 colleagues 5:10 collect 57:12 college 3:17 3:17,19 5:17,18,20 5:24 6:2,5,8 6:25 7:6,7 7:10,17 8:7	8:8 9:2,17 9:25 11:13 11:18 12:2 12:10,16 13:6 15:19 15:23,25 16:4 17:5 17:12,12 18:12,14 20:7,12,19 20:23 21:5 22:21 23:23 25:4,6,14 26:4,21 27:15,21,25 28:5,13,17 28:20,25 29:5,7,23 30:4,9,14 30:15,23 31:6,14 33:6 35:3 36:11 42:25 44:2,7,10 45:6 50:24 51:23 54:11 56:19,23 59:7,12 60:13 61:18 61:20 64:12 65:16 67:6 67:9,12 68:10,11,14 68:25 69:7 69:13,18,21 70:8,15,16 70:18,20 71:3,19,25 72:14,15,20 72:22 73:7 73:11,12 74:18 75:5 75:10,20 76:7,12 77:16 78:12 78:17 79:12 79:20 81:18 81:19 83:5 84:12 88:21 89:6,8,12 89:20 90:25 91:13,17,19 91:25 92:23	93:6,14,23 94:5,23 95:5,7,11 97:19 98:14 98:18,21,25 100:7,11,19 100:21,24 101:3,20 102:4,4,16 102:22,25 103:8,14,16 103:23 110:11,14 111:13 112:8,12 113:2 114:19 115:2,6 116:2 117:5 118:2 119:8 119:11,18 119:20 120:22 121:17,19 121:21 122:8 123:6 123:12,18 123:22,23 124:3,16,19 125:2 126:3 126:4,6,13 126:18,20 collegeeduc... 72:9 collegefest 69:17 collegegoing 5:15 48:14 98:19 103:21 104:25 112:19 113:25 115:24 126:10,13 collegerelat... 116:7 colleges 10:17 25:20 28:8 30:11 57:4 57:15 58:21 68:11 71:16 72:11 87:9	87:10 89:5 collegespeci... 48:11 color 71:19 combine 79:12 combined 108:10,20 combining 7:11 comcast 50:12 70:2 come 2:5 3:9 3:22 10:8 32:8 37:11 53:6 69:21 71:21 103:18 107:24 109:8,12 113:24 115:20 130:11 comebacker 31:11 comebackers 8:6,11 9:6 9:14 13:15 28:23 30:15 comes 51:2 69:22 88:5 129:16,20 comfort 24:25 76:12 76:14 comfortable 17:10 coming 2:4 19:19 33:11 61:2 64:11 70:18 72:12 72:16 73:22 86:5 130:10 comment 19:9 comments 14:12 19:4 32:24 33:22 36:22 82:14 96:10 125:18 commerce 6:13 71:14	85:7 86:8 88:8 129:15 129:17,20 commitment 34:11 35:7 109:9 commitments 22:11 committee 1:3,15 2:8 2:14 5:7 42:3 55:7 60:23 61:3 67:23 74:20 88:16 92:19 96:22 104:14 105:19 111:16,25 120:11,19 125:19 130:21,22 common 109:18 111:2 130:12 communal 104:6 communica... 93:23 communities 30:2 57:2 66:7 67:10 79:21,25 80:6 92:12 101:15 111:3 115:15 community 7:20 52:4 52:10,13 53:5 58:19 60:2,9 67:6 67:13 74:17 75:4 77:16 96:18 100:24 105:16,21 106:8,21,22 107:15,25 108:7,23 109:3,7,23 110:3
--	---	--	---	--	--	---	---

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 4

112:13	30:16	108:5,16,20	55:10	74:19,22	85:5 87:6	credentials	57:10,16,20
119:3,4	complicated	109:21	104:15	77:19 78:10	87:24 88:4	28:15	114:17
120:3 121:3	46:6	111:5,18	111:11,16	85:16 88:15	88:9 92:8	credit 8:7	116:9,21
122:22	component	112:6 114:9	120:12	88:17 92:18	96:7,12	credits 20:8	117:4
123:2,15	65:22	114:24	continues	92:21	97:12 105:9	crisis 103:13	daughters
125:2	115:16	116:13,25	69:25	councilman	111:19	critical 99:20	15:4
community...	comprehen...	118:15,25	117:11	1:10,11,11	120:14,18	crucial 98:16	david 1:11
63:12	98:22 99:6	124:14	120:5	1:12 3:11	125:4,11,20	121:14	14:9 67:9
101:13	101:8	127:17	continuing	14:7,8,9	125:22,23	cry 11:20	92:11
106:9 112:8	106:12	connected	73:21	19:8 36:7,8	125:24	cultivate	day 15:15
115:12	118:5	77:11 80:13	contribute	36:17 51:17	127:3,15	50:20	21:13 24:2
118:18	computer	connecting	55:3	60:22 82:12	128:8	cultural	42:23 63:5
community...	43:11	68:18	contributed	councilmanic	129:13,21	97:25	76:7 77:4
66:6	101:19	connection	35:22	48:22	130:5,9	culture 68:17	90:15
companies	107:5	117:12	contributing	councilme...	counseling	69:22 70:3	116:15
85:21,22	computers	connections	39:16,18	5:8 55:16	108:3	73:16 76:9	126:19,20
86:2,5,18	35:22	79:22 85:11	66:2,17	105:18	counselors	98:19	126:22
86:23 90:10	concentrati...	connectors	contribution	111:15,24	30:20 56:25	cultures	de 85:12 86:4
93:8,18	16:21	128:12	87:25	120:10	58:4 60:5	76:18 77:7	deadlines
company	concentrati...	connects	control	councils 1:15	63:18	curious 34:10	57:5,12
90:9,18	49:3,4	70:21	131:22	2:13 42:3	100:20	current 7:4	59:21
compelled	concerned	consequent	convenient	120:19	110:18	65:6 66:10	deadly 79:10
46:14	11:16	80:22	103:22	councilwom...	123:20	72:21 74:3	dealing 33:8
competent	concerns	consistent	conversation	1:10,12 2:2	country 8:23	98:22	deans 16:12
62:12	49:15	17:17	12:13 86:9	2:21 4:10	17:20 42:21	107:10,22	dear 56:4
competitive	conclude	118:10	conversations	4:25 5:6	couple 83:13	120:22	deborah 67:4
108:21	96:23	consistently	62:15,20	14:4,16,22	125:24	currently	67:20
compile	130:17	128:22	convey 18:17	18:25 19:6	coupled	16:18 48:23	debt 9:3
126:15	concluded	129:2	coordinator	19:21 23:17	129:14	57:22	december
complemen...	130:23	consisting	40:24 56:6	26:10,15,23	course 10:3	117:23	116:12
109:22	conduct 1:15	15:6	67:13	27:4,7	25:13,14	128:17	decided 15:11
complements	2:14 58:8	constant	coprovide	32:22 33:2	46:22	curriculum	decision
107:22	58:24	116:6	10:19	33:16,25	courses 114:7	47:7	42:20
complete 7:8	conducting	constantly	core 99:23	34:9,16,20	coursework	customer	decisions 51:2
8:7 10:7	47:25 53:21	65:18	corner 52:8	34:22 35:4	22:10	109:10	dedication
12:10 20:8	confidence	contact 10:12	corporate	35:10,16	covering	customized	122:22
21:8,15	16:12 18:15	contacted	87:13,15	36:3,5,6,19	102:4	102:15	deeply 32:5
23:6 29:6	confidently	80:9 116:14	corporations	36:24 37:4	crawl 93:5,19	103:8	definitely
30:9 31:6	92:25	contained	21:24 22:17	37:6,8,10	94:11	cuts 100:20	117:10
completed	conflicting	131:5	correct 131:8	37:12,15,16	create 50:3		degree 7:10
12:15,21	48:13	content 50:5	correlated	37:17,21	73:14 81:17	D	8:8 9:7,9
16:14,16	confused	contests	9:3	38:6,17,22	84:24 86:19	d 78:24	10:7 11:7
25:14,21	38:15,18	51:10	cost 87:2	39:6,14,23	103:18	daily 115:21	12:10,16,19
completely	connect 83:17	continually	couldnt 11:23	40:9,16,19	107:15	dance 79:13	13:19 16:4
44:11 66:9	92:4 98:25	23:4	13:17 25:24	41:5,19	created 84:3	80:9	16:13,14,15
110:24	102:20,24	continue	26:19 43:22	51:17 55:12	101:16	data 98:2	16:16 17:5
completing	111:8	51:13 54:20	43:23	55:18,22	103:6 126:8	databases	17:12 18:14
12:19 13:18	connect2col...	98:9 114:10	council 1:2	60:19,22	creation	90:19	20:9,23
15:2 17:7	100:17	118:8 124:4	6:20 8:18	66:19,23	124:14,15	date 32:7	21:9,15,19
completion	101:6,25	124:6,11,15	19:25 23:12	67:2,16	creative	48:17 52:21	21:24 22:9
9:2,8 22:25	104:18	124:25	23:20 27:10	74:11,14	71:12	daughter	22:21,25
119:9	106:2	continued	56:4 60:18	78:3 82:10	credential	15:7,9 21:2	23:7,9,15
complex	107:20	16:5 32:10	61:4 67:25	82:15,16	107:19	21:12 41:14	23:22,23
						43:3 56:22	

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 5

26:9 28:18	123:21	directly 6:7	108:23	drop 112:17	20:19 21:1	108:1,12	69:7
29:23 31:6	develop 24:23	58:16 99:25	diversifieds	dropin 102:3	21:4 22:1,7	109:1,21	eighty-eight
43:22 75:8	62:23 73:6	director 3:15	109:2	due 114:18	23:1 24:1	110:1,5,24	8:13
75:9 97:20	developed	5:4 38:16	diversity	115:7	25:1 26:1	111:1,15,24	either 10:2,12
98:5,18,25	117:22	40:22 42:5	79:14 94:18		27:1 28:1	112:1 113:1	12:14 75:10
114:4,5,6	development	61:6 79:14	division	E	29:1,2 30:1	113:9,10,14	elaborate
119:18	9:13 29:12	82:22 85:15	27:15	eager 94:23	31:1 32:1	113:19	121:5
degrees 5:18	32:3 35:24	96:16 97:16	dixon 104:17	110:4,23	33:1 34:1	114:1 115:1	elect 22:3
6:5,8 7:9	42:9 62:7	104:17	105:21	earlier 29:5	35:1 36:1	115:22	elected 25:16
30:9 51:3	106:18	105:20,22	106:5	early 106:14	37:1 38:1,2	116:1 117:1	eligibility
54:23 55:4	107:8 121:9	122:18	107:25	108:25	38:14,25	117:4 118:1	101:5
98:14	124:9,12	127:7	109:2	earn 8:14	39:1,5,17	119:1 120:1	eliminating
dejected	devor 86:15	disabilities	111:10	17:10 22:18	40:1 41:1	120:10,20	31:8
44:11	diamond 67:5	99:11	doctorate	29:23 55:4	42:1,3 43:1	121:1,8,17	email 10:14
delivery	67:19,21	discourage	16:18	earning 8:15	43:17 44:1	121:20	57:17 69:14
100:18	83:16 85:10	22:11	documents	29:3 64:15	45:1 46:1	122:1 123:1	emails 123:13
delta 25:16	87:8 88:2,7	discover 25:8	39:7 57:13	easier 16:2	47:1 48:1	124:1,21	embassy
25:17	88:12	62:23	59:17 130:2	easily 94:13	49:1 50:1	125:1 126:1	42:17
demand	didnt 10:11	disposal	doesnt 4:12	easy 76:11	51:1 52:1	127:1 128:1	embedded
50:12	12:4 44:9	110:15	4:13	95:9 121:18	53:1,7 54:1	129:1 130:1	104:4
demanding	44:10 45:16	disruption	doing 4:3	eat 23:25	55:1,6,8	130:22	embrace
103:16	57:9 61:16	4:24	44:17,19	24:2	56:1 57:1	educational	24:22
demograph...	68:10,22	disseminated	82:24	economic	58:1 59:1	1:17 2:18	embraced
102:19	69:2 76:15	118:17	103:17	1:17 2:19	60:1,16,23	8:25 13:4	104:9
demonstrate	76:20,21	disseminati...	117:19	5:21,22 6:6	61:1,3 62:1	16:6 20:16	emergency
84:13	90:23 91:13	127:24	122:6	9:13 20:21	63:1 64:1,5	24:19 58:23	116:17
demystifies	difference	distinguished	dominated	29:12 32:3	64:15 65:1	74:2 118:12	emphasis
64:25	73:24	42:2 55:6	28:15	97:23 108:9	66:1 67:1	124:8	31:8
department	122:14	67:24 74:21	dont 22:4,6	economics	67:23 68:1	educationre...	employee
6:14 88:5,8	different	78:9 92:20	35:18 53:11	110:12	68:7 69:1	52:3	87:5
129:15,17	24:23 56:8	105:18	59:6,7,8,10	economy	70:1 71:1	effect 12:16	employees
departments	57:24 79:19	111:23	59:11,11,12	71:12 97:24	72:1 73:1	29:22	22:3,13,17
122:7	79:25 80:24	120:18	60:5 81:24	98:11	74:1,19	effective	employers
depending	122:7,11	distribute	84:8 86:18	ecosystem	75:1,4 76:1	62:18 64:3	68:18 70:22
61:19	difficult	58:10	95:12	93:9	77:1 78:1	65:7 81:5	71:4,10,18
depth 49:24	21:22 24:17	distributed	114:14	ed 82:20	79:1 80:1	87:3 107:21	76:17 80:15
94:17	49:16,25	52:21	127:9	educate 71:7	81:1 82:1	effectively	81:9 84:6
design 75:9	79:22	distributing	doors 81:9,11	educated	82:21 83:1	31:21	84:14 85:3
75:10	digital 102:14	52:2	109:7,12	124:5	84:1 85:1	effectiveness	94:23 95:2
desire 15:17	dignity	district 27:12	112:9	educating	86:1 87:1	1:16 2:16	employerv...
18:3 19:16	106:22	40:23 48:22	dots 49:9,9	47:14 65:24	88:1,6,6,16	efficient	28:14
despair 18:7	diploma	56:5,12	drawing 84:8	education 1:3	89:1 90:1	90:11	employment
desperately	10:22	63:14	drayton 3:17	1:15 2:7,8	91:1 92:1	103:18	18:14 94:18
109:14	diplomas	116:18	23:19,21	2:14 3:1 4:1	92:19 93:1	effort 13:2	107:12
despite 25:21	49:5	districts	31:17	5:1,7 6:1	94:1 95:1	34:13 65:8	113:11
42:22 43:15	direct 63:17	49:11 51:18	dream 17:22	7:1 8:1 9:1	96:1 97:1	66:6	empower
43:16	103:7	diverse	43:14	9:24 10:1	98:1 99:1	efforts 7:11	24:8 106:25
detail 100:12	131:22	106:19	dreams 18:20	11:1 12:1	100:1 101:1	7:25 9:12	empowering
details 25:2	direction	diversified	56:14	13:1 14:1	102:1 103:1	23:7 39:19	47:13
deter 13:21	45:15 46:19	96:18	drew 121:13	15:1,2 16:1	104:1,13	52:18	enable 17:13
determines	89:16	103:19	drexel 120:23	16:20,24	105:1,19	108:21	47:20
121:16	113:17	105:15,21	121:12	17:1,3,7	106:1,15	118:16	enables 9:9
devastating	119:24	106:8	driving 5:16	18:1,19	107:1,4,18	eight 40:7	encompasses
				19:1 20:1			

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 6

79:19 encounter 47:12 48:14 54:24 encountered 112:20 encourage 55:2 58:6 66:12 98:24 encouraged 21:3 54:7 57:13,16 107:12 encourage... 20:13 25:12 energy 90:11 engage 47:15 66:6 engaged 44:22 99:14 110:16 124:5 engagement 73:14 engages 99:20 engaging 6:25 90:21 engineering 92:14 english 43:9 52:23 58:9 enhance 13:3 115:17 enjoy 54:13 enjoyed 20:18 enlarged 81:8 enon 127:22 enormous 82:23 enroll 70:10 enrolled 75:4 enrollment 15:22 ensure 70:12 72:13 enter 73:10 entered 89:12 entering 15:8 entertainm... 84:11 94:16 enthusiastic...	122:19 entire 22:15 119:19 entities 58:24 entreprene... 79:6 entreprene... 93:16 entreprene... 93:11 entrylevel 95:14 environment 90:15 epitome 43:14 equipped 103:3 especially 4:16 17:16 56:25 58:8 86:17 121:21 essay 102:5 124:19 essays 57:14 59:20 essential 31:4 98:8 et 58:25 60:2 evaluate 1:16 2:15 evening 83:4 event 75:25 76:8 79:10 79:11 80:8 80:10,19 91:7 93:5 95:22 events 52:20 56:8 69:12 69:16 71:9 77:10 84:19 94:10,13,20 94:25 100:9 116:7 117:16 119:3 123:11 126:14 everybody 56:24 evidence	131:4 evident 49:18 evolve 24:7 65:18 evolved 99:19 exactly 48:20 52:17 example 11:9 17:7 52:25 81:16 116:8 examples 31:16 exceed 62:11 excel 47:3 excellence 98:10 excited 93:13 115:23 excitement 16:9 exciting 4:2 90:22 94:24 110:8 exclaim 64:7 exclusively 30:12 excuses 17:23 executive 3:15 5:4 105:22 exist 80:6 85:6 129:24 existed 64:9 existence 28:5 49:7 95:25 existing 32:14 101:12,22 exists 94:19 121:21 expand 94:6 104:6 expanding 73:22 expected 16:2 expecting 118:7 experience 17:3 21:2 31:18 53:21 59:6 62:6 63:19 69:18 70:16,20 72:20 73:5	75:20,23 76:15,18,21 77:25 81:7 81:23 82:2 89:8 90:12 91:25 105:7 119:20 120:4 121:4 124:23 experienced 10:18 64:9 experiences 79:16 80:21 82:7 experiencing 18:6 expert 86:15 expertise 7:21 86:13 116:3 experts 50:5 explain 50:6 50:18 explains 48:6 expose 50:8 express 115:13 expressed 122:19 extended 17:14 45:9 89:8 extra 18:15 115:21 extremely 31:15 78:23 81:13 eyeopening 90:13 F faced 42:20 facilitate 62:14 facilitated 63:10 104:25 facilitating 30:13 116:10 fact 79:4 factor 12:18 factors 121:15 fairs 126:13	faithbased 100:3 126:2 126:25 127:19 fall 4:12,13 76:8 78:25 83:25 91:6 120:22 124:13 familiar 103:22 113:3 families 5:21 28:21 42:21 50:25 107:2 108:9,13 109:4,6,11 109:23 110:4 112:25 113:21,22 124:2 family 12:22 16:8,19 18:13 20:13 21:21 22:10 25:23 31:2 40:24 43:2 44:22 46:16 65:24 78:15 88:23 110:23 121:18 family susta... 9:10 22:18 47:21 fan 95:19 far 4:12,13 17:22 30:16 30:17 127:16 fasfa 126:12 fashion 75:9 faster 6:10 father 42:19 42:25 43:10 43:21 favorite 65:11 feature 84:23 february 1:7 federal 9:19 fee 35:19	feedback 63:21 feel 41:23 46:14 54:14 68:10 76:22 95:11 105:11 117:2 feeling 44:19 89:2 feels 46:11 fellow 96:20 120:21 fellows 104:24 felt 15:8 44:3 female 8:12 field 16:20 122:4 fifth 8:22 figure 9:23 44:23 70:17 72:3 89:15 fill 121:24 filling 114:25 fills 30:21 101:6 filter 48:12 final 25:23 50:23 51:14 97:6 finally 71:21 104:23 finance 9:24 22:7 71:11 76:8 84:10 84:16 91:6 91:8,11,24 94:15 finances 128:21 financial 9:19 17:8 20:22 21:11,22,25 30:24 31:3 32:15 34:4 34:11 35:7 51:2 80:12 80:17 90:17 102:7 107:2 108:6,14 116:10 119:9	124:18 financially 40:15 financing 22:9 find 18:7 22:7 81:5,15 122:15 126:11 finding 95:8 114:8 finish 10:11 21:23 22:21 23:14 finished 11:7 23:9 43:22 46:9 firm 92:14 102:18 first 11:20 15:4,8 17:20 20:10 23:2 47:25 61:21 75:16 78:8 80:8 99:24 101:11 109:17 110:10,13 113:10 117:8,14 121:10 firstgenerat... 18:11 28:12 61:18 99:9 112:23 119:16 firsthand 22:15 45:21 53:22 112:11 119:17 fish 23:25 24:2,12,13 fit 9:25 25:8,9 28:13 five 50:16 66:15 94:9 fiveyear 10:25 flee 42:24 flexible 17:14 flood 110:2	flu 41:14 focus 8:3 50:12 90:25 focused 28:6 30:12 52:18 71:11 77:8 79:8 124:16 focuses 30:7 80:25 focusing 16:23 folks 30:17,25 65:5 follow 47:7 53:9 116:23 football 78:17 forefront 104:10 foregoing 131:7,19 foreign 46:7,8 46:11 foreigners 46:8 forget 45:4 form 42:10 formed 5:13 former 11:11 44:16 61:5 82:19 112:10 fortunate 21:9 110:16 119:23 fortunately 20:16 25:18 fortythree 70:3 forward 3:23 13:11 40:12 49:8 73:21 111:6,10 130:14 foster 62:24 found 54:9 61:24 76:11 79:23 84:12 foundation 87:22 founded 90:8 founding 30:5 four 5:13
---	--	--	--	---	--	--	--

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 7

20:17 42:8	117:4 121:4	92:13	grads 30:13	45:16,20	119:11	happy 20:5	52:13 53:7
49:6 63:9	future 28:20	go 11:18	graduate	47:4 51:15	groups 63:18	33:14	54:22 59:13
68:25 78:20	43:4 44:20	15:10 17:21	3:14,18,19	52:7 53:19	76:2 79:23	114:20	59:16,19,20
82:4 87:8	66:10 85:9	24:11 29:21	3:20 5:5	54:2,8,18	80:9 81:3	127:10	62:22 73:12
fraction	87:4 90:23	43:20 44:2	7:12 8:4,5	55:10 56:10	grow 29:21	hard 54:16	106:25
100:25	95:21	44:10 49:23	8:21 10:23	56:21 57:6	32:13 43:3	124:20	108:2
free 9:6 30:22	futures 77:13	59:6,11	11:10,19	57:19 58:2	78:19	havent 12:14	113:11,25
36:14 41:23	77:22	73:20 89:16	12:5,24	58:12,17	117:11	12:15	114:19
69:22 70:4		91:18 98:8	13:14 15:12	59:2,23	118:9	haverford	116:6 117:3
71:4 105:11	G	115:22	16:5,7	60:7 61:10	124:11	67:9 88:21	117:3 123:8
118:2	game 49:13	goal 6:22	17:12 18:12	62:3 63:7	growing	89:6,17	124:25
freehold	49:22 50:3	7:16,22	18:20 20:3	63:24 64:23	42:23 76:20	91:17	130:13
88:22	50:10,16	13:8 17:2	20:17 21:16	65:21 66:14	84:16 88:25	head 26:6	helped 24:23
frequently	51:6,11,22	24:19,23	22:23 24:4	73:9	93:10,16	90:24	24:24 25:7
43:18	gap 30:21	25:15 26:5	24:9,20,25	graduations	95:16	headed 78:24	46:24 57:12
freshman	66:3 101:6	29:3 70:18	25:7,12	52:11	grows 104:3	heads 8:12	74:6 81:18
57:22	114:25	100:10	26:2 27:18	grant 64:21	growth 5:22	health 52:9	107:6,11
friend 59:24	gaps 121:25	goals 72:16	28:2 30:4,6	69:25 87:20	5:24 22:19	healthcare	helping 9:8
friends 16:8	garnered	108:15,17	30:21 31:7	90:3	85:16	84:17	13:5 20:15
fries 85:12	51:7	goes 79:3	31:14,23	grants 22:8	guaranteeing	hear 2:5 13:2	54:22 96:3
86:4	general 58:24	going 12:2	32:15,20	87:18	65:22 66:9	13:13 14:15	helpless
front 64:18	generate	14:15 16:9	35:8 37:24	122:15	guatemala	54:19 83:10	44:12
127:9	29:22	26:18 40:10	38:4,9,10	graphics	56:13	84:14 85:20	helps 12:22
fruit 4:13	generates	44:6 48:5	38:20 40:3	37:22	guidance	85:24	48:12 50:25
frustrated	5:21	53:15 60:12	40:6 47:17	grassroots	21:11 23:5	129:15	heritage
44:5	generations	117:7	54:23 56:17	51:16 53:5	30:19 110:6	heard 31:17	60:15
fulfillment	28:20	gold 75:25	61:21 65:3	grateful	110:18	64:7,10	high 7:5 13:6
17:6	110:20	77:4	72:23 74:4	18:20 23:12	113:8	83:12	21:6 30:13
fulfills 64:23	genuine	good 2:2 4:5	75:6,7	82:4 91:16	guide 10:21	125:12	43:21 44:9
full 6:12	15:17	5:3 14:17	85:25	95:24	46:24 52:24	hearing 55:15	44:21 47:17
fullest 18:2	geographic	14:23 16:11	129:19	114:23	57:7 59:15	96:24	49:4 51:23
fulltime	51:19	19:24 23:19	graduated	great 3:4	60:5	129:12	56:16,18
107:11	getting 23:10	27:10 34:3	56:16 68:20	14:22 32:16	guy 11:14	130:18	58:13 62:3
fully 131:5	51:3 73:19	34:19,20,22	69:3 72:6	36:4 53:4		hearings 1:15	63:16 65:3
function 6:16	77:9 95:3	41:25 59:11	92:16 94:2	67:2 68:22	H	2:15	65:16 73:10
6:22	gibson 116:9	60:21 74:13	95:4 110:11	89:4,5	habits 24:22	heart 19:16	75:3 105:3
functions	116:15,15	74:14 78:6	graduates	117:2	hackathons	heartening	116:11
95:15	116:23,24	82:16,17	5:24 28:20	124:12	79:7	54:5	higher 9:3,4
fund 79:8	117:12	88:14 92:10	54:21 72:5	greater 6:18	half 8:15 94:3	held 24:11	16:23 68:7
funded 87:7	gibsons	105:13,19	72:15 84:15	85:6 115:5	hall 1:6	hello 97:3	82:20,21
88:7	116:19	120:16,17	95:5,7	greatest	hampers 73:4	120:16	109:20
funding 32:6	give 18:15	goode 1:10	graduating	25:22	hand 24:11	help 1:17	110:5,24
87:9,17	23:25 26:24	3:12 14:7	13:21 25:15	greenwood	86:25	2:18 3:8 4:5	121:8
103:13	33:10 39:12	goto 109:4	43:13 44:9	85:16	109:13,14	6:9 9:22,23	highest 49:3
129:11	46:2 47:6	113:24	54:10 72:10	grew 76:10	handle 37:22	10:20 11:6	highlight
funds 87:18	48:15 78:13	gotten 81:24	graduation	88:23	handson	12:6,22	84:23
funeral 26:20	119:24	government	5:11,19 7:2	grim 42:23	24:15	19:17 21:22	highly 98:12
33:20	given 18:21	53:2 75:17	7:11 10:15	groceries	happen 99:2	22:20 23:15	highpaying
further 16:13	121:24	79:15	11:5 26:3	47:13	happened	43:19,23	98:12
18:19 91:5	giving 43:19	gowns 52:6	37:5,23	group 68:7	21:20	44:3,24	highquality
104:4	120:3	grade 15:8	38:12 39:4	80:12,18	happening	45:14 46:17	98:20
113:14	glad 89:7	grades 16:11	40:21,25	93:13 96:14	68:20	47:22 51:9	109:10
115:22	130:11	59:11	41:2 42:5,7	96:23	126:14	51:18 52:13	123:5
	global 62:12				happens 9:21		

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 8

hill 3:19 15:23 16:4	97:14,15 126:4 127:6	67:17 97:13 105:11	important 2:6 11:8	107:16 increase 54:4	56:19 57:3 58:3,21	inperson 10:2 10:13 48:2	83:18,24 86:15,19
hindered 17:25	128:16 129:18	ill 41:13 78:23	20:6 29:11 31:11 32:9	54:9,10 60:12 61:25	59:9 62:8 63:20,23	69:16 71:9 84:4 85:2	87:19 90:6 91:21
hip 83:6	130:3,7	illustrates 97:22	54:14 58:18 60:8 78:23	64:22 increased	64:4,25 65:14 66:4	95:22,22 99:15,18	internships 7:6 70:15
hire 94:23	host 106:4	im 5:4 26:8 27:23 34:25	82:6 119:14 120:4 121:5	6:15 62:10 66:15	98:21 99:2 99:8 102:11	inquiring 15:24	72:18 73:2 73:3 86:22
hired 95:3,18	hostages 42:16	35:2 37:8 37:21 38:20	121:15 122:24	increasing 54:18 72:24	102:16,22 103:21	inside 44:8 inspiration	86:24 89:21 interventions
hispanic 71:14	hosting 118:24	38:21 39:20 40:10 56:14	importantly 25:10 31:19	86:22 90:15 121:2	104:8 109:20	inspire 18:12 inspiring	108:10 interview
hits 99:17	hotpots 115:11	61:9 67:21 68:2 74:17	65:4 imported	incredible 90:15 121:2	111:7,9 112:18	13:22 instantaneo...	107:9 intrinsic
hoc 129:4	hotspots 101:24	75:5 77:3 78:7 82:4	29:18 impossible	incredibly 49:5	113:19 115:24	102:15 instilling 15:5	123:17 introduce
hold 36:12	hours 17:15	83:8 92:11 95:19,24	24:17 impressed	incubator 93:8	118:11 119:25	35:13 70:9 institution	53:13 71:17 76:2 84:5
hold 97:19	house 104:17	112:9 114:10,20	3:25 122:20 impression	independence 71:15 108:9	122:8 123:19	65:15 instruction	93:8 104:16 119:2
holding 86:25	household 8:12 26:7	119:15 127:6,7	68:23 improve 1:17	independent 69:6	127:24 129:14	intend 18:17 intensively	61:12 introduction
holds 75:25	households 111:10	83:9 121:14 83:7 75:13	2:18 42:22 104:5	indepth 65:14 individual	129:14 73:23	45:9 intent 111:4	95:23 introductions
hole 95:11	household 8:12 26:7	immigrant 56:14	inadequate 32:5	9:3 39:10 48:16 103:9	125:14 informing	102:9 interest 62:24	85:3 95:2 95:17
home 17:15	housing 106:17	immigrating 43:7	incapable 43:18	113:25 116:8	95:16 infrastruct...	110:2 117:19	95:3 invest 87:12
42:21 43:18	111:3	impact 5:23 6:18 13:10	incarceration 113:15	122:25 123:9	93:15 111:13	39:12 77:6 83:8 91:8	124:8 invested 9:16
51:21 76:23	117:25	17:8 18:10 45:20 53:23	incentive 17:11	129:10 individually	83:19 initial 10:12	93:11,14 interesting	68:24 investing
homeless 18:5	hub 97:25	64:15 68:5 73:25 85:19	incentivize 51:11	4:4 129:11 individuals	61:25 81:15 99:20	81:6 interests	77:17 investment
homeschool...	huge 12:13	106:23 107:15	inception 30:6	18:6 110:19 industries	100:15 101:7 104:3	108:18 intern 80:11	9:11 32:16 32:17
75:3	human 16:17	121:3,14 122:2	include 10:2 52:23 61:16	71:8 84:15 94:22	106:2,6 110:9	80:18 90:16 internal	investments 101:23
homework	hundreds 77:5 94:11	122:2 impacted	100:6 124:17	84:24 85:2 94:14 95:16	111:18 112:6	22:13 internet	invite 3:22 invited 63:5
43:23 45:11	I	15:3 impactful	included 12:11 48:19	107:19 inequality	114:10,24 116:14	51:21 interning	inviting 15:17 involved 24:6
honor 25:17	id 3:5 8:3	82:7 impacts	48:24 includes 6:25	121:20 influence	117:2,13,17 119:2	80:14 interns 86:12	73:19 74:7 75:13,17,20
120:24	19:8 34:9	112:12 implement	63:12 including	68:14 influx 72:8	119:2 initiatives	89:22 internship	76:4,5,13 93:18
honor 120:24	117:25	83:14 implemented	8:19 66:4,7 72:22 76:7	83:4 information	85:19 inkind 35:24	70:13,19,25 71:2 72:20	121:10 127:5
honorable	106:17	57:17 identified	85:22 100:9 105:2	2:6,25 8:17 21:14 31:4	83:20 innumerable	72:25 73:5 73:17 77:9	68:15 ips 106:16
19:25 23:20	117:25	101:17 importance	106:14 117:24	39:15 40:6 48:13 51:19			
honorary	hub 97:25	17:4 50:19 important	income	52:3,6			
55:15	huge 12:13						
honored	63:8						
36:16 106:4	human 16:17						
honors 23:23	66:5 93:19						
25:16	117:25						
hoops 45:12	hundred 40:8						
hope 7:25	hundreds 77:5 94:11						
51:12 54:20							
117:11							
121:4							
124:10							
hopefully							
18:12 104:9							
129:8							
hopes 42:21							
hoping 24:14							
26:8							
hormozi							
40:22 41:7							
41:25 42:4							
48:9 50:22							
51:5 97:3							

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 9

iran 42:14 43:4	june 25:15	102:10 107:13	100:16 102:2	lgbt 71:18 liberty 67:13	lived 68:24 90:13	100:21 107:16,16	30:18 managed
iranian 42:15	K	113:17,24	109:25	libraries	lives 12:20	lowesawyer	94:3
iraniraq 42:18	karen 114:3,6 114:12	114:16	laundromats	100:2	46:23 62:21	3:18 14:15	management
isnt 94:13	keep 47:20	119:17	52:9	library	66:2 73:24	14:20,21,23	31:5
issue 2:7 3:10	58:18 59:21	127:18	lauren 96:19	101:23	living 18:2	14:25	manager
12:13	keeping 5:18	knowing	104:23	118:2 128:4	69:2 95:20	lowest 49:4	53:14 55:17
issues 30:18	73:23	19:15 44:7	120:20	life 9:21 15:3	loans 22:8	lowincome	96:17 112:5
49:24 79:7	kensington	83:8	lead 10:4	16:25 17:8	122:15	99:8 119:17	112:10
ive 61:2 63:6	51:16,20	knowledge	62:25 75:15	18:23 21:20	local 32:13	lucien 4:14	116:5
63:20 64:7	52:17,19	91:5 103:25	leader 59:25	22:22 29:5	50:4 52:11	lucy 79:8	managers
64:9 79:10	kevin 3:17	112:11	59:25 93:20	30:18 44:21	64:5 102:18	luncheon	104:21
110:22	23:21 31:17	known	leaders 68:8	45:24 69:11	locate 85:21	89:24	managing
ivy 86:3	key 23:9	117:23	106:5	79:14 96:3	located	lutheran	112:14
J	50:16 60:13	knows 47:8	leadership	108:14	101:16	67:13	map 48:18,24
j 1:11	62:15 64:2	L	16:21 63:13	109:15	127:14	M	52:15,16
jalen 67:7	keyonna 67:5	l 131:14	65:5 75:14	113:20	location	m 1:7 130:23	maps 48:25
78:7	74:16	la 41:11	75:18 85:14	119:19	81:25	madam 34:2	marginalized
james 3:20	115:19	53:13 55:14	85:17	121:16	118:24	37:6 40:18	81:3
19:23,24	keyspots	55:16,20,20	leana 96:15	lifes 119:19	long 43:10	88:11	mark 1:12
20:4 23:18	101:23	55:21,24,24	97:4,15	lifetime 24:3	46:10 49:14	125:20	14:8
jannie 1:10	115:11	55:25 94:15	leap 111:6	lift 108:6	98:8 129:4	longer 38:21	marketfran...
january	kicked 82:18	lab 107:5	learn 29:15	likewise 21:3	longer 38:21	43:5	118:22
116:16	kids 11:14,17	labs 101:19	57:2 58:15	lincoln 80:12	longterm	87:8 100:9	marketing
jen 86:15	60:16 83:5	104:18,22	76:20 86:4	80:17	97:22	maintain	118:15
jersey 88:23	kimberly	lack 17:24	110:4 119:5	linda 40:22	longtime 22:2	64:20 66:12	127:18
jevs 117:25	3:18 14:15	21:13 22:13	learned 43:9	41:9 53:16	look 4:22	maintaining	married
jim 3:16	14:21,24	31:3 100:18	57:10,18,25	56:3 60:18	13:11 48:18	17:17 32:12	11:14
26:19 27:25	kind 11:16	103:13	59:5 79:2	28:19 64:18	52:15 73:21	83:21	masters
33:6 34:25	54:7	109:19	80:15 89:18	lines 118:22	128:21	major 16:20	16:16 114:6
36:11	kinds 110:20	landscape	90:2 91:8	link 128:18	looked 19:13	58:19 90:24	match 25:4
job 3:4 20:22	kiosks 52:7	46:11	94:5	linkage 85:14	looking 10:25	91:2 93:23	47:6
22:19 63:24	kitchen 45:5	lane 128:3	learner 16:23	129:7	18:13 39:20	majority	89:20
70:23 93:25	knew 11:12	languages	learning	linkages	49:8 61:22	28:12	matching
107:8 108:7	11:15 24:20	58:11	76:16 91:23	39:21,25	85:21,23	109:11	70:25 83:24
jobs 9:9 10:5	43:3 89:14	laptops 49:20	leave 60:16	85:6 129:24	109:12,13	making 73:24	87:19
29:20 43:8	knight 69:24	large 22:16	64:13 97:6	linked 129:11	113:9,13	79:9 82:6	material
47:21 49:14	87:21	28:12	led 42:16	links 128:11	looks 111:10	95:17	115:13
68:18 94:24	knocked 81:9	largely 12:12	76:14	128:12	losing 25:22	112:22	materials
95:10 98:13	know 6:5	larger 91:21	left 14:9 48:5	list 16:12	lost 44:5	maldonado	8:17 45:6
joined 30:4	8:25 10:24	largest 8:23	114:25	38:23	60:14	40:22 53:16	53:2 58:10
31:22 62:4	11:2 12:4	8:24 12:18	legwork	listening	lot 19:14 33:9	56:3 60:18	65:10 99:7
77:7	12:17 21:18	98:4	15:21	62:17	65:5 82:25	89:4,5	101:17
journalism	22:4,14	late 4:22	letting 13:20	124:23	107:13	107:13	118:5,16
57:23	33:8 34:10	18:18 45:2	level 34:4	literacy 108:6	114:23	41:9	123:11
journey 16:7	40:14 45:21	launch 65:12	72:21 85:14	little 4:23	122:10	malik 96:17	math 91:2,5
47:23 62:3	53:10 57:9	74:7 77:22	85:18 123:9	26:19 42:13	lots 61:19	104:16	matriculate
journeyed	59:8 60:3	106:5	leverage	78:13 89:9	love 79:18	105:14,20	31:13
20:11	64:8 73:11	117:15	86:13	106:7	loved 82:2	mallery 128:4	matter 13:7
jr 1:10	74:7 86:19	launched	leveraged	live 28:11	low 9:2 51:20	malvern	46:12 64:6
juggling	89:9 91:13	51:7 70:6	101:22	29:15 72:3	51:23	92:15	109:7 131:7
22:10	94:21	98:15	102:14	103:2		man 23:25	mattleman
						manage	

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 10

3:15 4:11	members 5:7	metastatic	monetary	N	needed 24:7	64:13	98:13
4:18 5:3,4	6:19 13:14	79:9	40:3	name 14:20	24:11 25:6	newly 103:5	occasions
14:14 26:17	19:25 20:5	methods	money 9:16	14:24 20:4	25:10 31:6	newsletter	61:5 110:22
33:4 34:14	23:13,20	62:18	59:10 79:13	23:21 26:25	45:4,13	69:15	occupation
37:2,11,14	25:23 27:10	metropolitan	month 100:11	27:3,5,11	49:19 117:3	niche 101:4	17:13
37:20 38:3	35:12,13	98:4	126:3,5,6,7	42:4 55:16	117:10	niece 47:10	occurred
38:8,19	42:3 52:4	michael	126:17,18	55:19 60:24	needing	nights 52:11	124:13
39:2,9,22	53:6 55:6	26:21 27:3	126:18,19	67:20 74:16	100:25	118:25	october
39:25 40:13	56:4 60:17	27:11	126:22	78:7 88:19	needle 107:14	nimble	100:16
129:19	60:24 65:24	michele	months 42:17	92:11 97:14	needs 25:3	108:22	101:25
mawr 67:12	67:24 70:5	131:14	117:14	100:4	50:17 60:14	nonprofit	106:3 112:7
mayor 89:24	74:21 78:9	middle 13:5	moore 75:10	105:14,20	65:19 103:3	36:13 69:6	offer 21:24
106:4	88:17 92:20	65:15	morning	112:3	103:10,12	79:8	76:25 93:25
mayors 36:2	101:15	middleclass	24:10 41:13	120:20	123:16,23	nonprofits	99:7,24
38:2,13,24	104:13	29:3	82:17	narrative	124:17	39:18 53:3	100:8
39:5,17	109:23	milestone	mother 4:15	128:14	neighbor	68:16 81:10	109:22
mba 26:9	110:22	18:11	11:15 15:9	national	44:14 59:24	norm 17:16	offered 70:4
90:8 110:13	117:20	millennials	41:9 42:19	25:17	neighborho...	normalized	offering
mean 86:22	119:4	83:4	43:11 44:14	nationwide	114:12	103:24	86:23 104:7
89:11	120:19	mimics 16:24	53:17 56:15	54:6	116:20	north 74:24	108:5
meaning 11:3	125:18	minds 47:2	59:24 60:14	native 119:16	neighborho...	northwest	offerings
meaningful	130:20	mindset	117:5	natural 54:12	49:2,11	128:2	107:23
62:19 90:21	membership	24:21	mothers 26:7	navigate	nephew 47:10	note 14:6	offers 70:7
means 19:13	86:12 87:13	mine 46:4	motivate	20:15 24:18	net 106:17	27:20 41:8	office 15:13
28:18 29:2	87:16	minimal	59:19	46:6	network 38:9	41:20 53:12	38:2,14,24
70:19 86:24	mention 18:9	15:21	motivation	navigation	38:10 47:22	110:10	39:5,17
114:23	mentioned	minority 57:2	17:25	29:8 31:20	76:17 95:13	notes 26:14	57:15 88:6
131:21	14:7 27:11	misguided	motivational	near 42:21	95:15	82:12 131:6	89:17 99:18
measures	27:23 28:22	114:16	18:4	nearly 28:10	networks	noticed 44:15	127:12
90:12	mentor 45:9	misled 114:16	move 47:18	106:10	105:5	notion 103:23	offices 3:13
media 51:10	mentoring	missing 12:12	83:14	122:13	never 18:18	number	85:23 92:15
69:14 94:4	54:6 61:22	110:21	106:25	necessary	22:3 23:9	12:14 60:12	officially 51:7
94:7 126:16	mentors 7:4	mission 31:25	107:14	29:9 60:7	29:6 43:22	76:6 83:15	oftentimes
126:24	54:13 99:15	34:12 68:4	108:8	65:22	45:4 46:9	86:23 88:24	10:8
medical	110:15	mitigation	130:13	111:12	new 18:13,14	110:14,21	oh 1:11 14:9
89:12 90:24	mentorship	108:3	moved 74:25	need 4:7 6:23	24:22,22	numbers	36:7,8
mediumsized	47:5	mobile 50:11	78:15	9:23 10:21	26:5,5	40:11 51:12	60:22
86:18	mergiotti	mode 102:8	movement	22:6 23:5	32:14 42:19	107:13	okay 38:22
meet 49:19	3:16 26:19	103:4	104:11	23:15 24:7	46:11 63:23	127:9,10,14	40:13,16
81:19,19	27:25 28:2	model 11:16	mu 25:17	40:9 46:3	65:11 69:10	numerous	88:9 128:8
93:19 101:4	31:22 33:6	15:4 22:24	multiple	46:17 49:2	72:10 76:12	15:3	129:13
meeting	33:14 34:19	54:17	110:20	59:13,13,14	78:14 83:24	nurturing	older 28:6,10
99:25	34:25 35:2	100:18	multiplier	59:16,18	84:9 87:19	17:17 31:9	30:8 31:13
116:22	35:6,11,17	101:11	29:22	62:11 64:2	88:23 94:15	nutter 89:24	56:15
meetings	36:12,16	103:25	multipurpose	64:24 85:4	100:15,17	106:4	110:17
10:13 52:10	message	115:4	106:9	95:18	103:25	O	olesh 86:3
52:20 58:6	47:17 102:9	moment	murphy	106:25	113:20	oak 128:3	once 22:25
mega 127:21	102:12,24	106:7	131:14	111:9	114:11	objections	55:3 73:10
member 3:21	messages	109:24	music 93:12	113:16	116:13	131:4	oneill 1:11
25:16 28:3	102:20	moments	musical 79:11	114:22	117:17	oblivious	oneonone
85:12	met 11:13	62:25	mutually	115:21	newcomers	110:25	114:13
115:18	75:24 77:5	monday	108:18	124:6	80:2	obtain 110:6	116:5
120:2	116:8,17	127:11	myriad 50:9	128:10,14	newfound	obtainable	

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 11

ones 24:21 32:14 121:16 onethird 129:16 online 10:2 83:17 84:21 95:10 open 69:23 73:16 76:9 77:7 79:25 81:12 85:23 87:18 91:20 opendoor 109:9 opened 43:12 operate 64:22 operating 70:2 129:3 opportunities 20:23 22:14 22:19 71:7 77:12 78:18 83:18 91:21 92:2 94:18 95:14 110:5 118:13 opportunity 4:16 6:21 15:14 18:22 29:6 42:6 60:25 61:23 66:3 68:3 74:10,23 77:24 78:11 80:16 81:14 82:9 85:18 86:11 88:18 91:3,9 92:7 92:22 93:24 95:7,9 96:6 97:10 105:24 119:4 120:8 optimize 129:5 option 103:23 options 113:18 order 31:24 65:8 101:21 111:8 org 69:16	organization 8:4 9:5 23:11 35:12 35:21,25 38:5 80:8 81:18 121:12 organization... 78:25 81:2 117:16 organizations 5:13 6:12 12:25 19:17 31:25 32:4 39:11,19 42:9 50:4 58:20 63:13 100:4,5 101:13,14 101:19 102:25 115:12 117:18 118:19 123:4 126:10 127:2,19 organize 59:17 organized 68:21 79:10 organizing 80:7 orientations 69:10 otis 105:22 outcomes 1:17 2:18 outlined 100:12 outofschool... 106:15 outpouring 117:18 outreach 7:13 23:7 53:14 55:17 65:7 outstanding 23:11 25:11 overall 18:10 overcoming 13:19 overwhelmed	44:6 overwhelmi... 44:25 56:24 110:2 P p 1:7 130:23 packet 8:17 52:25 packets 48:20 48:24 100:13 paid 72:24 73:3 82:25 89:20 parallels 73:16 paramount 17:19 parent 12:20 20:25 40:23 56:6,11 parental 97:6 parents 4:14 17:16 30:20 42:19 43:7 43:16 44:4 44:12,16 46:4 56:9 56:24 58:4 58:6,11,14 58:25 63:15 99:15 100:25 110:16 parks 105:3 122:11,18 parkway 76:7 116:11 part 16:10 41:17 70:15 75:3,19,22 76:23 79:23 81:4 89:7 105:25 108:25 109:8 110:8 125:16 128:24 participants 105:6 participate 31:24 61:13 participated	79:6 91:6 participation 63:2 particular 80:3 parties 108:17 partner 30:5 50:4 70:9 71:16 77:17 102:2,3 104:18,22 114:11 115:8 116:19 117:21 118:19,25 127:25 partnered 71:13 102:17 partnering 101:12 partners 13:11 27:22 34:10,11,15 51:9 54:21 69:7 70:3 87:11 110:3 117:23,24 118:3,8 partnership 6:9 10:16 34:5 50:7 50:24 104:19 108:15 111:11 128:22 partnerships 129:6 party 80:13 passed 41:9 53:17 passionate 45:19 120:3 passionately 32:4 path 20:16 24:18 119:19 paths 30:15 patience	96:22 patient 113:8 117:7 paved 95:21 110:17 pay 29:17 35:18 87:11 pcaps 61:7 peers 44:4 peirce 3:16 3:17 23:23 25:4,5,13 26:4,21 27:15,21,25 28:5,8 30:4 31:14 33:5 33:14 34:6 35:2,20 36:11 penn 57:21 82:22 91:23 pennsylvania 1:6 91:4 people 12:22 17:25 19:14 40:4 47:16 61:20 62:2 62:21 79:24 114:2,15 peoples 65:25 116:17 percent 6:3,3 6:6,7 7:17 7:18 8:10 8:13,14 11:5 28:8 28:10 54:2 54:3 66:15 70:14,17 71:25 72:4 72:4,19,21 73:2 83:11 83:12 95:6 97:18,21 percentage 87:25 percentages 83:10 perfect 25:3 31:10 perform 31:15 period 45:10	permeates 111:2 permitted 32:6 persisted 11:3 person 4:20 4:21 18:3 41:20 46:21 47:11 49:17 119:23 personal 13:16 17:6 20:11 28:16 110:10 113:7 117:12 121:9 124:9 personally 31:24 57:6 119:15 personnel 60:4 persons 119:18 perspective 91:15 pg2c 99:19 ph 78:24 phases 5:15 127:18 philadelphia 1:2,6,15,16 1:18 2:13 2:16,20 3:2 3:14,20 5:5 5:16,20,25 6:14 7:12 8:5,5,8,20 8:22 9:5 10:24 11:11 11:19 12:24 13:25 15:12 16:5,7 18:21 19:12 19:15 20:3 21:16 24:4 24:10,20 25:7,13 26:2,8 27:18 28:3 28:11 29:15 29:16,16,17	29:21 30:5 30:7,21 31:7,12,15 31:23 32:16 35:8 37:24 38:4,20 40:4,7,23 42:10 45:23 47:16 49:11 54:24 55:9 56:6 61:4,8 61:10 65:23 66:11 67:7 68:9,13,23 69:19,20,22 70:19 71:9 71:22 72:2 72:5,7,13 72:23 73:20 74:3,8,18 74:25 75:2 75:5,11,15 75:22 76:11 76:25 77:12 77:16,20,23 78:12,20 79:3,4,17 79:18,24 80:6,17 81:8,12,20 81:21 82:23 83:20 84:7 85:7,22 87:23 88:24 89:7,10,21 90:4,14 91:10,18,24 92:3,16,23 93:10 94:13 94:19 95:8 96:4 97:19 98:3,24 99:21 100:23 103:7,20 104:8 106:14 108:24 111:4 112:13,17 117:25 118:10,18 119:12,15	119:21 120:2,5 123:23,24 128:3 129:20 philadelphi... 92:14 philadelphi... 82:3 philadelphi... 5:17 6:17 8:2 13:4 23:8 32:7 100:22 101:9 102:10 103:12 112:15 122:25 philadelphias 12:5 13:14 22:23 25:2 32:2,11,21 66:14 73:7 98:9 112:8 124:22 philly 5:10 37:24 38:11 50:12 54:25 67:4,22 68:2 69:5 70:9,11,24 72:12 73:12 73:15 74:6 74:23 75:21 75:24 76:6 76:13,19 77:2,4,14 77:17,21 78:13 80:4 80:13,19 81:16 82:5 82:24 83:19 84:3 86:6 86:14 87:7 87:12 89:18 89:19,23 91:20 92:4 92:24 93:3 93:4,4,18 94:9,10 95:14,23 96:2,2
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STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 12

105:5 phillygoes2... 5:11 7:3 34:6 35:15 35:18 38:13 39:3 54:22 73:8 96:15 96:19 97:11 97:17 98:15 99:3,13 102:13 103:11 104:10,24 111:12,17 112:3 116:2 119:7 120:6 120:21 121:2,6,11 121:23 122:3,24 123:2,17 124:7,11,24 126:21 127:7 phillygoes2... 112:5 122:21 phillys 27:22 68:4 69:23 77:10 80:12 89:23 91:7 94:20 philosophy 24:5 phone 10:14 99:17 123:13 phones 49:20 102:11 pictured 48:23 pidc 85:8,13 85:20 86:3 86:4 piece 126:2 pipeline 5:16 13:5 87:4 129:2,3 pivotal 46:25 80:5 place 16:11 42:24 43:2 48:21 68:24	72:3 81:25 90:6 91:18 113:7,23 placed 115:7 places 103:22 109:4 127:23 placing 52:6 plan 50:16 75:8 83:13 planning 116:7 plans 49:13 49:22 50:3 50:10 51:6 51:11,22 planted 47:2 platform 83:17,25 84:22 87:20 play 60:8 played 48:8 50:21 51:4 please 14:17 34:4,23 37:11 48:4 50:14 67:17 127:15 128:9 pleased 3:7 3:25 68:2 pleasure 61:2 pockets 127:5 poconos 78:15 point 46:18 46:21 106:10,20 113:16 119:23 pointed 45:14 policies 30:10 policy 109:9 pond 24:12 poor 17:24 popular 23:24 population 31:11 64:7 populations 101:4 portion 87:17 position	86:20 108:13 115:3 positions 71:2 positive 63:21 possible 81:22 82:7 90:3 95:24 post 86:12 posted 71:3,7 postgradua... 70:23 72:14 postsecond... 21:4 47:19 64:14 107:18 108:12 112:22 113:8,10 118:12 potential 18:2 22:12 64:16 115:5 poverty 28:19 32:12 49:4 51:23 106:23 108:7 practical 43:19 praise 62:18 precipitated 103:14 prep 100:24 101:3 118:3 122:17 preparation 63:6 107:9 108:4 123:18 124:3 125:2 prepared 2:25 3:8 40:5 70:12 prepares 70:20 preparing 15:22 prescribed 47:5 presence 94:4 94:6 present 1:9	15:20 presentation 116:11 presentations 99:16 122:6 122:12,21 123:6,10 presented 15:14 56:11 president 3:16 17:21 27:24 33:5 33:18,23 34:21 35:2 36:11 67:5 67:21,22,25 74:19 75:16 85:13 88:15 92:18 previously 28:22,24 primary 85:11 principals 58:4 print 52:4 99:6 printed 52:22 65:10 118:16 prior 11:10 private 11:22 21:24 22:16 38:11 probably 11:6 64:10 problem 5:2 66:2 111:2 130:4 proceedings 131:4 process 44:6 45:7 48:14 56:20,23 57:3,8,11 58:23 59:8 59:16 60:6 65:2,17 112:19 113:3 114:2 114:17 116:21 117:8	processes 46:6 proclaim 44:8 proclaiming 64:12 produced 84:18 90:17 93:4 produces 94:9 productive 62:20 120:2 professional 16:22 28:16 62:5 63:4 63:19 79:20 80:21 81:10 82:20 108:15 124:8 professor 27:13 program 7:20 16:13 18:23 26:18 31:15 32:10 38:10 47:5 61:22 69:23 70:5 70:10 75:15 76:9 78:24 87:13,16 89:18,19 90:2 95:23 105:4 107:10,23 108:5 109:25 120:13 121:13 122:19 123:16 125:17 programm... 64:20 73:15 73:17 89:23 programs 1:17 2:17 6:16 7:24 22:2 28:7 30:10 31:5 38:16 50:9 58:17 66:17 70:14 72:25	73:8 76:6 76:14 77:18 84:5,25 100:3 101:2 101:3 120:6 123:4 124:7 124:9,16 128:11,13 128:19 129:23 progress 98:7 promote 98:18 promoting 118:14,23 promotional 22:14 51:9 proponent 63:8 prosperous 106:20 proud 13:17 25:24 26:11 26:12 49:5 125:13 proven 7:21 66:16 provide 6:15 9:6 21:10 24:8 29:17 35:12 39:10 41:15 43:5 58:20 81:13 86:7 94:25 101:21 102:3,15 106:12 107:4 113:18 115:18,23 116:5 118:6 provided 8:18 35:22 78:19 87:20 89:22 90:4 provides 36:13 70:24 86:11,16 87:4,16 92:3 99:3 104:21 providing 30:7 32:15	74:22 78:10 92:21 98:20 101:8 111:6 122:4,8 123:5,11 provisions 110:21 public 1:15 2:14 60:3 61:9 117:21 130:17 131:15 publication 3:3 pulse 85:8 purple 49:9 purpose 27:20 purposeful 62:20 pursue 18:19 21:3 26:9 75:8 98:10 pursuing 16:3 17:5 push 59:18 115:22 put 115:14 Q quality 63:21 99:4 121:16 quanisha 40:24 53:18 53:24 60:24 question 37:14,17,19 129:9,22 questions 14:11 15:18 15:21 19:3 32:24 33:7 33:13,22 36:21 44:18 45:13 46:2 46:18 53:9 53:11 58:15 66:21 82:14 96:9 117:9 122:14 123:10 125:25 quick 41:8 50:15	quickly 49:18 quinonessa... 51:18 quite 15:18 17:11 83:5 R raise 7:17 79:13 raising 5:19 6:2 ran 11:11 33:6 range 63:11 66:7 71:18 80:16 91:9 123:7 ranging 63:19 ranked 98:3 ranks 8:23 rate 11:5 54:18 66:14 rates 9:2 51:21,24 54:2 100:22 ravin 67:8 88:19 reach 7:19 8:2 32:7 46:15 49:23 98:23 110:23 115:5 123:7 reached 44:15 114:7 reaching 7:9 read 2:10 readiness 122:8 123:12 reading 26:22 41:11 53:15 56:2 97:8 ready 7:8 50:11 76:24 105:5 122:6 122:11,19 123:5 real 90:7,16 91:22 107:15 realize 45:17 94:17
---	---	--	--	--	---	---	---

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 13

119:19	refer 61:14	represents	93:1 94:1	resources	23:3 28:25	103:6	54:16 56:5
130:12	referrals	109:21	95:1 96:1	6:24 7:19	99:11	rprnotary	56:12,16,18
really 9:12	53:10	111:5	97:1 98:1	9:22 18:7	113:13	131:15	62:3 63:15
11:8 61:20	regard 2:7	reproduction	99:1 100:1	52:4,22	returns	run 79:7	63:16 65:3
64:19 85:8	regardless	131:20	101:1 102:1	57:4 58:22	127:11	running 4:21	65:16 71:22
86:19,22	18:16 53:8	reputation	103:1 104:1	64:5,8 66:4	revamped	runway 29:14	73:10,20
95:12,15	regards	97:25	105:1 106:1	66:5 99:5	65:9	rushing 33:19	75:4 77:15
126:19	105:23	requirements	107:1 108:1	102:21	review 10:9		89:10,12
reap 9:17	region 82:23	101:5	109:1 110:1	103:9	revolution	S	90:24 91:18
reason 58:19	regional	res 3:1 4:1	111:1 112:1	110:15	42:15	s 43:6,21 98:5	114:15
80:23 81:5	70:22,25	5:1 6:1 7:1	113:1 114:1	115:14	rewarded	safety 106:17	116:12
reasons 9:15	registered	8:1 9:1 10:1	115:1 116:1	119:13	16:11	sahaba 41:2	schools 58:5
128:19	11:25	11:1 12:1	117:1 118:1	121:19,24	reynolds 1:12	41:13	58:13 60:4
reassured	regrets 32:5	13:1 14:1	119:1 120:1	123:24	26:16 33:24	salary 17:10	60:9 61:9
44:24	regular 118:4	15:1 16:1	121:1 122:1	124:18	37:18 82:15	salon 43:12	63:14 80:10
rebates 90:10	reimburse...	17:1 18:1	123:1 124:1	respect 82:24	125:23	salons 52:8	100:2 105:3
recall 110:14	22:2	19:1 20:1	125:1 126:1	106:22	rhonda 116:9	sat 43:24	118:18
receive 69:25	reinforcing	21:1 22:1	127:1 128:1	respond	right 14:8	116:20	123:3 124:2
109:5	108:19	23:1 24:1	129:1 130:1	65:19	21:6 24:12	122:17	screen 48:4
112:18	related 30:11	25:1 26:1	research	response	41:20 45:13	satellite 85:23	50:15
113:7 118:3	53:7	27:1 28:1	16:22,24	14:13 19:5	45:14 46:18	saúl 56:18	sea 48:13
118:10,23	relating	29:1 30:1	researchba...	32:25 36:23	46:19 48:19	sayeh 40:22	search 102:4
received	121:21	31:1 32:1	50:18	51:25 66:22	52:16 59:22	42:4 97:14	107:8
23:21 62:8	relationships	33:1 34:1	reside 48:23	96:11	88:10 95:9	saying 23:24	searches
63:20	54:6	35:1 36:1	resident	100:18	113:17	scaling 32:6	102:6
100:13	relative 84:7	37:1 38:1	27:12	117:22	114:12	schedule	searching
109:25	relaunch	39:1 40:1	residents 6:4	125:10	119:24,24	17:14 28:15	71:6
114:19	83:24	41:1 42:1	8:20 69:11	responses	128:9,17	schirmer	seat 42:14
receptive	relaunched	43:1 44:1	71:24 72:9	53:9	129:20	26:21 27:2	second 49:12
15:16	84:21 86:10	45:1 46:1	72:10 97:19	responsibili...	rijhsinghani	27:3,6,6,9	82:17 93:4
recipients	relevant	47:1 48:1	98:9,17,24	28:17 31:2	67:8 88:14	27:12 34:7	100:8 102:8
102:24	103:19	49:1 50:1	99:21	responsibility	88:20	scholars	sector 12:11
recognize	111:7	51:1 52:1	102:17	104:7	rise 51:13	89:19	22:16
9:15 53:6	118:11	53:1 54:1	103:7,20,24	responsible	54:2	scholarship	sectors 84:24
recognized	reliable 111:7	55:1 56:1	104:8	2:24	risen 97:20	51:10 102:6	85:2 95:17
25:18	117:6	57:1 58:1	106:21	rest 60:23	98:6	scholarships	secure 107:11
recommend	118:11	59:1 60:1	112:16	result 20:18	rising 6:3	22:8 57:5	security 17:8
72:2	123:6	61:1 62:1	118:9	22:12 68:22	risk 12:18	57:24	see 3:2 8:16
record 7:21	reliant 98:11	63:1 64:1	resilience	69:17 94:16	road 42:13	102:21	35:10 39:20
14:18 34:24	rely 95:13	65:1 66:1	15:6 50:19	resulted 25:3	roadblocks	122:16	40:10 48:20
41:18,24	123:25	67:1 68:1	resolution	resume 107:7	54:25	school 7:5	51:12,22
recreation	remain 65:6	69:1 70:1	1:14,14	108:3	robin 93:20	10:10 12:2	52:17 54:17
105:4	remarkably	71:1 72:1	2:10,12	rethink	93:21	13:6,6	65:12 69:2
115:20	79:25	73:1 74:1	resource	103:16	rochelle	15:10 16:9	71:23 72:19
122:11,18	remember	75:1 76:1	52:24 56:11	retreated	41:11 53:14	20:14 21:6	83:4 84:20
128:5,5	40:11 60:11	77:1 78:1	93:20 98:17	44:8	55:14,17,20	21:8,13,21	89:4 93:7
red 52:5,7	remiss 36:10	79:1 80:1	99:22	return 9:10	55:20,21,24	22:20 23:3	93:13,15
redesigned	reporter	81:1 82:1	117:23,24	10:10 21:14	55:25,25	25:5 30:13	124:10
90:16 103:5	131:23	83:1 84:1	118:8 129:7	21:21,23	role 11:16	40:23 43:13	128:10,14
reenroll	reports 90:18	85:1 86:1	resourced	22:20 32:17	15:4 60:8	43:20,21	129:22
10:21	representat...	87:1 88:1	128:23	50:14	61:5 112:20	44:5,10,19	seed 47:2
reentering	15:19	89:1 90:1	resourceful	returning 7:7	room 1:6	44:21 45:11	seeing 49:8
109:17	119:12	91:1 92:1	15:19 43:16	15:24 21:8	routefinding	46:9 47:18	seek 6:24
						49:5 54:14	

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 14

28:17	109:10	48:10	107:17	78:11 82:9	standalone	stores 52:8	67:6,7,8
seeking 30:9	117:10	showed 24:13	skills 28:14	88:18 92:7	38:7	stories 13:16	69:10 70:5
30:15,23	118:21,23	90:22	29:8 31:5	92:22 96:6	standpoint	13:22 53:24	70:8 74:17
79:11	services 9:7	showing	31:20 50:17	97:11	128:13	74:5	75:6,12,14
109:14	10:19 16:17	13:24 86:25	62:10,18	104:19	start 42:18	story 88:22	75:16,18
seeks 46:3	30:22 96:18	shown 117:19	63:25 65:17	112:2 115:4	44:7 121:24	94:8 121:19	76:12 77:3
seen 5:24	100:6,19	shows 52:12	small 6:11	120:24	started 4:20	122:3,23	78:12,19
53:4,24	101:8,21	59:3	86:17 91:19	127:16	9:18 11:20	123:25	79:2,15
sefra 116:9	102:4	signage	119:11	speaker 18:4	12:7,15	strategic	81:7,23
self 91:16	103:14	118:23	smith 40:24	speaking	21:5,18	68:21 83:13	82:3 87:3
selfesteem	104:5	signature	53:18 60:21	27:24	22:5 23:8	strategically	88:13 92:23
17:24	105:16,21	52:7 84:9	60:24	105:15	35:21 42:25	52:2 115:7	95:12
selfpreserv...	106:8,13,15	94:14	smooth 20:20	117:16	43:10 54:3	127:20	100:20
15:7	106:16,17	significant	social 12:23	speaks 41:21	56:5 58:12	strategies	119:17
selfsufficienc...	108:23	13:20 31:2	17:4 51:10	specific 72:16	69:6,24	64:3 65:7	120:23
107:3	112:16	87:17 111:5	63:12 67:10	87:18 101:5	75:12 86:9	strategy 50:7	121:11,18
semester 11:4	115:17	silver 67:9	69:14 79:6	124:16	93:22 110:7	51:15 65:11	students 4:4
25:23	117:25	92:10,11	79:20 92:12	specifically	110:25	streams 87:9	4:5 5:18 7:2
send 47:15	122:4	similarly	94:4,7	12:3 72:24	114:3	street 90:8	7:5,6 8:21
54:20 117:5	serving 13:3	85:15	126:15,23	122:9 127:4	116:24	93:12	10:8,15,19
sending	28:6 101:15	simplest	society 9:18	127:13	startup 89:19	118:21	10:20,24
102:18	session 2:9	44:18	25:17	specifics 7:24	90:7 93:7,9	strengthen	11:3 12:18
sends 105:23	sessions 48:2	simply 16:24	109:17	spell 27:4	93:12	62:13	13:5,25
senior 78:7	setbacks	45:12	solid 17:9	55:18	startupphl	strengths	21:5 23:10
88:20 91:15	13:21	single 11:4	solution	spent 22:15	90:3	62:11 63:25	25:19 28:9
sense 59:3	sets 49:21	12:17 20:25	31:10	spoke 115:19	startups	stressed	28:13,23
104:6	settings 63:11	26:7	107:22	116:13	89:21 93:14	43:17	29:10,13
separate 38:5	seven 69:7	sit 45:10	109:22	122:13	state 9:19	stresses 31:3	31:13 46:5
separately	shape 75:19	site 15:20	solve 79:7	spokesperson	57:21 82:22	stretched	47:15 48:15
128:20	75:22	71:3,6	somebody	61:7	stated 114:13	123:20	50:25 52:14
septa 118:20	share 13:15	103:6	59:14,16,18	sports 47:11	115:16	strewn 45:5	54:9,12
september	20:10 34:4	116:19	59:19,20,21	spread 58:3	statement	strong 32:13	56:25 58:11
51:6 56:7	53:25 77:24	117:21	someones	spreading	116:25	32:17 71:8	58:14 59:6
70:6	85:18 106:7	118:22	129:16	123:18	station 52:7	84:16	59:13 60:6
serve 6:17 7:4	122:3,23	119:7	soon 85:24	spreads 104:2	statistic 97:21	111:11	60:12 62:22
8:2,11	123:25	sites 89:4	129:12	squilla 1:12	statistics 57:4	stronger	62:23,25
22:11 50:10	130:13	102:2,3	sophomore	14:8 19:8	stay 42:20	13:10	63:16 64:2
73:9 75:16	shared 16:8	108:20	89:14	51:17	55:2 68:19	strongly	65:23 68:5
79:13 101:3	21:2	114:12	sorry 37:9	stability 5:21	76:11	107:20	68:14,22
106:10	sharing 121:4	115:8,15,19	38:19	107:3	stayed 25:14	108:13	69:13,15,19
117:20	shayla 114:17	116:8	south 106:13	staff 5:8 6:11	72:5 116:16	structured	70:7,12,15
118:7	shell 105:6	118:19	108:24	15:16 63:14	staying 28:18	90:18	71:3,4,5,8
served 72:23	shes 85:12	119:2	space 36:14	63:15 69:11	steady 53:25	struggle	71:18,19,19
98:16 101:2	shift 82:18	127:25	55:21,24	86:16 100:5	stenographic	44:15	71:21,25
108:24	shifting 4:22	sits 85:17	spanish 52:23	101:18	131:6	struggling	72:19,22
serves 21:17	shoot 45:11	sitting 45:5	58:9	115:10,12	step 21:13	108:13	73:2,4,10
service 23:4	shops 52:8	situation 8:10	spanishspe...	115:18	23:2 24:24	stuck 9:14,16	73:18,25
36:15,18	short 49:7	42:22 63:24	49:10	116:2 119:7	57:3,3	student 15:25	74:4 76:2
63:12,17	60:4	situations	spawn 28:19	staffs 23:13	116:22,22	16:19 28:7	77:5,22
68:5 89:17	show 84:13	30:16	speak 17:3	101:14	stepped 11:21	45:23 46:16	80:2,9,14
100:17	122:2,23	six 10:6 94:9	18:22 20:2	stakeholders	stop 21:7	47:9,10	81:18,19,22
102:8,9	129:25	skilled 29:24	20:5 34:8	110:3	stopped 9:20	50:17,20	83:17 84:5
103:4	showcased	98:12	42:7 74:23	stand 119:25	11:12 21:20	60:13 61:18	84:12 85:3

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 15

89:20 91:7	80:19,24	sure 23:13	93:21	temple 21:5	19:21,25	127:14	time 4:4 9:16
92:3 93:6,9	89:20,23	34:25 66:8	tap 22:3	67:8,9 78:8	23:16,17,18	theyve 9:16	11:18 15:9
93:14 94:12	90:12 91:2	127:24	targeted	78:17,18	26:10,16,23	thin 123:20	15:14 20:2
94:17,21,23	105:4 122:5	130:3	102:19	79:15 82:3	27:2,7,9,16	thing 44:18	27:17 31:5
94:25 99:8	summers	surely 17:9	107:21	92:17	32:9,19,22	61:16 81:12	32:20 45:10
99:9,10,10	80:22	surrounding	targeting	ten 5:25	33:2,8,11	84:2 100:8	45:13,17
99:14	supervision	68:12	127:20,23	10:16 62:5	33:16,18,25	things 33:9	46:25 55:7
100:10,25	131:22	sustaining	128:7	68:6 69:5	35:4 36:5,8	35:19 44:25	55:23 57:14
101:4 105:2	supply 29:19	29:3	taught 76:19	81:21 83:2	36:9,10,15	45:2 57:18	60:18 66:18
105:3	support 4:6	swag 100:10	79:16	83:21,23	36:17,19,24	76:15,20	78:16 81:14
112:21,23	6:15 7:25	symposium	tax 55:3	tenure 78:21	36:25 37:2	87:18 91:12	81:20 82:8
112:24,24	9:18 10:14	36:13	taxes 29:17	terms 126:25	40:17,18,19	think 19:11	92:6 96:5
113:4,15,22	10:23 13:24	system 15:5	teach 24:2	terrifying	41:6,7,22	19:13 76:15	99:19
121:7,23	16:6 17:4	35:23	46:4,5	42:23	42:6 50:22	76:21 79:21	104:14
122:13	20:7,12	124:22	60:10 62:17	testified	55:7,12,14	80:20 81:24	105:8
123:8,8,12	21:11,14	systems 30:10	teachable	129:23	60:17,19,25	114:14	109:17
123:24	23:6 24:8	31:19 51:19	62:25	testifiers	66:18,19,23	thinking	113:11
130:13	24:15 25:12	67:11 86:2	teacher 15:4	38:23	66:24,25	24:24 57:11	117:8 129:4
studies 16:22	26:6 29:9	87:21 92:13	44:17 59:25	testify 3:9	67:3,16,19	third 51:14	times 20:21
study 10:3	30:17 31:19	93:17	teachers	27:17 32:20	67:22 74:9	88:3 100:15	54:10,12
submit 59:17	32:10,15		63:15	60:25 105:6	74:11,18	103:4	59:7 69:9
127:11	33:21 35:24	T	123:20	105:24	77:15,19,23	thirdgenera...	88:25
128:9 129:9	46:2,3,5,24	tabernacle	team 47:11	125:9	78:2,3,5,8	121:17	title 2:10
submitted	55:8,10	127:22	118:3	testifying	82:8,10,13	thirdyear	today 5:9
129:25	59:14 61:10	table 4:9	tech 71:12	19:20 40:5	88:10,11,17	16:18	13:2,13,23
substitution	64:5,20,21	34:18 41:4	84:17	97:5 127:8	90:5 92:6,8	thompson	19:20 27:17
41:21	64:24 65:8	45:5 67:15	technical	testimony	92:18 96:5	41:2,13	27:19 28:8
suburbs	66:13 70:2	97:2	86:13,17	3:23 14:19	96:7,12,21	thought	32:8 33:9
68:13	77:21 98:19	tables 119:10	96:16	26:22 33:10	97:9,10	11:20 61:21	33:12 40:2
succeed 12:23	101:2 102:5	tablets 49:20	101:18	37:23 41:12	104:12	81:17 93:24	41:10 42:14
50:17 54:15	103:21	tabling	104:20	41:16,17,24	105:8,9,23	thoughts	53:18 54:4
64:2 65:3	104:15	123:11	112:4 116:4	53:16 56:2	111:14,19	20:11 89:11	56:2 61:2,9
120:8 125:2	111:16	take 10:6	techniques	61:17 67:18	111:20,25	thousands	62:12 64:2
success 5:23	113:4	23:2 81:14	107:8	97:7 100:13	120:11,14	21:12	64:19 65:6
6:6 13:16	114:22	91:3,22	technology	105:12	124:20	thread	65:12 74:5
29:9 30:3	115:25	106:7	83:22 84:11	111:20	125:3,4,6	109:18	77:25 82:9
53:4,23	116:6 120:5	taken 48:21	95:19,20	125:7	125:12	three 10:9	92:7 93:2
63:2 65:18	120:12	106:24	115:9	text 102:9,12	130:5,7,10	42:17 43:8	96:6 97:8
65:23 66:10	121:7	131:6	teeming	102:19,24	130:16,18	47:24 57:24	97:18
73:13 87:15	122:16	takes 65:2	68:14	116:16	130:20	72:16 74:3	100:14
100:20	124:6,25	76:24	teenagers	texting	thanks 25:11	84:4 99:23	105:24
successful 4:6	125:16	talent 1:16	56:15	115:10	thats 12:8	100:9 107:6	112:2
10:25 23:5	supported	2:16 3:2	teens 115:20	119:6	38:19 39:11	117:24	119:25
46:21	54:7 122:6	5:14 37:25	television	textizen	87:2 117:13	threepronged	120:25
114:18	supporting	42:9,10	49:21	102:18	126:21	101:9	125:7,9,15
successfully	22:24 66:9	52:12 84:8	tell 11:25	thank 2:3,4	128:19,23	thrilled	128:25
21:23 30:23	82:5 95:25	86:7	25:25 32:8	2:21,23	theres 33:7	105:25	129:24
57:20	supportive	talk 4:2 40:6	39:24 40:3	3:11,24	38:23 52:24	110:7	told 11:19
suddenly	31:9 110:18	45:25 46:17	43:24 53:20	4:10,17,18	73:11	thrives 72:13	57:14
58:2	112:25	86:6,21	68:3 74:5	5:5 13:23	theyre 9:15	ticket 70:7	tool 103:6
summer	121:18	125:25	95:13	14:3,4,9	39:4 87:14	tickets 70:4	top 100:10
15:11 80:11	supports	128:24	telling 7:23	18:24,25	109:13	tied 32:2	topic 81:6
80:13,15,19	123:3	talked 44:16	42:12	19:6,10,19	126:11,12	tier 51:14	topics 65:15
		talking 40:2					

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 16

touch 65:25 69:12 116:16 126:9 tourists 88:25 town 68:10 68:11 72:14 track 7:21 9:22 18:8 59:22 73:14 tradition 18:13 traditional 29:12 train 49:12 63:5 100:5 trained 48:17 trainer 40:25 53:20 63:4 63:5,7 training 7:13 35:23 48:2 48:3,10,11 48:21 49:17 49:25 53:21 61:15 62:6 62:9,16 63:3,22 64:11 101:17 107:4 108:8 115:10 trainings 69:10 118:4 transcript 131:8,20 transcripts 10:9 transformed 69:18,20 72:8 92:2 transforming 73:19 transition 15:23 65:16 transitioning 30:14 transitions 20:20 treated 106:21 tree 4:12,13 tried 10:10	21:20 troubled 119:22 troubling 103:15 true 3:6 6:22 13:10 131:7 truly 6:16 13:22 17:21 79:17 90:13 99:5 114:23 try 4:5 119:6 trying 28:13 37:22 89:15 tuition 21:25 turn 45:2 48:4 tutoring 124:19 two 10:8 11:24 13:13 13:15 25:22 43:8 48:25 56:15 85:10 88:12 type 47:18 107:19 U u 43:6,21 98:5 ultimately 87:14 unable 113:4 underempl... 109:16 undergrad... 21:19 78:21 underserved 66:8 understand 24:5,6 33:19 understand... 62:10 64:14 understood 24:4 undocumen... 99:9 unemployed 18:5 109:16 unemploym... 9:4 95:5 unique 22:23	59:2 93:5 99:19 112:21 115:3 united 61:6 61:15 universities 10:17 25:19 30:11 68:12 71:17 72:11 87:10,11 university 16:19 21:6 57:21 75:11 78:8 82:22 91:4 92:17 93:7 120:23 121:13 unlocking 80:5 unofficially 129:4 unquestion... 107:24 unrealized 22:12 upbringing 17:18 upcoming 13:12 updated 52:16 updates 57:16 upgrading 90:11 urge 64:19 use 17:2 62:17 83:16 118:6 useful 56:21 115:13 userfriendly 90:20 users 102:20 utility 90:10 90:10 108:2 utilization 35:23 utilize 31:20 112:16 118:4 119:5 utilized 113:6	V valuable 86:20 value 15:5 36:4 values 108:17 varied 82:6 variety 63:10 112:20 various 64:18 80:5 81:9 100:5 115:11 117:16 118:15 vast 64:23 95:8 109:11 venues 68:17 70:7 veterans 99:10 vetted 99:4 viability 1:17 2:19 97:23 viable 103:23 vibrant 94:22 97:25 100:24 106:20 vice 26:14 75:16 85:13 video 48:6,8 48:10 49:13 49:22 50:21 51:4 65:12 viewing 51:11 views 51:8 village 16:10 vision 106:19 visit 10:12 15:11 69:8 visited 88:24 112:15 visits 69:15 89:3 99:18 vital 32:11 102:22 vocalizing 64:13 volunteered 76:5 volunteering 68:16 73:18	vulnerable 106:16 W w 1:10 14:7 56:18 wage 29:4 wages 9:10 22:19 wakeup 24:10 walk 45:3 83:3 93:6 109:6 walked 45:6 63:23 want 3:14 4:19 8:7 18:4 19:10 20:8 22:17 27:16 44:10 44:20 46:13 60:11 71:22 74:18 76:4 77:23 78:8 83:11 124:4 126:5 wanted 6:19 12:3 25:5 33:4,7,10 37:13 41:8 43:25 75:19 75:21 80:18 89:16 92:17 wants 23:14 37:18 45:22 war 42:18 warm 15:16 wasnt 25:4 26:4 43:10 44:13,22 45:2 89:14 117:5 watch 48:5 59:20 waterview 128:5 way 2:25 3:13 10:15 22:7 24:24 26:3 31:10 49:12 49:24 61:15 68:21 73:18 81:2,5 87:2	98:8 110:17 129:25 ways 15:3 47:25 99:23 wearing 52:5 website 70:25 86:11 90:17 99:6,17 103:5 115:9 119:5 126:9 126:16,23 wednesday 1:7 week 47:12 70:8 100:10 116:23 126:22 weeks 11:24 97:6 weight 22:9 welcome 14:17 26:24 41:6 105:12 welcoming 5:9 67:12 80:2 81:4 went 116:21 west 74:25 84:10 90:14 128:3 weve 6:13,20 8:18,20 49:6,7 64:10 83:21 84:18 86:9 98:7 101:16 wharton 90:8 whats 81:15 white 96:16 104:20 111:22 112:4 127:16 whos 25:18 wide 71:17 81:12 wider 49:23 wilson 1:10 3:11 14:7 win 90:7,7,16 91:22,22 wins 90:17 winwin	108:16 wise 51:2 wish 78:4 witness 4:8 30:2 34:17 34:17 41:3 67:14 96:25 witnesses 4:8 41:3 67:14 96:25 wonderful 2:24 3:4 18:22 36:14 125:7,16,17 wont 23:6 words 29:19 work 4:2,15 4:17 6:21 7:2 10:16 11:8 12:8 12:11 13:3 13:24 14:2 17:14 20:6 23:10,12 26:2 29:16 30:18 32:4 32:9 49:6 54:5,16 58:5 69:7 73:22 76:22 80:25 86:3 90:14,20 103:17 105:5 107:14 111:4 112:2 116:24 119:14 120:25 121:5,22 122:6,10,11 122:18 123:5,14,16 123:21 124:21 128:20,21 worked 4:14 8:18 43:8 82:20 113:12 114:2 worker 29:24 workers 81:3	workforce 7:8 29:11,19 32:2,13 62:13 70:13 70:21 74:2 106:18 107:4,21 108:22 working 6:8 9:5 10:18 11:10 12:25 13:8,11 22:5,16 56:5 66:14 85:25 114:3 118:14,20 workplace 81:4 works 8:6 54:17 70:11 workshop 56:10,21 58:13 61:14 62:4 64:6 104:25 workshops 49:2,10 56:9 58:7,9 58:24 63:10 65:10 99:7 99:16,24 124:18 126:12 world 83:7 91:20 worth 9:11 worthwhile 120:12 wouldnt 3:6 51:22 write 57:13 writing 40:10 102:6 written 58:22 61:16 wrong 11:24 X Y year 13:12 35:9 36:12 42:15 56:17 65:9 69:9
--	---	--	---	--	--	---	---

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 17

69:14 71:5	youtube	49:1 50:1	29:1 30:1	15minute	85:1 86:1	20th 108:25	65:1 66:1
71:10 73:22	50:11 51:8	51:1 52:1	31:1 32:1	49:21	87:1 88:1	21st 97:24	67:1 68:1
89:14 94:3	65:13	53:1 54:1	33:1 34:1	16 52:22	89:1 90:1	22 6:3	69:1 70:1,4
94:10 95:4		55:1 56:1	35:1 36:1	18 91:14	91:1 92:1	24 7:17 8:15	71:1,5 72:1
106:11	Z	57:1 58:1	37:1 38:1	97:20	93:1 94:1	25 28:9 69:15	73:1 74:1
107:10	zip 103:2	59:1 60:1	39:1 40:1	188 70:5	95:1 96:1	95:6 97:18	75:1 76:1
109:5	zone 24:25	61:1 62:1	41:1 42:1	18yearold	97:1 98:1	257 71:5	77:1 78:1
110:11	76:12,15	63:1 64:1	43:1 44:1	91:16	99:1 100:1	28 6:3	79:1 80:1
112:15		65:1 66:1	45:1 46:1	19 8:13	101:1 102:1	28th 106:3	81:1 82:1
113:23,23	0	67:1 68:1	47:1 48:1	1980 42:14	103:1 104:1		83:1 84:1
years 5:25	000 8:9,14,15	69:1 70:1	49:1 50:1	1996 110:11	105:1 106:1	3	85:1 86:1
10:7 11:9	23:8 29:19	71:1 72:1	51:1 52:1	19th 90:7	107:1 108:1	3 8:19 38:7	87:1 88:1
11:13 20:17	29:20 52:22	73:1 74:1	53:1 54:1		109:1,6	71:6 95:6	89:1 90:1
28:9 29:14	69:13 99:14	75:1 76:1	55:1 56:1	2	110:1 111:1	112:15	91:1 92:1
31:23 42:25	106:10	77:1 78:1	57:1 58:1	2 3:1 4:1 5:1	112:1 113:1	130:23	93:1 94:1
49:7 62:5	109:6	79:1 80:1	59:1 60:1	6:1 7:1 8:1	114:1 115:1	30 7:18 69:8	95:1 96:1
63:9 66:16	112:15	81:1 82:1	61:1 62:1	9:1 10:1	116:1 117:1	99:14	97:1 98:1
68:6,25	122:13	83:1 84:1	63:1 64:1	11:1 12:1	118:1 119:1	300 105:2	99:1 100:1
69:5 72:13		85:1 86:1	65:1 66:1	13:1 14:1	120:1 121:1	30plus 29:13	101:1 102:1
72:17 78:20	1	87:1 88:1	67:1 68:1	15:1 16:1	122:1 123:1	31 87:10	103:1 104:1
81:21 82:4	1 1:7 27:13	89:1 90:1	69:1 70:1	17:1 18:1	124:1 125:1	34 95:6	105:1 106:1
83:2,22,23	54:10,12	91:1 92:1	71:1 72:1	19:1 20:1	126:1 127:1		107:1 108:1
84:4,18,21	105:2	93:1 94:1	73:1 74:1	21:1 22:1	128:1 129:1	4	109:1 110:1
107:6 109:2	122:13	95:1 96:1	75:1 76:1	23:1 24:1	130:1	4 1:7 3:1 4:1	111:1 112:1
109:18	10 1:7 49:21	97:1 98:1	77:1 78:1	25:1 26:1	20 102:2	5:1 6:1,3	113:1 114:1
124:12	100 8:24 69:9	99:1 100:1	79:1 80:1	27:1 28:1,9	115:7	7:1 8:1,19	115:1 116:1
yield 108:21	69:13 98:4	101:1 102:1	81:1 82:1	29:1 30:1	2000 110:12	9:1 10:1	117:1 118:1
york 78:14	109:2	103:1 104:1	83:1 84:1	31:1 32:1	2002 110:13	11:1 12:1	119:1 120:1
84:9 94:15	110 69:15	105:1 106:1	85:1 86:1	33:1 34:1	2004 83:20	13:1 14:1	121:1 122:1
youll 13:13	13 67:10	107:1 108:1	87:1 88:1	35:1 36:1	2005 30:6	15:1 16:1	123:1 124:1
85:24	14 67:12	109:1 110:1	89:1 90:1	37:1 38:1	2007 15:11	17:1 18:1	125:1 126:1
young 19:14	140975 1:14	111:1 112:1	91:1 92:1	39:1 40:1	2008 98:7	19:1 20:1	127:1 128:1
47:11,16	2:11 3:1 4:1	113:1 114:1	93:1 94:1	41:1 42:1	20082009	21:1 22:1	129:1 130:1
62:2,21	5:1 6:1 7:1	115:1 116:1	95:1 96:1	43:1 44:1	11:2	23:1 24:1	40 29:19
65:25 72:8	8:1 9:1 10:1	117:1 118:1	97:1 98:1	45:1 46:1	2010 70:14	25:1 26:1	400 1:6
75:2	11:1 12:1	119:1 120:1	99:1 100:1	47:1 48:1	71:25 97:21	27:1 28:1	42 8:14
younger	13:1 14:1	121:1 122:1	101:1 102:1	49:1 50:1	98:16 99:13	29:1 30:1	43 52:19
56:17 78:16	15:1 16:1	123:1 124:1	103:1 104:1	51:1,8 52:1	2011 16:15	31:1 32:1	490 48:18
youre 4:3	17:1 18:1	125:1 126:1	105:1 106:1	53:1 54:1	63:6	33:1 34:1	
19:11 26:11	19:1 20:1	127:1 128:1	107:1 108:1	55:1 56:1	2012 16:15	35:1 36:1	5
38:14 39:12	21:1 22:1	129:1 130:1	109:1 110:1	57:1 58:1	93:3	37:1 38:1	5 48:18 70:5
48:5	23:1 24:1	15 3:1 4:1 5:1	111:1 112:1	59:1 60:1	2013 21:9	39:1 40:1	50 107:11
youth 36:13	25:1 26:1	6:1 7:1 8:1	113:1 114:1	61:1 62:1	56:7 70:6	41:1 42:1	500 8:19 35:9
46:23 62:6	27:1 28:1	9:1 10:1	115:1 116:1	63:1 64:1	92:17 95:4	43:1 44:1	107:7
62:11 63:16	29:1 30:1	11:1 12:1	117:1 118:1	65:1 66:1	120:22	45:1 46:1	501 38:7
64:10 65:2	31:1 32:1	13:1 14:1	119:1 120:1	67:1 68:1	2014 25:15	47:1 48:1	53 54:10
65:20 66:11	33:1 34:1	15:1 16:1	121:1 122:1	69:1 70:1	51:6 56:16	49:1 50:1	55 8:13 71:25
105:5	35:1 36:1	17:1 18:1	123:1 124:1	71:1 72:1	70:16 72:3	51:1 52:1	565 71:6
106:11,16	37:1 38:1	19:1 20:1	125:1 126:1	73:1 74:1	72:5 106:3	53:1 54:1	57 54:2
106:17	39:1 40:1	21:1 22:1	127:1 128:1	75:1 76:1	112:7	55:1 56:1	58 6:5
119:22	41:1 42:1	23:1 24:1	129:1 130:1	77:1 78:1	2015 1:7 75:7	57:1 58:1	
124:4,22	43:1 44:1	25:1 26:1	130:23	79:1 80:1	83:25	59:1 60:1	6
youthful 89:3	45:1 46:1	27:1 28:1	150year 28:5	81:1 82:1	2018 7:18	61:1 62:1	6 95:6
	47:1 48:1			83:1 84:1		63:1 64:1	600 8:21

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622

City of Philadelphia Committee on Education
February 4, 2015

Page 18

600plus 28:9
618 70:4
620 6:4
63 6:4 70:14
64 50:13 54:3
72:4
65 54:12

7

7 66:15
70 8:9,10
23:8 29:20
700 8:19
71st 98:3
73 72:4
79 11:5

8

8 106:10
80 28:10
800 51:8
81 70:17
72:21,25
83:11
86th 8:24

9

9 35:9
90 8:14 28:8
72:19 83:11
90minute
49:25
92nd 98:6
9th 25:15

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.
(215) 504-4622