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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

JOINT COMMITTEES ON FINANCE

4

AND EDUCATION

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, December 11, 2006
10:05 a.m.

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PRESENT:

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COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, CHAIR

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA

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COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE

14

COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO

15

COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.

16

COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE

17

COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY

18

COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

19

COUNCILMAN JUAN RAMOS

20

COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

21

COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

22

COUNCILMAN DANIEL SAVAGE

23

COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

24

RESOLUTIONS 060806, 060807 and 060908

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COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good

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morning. Thank you all for being here

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this morning. This is a joint Education

5

and Finance Committee hearing on

6

education.

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Having said that, we're going

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to ask the Clerk to read the title of all

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three resolutions, as much testimony will

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be intertwined. We thank you all for

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being here, and the Clerk may now begin.

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THE CLERK: Resolution 060806,

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calling for City Council hearings before

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the Joint Committees on Finance and

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Education to explore the reasons and

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remedies for the School District of

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Philadelphia's FY07 budget deficit and to

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explore the impact the deficit could have

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on school students, teachers and

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programs; and

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Resolution 060807, resolution

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authorizing the Committee on Education to

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investigate and conduct hearings related

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to the reported crisis faced by the City

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of Philadelphia regarding the high drop

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2 out rate among public school students
3 prior to high school graduation, for the
4 purpose of examining the reported data
5 and exploring corrective measures that
6 can be taken to encourage high school
7 graduation; and

8 Finally, Resolution 060908,
9 calling on the Joint Committees on
10 Finance and Education to hold hearings on
11 the high incidence of truancy among
12 students in the School District of
13 Philadelphia.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you very much. So as all of you have
16 heard, just for the sake to repeat what
17 the Clerk has read, we will hold hearings
18 this morning on the budget crisis, school
19 budget crisis, as well as the dropout
20 rate, as well as the truancy problem in
21 our City.

22 Having said that, let me note
23 that a quorum is here. To my left is, of
24 course, our President, President Ann
25 Verna. To her left, Councilman Savage.

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2 To his left, Councilman Rizzo. To my
3 right, Councilman Goode. To his right,
4 Councilman Greenlee, or as they said on
5 the radio his first week, Greentree,
6 Councilman Greenlee, and to his right,
7 Councilman DiCicco.

8 It now gives us great pleasure
9 to present to you the Mayor of our City.
10 We thank him for coming here to testify
11 on these important issues, the Honorable
12 John F. Street, Mayor.

13 Thank you, Mayor.

14 MAYOR STREET: Thank you.

15 Which one of these am I
16 supposed to use? I don't know. One is
17 heavier than the other.

18 Who thinks I should use this
19 heavy one?

20 I'll be brief, no matter how
21 long it takes.

22 I want to thank Council
23 President Verna, Councilman Blackwell and
24 the other distinguished members of the
25 City Council of Philadelphia for having

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2 this hearing, especially at this time
3 given the fact that as we sort of roll
4 into the holiday seasons, it would be
5 real easy for this Council to decide that
6 there are more other important things to
7 do than to come here and talk about
8 quality education.

9 I also want to thank the
10 members of the general public who are
11 here, some of which your faces are
12 remarkably familiar since most of us
13 spent a fair amount of hours at the SRC
14 hearings when the topic of the discussion
15 was public education, as we are about to
16 discuss here today.

17 I want to thank Sandra Dungee
18 Glenn, who is here, who is one of the
19 Mayor's appointees on the SRC. I believe
20 she's here representing the Chairman.

21 I will tell you in the presence
22 of these witnesses that she does a
23 wonderful, wonderful job. She rarely
24 ever misses a meeting, and she pays full
25 attention to the activities of the SRC

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2 and the School District of Philadelphia.

3 Quality education has been and
4 continues to be a huge priority for me.
5 Someone once said that the greatest form
6 of economic development that we can do in
7 this City is to develop good, quality
8 education, not just in Central, Masterman
9 or some of our academic or specialty
10 schools, but in every school, every high
11 school, every junior high school, every
12 middle school and every elementary school
13 in our system.

14 All too often families have to
15 make an awful choice when their children
16 become school age. They have to decide
17 whether or not they're going to continue
18 to live in our City or whether or not to
19 move to greener educational pastures
20 where they can avoid the high costs of
21 providing private education.

22 The members of this Council,
23 this Administration and many, many other
24 people have spent an awful lot of time,
25 effort and money making sure we improve

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2 the quality of life and opportunity in
3 our neighborhoods. Literally thousands
4 and thousands of affordable and
5 market-rate housing is now available in
6 our neighborhoods in places and in ways
7 that were not available just a few years
8 ago. As most of you know, thanks to the
9 ten-year tax abatement, which was
10 sponsored by Councilman DiCicco and
11 supported by every member of this Council
12 and this Mayor, there is a significant
13 housing boom in this City, which has done
14 very well for us. But having people move
15 into our City and stay in our City
16 doesn't always work when people have two
17 and three and sometimes more children and
18 face the prospects of a huge, huge bill
19 to send them to a private school.

20 So most of us a few years ago
21 were very, very pleased and we were
22 optimistic with the emergence of the new
23 form of government that we now have
24 running our schools.

25 My notes tell me that we didn't

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2 have a -- and Debra Kahn, I think, did
3 this. My notes say that we didn't have a
4 takeover; we had a moveover. The City of
5 Philadelphia decided to move over and
6 invite the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 to come in and be our partners in running
8 these schools.

9 Now, I know a lot about how
10 that happened, because I was there for
11 every step of the way, and I sometimes
12 have to remind people that the
13 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's plan to
14 fix funding and to fix the School
15 District of Philadelphia didn't
16 originally include a huge amount of
17 additional funding. In fact, the plan
18 was to take our system, the 220-some-odd
19 thousand children, and pay Edison Schools
20 about a quarter of a billion dollars a
21 year to run the system. Some people
22 still remember that. And there were some
23 of us who didn't believe that our school
24 system should be run by a for-profit, a
25 fictitious entity in the law, but should

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2 be run and operated by somebody that we
3 could feel and touch and understand,
4 someone that will be responsible to the
5 voters and taxpayers, citizens, parents
6 and those who are invested in public
7 education. And we had a pretty big fight
8 about it.

9 As you recall, we had a pretty
10 big fight about it, because those of us
11 who believed that we ought to have a CEO
12 form of government were committed to that
13 end, and those who believed that we
14 should have some other form of
15 government, privatize our system, agreed
16 to disagree, and in the end, those of us
17 who believed that we should have a CEO
18 form of government prevailed.

19 But at that time, we were
20 facing a pretty significant budget
21 deficit. I hasten to point out that
22 while we had a budget deficit, our system
23 was also making progress. Sometimes it's
24 so easy to forget. Our test scores were
25 up at that time, and there were other

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2 good things that were happening in our
3 system. The problem is, we had an
4 approximately \$200 million deficit.

5 For those who are new to the
6 public education issue in our City and in
7 our Commonwealth, the situation then,
8 although it was much more grave
9 financially, occurred in a way that is
10 very different from the way we recently
11 learned of the School District's
12 financial problem. And there are some
13 people who might want to rewrite that
14 history, but I have no interest in
15 rewriting it. Because I was the
16 President of City Council. Many of the
17 members of City Council were here at the
18 time. We complained bitterly that the
19 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was not
20 adequately funding public education, and
21 we made a conscious decision not to cut
22 programs in the School District of
23 Philadelphia. Ed Rendell was the Mayor,
24 and we had a meeting and we decided that
25 we weren't cutting vital educational

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2 programs and that we were making some
3 progress and that to reduce School
4 District spending in an amount necessary
5 to balance the budget would mean that
6 nothing would be less, nothing would be
7 less.

8 So we didn't have a \$200
9 million deficit by surprise. It wasn't
10 like we woke up one day and we had a
11 financial problem. It happened over a
12 period of years and it happened because
13 the Mayor, the Council President and
14 Councilmembers decided we are not cutting
15 this budget. And I still believe it was
16 the right thing to do. And some people
17 might remember there are those who
18 accused Mayor Rendell and the rest of us
19 as -- they said we're going to run the
20 train right off of the cliff. Anybody
21 remember that? We all talked about it.
22 But we knew at some point in time if our
23 system were going to thrive, we needed a
24 huge amount of additional resources.

25 I'll never forget -- and I do

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2 promise to be brief, no matter how long
3 it takes, but I'd like for this record to
4 reflect some of this information, because
5 I didn't actually realize at the time we
6 were making this decision not to cut the
7 budget, the School District's budget,
8 that I would be the Mayor when it came
9 time to fix the problem that was created,
10 but I still believe it was the
11 appropriate thing to do.

12 And I remember going to
13 Harrisburg and being in a meeting with
14 Governor Ridge for probably three hours,
15 and we talked about public education in
16 Philadelphia and around the Commonwealth
17 and we talked -- in fact, we were in a
18 meeting for so long, that there were
19 people who came and knocked on the door
20 and wanted to know are you all right, is
21 everything okay. Well, yes, everything
22 was okay, but we had to come to grips
23 with the issue. And I remember Governor
24 Ridge said that we aren't going to just
25 pour money into Philadelphia. We aren't

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2 going to just give money. If there is
3 going to be more money from the
4 Commonwealth, we should be talking about
5 education reform and not just talking
6 about additional revenues for the City of
7 Philadelphia.

8 And then tragedy struck our
9 country. Governor Ridge was summoned to
10 Washington to serve as the Secretary of
11 Homeland Security. Lieutenant Governor
12 Schweiker became the Governor of the
13 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and I had
14 to have another long meeting.

15 But we did have that meeting
16 and we did talk to Governor Schweiker.
17 And I'll never forget, Governor Schweiker
18 at his inaugural swearing in as Governor
19 said, The children of Philadelphia are
20 children of the Commonwealth and deserve
21 our support, and he made a commitment
22 that he would help our children.

23 But it didn't come until after
24 we had a huge, huge amount of
25 disagreement. But at the end of the day,

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2 we decided -- and it was really
3 interesting because when we first looked
4 at all of this, there were people who
5 were saying, Oh, if we just ran an
6 efficient system, if we just got rid of
7 all the fat, if we just had a better PFT
8 contract, because there are some people
9 who wanted to blame all of the problems
10 in public education on the PFT and on the
11 contract.

12 And I can remember telling
13 people when I came back from Huntsville,
14 Alabama in 1966 and I taught for a very
15 brief time as a substitute teacher in the
16 public school system, I made more money
17 driving part time for Yellow Cab than
18 some teachers were making in a public
19 school system, and it was right around
20 1966 that the PFT was started. And I
21 actually didn't agree with that, because
22 I believe that we could have a fair
23 contract and at the end we would still
24 need more money to fund our system.

25 Well, the Governor did impanel

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2 a group of people, and people did look at
3 this system. And one of the inevitable
4 conclusions that was reached was that the
5 Philadelphia public school system
6 probably did need more money. Most of
7 you remember, the City of Philadelphia
8 put in, I think, \$45 million of annual
9 revenue. The Commonwealth of
10 Pennsylvania, I think, put in 75 or some
11 amount of money, but there was about \$120
12 million of recurring revenue that came to
13 this system as a result of the agreement
14 that we made with the Commonwealth of
15 Pennsylvania.

16 But that wasn't all. Not only
17 was there an additional \$120 million of
18 recurring revenue, but there was about
19 300 and maybe -- Charlie, do you remember
20 how much money was borrowed? 320
21 million?

22 MR. McPHERSON: Somewhere
23 around there.

24 MAYOR STREET: It was about
25 \$320 million that was borrowed so that

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2 the School District of Philadelphia would
3 be able to use on an annual basis some
4 part of that \$320-some-odd million to
5 balance its budget, because its expenses,
6 everybody understood, were still going to
7 be beyond its revenues even with \$120
8 million of new money on an annual basis,
9 and so we still needed these borrowings.

10 Now, when the dust settled, we
11 had \$120 million in new revenues. We
12 also had the borrowings and we had a new
13 CEO. And I think most people were very
14 pleased that it looked to us like our
15 system was on a much stronger financial
16 footing and that we were going to be able
17 to experience some progress in our
18 schools.

19 I hasten to remind people that
20 even as we borrowed \$320 million to
21 supplement the School District's annual
22 operating budgets, we knew at some point
23 in time more money would be necessary to
24 run that system, because I don't think
25 anybody believed that we would be able to

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2 shrink the size of the system so that we
3 would be able to live within our means
4 once the \$320 million was absorbed.

5 And another thing happened
6 along the way, and most of us agreed with
7 it and supported it. We had a huge,
8 huge, huge increase in the number of
9 charter schools that occurred right here
10 in the City of Philadelphia. I
11 understand between maybe 50,000 and
12 60,000 children are in charter schools.
13 We have 54 charter schools. There's a
14 huge charter school movement in this
15 City, a huge charter school movement, and
16 I think most of us believe that charter
17 schools have been a valuable addition to
18 our City, an option that parents like,
19 their children like, because it gives
20 people a role in a public school that's
21 not a traditional public school. But
22 charter schools are also a little bit
23 more expensive, so that there were things
24 that happened that we knew would have a
25 financial impact on our system.

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2 Debra Kahn, who was the first
3 local Secretary of Education that I had
4 an opportunity to appoint, was very, very
5 aggressive in support of charter schools,
6 but also said that we need more money
7 from the Commonwealth for the School
8 District to continue to support an
9 aggressive charter school program.

10 Now, you know, I think most
11 people up until just recently were very,
12 very pleased overall with the progress
13 that we were making. In fact, when I
14 came to this Council in January of 2006,
15 we complimented CEO Paul Vallas, Chairman
16 Nevels and all the members of the SRC and
17 we said, Thank you very much for doing a
18 good job. But in January of 2006 in my
19 budget message, I reminded this City and
20 I reminded City Council that in spite of
21 the progress that we had made, in
22 addition to all of the good things that
23 were happening, this system needed to be
24 improved in a dramatic way if we are
25 going to meet the educational needs and

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2 requirements of a world-class city in the
3 21st century. The progress was good, but
4 it was still too slow.

5 We recognized that we had
6 problems in our system. The dropout rate
7 is too high, the graduation rates are too
8 low, not enough children go to school on
9 a regular basis, truancy was out of
10 control. There are huge issues that are
11 not singular to the Philadelphia public
12 school system. We find them all over the
13 country in urban and many other areas,
14 but we couldn't be so caught up in our
15 progress that we failed to take a look to
16 see where we are going, what do we want
17 our system to look like in the 21st
18 century.

19 Let me tell you, I owe a debt
20 of gratitude to the leadership, to the
21 teachers, the administrators and everyone
22 in the public school system. Let me tell
23 you, every one of my children has gotten
24 an education in the public school system,
25 every single one. And I resent it

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2 sometimes that people think -- I resent
3 two things. I resent that there are some
4 people who think that because your child
5 goes to the public school system, good
6 things can't happen. A lot of good
7 things are happening to children. A lot
8 of children are coming out of our public
9 school system and doing great things, not
10 only in our City but around our country.
11 And so public education is a wonderful
12 thing, and we've had some great
13 successes.

14 The other thing that sometimes
15 bothers me is this idea that a school
16 should be near perfect in order to
17 justify support and in order to justify
18 parents and children and others making
19 sure their children go to school. I
20 recently appeared at one of the hearings
21 that was being held by our Education Task
22 Force, which I'll get to in a minute, and
23 I stumbled on to maybe 50 to 100 children
24 that were in 11th grade and 12th grade.
25 Some of them were getting ready to

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2 graduate this year. Some of them are
3 juniors. And I had a candid conversation
4 with them, and I said, No school in this
5 City is so bad that you can't go to it.
6 None. It doesn't matter whether or not
7 you have the latest computers, whether or
8 not you have the fancy -- everything that
9 you have, these schools are worthy of
10 your attendance. And I said that to
11 parents at a recent truancy meeting we
12 had up at the Liacouras Center.

13 People have to send their
14 children to school, have to send their
15 children to school. There are children
16 all over this country and all over the
17 world who would kill to get to a school
18 as good as some of the schools we have in
19 the City of Philadelphia, schools that we
20 know need to be better. And so not
21 having a perfect school environment is no
22 excuse for parents or children or anyone
23 else, any caregiver, not sending their
24 children to school.

25 And so I guess it was in

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2 September of this year as part and parcel
3 of our efforts to create an environment
4 where people started to take a fresh look
5 at our public education system. CEO Paul
6 Vallas has been around for over four
7 years. Most people are very familiar
8 with his enthusiasm and the support that
9 he has gotten and the progress that we've
10 made. And we had a press conference and
11 we said, We're going to impanel an
12 Education Task Force. We have some very
13 impressive people that are a part of that
14 group. And we said, We want to just take
15 a look at where we are. We want to take
16 a look back and we want to take a look
17 forward, because sometimes you have to
18 look back in order to have an
19 appreciation for where you've been and
20 how you got where you are in order to
21 have a real sense of where we ought to be
22 going.

23 And this group is out there.

24 It's working. It's having public
25 hearings all over the City. And most of

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2 our public hearings are in the evening.
3 They're in schools. They are well
4 publicized. They're not as attended as
5 well as I would like them to be attended,
6 but, you know, we can't always make
7 people come to where we want them to be,
8 but we can certainly make ourselves
9 available.

10 And so it is our goal at the
11 end of this process to be able to issue a
12 report that says this is where we are,
13 this is the progress that we've made, but
14 this is really where we ought to be going
15 here.

16 Thirty-two, 33 children in a
17 classroom with one teacher and maybe an
18 aide is too many children in a classroom.
19 These teachers cannot survive.

20 (Applause.)

21 MAYOR STREET: There's too many
22 children in a classroom. And if we think
23 somehow we're going to get the results
24 that we want with that many children in a
25 class, we are fooling ourselves.

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2 And so we know that there are
3 proven things that we can do to improve
4 the effectiveness of our classrooms and
5 our teachers, administrators and staff
6 and principals, but those things are
7 going to have to be funded, and in order
8 to fund them, we have to know how many of
9 them we think we need, where we need them
10 and how much it costs to buy those
11 services.

12 It is also our goal to look at
13 all of the things that we are doing in
14 the system today, that we're doing an
15 awful lot of things. For example, there
16 are maybe 30 beacon schools in our
17 system, and these are after-school
18 programs that run until 9 or 10 o'clock
19 at night. They are uniformly loved and
20 used when we have them. We should
21 probably have a beacon school in every
22 neighborhood and in most schools so that
23 our young people will have something to
24 do and families will be able to get the
25 support they need as they try to educate

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2 their children.

3 Now, we all got a little bit of
4 a shock just a couple of months ago. We
5 were told that -- and in all fairness, I
6 will tell you that I, too, like everyone
7 else was delighted at the School
8 District's testimony at these Council
9 hearings when the CEO and the Treasurer,
10 I guess the Treasurer or the Finance
11 Director of the School District, said
12 that all of our recurring expenses are
13 offset by recurring revenues and that
14 only \$5 million of one-time revenue was
15 including in this budget. The testimony
16 further went on to say that approximately
17 \$175 million worth of education reforms
18 are fully funded in the budget. And so
19 it was with a sense of dismay and a
20 little bit of distress that we found out
21 that the School District is facing a \$73
22 million FY06 deficit.

23 Now, the SRC has had many, many
24 hours of hearings. I know how many hours
25 of hearings they had because I attended

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2 every hour, every minute, every second of
3 those hearings, because it gave me an
4 opportunity to hear the people of this
5 City and their anxiety, their
6 frustration, their hopes and aspirations
7 for the public schools of this City. And
8 I will tell you, those people who
9 didn't -- and I know some Councilmembers
10 had an opportunity to come in and stay
11 for some time, but for me, it was an
12 opportunity to reacquaint myself
13 firsthand with the people of this City on
14 the issue of education.

15 I've never seen a more
16 impressive group of people testify in any
17 venue in any forum ever, and I want to
18 again congratulate the people,
19 particularly those parents and advocates
20 who took their time, who took off work,
21 who came in the driving rain to express
22 their concern for the School District of
23 Philadelphia and to say, We can't afford,
24 the system can't tolerate the kind of
25 proposals that were under consideration

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2 at the time.

3 Now, it is my understanding
4 that the SRC has voted a whole series of
5 reforms, a series of changes that will
6 require the elimination of many, many
7 positions at the School District of
8 Philadelphia, but that those reductions
9 were tailored to have the minimum impact
10 on the educational services that are
11 being provided by the system to our
12 children and to their families. And I
13 want to thank the SRC for its hard work,
14 but, unfortunately, we are not done.

15 And now I want to express a
16 huge concern of mine and everyone else
17 who has been watching public finances in
18 the City and the School District. Some
19 of us have been doing it for decades.

20 We need a five-year plan for
21 the School District of Philadelphia. We
22 need a five-year plan. We need the kind
23 of five-year plan that the City of
24 Philadelphia annually produces and gives
25 to PICA, makes available to the members

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2 of this Council that state our revenues,
3 that state our recurring expenses and
4 projects them out over a five-year
5 period.

6 I said to Charlie McPherson
7 when I came here today -- and I have the
8 utmost respect for Charlie and all the
9 members of Council's technical staff.
10 It's real easy for me to do. I helped
11 recruit some of them here, and they do a
12 great job.

13 It's one thing to fight about
14 how money should be spent, and we reserve
15 to fight about how money is spent, and
16 we've been fighting about it. We're
17 going to always fight about it a little
18 bit, and at the end of the day, we'll do
19 whatever we do. We're fighting about how
20 to spend. Some people think we should
21 spend more over there. Some people think
22 we should spend less over here. We're
23 fighting about how money should be spent.
24 But the one thing we're not doing is
25 fighting about how much money we have. I

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2 will repeat that. It's one thing to
3 fight about how money should be spent.
4 Some Councilmembers think we should put
5 more in recreation facilities. Some
6 Councilmembers think we should put more
7 in other facilities. Some people think
8 we should have more police officers.
9 Some people think we should have more
10 probation officers. We're fighting about
11 how money should be spent.

12 We can't have that discussion
13 with the School District of Philadelphia
14 today, because we don't know how much
15 money we have. We have not clearly
16 defined the costs of providing the
17 educational services that we now provide,
18 and we don't know how much it cost us
19 last year or the year before that, and,
20 therefore, it's impossible for us to know
21 how much it's going to cost us to provide
22 a similar level of services next year and
23 the next year and the next year. And
24 that is a huge problem.

25 I sent a letter to Jim Nevels

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 and I asked for a bunch of documents. I
3 asked for a lot of information. I said,
4 Give us this information so we can take a
5 look at it and then we can determine for
6 ourselves the nature of the financial
7 problem that is being experienced by the
8 School District.

9 We received a reply to that
10 letter, and we still don't know. And
11 there are people on Council's technical
12 staff, people in the Governor's office,
13 people in the Finance Department of the
14 City of Philadelphia. We are entitled to
15 know. The general public is entitled to
16 know the details of the finances of the
17 School District of Philadelphia. I want
18 to know if we continue to spend at the
19 rate we are spending, less the cuts that
20 were made, what kind of surplus or
21 deficit will we have at the end of this
22 year. And if we project those revenues
23 over next year, the next year and the
24 next year, what will the financial
25 picture look like.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 And I'll tell you why that's
3 important. Because if we don't do that,
4 we will get in trouble. Because right
5 now the City has a projected fund balance
6 of \$250 million, and if we project our
7 current expenses and our current revenues
8 into the future, we will have a problem,
9 because we spent more money last year
10 than we took in. And the School District
11 of Philadelphia has been spending more
12 money every year than it is taking in,
13 because if it weren't, then they wouldn't
14 have had to use any of the \$300 million,
15 plus borrowings.

16 And so I'm asking, I'm asking
17 this Council, asking the SRC, CEO,
18 everyone who cares and who has anything
19 to do with the School District of
20 Philadelphia, give us an accurate,
21 detailed financial accounting of the
22 money that has come into this system over
23 the course of the last four years.
24 Project our existing expenses on an
25 annual basis in both revenues and

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 expenses over the course of the next five
3 years. Show us the anticipated
4 additional expenses that the School
5 District is likely to incur out over that
6 five-year period so we can know the
7 challenge.

8 Now, that's the challenge that
9 we have if our goal is to maintain the
10 current level of education reform, the
11 current level of programming at the
12 School District of Philadelphia, which I
13 think, notwithstanding the great work of
14 an awful lot of people, is inadequate.

15 And I don't want to be
16 misunderstood. I'd rather have somebody
17 disagree with me than misunderstand me.
18 We have a system that has made progress.
19 Scores are up in a variety of different
20 places. There are things to celebrate in
21 our system, but we also have a financial
22 issue. Part of our financial issue is
23 the state of our finances today, because
24 if you had a \$73 million problem last
25 year, that means that our recurring

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 revenues are inadequate to fund the level
3 of services that we were providing last
4 year. And so we need to know how much
5 additional revenue is needed to fund last
6 year's program in view of the changes
7 that have been recently adopted so we'll
8 know where we are.

9 Now, in addition to that,
10 unless we decide that the current level
11 of programming is adequate to take us
12 into the 21st century, we have to take
13 that forward look, because I, for one,
14 believe class sizes are too large. I
15 believe that we need more technology in
16 our system. I believe we need to
17 implement the aggressive capital program
18 that CEO Paul Vallas has been talking
19 about. I believe we need more
20 after-school programming. I believe we
21 need more tutoring, we need more
22 mentoring. I believe that we need the
23 aggressive truancy program that we've
24 been talking about over the course of the
25 last couple of months. It is inadequate.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 It is unacceptable for somewhere between
3 15,000 and 20,000 children to absent
4 themselves from school on a daily basis
5 and feel no necessity on a prompt basis
6 in accordance with state law to provide a
7 written excuse. It is unacceptable.

8 Now, if we have between 15,000
9 and 20,000 children who might absent
10 themselves on a daily basis, I've said,
11 and some people have agreed with me, that
12 it cannot be only the School District's
13 responsibility to make sure children go
14 to school. It has to be the Mayor's
15 responsibility, the Governor's
16 responsibility, the Council's
17 responsibility. It has to be the Police
18 Department's responsibility, DHS's
19 responsibility. It has to be our
20 community's responsibility. All of us
21 have to be responsible for making sure
22 our children go to school. Because when
23 our children don't go to school, they get
24 in trouble. No good thing can happen to
25 a child that's not in school when it

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 ought to be in school. They hang out at
3 the Franklin Mills, they hang out at the
4 Gallery, they hang out at neighborhood
5 corner stores. They hang out at the
6 homes of parents who are not properly
7 supervising their children or controlling
8 their places of dwelling.

9 And so we must do something
10 about that. But when we do -- and I am
11 telling you, we're committed, and I've
12 talked to many members of this Council
13 about this individually. I will be
14 coming to this Council with a transfer
15 ordinance and I'm going to say we should
16 put up \$3 million and we should increase
17 the number of parent truant officers from
18 100 to 400 and we should put them out in
19 the street and we should make sure
20 children go to school. You must go to
21 school. And when they do go to school,
22 we cannot send them to the same
23 environment which in many cases caused
24 them not to go to school --

25 What is this? I'm getting some

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 attention. Thank you.

3 -- (continued) that caused them
4 not to go to school. Do you understand?
5 Children that need educational support,
6 that need tutoring, that need mentoring,
7 that need help with their homework, that
8 need somebody looking after them and,
9 therefore, they didn't have it and they
10 didn't go to school, we can't now send
11 them back to school and they find the
12 same environment that they found that in
13 many cases was unacceptable to them in
14 the first place.

15 There's no excuse for children
16 not to go to school. We're not trying to
17 excuse them, but we do know that there is
18 a practical reality that we're going to
19 need more support for these children that
20 we run back into these classrooms.
21 Because we can't take a child who has a
22 history of truancy for two years, now
23 decides that he has to go back to school,
24 and send him into a classroom with 32
25 children and a teacher that can barely

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 keep up with the ones that come to school
3 that want to be in a school, so we have
4 to have special arrangements for them.
5 And I've had this discussion with
6 Mr. Vallas, and he has committed that we
7 are going to have the services for these
8 young people when we drive them back to
9 school.

10 But you know what? He isn't
11 going to be able to do it under the
12 current funding structure. As much as he
13 might like to, it's not going to happen.
14 It isn't going to happen. He isn't going
15 to be able to deal with whatever changes
16 have to be made in spending to compensate
17 for the budget crisis from last year's
18 budget, fix that, do whatever is
19 necessary to make sure that we don't have
20 a financial crisis in this year's budget,
21 and provide whatever additional services
22 are necessary when we start making sure
23 children who need to go to school go back
24 to school.

25 And so I have tried to be

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 clear, because I believe that in order
3 for us to advance the cause and the
4 interests of children in our City, to
5 advance the interests of education in our
6 City and in our Commonwealth and to
7 improve the prospects of having a
8 world-class city that takes care of all
9 of its children, we have to do something
10 about the schools, but we cannot do it
11 unless we come to some agreement on the
12 money. We have to come to some agreement
13 on the money. We might not agree with
14 spending proposals, but we can't argue
15 about how much money we have and the
16 nature of the financial deficit we have
17 for this year and going into the future.

18 So I appreciate the opportunity
19 to come here today, and I guess if we can
20 get a couple of things out of these
21 hearings -- because having spent 19 years
22 here, you can have hearings, but at the
23 end of the day, the hearings have to be
24 worth something. The hearings really do
25 have to be worth something. And I can

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2 look at the faces of every one of these
3 Councilmembers, and everybody here is
4 somebody that I have some real respect
5 for. Let's make sure -- and I will
6 pledge the cooperation of this
7 Administration and working with this
8 Council and the SRC and the Governor's
9 office to make sure -- and I guess PICA,
10 because we're going to get PICA in this
11 and the Controller, City Controller, Alan
12 Butkovitz, who I think is here today,
13 who, by the way, has been vigilant in
14 looking at this funding, for which I am
15 very grateful. He's actually always
16 messing with our stuff, too, but that's
17 okay. That's the job of a City
18 Controller. Let me tell you something,
19 if a Controller is making everybody
20 happy, then a Controller is not doing the
21 Controller's job. At some point in time,
22 the Controller is going to make some
23 people unhappy.

24 But I just believe that we
25 ought to come out of these hearings and

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 there probably ought to be some kind of a
3 written report. It doesn't have to be
4 500 pages long, but at the end of the
5 day, we should understand, and it
6 shouldn't take -- it can't take six
7 months or a year. It has to probably be
8 done in the next 30 or so days. We have
9 to figure out where we are on the money.
10 We just have to know. We just have to
11 know. And once we figure that out, then
12 we can put our heads together, we can
13 circle the wagons and we can say, What
14 are we going to do about this? What are
15 we going to do about this? We can't put
16 this on the SRC. We can't put that on
17 Paul Vallas. We can't blame it on the
18 PFT. We can't blame that on anybody.

19 Let me tell you something,
20 there are two primary sources of revenue
21 for the School District of Philadelphia.
22 That is the City Council of Philadelphia,
23 local government, and the Governor and
24 the General Assembly. And we ought to be
25 prepared to go to Harrisburg in the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 spring of the year and fight for
3 revenues, fight for money for the School
4 District of Philadelphia.

5 Can I get an amen?

6 (Amen.)

7 MAYOR STREET: Can I get an
8 amen?

9 (Amen.)

10 MAYOR STREET: Especially the
11 people holding those signs up with my
12 picture on them.

13 Can't you get a better picture
14 than that? I'm over there. Look at me.
15 They got them over there. Over there,
16 they're telling me to stop bickering. I
17 looked over there and I instantly
18 recognized myself.

19 But, you know, we wouldn't have
20 to bicker if we could just figure out --
21 if we just knew the money. Let me tell
22 you something, I'm prepared to fight for
23 funding. There are some people who might
24 not have been around. It took probably
25 nine years to get the retail liquor sales

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2 tax, and I know Council President was
3 there every time. It took a decade to
4 get that tax passed, but it was needed
5 for the School District of Philadelphia.
6 But we have to understand our challenge,
7 and I am hopeful that in the new year, we
8 will be able to understand our finances.
9 The Education Task Force is going to be
10 prepared to say if we want reduced class
11 size and elementary school, this is what
12 we have to do and this is how much it
13 costs, if we want certain kind of other
14 amenities.

15 I was at a meeting -- this
16 school system ought to have every good
17 program anywhere in the country. We want
18 our children to go to school. We want
19 our parents to be committed to sending
20 them to school. Then there ought to be
21 things for them to do.

22 I once had a conversation with
23 a certain distinguished Councilmember in
24 the Fifth Council District, who I won't
25 name -- I'm not going to tell him. He's

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2 not even paying any attention. But
3 Councilman Clarke confided in me that
4 there was a time in his life when he went
5 to school to play football, because the
6 most important thing for him at that time
7 was football. And there are a lot of
8 times when children, they go through this
9 period of time when it might be football,
10 chess, hockey. It could be something
11 that may not be the academics. But we
12 ought to have an education program that's
13 rich enough so that children can come --
14 we don't care what reason they come. If
15 they want to come for football, God bless
16 them. If they want to come for hockey,
17 God bless them.

18 Do you know I have a son that
19 came for -- he loved chess. He loved
20 chess. He lived for chess. He plays
21 chess today. He was the President of the
22 Chess Club at the University of Maryland.
23 He loved chess.

24 We don't care. Do we care if
25 it's music, if it's art? We ought to

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 make sure that there's something at these
3 schools for everyone. No child should
4 be --

5 (Applause.)

6 MAYOR STREET: I'll take that.

7 And these schools have to be
8 24-hour buildings in our City. We need a
9 system that doesn't close the school
10 buildings down when the holidays come.
11 When the children get out of school for
12 the holidays, they ought to still be able
13 to have education, enrichment,
14 recreation. They ought to be able to
15 have activities that can go on in the
16 schools and in the summertime. There
17 ought to be a wealth of activities for
18 our young people. And I don't think
19 we're funded adequately for that, and I
20 think it raises the bar on our commitment
21 to our schools and it raises the bar to
22 the Commonwealth's commitment to
23 education, both in the Commonwealth of
24 Pennsylvania and in our City.

25 Governor Rendell has probably

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2 funded public education in the
3 Commonwealth more aggressively than any
4 recent Governor, and we appreciate that,
5 but, you know, sometimes the answer is
6 more. The unions always say the answer
7 is more, but I think in this case, the
8 answer is more, more funding, more
9 resources, more programs, more things
10 that will improve the quality of the
11 environment in our schools and the
12 opportunities for our children.

13 Now, I went through an awful
14 lot and I want to kind of take a look at
15 my notes for just a minute to see is
16 there anything that somebody thought I
17 should say that I missed.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
19 Mr. Mayor, while you do that, let me note
20 that other Councilmembers have joined us.
21 To my right, Councilman Ramos, who is on
22 these Committees as well. To his right,
23 Councilwoman Miller. To her right,
24 Councilman Clarke, and certainly to my
25 left, Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds

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2 Brown. The majority of them are members
3 of either Finance or Education
4 Committees. Thank you.

5 MAYOR STREET: Councilwoman, I
6 have reviewed my notes and concluded that
7 I have covered everything.

8 (Applause.)

9 MAYOR STREET: I've covered
10 everything. And I'm willing to answer
11 some questions, as long as I'm out of
12 here shortly.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you, Mr. Mayor, and let me note for
15 anyone who has come in in the last few
16 minutes since the Mayor began his
17 testimony, I will only say abbreviated
18 remarks. We already said that these
19 hearings are with regard to not only the
20 budget deficit, but the dropout rate and
21 truancy, and we hope to get into that
22 more in detail as the day goes on. The
23 issue that the Mayor mentioned was a
24 deficit that we didn't realize we had,
25 and that's part of the issue, because in

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2 April '06, I have a quote saying that
3 this would be the third balanced budget
4 in a row.

5 So Council has those concerns,
6 and we're also concerned that providing
7 funding will not simply solve the issue
8 and that since the state takeover in '02,
9 the City has provided some 144 million in
10 funding above what was previously
11 provided.

12 Council is equally concerned
13 about the findings of a dropout study
14 conducted at Johns Hopkins University
15 that said only half of the 9th graders in
16 Philadelphia schools would graduate
17 within four years.

18 And, finally -- we only give
19 abbreviated remarks -- we say that
20 truancy is obviously a precursor to
21 dropping out of school, with as many as
22 80,000 students having more than eight
23 unexcused absences during the last school
24 year.

25 So these are just some of our

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2 concerns and the reasons we are here and
3 that we as City Council took it upon
4 ourselves even before the break to have
5 these emergency hearings to deal with
6 these issues.

7 I will now open the floor to
8 questions for the Mayor.

9 Councilman Goode.

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
11 Madam Chair.

12 Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thank
13 you for your testimony.

14 MAYOR STREET: Good morning,
15 Councilman.

16 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I agree that
17 one of the things that is most necessary
18 is a five-year financial plan, but I
19 don't necessarily agree that it's not
20 debatable how much money that we have.

21 I'd like to direct my
22 questions, which were not originally
23 intended for you because I didn't know
24 you would be here, around the area of
25 District finances to focus on tax

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2 structure and tax incentives.

3 What changes to the City's tax
4 structure under tax incentive policies do
5 you think would benefit the School
6 District finances? As we look at this,
7 should we be looking at tax policies as
8 well?

9 MAYOR STREET: Well, I think we
10 should immediately go to 100 percent
11 assessments and we should let the taxes
12 for the School District of Philadelphia
13 grow.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're
15 killing us. You're killing us, Mr.
16 Mayor.

17 MAYOR STREET: I know. I know.
18 But you know what? At some point in
19 time, the School District of Philadelphia
20 needs more money.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We're
22 having hearings on that in January. We
23 don't agree.

24 MAYOR STREET: The School
25 District needs more money. The current

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2 assessment system needs work. It needs
3 to be fairer. We don't need to drive
4 people out of -- there are things that
5 can be done that can make sure that
6 residents of neighborhoods don't get
7 hurt, but we should make sure that we
8 allow tax revenue as a result of
9 increases in the value of real estate to
10 grow in a way that funds this system.
11 And that's just one thing.

12 I also think that there are
13 other things that we can do to be helpful
14 to the School District of Philadelphia.
15 Part of the goal of this Administration
16 has been to establish a much more direct
17 approach and relationship between the
18 Department of Human Services and the
19 School District of Philadelphia in
20 providing the social services that will
21 be important to the School District of
22 Philadelphia.

23 For example, under the truancy
24 program, we're going to fund a huge
25 amount of the parenting programs that

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2 will end up being provided by parents
3 that have students in our school system.
4 So there are some things.

5 I'm always a little bit
6 surprised that not more attention was
7 paid to the Tax Commission report that
8 was done as a result of a joint effort by
9 this Administration and this Council. We
10 did this report, and this report said, as
11 you know, that we should do everything we
12 can to level the economic playing field.

13 We have reduced taxes in this
14 Administration by \$1.1 billion exclusive
15 of any additional reductions that happen
16 in the upcoming year, \$1.1 billion.
17 That's a lot of tax reduction. It's not
18 possible to reduce taxes by \$1.1 billion,
19 continue to aggressively fund the public
20 school system of our City, cap
21 assessments and do some of the things
22 that we are talking about. At some point
23 in time, you got to have a little bit
24 more money, and I think this system is
25 going to need money fairly quickly, but

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2 not just coming from local government.

3 It actually has to be a partnership with
4 the Commonwealth.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What about
6 tax increment financing, your opinion and
7 position on that now?

8 MAYOR STREET: Well, I think
9 the economic development tools that we
10 have right now are the appropriate tools,
11 and I'm not prepared at this time because
12 I know that inevitably the ten-year tax
13 abatement will come up, because it always
14 comes up.

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: That's my
16 next question.

17 MAYOR STREET: Oh, okay. How
18 did I know that that -- see, I think we
19 have to be very, very careful, because we
20 have made a huge amount of progress in
21 our City in developing our neighborhoods
22 and developing Center City and a lot of
23 areas as a result of the ten-year tax
24 abatement, tax increment financing and
25 the few tools that we have. I remind

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 people that we used to spend anywhere
3 from \$30 to \$50 million a year on
4 economic development through the --

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Economic
6 Stimulus.

7 MAYOR STREET: -- Commerce
8 Department. That has reduced
9 dramatically. What do we call the
10 program?

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Economic
12 Stimulus Program.

13 MAYOR STREET: Yes, the
14 Economic Stimulus Program. I remember
15 when we had \$25 million in there, it was
16 nothing to have \$25, \$30 million in the
17 Economic Stimulus Program. So this
18 Administration decided that we weren't
19 going to be able to spend that kind of
20 money. I think we have \$5 million,
21 because you always have to have some
22 amount of money. I bet you we've cut
23 that Economic Stimulus Fund by 80
24 percent. I bet you we've cut it on
25 average -- maybe more.

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2 But I'm just not prepared to
3 say at the moment that particularly given
4 where we are in our City, that we should
5 start taking away the tools that we have.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: But in
7 short, in terms of tax policy, in terms
8 of tax structure and tax incentive
9 policies, looking at tax increment
10 financing, looking at the real estate
11 abatement, looking at full valuation, all
12 of that should be on the table and you
13 think we definitely should look at full
14 valuation?

15 MAYOR STREET: I think we
16 should look at it all. And let me just
17 say another something. To the extent
18 that we decide to modify the ten-year tax
19 abatement, it shouldn't happen. It
20 should be incremental. We shouldn't walk
21 in one day and say it's here today, gone
22 today. That would be tragic for this
23 City. It ought to be done in a way that
24 is thoughtful, that is well considered.
25 We shouldn't do anything at all

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2 precipitously.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: My only
4 point, Mr. Mayor -- and you know I'm an
5 advocate for economic development
6 resources, but it is still debatable how
7 much money we have because of our tax
8 policy and particularly tax incentive
9 policies.

10 MAYOR STREET: Well, see, we
11 could fuss about that a little bit,
12 because I think we know how much money we
13 have. If you're talking about how much
14 money we could get or how much money --
15 or the economic return that we get on
16 certain incentives, then obviously there
17 are all kinds of ways to try to look at
18 that, but when we present an operating
19 budget and a five-year plan -- this is my
20 point, and we know how much money we
21 have. When we present an operating
22 budget and a five-year plan, PICA looks
23 at those numbers, the Controller looks at
24 those numbers, City Council technical
25 staff looks at those numbers, everyone

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 looks at those numbers. There's no
3 mystery in our revenues and there's very
4 little mystery in our expenses. People
5 pretty much know.

6 Now, that's what I meant. And
7 there's not been a case in my memory --
8 and I go back 27 budgets here -- there's
9 not been a case in my memory where we
10 looked around one day and said -- I can
11 remember one time when we were less than
12 candid about a budget or two, but it
13 wasn't like we didn't know. And I know
14 there's some people who don't like that
15 kind of candor in a public forum. There
16 have been times in an election year that
17 we kind of glossed over a couple of
18 things.

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Like full
20 valuation.

21 MAYOR STREET: No. I'm not
22 talking about -- we never considered full
23 valuation, but I'm just saying --

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: As an
25 example, like full valuation.

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2 MAYOR STREET: Well, I don't
3 think so. I mean, I don't think that's a
4 good example.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I think
6 you've been very candid about it, but the
7 people who gloss over the issue of full
8 valuation, that is a serious issue as to
9 how much money we will or will not have.

10 MAYOR STREET: Well, full
11 valuation is -- to me full valuation is
12 an issue of fairness in the
13 administration of our tax assessment
14 program. For me, it's fundamentally a
15 question of fairness. We must have a
16 system that's fair.

17 Now, part of the problem is, it
18 is never easy, and I've thought about
19 full valuation, how do you get there, and
20 I think that there are some things that
21 you can do. You can go to full
22 valuation, but there are some things that
23 you can do to alleviate the negative
24 impact that it will have on people in
25 communities. We're not in the business

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 of running people out of neighborhoods.
3 But at some point in time, whether it's
4 this year or next year, full valuation is
5 going to have to be something that this
6 government actually takes on.

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Are you
8 still committed to capping revenue from
9 the move to full valuation at it being
10 revenue neutral to the five-year plan of
11 last year?

12 MAYOR STREET: I probably want
13 to talk to representatives of the Finance
14 Department before I answer that question
15 at this time. I would want to have all
16 of the most recent revenue information
17 and expense information.

18 I can tell you -- let me give
19 you an example. Right now we have under
20 consideration reasonable union demands
21 that could cost this government far in
22 excess of \$100 million in health and
23 welfare benefits over the course of the
24 next five years, far in advance of that.
25 We have firefighters award on appeal.

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2 They actually came and visited me, as you
3 know.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: We know. We
5 could hear.

6 MAYOR STREET: You could hear
7 them. They were singing happy holidays
8 to me.

9 So it could be as much as \$100,
10 \$110 million of additional expenses.

11 Before I start talking about
12 capping at what year, I'd really want to
13 kind of take a look at our current
14 finances. I will also tell you that we
15 had an operating budget deficit last
16 year.

17 So these things are moving
18 targets. You can have an operating
19 budget deficit if you have a fund balance
20 of a quarter of a billion dollars,
21 especially if the operating budget
22 deficit is no more than 20 percent of
23 your fund balance. But these things, you
24 have to be very, very vigilant about
25 them, and I would -- but you see, all of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 that is the kind of thing that gets
3 discussed in a very open way in this
4 Council when we come up here with an
5 operating budget and a five-year plan.

6 Let me tell you something, we
7 aren't fooling anybody up here on the
8 finances of this City. You got people up
9 here who know as much about this as
10 anybody anywhere, and that's basically
11 what I meant. And there are things that
12 we can do that will cost us money and
13 there are things that we can do that can
14 increase our revenues. I guess my bottom
15 line is that this School District very
16 shortly is going to need more money, both
17 from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and
18 the City of Philadelphia, if we're going
19 to maintain the current reforms and
20 especially if we're going to do something
21 to accelerate the kind of progress we
22 think is necessary in our schools.

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

25 Mr. Mayor, obviously most of us don't

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 agree about full valuation. We could do
3 it and then in a year from now, you
4 wouldn't have any of us sitting up here
5 to have a discussion with, because the
6 citizens of the City would vote us all
7 out. Citizens don't want full valuation.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: They
10 are worried about tax increases, and we
11 are right there with them.

12 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Point of
13 order, Madam Chair, if I may.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes,
15 sir.

16 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: A year
17 ago, October, November '05, I had
18 conducted three days of public hearings
19 on the issue of full value reassessment,
20 and since that time, I've probably had a
21 about a dozen community meetings where
22 David Glancy and some of the folks from
23 BRT went out to explain it.

24 For me, obviously it would
25 certainly be an election year issue. I

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2 think as the Mayor said, the biggest
3 problem is that there are a number of us
4 who believe that full value reassessment
5 is probably the right way to go, but
6 without the tools that will protect
7 long-time residents, we never really
8 could get into that, and that's one of
9 the reasons why I was supportive of not
10 going forward with full value
11 reevaluation immediately, not just
12 because of the election, but because
13 there aren't any safeguards, and until
14 Harrisburg gives us some of those tools,
15 which in many cases we need that
16 legislation in order for us to have those
17 safeguards, I don't think we should move
18 forward either this year or next year.
19 But I certainly think it would be the
20 right way to go. I think it's the fair
21 way to go. And when you look at the
22 value of property in the City of
23 Philadelphia today versus what was the
24 anticipated value, we're certainly much
25 higher in the total value of the City of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Philadelphia. So there may not be the
3 significant increases that some of us
4 were fearful of a year or two ago.

5 So I just want the record to be
6 clear. There were public hearings and
7 it's not that -- I don't want people to
8 think that we kind of buried this thing
9 because we're all going to be faced for
10 reelection. It's a fact that we're all
11 going to have to deal with it at some
12 point, but until we get those pieces of
13 legislation in place in Harrisburg, I
14 don't think any of us should even move on
15 that, whether it's an election year or
16 not. I just wanted that for the record.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you. As my colleagues say, that is a
19 discussion for another day, and we will
20 exempt my colleague from my previous
21 statement.

22 But at any rate, my -- and then
23 I'll call Councilman Rizzo, who has been
24 waiting. We wondered, Mayor, when you
25 fund or try to transfer this 3 million if

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2 you would consider some of the
3 discussions we had when you testified
4 before this Council on our call to
5 action. And we talked about, for
6 example, having those who receive -- they
7 don't call it welfare; TANF assistance,
8 if we could have these parents and maybe
9 this fund could help coordinate parent
10 activities, like those who get checks,
11 being able to work in schools and
12 neighborhood projects, and maybe since
13 you're going to be working with parents,
14 you could help coordinate some of that
15 that. We've been working hard on having
16 other job training activities for low, no
17 income and homeless people and
18 coordinating with GPUAC and others, and
19 maybe this Committee could help
20 coordinate those in a way that deals with
21 this call to action to reduce crime. We
22 want to work with you in that regard.

23 MAYOR STREET: Well, we
24 certainly look forward to working with
25 you like that. Mr. Vallas will be able

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 to explain in some detail how the parent
3 truancy officers are recruited, but
4 they're basically recruited out of the
5 neighborhoods through agreements with
6 community organizations. The goal is to
7 make sure that you have parent truancy
8 officers that are from the neighborhood
9 that know the neighborhood, that know
10 parents and children, that know the
11 schools and have a long history of
12 activity and involvement in the schools.
13 And they have been a fierce force in
14 getting children and parents to recognize
15 their responsibility. Their problem has
16 been there are just too few of them.
17 There have just been way too few of them.
18 And when we quadruple their numbers --
19 four times, is that quadruple?

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

21 MAYOR STREET: When we
22 quadruple their number, I will tell you,
23 there will be a difference in the
24 community.

25 So we believe that for

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 children, you really have to do three
3 things. You got to keep them in school
4 when they are supposed to be in school.
5 You have to keep them engaged between
6 when school is out from the time their
7 parents come home, which is largely 6, 7
8 o'clock at night after work, when there
9 are after-school programs, and then with
10 our curfew centers, stay off of the
11 street at night. You should be home, not
12 having children wandering around the
13 street at 11 or 12 and 1 o'clock in the
14 morning. And I think I'm looking forward
15 to getting a new curfew bill out of City
16 Council that is going to make it an even
17 more stringent curfew ordinance.

18 The Council President worked
19 with us in South Philadelphia. We put a
20 curfew center as a pilot in South
21 Philadelphia, and it has been very, very
22 successful. The incidence of violence
23 against youth, the incidence of youth
24 being engaged themselves as perpetrators
25 of violence has gone significantly down

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 since we established a curfew center.
3 And we will have an additional four
4 curfew centers by January of this year
5 and a total of a dozen curfew centers by
6 June of 2007, because children must go to
7 school, children must be busy after
8 school, and children must be home at
9 night. And if you do those three things,
10 we think you go a long way toward
11 improving the prospects of children
12 staying out of trouble, getting a decent
13 education and becoming productive adults
14 in our society.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you. We appreciate that, because this
17 Council has done a lot of work. I'm
18 reminded back when Herb DeBeary was
19 here -- so I'm going back a long time --
20 when we did hearings on the dropout rate
21 then and we came up with issues like
22 school uniforms. In fact, Mary Mason was
23 a big proponent of that. And we came up
24 with the issue of PP, parent patrols, and
25 I thought about it when I saw some

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2 parents in here the other day with the
3 armbands. We suggested back then in '91
4 or '92.

5 So Council has been working a
6 long time on these issues, and we're
7 happy to see that little by little we
8 move along, and when good minds come
9 together, we can see some positive
10 results in spite of all of our issues.
11 So we look forward to working with you in
12 that regard.

13 Councilman Rizzo.

14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Mayor, one
15 of the things we should maybe put on the
16 list to deal with the dropout rate is the
17 fact that I believe in Pennsylvania a
18 child can leave school at 16. Maybe
19 there ought to be a real good look at the
20 possibility of raising that age where
21 they can just voluntarily say, I'm done,
22 I'm not going to go. And I understand
23 there are some other municipalities, some
24 other states that have an age that is
25 higher than 18 years old.

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2 MAYOR STREET: Well, that is
3 certainly something we should take a look
4 at. I think there's a practical problem
5 with increasing the age too much beyond
6 16. These children, for all practical
7 purposes, become emancipated. It's just
8 really hard. Unfortunately, we have
9 children today who are 14 years old, 13,
10 15 -- and the parents are very, very
11 candid. Parents will say, I can't do
12 anything with them. Now, the fact that
13 the parent might not be able to do
14 anything with them doesn't mean that the
15 school and society can't do anything with
16 them. We sometimes have to intervene on
17 behalf of the parent. That's the basis
18 for the whole juvenile system. That
19 allows parents to actually come in and
20 say to a court, I need help monitoring
21 the behavior of a child.

22 You should be aware of the fact
23 that we've taken all of that into account
24 in the truancy program, and to those
25 parents who suggest that they are -- and

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2 many of them who are being brutally
3 candid about this, and it is a very
4 distressing fact for them, they admit
5 they can't do anything with their
6 children. Judge Dougherty and the Family
7 Court are fully prepared to bring those
8 children into the court, and if we end up
9 having to give them a serious amount of
10 supervision through any one of the
11 Department of Human Services programs, we
12 will do that. We have the Adolescents
13 Violence Reduction Program. It's a
14 program that is relatively new that is
15 specifically geared to engage a child
16 between the age of 10 and 15 who is on
17 the verge of delinquency but not
18 delinquent. On the verge, not going to
19 school, having all kinds of issues. And
20 the goal is -- and you can get a detailed
21 explanation. The goal is to take that
22 child, that family, and assign that child
23 to a program. It will get a person that
24 will be able to check and make sure it's
25 going to school, because there are

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2 parents who have a very difficult time.

3 But raising the mandatory
4 school age is something that we can
5 certainly take a look at. I'll ask the
6 Education Task Force to look at it, and
7 you can challenge the School District
8 representatives to take a look at it,
9 too.

10 I think there is also a problem
11 with the age children start school. I
12 think children in our City can start
13 school as late as eight years old, and
14 most people think by that time they
15 should be in the second or third grade.

16 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Agreed.

17 Just a moment on the budget. I
18 would love to be supportive of that
19 transfer ordinance, but it's difficult.
20 I know the answer to this question, but
21 the constituents, our constituents,
22 sometimes express a concern. You
23 mentioned earlier about the number of
24 layoffs in the School District. You as
25 the Mayor, we as the Council, how

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2 confident are you that the money that the
3 School District has is being handled
4 appropriately? Do you believe that the
5 School District is running efficiently?
6 Because you have constituents e-mail "how
7 can the School District lay off 80 people
8 and it still run efficiently"? I know
9 the answer to that question, but it's
10 tough to communicate, Mayor, to the
11 constituents that the School District is
12 running or other government agencies are
13 running as efficiently as they can be.
14 That's one of the issues that I hear
15 constantly.

16 MAYOR STREET: Well, look, this
17 whole business about the sudden nature of
18 the deficit and the amount of the
19 deficit -- because it's not just the
20 deficit. If it were \$5 or \$10 or \$15
21 million, people would say that could
22 happen in any budget, but it's the amount
23 of the deficit and the sudden nature of
24 the deficit that has caused people a lot
25 of concern.

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2 I have this philosophy or this
3 theory about all of this that I sometimes
4 reserve for people who work for the
5 Mayor, but I'll share it with you at your
6 request. I think every four or five
7 years you ought to go back through and
8 figure out where you might be able to be
9 more efficient. And so it doesn't
10 trouble me one bit that Mr. Vallas can
11 say, I can use 50 fewer people or 75
12 fewer people. We've reduced the number
13 of people on the payroll of this
14 government by probably somewhere between
15 800 and a thousand people. I mean, you
16 end up having to do it.

17 As most people know, I was born
18 and raised on a farm, and we had hedges
19 on that farm, and those hedges would grow
20 and grow and grow and grow and grow, and
21 every five years or so, my father would
22 come -- anybody here ever lived on a
23 farm?

24 My father would cut the hedges
25 all the way down, and I remember when he

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2 first did it, I would said, Oh, my God,
3 he's killing the hedges. No, he was not
4 killing the hedges. What he would do is,
5 he would cut them all the way down and
6 then they would grow back and you had an
7 opportunity to shape them.

8 Budgets are like that. Budgets
9 grow. They grow. You put people over
10 here. You get a problem. You put people
11 over here. Now you got a budget that's
12 growing all over the place. And it's not
13 unreasonable -- and we're into the fifth
14 year of the new administration. It's not
15 unreasonable for a CEO to be able to say,
16 You know what, I can trim this budget
17 back, I can cut it back in some areas.

18 Now, you and I wouldn't know,
19 and I've never said that the School
20 District can't do with fewer
21 administrators, fewer support staff.
22 Only they know that, but we will know
23 shortly, because if they cut back too
24 far, then what will happen is, the
25 programs will suffer, because somebody

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2 has to monitor the programs. I mean, in
3 our government the first thing that goes
4 is Public Property and some of those
5 other administrative service entities,
6 but you know what, if you cut them back
7 too far, then no one gets any service.
8 So you have to be real careful.

9 I believe that, by and large,
10 our system is reasonably run and it is
11 not well enough funded. I do believe
12 that there are programs that we are
13 operating now that we probably can let
14 go. We don't need everything that we're
15 doing. Some of the things that we're
16 doing we decided to do as an experiment.
17 But part of our interest in having the
18 Education Task Force work with the School
19 District, work with advocates, parents,
20 Council, everybody, is kind of take a
21 look and let's make some judgments about
22 some of this stuff. We might not be able
23 to do everything. We always did, but
24 there are some core things we should
25 probably do more of and there are some

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2 other supportive things that we should
3 probably do some more of, and there may
4 be some other things that we find have
5 cost us money but might not be worth the
6 trouble that we should eliminate. That's
7 a part of the analysis that the Task
8 Force would like to do with the School
9 District and the SRC and be able to say,
10 Here's where we ought to be going with
11 public education.

12 Look, you don't have to be
13 really smart to know that if you have 18
14 children in a classroom with an aide or
15 two, you're going to be way better off
16 than if you have 32 children. So that
17 kind of thing is at the top of
18 everybody's lists of further reforms.
19 But we should be looking at all of those
20 things.

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thanks,
22 Mr. Mayor. I'm glad you didn't hedge on
23 that question.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you.

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2 Mr. Mayor, we only have two
3 more questions for you.

4 MAYOR STREET: That's a good
5 one.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: If
7 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown
8 would wait a moment, because this is a
9 follow-up question from Councilwoman
10 Miller with regard to your testimony.

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Yes.

12 Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

13 MAYOR STREET: Good morning,
14 Councilwoman.

15 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I just
16 want to ask a question regarding AVR --
17 the Youth Violence Reduction Program.

18 MAYOR STREET: That's YVRP.

19 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I know.
20 I'm going to talk about both.

21 MAYOR STREET: You want to talk
22 about both?

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Right.

24 It's my understanding that the AVRP
25 services children from 10 to 15.

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2 MAYOR STREET: Yes.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: And the
4 Youth Violence from 17 to?

5 MAYOR STREET: 24.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So what
7 happened with the 16-year-old? We were
8 at a community meeting and this issue was
9 raised, the point was raised, from a
10 couple different providers.

11 What are we doing for the
12 16-year-old and why were they left out?

13 MAYOR STREET: We structured it
14 from 10 to 15 largely on the
15 recommendation of the professionals who
16 believe that those were the children who
17 could most benefit. I sat in a meeting
18 and was told that there were about 3,000
19 children between those ages that were at
20 risk. I think the thought is that
21 children between 16 -- and I probably
22 should distinguish between the AVRP and
23 the YVRP.

24 The Youth Violence Reduction
25 Program are people who are already in the

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2 system. These are people who already
3 have probation officers. These are
4 people who, for the most part, are at
5 serious risk of either committing or
6 being a victim of serious violence.

7 The AVRP, on the other hand --
8 and they have to be adults. They're not
9 juveniles. They have to be adults.

10 The AVRP program, on the other
11 hand, was designed to capture people
12 before they got into the Youth Study
13 Center or before they got into trouble,
14 and in point of fact, the focus is on the
15 younger of the children.

16 We find that many times there
17 are families and they'll have multiple
18 children in the families, and we want to
19 be able to service as many of them as
20 possible, but this was -- we did an
21 annual report card, and if you look at
22 those report cards -- and we saw long
23 before anybody was talking about it in
24 the community at large -- we started
25 seeing the increase in violence, both

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2 perpetrated by young people and young
3 people being the victims of violence. It
4 was about two years ago. And we decided
5 we needed to do something about it. We
6 created the AVRP program.

7 I don't think that there was
8 any intention to exclude the
9 16-year-olds, but the 16-year-olds, they
10 get to be out of the reach of a kind of
11 program like this and they end up getting
12 to be the kind of -- you need more
13 adult-oriented programs for those
14 children that are getting older.

15 I'm more than willing to sit
16 down or have the Managing Director and
17 folks kind of take a look at it if you
18 think that there is a serious gap and a
19 serious need, but that was really the
20 thinking.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.
22 Well, that will be good if the Managing
23 Director or whatever committee takes a
24 look at that, because there is a gap, as
25 expressed by some of the providers. Now,

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2 I originally didn't think there was a
3 gap, because I figured that the
4 16-year-olds could get service anyway,
5 and I can't really remember the exact
6 circumstances, but this particular kid
7 couldn't get help because he didn't fit
8 into each one of those programs, but I'm
9 sure that there must be something for
10 him.

11 MAYOR STREET: See, there are a
12 huge number of programs for those
13 children who are in the dependent system
14 because their families are dependent.
15 The juvenile system provides a huge
16 amount of programs for 16-year-olds and
17 others.

18 This is a special program
19 that's designed for children that are not
20 in the juvenile justice system. This is
21 designed to be the ounce of prevention
22 that keeps us from ever needing to spend
23 the pound of cure. We don't want these
24 people showing up down at the police
25 station. We don't want them to be

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2 habitual truants. We don't want them to
3 be trotting around the streets and get
4 into the juvenile system.

5 When I had my orientation to
6 all, we were actually going over all of
7 the programs that we were going to ask
8 the Commonwealth to fund under the
9 needs-based budgets, and I got a briefing
10 on all of that and I asked a ton of
11 questions like we do, and recognized that
12 we needed a program to keep children out
13 of the juvenile justice system as opposed
14 to just kind of letting them hang out and
15 then one day they're down at the Youth
16 Study Center. And so that's all that
17 material.

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: And I
19 agree. Certainly prevention and
20 intervention programs are basically
21 needed, but it would be nice, and I'll
22 get the information and forward it to the
23 Managing Director.

24 MAYOR STREET: Okay. Copy me.

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: For the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 specifics, and I'll copy you. Thank you.

3 Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
5 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Brown.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
7 Madam President.

8 Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

9 MAYOR STREET: Good morning.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: First, a
11 point of information, if I might, with
12 regards to the state mandatory starting
13 age is currently eight and this City
14 Council has actually introduced a
15 resolution urging the State Legislature
16 to support State Representative Roebuck's
17 bill to lower the mandatory age to six,
18 and we're all waiting to see what the
19 State Senate will do with that bill.

20 MAYOR STREET: I think we
21 should make them go to school when
22 they're four.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Early
24 childhood education.

25 MAYOR STREET: I mean, early,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 early, early childhood education.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Secondly,
4 know that we, especially I, look forward
5 to your signing of the curfew bill that
6 should be moving to your desk soon that
7 was passed unanimously out of this
8 legislative body. So we expect that that
9 will strengthen the bill and in many ways
10 hold parents and facilities more
11 accountable who allow children to be out
12 past those hours stipulated.

13 My question goes to the second
14 group of young people you've spoken
15 about, young people who are out during
16 the hours of 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. I should
17 first commend you for your commitment to
18 increasing the number to now 65,000 young
19 people. The facts say that there are
20 still about 35,000 children who have no
21 place to go after school. Now I get more
22 letters and a lot of phone calls around
23 the issue of the quality of our
24 after-school programming. We have our
25 beacon schools. We have the Philadelphia

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Free Library providing services. We have
3 Safe and Sound, DHS, and I know that the
4 Rec Department has done a great job in
5 standardizing services to children.

6 What's your perspective or view
7 at this hour given our improvement in the
8 provision of after-school programming to
9 now take a good look at continuum of
10 quality?

11 MAYOR STREET: Well, when I
12 became the Mayor, we used to joke that
13 some of our after-school programs
14 consisted of herding children into a gym,
15 locking the door and saying, You can't
16 leave until 6 o'clock at night. And they
17 were different children every day and
18 there wasn't a continuum of service, that
19 they didn't have a curriculum and that
20 didn't have regular --

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:
22 Structured, stimulating and safe
23 services.

24 MAYOR STREET: Right. And, in
25 fact, I got criticized -- you wouldn't

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 know this, because only a Mayor would
3 know this. I got criticized by a lot of
4 people because we started imposing these
5 standards on after-school programs.
6 Because after-school programs and
7 recreation programs are all --

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Are not
9 baby-sitting services.

10 MAYOR STREET: They're not
11 baby-sitting services, and you can't
12 just -- I mean, there were people who
13 were in our after-school programs, they
14 wanted to just be able to go out and
15 recruit a bunch of children and count
16 them on the way in the door and not even
17 be able to identify who the children
18 were, whether or not they came on
19 consecutive or multiple days. We stopped
20 most of that, and we did adopt a whole
21 group of standards, because these are
22 educational programs and they're
23 educational, they're cultural and there's
24 a lot of enrichment that has to take
25 place or else they are a little more than

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2 a baby-sitting program. I think it is
3 fair for you to say to us, Let's just
4 take a look and make sure we're doing
5 everything we should be doing.

6 We have this discussion all the
7 time, and not being the Managing Director
8 or any of these Commissioners, I'm not
9 armed with the kind of detailed
10 information that might already exist, but
11 I will tell you, we don't tolerate
12 programs that are baby-sitting services
13 that don't have real enrichment for these
14 young people. We increased the amount of
15 prevention programs, including all of our
16 after-school programs. I mean, we spend
17 probably \$90 to \$100 million a year on
18 that programming, which is up in a
19 dramatic way. But it isn't enough. I
20 agree with you. We didn't make sure that
21 these programs are operating.

22 When I became the Mayor, we did
23 an analysis of all of this, and at that
24 time, we were told that we probably
25 needed 100,000 after-school slots in this

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2 City, and I don't know the most recent
3 numbers, if it's 65,000, whatever it
4 is --

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: It's an
6 improvement.

7 MAYOR STREET: It's a huge
8 improvement, and we have probably put at
9 least 50,000 new after-school slots. But
10 I believe every child ought to have an
11 after-school opportunity. It's one thing
12 if parents have other resources and have
13 other plans, can make other plans, but no
14 child in this City should have to leave
15 school and be your traditional latchkey
16 child because there's no place to go or
17 nothing to do. That is a recipe for
18 disaster. Because typically they don't
19 go home and just close the door and stay
20 in the house. They go home, they may get
21 a little something to eat and then
22 they're out in the street.

23 We live in a society today
24 where so many parents and caregivers are
25 all working, and many of them are working

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2 out of a necessity to work. They work in
3 jobs that might not pay a living wage.

4 So, therefore, sometimes the parents have
5 overlapping work schedules, and these
6 children are home all by themselves.

7 There ought to be something for them to
8 do. There ought to be a place for them
9 to be, and that's our goal. And, in
10 fact, as a part of the analysis we do
11 with the Education Task Force, we will
12 talk about after-school programs and how
13 effective they are, how many we need and
14 how they should be funded, because for
15 me, this is a critical part of a
16 component of making a neighborhood a
17 safe, special place for children and
18 families.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So in
20 short, the Education Task Force is going
21 to look at the issue of quality?

22 MAYOR STREET: I'm sure they
23 are, but I will check and make sure.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right
25 then.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: She's saying
3 yes.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
5 Mr. Mayor.

6 MAYOR STREET: I think I'm
7 getting a nod from Secretary Barnett that
8 it's on the list.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mr.
11 Mayor, we note that, as you know, I
12 started out as a school teacher as well
13 in my first life.

14 MAYOR STREET: I did, too.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
16 Absolutely.

17 MAYOR STREET: I wasn't strong
18 enough.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
20 certainly as Education Chair, we have
21 printed and continue to print
22 newsletters. The editor is Ms. Dolores
23 Mohammed, who is Principal and Chairman
24 of the Board of the Essence International
25 School in Nigeria. I serve on that

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2 Board. And we've printed newsletters for
3 daycares who have them at home so that
4 they have an educational component. This
5 Committee continues to do that, for those
6 who may not be aware. We've continued to
7 print newsletters and make them available
8 to daycare providers at home so they have
9 an educational focus, and we've also
10 taken them around the world. There's an
11 open classroom model that is also used
12 that's been taken around the world to
13 deal with basic skills.

14 So this Education Committee is
15 involved in many aspects of education,
16 and we wanted all of you to be aware of
17 that.

18 Councilman Ramos, and then I'm
19 sure, Mr. Mayor, this is the last
20 opportunity.

21 And we're sorry any of you who
22 have to wait, but we will be inviting
23 Mr. Vallas on next. Thank you.

24 Councilman Ramos.

25 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Thank you,

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2 Madam Chair.

3 Mr. Mayor, your advice to us,
4 if I hear correctly, and correct if I'm
5 wrong, is that, one, we should ask the
6 State for more money to fund our
7 schools --

8 MAYOR STREET: That's not one.
9 That wasn't one.

10 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: That was not
11 one of them?

12 MAYOR STREET: That was not No.
13 1.

14 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Oh, okay.
15 Typical lawyer.

16 MAYOR STREET: That's not
17 semantics for me, because the State will
18 say, the first thing he did was say the
19 State has to put up more money, and to
20 me, that's too sensitive for me to not
21 mention.

22 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: I
23 understand. Two, that we have an
24 obligation to make sure our schools run
25 effectively so we can probably make those

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2 classrooms smaller.

3 What happens in the event that
4 the State of Pennsylvania does not want
5 to increase the funding for our School
6 District? What do you recommend? What
7 do we do?

8 MAYOR STREET: Well --

9 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Because it's
10 obvious we won't be able -- and, again,
11 correct me if I'm wrong. I think
12 it's obvious that we won't be able to
13 pick up the tab to be able to pay. I
14 mean, can we afford to give 20, 30, 40,
15 50 additional million dollars for our
16 School District? It's probably the right
17 thing to do, but where does that put us?
18 What happens if the State says no, that
19 this is our funding level and we're not
20 going to give you any more?

21 MAYOR STREET: Well, I don't
22 like to speculate on a negative, because
23 if you start speculating on a negative,
24 you have to be careful. You'll create an
25 environment where you can't get done what

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2 you need to get done. I'd rather think
3 that there are a number of people in
4 Harrisburg that are committed to public
5 education. We have a Governor that's
6 made education a huge priority in his
7 first four years, and I said it's
8 important to both the Commonwealth and it
9 is important to his goals and objectives
10 for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

11 We have a City delegation that
12 is a very, very strong, well-experienced
13 delegation. I believe that we have to
14 create an environment where it will be
15 possible for us to fund public education.

16 I don't think we should -- I
17 don't go to Harrisburg in the spring of
18 the year with a negative outlook.
19 There's new leadership in the
20 Pennsylvania Senate. There are maybe 50
21 or so new House members who say that they
22 are interested in education and
23 interested in good government in the
24 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The first
25 and most important thing is, we have to

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2 be prepared to make our case. We have to
3 be prepared to make our case. And if we
4 make our case, I think we have a great
5 prospect, a great chance of getting some
6 additional support out of Harrisburg.

7 Let me be more specific. I
8 think we've got -- and I've said this and
9 I'll continue to say it without apology.
10 We have to understand the finances of the
11 School District. We have to understand
12 how much money we have, how our money is
13 being spent. We have to project the
14 costs of our programs over the course of
15 the next year and then five years so that
16 we know where we are. We have to
17 determine where we want this District to
18 go, the size of our classes, how many
19 children do we want, the kind of
20 programming that we want that we know
21 works for the City of Philadelphia, that
22 will work for our region and work for our
23 Commonwealth. And then I think we have
24 to develop the kind of alliances around
25 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania so that

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2 we aren't standing alone. I mean, one of
3 the things that Paul Vallas said at the
4 recent SRC hearings is that we can't go
5 this alone. We cannot go this alone.
6 And I'm sure he'll be here and he'll tell
7 you that. He'll repeat that.

8 We can't go this alone. We
9 have to be in the position where the kind
10 of programs we have and the money that we
11 ask for is supported by Allegheny County
12 and people all around the Commonwealth.

13 I was just at the Pennsylvania
14 Society on the past weekend and I talked
15 to the Mayor of Reading, who has an
16 alliance with Mayors all around the
17 counties out there. They meet on a
18 regular basis. We worked with them when
19 we went to Harrisburg in our efforts to
20 get the Commonwealth to be more
21 sympathetic with the problems of guns and
22 violence.

23 Well, I think we have to reach
24 out to our other areas. We have a
25 delegation that's helping us do that, and

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2 I think you got to create a certain
3 demand for high-quality education in the
4 City of Philadelphia and around the
5 Commonwealth. And then we have to have
6 our delegation saying and the delegation
7 from some of these other places saying,
8 You can't get a budget unless you help
9 solve this part of this problem. You
10 can't get a budget.

11 Let me tell you, this is going
12 to be a tough budget season in
13 Harrisburg. I heard the Governor's
14 comments at the Pennsylvania Society, at
15 the Pennsylvania Manufacturer Association
16 luncheon. I went right there Saturday.
17 I listened to his -- it's going to be a
18 tough budget cycle, but you know what,
19 that's just doing our job. It's going to
20 be tough, and I hate to reduce this stuff
21 to a cliché. But we're going to expand
22 our Convention Center. We're going to
23 bring gaming into the City. We're going
24 to do a bunch of things that are
25 important to our City. You know what, in

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2 addition to all those things, we should
3 take care of our schools, not just in
4 Philadelphia but our schools all over the
5 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. If anybody
6 thinks the City is the only one who has a
7 potential problem with funding, then you
8 don't know the Commonwealth of
9 Pennsylvania. This Commonwealth doesn't
10 have a distinguished record of funding
11 public education. As I've said, Governor
12 Rendell has done probably a better job
13 than most recent Governors. And I think
14 we have to create an environment, first
15 in our City and then around our
16 Commonwealth, where people will
17 understand the critical nature of our
18 needs and tie them to the future of our
19 City and the future of our Commonwealth.

20 I think you can't do that
21 without reaching to the business
22 community, our philanthropic community.
23 I mean, we have to get all parts of our
24 community engaged, and I think we can get
25 some help out of the Commonwealth. But

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2 it's also going to require that the City
3 of Philadelphia also come up with money,
4 because just as we did with our original
5 program, we came up with money, the
6 Commonwealth came up with money. They're
7 never coming up with money if we don't
8 come up with any money, and I think
9 that's going to be our challenge.

10 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Thank you,
11 Mr. Mayor.

12 Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you very much.

15 Thank you all for your
16 patience. I hope I don't have to step
17 out in the hallway for any reason,
18 because everybody wants to go next.

19 Having said that, thank you,
20 Mr. Vallas, for your patience.

21 Mr. Mayor, thank you very much
22 for your testimony. We appreciate your
23 being here and look forward to working
24 with you on all of these issues. Thank
25 you very much. Thank you, Mayor.

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2 Our Controller, Alan Butkovitz,
3 will precede our CEO of the School
4 District, Paul Vallas.

5 Alan Butkovitz, Controller,
6 welcome. Thank you. Good morning. Next
7 will be Paul Vallas.

8 MR. BUTKOVITZ: Thank you.
9 Good morning, Madam Chairman and members
10 of Council.

11 In listening to the testimony
12 on this very complex question of the
13 current school deficit, I'm reminded of a
14 story that I first heard when I was about
15 eight years old, and that involved a
16 skeptic in Europe who went around from
17 rabbi to rabbi with the challenge, Tell
18 me everything there is to know about
19 Judaism while I stand on one leg, and
20 everybody was mightily insulted.

21 There's a lot of complexity to
22 this. You're trivializing it. What do
23 you mean? And he finally came upon Rabbi
24 Akiba, who said, Do unto others as you
25 would have them do unto you. All the

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2 rest is commentary. And pretty much
3 that's the punch line of this.

4 There's really four main points
5 that I want to make and the rest is
6 really commentary. The first point is,
7 this deficit in the current school year
8 isn't resolved yet. I saw that there was
9 an announcement in the Philadelphia
10 Inquirer on Saturday indicating that the
11 gap is closed. Well, the heading is
12 that's not over.

13 Number two, I would endorse as
14 a very sound idea the Mayor's proposal
15 for a five-year plan and note that the
16 School Reform Commission has already
17 adopted policy to see that that comes
18 through.

19 The third is the need for
20 transparency in school budgeting and
21 school spending.

22 And the fourth would be need to
23 give Mr. McPherson and your very able
24 staff another job and get this Council
25 very proactively involved in the review

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2 of the school budget instead of just
3 reviewing a one-page summary.

4 First of all, with respect to
5 the current deficit, the tabulation of
6 the figures -- you note that the School
7 District's most recent comment is that
8 it's a \$73.3 million deficit. The
9 tabulation of the figures that have
10 recently been submitted regarding the
11 cuts total \$51.8 million. So right off
12 the bat, there's another \$20 million,
13 which is obviously very, very difficult
14 to reach.

15 There is an item of \$13.9
16 million that's supposed to be achieved
17 through debt refinancing. That figure is
18 only calculated by the School District at
19 2.7 million for Fiscal Year 2007. As a
20 result, our staff is questioning the
21 basis for the \$13.9 million credit for
22 the current school year.

23 There is credit taken for \$5
24 million under the heading Investigate
25 Refinancing Options. It's a speculative

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2 comment. There is already credit being
3 taken for \$2.3 million in savings as a
4 result of an audit of charter school
5 enrollment that has not yet taken place.
6 It's premature to determine what savings,
7 if any, are going to be available before
8 the audit has been done.

9 So there is a lot of work to be
10 done and there is a lot of vigilance to
11 be exercised on the part of parents and
12 others who are interested in preserving
13 school programs, because they are not out
14 of the woods yet.

15 The next point I would like to
16 make is that just about every participant
17 in government and politics in the City of
18 Philadelphia has been on the right side
19 of the school funding issue for as far
20 back as you can go. This is not a matter
21 of good guys and bad guys. I see signs
22 here about stop the bickering. I'd like
23 to know who the enemy is, because the
24 enemy is not in this room.

25 The City of Philadelphia has

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2 increased its appropriations to the
3 School District over the last four years
4 by \$144 million, and this Council
5 deserves a lot of credit because that
6 means that you're taking grief from
7 taxpayers and from other people that
8 would like to see that money spent and,
9 at the same time, an additional \$300
10 million in funding from the State. Plus,
11 the School District was given permission
12 to issue \$300 million in deficit bonds,
13 which have now been entirely spent. A
14 school budget that was \$1.5 billion in
15 2002 is now \$2.1 billion. So the idea
16 that someone has been withholding money
17 is a misguided idea. Money has been
18 showered on this experiment at the same
19 time that we've seen a drop in enrollment
20 from 215,000 to 175,000 students. So the
21 amount of spending per pupil has also
22 increased.

23 We've had a ten percent
24 increase a year in the school budget for
25 four years at a time when inflation has

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2 been three percent. It's a lot of money.

3 The issue is, since there are still unmet

4 needs, why is the 40 percent increase

5 insufficient? How is that money being

6 spent, and how much money would it take

7 to achieve those objectives?

8 I would parenthetically note

9 that I come into this role both as a

10 graduate of the Philadelphia public

11 school system myself, a 1969 graduate of

12 Overbrook High School, and as someone

13 whose two children are recent graduates

14 of the Philadelphia public schools and

15 who spent 15 years in the State

16 Legislature heavily involved and

17 committed on public school issues. I

18 voted for every single state tax increase

19 necessary to increase appropriations to

20 the Philadelphia schools, including the

21 2003 appropriation that Governor Rendell

22 earmarked specifically for smaller class

23 size. I took intense pressure from

24 school voucher advocates to support

25 public schools as opposed to the voucher

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2 movement for many, many years and, in
3 conjunction with Representatives John
4 Taylor and Bill Keller and Marie Lederer,
5 led a three-year investigation that
6 detailed the extent of violence in the
7 Philadelphia public schools, which
8 produced a 300-page detailed report and
9 which was heralded by Paul Vallas when he
10 came into town as a template for action.
11 And I think if you go back to the news
12 articles on Mr. Vallas's appearance in
13 Chicago, you will find many instances of
14 love letters between Mr. Vallas and
15 myself. We were partners in that effort
16 to clear up and to take more proactive
17 steps on the violence problem in
18 Philadelphia schools.

19 My job now is to take a
20 cold-eye view at the numbers and to be a
21 referee on these issues. So I want to
22 call to this Council's attention certain
23 trends in school budgeting over the last
24 four years. First of all, there has been
25 an overwhelming increase in no-bid

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2 contracts, which do not require SRC
3 approval. They were \$587,000 in 2002.
4 They're now \$7.7 million.

5 The business consultant
6 category for no-bid contracts in 2002 was
7 \$13,000. It's now \$2.3 million. Okay?
8 So when there is consideration for cuts
9 in programs that affect children, be
10 mindful that there are other items that
11 have not been put on the table that have
12 experienced extraordinary increases in
13 that period of time.

14 We would point out in the line
15 item budget for the School District there
16 are several entries which are at very
17 large variance with the expenditures.
18 There has -- just give me a moment.

19 In the Risk Management area,
20 for example, the amount that was budgeted
21 for personal services in Risk Management
22 was \$217,700. The amount that was spent
23 was \$8,322,088.

24 That wasn't the first year that
25 that happened, although the same figure

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2 of \$217,000 was also budgeted the
3 previous year and the spending was
4 approximately \$3 million. This
5 highlights the need for transparency in
6 the budget. It is not just an internal
7 document. It is not a memo from the
8 School District to itself. It is not
9 something where you're just trying to
10 make the gross numbers at the bottom
11 balance out to a certain figure. Anybody
12 with a financial background has to have
13 their interest piqued at how spending in
14 that item can be 3,922 percent of the
15 budgeted amount.

16 In the same area under
17 Professional Technical Services, the
18 amount budgeted is \$25,000. The amount
19 spent is \$3,694,000.

20 Now, I'm stunned even at this
21 point, because the constant battle that
22 I've been running into as the Controller
23 vis-a-vis the School District is this
24 idea that would you please just go away
25 because we can manage this as a private

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2 matter, and I think with respect to these
3 signs about stop the bickering, that that
4 kind of reflects the same kind of
5 opinion. But it is not pointless
6 bickering. Those are substantial
7 questions. Those are questions that have
8 an effect on what happens to our
9 children. The Council should be asking
10 those questions. The Legislature should
11 be asking those questions. The School
12 Reform Commission has recently taken
13 significant steps to reinforce its
14 staffing and to bring in consultants so
15 that it has the expertise to delve in in
16 detail into those questions. Because
17 when you have an area that has grown by
18 millions of dollars that does not provide
19 direct services to children or students
20 at the same time that you're talking
21 about foregoing discretionary money for
22 principals to hire arts and music
23 teachers or cutting out after-school
24 programs or any of the myriad -- cutting
25 out transportation services for children,

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2 policymakers would like to know if there
3 are matters that are more removed from
4 those direct services that can be dealt
5 with first. That is not a matter that I
6 believe should be lightly deferred.

7 School District has undertaken
8 a multi-billion dollar capital spending
9 program and we have seen variously
10 described goals of construction of 75 new
11 schools, 14 new schools. Almost a
12 billion dollars has already been
13 borrowed. Most of it remains unspent.
14 We are many years into the time period
15 where the construction would be done at a
16 time that there has been an extraordinary
17 inflation in building costs caused by a
18 variety of factors, including the
19 reconstruction in Iraq and China's
20 competition now for building supplies
21 worldwide in a massive building program
22 that is going on in China, 53 percent
23 increase in building costs in the first
24 six months in this year alone. That
25 means that if you have an initial

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2 estimate of \$2.8 billion to accomplish
3 all that building and it now costs 50
4 percent more to get the same work done
5 and you have delays that seem to be
6 unending, one of several things is going
7 to happen. Either you're going to build
8 and repair a lot fewer schools than you
9 have in the plan or it's not going to be
10 a \$2.8 billion capital program. It will
11 have to be a \$7 billion or a \$10 billion
12 program to redeem all those promises.

13 The actions of our office are
14 not being done for purposes of
15 harassment, but for purposes of providing
16 a baseline so that all the people who
17 have an interest in what happens to the
18 schools have a detailed fund of
19 knowledge, as you do when you deal with
20 the City budget, as we did when I was in
21 Harrisburg in dealing with the State
22 budget.

23 It's my personal view that
24 there is going to be a significant tax
25 issue on the floor of this Council after

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2 the beginning of 2008 and that part of
3 that will be with respect to additional
4 funding for the schools. So a clear
5 understanding of what it's going to cost,
6 what you're going to get for it and what
7 you're going to forego is going to be in
8 your lap. The School District needs to
9 operate within the same frame of
10 discipline that the rest of us have to
11 operate within.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you, Mr. Controller. That was excellent
14 testimony. You mentioned specific areas
15 like Risk Management, professional
16 services, building costs, and we hope
17 that when Mr. Vallas testifies, that his
18 people with him will take note to this so
19 that we may hear some response to this
20 issue, as well as issues like no-bid
21 contracts, et cetera.

22 The Controller's testimony is
23 certainly for the public record, as will
24 his actual testimony be on the record,
25 and so we hope that we can get responses

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 to those important issues.

3 Any questions?

4 Councilman Goode.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
6 Madam Chair.

7 Good afternoon, Mr. Controller.

8 MR. BUTKOVITZ: Good afternoon.

9 COUNCILMAN GOODE: With regard
10 to the issue of tax structure and tax
11 incentive policy again, I want to
12 specifically focus now on tax financing
13 projects. What is your position on TIFs,
14 not just in the past but in the future?

15 MR. BUTKOVITZ: I think it can
16 be a useful tool in stimulating
17 development.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Do you
19 believe that forgiving taxes was
20 necessary in each of the projects that
21 have been approved over the last four or
22 five years?

23 MR. BUTKOVITZ: No. And,
24 again, when I was in the Legislature, I
25 was one of the votes that opposed the

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2 proposal to provide TIFs and other tax
3 benefits to the Comcast project on the
4 basis that a program that was envisioned
5 to provide an initial stimulus to
6 depressed areas, the entire City of
7 Philadelphia has legally been defined as
8 a distressed area, so that people were
9 able to come into very vibrant,
10 profitable areas like Center City and
11 with a straight face argue that they
12 needed no taxes or they needed
13 substantial incentives to do that. I
14 opposed that.

15 So it really depends on the
16 particular case.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Well,
18 actually, most of the TIFs that have been
19 done have been done in Center City, and
20 the truth of the matter is that I've
21 argued for several years that it was
22 taking money away from the School
23 District, it was not necessary to finance
24 those projects. So what position will
25 you take as Controller on future TIFs

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2 related to School District finances?

3 MR. BUTKOVITZ: I think that my
4 position with respect to Comcast would be
5 reflective of our position generally. I
6 mean, if the surrounding area will
7 support the investment without that
8 incentive, it should be done without that
9 incentive.

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And what's
11 your position on the real estate tax
12 abatement program?

13 MR. BUTKOVITZ: My personal
14 view right now is that at the time that
15 it was enacted in 1997, there was no
16 building going on and it was necessary at
17 that time, but that it has achieved its
18 purpose of making Philadelphia, in
19 particular Center City Philadelphia, a
20 hot development area that should be able
21 to sustain those types of developments
22 without a ten-year tax write-off.

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So that
24 program should be on the table in terms
25 of future consideration?

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 MR. BUTKOVITZ: But I would
3 agree with the Mayor in terms of a phased
4 reduction, because I'm opposed to doing
5 anything that will be a jolt or a shock
6 that will cause a major rethinking of
7 development projects.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What other
9 recommendations might you have about tax
10 structure or tax incentive policies that
11 you think will affect the School District
12 finances in the future?

13 MR. BUTKOVITZ: Well, you know
14 that I believe that there's been a --
15 contrary to the concept of progressive
16 taxation, we are in the position of
17 moving in Philadelphia towards an
18 evermore regressive tax situation.
19 Essentially we have a 60/40 ratio right
20 now between wage taxes and property
21 taxes. Wage taxes have been highlighted
22 as a significant issue. We've gone from
23 five percent to four percent. We're
24 going down further. It has been
25 earmarked for reduction as a result of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 casino revenues. Whereas, property
3 taxes, both because of the unrealized --
4 the untapped appreciation of real estate
5 and because of proposed changes in
6 expediting the way that reassessments are
7 done, as well as the proposed full
8 valuation project, we could see a shift
9 in that ratio where half or more of our
10 revenues come from real estate taxes as
11 opposed to wage taxes. That's a problem
12 for a variety of reasons. First of all,
13 long-time residents whose ability to pay
14 is not reflected in the paper increase in
15 the value of their homes, and the very
16 real danger that in gentrifying
17 neighborhoods and across the City people
18 who are too poor to pay the real estate
19 taxes will be driven out of their
20 neighborhoods.

21 Secondly, that the commercial
22 and residential development in the City
23 has in fact become one of the City's
24 leading economic engines right now, and
25 it has to be viewed not just as something

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 that involves consumers, but as a major
3 business of the City.

4 I really think that we should
5 have a graduated state income tax. The
6 State should be moving in the direction
7 of a greater role with respect to public
8 education on many of these issues and
9 that really the tax restructuring you
10 should be looking at, although it's not
11 within your purview, is an amendment to
12 the State Constitution, because it's very
13 difficult for Philadelphia to achieve the
14 kind of equity and the adequate resources
15 that it needs within the boundaries of
16 the City of Philadelphia.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you very much.

20 Are there further questions for
21 our Controller?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you, Mr. Butkovitz.

25 At his request, Mr. Vallas has

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 asked that some of the students have a
3 chance to speak before him. They
4 probably asked him, as they've been
5 asking me, but at any rate, we have Powel
6 School, Helen Gym, parent, Powel
7 Elementary School. Andrew Broggins, I
8 suspect, is with her as a student, and
9 also Steve Alston, organizer, Youth
10 United for Change.

11 Thank you for your patience.
12 We're trying to do the best we can in
13 trying to move our hearing along
14 expeditiously. Thank you. Please
15 identify yourself for the record and
16 begin your testimony.

17 MR. ALSTON: Good afternoon,
18 everyone. First of all, I would like to
19 say there's a lot of students here who
20 have probably taken the day off of school
21 because of the timing of these meetings.
22 So first and foremost, I would like to
23 say if any student is here who took the
24 time out of school to be here, can you
25 please come down and join us or stand up.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Could
3 you give us your name, please, young man.

4 MR. ALSTON: My name is Steven
5 Alston and I'm representing Youth United
6 for Change.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you. Welcome. We're happy to have all
10 of you.

11 MR. ALSTON: Once again, my
12 name is Steve Alston. I'm a 25-year-old
13 lifetime resident of the City of
14 Philadelphia. I'm also an Olney High
15 School alum and proud alumni and staff
16 member of Youth United for Change.

17 I'm speaking on behalf of 7,000
18 students in five high schools that make
19 up our organization who would have loved
20 to be here but because of the timing of
21 these public hearings could not be.

22 Students of Youth United for
23 Change come from Olney, Edison,
24 Kensington, Strawberry Mansion and
25 Mastbaum High Schools. However, the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 alumni of Youth United for Change, while
3 we all make up voters and communities
4 that you all represent throughout the
5 City of Philadelphia.

6 The students in Youth United
7 for Change want to tell the leaders of
8 the City of Philadelphia that it is
9 imperative, imperative to find a way to
10 better support our public schools.
11 Students deserve that the City of
12 Philadelphia use funds in the City's
13 surplus toward education first.

14 We are here today to ask our
15 City officials to work with the School
16 Reform Commission and with the School
17 District of Philadelphia to close this
18 funding gap that is currently hurting
19 students in very, very negative ways. We
20 must find a way to effectively build a
21 long-term strategy and working
22 communication between City and District
23 leadership to fully fund our public
24 schools.

25 And I'll just end by saying,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 students of Youth United for Change
3 demand that the adults responsible for
4 funding their public education, we're
5 just hoping that you all can find a way
6 just to work together to protect the
7 future of the students in the School
8 District of Philadelphia, because what
9 that means is protecting the future of
10 the City of Philadelphia.

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you very much. Thank you very much,
15 Mr. Alston.

16 MS. GYM: Good afternoon. I
17 want to thank the City Council staff
18 members for allowing some of the parents
19 who took off personal work and family
20 time and who were at the bottom of the
21 speaker list to be able to come forward,
22 and also to Mr. Vallas for allowing us to
23 have a moment to speak.

24 My name is Helen Gym. I'm a
25 parent at Powel Elementary School in West

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Philadelphia. I'm also a member of the
3 Citywide parents group that's been coming
4 together specifically around the budget
5 cuts.

6 I want to say that I think I
7 can say that every single parent in here
8 has probably had enough of public
9 hearings, of task forces, of consultants
10 paid for studies and reports, while our
11 kids lack the basic necessities in our
12 schools. We are not here --

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. GYM: -- to testify, to
15 pose for your cameras and to show this
16 support, but we are here to fundamentally
17 demand leadership on this issue of the
18 public schools and the budget deficit
19 that it is now facing.

20 Parents and students came to
21 this City Council last spring to raise
22 our concerns about the School District's
23 budget and to beg this body to ask the
24 right questions, demand answers and
25 provide the public authority that parents

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 and students at the time lacked.

3 This past summer a group of
4 parents met with every single education
5 committee staff member to discuss the
6 seriousness of this budget. We pressed
7 on even though one Council staff person
8 had the District's budget on her radiator
9 and said she hadn't had time to go
10 through such a lengthy document even
11 though it was late July.

12 This past month the School
13 District held four days of public
14 hearings on the school budget issue. We
15 are very grateful that the Mayor came to
16 every single one of those hearings and
17 sat through more than 12 to 14 hours of
18 public testimony. We were there.
19 Hundreds of parents and students turned
20 out to hear what the District had to say.
21 But where was Council, save Councilwoman
22 Blackwell, who definitely came and we
23 appreciate that.

24 We have been fighting for our
25 schools and our children about this issue

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 for months on end. So you'll have to
3 forgive me if I sound a bit tired at the
4 idea of yet another public hearing.

5 If you don't want to use your
6 surplus, then we ask you to at least
7 consider your priorities in this school
8 budget. And by the way, what I mean by
9 that is that the City's surplus, which is
10 my wage tax dollars, my real estate
11 taxes, and we have an issue with our
12 public schools in crisis.

13 Number one, we ask you to pay
14 your bills, your rent, your utilities to
15 the public schools.

16 Number two, pick up after
17 yourself. Please consider trash pickup.

18 Number three, pay your own
19 employees. Mr. Butkovitz, you would have
20 a lot more authority if your office and
21 the Bureau of Revision of Taxes were not
22 taking away my children's teachers, my
23 children's art programs and my children's
24 enrichment programs.

25 We have had days of talking and

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 no promises about our schools. If we are
3 here six months after the hearings in
4 March arguing over the same cuts, if we
5 have not protected our schools and our
6 children, if we have not even restored
7 our funds to them, if we have not made a
8 commitment to class size, to our truancy,
9 to our dropout rates, then what is the
10 point of all this testimony and all the
11 talking? The most we've heard is
12 bickering between Mr. Vallas and the
13 Mayor and the deafening silence from the
14 Council body.

15 So we need to know this is not
16 a charade or a pass at a public process.
17 To all of you who have power and titles
18 and who are appointed to serve our
19 children, we need to know that our kids
20 are not your version of a political
21 football field, a place to trample or to
22 mow under with the notion of fiscal
23 rather than moral responsibility.

24 Parents have fought valiantly
25 and with faith in both the District and

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 City that you will protect our children,
3 you will place them first. You have the
4 funds to make the difference today. Stop
5 talking, please, and fund our schools.

6 (Applause.)

7 REVEREND WEEKS: Good
8 afternoon. My name is Reverend Paul
9 Weeks, parent of a bright young lady in
10 Central High School and two kids in the
11 Jenks Elementary Middle School.

12 To the Mayor, to City Council
13 President and Councilmembers, history
14 will judge all of us ever so severely.
15 God help us if we don't grab this budget
16 by the throat and make it do for us on
17 the front side of our kids' potential.
18 Because that same budget we will see
19 again battling pistols, murder rates and
20 building penitentiaries. God help us.
21 Our kids' future cannot be DOA.

22 This is very critical. We all
23 in this room know how to keep guns out of
24 kids' hands. It's not really a big
25 mystery. We all know how to keep guns

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 out of these kids' hands. Put a book in
3 it, create a thirst and a hunger for
4 learning.

5 Mayor Street, Council President
6 and members, put an end to this
7 bare-bones educational mentality. Every
8 parent knows it begins with class size
9 and it ends with class size.

10 (Applause.)

11 REVEREND WEEKS: Philadelphia
12 public school system deserves to be
13 robust. Councilmembers, \$20 million will
14 be like a steel levee that won't break
15 under pressure. We need Councilmembers
16 to step up to the plate and feel real
17 good and real proud about \$20 million.
18 It will be like a steel-granted levee
19 that will not break under this pressure.
20 That will, once and for all, seal up and
21 secure our young people's future for
22 generations to come.

23 The \$20 million, metaphorically
24 speaking, is a two-point conversion,
25 because in case you haven't noticed, we

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 are first and goal at the one yard line.
3 There's only time for one more play, a
4 two-point conversion for this win for the
5 City of Philadelphia, no timeouts. An
6 extra point won't do it. One point
7 meaning \$10 million, if you'd make that
8 discussion and want to argue with
9 yourselves. Two points, \$20 million will
10 win this deal for the City of
11 Philadelphia.

12 Mayor Street in his absence, I
13 wanted to let him know that I am aware
14 that he has many adversaries, that he has
15 endured dirt, darkness and despair, but,
16 see, this two-point \$20 million
17 conversion will sew a \$20 million love
18 seed for our kids, for City Council and
19 for this Mayor's legacy.

20 Love covers a multitude. A \$20
21 million seed will sew over 100 fold.
22 Think about this for a minute: This is a
23 futuristic anti-crime check. For our
24 kids, for City Council, check mate. They
25 say this City Council couldn't get with

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 this Mayor and build stadiums. That's
3 history. They say this City Council
4 couldn't get with this Mayor and finish
5 the Convention Center and the Kimmel
6 Center. That's history. But for the
7 foundation of the world, destiny is
8 calling again for you fine ladies and
9 gentlemen to step up to the plate and put
10 a \$20 million check, check mate.

11 History is the ultimate judge.
12 It begins with class size and it ends
13 with class size. Let history judge.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
17 say to this Committee we were happy to
18 bring some forward. We have no idea how
19 many of you are there. We will hear
20 those at the table and then we'll bring
21 on Mr. Vallas. Thank you very much.

22 Mr. LaVan.

23 MR. LaVAN: Thank you. Good
24 afternoon, Madam President, Madam
25 Chairwoman, distinguished members of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Council. Thank you for affording the
3 parents around us this opportunity.

4 Along with the parents,
5 students, community members surrounding
6 me at this moment, we have been
7 screaming, testifying, talking, trying to
8 get attention, not for the last week or
9 two but for the last year and really
10 since the spring. What comes to mind to
11 me -- and I have the privilege and honor
12 of knowing some of you on a very personal
13 level, but what comes to mind to me as I
14 speak to this body is that Rome is
15 burning and our Legislature is playing
16 the fiddle as Nero did. You don't
17 realize what is happening, and we are
18 here to bring this to your attention.

19 I am also here to offer you
20 something that is easy, simple and can
21 and must be done without delay, and that
22 is class size reduction, the linchpin to
23 any and all reform.

24 (Applause.)

25 MR. LaVAN: I don't believe

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 that this body is aware that from 2002
3 through this spring we had class size
4 reduction. The School District of
5 Philadelphia was improving. Our test
6 scores, our numbers show it. Were we to
7 our goals? Of course not. But were we
8 moving in the right direction under CEO
9 Vallas? Yes, we were. Were we moving
10 under the right direction under Chief
11 Academic Officer Thornton? Yes, we were.
12 Something has now gone terribly
13 wrong, and the buck starts here, for what
14 happened in the spring was the
15 elimination of the class size reduction
16 initiative. For the first three years of
17 the Vallas administration, class size
18 mandatory roll-back to 22 to 25 children,
19 we saw improvement. Very quietly,
20 apparently without telling Council -- and
21 you'll have to ask CEO Vallas why that
22 was the case, but without telling
23 Council, the class size reduction program
24 was eliminated systemwide. The only cap
25 on class size at this point is the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 contractual cap of the PFT of 33 children
3 in a classroom.

4 I'm the President of the Home
5 and School Association at Shawmont. I'm
6 a product of this system. Thirty-three
7 children in my son's class is too many
8 children. I challenge any one of you to
9 tell me that I am wrong. If I am wrong,
10 I will stand up and leave right now.
11 Thirty-three is too many. And we as
12 parents and community leaders, we knew in
13 April this was just the tip of the
14 iceberg. We went before the SRC. We
15 went to the media. We came to this body.
16 Nobody paid attention. Rome was starting
17 to burn. Now there's a full-fledged
18 fire. People have been laid off.
19 Classes are being leveled. Split grades
20 run rampant throughout the City.

21 We need money. We need your
22 help. Thirty-three is too many. You
23 trusted Paul Vallas. You trusted
24 Dr. Thornton six months, a year ago.

25 I have had my clashes with Paul

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Vallas. Some of them are legendary at
3 this point, but I have learned one thing
4 in this process, Mr. Vallas, Dr. Thornton
5 and I am sure each and every one of you
6 share with us the goal of the best
7 possible school system for our children.
8 I don't doubt that any one of you want
9 that. Well, if I am right, if we are
10 right, take a look at one issue first,
11 what has happened to class size. It has
12 exploded back to the contractual limit of
13 33, and it's too many.

14 Take action immediately. Get
15 the School District the funds to
16 reinstate beginning immediately a real
17 class size reduction program so we can
18 again have school reform, for if you
19 don't, we will all be looking at school
20 failure.

21 Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 REVEREND WEEKS: Madam

24 President Verna, Councilman Blackwell, I
25 was asked very graciously to thank you

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 and also just to ask you for two more
3 minutes. There's two parents that want
4 one minute each. If you will grant that,
5 we'd really appreciate that. Thank you
6 for your patience.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We'll
8 try to accommodate you.

9 MS. TOY: Thank you very much.
10 I will allow panel --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
12 Please, have a seat and let us -- it's
13 quicker to proceed. Identify yourself
14 and then --

15 MS. TOY: Good afternoon,
16 Council President, Committee Chair
17 Blackwell and members of City Council.
18 Thank you very much for this opportunity
19 for public hearings. My name is Patricia
20 Toy. I am the parent of a 7th grade
21 student at the Albert M. Greenfield
22 School and I am Co-President of our Home
23 and School Association.

24 Greenfield was the victim of
25 the budget cuts that the School District

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 suffered this year. We lost one of our
3 4th grade teachers in mid October to
4 leveling, forcing us to go from three
5 classes to two large 4th grades. One of
6 our 4th grade classes had been a small
7 group of 16 students who are performing
8 well below grade level. It was our
9 principal's thought that if he could give
10 these students more individual attention
11 in a small class setting, they would have
12 a better chance to improve and hopefully
13 reach grade-level performance before
14 entering 5th grade. Now these 16
15 students, along with the others, are in
16 two large classes, with no opportunity to
17 get the additional attention and help
18 they need and deserve.

19 Class size does matter.
20 Research studies prove it. And ask any
21 classroom teacher and they will tell you
22 that class size is one factor that can
23 have the greatest impact on student
24 performance. Fewer students in a class
25 means more individual attention from the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 teacher. It means a calmer classroom
3 environment, and it has been proven that
4 in a smaller class setting, students
5 experience continued pressure to
6 participate in learning activities and
7 they become better, more involved
8 students.

9 We cannot abandon the class
10 size reduction initiative. We cannot
11 renege on our plan for true reform of our
12 public schools. We cannot settle for
13 mediocre or inferior education for
14 Philadelphia public school students and
15 consider it good enough.

16 Our students and our schools
17 have come a long way in the last four
18 years, and I commend Paul Vallas and the
19 SRC for their vision and for setting the
20 bar high. But we still have a long way
21 to go. Let's not abandon our goals for
22 high achievement. Let's not abandon the
23 plan for class size reduction.

24 I believe in public school
25 education and that every child has a

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 right to a good, quality public school to
3 attend, and I know I am not alone in
4 believing that inner city children
5 deserve good, quality public schools just
6 as suburban students do.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. TOY: Or students in any
9 other part of our country. Let's not
10 treat Philadelphia public school children
11 as second-class citizens. Let's give
12 them their fair share of the pie. Let's
13 make education in our public schools a
14 top priority.

15 The City, the State and the
16 School District of Philadelphia must work
17 together for the good of our public
18 school students. They need to partner
19 together to see that our schools get the
20 funds they need to provide a quality
21 education. Our students have proven they
22 can achieve. They have the test scores
23 to back this. Let's remove the obstacles
24 and give them the tools they need to
25 succeed further. Class size reduction is

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 a key factor. We have a long way to go,
3 but look how far we've come. Let's keep
4 the bar high, and our students will prove
5 they can reach it.

6 Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you very much.

10 Please identify yourself for
11 the record in either order and begin your
12 testimony. Thank you.

13 MS. SHAW: Good afternoon. My
14 name is Delores Shaw and I'm Vice-Chair
15 of the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing
16 Project, EPOP. EPOP is a member of the
17 Out-of-School Youth Collaborative, which
18 has spent the last two years looking at
19 the issue of out-of-school youth and our
20 dropout rate around the City, but, more
21 importantly, I am here too as a mother.
22 I'm a mother of a sophomore student at
23 Mastbaum Vo-Tech High School and a
24 17-year-old son who now sits at home
25 because this year he will be part of the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 2005 dropout data.

3 At first, I was concerned about
4 combining the three issues of education
5 at this particular meeting, but it
6 occurred to me while I was sitting back
7 there a minute ago that all these issues
8 are interconnected. The issue of equity
9 and equitable funding for all our
10 Philadelphia public schools had driven
11 the School District into the ground.
12 Poorly maintained and dilapidated schools
13 serve students who have no clear
14 educational goals, who have no
15 educational drive, and in the end, after
16 they go to school long enough, they begin
17 to disengage, then they become truant.
18 And a truant student to the City of
19 Philadelphia is a student who is
20 invisible. They do not exist.

21 As a second thought, I want the
22 Council to understand that every student
23 in the City that drops out is not a
24 juvenile delinquent, is not a criminal,
25 nor are they some kind of thug that runs

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 the street looking to kill someone. Most
3 of the young people that drop out of our
4 school drop out because they become
5 disengaged, disenfranchised and just
6 lost. We need to do all we can.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. SHAW: And I implore every
9 Councilmember sitting there that this is
10 a problem that expands long outside our
11 homes. I sit here as a parent, and a few
12 weeks ago I had to admonish a parent for
13 saying that we were all being bad
14 parents, we weren't doing everything we
15 can. That's a lie. The number of
16 parents that actually aren't keeping
17 their commitment to send their children
18 to school and do what everything we can
19 to endorse them getting a good education
20 is very small. Every parent and young
21 people sitting here today that have taken
22 their time to come here is concerned
23 about their education or the education of
24 their children.

25 (Applause.)

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 MS. SHAW: I ask Council and
3 our State Reps not to become involved in
4 a spurring match over who is going to
5 fund our schools, while our young people
6 and our children fall victim to a fight
7 that no one will win.

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. SHAW: And as a sidebar
10 issue -- and this is somewhat personal --
11 I'm going to ask City Council to look at
12 the role of CEP, Community Education
13 Partners, and the role that they play on
14 our schools. From September to February,
15 my son attended CEP. He was a victim of
16 violence while he was there. He was a
17 victim of violence before he came.

18 My concern is for the
19 educational capacity, for the educational
20 resource and for the education, this
21 for-profit company provides most of the
22 students they're supposed to teach. The
23 population of students they teach are
24 highly African-American and Latino, and I
25 can assure you my son always said that

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 the only requirement that a teacher has
3 to teach at CEP is that for the men, that
4 they be at least six foot tall and over
5 250 pounds, and for the women, some of
6 them are just the same.

7 I shall tell you that this is
8 nothing more than an excuse for a jail.
9 There is no education going on there and
10 there's a contract where someone is
11 making big money and they're making it on
12 the backs of our children.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. SHAW: I thank you very
15 much for your time and for listening to
16 me today.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you very much.

20 Please.

21 MS. GUDENAS: I'm Justine
22 Gudenas and I'm also a parent from
23 Greenfield School. And as Pat Toy said,
24 Greenfield School at one time was a star
25 school of the system, and it is

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 suffering. The art program was cut back,
3 music was cut out, Spanish as a second
4 language has been cut out, and this is
5 happening to what was supposed to be the
6 best school in the system.

7 I'm also urging City Council to
8 very closely look at the School District
9 budget. There really is no objective
10 oversight of the budget. The two
11 entities that are overseeing the budget
12 are the City Controller's office and also
13 a private company hired by the School
14 District, and yet ten employees of the
15 City Controller's office are actually
16 paid by the School District budget. In
17 fact, Vallas in his proposed budget asked
18 that the salaries of ten employees from
19 the City Controller's office, who are
20 doing no work whatsoever for the School
21 District, that their salaries be taken
22 off the budget. That was not done by the
23 School Reform Commission, which was
24 supposed to be overlooking this budget,
25 and there's no explanation given as to

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 why that is so. And, of course, the
3 salaries of these ten employees, who are
4 not really doing anything for the School
5 District, that money is being taken away
6 from the children.

7 So I'm just simply giving one
8 more example of why it's so very, very
9 important for City Council to closely
10 examine this budget.

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you very much. We thank you, parents
15 alike. And certainly all who are here
16 will certainly get a chance to testify,
17 those who haven't, further along in our
18 hearing, and we thank you.

19 We will now ask Mr. Paul
20 Vallas, CEO, School District of
21 Philadelphia, Sandra Dungee Glenn, School
22 Reform Commission, to come forward.

23 Thank you all. I thank
24 everyone here for your patience. I
25 promise everyone who would like to

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2 testify will, and I apologize for the
3 lateness of the hour and for delaying
4 everyone from busy, busy schedules.

5 Thank you, students, as well.

6 We would like to acknowledge
7 the presence of students from the Parkway
8 West High School who are in the balcony.
9 Thank you for being here.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
12 thank you very, very much.

13 I'd like to thank members of
14 the Committees on Education and Finance
15 for their patience, and we certainly
16 would like to thank Councilman Kenney for
17 being here as well.

18 Good afternoon. Thank you and
19 thank you for your willingness to
20 certainly defer to parents and students
21 who have been here. Thank you both.

22 MS. DUNGEE GLENN: Thank you,
23 Madam Chair, and good afternoon. I'm
24 going to lead off with our testimony
25 today and then be followed by our CEO,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Mr. Paul Vallas.

3 First of all, let me say good
4 afternoon to you, Madam Chair, Madam
5 President and to members of the City
6 Council Finance and Education Committee.
7 And even in his absence, I want to
8 acknowledge the Mayor and thank him, as
9 always, for his strong support of public
10 education and all that he has done.

11 I have the privilege and honor
12 of having been appointed three times by
13 the Mayor to our educational bodies,
14 first to our Board of Education and then
15 in 2002 to the School Reform Commission
16 and then was reappointed in 2005 to our
17 School Reform Commission for a second
18 term. So that is very much an honor and
19 a privilege.

20 I am Sandra Dungee Glenn, one
21 of the five Commissioners on the
22 Philadelphia School Reform Commission,
23 and you need to know that I am joined
24 here in Council Chambers today by my
25 colleague, Mr. Dan Whelan, and I'd just

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2 like for him to be acknowledged in terms
3 of his presence here today.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
5 certainly welcome him to come forward.
6 Mr. Whelan, you're certainly
7 invited.

8 MS. DUNGEE GLENN: It's always
9 good to know, Madam Chair, that he does
10 have our back, though. So he is right
11 back there.

12 I want to say on behalf of
13 Chairman Jim Nevels that he sends his
14 apologies and is sorry he is not able to
15 join you today and thank you for inviting
16 SRC to speak with you.

17 When the SRC first came before
18 this distinguished body five years ago,
19 we were embarking on a monumental journey
20 to turn around a school system that no
21 one believed in and to prove to the City,
22 the State, our children and all of our
23 stakeholders that our children can learn
24 and they would learn.

25 Today, the School District of

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2 Philadelphia's system of reforms is
3 providing a national model for urban
4 districts across the country. We are
5 improving academic achievement and
6 financial responsibility.

7 In the first year of our reform
8 efforts, the School District standardized
9 and implemented an entire new curriculum.
10 We mandated summer school and
11 extended-day programs for the first time
12 in Philadelphia's history. We negotiated
13 a child-friendly contract with the
14 Philadelphia Federation of Teachers that
15 put children ahead of politics. We
16 openly and honestly reported incidents of
17 student violence, in spite of the
18 political ramifications of those numbers
19 if those numbers were to rise, and
20 launched a zero tolerance policy to
21 school violence that would extend beyond
22 the schoolhouse doors and beyond school
23 hours.

24 We expanded school choice by
25 creating privately managed schools, EMOs,

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2 alternative schools and increasing the
3 number and diversity of charter school
4 options. And just as a note, in 2002,
5 the EMOs were given five-year contracts
6 and those contracts will be up for review
7 this June 2007. The School Reform
8 Commission will evaluate if and how EMOs
9 will continue in Philadelphia.

10 I also should note that
11 currently we have 54 charter schools and
12 that they are educating approximately
13 30,000 Philadelphia school children. We
14 are due to open another six to seven in
15 September of 2007.

16 It should also be noted that 25
17 of our 54 charter schools made AYP last
18 spring 2006, and I think that's very
19 important for us to note.

20 We set quantifiable goals and
21 deadlines, advanced in The Declaration of
22 Education. The Declaration drives public
23 education reform in our School District.
24 It sets an exceedingly high standard for
25 early literacy, academic achievement,

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2 school climate and safety, community
3 involvement and administrative
4 operations, all to be achieved by the
5 year 2008.

6 In 2006, our students achieved
7 a record fourth consecutive year of
8 growth in math and reading scores for all
9 District students whose scores are used
10 to measure Adequate Yearly Progress, AYP,
11 under No Child Left Behind.

12 Math scores have risen 22.3
13 percentage points since 2002, and reading
14 scores 14.1 percentage points since 2002.

15 Scores in virtually every
16 demographic category are up. Scores at
17 our 37 small high schools, those high
18 schools with 500 or less students,
19 outpace scores at larger high schools
20 with more students scoring advanced or
21 proficient in math and reading. For
22 this, we are extremely proud.

23 Five years ago, one of the
24 immediate goals set by the School Reform
25 Commission was to make ourselves

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2 accountable for every decision,
3 accountable to employees, to students and
4 to the citizens of Philadelphia.

5 Radically changing the public's
6 view of public education is a formidable
7 task under the best of circumstances.
8 But slowly, we believe we are rebuilding
9 support for public education in
10 Philadelphia and building confidence in
11 our public School District.

12 Ninety-four percent of the
13 District's teachers are now fully
14 certified, and the District's Academy for
15 Leadership is training a new corp of
16 skilled and motivated school principals.

17 Some have called our progress
18 in turning the District around
19 unprecedented, but we call it mandatory.

20 As you have heard widely
21 reported, the District has come upon a
22 budget deficit this fall, the origins of
23 which CEO Paul Vallas will explain in
24 greater detail. The SRC is working with
25 management to adjust our FY07 budget to

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2 close this deficit and return the
3 District to sound financial footing for
4 Fiscal Year '08 and beyond.

5 We have been taking deliberate
6 steps to manage this deficit, and we have
7 made every effort to make this process as
8 transparent as possible so that all of
9 our stakeholders understand how we are
10 working to resolve this problem. We have
11 held 15 hours of public hearings about
12 the budget.

13 And I appreciate that,
14 Councilwoman Blackwell, you have attended
15 some of those hearings.

16 And we want to assure you that
17 parents' and citizens' comments and
18 testimonies are having an impact on us.

19 We take our fiduciary
20 responsibility to the children of
21 Philadelphia very seriously. The SRC has
22 acted with urgency to avert damage
23 related to the deficit. However, we will
24 not undermine successful reform. We will
25 continue to develop and implement

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2 policies that improve our fiscal and
3 organizational oversight of the District
4 in the Mayor's call to the SRC, and we
5 agree with him on the urgency of our
6 finalizing our five-year plan.

7 In November, the School Reform
8 Commission created the Financial
9 Accountability Unit, FAU, to improve the
10 process of reviewing and reporting on
11 programs and budget. Many partnerships
12 have formed over the last five years, and
13 these partnerships have been at the heart
14 of the reform process, and it is crucial
15 to continue community involvement in our
16 schools if we want our children to
17 succeed.

18 Most important are our
19 partnerships with the City of
20 Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of
21 Pennsylvania. We will not reach our
22 goals without your confidence, support
23 and continued investments in our
24 educational reforms.

25 Our work is well begun, but

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2 much more remains to be done.

3 We have seen four years of
4 unprecedented growth in standardized test
5 scores. In 2002, only 19.5 percent of
6 our students scored proficient in math on
7 the PSSA. In 2006, 41.8 percent scored
8 proficient. That is impressive progress,
9 but the flip side is that just under 60
10 percent of our students have not reached
11 grade-level proficiency in math. Much
12 work remains to be done.

13 Our reforms are helping all
14 students across the demographic spectrum.
15 The math and reading scores of
16 African-American, white, Latino and Asian
17 students have all risen. But the
18 achievement gap for black and Latino
19 students, their performance as measured
20 against their white peers, remains
21 virtually unchanged. Work well begun,
22 but much more remains to be done.

23 The District is aggressively
24 tackling the dual and related problems of
25 truancy and high school dropouts. A

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2 number of research-based initiatives have
3 been implemented: school realignment to
4 a K-to-8, 9-to-12 system, middle grade
5 supports, smaller high schools, 9th grade
6 academies, upgrades to career and
7 technical programs, CORE Philly
8 Scholarships, athletics and other
9 extracurricular activities. All are
10 solid initiatives intended to decrease
11 truancy and dropout rates by making
12 school more relevant, engaging and
13 connected to students.

14 But we must still find programs
15 that address recovery as well as
16 prevention. CEO Vallas will talk about
17 both our dropout recovery and truancy
18 programs in detail. Again, our work is
19 well begun, but much remains to be done.

20 The SRC wishes to thank Mayor
21 Street and City Council for the City's
22 valuable \$3 million contribution proposal
23 to the anti-truancy effort. With the
24 contribution, the School District will
25 expand the number of parent truant

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2 officers. By working together to resolve
3 the truancy problem and addressing why
4 all of our children don't attend school,
5 we can reach them before they officially
6 drop out of the system altogether.

7 We know we can't do it alone.

8 We need your help. Just as we have
9 successfully worked together to get to
10 this stage in the reform process and as
11 the effort to fight truancy has shown,
12 the children of Philadelphia are the
13 beneficiaries of our partnership.

14 We believe the best of what
15 public education has to offer in
16 Philadelphia is still to come and our
17 brightest days are still ahead. We owe
18 it to the 184,000 children we serve to
19 attack our work with urgency and fidelity
20 so that they can benefit from the best
21 and brightest we have to offer.

22 The School Reform Commission is
23 made up of five independent individuals,
24 but three things unite us. Number one,
25 no excuses; number two, children come

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2 first; and, number three, success is our
3 only option.

4 I thank you for the opportunity
5 to address you today.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you very much, Ms. Dungee Glenn. We
9 appreciate your testimony and its
10 positive tone.

11 We welcome Mr. Vallas. We
12 realize we all are in this together and
13 that it is our responsibility to try to
14 come up with positive solutions to the
15 problems that plague us. And thank you
16 for your patience, for being here today,
17 even calling this morning to talk about a
18 press conference you had today and then
19 waiting to allow at least the majority of
20 the parents to try to get their testimony
21 in today. Thank you.

22 And thank you, Ms. Dungee Glenn
23 and members of the SRC.

24 MR. VALLAS: Well, thank you so
25 much, Madam Chairman. Before I get

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2 started, I just wanted to -- I always get
3 frustrated when there is some
4 misinformation that goes out, and I just
5 want to correct certain statements that
6 were made here earlier.

7 The School Reform Commission
8 approves every contract over \$25,000 and,
9 every contract under \$25,000 is approved
10 by a review committee, which,
11 incidentally, reports all those contracts
12 to the School Reform Commission. So I
13 didn't want anybody to think -- if the
14 School Reform Commission wasn't approving
15 those contracts, I don't think we'd be
16 spending all those hours twice a month
17 deliberating all those contracts.

18 So the School Reform Commission
19 does approve all those accounts. I'd
20 love to have unilateral authority to pass
21 those contracts, but, unfortunately -- or
22 I should say fortunately for the public,
23 I don't. So I just wanted to point that
24 out.

25 A second point I wanted to

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2 make, too, was, there was a claim made
3 that the School District has overspent in
4 its Risk Management administrative
5 account. Let me point out that we bill
6 to that account all the Risk Management
7 settlements. As you know, about four
8 years ago we embarked upon a campaign to,
9 in effect, get the heavy workmen's comp
10 caseload off our books. We were paying,
11 I don't know, upwards -- I don't know the
12 exact number, upwards to \$10 million a
13 year. So we issued a Risk Management
14 bond, and we've used the proceeds of
15 those bonds to pay for the settlements.
16 And the settlements, I don't know -- the
17 year in question, I think the settlements
18 were \$8, \$9 million. So we record that
19 on the Risk Management line.

20 So it may look like there's
21 50,000 in administration, but there's an
22 \$8, \$9 million payout, but that's the
23 settlement payout that's paid to get the
24 workmen's comp people off our payroll.

25 If someone had asked, we would

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2 have given them the explanation. So to
3 assume here that, my God, we have a
4 \$50,000 line and we're spending \$9
5 million, it's very, very, very
6 misleading. That's our Risk Management
7 payout line. We've always billed to that
8 line.

9 Let me point out that the
10 workmen's comp reforms to date have saved
11 us about \$20 million, and it's going to
12 save us money every year, because we have
13 individuals -- we had some individuals
14 who have been on workmen's comp since
15 1962, 1963, just to give you a sense. So
16 the City has gone through similar
17 reforms. You're very familiar with them.
18 And, of course, we've gone through those
19 same reforms. So I just wanted to make
20 that point.

21 A final point I wanted to make,
22 too, is, every single major project in
23 our school construction program, with the
24 exception of the West Philadelphia High
25 School and possibly Dobbins because the

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2 public meetings are still going on in
3 Dobbins, either those projects will have
4 been started or the contracts will have
5 been let really before the end of the
6 school year. So the bottom line here is,
7 we're delivering on everything we
8 promised.

9 I do want to point out, though,
10 that like every municipality, we have to
11 follow rules. We have to acquire land.
12 We have to have public hearings. We've
13 had something like close to 700 public
14 hearings. How many public hearings have
15 we had on West Philadelphia High School?
16 Each one of you know, though, the degree
17 to which we've had public hearings on
18 these projects. The Kensington High
19 School, for example.

20 So we've had exhaustive public
21 hearings. And we have to go through the
22 regulatory commissions like everybody
23 else. And that, with some great degree
24 of justification, can be a prolonged
25 process. You have to go through zoning,

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2 you have to go through the regulatory
3 departments, you have to go through the
4 Arts Council. So, likewise, if you plan
5 a school and you finally break ground a
6 year or two years later, the cost of that
7 school is going to be a little higher
8 than it would have been if you started it
9 two years earlier.

10 The bottom line, though, is,
11 the process is what it is and we
12 experience the cost increases, you
13 experience the cost increases, the
14 private sector experienced the cost
15 increases, but that's the nature of the
16 system. And I'm not criticizing that
17 system. I'm just pointing out that it's
18 a little misleading to say, oh, my God,
19 they're spending more on their schools.

20 I do want to point out, though,
21 that the average change order on our
22 school construction programs is four and
23 a half percent. That is unprecedented.
24 That is extraordinarily low for the
25 public sector. That's even low for the

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2 private sector.

3 So when we build things,
4 whether it's the Microsoft High School or
5 it's the Audenreid School or it's the
6 Gratz addition or it's the Deburgos
7 School, that work comes within cost. So
8 I just want to point that out, because I
9 don't want to create the impression that
10 we haven't delivered on the capital plan.

11 Let me point out, the capital
12 plan addresses one-third of our need. So
13 we should be talking about how we're
14 going to do Phase II of the capital plan
15 rather than questioning the quality of
16 Phase I.

17 And as you know, I've provided,
18 as I do every year, summary books
19 identifying every single project and
20 initiative in every single district, and
21 we make that information available, from
22 school construction to after-school
23 programs to summer school programs to new
24 schools, and we'd be more than happy to
25 make that information available again.

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2 So I just wanted to make those
3 three points of correction. I didn't
4 want people to think that I can just
5 award contracts without rigorous
6 supervision or, for that matter, somehow
7 we overspent in line by \$8 million.
8 Again, if we're asked, we'll give the
9 explanation. But a lot of times we're
10 not asked. The statement is made and
11 then that's it.

12 First of all, I likewise would
13 like to thank this body for their
14 long-time support for the School District
15 on so many levels and the members
16 individually, because I think we've had a
17 lot of success in our school reform
18 issues because we have been responsive to
19 the local leadership. Having come from
20 Chicago, Mayor Daley always used to say,
21 All politics is local. In Philadelphia,
22 all politics is local, but the
23 individuals with the ear closest to the
24 rail, so to speak, are those individuals
25 who can guide us more effectively. The

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2 Council men and women here know the
3 neighborhoods. We have never been
4 steered wrong when we ask their advice
5 and their input in the process.

6 I duly admit that I probably
7 make more promises than I deliver on, but
8 as somebody said, Vallas keeps half of
9 his promises, but then they said in the
10 same breath, But some of his predecessors
11 didn't make any promises. So I think you
12 can decide --

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. VALLAS: You can make that
15 decision yourself. At least we try to
16 keep as many promises as we can. But
17 it's our desire to do a lot. We have a
18 District that's financially -- that has
19 struggled. The School Reform Commission
20 inherited a District with huge -- \$100
21 million of the deficit financing bond the
22 year the School Reform took office and
23 the year that they got the deficit
24 financing proceeds had to be spent just
25 to pay the previous year's bills. By the

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2 second year of the School Reform
3 Commission's existence, the deficit
4 financing bond proceeds were about \$140
5 million, and we all remember those days,
6 or at least you remember those days,
7 because I kind of parachuted in here
8 about the seventh or eighth month of the
9 School Reform Commission's existence.

10 But there has been a desire to
11 do a lot. I was criticized early on. A
12 lot of people said, Don't pretend like
13 you can do it all, or You got to ask for
14 more. But our approach has been to try
15 to work behind the scenes to secure more
16 funding, while at the same time doing the
17 best we could not to make excuses and to
18 do as well as we could with the resources
19 we had. And now we may have come to the
20 end of our rope from a financial
21 standpoint, but I think that effort has
22 produced results. And I'm going to
23 summarize those results in a few minutes
24 after I've summarized why we kind of got
25 into this budget fix. Because I do want

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2 to point out that in 2002, the School
3 Reform Commission did lay out some
4 ambitious but yet totally appropriate
5 goals, goals that if achieved would
6 define us as a superior district, and at
7 the same time, the management team laid
8 out a document called Vision 2008, which
9 articulated the things that we were going
10 to do to help put the School District in
11 a position of achieving those goals. And
12 if you look at my testimony, every single
13 year, at least the last three years'
14 testimonies, you've seen not only the
15 goals discussed, but you've seen the
16 vision articulated and you've seen me
17 give status reports on that vision. And
18 I'm going to talk about that shortly.

19 I do want to say this, though:
20 When I testified before City Council last
21 year, I testified and I said that the
22 current year, that the '06-'07 year,
23 budget was balanced, and we felt that
24 that budget would be structurally
25 balanced. The challenge that we faced

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2 wasn't in the '06-'07 budget. It was in
3 the '05-'06 budget. In effect, we ran a
4 much larger deficit than we realized and
5 we had forecasted.

6 If you remember, last year
7 around this time in January, the School
8 District initiated -- we actually in
9 December made a number of proposed cuts
10 or we proposed a number of cuts in our
11 mid-year budget, because we felt
12 expenditures were exceeding revenues and
13 we felt that we were going to be running
14 a deficit and that deficit could be a
15 sizable deficit. And we deliberated over
16 those cuts, quite appropriately, for the
17 better part of two months before
18 initiating those cuts. We put a freeze
19 on hiring. We eliminated some minor
20 contracts. We encumbered some unspent
21 discretionary spending, or at least we
22 thought we had encumbered those dollars.

23 So when I say that when we talk
24 about the deficit, we were concerned as
25 of December and January that we were

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2 actually going to be running a deficit,
3 and we attempted to initiate certain
4 actions to kind of head off that deficit.

5 As late as August, we were
6 projecting what we then thought would be
7 a smaller deficit of about, I don't know,
8 \$22, \$24 million and we thought a
9 manageable deficit, until we were
10 surprised as we began to close our books
11 with the \$73 million deficit.

12 So, again, the problem when we
13 testified in '06-'07 on the '06-'07
14 budget, we felt we had a structurally
15 balanced budget and we felt that we would
16 finish the year with at least a very
17 small -- the previous year at least with
18 a very small deficit and hopefully a
19 small draw-down on the remaining deficit
20 financing bond proceeds. That said and
21 done, we did finish the year with a \$73
22 million deficit.

23 Now, while that constitutes a
24 little over three percent of the School
25 District's budget, I'm not saying that

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2 that is an insignificant amount, but I've
3 always felt that at this present time, it
4 was a manageable amount. But obviously
5 for a school district that is always
6 financially challenged, even a manageable
7 amount can have impact on programs.

8 But let me summarize the
9 highlights of why that deficit occurred.

10 The first reason for the
11 deficit was a receipt of about \$13
12 million in revenues that we were
13 projecting in '05-'06 that actually were
14 to be received in '06-'07. There was the
15 Plan Con, the State school construction
16 bond reimbursements that came later than
17 anticipated. We had to roll it over into
18 this year as opposed to last year. There
19 were proceeds from the sale of two pieces
20 of property that we had budgeted for last
21 year and we did not receive those
22 proceeds. In fact, we're just settling
23 on the sales now. One of the sales for
24 the Durham building were challenged in
25 court, so that delayed us closing that

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2 deal.

3 So there's about \$13 million in
4 income that we did not receive in '05-'06
5 that rolled over into '06-'07. Obviously
6 that was part of the \$73 million deficit.

7 The second thing was, we
8 significantly underestimated payouts for
9 individuals who retire or who are
10 separated from the District. Our term
11 pay was based on historic trends. We had
12 always projected about \$20 million. The
13 previous year we had 20 million in term
14 pay. That's kind of been the historic
15 level of term pay. The only time we've
16 had higher term pay is when we did our
17 early retirements.

18 We ended up getting hit with a
19 liability of almost \$30 million, and it
20 was due to the fact that we had about a
21 one-third higher rate of separations than
22 we had anticipated, "separations" meaning
23 retirements, individuals leaving the
24 system, part-time individuals leaving the
25 system. It was much higher than we had

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2 projected, and as a result, we had a
3 payout. When people leave, they're
4 entitled to a portion of their sick days
5 and vacation days, et cetera. So the
6 term pay was almost \$10 million higher.

7 Now, that could have been done
8 to a number of reasons. As you know, the
9 No Child Left Behind mandate on highly
10 qualified, you can't work in the school
11 unless you're highly qualified, whether
12 you're a teacher or support staff. That
13 impacted in June of last year. Thus,
14 there were a lot people who separated
15 from the District because they did not
16 reach that high qualified status.

17 So there are a lot of reasons
18 for that, but, again, it was a reasonable
19 underestimation given historical trends.
20 And had I micromanaged the budget process
21 myself, I would have never projected 30
22 million. I would have projected 20
23 million.

24 The next big difference or the
25 big surprise was in salvage.

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2 Historically this District has always
3 salvaged. These are unspent
4 appropriations anywhere from \$25 million
5 to \$30, \$35 million. And we this past
6 year salvaged \$6 million, which is a
7 historical low, which is unusually low.
8 And there's no way we could have
9 calculated or estimated a salvage of this
10 low. But hindsight being 20/20, we
11 probably shouldn't have been surprised,
12 because when we did the mid-year cuts,
13 when we cut at mid year, as you know, we
14 proposed a whole series of cuts in
15 December that included us encumbering
16 unspent discretionary funds at the local
17 school level, et cetera. We estimated we
18 were going to target certain monies that
19 we were going to try to secure and not
20 spend, but we deliberated over the budget
21 cuts for the better part of two months.
22 So by the time schools went out and
23 started encumbering, when we asked
24 schools to save 30 percent of their
25 unspent discretionary spending in

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 February, it was a heck of a lot less
3 than it was when we proposed it in
4 December.

5 So the combination both -- and
6 the same thing with department heads.
7 People moved money around and encumbered
8 funds. So we had a historic low salvage,
9 because we base cut at mid year.

10 So those items alone that I
11 talked about, the lower than anticipated
12 salvage, the higher than anticipated term
13 pay, the additional revenues or the late
14 receipt of the revenues, we also did not
15 attrit. We did not realize the savings
16 from attrition that we had anticipated,
17 central office attrition. As you know,
18 we added 119 additional teachers in this
19 current year's budget, and we assumed
20 that our attrition from last year and
21 this year would, in effect, cover those
22 additional hires. That was probably way
23 too optimistic an assumption. We
24 probably should have proposed specific
25 cuts then, central office cuts then, to

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 finance the additional teachers. But we
3 came up with about six and a half million
4 dollars short on that.

5 So we got hit with all those
6 factors and then some others that really
7 contributed to the \$73 million deficit.
8 So, again, on the flipside, though, we
9 could salvage 24 million this year
10 instead of 6 million, or we could have a
11 historic low number of separations, in
12 which case we would have a pleasant
13 surprise as opposed to an unpleasant
14 surprise. But the point here is, while
15 you can understand and perhaps
16 rationalize the miscalculations
17 individually, collectively they become a
18 little more difficult to explain and plus
19 the impact, kind like a financial perfect
20 storm, so to speak.

21 But, again, when you're
22 pressing the envelope to do a lot, you
23 will always run the risk of overspending
24 your resources. I mean, if we see
25 something that works, we try to do it,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 whether it's a dropout prevention
3 program, whether it's hiring parents to
4 serve as truant officers, whether it's
5 partnering with 47 community-based
6 organizations to help us with community
7 policing. We certainly have pushed the
8 envelope. And when you do that, you're
9 going to run the risk that you're going
10 to run deficits. The question isn't are
11 you going to run a deficit, but the
12 question is can you manage that deficit,
13 and in going in and cutting, can you
14 impose the type of cuts that are going to
15 have the minimal impact on School
16 District programs. And the deliberations
17 that we've had, really since late October
18 at the direction of the School Reform
19 Commission, the public hearings, bringing
20 in independent entities like PFM and
21 others to give us a second opinion, have
22 all been driven by a desire to balance
23 our budget but, at the same time, to do
24 so in a way that would have a minimum
25 impact on the schools and on our critical

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 programs. And I think what the School
3 Reform Commission has given me the green
4 light to do does that.

5 We do make \$73 million in
6 adjustments. Most of those adjustments
7 are full-time adjustments or permanent
8 adjustments to the base. A part of the
9 adjustments are one-time adjustments. We
10 did a bond refinancing that's going to
11 generate about \$13 or \$14 million. There
12 are some other one-time things that we're
13 going to do. But the objective here has
14 been to do the things that won't really
15 adversely impact classroom instruction.
16 We don't want to do what we did last
17 year, which was go in and try to trim
18 discretionary spending or not fill
19 critical teacher vacancies.

20 Let me point out that while the
21 leveling we've done has created some
22 controversy, quite appropriately because
23 we haven't leveled downward in four
24 years, we've actually to date hired about
25 80 or 90 additional teachers to fill

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 vacancies in schools that were
3 overcrowded. So we continue to staff at
4 the local level to obviously address our
5 critical staffing needs.

6 But if you look at the cuts
7 that we've made -- and in your red book
8 on the right-hand side, there's a list of
9 the specific budget adjustment
10 categories -- you'll be hard-pressed to
11 find something that is having a direct
12 impact in schools.

13 If I can summarize, we've
14 targeted contracts, we've targeted
15 non-educational operations, we've
16 targeted vendors, we've targeted private
17 providers, we've targeted all our
18 alternative school providers. There was
19 an increase at the state level to expand
20 our alternative school services. That
21 increase is going to be slower than
22 anticipated, thus saving us money. We're
23 doing another round of healthcare
24 re-enrollments.

25 So I think we've done a number

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 of things, all designed to save us money,
3 but also designed not to adversely impact
4 in the classroom. If you go through that
5 list and if you have any questions along
6 the way on that list, please let me know.

7 Let me point out that probably
8 the biggest cut and probably the most
9 painful cut was the central office cut.
10 Now, I freely admit, I've tried to avoid
11 laying off people over the last four
12 years. I don't think I've ever laid off
13 a teacher. Certainly schools will lose
14 teachers if they lose population, but we
15 haven't been laying off teachers. And we
16 tried to downsize the central office
17 through attrition. And when you look at
18 the first year, 2001, RIF and then look
19 at the attrition since 2001, the central
20 office prior to this cut has been reduced
21 by about 25, 26 percent, and we did it
22 for a lot reasons, to help us balance the
23 budget and also to help us shift money
24 into the classrooms.

25 But this was the first RIF, so

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2 to speak, or reduction in force, that
3 I've had to do on my watch here, because
4 attrition just wasn't getting us what we
5 had anticipated.

6 We did eliminate 175 positions.

7 The criteria that we wanted to use was,
8 we wanted to eliminate positions who the
9 work of which could be picked up by
10 someone else. So we didn't want to
11 eliminate the function as much as simply
12 reduce the number of personnel managing
13 the function, so to speak. So there were
14 some critical positions eliminated. But
15 my individual department heads can come
16 up if you have a specific question about
17 any particular layoff, and they can talk
18 about who now has responsibility for
19 performing that function.

20 In eliminating 175 positions,
21 we'll save about 6 million this year and
22 annually 16 million in the out years,
23 because obviously you have payouts, term
24 pay when you eliminate positions, and the
25 positions are being eliminated at mid

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2 year, so you're not going to realize the
3 savings.

4 So we have to say -- and
5 term/payout is somewhere, I don't know,
6 between \$3 to \$4 million, so obviously
7 that's going to cut into our costs. But
8 because we had 47 vacancies and because
9 53 individuals who are teacher and
10 counselor certified are going to be able
11 to bounce into vacancies at the local
12 school level, we, in effect, are only
13 going to be laying off 81 people.

14 Now, 81 people is still 81
15 people, and that is painful obviously for
16 the person who is being laid off. So
17 what we've done is, we've created a job
18 bank that is up, website, et cetera, and
19 it is staffed by representatives from the
20 Human Resources Committee, and what we
21 have been doing really in the last month
22 is, we've been reaching out to all of our
23 private school providers, our charter
24 school providers, our private vendors,
25 our alternative school providers, our

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2 contractors, asking them to identify
3 vacancies that exist and then working to
4 match individuals' credentials with those
5 vacancies. And if you go to the website,
6 you will see dozens and dozens of jobs,
7 and that website is only expanding.

8 So what we do -- and we're
9 going to keep the website up maybe even
10 permanently, but we're going to continue
11 to have the team in Human Resources
12 working to get people placed. So we're
13 obviously going to try to minimize the
14 impact.

15 Now, the cuts that we're making
16 this year, the analyzed savings we're
17 hoping will come to about \$80 to \$90
18 million a year. And if that is the
19 savings we realize next year once we've
20 analyzed the savings and the Governor
21 provides the same level of funding
22 increases that he's provided in past
23 years, then we'll be close to balancing
24 the budget next year. But that does not
25 get us beyond next year, because while a

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2 lot of what we're doing this year with
3 these cuts is, in effect, not only making
4 these cuts early so we can finance last
5 year's obligations but also cutting the
6 base so we can, in effect, balance next
7 year's budget, the Mayor is quite right
8 the District needs to finalize its
9 five-year plan, because we need to look
10 at the five-year obligations of the
11 School District as we debate this issue
12 as to what the School District needs to
13 continue to move reform forward.

14 We're not done with our
15 five-year plan and we won't be probably
16 until late January, because you can't
17 complete a five-year plan when you
18 haven't made any final decisions on
19 balancing the current year budget. But
20 as you know, in January we begin our
21 budget deliberations in-house. In
22 January, we begin to get a sense of what
23 Harrisburg is going to provide us. In
24 January, we'll have a clear idea of
25 what's going to be available at the

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2 federal level in Title I.

3 So we will be completing our
4 five-year financial plan shortly, and
5 when we come before City Council with
6 next year's budget proposal, we will not
7 only obviously be presenting next year's
8 budget but we'll also be presenting our
9 five-year plan. Obviously we hope to get
10 the Mayor's office and the interested
11 parties our five-year plan sooner, but
12 we've got to complete the work on this
13 year's budget before we finalize the
14 five-year plan. And while I'm confident
15 with the cuts that we're doing this year
16 that it's going to put us in a good
17 situation to maintain the status quo; in
18 other words, to maintain the existing
19 reforms that we put in place, the out
20 years are a concern and there is a
21 concern about what we're going to need to
22 secure in order to take school reform to
23 the next level. So I just want to point
24 that out. But there's certainly no
25 intent not to provide information. It's

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 just we don't have the five-year plan
3 completed yet.

4 I do just want to summarize a
5 number of things, and then I want to talk
6 about -- and in passing, I want to make
7 reference -- and, Madam Chairwoman, with
8 your permission, I'll certainly make my
9 comments on the Youth Collaborative and
10 the truancy initiative, too, so we can
11 cover that.

12 I just want to give you a
13 perspective on what the District has been
14 able to accomplish over the last few
15 years, and this has always been
16 articulated in the Vision 2008. We now
17 have 3,000 more kids in early childhood
18 programs than we ever had before. All of
19 the early childhood programs have been
20 standardized under the auspices of
21 Dr. Martinez and the United Way, early
22 literacy, standardized curriculum,
23 instructional models.

24 We're not where we should be.
25 There are still thousands of additional

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 children we need to put into early
3 childhood programs, but without a
4 significant increase in funding, we've
5 been able to serve more children in
6 quality programs. And let me point out
7 that this does not include the 500
8 pregnant teens that are in our ELECT
9 Program or our Cradle to the Classroom
10 Program or the families that we're
11 reaching through the HOME Program.

12 As Sandra has pointed out, over
13 the last three years, we've standardized
14 the curriculum. We've established a
15 managed instructional program and we have
16 literally replaced every textbook in this
17 system, pre-K all the way through 12th
18 grade. There is no debate that we have
19 one of the better managed instructional
20 programs in the country, our data-driven
21 instructional programs, the alignment of
22 our curriculum and instructional models
23 to the state standards, and I think it's
24 reflected in the test scores.

25 There's not a large urban

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2 district in this country that has shown
3 the growth in test scores relative to
4 their state scores that we've
5 experienced. And let me point out that
6 in 2002, we only had 28 schools making
7 AYP. We have 166 schools making Adequate
8 Yearly Progress, the No Child Left Behind
9 standard. It's only half our schools,
10 but in 2002, we had eight percent of our
11 schools making Adequate Yearly Progress.
12 So that reflects the fact that I think
13 we've been taking care of business and
14 we've been showing a lot of success.

15 When we came in in 2002, we
16 said the middle school system didn't work
17 and we needed to reorganize the District.
18 The District today is predominantly a
19 K-to-8, 9-to-12 district. I think we've
20 got about 14, 15 middle schools
21 remaining. We used to have 44. And
22 you're seeing it in the academic
23 performance of middle-grade children and
24 you're also seeing it in the behavioral
25 support.

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2 Sixth graders were our most
3 violent grade. In 2002, we had 136
4 teacher assaults among 6th graders. It
5 was the most violent grade and it was the
6 least productive grade academically. No
7 more, and I think it's because the
8 K-to-5's have been adding 6th grade and
9 7th grade and 8th grade and we've
10 significantly downsized the schools. But
11 the School District has been reorganized
12 into a K-to-8, 9-to-12 system.

13 We also said as part of the
14 reorganization our schools needed to get
15 smaller. Well, today we have 36 small
16 high schools. Today the average size of
17 our high schools are a thousand kids. It
18 used to be 1,700. And by '08, it will be
19 800 kids. Today half of our schools have
20 fewer than 500 kids. And we have school
21 choice. There are 84 high schools in
22 this District. There used to be 42.

23 There's a map that I put in, I
24 believe, your left-hand packet. It shows
25 the District's small high schools

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2 geographically distributed.
3 Incidentally, it doesn't include some of
4 the new high schools that we brought
5 online this year. It shows all the high
6 school choices, all 84, charter, select
7 enrollment magnet, general enrollment
8 schools. Again, 84 school choices. So
9 if you look at those two color charts, it
10 really drives home the point of what's
11 available.

12 School climate, serious
13 incident reports are down 11 percent this
14 year and last year they were down 14
15 percent. We're having success in the
16 schools. Our school-based community
17 policing, the cameras, the school-based
18 police, our partnering with faith-based
19 organizations is beginning to -- the
20 school climates of the individual schools
21 are changing. Olney and Kensington,
22 which used to be nightmare schools, are
23 now relatively peaceful schools. When
24 that child was shot on his way to Olney,
25 he ran to the school for protection. He

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2 didn't run away from the school, I might
3 add.

4 We have a 24-hour zero
5 tolerance policy. The criticism of the
6 alternative school providers aside, we do
7 have seven alternative schools, and we do
8 not expel to the street. We do expel to
9 alternative schools, to alternative
10 placements. So we have made an attempt
11 to provide alternatives to students who
12 because of serious offenses need to be
13 put in other learning environments, need
14 to be taken out of the general school
15 population and put in special population.

16 I think all these alternative
17 school providers need to be scrutinized
18 and they need to be held to certain
19 performance standards, as we do and as we
20 will continue to do, whether it's CEP or
21 not.

22 We have a \$1.7 billion capital
23 plan, and our capital plan is online, and
24 you can look at projects done, you can
25 look at projects in the planning stage,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 you can look at projects that we're
3 currently negotiating contracts on. And
4 as I mentioned, by the end of this year,
5 with the exception of two schools, we
6 will have either broken ground or
7 contracted to begin construction once the
8 permitting process has run its course on
9 all the things promised, on all the
10 things promised in the original capital
11 plan. But I will tell you, the capital
12 plan only addresses about one-third of
13 our need.

14 If you look at enrichment,
15 there's another map here that identifies
16 the accelerated learning schools. K-to-8
17 schools were reporting accelerated middle
18 grade programs. In effect, we're
19 magnetizing those neighborhood schools.
20 We've restored AP honors and advanced
21 placement to all of our high schools.
22 Five of our high schools have
23 international baccalaureate programs.
24 We're, in effect, magnetizing the
25 schools.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 So, again, this District
3 literally had no high school AP honors or
4 advanced placement, and other than the
5 little gifted program, which was only
6 reflected in a number of schools, most of
7 the schools had no gifted and accelerated
8 at all. We need to do more, but I just
9 want to point out efforts that we have
10 taken to expand accelerated and gifted
11 and to put accelerated and gifted into as
12 many of our schools as possible.

13 On the enrichment side, we have
14 a thousand more clubs than we had five
15 years ago. We have almost 300 additional
16 high school sports teams as we had four
17 years ago, and you've seen the gym
18 renovations and the super sites that
19 we've created.

20 Today we had a press
21 conference. The reason I was a little
22 late was, we had a press conference. The
23 Archdiocese is joining the PIAA and is
24 joining our division, Division 12. So
25 now the Division 12 is going to be

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2 Philadelphia public and Catholic schools,
3 and that's unprecedented to have that
4 type of -- and why? Because we're not
5 afraid of competition and because I think
6 it's going to restore old rivalries and
7 it's going to make our programs even more
8 competitive.

9 We've had a 200 percent
10 increase in the number of scholarships
11 that our high school athletes have gotten
12 just through their exposure through the
13 PIAA literally. So even on the
14 enrichment side, the restoration of music
15 and art, while slow, we certainly have
16 done a stellar job providing music
17 equipment and music materials. I'm not
18 suggesting that we're anywhere near where
19 we should be, but I'm mentioning that
20 because you have to understand what
21 you've gotten for that deficit. We've
22 hit the wall, but we've accomplished a
23 lot as we moved toward that wall.

24 I do want to point out that had
25 it not been for the City Council's

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 efforts in earmarking the sports facility
3 fund bond proceeds, we would not have
4 renovated and replaced our materials.
5 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown and
6 the entire City Council has been very,
7 very instrumental in that.

8 So, again, these are things
9 that have been going on since 2002.

10 And, finally, on the parental
11 outreach, we now have 180 Home and School
12 Councils. One hundred twenty of our
13 schools, I believe, have parent help
14 desks. We have three parent leadership
15 academies.

16 To help make the budget more
17 transparent, we're in the process of
18 creating a Parent and Community Budget
19 Advisory Committee that's going to have
20 complete access to all of our budget
21 documents and who are going to shadow us
22 in the coming months as we begin to
23 deliberate the budget and will host a
24 whole series of evening forums as the
25 budget is debated and discussed. So in

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 addition to the Budget Oversight
3 Committee that the School Reform
4 Commission has created, it's also our
5 desire to create a public committee out
6 there that can review and scrutinize our
7 efforts.

8 So, again, our efforts to
9 institutionalize our parental involvement
10 and a role for parents in the schools I
11 think is certainly unprecedented.

12 And someone asked about the
13 TANF. Councilwoman Blackwell, we have
14 close to 400 TANF volunteers in our
15 schools, not to mention, I believe, over
16 250 parents working through
17 community-based organizations as part of
18 our school-based community policing
19 initiative and, of course, the hundred
20 parent truant officers, hopefully soon to
21 be augmented by another 300 to 400
22 officers when the Council approves the
23 Mayor's initiative.

24 So, again, I think we've really
25 attempted to institutionalize a role for

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2 our parents, and we're going to continue
3 to institutionalize that role.

4 But while a lot has been done,
5 a lot needs to be done, and I want to
6 talk about the things that we need to do
7 that are going to require additional
8 funding. I think there are going to be
9 specific needs for additional monies that
10 will emerge through our five-year plan.
11 To sustain and expand upon our existing
12 initiatives will require more resources,
13 and we hope to identify what those
14 dollars are and to reach a consensus with
15 the City and other regulatory or
16 oversight agencies hopefully in the
17 coming months so there at least, as the
18 Mayor pointed out, is a consensus on what
19 it's going to take us to go the next five
20 years.

21 This Vision 2008 was a
22 five-year vision. Now what's the next?
23 What are we going to do in the next five
24 years? And it's interesting because over
25 the next five years, the next five years

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 will end about the time that the No Child
3 Left Behind 100 percent standard -- I
4 believe it's 1214 -- is in effect. So
5 clearly, we're going to need to be even
6 more ambitious than we've currently been.

7 But let me talk to you about
8 the things that we absolutely need to do
9 that we don't have funding for and that
10 we need funding for, just not from the
11 City but also from the State and
12 hopefully additional Title I money from
13 the new Congress.

14 The first thing and probably
15 the most important thing is, we need
16 money for class size reduction. In order
17 to reduce class sizes in this District --
18 and let me point out that we have one
19 teacher, classroom teacher, in the School
20 District for every 25.3 students. That
21 doesn't mean every class has 25 kids.
22 Some schools have much more Title I than
23 other schools. So some schools, they
24 have class size reduction. Other schools
25 don't have class size reduction. But to

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 get all of the classrooms below 25, at
3 21, 22, will require upwards to about 800
4 additional teachers, and we're going to
5 preliminary cost out what it would cost
6 for us to finance 800 additional
7 teachers. You're probably talking
8 something in the neighborhood of \$60 to
9 \$70 million, but that would allow us to
10 address that issue. And not something
11 that we would need to do one year, but
12 something we could phase in over three or
13 over a four-year period. But we're not
14 going to make any headway on class size
15 reduction without additional resources.
16 In fact, we've been struggling just to
17 hold the gains that we've made in the
18 past few years. And as you know, this
19 past year, despite the addition of 119
20 teachers into the budget at the close of
21 the last SRC budget deliberations, we did
22 have to level. Thus, we did have to take
23 62 teachers out of existing schools and
24 move them to other schools that had
25 overcrowding, and that was something that

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 we would not want to do again, not want
3 to repeat.

4 But it is going to cost more
5 money to do class size reduction. And
6 it's just not a City issue. It's a State
7 issue. There are many states out there,
8 like California and others, where they've
9 passed propositions to earmark state
10 money and to mandate that the state fund
11 class size reduction. The decision
12 regarding adequate funding for the
13 schools in New York State has ordered the
14 Legislature to appropriate billions in
15 additional money, not only statewide but
16 I think \$2 billion in additional money to
17 New York alone. So it is going to take
18 more resources.

19 The second most important area
20 is early childhood education. We have
21 got to get all of our children in some
22 sort of early childhood educational
23 programs, and that means we have got to
24 move towards -- in New York they're
25 moving towards universal pre-school for

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 four-year-olds. It's half day, but for
3 four-year-olds. So every single
4 four-year-old is in pre-school at least
5 half a day.

6 But we've got to expand our
7 zero to three program. Someone told me
8 there's close to 300 teen pregnancies a
9 year in the Philadelphia area. And,
10 again, teen pregnancies constitute -- the
11 dropout rate among pregnant teens is 70
12 percent. I believe it's the second
13 highest dropout rate. Incarcerated youth
14 is the highest, I believe closer to 90
15 percent. Well, what about the children
16 of the 70 percent who drop out, the
17 pregnant teens? I bet their dropout rate
18 may even be higher. So taking our early
19 childhood programs to scale is absolutely
20 critical.

21 The Governor, every year he's
22 provided incremental increases for early
23 childhood education. But we have
24 thousands of children that we need to
25 reach. We have a program right now

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 called Cradle to the Classroom. We try
3 to identify all the pregnant teens,
4 assign the pregnant teens a parent
5 advocate, train the pregnant teens, get
6 the pregnant teen back into high school,
7 get the baby pre-school, daycare,
8 wrap-around services, et cetera. And we
9 know based on research that teens who
10 have successfully gone through this
11 program are four times more likely to
12 graduate, and children who have gone
13 through this program, particularly the
14 early childhood component, are close to
15 grade level by the time they reach third
16 grade, no gap.

17 But the biggest challenge we
18 have in the program is not hiring enough
19 parent advocates to work with the
20 pregnant teens. It's getting enough
21 daycare slots so that the pregnant teens
22 can get back into school, because there
23 aren't enough slots available for the
24 babies of all the pregnant teens. So
25 we're impeded by our ability to get

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 pregnant teens back into school because
3 there's nobody to care for the baby. So
4 that's something that we're going to need
5 help on, and that's something that we're
6 costing out through the United Way and
7 through their efforts, because they've
8 made early childhood education a number
9 one priority, and we hope in the next few
10 months before we come before the budget
11 and after we've seen what the Governor
12 has proposed, that I've asked my staff to
13 put a dollar amount on universal early
14 childhood education, including zero to
15 three.

16 What we may be forced to do on
17 the zero to three pregnant teens is to
18 create a virtual school program so the
19 pregnant teens can work to get their high
20 school diploma at home while they're
21 caring for their babies because of the
22 lack of an early childhood program. So
23 we've talked to June Brown and a number
24 of the virtual school providers, because
25 we're desperate to get the kids back into

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 a high school program.

3 The third most critical area is
4 to fund our dropout prevention
5 initiatives. Now, we were asked to join
6 the Youth Collaborative a couple years
7 ago to do a comprehensive review of the
8 Philadelphia dropout problems. I think
9 we're one of only two districts to be
10 bold enough to do that. Most school
11 districts in most states underestimate
12 their dropout numbers and they have a
13 tendency to try to conceal the problem.
14 We wanted to look at the problem. So we
15 went back and we looked at dropouts. We
16 looked at children who had entered the
17 system 1996 to 2001, where were they now
18 and where are they now. And the Youth
19 Collaborative will detail the findings in
20 that study.

21 But the point of this exercise
22 was to identify the problem and identify
23 who the highest risk children are and to
24 tailor programs to help those children.

25 I think your overall reforms

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2 are reorganization, our early childhood,
3 our expanded, our high school reforms,
4 our standardized curriculum instructional
5 models. I think they'll help close the
6 gap over the long term. I think they'll
7 help improve student achievement.

8 But you know what? We've got
9 kids at risk today and tomorrow and the
10 next year and the following year. We
11 need special interventions. We need to
12 bring the Cradle to the Classroom
13 programs to scale for our pregnant teens.
14 We need to dramatically expand our
15 transition schools. A large percentage
16 of our kids who drop out are overage
17 underachievers. Kids don't have to start
18 school in Pennsylvania until they're
19 eight years old. Prior to this, close to
20 3,000 kids every year would start a
21 school a year or two late. And let me
22 tell you, it's not like they were home
23 schooled. That's been cut in half by
24 about 50 percent because of our expanded
25 early childhood programs. We get the

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2 kids early. The parents, great. The
3 kids are on track. But we still had
4 1,400, 1,500 kids start school a year or
5 two late, and where do you stick an 8th
6 grader? In kindergarten? First grade?
7 Second grade?

8 Ninety percent of our
9 disruptive incidents are academically
10 failing kids. Sixty percent of our
11 disruptive incidents are caused by
12 overage kids, overage underachievers.

13 So as part of the Youth
14 Collaborative, we're going to push for
15 the expansion of our transition schools.
16 These are small schools that take 15,
17 16-year-old middle grade schools and
18 17-year-old freshmen who are academically
19 failing and they put them in small
20 self-contained schools. We have four of
21 those schools, and they're having great
22 results. New York copied our program,
23 but with the resources they have, they
24 just decided that they're going to have
25 20. If we could add five or six or seven

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2 additional schools, we could get so many
3 kids off the street and we could get the
4 overage underachieving kids out of the
5 general high school, thus providing the
6 general high school with relief.

7 The point that I'm trying to
8 make is, there are things in this Youth
9 Collaborative study. There are programs
10 to be brought to scale. This is a unique
11 study, and not only does it
12 comprehensively identify the problem but
13 it does even more than that. It talks
14 about real solutions, solutions that have
15 piloted, solutions that have shown
16 success. It's like you see the cure.
17 Now the question is can you manufacture
18 the drug that can cure the disease. You
19 see?

20 So those things need to be
21 brought to scale, too. But I'm going to
22 continue to do pilot. I'm going to
23 continue to run my own airport with all
24 the little pilots I have until we get
25 enough money to bring those type of

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2 programs to scale.

3 The fourth thing is classroom
4 modernization. Now, I've been talking
5 both publicly, collectively, individually
6 all about classroom modernization. We
7 talk about the next phase of the capital
8 plan. Well, \$500 to \$600 million, a
9 number I have put out for the better part
10 of a year and a half, would enable us to
11 modernize every classroom, SMART Boards,
12 Whiteboards, laptop computers, furniture,
13 a furniture buildout to the classrooms.
14 So every ugly high-rise building would at
15 least have state-of-the-art modernized
16 classrooms that would educate kids in an
17 environment equal, if not superior, to
18 the suburbs. Because when you have a
19 great managed instructional program and
20 you add classroom technology to it, it
21 allows you to take curriculum and
22 instruction to the next level. And
23 that's achievable, because a lot of the
24 money that would be needed to do that is
25 money that you could, in effect, bond.

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2 You could raise the proceeds from
3 bonding. We worked with Senator Fumo to
4 get an earmark of \$5 million in casino
5 revenue specifically to purchase laptops
6 and SMART Boards from the schools.

7 And then, finally, we need a
8 fifth phase of the capital plan. We're
9 going to be running out of money shortly,
10 and we at least need a second phase. And
11 what do we need to do in the second
12 phase? We need to fund those things that
13 are going to help us enhance our
14 education reforms.

15 The first thing is, we need
16 about \$150 million a year in capital just
17 to maintain our buildings. I mean,
18 because of 20 years of deferred
19 maintenance, Bache is collapsing. I have
20 to find a new location for Bache.
21 Wanamaker is vacant. I have to find a
22 new location for Wanamaker. Now Ada
23 Lewis because it was never renovated, it
24 was never maintained, that building can't
25 be repaired. Overbrook cannot be

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2 repaired. I've got to find a replacement
3 building for that. We need 150 million
4 in capital just to maintain our
5 buildings.

6 Everybody looks at the School
7 District's capital plan without realizing
8 three-fourths of the money is just going
9 into maintenance. It's just not going
10 into new buildings and replacement
11 buildings.

12 But we also have K-to-5 schools
13 and small high schools that are in need
14 of annexes, small annexes, \$5 million a
15 piece that can provide gyms, cafeterias,
16 multi-purpose rooms. We need to do the
17 tuckpointing and window replacements in
18 our schools that will keep our schools
19 from further deteriorating, and obviously
20 we need to do the classroom
21 modernization.

22 Just a small expansion of the
23 capital plan by a billion dollars or so
24 would allow us to have another three
25 years of catch-up maintenance. It will

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 allow us to do window replacements. It
3 will allow us to do our window
4 replacements and tuckpointing. Go look
5 at Strawberry Mansion with the window
6 replacements and tuckpointing on the
7 Strawberry Mansion High School side of
8 that campus. And it would allow us to
9 build at least 20 annexes in schools that
10 are K-to-8 and small high schools that
11 need the gyms and the auditoriums.
12 So we in the next couple of
13 months are going to be costing these
14 things out and we're going to be
15 presenting them not only through the
16 Mayor's task force on school reform, but
17 obviously this is going to be part of our
18 legislative agenda for Harrisburg as well
19 as Washington, and obviously it's going
20 to be part of our budget presentation for
21 you. And many of these things I've
22 talked about, like classroom
23 modernization and the expanded capital
24 plan and many of the youth
25 collaboratives, are not new things.

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2 These are things that I've talked about
3 in the past, sometimes individually and
4 collectively, as we move forward.

5 So, again, I think the District
6 has accomplished a lot since 2002, and
7 it's accomplished a lot because of the
8 support that we've received from our
9 Mayor and the support that we've received
10 from the Legislature. I don't know where
11 we'd be without the leadership of John
12 Perzel or, for that matter, without the
13 leadership of Dwight Evans and Tony
14 Williams and others in the Senate or
15 Vince Fumo in the Senate and the
16 things -- Dwight Evans is in the House, I
17 might add, and the legislative officials
18 who have really stepped up to the plate
19 to support us, and likewise to City
20 Council, because I have never lost sight
21 of the fact that when the 2002 Reform Act
22 was passed, the City also provided the
23 School District with an additional \$40
24 million in funds to help us not only
25 close the gap but also give us the

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2 flexibility to move forward.

3 But we're at a crossroads. The
4 first kind of five-year school reform
5 cycle is over, and now we need to decide
6 what it's going to take us to not only
7 sustain those reforms, but to go to the
8 next level. And I'm not afraid to ask
9 for money. I may need to ask for it more
10 publicly than I have in the past, because
11 as you know, my approach has always been
12 to privately lobby and privately complain
13 and privately try to wear people out,
14 while publicly you maintain a certain
15 decorum. But we've accomplished a lot.

16 I think the District is poised
17 to go to the next level, but going to the
18 next level is going to require a much
19 greater investment, not only on the part
20 of the State but also on the part of the
21 City.

22 I also want to clarify one
23 thing, too, because I lobby the
24 Legislature all the time on school
25 funding. I have just refused to chastise

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2 the Legislature. One of the things I
3 learned is, you never criticize people
4 who can give you money, because they can
5 always say no. And even if they haven't
6 given it to you in the past, it will make
7 them even more entrenched. And I'll tell
8 you, my approach has always been with
9 Harrisburg to go to Harrisburg and to ask
10 Harrisburg for things that we deserve.
11 And I believe we deserve more money. No
12 one should ever misrepresent me saying we
13 don't deserve it. I've made a case.
14 It's hard to argue with 166 schools
15 making AYP, some of the biggest increases
16 in test scores, all the things we've been
17 able to do with the limited resources we
18 have.
19 But my approach is also to ask
20 for things that other school districts
21 are asking for. Because you know as well
22 as I do, there are individuals who do not
23 support public schools and there are
24 individuals who do not support public
25 schools in Philadelphia, who will use

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2 Philadelphia as an excuse to oppose
3 funding for a public education. So our
4 approach is to be part of a coalition
5 rather than taking the lead.

6 When I've met with many of the
7 school activists, the school reformers
8 who have been litigating and challenging
9 the Legislature for years on school
10 funding issues, they always tell me that
11 there are other districts in the State
12 that are poor and struggling and they
13 need to be at the forefront, and we need
14 to be part of them. We need to be in
15 solidarity.

16 So when we hit this budget
17 crunch, the absolute last thing that I
18 was going to do was going to go to the
19 Legislature and say, We have a budget
20 crisis, give us more money. I mean,
21 first of all, we wouldn't have gotten
22 any, and, secondly, that would have just
23 emboldened those who didn't want to give
24 Philadelphia any money in the first place
25 not to provide additional funding.

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2 So the bottom line is, we'll be
3 ready to go to Harrisburg, as we always
4 have, as part of a much broader
5 coalition. And we have a willing
6 Governor and hopefully a supportive
7 Legislature. So hopefully the
8 Legislature will help us -- if we do as
9 well over the next four years as we've
10 done over the previous four years, it's
11 going to put us in better shape. But we
12 hope to cost out in the coming months as
13 we finalize our five-year plan the
14 specific things that we need to do to
15 take this District to the next level, and
16 then obviously once we agree on the
17 numbers, figure out a strategy on how
18 we're going to financially do what we
19 need to do in order to get there.

20 Madam Chairman, I want to thank
21 you for your indulgence, and we will take
22 any questions you have.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much. After you outlined our
25 needs, I had 20 questions. I almost

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2 don't want to ask any.

3 We'll give everybody an
4 opportunity to ask a few questions. I'll
5 ask one.

6 What about the issue that we've
7 been concerned about of District
8 requirements versus schools? They're
9 afraid that when it comes down to it,
10 schools still have to decide whether they
11 keep music teachers and art teachers and
12 librarians and all of that in their own
13 allotment versus the money they get from
14 the District.

15 MR. VALLAS: Let me respond to
16 that by saying -- first of all, let me
17 make a comment about teacher recruitment
18 and retention. Right now I think -- and
19 Tomas will verify that number.

20 How many vacancies do we have
21 in the District right now?

22 MR. HANNA: About 50.

23 MR. VALLAS: I mean, this
24 District always would run 160, 170
25 vacancies. We've been running about 50.

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2 We actually sat on some vacancies and we
3 had them filled by full-time substitutes
4 because we had the bouncing, but after
5 the bouncing is done, we'll have under 20
6 vacancies in a district with 10,400
7 classroom teachers.

8 I also want to point out
9 that -- and this is because of the
10 efforts of Sandra Dungee Glenn and the
11 Campaign for Human Capital. I mean, we
12 literally -- our retention rate among new
13 teachers is 93 percent. It used to be 72
14 percent. Our certification rate is at a
15 highest level ever. You know, 750
16 teachers have left this system because of
17 their failure to become highly qualified
18 under the No Child Left Behind standard,
19 yet we have virtually no vacancies.

20 So clearly, we've made a lot of
21 gains. And let me point out that as we
22 speak, we have over 1,200 university
23 interns working in our schools, student
24 teachers, student counselors, students
25 doing their internships and things like

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2 that.

3 So what we've attempted to do
4 is -- I think we've done a good job
5 recruiting teachers, and we have many
6 more applicants than we have spots for,
7 but the problem with some of these
8 supplemental positions is, quite frankly,
9 we don't have the money to provide a
10 librarian for every elementary school, to
11 provide a freed-up music teacher for
12 every elementary school, freed-up art
13 teacher for every elementary school.
14 Schools get an allocation, but sometimes
15 it's not a full teacher allocation. They
16 get an allocation and then they have to
17 make a decision as to whether or not
18 they're going to fund that position
19 partly out of what we give them and
20 partly out of what they have in Title I
21 or use that money to hire another
22 teacher.

23 So some schools, Madam
24 Chairman, do have to make the choice.
25 They shouldn't have to make the choice.

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2 In an ideal world, they should not have
3 to make the choice between a music
4 teacher and an art teacher and a third
5 grade teacher, but because of our desire
6 to reduce class size at the elementary
7 school, many schools have had to make
8 that choice.

9 If we fund a District-wide
10 class size reduction initiative with a
11 goal towards getting all of our
12 classrooms down below 25, so you have 22,
13 23 kids in the classroom, this is what's
14 going to happen. Schools with a lot of
15 Title I money are going to have 17, 18
16 kids in primary grade classrooms, and a
17 lot of schools are going to -- more
18 schools, if not most of the schools, are
19 going to be able to hire that full-time
20 art and full-time music teacher, you see,
21 but not without that additional
22 commitment will we be able to address
23 that issue.

24 MS. DUNGEE GLENN: Madam Chair,
25 if I may, I'd like to add something to

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2 that. There is another thing that we are
3 taking a look at, the Commission, and
4 we've asked Mr. Vallas and his team to
5 take a look at it as well that's a
6 different approach, if you would, to
7 funding and providing the dollars to
8 schools, called weighted student funding,
9 and what that does is, the District would
10 be very clear about the outcomes and some
11 of the standardized things like the
12 curriculum that we would have in place,
13 but it would provide more flexibility to
14 schools to determine on a
15 school-by-school basis what their
16 priorities might be, whether they would
17 choose to have a music teacher and an art
18 teacher and a librarian versus some other
19 kinds of programs. They could look at
20 their school needs, and it would be not
21 as much cookie cutter from the central
22 office. There would be more flexibility
23 allowed to the schools.

24 It's been tried in some other
25 districts, like San Francisco. I believe

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2 Cincinnati is taking a look at it. And
3 what it does, it also helps to deal with
4 the issue of equity, where you have
5 schools are funded depending on the kinds
6 of children they have to educate. So it
7 provides some flexibility around the
8 dollars that would come in, if you had
9 more children who are English language
10 learners, more children who may be low
11 income. And so the dollars, in other
12 words, follow the child more closely.
13 And those issues that you raised about
14 schools making choices, it helps to
15 ameliorate some of that.

16 It's an issue in the very early
17 stages for this District to take a look
18 at, but it's something that we think
19 might give more flexibility to schools
20 and supports for that very reason.

21 MR. VALLAS: There's a lot of
22 national interest in this, too. There's
23 a national coalition that has formed,
24 people from the right and the left and
25 the center, or whatever, all looking at

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2 this issue. And at the state level, I
3 believe there was a resolution to study
4 the whole equity thing.

5 So this thing has some momentum
6 behind it, and Sandra has asked us to
7 meet with some of the national experts on
8 this and to perhaps consider identifying
9 schools or clusters of schools where we
10 can pilot this initiative. But it's the
11 next trend, because right now, I mean,
12 the money doesn't really follow the kids.
13 The positions follow the kids, but the
14 positions have no relationship to the
15 actual dollars. And this has been tried
16 and it's shown a lot of success in school
17 districts like San Francisco, I think
18 Cincinnati to a lesser extent.

19 So we're looking at this. And
20 obviously if we have a good funding year
21 next year, this would be something well
22 worth trying.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: With
24 regard to counselors and nurses, do we
25 use the other agencies, the Planned

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2 Parenthood agencies, the Women Against
3 Rape agencies, who can really provide the
4 kind of one-on-one support and counseling
5 that kids need?

6 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. You know,
7 there's a lot more outreach than people
8 realize, or I should say coordination
9 among agencies than people realize. The
10 problem, though, is, many of these
11 agencies are themselves financially
12 strapped. I mean, Human Resources is
13 overwhelmed with the challenges that they
14 face.

15 But let me give you an example
16 of the way we cooperate. Public Safety,
17 we have our Public Safety Task Force. We
18 work very closely with the Police
19 Department, the courts and other
20 intervention agencies, and I think the
21 school-based -- and with community-based
22 organizations, and I think the reason
23 that we've had a lot of success in the
24 reduction of incidents is because of the
25 school-based community policing approach

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2 and the cooperation we've had. Ever
3 since the Mayor created the Task Force,
4 you remember, two years ago after the
5 shooting outside Strawberry Mansion, I
6 mean, I think the cooperation has never
7 been greater, and I think we're seeing
8 the success.

9 We've been able to have success
10 in the schools without changing the
11 definition of what is an arrestable
12 offense. In other words, we still have
13 probably the toughest reporting
14 requirements around when you look at
15 cities like New York and LA where you
16 literally -- I mean, the criteria for
17 determining a persistently dangerous
18 school is almost impossible to achieve.

19 Also, when it comes to Human
20 Resources, we, I believe -- and somebody
21 can give me this number -- we've been
22 coordinating with City agencies to create
23 behavioral support teams in our
24 individual schools, with DHS and others,
25 so that we have using their resources and

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2 our own, we've converted these TSS
3 positions and some of these social
4 service support positions into, in
5 effect, behavioral support specialists,
6 individuals with Master's degrees,
7 individuals who are experts in child
8 psychology and child counseling and
9 things like that, and those teams are now
10 operational in, I think -- can somebody
11 give me the school number now?

12 It's more than -- it was 29 the
13 first year. I think it may be as many as
14 40, 45 schools. But if you look at the
15 proposals in the Mayor's Blue Ribbon
16 Commission on Behavioral Health, youth
17 behavioral health, there are a number of
18 recommendations to enhance that level of
19 cooperation and coordination that do not
20 necessarily require additional funding as
21 much as improve coordination so that we
22 can have a better delivery of social
23 services and of intervention services at
24 the local level. We can do a lot better,
25 but under the Mayor's leadership, we're

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2 doing a heck of a lot more than was ever
3 done before prior to his Administration.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you very much. I'll defer to my
6 colleagues.

7 President Verna.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
9 you very much, Madam Chair.

10 Before I start my line of
11 questioning, one of my constituents, Al
12 Brown, was here earlier. He is the
13 Senior Vice-Chair of the Point Breeze
14 Arts Center. I asked him if he would
15 leave his testimony, we would make it
16 part of the record.

17 And at this point, Mr. Vallas,
18 good afternoon.

19 MR. VALLAS: Good afternoon.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
21 understand that the high school dropout,
22 the rates have become a national crisis.
23 It's not just here in Philadelphia. Can
24 tell us what you believe are the main
25 reasons for our school children dropping

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2 out of school?

3 MR. VALLAS: You know, I'll
4 tell you -- and I have a summary sheet
5 that summarizes my talking points on the
6 Youth Collaborative, and it really
7 answers that question in a little more
8 detail, and I'll circulate a copy. I
9 don't know if it's in your packet. My
10 cheat sheet, I'll give you my cheat
11 sheet.

12 I think the biggest problem --
13 there are a number of problems. I think
14 probably the biggest problem is, the
15 majority of our children in this District
16 are being raised by single parents, and I
17 would submit to you that a large number
18 of them are high school dropouts
19 themselves. And I think what we have
20 here is, there's this expectation that
21 high school graduation isn't something
22 that's expected and that college is
23 something that's beyond their reach.

24 One of the things that drove
25 Chaka Fattah to push the CORE Philly

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2 Scholar initiative was to, in effect,
3 tell children that when they graduated,
4 if they stayed on and graduated high
5 school, college would be financially
6 affordable to them. We would pay for
7 their first year of college, to overcome
8 this perception that college somehow is
9 not affordability and beyond their reach.
10 And I'll tell you, it's interesting,
11 because during the period that the CORE
12 Philly Scholar program has been in
13 effect, our graduation rate has actually
14 risen. According to the State, it's
15 risen higher than the Youth Collaborative
16 report would indicate. I trust the Youth
17 Collaborative report. I've always felt
18 that -- and that states as a whole have a
19 tendency to inflate graduation numbers.

20 But if you look at -- I firmly
21 believe that. Also, if you look at Time
22 Magazine's special edition called
23 "Dropout Nation," they focused on the
24 national dropout phenomena, and they
25 concluded that children are dropping out

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2 for a variety of reasons. Number one, as
3 I pointed out, college is just not part
4 of the expectation, and if you don't
5 think you're going to college, you're
6 less inclined to stay in high school
7 since high school is a prerequisite to
8 college.

9 High school is boring. They
10 can't relate. They don't understand the
11 relevancy of high school. And high
12 school is not financially affordable. I
13 think they cited in some circles either
14 the number one or two reason was this
15 perception that high school was not in
16 their future because it was not
17 financially affordable. So I think these
18 things are reasons why children drop out.

19 Now, what compounds those --
20 and this is just not inner city. This is
21 national.

22 What compounds this problem are
23 other challenges that we face; for
24 example, the late start. I will tell you
25 this: Children starting school at seven

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2 and eight years old is almost fatal from
3 an academic standpoint. When we get kids
4 in early childhood programs and after
5 those early childhood programs when we
6 get them into school on time, we
7 compensate for a lot of things that they
8 don't receive the support on. We can
9 work with the mother and provide the
10 mother with the help so that the mother
11 can manage the basic parenting skills.
12 We can make sure the child's nutritional
13 needs are addressed. We can stimulate
14 the child so that the child, when the
15 child starts kindergarten, the child is
16 ready for kindergarten.

17 So the lack of early
18 intervention, compounded by the fact that
19 many children are being raised by single
20 parents, very inexperienced single
21 parents, that challenge can sometimes be
22 overwhelming, and I think that challenge
23 complicates the problems or combines with
24 the other reasons that I cited, the
25 reasons in the Time Magazine article, to

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2 make things even more complicated.

3 When you look at the three
4 categories of dropouts -- and the Youth
5 Collaborative will talk about this in
6 greater detail -- I think children who
7 are incarcerated drop out at a 90 percent
8 rate. Pregnant teens drop out at a 70
9 percent rate. I don't know what the
10 statistic was of the overage
11 underachievers. But clearly, those were
12 kind of three categories of the highest
13 number of dropouts.

14 So what we're trying to do,
15 Councilwoman Verna, is, we're trying to
16 identify interventions that we can add to
17 our reforms in addition to the kind of
18 comprehensive reforms that we've laid out
19 that help us address this issue. The
20 Cradle to the Classroom Program, if a
21 pregnant teen has a baby, make sure that
22 that pregnant teen is counseled and goes
23 through parent training, make sure that
24 baby is put in daycare and pre-school.
25 You do that for one or two generations

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2 and you're going to do more to break the
3 cycle of poverty and of academic
4 underachievement than anything.

5 Overage underachieving
6 students, the kids that are in 6th, 7th
7 and 8th grade now, when we get those kids
8 of that middle school grade setting -- in
9 2002, my first year here, we had 3,000
10 students in middle grades who had reached
11 the age of 16 before the end of the
12 school year, including 400 6th graders.
13 Now, you don't think that's a disruptive
14 influence, I say rhetorically? If you
15 can move the overage underachiever kids
16 out into these transition schools, into
17 these MGAP classrooms, into these
18 transition middle schools and high
19 schools, you will not only keep them in
20 school and then you provide them with
21 wrap-around services, more intensive
22 instruction, things like that, but you'll
23 get the potentially disruptive kids out
24 of the general school and thus relieve
25 the general school of a critical burden.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 And then, finally -- and I've
3 been talking to every mayoral candidate
4 and every elected official I can ad
5 nauseam about this, and this is building
6 on the CORE Philly Scholar initiative
7 that Chaka Fattah has pushed forward. I
8 said if we could tell all of our high
9 school kids that if they get to their
10 senior year, if they got to their senior
11 year, we would provide them with not only
12 a scholarship, regardless of their
13 grades, but we would provide them with an
14 opportunity their senior year to actually
15 enroll in college and take college
16 courses before they graduated -- and we
17 have a dual enrollment program now -- but
18 we would also give them a job, a college
19 job. We would give them a job, an
20 internship, a paid internship.

21 So if we told the kids, You get
22 through your junior year and we'll get
23 you a summer job, we'll get you an
24 after-school job, you'll be able to take
25 college courses before you've graduated,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 and when you graduate, you'll get a first
3 year scholarship, let me tell you, you
4 start telling the 6th graders that now
5 and those 6th graders -- when I talk to
6 6th graders about scholarships and I talk
7 to 6th graders about high school choices,
8 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, you can hear a
9 pin drop, because too many of our
10 children don't think college is
11 financially affordable. Too many of our
12 children are searching for some work to
13 generate some income. Too many of our
14 children don't believe they have choices.

15 So when you provide those
16 incentives, then you can begin to create
17 a college culture, because then you can
18 begin to tell the young kids in primary
19 grades and middle grades that this is
20 something there for you, it's yours, you
21 can have it if you get this far.

22 So those are some of the
23 reasons I think for the high dropout
24 rate. It's also some of the -- I don't
25 want to call them stop gap, but some of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 the interventions that I think we need to
3 initiate to address the population of
4 potential dropouts that we have right
5 here deciding whether or not they're
6 going to continue to come to school or
7 they're going to hit the streets.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Whoa.
9 Thank you. I guess I was distracted a
10 couple times when you were testifying.
11 Did you indicate the current dropout rate
12 at the School District and how it's
13 computed?

14 MR. VALLAS: I'm going to let
15 the Youth Collaborative do that. They
16 can go through their methodology, because
17 there's like three or four different
18 ways --

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
20 know. Every jurisdiction seems to
21 compute in a different way.

22 MR. VALLAS: Obviously we track
23 the kids once they leave 8th grade, have
24 they dropped out. And we're just not
25 looking at a one-year rate as much as

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 we're looking at the overall rate, which
3 is why we look at graduation rates and
4 dropout rates.

5 But you're right, because like
6 New York, New York State, the city says
7 their graduation rate is 58 percent. The
8 State says it's 56 percent. And
9 Educational Week, when they did their
10 study, said it was 39 percent. So
11 they're all over the board.

12 Our graduation rate, according
13 to the State, was, I don't know, 66, 68
14 percent, but yet the Youth Collaborative
15 identified the graduation rate, I think,
16 at 47 -- 57 or 58 percent. I don't know
17 what the statistic was.

18 But the reason we embarked upon
19 this study is, we wanted to really
20 develop the best methodology for
21 computing the dropout rate and then to
22 identify the categories of dropouts and
23 determine the unique characteristics of
24 these dropouts so that we can do earlier
25 intervention once we identify children

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 who are likely to drop out and tailor our
3 programs to meet the specific needs of
4 the dropout, be they the pregnant teens
5 or, for that matter, the incarcerated
6 youth or the overage underachievers.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

8 Mr. Vallas, can you tell me how we
9 compare to the national average of
10 dropouts?

11 MR. VALLAS: Well, you know
12 what's funny, Education Week, when they
13 did their study, our graduation rate --
14 and they didn't do dropout rate. They
15 did graduation rate, because a lot of
16 kids may drop out but then they get back
17 into school and they graduate. And the
18 graduation rate put us at the mid 50's,
19 and their data was 2002-2003.

20 And we were, incidentally, I
21 think first or second among the old
22 industrial city schools. There are 50
23 schools that they listed, but like New
24 York, LA, I think we were like first or
25 second, and we were right in the middle

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 of the 50 largest school districts, but
3 that includes like Raleigh and some of
4 these others.

5 In the Youth Collaborative
6 study, they had a little index where they
7 took select schools, the traditional
8 cities, let's call them, and I think we
9 were ranked either second or third when
10 it came to graduation rates. So at least
11 according to these studies, we're average
12 or above average.

13 But bragging about a 55 or 58
14 percent graduation rate is like bragging
15 that you're in the first-class section on
16 the Titanic. The bottom line is, the
17 ship is still going down and you don't
18 have a life jacket.

19 So we probably compare
20 favorably, but let me tell you, the
21 numbers are dismal across the board. So
22 I'm not heartened by the fact that our
23 graduation rate may be higher than New
24 York's, Detroit's or even Chicago's or
25 LA, because the graduation rate is just

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 unacceptably low.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

4 Mr. Vallas, what are the vocational
5 training programs that the District
6 offers its students? Do you believe that
7 if we strengthen these programs, more
8 students would stay in school and be
9 better prepared --

10 MR. VALLAS: Yeah.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: -- to
12 enter the workforce? You know, reading
13 the report from Johns Hopkins, one of the
14 reasons that children leave is because
15 they're bored. Maybe if we put them into
16 vocational training programs, it will
17 help them and certainly make it much
18 easier to join the workforce.

19 MR. VALLAS: Right. Well, one
20 of the proposals in our partnership with
21 the Youth Collaborative initiative is to
22 dramatically expand dual enrollment
23 programs, and when I talk about dual
24 enrollment, I am talking about not only
25 dual enrollment in colleges,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 universities, dual enrollment so children
3 can, in effect, be enrolled in job
4 training, job preparation, work skill
5 programs, vocational ed programs while
6 they're in high school. Because, look,
7 the old vocational educational programs
8 in this District, which, incidentally,
9 were not maintained for 10, 15 years, I
10 mean, many of these programs were
11 obsolete and irrelevant, and what we've
12 been doing is, we've been working to, in
13 effect, clean up those programs and get
14 those programs certified again, because I
15 think only six or seven of our programs
16 were certified and now I think 60 or 65
17 are, just to basically upgrade the
18 programs that --

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Can
20 you tell us which were certified?

21 MR. VALLAS: I can give you a
22 list. I can have Lori Analoff put
23 together a list of those previously
24 certified and those certified now.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 what are your plans for the future?

3 MR. VALLAS: Well, our plans
4 are threefold. One is to upgrade and
5 improve the physical condition in the
6 programs that we have, get them certified
7 and, in effect, do the equipment upgrades
8 that we need to have. That's number one.

9 Number two, to expand our
10 off-campus enrollment program. In other
11 words, they are from Community College to
12 DeVry to private providers, who do a heck
13 of a better job in job training and
14 workforce development and workforce
15 preparation than we do. So, I mean, we
16 have 80 colleges, universities,
17 institutions of higher learning, many of
18 them with work study programs, not to
19 mention -- and those, incidentally,
20 include -- higher ed also includes the
21 vocational technical training programs.
22 Manor College, for example, we have 75
23 kids at Manor College who attend
24 Northeast High School in the afternoons.
25 They're taking courses at Manor College.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 So the second approach is to go out and
3 partner and to buy space in those
4 programs.

5 The third approach has been to
6 establish these academies, and by
7 "academies," I'm talking about the Sunoco
8 Academy, establish academies with --
9 Sunoco, for example, has an academy
10 program in Bache. Lockheed Martin has an
11 academy program in three high schools.
12 The Exelon and one of the other providers
13 are looking at establishing an academy
14 program in a couple of our high schools.
15 A number of the hospitals have healthcare
16 academy programs in one of our high
17 schools. St. Christopher has a
18 healthcare academy in Olney.

19 So the whole idea is to bring
20 in the employer, design a program in the
21 school that matches the employer's needs,
22 do the buildout, whatever, then they
23 provide the internships, the
24 apprenticeships so, in effect, we can
25 alter or modify our electives to prepare

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 them for those jobs.

3 So, once again, threefold:

4 Upgrade what we have physically, number
5 one; number two, dual enrollment; and
6 then, number three, establish academy
7 programs.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: How
9 many students would you say are in these
10 programs?

11 MR. VALLAS: I'd have to give
12 you that number.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'd
14 be curious to know how many of these
15 so-called academies we have and how many
16 students --

17 MR. VALLAS: Okay.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: -- we
19 have attending.

20 Can you tell us, please, how
21 does the District interact with the
22 City's Health Department, the Department
23 of Human Services and many other agencies
24 in an effort to keep students in school?
25 What additional assistance and/or

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 coordination with these agencies would be
3 helpful?

4 MR. VALLAS: Do you want me to
5 provide a written response or I can bring
6 someone up to -- I mean, we can spend an
7 hour talking about that.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
9 Either way it would be fine.

10 MR. VALLAS: I'll be more than
11 happy, if I can ask my staff. Brenda
12 Taylor, who is our Director of
13 Specialized Education Services, she
14 interfaces with all the social service
15 support agencies, and we'll be more than
16 happy on a very short memo to summarize
17 the cooperation and partnerships that we
18 have them. Okay?

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
20 you.

21 I know I have a number of other
22 questions that I would like to ask you,
23 but I see that other Councilmembers would
24 like to ask you some questions.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 you, Council President.

3 Councilman Goode, then

4 Councilman Savage.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,

6 Madam Chair.

7 Good afternoon, Mr. Vallas.

8 MR. VALLAS: Good afternoon.

9 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Mr. Vallas,
10 who conducted your final interview for
11 your job?

12 MR. VALLAS: The School Reform
13 Commission, all five Commission members.

14 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Within that
15 interview, was the dropout rate
16 mentioned?

17 MR. VALLAS: I think we ran the
18 gamut. We talked about closing the gap.
19 We talked about --

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Do you
21 specifically remember anyone referring to
22 the dropout rate within that interview?

23 MR. VALLAS: I remember being
24 asked about dropout rate and then dropout
25 intervention programs.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And what did
3 they say the dropout rate was at that
4 point?

5 MR. VALLAS: I don't remember.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What was the
7 charge given to you as potential CEO with
8 regard to the dropout rate?

9 MR. VALLAS: Well, I don't
10 think there was a specific charge per the
11 dropout rate. The dropout rate was to
12 close the gap and to improve academic
13 achievement. Also, the School Reform
14 Commission set a number of goals laid out
15 in the Declaration of Education,
16 identifying certain goals for the
17 District to achieve that would define us
18 as being a high-quality school district.

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: My question
20 was whether you were given a specific
21 charge.

22 MR. VALLAS: At the time I was
23 hired, no. The charge was improving the
24 graduation rate and improving test
25 scores. There were no specific

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 increments.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Let's shift
4 to academic performance. How are young
5 black males performing in the District?

6 MR. VALLAS: Well, I think the
7 majority of children in this District are
8 still underperforming in terms of they're
9 not at proficiency, the majority of the
10 children are.

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: How are
12 young black males performing in the
13 District?

14 MR. VALLAS: I'll give you the
15 specific details, but I would say about
16 over 60 percent are not at proficiency.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: About 60
18 percent are not at proficiency?

19 MR. VALLAS: Right.

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: How has that
21 changed under your tenure?

22 MR. VALLAS: Well, in the area
23 of math, it's more than doubled. In the
24 area of reading, I think it's improved by
25 about 50 percent. But I can give you the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 specific breakdown, disaggregated data,
3 by test scores. For example,
4 underprivileged children, 11 percent of
5 the underprivileged children --

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: My specific
7 question is, how are young black males
8 performing in the District and how has it
9 changed under your tenure?

10 MR. VALLAS: And what I'm
11 saying is, there has been dramatic
12 improvement, and I'll be more than happy
13 to give you those specifics.

14 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You don't
15 have any specifics right now?

16 MR. VALLAS: I can generalize,
17 but I can't give you the exact specific
18 test score performance.

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Feel free to
20 generalize.

21 MR. VALLAS: Well, as I
22 mentioned, I believe that the math scores
23 have improved by close to 50 percent --
24 or I'm sorry; that math scores have
25 dramatically --

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Have
3 improved from what to what?

4 MR. VALLAS: I'll give you the
5 numbers. I'll get the disaggregated data
6 for you and I'll read off the test
7 scores.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What's the
9 dropout rate of young black males?

10 MR. VALLAS: I'll have to break
11 that out.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: How does the
13 dropout rate affect measurement of high
14 school test performance?

15 MR. VALLAS: How does it affect
16 the measure of high school test
17 performance?

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Do you
19 account for dropouts at all in measuring
20 success or failure or are dropouts just
21 removed from the equation altogether?

22 MR. VALLAS: Well, we test
23 children who are enrolled in the schools.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So, in other
25 words, if you've dropped out or you're

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 truant or just don't take the test,
3 you're basing your success or failure
4 based upon who actually was there and
5 took the test?

6 MR. VALLAS: Well, we test
7 children who are officially enrolled.
8 So, in other words, if a child is
9 officially enrolled but that child is not
10 attending school but that child is on our
11 roster and that school does not -- and
12 that child is not tested, then even if
13 the school experienced improved test
14 scores, that school can be disqualified
15 from making AYP for having poor test
16 turnout. But if a student drops out of a
17 school, if a student is not attending an
18 individual school or in a specific school
19 district, then obviously they're not
20 going to be tested.

21 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So is it
22 safe to say that if your overage
23 underachievers, those people who are not
24 performing, who do not feel they can
25 perform, drop out of school, then your

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 high school test scores would go up?

3 MR. VALLAS: Well, I think what
4 I'm saying is if your --

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: That was a
6 question. I wasn't asking whether you
7 said that. I was asking, is it safe to
8 say that if those overage underachievers,
9 those people, in many cases young black
10 males, do not feel that they can perform
11 within the District and they simply drop
12 out, that your test scores, your high
13 school test scores, will go up?

14 MR. VALLAS: Well, if children
15 who are --

16 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Because
17 you're not testing the people you can't
18 reach.

19 MR. VALLAS: Right. If
20 children who are underachieving are not
21 in school, obviously the test scores
22 would be higher than if they were in
23 school being tested.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So your test
25 scores may have gone up related to those

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 people dropping out of the system and so
3 you've actually not necessarily just
4 succeeded in terms of those people who
5 you have tested, but you've also failed
6 to those people who dropped out?

7 MR. VALLAS: Well, let me
8 respond by saying your question assumes
9 that the dropout rate has been going up,
10 and it hasn't. Your question also
11 assumes that -- because comparing apples
12 to apples, if you look at the statistics,
13 the graduation rate has actually been
14 climbing. So one could argue that us
15 keeping more kids in school compared to
16 past years, previous years and previous
17 superintendents, should have resulted in
18 slower growth in test scores.

19 So the bottom line here is, we
20 can talk about what the dropout rate or
21 the graduation rate is. The fact remains
22 the dropout rate is not lower than it was
23 when I came in. According to the State,
24 it's higher in terms of the graduation
25 rate. The dropout rate appears to have

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 declined. So one can argue that we are
3 testing more kids and we're keeping more
4 kids in school, thus that would put a
5 downward pressure on test scores as
6 opposed to an upward pressure, just to
7 point that out.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'll get
9 back to that in a second. What
10 correlation do you see between the
11 current murder rate and the dropout rate?

12 MR. VALLAS: Well, if you're
13 trying to blame the schools for --

14 COUNCILMAN GOODE: No. I asked
15 you a question. What correlation do you
16 see between the current murder rate and
17 the dropout rate? You can answer it or
18 not answer it, but I'm not trying to
19 blame anybody. I asked a question.

20 MR. VALLAS: I'm not going to
21 answer it because --

22 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You're not
23 going to answer the question?

24 MR. VALLAS: Well, I can't give
25 you an exact correlation. I will say

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 this in response to your question, that
3 the majority of children incarcerated,
4 the majority of individuals who are in
5 prisons are not college graduates and,
6 for that matter, the majority have
7 dropped out of high school. So I can't
8 tell you that definitively.

9 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Let me ask
10 you a question. How many young black
11 males and young Latino males have dropped
12 out under your tenure?

13 MR. VALLAS: I'd have to give
14 you that number.

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You don't
16 know?

17 MR. VALLAS: I can't tell you
18 off the top of my head, but I'll be more
19 than happy to give you that.

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So you
21 probably have no idea how many of them
22 have been killed or have killed someone
23 either?

24 MR. VALLAS: Well, if you're
25 asking me that information, I can

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 certainly try to secure it for you.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay. Of
4 the murders this year -- I think right
5 now we may be at 384. I've asked this
6 question to the Administration, several
7 people. This is not something I'm just
8 asking you.

9 MR. VALLAS: No, no, no. I
10 don't take offense to it.

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Out of the
12 victims and perpetrators, how many do you
13 think were high school dropouts?

14 MR. VALLAS: I can give you
15 that. If we --

16 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Actually, I
17 was told that you couldn't.

18 MR. VALLAS: If we accessed --

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I would be
20 very interested if you could give me that
21 information.

22 MR. VALLAS: I'll be more than
23 happy to give you that. Absolutely. If
24 we have the names of the victims, we can
25 tell you how many -- or the victimizers,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 we can tell you --

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Because I've
4 been told by the Mayor, by the Secretary
5 of Education, by the Director of Social
6 Services and everyone else that that
7 information is not available, has not
8 been provided by the School District and
9 it can't be tracked, and I've asked
10 everyone involved in this issue --

11 MR. VALLAS: Well, you haven't
12 asked me yet.

13 COUNCILMAN GOODE: -- to begin
14 to track it. I'm asking you now.

15 MR. VALLAS: Sure. I'll be
16 more than happy to get you that
17 information.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: But the
19 first question was, how many -- and I'm
20 asking you now to just generalize off the
21 top of your head -- of the 384 people who
22 were murdered, how many do you believe
23 were high school dropouts?

24 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. I can't --
25 I will not want to guesstimate on that,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 but if I had the names of those
3 individuals, I can tell you how many
4 were.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay.

6 MR. VALLAS: And I'm sure if --
7 I mean, it's easy to get the names, and
8 then you go back and you track where they
9 came from and --

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm going to
11 throw out a number and I'm going to guess
12 that I'm probably going to be pretty
13 close to it. I'm going to say 80
14 percent.

15 MR. VALLAS: Oh, I don't know
16 about that, but, again --

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Let me
18 finish. I'm going to say 80 percent.

19 MR. VALLAS: Okay.

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: If 80
21 percent of the people who were murdered
22 this year were high school dropouts, do
23 you think it's actually fair to just put
24 them into categories of overage
25 underachievers; to suggest that their

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 parents were high school dropouts,
3 therefore they're going to be high school
4 dropouts; to suggest any of those things
5 that you have done today and to simply
6 say that, Well, we need to come up with
7 different pilot programs and try a bunch
8 of test programs?

9 We're actually talking about a
10 significant portion of our population, a
11 significant portion of young adult males
12 in the City. We're actually talking
13 about an epidemic among young men of
14 color. We're talking about an epidemic
15 in terms of a high school dropout. We're
16 talking about an epidemic in terms of
17 failed academic performance. And not
18 just in terms of those who you test, but
19 particularly those who you haven't
20 tested.

21 So I don't accept higher test
22 scores as meaning anything if there are
23 people who you have not reached in this
24 City, you cannot reach, were never given
25 that charge and even of your own

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 statement saying those were not your
3 primary goals as CEO, you were given
4 different goals by the SRC, your goals
5 were not to effect the dropout rate.

6 MR. VALLAS: Yes, they were.

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Your goals
8 were --

9 MR. VALLAS: Yes. Read the
10 Declaration of Education that's in your
11 packet.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I asked you
13 specifically in your final interview.

14 MR. VALLAS: I said that the
15 School Reform Commission set a number of
16 goals that would define us as a district.
17 It includes graduation rates, it includes
18 the percentage of children going to
19 college, it includes test scores, it
20 includes student behavior, it includes
21 partnership. It's in your packet. And
22 incidentally, we've distributed these
23 goals every year.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Did you
25 understand specifically I'm asking about

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 the fact that there are young black
3 males --

4 MR. VALLAS: I understand. I
5 have to deal with that every day. I've
6 been to the funerals, Councilman.

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: -- who the
8 District is not reaching?

9 MR. VALLAS: Well, you know,
10 let's just say that we're trying to
11 reach. But I've come before this Council
12 every year and I've had conversations
13 with this Council about ways that we
14 could access additional help every year.
15 I've had those conversations lightly
16 publicly, and I've had those
17 conversations more deeply privately. The
18 bottom line is, the Youth Collaborative
19 is bringing an initiative before this
20 City Council and before the Legislature
21 that they have been partnering with us on
22 for the last two years on how to stem the
23 dropout rate.

24 Now, I think given the fact --
25 and I think the Mayor very eloquently

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 said it, the challenges that we face in
3 the City cannot be just laid on -- I'm
4 willing to take my share of the blame any
5 time, any way. In fact, I'll take more
6 of the blame, but the bottom line here
7 is, we have a collective responsibility
8 to identify those programs that work and
9 take them to scale. You're going to have
10 an opportunity to do that in a very
11 specific way, Councilman. You're going
12 to have an opportunity to decide whether
13 or not you want to take programs to scale
14 that will stem the dropout rate in the
15 City, and those programs are very
16 specific and they have specific results.
17 And I'll be more than happy to work with
18 you to lobby Harrisburg for that support,
19 but that support is also going to have to
20 come from the City Council.

21 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So you're in
22 your fifth year and you're coming here
23 talking about creating new programs that
24 will eventually go to scale.

25 MR. VALLAS: No, no. You know

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2 what, I've come here every year and I've
3 had conversations with Councilmembers
4 every year about ways that we could
5 secure additional resources to help move
6 this School District forward.

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: This is not
8 an issue of money for me. Let me make a
9 statement to you.

10 MR. VALLAS: No, no, no. The
11 implication is that I'm just showing up
12 here now asking for this.

13 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Excuse me.

14 MR. VALLAS: Okay.

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm willing
16 to commit every dime of our fund balance
17 toward education, but the issue is -- and
18 I'm willing to say that publicly. I
19 don't have a problem with that at all.

20 MR. VALLAS: Okay.

21 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Money is not
22 the issue for me. For me the issue is
23 how it's going to be spent.

24 MR. VALLAS: You know what,
25 money --

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And whether
3 this system actually works.

4 MR. VALLAS: You know what --

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And whether
6 it works for everyone. That's part of my
7 charge.

8 MR. VALLAS: Well, guess what.
9 Money is the issue, too. Because
10 everybody says money is not the issue,
11 let's figure out what the numbers are.
12 Hey, let's verify the numbers. That's an
13 excuse not to provide more money. It's
14 going to -- you need to get 100 percent
15 of the kids, the pregnant teens, you need
16 to get 100 percent of those kids in the
17 Cradle Program. That's money. That's
18 the issue. You need to have transition
19 schools for the overage underachievers.
20 That's money. That's the issue.

21 You know, I've been in public
22 life for 20 years and I've heard the same
23 old story, it's accountability, we need
24 to verify the numbers.

25 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I hope

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 you're having fun, because I'm ready for
3 you when you're finished.

4 MR. VALLAS: I'm sorry,
5 Councilman. Money is the issue.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: The issue
7 for me is not just intervention. Once
8 they get of high school age, by that time
9 you've probably already lost them. Well,
10 we've probably lost them. I'm going to
11 use the word "we." And we discussed this
12 last time you were here. If you can
13 predict by third grade reading scores
14 when people are going to drop out, then
15 the intervention should start then.

16 MR. VALLAS: That's right, 6th
17 grade.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So I'm
19 asking you what your track record is,
20 what your track record is during your
21 tenure.

22 MR. VALLAS: I think my track
23 record is that we've seen an increase in
24 graduation rates, a decline in dropout
25 rates. We've seen a significant, I

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 think, decline in serious incident
3 reports. We've seen an increase in the
4 number of kids going to college. We've
5 seen an improvement in test scores. And
6 I think that track record compares very
7 favorably to the track record of other
8 big city superintendents.

9 That said and done, it's --

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Is it --

11 MR. VALLAS: No, no, no. You
12 asked the question. Let me give you the
13 answer.

14 COUNCILMAN GOODE: No, no. The
15 specific question --

16 MR. VALLAS: That said and
17 done --

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: The specific
19 question I'm asking is the specific
20 epidemic that relates to young black
21 males that starts with
22 underachievement --

23 MR. VALLAS: And what I want --

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Let me
25 finish -- (continued) it starts with

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 underachievement, then leads toward
3 higher rates of drop out and it leads
4 toward being murdered or murdering. I'm
5 asking what your specific track record is
6 with regard to young black males and
7 whether you take that as a specific
8 charge, when you talk to me about
9 programs and how the system is achieving
10 in general. You want to talk to me about
11 how good a job you've been doing --

12 MR. VALLAS: No, no, no. Look,
13 I'm saying -- you're asking me for
14 comparisons. I'm giving you comparisons.
15 Am I satisfied with the progress we've
16 made? No. But I can sit back here since
17 you're -- I can sit back here since
18 you're comparing --

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm not
20 comparing. I'm asking you specifically
21 about young black males.

22 MR. VALLAS: Since the
23 implication of your question is that
24 somehow our academic failure --

25 COUNCILMAN GOODE: It's a

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 question. It's not an implication.

3 MR. VALLAS: -- that our
4 academic failure is contributing to the
5 murder rate, and I could also sit back
6 and I could also say, Well, what's been
7 your role in helping the District address
8 some of the critical issues? What about
9 the role of police in the schools? What
10 about the role of providing more persons
11 intervention service?

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Mr. Vallas,
13 this is not going to work today. I asked
14 you what your track record is.

15 MR. VALLAS: And I told you my
16 track record. My track record --

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And let me
18 explain to you why else it's not going to
19 work. Because you don't question me
20 here. I question you.

21 MR. VALLAS: Well, I have the
22 opportunity to respond to a question with
23 a question.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Actually,
25 you don't.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 MR. VALLAS: Okay. Well...

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What is your
4 track record with regard to reversing the
5 trend of underachievement by black males
6 in the system?

7 MR. VALLAS: I think my track
8 record is good vis-a-vis other
9 superintendents and other large
10 districts. Is it satisfactory? No.

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm trying
12 to figure out what it is.

13 MR. VALLAS: I answered your
14 question.

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What is it?
16 You're comparing it to other people in
17 the District. What is your track record?

18 MR. VALLAS: I'll be more than
19 happy to give you the detailed growth by
20 race and income and social group, both
21 test scores, graduation rates, and then
22 you can draw your own conclusion, but I
23 think the conclusion you will draw is
24 that it's --

25 COUNCILMAN GOODE: If you can

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 just tell me, I'd be happy.

3 MR. VALLAS: Well, I can't give
4 you the exact numbers now. I'll be more
5 than happy to submit it to you.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You don't
7 know. You can simply say, I don't know.

8 MR. VALLAS: You know what,
9 I'll provide the information to you.
10 Would that be satisfactory? Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You could
12 also say you don't know what your track
13 record is.

14 MR. VALLAS: No, no. My track
15 record is good. I told you.

16 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What is it?

17 MR. VALLAS: I can't give you
18 the exact specifics.

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I didn't
20 think so. Thank you.

21 MR. VALLAS: Well, thank you.
22 All right.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
24 Councilman Savage.

25 COUNCILMAN SAVAGE: Thank you,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Madam Chair.

3 Mr. Vallas, one of the warning
4 signs that children will eventually drop
5 out of school is a high number of
6 absences. In all likelihood, a truant
7 student will eventually drop out.

8 Recently, a program has been
9 developed by the Mayor, the School
10 District and the Family Court in order to
11 crack down on the number of truants in
12 the District by holding parents
13 accountable. Could you explain how this
14 program will work?

15 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. The program
16 is threefold, and it's designed to expand
17 upon three School District initiatives.
18 The first initiative is to expand the
19 number of parent truant officers. The
20 way that program will work is, in effect,
21 more parent truant officers, more home
22 visits. More home visits, more
23 follow-up.

24 The District has historically
25 had about anywhere from 100 to 200 parent

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2 truant officers. The District has
3 historically had parent help desks and
4 contracts with community-based
5 organizations to have parents and
6 community people in the schools working
7 in a variety of social service
8 categories.

9 But what the Mayor wants to do
10 is to finance the hiring of at least an
11 additional 300 parent truant officers,
12 and those parent truant officers will
13 work in the schools 20 hours a week and
14 they will, in effect, make home visits.
15 So that if a child is absent in excess of
16 three days, those parent truant officers
17 will make a home visit and a follow-up
18 visit.

19 When they make the home visit,
20 they have an opportunity to assess the
21 situation. They can assess and evaluate
22 the situation and they can make referrals
23 to social service agencies. They can
24 call the police, if need be. They can
25 call in DHS, et cetera. So they can

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2 provide certain social service
3 interventions if they determine that
4 that's needed. Or if they need
5 additional help, they can contact our
6 crisis intervention services and we can
7 go out and address the needs.

8 In addition, the parent truant
9 officers will also not only make home
10 visits to reach those children who have
11 not been attending school, but if you
12 have a child who has attended school
13 regularly and the parent has been absent,
14 the parent isn't coming and picking up
15 the report card, the parent isn't coming
16 to parent/teacher conferences, the
17 parents have been unresponsive, the child
18 is disheveled or the child obviously
19 appears to have been neglected
20 nutritionally, whatever, the parent
21 truant officer can make a home visit to
22 track down the truant parent, so to
23 speak.

24 So the truancy program is not
25 only designed to reach the child but also

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2 to reach the parent. But all the truant
3 officers will be trained to do kind of
4 social service referrals.

5 The second component of the
6 truant officer program -- or the dropout
7 prevention program is to expand the
8 Saturday program. This is the Saturday
9 program for children and parents and
10 guardians, children who have been
11 chronically absent and children who have
12 been chronically badly behaved. So if
13 you have a child who has been disruptive
14 but they haven't violated the zero
15 tolerance policy and if you have a child
16 who has been absent unexcused for X
17 number of days -- I think the number is
18 three -- the children can be required to
19 attend a series of successive Saturday
20 programs, and they must attend that
21 program with a parent, foster parent or
22 guardian.

23 At the Saturday program, the
24 child and the parent or guardian is
25 provided with certain wrap-around

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2 services. So, in other words, there will
3 be representatives from social service
4 agencies there, like DHS and others.
5 Right now we have ten Smart Sites, and
6 the plan is to expand those Smart Sites
7 eventually to the 29 beacon sites. These
8 are 29 schools that are open on Saturday
9 for the beacon program. So we'll be able
10 to get thousands of children and their
11 parents in these Saturday programs.

12 And then the third program, the
13 third major initiative -- there are other
14 elements of this, too, but the third
15 major initiative is an expanded outreach
16 initiative with the courts, because
17 obviously your last recourse is court
18 intervention or, for that matter,
19 sometimes reassigning the child or
20 placing the child in a foster home or
21 sometimes imposing fines or whatever.

22 So those are the three main
23 components. We have elements of this
24 program at all levels. I don't want to
25 say they're pilots because they're not,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 but this allows us to expand these
3 programs dramatically.

4 Where we've had parent truant
5 officers, we've had success. Schools
6 that have had regular parent truant
7 officers for the past four years have
8 better attendance, better test scores,
9 better behavior. So this would allow us
10 to really take this program to scale; in
11 other words, have a team of parent truant
12 officers and community climate people in
13 virtually all of our schools, all of our
14 K-to-8 elementary schools.

15 COUNCILMAN SAVAGE: Thank you,
16 Mr. Vallas.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much.

19 We have to permit the
20 stenographer to break. We'll take a
21 five-minute break.

22 (Short recess.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much. We are ready to move. I
25 know this is one of the most exciting

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 days you've had this year.

3 Thank you. We're promising
4 Mr. Vallas that as soon as our testimony
5 is finished, we will invite the student
6 up who has been waiting all day. Thank
7 you for noticing. Thank you.

8 We would now like to entertain
9 a few questions from Councilwoman
10 Blondell Reynolds Brown and then
11 Councilman Greenlee.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair.

14 I would like to go back to one
15 of the reasons that brought us here, and
16 that was the \$70 million plus deficit.
17 You acknowledge four findings, I guess,
18 or reasons for why we got here, the
19 proceeds from the late receipt of the
20 revenues from the sale of property and
21 the number of others.

22 What lessons have we learned
23 going forward so that we don't -- we may
24 have other conversations and we will, but
25 on this particular issue around the \$70

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2 million and the surprise that so many of
3 us got, what lessons have we learned from
4 that?

5 MR. VALLAS: Well, a couple
6 things. One of the things that we're
7 doing in this year's budget is, we're
8 going to budget a very low rate of
9 salvage and we're going to raise kind of
10 the minimum term pay estimates in our
11 budget. I mean, I think our assumptions
12 about salvage were much higher than
13 anticipated. While they're historic,
14 they're much higher. So we're going to
15 lower that amount. I think this year
16 we're budgeting \$6 million in salvage.

17 Now, I think the City's number
18 is probably four times, five times, but
19 we would rather err on the side of
20 caution, so that if we have more salvage
21 than anticipated, it will just give us
22 additional money that we can roll over
23 into programs the next year.

24 It's the same thing on term
25 pay. Our estimates on term pay, which is

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 the payouts for people who leave the
3 system, and our estimates on salvage,
4 which is unspent appropriations, I think
5 they are unrealistic based on last year's
6 results. So we're making adjustments to
7 reflect last year's results.

8 What that will do is, that will
9 guarantee that we won't have surprises in
10 these two categories again, and that if
11 we do have a surprise, it will be on the
12 positive side. It won't lead us to raise
13 the number the following year. It's just
14 that if we get the windfall, great. It's
15 more money to spend, more money we can
16 put in our reserve.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Was the
18 fiscal FAR, I believe you called it,
19 Fiscal Accountability Review Unit, a
20 direct result of --

21 MR. VALLAS: Yes, ma'am.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- the
23 deficit?

24 MR. VALLAS: Yes.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Speak to

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 what it is.

3 MR. VALLAS: Ongoing. That --

4 I'm sorry.

5 MS. DUNGEE GLENN: If I may,

6 Councilwoman, the Financial

7 Accountability Unit, the FAU you're

8 referring to, that was an entity that was

9 created, if you would, by the School

10 Reform Commission and adopted in

11 November. And, yes, the intent of having

12 that ongoing unit, which is made up of

13 appointees on the Commission, our senior

14 CFO, as well as an appointee from the

15 CEO's office, is to maintain an ongoing

16 oversight of both programmatic and budget

17 issues, so there's realtime information

18 being shared and brought back to the

19 School Reform Commission. And, of

20 course, that would be available to City

21 Council or the Mayor's office and also

22 our state partners. And we're really

23 looking at that being one of ten measures

24 that were put in place to really tighten

25 up on what we view as important and

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 necessary management policies that were
3 in place, but really refocusing on them
4 and then adding others where we thought
5 they were weak.

6 So, yes, that is part of a
7 ten-point plan, if you would, and one
8 that is going to be ongoing, and I
9 believe it will be very beneficial, both
10 management and to the School Reform
11 Commission, to keep a better view of this
12 budget throughout the school year.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that's
14 a formally adopted new practice?

15 MR. DUNGEE GLENN: That's
16 correct.

17 MR. VALLAS: Yes. It's the
18 same thing with the Parent and Community
19 Budgetary Review entity. That will be a
20 permanent entity. As you know, the Home
21 and School Councils who are housed in the
22 central office and have access and
23 participate in the School District's
24 cabinet meetings, we want to set up a
25 formal -- they want to set up a formal

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2 budget review. It will be beneficial not
3 only in terms of giving them access to
4 the budget documents and all the detail,
5 but also they're going to work with us to
6 design a budget supplement that's easier
7 for parents to understand and more
8 accessible, and we're also going to set
9 up a website that parents can access to
10 get information from them on budget and
11 finance issues.

12 And then what will also emerge
13 from this will be an opportunity to have
14 more public meetings on budget issues,
15 preferably at night, preferably in the
16 community, which will be run and hosted
17 by the Home and School Council
18 Association and other parent and
19 community groups. So that, I think, is
20 going to be a permanent feature of this
21 reform.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.
23 Now, the issues of our dropout rate and
24 truancy also brought us here, and you
25 reference in your testimony the work of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 the Blue Reform Commission.

3 MR. VALLAS: Yes. The Blue
4 Ribbon Task Force on Behavioral Health.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes. Many
6 of us have participated in those
7 year-long hearings, and one of the
8 glaring findings, although not new, not a
9 terrible surprise, is still the gap of
10 communication across systems.

11 MR. VALLAS: Right.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: The need
13 for us to still figure out how we do that
14 better. So to that question, what role
15 do you believe DHS could have or should
16 have when it comes to increasing the
17 number of youth who graduate from high
18 school?

19 MR. VALLAS: Well, let me just
20 give you one example. When students are
21 truant and when they're chronically
22 truant, you have a couple of recourses.
23 Because, again, about 65, 70 percent of
24 the children who are absent are absent
25 unexcused, and when students -- and you

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2 have a choice. If students are absent
3 unexcused and consistently absent
4 unexcused, what do you do? Do you
5 suspend them? Well, great. Then they
6 just stay home anyway, you know. I mean,
7 the more you suspend kids, the greater
8 the likelihood they're going to stay home
9 and they're not going to come back. So
10 you have that dilemma.

11 So what recourse can you take?
12 Well, there's a couple recourses. One
13 is, if students are chronically absent
14 without excuses, you can take them to
15 court or you can take their parents to
16 court. And let me point out that we do.
17 We have mobile courts. We have family
18 courts. We have the mobile rotating
19 family court. So a lot of times we will
20 pursue legal recourse and we'll go to
21 court to get the parent, foster parent or
22 guardian to get the child back into
23 school.

24 Another recourse is a goal to
25 DHS. And we make a lot of referrals to

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 DHS for children who are chronically
3 absent. I mean, the case that was cited
4 in the Inquirer Sunday about the child,
5 not only did we make a referral but an
6 assistant principal and a special
7 education coordinator actually visited
8 the home, because the child -- this child
9 wasn't absent. This child just wasn't
10 enrolled in school, trying to get the
11 child enrolled in school.

12 So we'll make referrals,
13 because a lot of times the children and
14 the family will be in the care or under
15 the supervision of DHS or, for that
16 matter, they should be under the
17 supervision of DHS. But then that -- and
18 I can give you the data on the number of
19 referrals that we make a year to either
20 the courts or to social service agencies
21 and to DHS. And they're in the thousands
22 and thousands and thousands.

23 But I'm not here to critique
24 other departments, but a lot of these
25 departments are stretched themselves,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 because what does DHS do when they're
3 overwhelmed with the number of referrals
4 that they get? You see what I mean?

5 So that's our approach. If
6 children are chronically -- now, what
7 we're hoping -- one of the reasons we've
8 been partnering with the faith-based
9 community -- and we now have, I think, 80
10 legitimate faith-based partners. In
11 fact, former Mayor Wilson Goode has
12 played a leadership role on our
13 interfaith task force to help us
14 establish their criteria for these
15 partnerships is to, in effect, have
16 school and community-based organizations
17 who can reach out to these homes and can
18 provide some sort of intervention besides
19 the interventions that DHS provides or
20 other social service agencies.

21 And so if you have a family
22 that's troubled, you can contact a local
23 community-based organization or reach out
24 and have them visited by the local
25 church. You see what I mean? The local

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 faith-based organization.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Does the
4 School District currently have a method
5 in place where when you have a student
6 like the one you just described that has
7 been truant for X number of times and you
8 contact DHS, the Office of Social
9 Services has a system by which
10 departments can talk to each other, they
11 plug in a child's name and all the
12 agencies in touch with that child show
13 up? Is the School District tapped or
14 wired into that system with the Office of
15 Social Services?

16 MR. VALLAS: I believe we have.

17 Is Gwen Morris here? Oh, you
18 want to come up and join us. I'm sorry.
19 We have our Program Director here. I
20 apologize.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: It just
22 goes to your question what happens
23 with --

24 MR. VALLAS: She's going to
25 slug me because I keep on saying Gwen

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Morris. Sorry about that.

3 MS. NICHOLS: What was the
4 question again? I'm sorry.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Currently
6 DHS, the Police Department, Office of
7 Behavioral Health, when you plug in a
8 child's name, all the worlds, all the
9 agencies involved with that child
10 immediately come up, tell if they've been
11 in the Office of Emergency Shelter, so
12 that you get the big picture of that
13 particular child. Is the School District
14 plugged into that system? Because it
15 goes to the question how we can refine
16 different systems talking to each other
17 when we're trying to best serve these
18 children.

19 MS. NICHOLS: Good afternoon.
20 Just to identify myself, my name is Lynn
21 Nichols.

22 No, we are not plugged into
23 that system. You're referring to DSS
24 Cares?

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 MS. NICHOLS: No, we are not.

3 We are hoping to be connected to that
4 system because of what you just said, you
5 can find out every system that's
6 currently connected to that child. So we
7 would like to be able to do that.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So when
9 you say we're hoping to be connected,
10 that means that there's been discussion
11 and you're looking for the dollars to
12 make that happen?

13 MS. NICHOLS: Yes. Yes.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right
15 then.

16 So let's move on to the Health
17 Department. What role could the Health
18 Department play when it comes to the
19 number of young people who graduate; in
20 particular, those young people who are
21 pregnant? Do you have any thoughts about
22 that, Mr. Vallas?

23 MR. VALLAS: Yes. Absolutely.

24 Well, the Cradle to the Classroom
25 Program, which is part of the ELECT

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Program -- and as you know, we partner
3 and contract out with community schools
4 for this program. The program is
5 designed to identify as many pregnant
6 teens as possible and then to provide the
7 pregnant teens with eligible social
8 service support.

9 So you go and you identify the
10 pregnant teen. You assess the pregnant
11 teen's needs, their income status, et
12 cetera, because a lot of this
13 intervention is triggered by income
14 levels and things of this nature. And
15 then you make referrals to various social
16 service agencies.

17 So the ELECT Program, the
18 Cradle to the Classroom Program or early
19 childhood program --

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Is run by
21 whom?

22 MR. VALLAS: It's run by Donna
23 Piekarski. Donna Piekarski is our
24 Director of Early Childhood Services.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: In the

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2 School District?

3 MR. VALLAS: In the School
4 District. And she is part of a coalition
5 of early childhood providers, which
6 include social service agency supports.
7 And all the City departments -- in fact,
8 the drive to revamp this program was
9 started by Alba Martinez, who is now at
10 the United Way and has made this United
11 Way's principal focus.

12 But if there's one program
13 that's very well organized and well
14 coordinated, it's the early childhood
15 program, in part because of the early
16 work by Alba and other work by the United
17 Way.

18 But referrals are made.
19 Referrals are made to -- if a child is
20 homeless, referral is made to the
21 appropriate department. If a child is
22 being raised by a single mother who is in
23 need of income support, the appropriate
24 services are made. The appropriate
25 services are made to the Department of

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2 Health if a child is in need of social
3 service support, healthcare, et cetera,
4 et cetera.

5 We provide special
6 interventions on our own, though. We go
7 in and we do the vision, the hearing
8 tests, the healthcare exams, things of
9 this nature. So we just don't fulfill
10 the academic function; we also provide
11 some social service supports on our own.

12 But most of our early childhood
13 programs are now off campus with
14 off-campus providers, because they can
15 serve more kids much less expensive than
16 we can. They don't have all the mandates
17 and all the requirements that we have to
18 house these programs in our schools.
19 They can do it much cheaper than us. But
20 I think we're very -- we're much more
21 effectively coordinated on this level
22 than we are in addressing some of the
23 needs of the elder kids.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. The
25 Chair and I were discussing the next

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2 steps after today, and clearly, we need
3 to come up with recommendations which
4 will reflect the kind of testimony we're
5 hearing. And so to the Blue Ribbon
6 Commission report, there's still
7 opportunities for systems to do better in
8 servicing young people.

9 Is there one central office at
10 the School District that calls DHS or the
11 Health Department or is it, for obvious
12 reasons, scattered throughout the system?
13 For example, does the Office of
14 Specialized Services, a counselor from a
15 school calls the Office of Specialized
16 Services and that becomes the center
17 point --

18 MR. VALLAS: Yes.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- in
20 servicing that child; is that how it
21 works?

22 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. There's
23 three main coordinating entities in this
24 department. The first is the School
25 Safety Council, which on school safety

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2 issues, school climate issues, as you
3 know, created by the Mayor a couple years
4 ago after the shooting outside Strawberry
5 Mansion. You have all the law
6 enforcement and crisis intervention
7 entities meeting, talking on a daily
8 basis, exchanging information and doing
9 coordinated intervention. That's number
10 one.

11 Number two, when it comes to
12 the social service side and even though
13 the Office of Alternative Schools and
14 obviously truancy, our tenets office,
15 focus on those things, Brenda Taylor and
16 Specialized Education Services
17 coordinates among the critical social
18 service agencies, in particular the DHS,
19 when it comes to making referrals, when
20 it comes to making referrals for children
21 who are truant, children who have been
22 neglected, children who have some serious
23 crises problems, and they're constantly
24 in contact. I cited the example of the
25 child who had not been enrolled at school

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2 visited by an assistant principal and a
3 special education coordinator from Brenda
4 Taylor's office, who in turn contacted
5 the case manager and referred the case
6 manager to this case and to the problems
7 that this child was experiencing.

8 So there is a lot of
9 coordination. I think what's emerged
10 from the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force,
11 though, are recommendations on how
12 coordination can be improved at all
13 levels, not only truancy, truancy
14 prevention, but also student behavioral
15 support and things of this nature. And I
16 think the recommendations offer a good
17 blueprint, not necessarily a call for
18 more financial resources, but rather a
19 call for better coordination of
20 services --

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:

22 Absolutely, which do not cost.

23 MR. VALLAS: -- and I think the
24 recommendations are there. There is good
25 coordination, but the coordination is

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2 nowhere that it should be.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: One parent
4 referenced the CEP, cited concerns
5 expressed about CEP. What is the role of
6 the School District once those contracts
7 have been approved, particularly for CEP?
8 What type of monitoring/evaluation is
9 done to make sure they are indeed
10 delivering educational services to the
11 behavioral students?

12 MR. VALLAS: Well, first of
13 all, our office that manages student
14 disciplinary programs also oversee the
15 alternative school providers. And
16 there's just not one provider; there's
17 multiple providers. And let me point out
18 that when we arrived, there was, in
19 effect, three alternative schools run by
20 the District disastrously. We were
21 spending like \$30,000 a kid, and the
22 schools had like 50 percent attendance.
23 So they were extraordinarily inefficient,
24 and then CEP and they had one building.

25 And so over the past five

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2 years, we now have seven different
3 schools, and we have a diversity of
4 private managers who, in effect, provide
5 those services.

6 Now, every one of these private
7 managers signs a contract with us. The
8 contract is performance-based, in that
9 all the schools are evaluated using the
10 same criteria and same standards that we
11 use to evaluate all of our other schools.
12 The kids have to be tested. The kids
13 have to report their attendance. They
14 have to report graduation, dropouts, all
15 those things. So when those contracts
16 come up for renewal, we scrutinize those
17 schools as we would maybe a charter
18 school. I don't want to say a public
19 school, because charter schools and
20 alternative schools are not subjected to
21 the same scrutiny that the public schools
22 are subjected to, because we run them on
23 a day-to-day basis. But the bottom line
24 is, they have to test the kids and we
25 look at test scores.

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2 In addition, we commissioned
3 Temple a couple years ago to go in and do
4 an analysis of CEP specifically and to
5 survey parents and to basically get a
6 general idea of -- give us a general
7 assessment of how the school was
8 performing. I will tell you this: One
9 thing working against us -- and, you
10 know, any time anyone wants to take a
11 surprise visit to any school, just give
12 me a day, just call me in the morning and
13 let me know the day you want to come so
14 nobody paints you a pitempt convillage
15 (ph) and I'll be more than happy to have
16 you taken to any one of the schools, be
17 it CEP, be it Camelot, Boone or be it one
18 of the transitional schools that we run
19 up in the Northeast that takes the
20 overage underachieving kids out of the
21 Fels School.

22 But one of the things that
23 works to our disadvantage is, the State
24 says that students who commit serious,
25 serious offenses, when you transfer a

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2 child out of the District, you can only
3 do it for a year. So that child has to
4 be returned to their neighborhood school
5 within a year. So these schools become
6 very transitory. You have 50 percent, 60
7 percent mobility in the school. So the
8 kids are moving out of one school and
9 into another and then back into the
10 neighborhood school and then back again
11 and forth again and back again and forth
12 again. So the state laws are kind of
13 crazy, and that undermines the ability of
14 that school to kind of have a stable
15 student body just as they struggle to
16 have a stable faculty.

17 But we look at their test
18 scores and their attendance rates and
19 things like that, and it is --

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Does that
21 type of placement make a difference for
22 children in terms of improved test scores
23 and improve the attendance when you
24 separate them?

25 MR. VALLAS: I'll submit to you

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2 our own analysis of that. I believe it
3 has. Look, students who enroll in
4 alternative schools and transition
5 schools, in 2002 in this District there
6 were like 2,500 students who were, in
7 effect, released from correctional
8 facilities, et cetera, and they were sent
9 back into the District. One high school
10 got almost 200 students, one high school.
11 Okay? One high school. So we want to
12 talk about dropout rates? One high
13 school, 2,500 kids.

14 Our data tells us that only
15 half of the kids released from these
16 facilities actually physically return to
17 school. And then let me tell you, half
18 don't graduate. Half return and then
19 most eventually fail to graduate anyway.
20 And I'll be more than happy to give you
21 some of the harder statistics on that.

22 When we began to expand the
23 alternative school network and we began
24 to open these transitional schools for
25 overage underachievers or for individuals

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2 who are being released from correctional
3 facilities and when we set up a program
4 called RETI-WRAP where if a child was
5 released from the correctional facility,
6 we would put them through this two-week
7 RETI-WRAP system where they sat down,
8 counsel them, evaluate them, health
9 check, all those things, tried to get
10 them back on track. And the RETI-WRAP
11 program we've been running for the better
12 part of three years with a lot of
13 success, and we do that in coordination
14 with City agencies and many of the
15 community-based organizations, community
16 agencies, the courts. They're all
17 involved in RETI-WRAP.

18 What we discovered was, we got
19 about 85 percent of the kids to
20 re-enroll. And so these programs are
21 having an effect. They're having an
22 effect. And what we need to do is, we
23 need to find a way to take them to a
24 larger scale. Right now we have
25 RETI-WRAP, but a lot of these kids are

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2 sent right back into their neighborhood
3 schools. They're either sent into the
4 alternative schools, which are not always
5 suitable for them, or they're sent into
6 the neighborhood schools. If we had more
7 of these transitional schools, the
8 likelihood that those kids would return
9 to school and stay in school and graduate
10 would probably be increased, because a
11 transitional school is not like an
12 alternative school. An alternative
13 school is for discipline-problem kids. A
14 lot of times you have kids who have had
15 problems but they're not necessarily
16 violent or threatening, and sometimes
17 they're overage underachievers, sometimes
18 they are mischievous or they're
19 disruptive, but generally they've kind of
20 dropped out and they don't need to be
21 sent to a CEP or a Camelot. They can be
22 put in a transitional school at Fels or
23 they can be put in a program like
24 YouthBuild or some of those programs.
25 So if we can expand that number

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2 of alternative school offerings, we can
3 get a lot of these kids who are trying to
4 re-enroll in school. We can get them
5 into the more appropriate settings.

6 Right now it's either the neighborhood
7 school, which sometimes is unacceptable
8 for kids who really have a bad track
9 record -- and, look, how many times have
10 I gotten beaten up with accusations that
11 I'm letting violent kids back into school
12 or we're letting kids that dropped out of
13 school back in and they have a bad
14 record? I mean, how many times do we get
15 calls on that or we've gotten reamed on
16 those type of things?

17 So having a greater and more
18 diversified offering of alternative
19 schools, schools for violent kids who are
20 serious offenders who need to be put in
21 those type of programs and then kids who
22 are just overage underachievers who are
23 academically struggling and really need
24 to be in the right environment. I mean,
25 having the diversity of those type of

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2 programs would help us, I think, save
3 more kids and get more kids -- right now
4 as we speak, since the Youth
5 Collaborative, since our press conference
6 where we announced this year's
7 re-enrollment, we've been in the process
8 of re-enrolling something like, I don't
9 know -- what is it, Al? How many kids
10 were we re-enrolling after the Youth
11 Collaborative?

12 About 500 kids. But we had
13 something like 800 applicants or
14 something. So we've been re-enrolling
15 kids into programs, getting them back
16 into school, but sometimes it's finding
17 the right setting. Because if we send
18 them back to the neighborhood school
19 without the appropriate supports or if we
20 send them to some big behemoth
21 neighborhood high school, they're just
22 going to get lost. So that's where we're
23 at.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: My final
25 question, the hard choices that you've

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2 had to make regarding the current budget
3 deficit, were any budget cuts made to
4 programs that are serving the very
5 populations we're talking about, truant
6 young people and young people who are on
7 the binge of dropping out?

8 MR. VALLAS: Well, Sandra
9 Dungee Glenn wouldn't let me. I mean, I
10 tried to tweak a couple programs, but she
11 should have been CSI, like the forensic,
12 because she went through the budget with
13 a forensic fine-tooth comb and said, No,
14 that doesn't do it or that doesn't do it.
15 Even in cases where I said I think we can
16 get some federal money to reimburse us
17 for that, she says, Well, when I see the
18 federal money, then we'll count it.

19 So I think we've really tried
20 to minimize that, but as Councilman Goode
21 pointed out, we need to do more. Just
22 sustaining the reforms that we've enacted
23 is not enough. We've got to take some of
24 these things to a larger scale, and if
25 that means reprogramming some of our

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2 dollars in the next budget process, we're
3 certainly willing to do that.

4 But I will tell you in all
5 honesty, I mean, you all know that
6 privately I've always lobbied you for
7 more money and more resources and things
8 like that, and I've always done it in a
9 very -- maybe I should have been more
10 public about it. Maybe I should have
11 done what some of my predecessors do and
12 just say, Well, I can't do that, they
13 won't give me money for that or without
14 an equitable school funding formula, I
15 can't do this or can't do that. We need
16 to do a lot with the resources we've been
17 provided, but to really show progress on
18 the issue of dropouts, we're going to
19 need to fund the initiatives identified
20 by the Youth Collaborative. And I'll
21 tell you this: Charlotte-Mecklenburg is
22 considered to be the model urban school
23 district. We've all heard about
24 Charlotte-Mecklenburg and their
25 performance and everything like that.

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2 When Education Week came out with their
3 study on dropout rate and graduation
4 rates, our graduation rate was a half a
5 point less than Charlotte-Mecklenburg,
6 even Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The
7 so-called Shangri La among large urban
8 districts has a graduation rate or at
9 least in the year studied, 2002-2003, of
10 56, 57 percent.

11 So the dropout problem is a
12 national problem, but I think we over the
13 last four or five years have been able to
14 identify some things that are having
15 success and the degree -- and our ability
16 to expand them to a larger scale, I
17 think, can translate into additional
18 success.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 Madam Chair, is the Youth
22 Collaborative scheduled to testify?

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
24 We have so many people who are waiting.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you.

4 Councilman Bill Greenlee.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
6 afternoon. I'll make this fast. I don't
7 think this question was directly asked.

8 On the issue of class size that
9 the parents were talking about earlier,
10 does the School District have, I guess,
11 what I would call an average target class
12 size? And, secondly, they gave the
13 amount of \$20 million. Does the School
14 District have an amount of money that
15 they think could realistically meet the
16 goal?

17 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. In order to
18 get all class sizes below 25 -- and let
19 me point out that you're always going to
20 have aberrations, because some schools
21 sometimes will have an extraordinarily
22 large 4th grade class, but in order to
23 get every child in a classroom of less
24 than 25 kids, we would have to hire
25 probably close to about 800 teachers.

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2 That said and done, there is
3 one teacher for every 25.3 kids, but as I
4 mentioned, a lot of your poorer schools
5 with Title I dollars have smaller classes
6 because they get hundreds and hundreds
7 and sometimes millions of dollars in
8 Title I money and we pressure them to go
9 out and hire teachers. In the rest of
10 the schools, the class sizes are 30, 31,
11 32.

12 So \$20 million would allow us
13 to purchase about 250 teachers. For
14 every one teacher you hire, you, in
15 effect, reduce the class size in four
16 classes. So if you had 250 teachers,
17 you'd reduce the size of a thousand
18 classrooms. That's the way the formula
19 works. For \$60 million spread over a
20 two, three-year period, I think we could,
21 once and for all, address the class size
22 problem, and I will try to do that on a
23 gradual basis, every year add \$20 million
24 to the budget.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

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2 you. Thank you, Mr. Vallas.

3 Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you very much. Just a follow-up. I'll
6 only ask two questions, because there's
7 so many people still waiting. But do we
8 still have parole and probation officers
9 in schools where we have big problems?

10 MR. VALLAS: They've deployed
11 them regionally, I believe, Madam. And
12 as you know, Judge Dougherty is now the
13 head of Family Court, and he's come up
14 with a strategy to increase their
15 effectiveness. So I believe they're
16 almost deploying them on a regional
17 level, which is effective.

18 He's got more on the street and
19 he's got -- and they're assigned
20 regionally and they work with the schools
21 regionally. And so I feel pretty good
22 about his approach. He's very aggressive
23 about getting resources out of Family
24 Court and into the schools.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Did

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2 you, by chance, read the article that the
3 Notebook put out on the CEP schools
4 recently?

5 MR. VALLAS: Yeah. We'd be
6 more than happy to invite CEP in and let
7 them defend themselves. I have a
8 tendency to think that sometimes there
9 can be a bit of a bias against private
10 managers. CEP is certainly well equipped
11 to defend themselves.

12 I think CEP does an adequate
13 job. There aren't a lot of high-quality
14 providers. I believe CEP does a far
15 better job than we ever did. So I do
16 want to point that out.

17 But let me point out that CEP's
18 contract comes up for renewal, just like
19 everybody else, and what we've done is,
20 we've expanded the number of providers,
21 so we've reduced our dependency,
22 Councilwoman, on CEP. And so now we have
23 Camelot, now we have Abraxas. There's a
24 number of other providers. And with the
25 new round of charter school applications,

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2 I've been inviting charter school
3 proposals that are for alternative
4 placement. So I think CEP has more
5 competition.

6 I also want to point out that
7 we've gotten a considerable increase in
8 our funding for alternative schools,
9 something that we did not have before,
10 and part of the reason is because of
11 CEP's lobby. The Legislature has
12 earmarked alternative schools money to
13 the District to help us finance our
14 alternative schools program, and
15 obviously CEP has been very instrumental
16 in that.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
18 I had been involved and very supportive.
19 My complaints generally come from the
20 community, because with the advent of
21 uniforms, they see the kids in the
22 street. So that's the problem there.

23 MR. VALLAS: CEP also takes the
24 toughest kids. But, again, we'll be --
25 all of these providers will be

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2 scrutinized, and over the next budget
3 year they'll be scrutinized even more as
4 we try to -- this budget will certainly
5 make us more vigilant when it comes to
6 looking at existing programs to see how
7 we can reprogram the dollars.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'll
9 mention one other issue and then call on
10 Dee Phillips. I didn't realize Ted
11 Kirsch or Dee Phillips or Jerry Jordan
12 were here, but she's still here to
13 present his testimony. And one of the
14 issues that they mention is layoffs,
15 people who have lost their jobs. She'll
16 make her own testimony. And then I've
17 had people who have called me about the
18 central administration office, like
19 Budget and Finance Department, and who
20 gets laid off and who doesn't, and one
21 case in particular where a gentleman has
22 about 18 months left and what happens
23 when people get laid off.

24 I've been going through this
25 with the Water Department and housing

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2 departments, how they get cut down so
3 far, as opposed to being able to leave on
4 basically the same level, especially when
5 they're that close to the end, how we
6 deal with layoffs and who gets laid off
7 and a general response to the employee
8 issues.

9 MR. VALLAS: Well, let me make
10 a general comment. We eliminated 175
11 positions, and any time you're going to
12 do a reduction in force, you've got a lot
13 of obstacles or there are a lot of issues
14 that you need to be careful with. You
15 want to make sure it's fair. You want to
16 make sure that you're not discriminating
17 on all levels, not just race
18 discrimination, age discrimination, et
19 cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And so a
20 lot of times you like to go in and do a
21 strategic cut and make a judgment that
22 this is a strong person, this is a weak
23 person and make your decisions
24 accordingly, but you can't do that. You
25 can't do that. Legally you can't do it,

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2 and it's probably not the right thing to
3 do anyway.

4 So in doing these cuts, we
5 really looked at doing a reduction in
6 force across the board. We want it to be
7 even. We want it to be equitable. We
8 want it to be non-controversial. We also
9 wanted to eliminate functions that could
10 be picked up by someone else.

11 So we really kind of followed a
12 template. Because any time you're going
13 to do a reduction in force, you're going
14 to risk challenges.

15 Now, that said and done, as I
16 mentioned, about 47 of the positions were
17 currently vacant and about 53 of the
18 individuals actually moved into other
19 vacancies within the District, as is
20 their right under their collective
21 bargaining unit. So that left us with 81
22 actual layoffs.

23 Now, the individuals who have
24 been laid off we're trying to help get
25 placed. And I have to be really delicate

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2 with my language, because going out and
3 saying, Hey, you got laid off, but here,
4 I got another job for you, that would not
5 be -- that could be viewed as
6 inappropriate. Someone could say I got
7 this person the job, but I didn't get
8 someone else a job, even if the job
9 wasn't in the School District.

10 But creating the job bank and
11 connecting people, letting people know
12 what jobs are available and then helping
13 facilitate the connection between those
14 people and those job opportunities we
15 think are going to help us reduce -- to
16 place a large number of these people.
17 I'm going to keep the job bank up and
18 running until everybody is placed. I'm
19 not promising that that's a possibility.

20 I'll also tell you this: Union
21 employees have -- and the job bank is on
22 the website. You can look up the job
23 bank. It lists all the jobs that are
24 available. We're probably going to keep
25 the job bank up permanently.

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2 But individuals who have been
3 laid off, if they're union types and
4 there are other vacancies in the
5 District, they have the first right to
6 move into those vacancies. They will
7 have re-call rights. So if you're a
8 member of the union and suddenly there's
9 a vacancy in a department that you're
10 eligible for, you would have a right to
11 claim that vacancy. Also, if you're a
12 non-union member and we have a vacancy
13 that is budgeted, we will inform you of
14 that vacancy in this non-union position
15 for the non-union member, and that
16 individual will have an opportunity to
17 apply.

18 So some people may be re-called
19 in the next budget year as new vacancies
20 open up. We're not going to be restoring
21 any of these positions. I mean, we
22 may -- you never can tell what will
23 happen from budget year to budget year.
24 We make decisions on how we're going to
25 reprogram and reprioritize in the next

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 budget year, so I can't say that we're
3 not going to create some new positions,
4 but the bottom line here is, as vacancies
5 open up, individuals will have re-call
6 rights. But hopefully most of the 81
7 will have been placed by then and there
8 will be very few people who will need to
9 exercise their rights because they'll be
10 working with other providers.

11 CEP, for example, because the
12 Legislature gave money to expand the
13 number of slots CEP has for alternative
14 schools specifically and as part of that
15 expansion, they have ten vacancies. They
16 are going to the RIF list and they're
17 recruiting from among the RIF list
18 individuals to fill those vacancies.
19 There are many schools with vacancies
20 that we didn't identify that people don't
21 necessarily bounce into, and they're
22 going to the RIF list and offering people
23 positions. So hopefully most of these
24 people will be placed before we're done.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 you very much. We'll call you about any
3 individual cases.

4 MR. VALLAS: Okay.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you very much.

7 We're going to call Dee
8 Phillips and then this 9th grade student
9 who has been here all day and then any
10 kids. I know District Council 33 has
11 kids. We're going to take care of you
12 youngsters. Okay? Young people.

13 MR. VALLAS: And I'll get
14 Councilman Goode his statistics promised.
15 If we can get the names, Councilman, of
16 the 386, we'll tell you what their
17 education history is. We'll work on
18 that. Give us about a week on that,
19 though. Okay?

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And,
21 in fact, Mr. Vallas, if you submit it to
22 the Chair, we'll make sure everybody gets
23 it.

24 MR. VALLAS: Absolutely.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We

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2 would also like to thank Councilwoman
3 Tasco for being here this afternoon.

4 Ms. Phillips and then our 9th
5 grader and then kids, kids with programs.

6 Philadelphia Federation of
7 Teachers. Thank you very much. Thank
8 you for your patience.

9 MS. PHILLIPS: Oh, you're quite
10 welcome. Good afternoon, Chairwoman and
11 other members of City Council. I am Dee
12 Phillips, the Philadelphia Federation of
13 Teachers. I hold the proud position of
14 Vice-President of the middle years, and I
15 have with me my colleague, Arlene Kempin,
16 who is Vice-President of the elementary
17 grades. Unfortunately, Ted Kirsch had a
18 conflict in his schedule today and our
19 General Vice-President, Jerry Jordan, is
20 out of town, so you got the two of us.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It's
22 our pleasure.

23 MS. PHILLIPS: So, again, I
24 thank you for inviting the PFT to
25 testify. Some of what I'm going to say

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2 today I know you've heard, but I think it
3 bears repeating, and on behalf of our
4 18,000 members of the Federation, 10,400
5 which are teachers, we're glad to be here
6 today.

7 Our message is that education
8 cuts don't heal.

9 When principals pack 30 to 40
10 children in classrooms as they have in
11 nearly 200 classrooms around the City and
12 expect that every child is going to be
13 proficient in math and reading, or when
14 schools force teachers to teach 30 or
15 more students from two different grades
16 simultaneously, or when the District cuts
17 Saturday, after-school and summer
18 programs designed to help students
19 succeed, they are inflicting education
20 wounds that will not heal.

21 Despite statements to the
22 contrary, these policies, many of which
23 were implemented even before the current
24 round of budget cuts, will cripple our
25 students academically.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 PFT members are extremely
3 concerned about the mid-year layoffs, the
4 surprise deficit and the impact of budget
5 cuts on our students and staff.

6 With no fanfare last summer,
7 the District cut a significant number of
8 teaching positions because of the NCLB
9 requirements. They cut 47 non-teaching
10 assistants, 33 secretaries, 30 climate
11 support assistants and 15 school library
12 jobs. Last week it laid off more than 80
13 hard-working employees and demoted and
14 cut the pay of many others. Meanwhile,
15 there were 172 overcrowded classes. I'm
16 going to repeat that. There are 172
17 overcrowded classes and 71 teachers who
18 are assigned to teach grades
19 simultaneously. That's commonly called
20 split grades.

21 While school resources are
22 being cut, administrative expenditures
23 are rising. According to Standard and
24 Poor's independent school evaluation
25 service, Philadelphia is in the 23rd

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 percentile statewide in instructional
3 spending, but its administrative costs
4 are 45 percent higher than the average
5 school district in the state. This
6 equation, not to mention the District's
7 spending priorities, must change.

8 The PFT remains steadfast in
9 its advocacy for students. Parents and
10 teachers want early childhood education
11 for all pre-school children in
12 Philadelphia; significant reduction in
13 class size and to end educational
14 indefensible split grade classes;
15 programs that identify at-risk students
16 early and target them for proven
17 interventions that reduce the likelihood
18 that they will drop out; safe, healthy
19 and orderly schools. Cuts to
20 non-instructional staff have taken a toll
21 on school safety, and deferred
22 maintenance cost one PFT member three
23 fingers this year.

24 To combat the well-documented
25 dropout problem, the PFT additionally

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 recommends the School District to
3 transform high schools by offering a
4 variety of programs that help students
5 make the connection between what they are
6 learning in school and their futures.
7 Offer more work study opportunities and
8 better career and technical training.
9 They should make more extensive offerings
10 of career, technical and college prep
11 classes available. Students must be able
12 to choose a high school based on course
13 offerings or thematic orientation and
14 extracurricular activities that meet
15 their needs and interests. Students
16 should have choices among non-selective
17 and selective public high schools that
18 will meet their individual needs.
19 Improve discipline and order, enforce
20 rules with real consequences.
21 Surveys of high school dropouts
22 show that they are distracted and
23 confused by too much freedom. Students
24 say that there are no consequences for
25 roaming hallways, cutting classes or

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 performing poorly. The Mayor's truancy
3 initiative should be supported.

4 To eliminate the deficit, we
5 have urged the SRC to reexamine and cut
6 true administrative costs. We have also
7 recommended that the SRC place a
8 moratorium on new charter school
9 approvals and/or the expansion of
10 existing charter schools. Not that we
11 have anything against charter schools,
12 but they will cost \$250 million this
13 year. It is fiscally irresponsible to
14 approve more charter schools without the
15 financial resources to pay for them.

16 We urge the SRC to end the
17 practice of hiring outside lawyers and
18 accountants, retired principals and
19 private consultants and stop privatizing
20 management and services. The savings
21 from outsourcing work is short term, and
22 over time costs rise and the quality of
23 this service diminishes. The District
24 should utilize fully the enormous pool of
25 talented employees and jettison

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 consultants and outside contractors to
3 save money.

4 We urge the SRC and the
5 administration to consider the people who
6 daily give so much to the District.
7 These are the working men and women who
8 live in our community. They have
9 families. They rely on salaries and
10 healthcare, and they help our school
11 system function efficiently.

12 Finally, in this era of
13 accountability, teachers and support
14 staff are held responsible for raising
15 test scores year after year. The City
16 Council should demand accountability from
17 the SRC and administration. School
18 District employees are paying the
19 ultimate price for the incompetence of
20 District officials and SRC Commissioners.
21 What about those responsible for faulty
22 assumptions, bad math and fudged budget
23 figures approved by the SRC last spring?

24 Student progress, of which we
25 have been proud, is in jeopardy. The

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 future of the City's children, as well as
3 the economic vitality of Philadelphia,
4 hang in the balance.

5 So, again, on behalf of the
6 18,000 PFT members who work in our
7 schools and the nearly 200,000 students
8 who attend them, we urge City Council to
9 hold the SRC to the highest standards,
10 because their spending priorities and
11 decisions will affect Philadelphia's
12 children for the rest of their lives, and
13 education cuts don't heal.

14 Thank you. Do you have any
15 questions for us?

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you very much. We thank you both.

18 Arlene, would you like to
19 comment?

20 MR. KEMPIN: Dee said that I'm
21 one of the Vice-Presidents of the PFT,
22 specifically of elementary schools, but
23 my staff position is that I represent the
24 PFT at the administration building in the
25 Office of Human Resources, and

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 specifically last Tuesday when 38 of our
3 members and in addition to 38 of our
4 members, there were a significant number
5 of other non-PFT members who were laid
6 off, several more, 56 of our members but
7 an additional number of non-members, were
8 demoted either to ten-month positions --
9 they had held 12-month positions -- or
10 five-day-a-week people who now will be
11 working four days a week. This is a
12 significant cut in their salaries.
13 They've lost 20 percent of their
14 salaries. These are not the people that
15 deserve to be punished for these
16 mistakes.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much.

19 Any questions?
20 (No response.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much.

23 Our 9th grader.
24 (Someone talking from
25 audience.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
3 right. Then young people come.

4 Mr. Mayer Krain, we'll get you
5 next. We'll get the kids. You've been
6 very patient. Thank you.

7 Please identify yourself for
8 the record and begin your testimony.
9 Thank you.

10 MR. BROGGINS: To start, my
11 name is Andrew Broggins. I'm 17 years
12 old. I would like to thank you for the
13 opportunity and honor for me to be up
14 here speaking.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you.

17 MR. BROGGINS: Okay. I'm a
18 freshman in Community College. I've gone
19 through almost every program that was
20 mentioned in here. I was a dropout of
21 high school and I've reintegrated into
22 the community through a GED.

23 To start back, during middle
24 school, I started going through some
25 problems. I was kicked out of 7th grade

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 and sent to CEP for about -- I didn't
3 complete the program and was integrated
4 back into that same high school. It
5 didn't work out too good. Still more
6 problems.

7 I was always told I was an
8 intelligent student, I just had bad
9 behavior, absences, latenesses and about
10 30 or 40 suspensions a year. And it went
11 from there to going on to Martin Luther
12 King High School, more arrests during
13 probation. At King I was arrested and
14 sent to a facility for adjudicated male
15 youth delinquent. And I came home, sent
16 to RETI-WRAP, Vision Quest, vocational
17 programs such as DeLaSalle. Wow.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Were
19 they good programs? Was RETI-WRAP good,
20 as we've heard? Did it help you?
21 Obviously you look very nice and you are
22 really on point, and I've seen you here
23 before, so apparently your environment
24 and obviously believing in yourself has
25 helped you and hopefully believing in the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 good Lord above has brought you far.

3 MR. BROGGINS: Of course. Of
4 course. RETI-WRAP, it was the only way
5 back into school, because I didn't want
6 to go through vocational. I didn't want
7 that type of future. So I dropped out of
8 that and I dropped out of Martin Luther
9 King. I mean, I went to Germantown after
10 RETI-WRAP.

11 I don't think it was that good
12 of a program, though, to tell you the
13 truth, but it was a good integration. It
14 was a good integration. I guess the only
15 way back into school. I didn't have a
16 choice really.

17 But through RETI-WRAP, I went
18 to Germantown Twilight. I was in
19 Twilight for a few months before -- I was
20 on probation for about seven years at the
21 time, and this was just last year, same
22 time last year. And my probation officer
23 forced me into the E3 center. The E3
24 center is where I was told once again I
25 was intelligent, but I still wasn't doing

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 anything with my life.

3 The E3 center, I took a test.

4 They said that I didn't even need to
5 study for the GED, I could just take it.

6 So I decided to drop out of Germantown
7 and take the GED. I passed it with about
8 a 3,000 or whatever.

9 But I went from there into --
10 they got me a job and now I work at
11 currently Prescott and Associates. It's
12 financial advising consultants. I work
13 there as a representative assistant. I
14 also work with the Philadelphia Youth
15 Network as a youth ambassador, and I am
16 in Community College studying to be a
17 doctor. And all this happened within
18 about 10, 11 months. It started this
19 year. I started trying to get myself
20 together. And now I'm speaking to you
21 guys. Hi.

22 Other than that, there's a lot
23 I had to say, but I decided not to even
24 read off of this. But I was also in the
25 international baccalaureate program,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 because my grades was good but my
3 behavior was like the worst. I couldn't
4 get into any of the high schools and
5 stuff, my neighborhood high school, so
6 they sent me to that program. That
7 didn't work out too well either, and
8 neither for a couple other people in that
9 program, actually. I wrote that down
10 because I heard that in here, and I
11 realized I was in a lot of these
12 programs, you know, and I'm here to tell
13 my story and I was told to say -- not to
14 say. I wasn't told to say anything. I
15 was told to tell my opinion about what
16 will work and what wouldn't work, you
17 know. And my opinion is that everything
18 that's going on, I believe that the
19 parents as well as the children should be
20 held accountable -- well, their children
21 should be held accountable for truancy.
22 I think that the home situation
23 should be looked at, because you go from
24 home to school and from school to home,
25 nine times out of ten, and that's where

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 everything starts at. So I think that
3 should be looked at more deeply. Also,
4 because I was truant like every year of
5 school and I was never contacted by a
6 truant officer, and I was truant over 120
7 days from 6th grade until I dropped out.
8 They never contacted me.

9 And I don't believe that if a
10 child is not doing well at home, it's
11 hard to do well at school. I believe
12 that. Also --

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're
14 saying you believe that if you're not
15 doing well at home, then you won't do
16 well at school?

17 MR. BROGGINS: No.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You
19 don't believe it?

20 MR. BROGGINS: No, because I
21 know people who have done well at school
22 and had the worst living situations. I
23 believe that it's hard to do well in
24 school if everything at home is not well,
25 and some people don't have the same tools

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 as others.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

4 True.

5 MR. BROGGINS: I think that the
6 problem is looked at on a very large
7 scale. I think it should be minimized to
8 a smaller group, even smaller than race,
9 you know, because there's a lot of people
10 who are in these groups that are, in
11 certain groups, that are in many
12 different races. That way you can learn
13 more about certain people.

14 I believe that students need
15 better education, particularly in the
16 schools I were in. I'm not sure about
17 all of them, but the schools I were in
18 were not teaching anything, like nothing.
19 The math classes were the worst. I never
20 really learned nothing after the 8th
21 grade. Stopped learning, because they
22 teach you things that were the 6th grade
23 work in the 9th grade when you're coming
24 from the 8th grade. I don't understand
25 it, but -- I do understand it. A lot of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 people didn't know. And I think they
3 should start back as far as pre-K,
4 because that's where people start
5 learning, and a lot of subjects are
6 progressional, you know. So I don't
7 think that should be looked at as far as
8 6th grade. Even farther back than that,
9 because a lot of things start off when
10 school starts.

11 Wow, there's a lot.

12 And I think that parents should
13 have more time home with their children,
14 because a lot of parents overlook a lot
15 of things because they are working too
16 hard, trying to support their family and
17 they're never home, a lot of parents.
18 Some parents don't work and they're still
19 never home, you know. But a whole other
20 subject.

21 And, lastly, I believe that it
22 should be more than the parents that
23 watch over the youth. I think it's a
24 community job, because it takes more than
25 that, and a child is going learn from

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 more than the parents. Some children
3 don't learn anything from the parents and
4 learn everything from the community. So
5 I think it should be a community's effort
6 as well to teach the children certain
7 phases in life that he can't be taught by
8 others. And that's all I have to say.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you very much. We're very proud of you,
11 and certainly this Council extends our
12 arms to you. If we can help any way we
13 can support you, you can come see any of
14 us and we'll be there for you.

15 MR. BROGGINS: Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you.

18 Can you give us your name and
19 then make your statement?

20 MS. BUSSEY: My name is
21 Shadirah Bussey. I'm 15 years old and
22 I'm attending Agora Cyber Charter School
23 as a 9th grade student, and I'm here
24 today to talk about the need for more
25 counselors, nurses, the reason for

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 dropout rates and truancy.

3 First I want to start off with
4 the need for more counselors. First, if
5 you don't have the proper number of
6 counselors, how are students supposed to
7 see their future or move on without
8 talking to someone about it? There are
9 approximately 800 students for one
10 counselor. That's not enough. And I
11 think it should be, I say, about 250 per
12 counselor.

13 And you wonder how you can't
14 stop the truancy rate. If you stop
15 sending students from one neighborhood
16 school to another without providing
17 transportation, we wouldn't have the
18 problem. And we have tens of students,
19 but you continue to shut out the arts and
20 music in our schools, but you don't allow
21 us to show our skills.

22 How can you learn in an
23 environment with 30 or more students in a
24 class with one teacher? How about if you
25 try it, see if you could learn? Because

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 it won't happen.

3 We already have students having
4 problems with math and reading who have
5 never received the type of classroom
6 support they needed. All we want is a
7 fair education. You have yours. Let us
8 get ours.

9 And another thing I wanted to
10 say was that Mr. Vallas said -- I think
11 he said he never seen a homeless person,
12 but me and my brother, we homeless. Our
13 parents, our family is separated.

14 (Witness in tears.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It's
16 all right. We work with so many people.
17 On the 19th from 3:00 to 7:00, we'll have
18 our party, and we're prepared for 2,500
19 women and children, and everybody gets a
20 gift. Every year we do it, and we'll be
21 at the Convention Center this year. So
22 we have dinner, we'll have fun, we'll
23 have a party, and we must make sure you
24 come. So make sure that we know how to
25 reach you. Okay? Are you with

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Mr. Johnson?

3 (Witness nods head in the
4 affirmative.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

6 Mr. Johnson, we'll invite him. He'll
7 make sure that you come. So we're here
8 for you. Mr. Johnson is always helping
9 young people, so he'll help you. It's
10 okay.

11 MS. BUSSEY: We bust our hide
12 to take care of each other. And my mom,
13 she going through a lot and it's not
14 really -- we don't get no help. I miss
15 my mom.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.
17 We'll try to help you. It's one of the
18 things we do. And Mr. Johnson knows me
19 very well for a very long time, and we'll
20 help you in any way we can.

21 Sir, young man, you're next.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who, me?

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

24 You don't want to speak? All right.

25 Thank you very much.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 We thank you. Thank you all.

3 You've done a great job.

4 After Mayer Krain, we're going
5 to ask Sherman Harris. He has four
6 students with him, unless he left. Oh,
7 dear. They have an apprenticeship
8 program that they work in conjunction
9 with the School District. After Mayer
10 Krain, we're going to ask Sherman Harris
11 and the students to come forward, if
12 they're still here, or we certainly want
13 to ask him to talk about his program.

14 Mr. Krain and then Sherman
15 Harris. Thank you.

16 MR. KRAIN: This is not from my
17 original speech, but I just wanted to put
18 on the record that charter schools are
19 not really all banged up to what they're
20 supposed to be. Today's Inquirer, it
21 basically shows on page Section B, they
22 overhauled the charter school, another
23 financial problem. I think if maybe
24 Council would read into that. There's
25 been some overbillings and things like

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 that to the School District.

3 And I'll start my speech. I
4 just also want to make one other comment,
5 that charter schools are not audited by
6 anybody. No one audits a charter school.
7 So any monies they bill or whatever they
8 do goes right to them and they spend it
9 any way they want to.

10 Okay. Chairwoman Blackwell and
11 all the other parties that are interested
12 in the betterment of our children's
13 education, my name is Mayer Krain and
14 it's spelled M-A-Y-E-R, K-R-A-I-N. I'm
15 here today as a concerned citizen of
16 Philadelphia, who was born, raised and
17 lived my entire life so far in the City
18 of Philadelphia. I'm a product of the
19 Philadelphia public schools, a graduate
20 of Drexel University and a licensed
21 Pennsylvania CPA for over two decades.

22 I pay taxes to the City of
23 Philadelphia as a salaried employee, wage
24 tax; a business owner, business privilege
25 and net profits; an investor, School

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 District income; a property owner in the
3 way of real estate taxes; and various
4 other taxes that are buried in costs
5 charged to me. Some of those taxes go
6 directly to the benefit of the School
7 District. I, therefore, have a strong
8 vested interest in seeing that the
9 Philadelphia public schools, with its
10 students, teachers and other employees,
11 succeed in each of their endeavors.

12 The Paul Vallas regime
13 originally came en mass from Chicago
14 demanding large salaries. The current
15 term in education is NCLB, No Child Left
16 Behind. For Vallas, NCLB means No
17 Comrade Left Behind. He brought them
18 here either as School District employees
19 or as subcontractors.

20 Mr. Vallas was given \$300
21 million from bond proceeds to supplement
22 annual revenues to help in reforming the
23 education of the School District of
24 Philadelphia. This money has all been
25 used up within five years.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Vallas circled the wagons in
3 order to keep the City Controller from
4 independently reviewing the School
5 District's financial records. He now has
6 finally admitted to suddenly the
7 appearance of a deficit of 73 million
8 just after his contract was renewed for
9 two more years. There were rumors of a
10 \$100 plus million deficit for the Fiscal
11 Year '06-'07 prior to July 2005 and
12 before the April 2006 testimony given
13 before City Council.

14 Vallas also yanked away
15 discretionary spending from the
16 principals last school year. The School
17 District also claimed to impose a hiring
18 freeze. However, if you go to the SRC's
19 resolutions on the School District
20 website, you will find additional job
21 creations consistently being made after
22 the hiring freeze announcement was made.
23 If you add to that now the admitted \$73
24 million deficit, the \$38 million that
25 Vallas is shorting the ten-month

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 Philadelphia Federation of Teachers union
3 members with the 27 pay periods, the
4 School District administration's
5 contention, versus the PFT's contention
6 of 26 pay periods, you will now arrive at
7 the \$100 plus million deficit amount. If
8 the PFT union prevails with the
9 arbitrator's decision from its lawsuit
10 expected this month, there is \$38 million
11 that has not yet been factored into the
12 current budget cuts.

13 Vallas has not offered to cut
14 out contracts to vendors that are
15 non-residents of Philadelphia or
16 Pennsylvania. The School District has
17 contracts with politically connected
18 for-profit companies from Tennessee,
19 which is Community Education Partners, or
20 CEP, and New York, Edison Schools, and a
21 non-profit from New Jersey, Foundations
22 Inc. Many ex-School District employees
23 have left the School District and signed
24 on to these companies to do work for
25 substantially more money, while receiving

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 their School District pensions. They
3 accept positions with these companies and
4 even negotiated contracts on behalf of
5 those companies with the School District,
6 all within a year of leaving the School
7 District. This is a violation of School
8 District policy that appears not to be
9 enforced.

10 Vallas's budget cuts are
11 basically on the backs of approximately
12 188 non-politically represented little
13 guys right now at Thanksgiving and
14 Christmas holiday time. Many of these
15 people are residents of the City of
16 Philadelphia. They live here, they work
17 here, they vote here, they raise their
18 families here and they spend their money
19 here. They don't take their profits back
20 to Tennessee, New York or New Jersey.
21 Any new monies that the City provides
22 should be earmarked specifically to
23 restore those people immediately back to
24 their jobs.

25 There is a website called

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 www.hallwatch.org. From this website you
3 can obtain information on the largest
4 Philadelphia real estate tax delinquents
5 and the total amounts of those
6 delinquencies.

7 At the School Reform Commission
8 on November 10, 2006, I provided
9 delinquent taxpayer accounts from the
10 City's website, which showed three
11 rowhouses with \$1,500 in annual real
12 estate taxes owing from \$16,000 to
13 \$20,000. This is not an anomaly.

14 I believe that the City of
15 Philadelphia should collect the massive
16 amount of delinquent real estate taxes
17 and provide the School District with its
18 share of monies. Any additional money
19 that is provided to the School District
20 should have restrictions attached. The
21 State Legislature placed restrictions
22 with the EMO contractors' monies. The
23 City should be possibly reviewing the
24 actual School District contracts.

25 The City provides ten years of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 real estate tax abatement on newly
3 constructed properties. That may be
4 great for the City for current wage and
5 business taxes, but the School District
6 receives nothing. As a matter of fact,
7 it receives less than nothing. The real
8 estate value of those properties and
9 income of those people allows the State
10 to decrease its aid ratio to the School
11 District. However, the School District
12 has the cost of educating their children.

13 We have constantly heard from
14 the Hornbeck and Vallas administrations
15 that our children's test scores are
16 rising every year. So why after 12 years
17 of increasing test scores are our
18 children not reaching a substantial
19 amount of proficiency? Is this all hype,
20 and then why is the dropout rate so
21 significant?

22 I just wonder what the real
23 agenda in education is of our children.

24 Thank you for your time and
25 consideration, Councilwoman.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you very much. We appreciate your
4 involvement. We met you at the School
5 District. Thank you for your patience.

6 Sherman Harris, we certainly
7 invite him, and students from District
8 Council 33 apprenticeship program that is
9 conducted with the cooperation of the
10 School District. Thank you very much.

11 MR. HARRIS: Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We're
13 sorry we have to bring you in here like
14 every day.

15 MR. HARRIS: It seems like it,
16 doesn't it? Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But we
18 welcome you.

19 MR. HARRIS: Thank you, Madam
20 Chairperson. First of all, originally
21 this testimony -- I was a guest to sit
22 while someone else read the testimony, so
23 you'll see it says Local 1637. Also,
24 originally I had four students with me.
25 They had to leave, but I would like to

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 just state their names, because they were
3 here. Leah Exum from West Philadelphia
4 Auto Academy, Calvin Harrington from the
5 West Philadelphia Auto Academy, Brittnie
6 Lewis-Norris from the West Philadelphia
7 Auto Academy and Veronica Richardson from
8 William Penn Health Center. I have two
9 of their testimonies that I just would
10 like to read before I read mine. I think
11 they need to be heard, because --

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I am
13 absolutely so sorry. We were just there
14 in June congratulating this Automotive
15 Academy.

16 MR. HARRIS: We're proud of
17 them. That's one of our proudest
18 achievements. We love them.

19 First of all, the first
20 testimony is from Brittnie Lewis. It
21 says, "Good morning. My name is Brittnie
22 Lewis-Norris. I'm a 10th grader at the
23 West Philadelphia High Auto Academy.

24 "My opinion as a student is to
25 add more classes/electives to schools. I

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 think students tend to focus more with
3 some excitement in education. When I say
4 classes/electives, I'm talking about
5 business culture, learning about
6 different religions, cosmetology,
7 culinary arts, dance, interior design,
8 driver's education, et cetera. This
9 would stop students from dropping out of
10 high school.

11 "For the young women who have
12 babies, schools should add child centers
13 or daycares. Most of the school dropouts
14 are young mothers. The reason being is
15 that they don't have the proper help to
16 supervise their child, so they drop out.

17 "At West Philadelphia High, we
18 have a trade which is automotive and
19 engineering. The school has helped me a
20 lot. It's smaller, and the teachers are
21 great. Learning is exciting."

22 That's good to hear.

23 "I like to learn and experience
24 different things. West Philadelphia High
25 Auto Academy helped me accomplish that.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 I am happy to know that students can lift
3 their voices and have the opportunity to
4 talk about what they think is wrong, what
5 they think is right. We've had can
6 drives, trips, after-school programs.
7 But, of course, these are rewards for
8 academic success. Students appreciate
9 these rights, not only as children but as
10 young adults.

11 "The Automotive Academy is the
12 best thing that has ever happened to me.
13 It has made me realize that knowledge is
14 the key to success and dropping out isn't
15 for me."

16 This is from Leah Exum.

17 "In the mind of most high
18 school students, school is the last thing
19 on their mind. The reason being is that
20 all the eye catchers have been taken
21 away, such as home economics and our
22 uniqueness. Over time the graduating
23 percentage has fallen a great deal and
24 the survivors are not prepared for the
25 future. For example, my goal is to be an

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 interior designer, so working with the
3 Auto Academy has been very informative
4 and will prepare me for the future and
5 prep me in my lifelong dream of working
6 with automobiles and materials.

7 "My teachers and guides have
8 really inspired me to keep my goal by
9 having interactive days in the shop and
10 choice and decision-making on a daily
11 basis.

12 "If we were given more money, I
13 think West Philadelphia High School for
14 Automotive and Technology will succeed
15 and overflow with successful careers and
16 so on. Every kid is not a master in
17 biology and they are not a mathematician.
18 So when they look at their report card,
19 they can say, 'I have done my best in the
20 hard subject, but I've excelled in my
21 sewing class or cooking class, even in my
22 auto shop.'

23 "Please let us have more
24 classes with the standard one we have.
25 Keep the children interested in school,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 and the world will change. The children
3 are our future."

4 That's nice. That's great to
5 hear students talk.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Very
7 nice. I feel terrible.

8 MR. HARRIS: I wish they were
9 here, but we do work with the students.
10 Before I read, we work with these
11 students, and you'll be surprised by
12 showing a little interest and a little
13 time in them how you can change their
14 lives, and this is a pretty good example
15 of children that were probably somewhat
16 wasted or lost in the streets that
17 they're reaching.

18 We are here because we, like
19 many others, are seriously concerned with
20 the Philadelphia dropout crisis.
21 District Council 33 families have
22 thousands of dependent children, many of
23 them students in the School District of
24 Philadelphia. Our members and our union
25 work hard to ensure that the futures of

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 our children are filled with opportunity.

3 We know firsthand that dropping out

4 diminishes opportunities.

5 District Council 33 has

6 formally been involved with high school

7 students for many years. We have a track

8 record of success when it comes to

9 keeping students in school. We come to

10 you today to ask that you support and

11 expand these successful programs.

12 Since 1993, District Council 33

13 has partnered with the City of

14 Philadelphia's Office of Fleet Management

15 in an internship and apprenticeship

16 program. The same program also exists in

17 the Philadelphia Parking Authority.

18 The program begins working with

19 high school students in the summer

20 between 10th and 11th grades. Students

21 become paid interns, who are mentored by

22 our members, who are skilled automotive

23 technicians. They work full time in the

24 summer and part time during the school

25 year. The program requires that students

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2 meet strict academic and attendance
3 standards during the two and a half years
4 they serve as interns.

5 During this same time, they
6 must master basic technical competencies
7 as well. Students who successfully
8 complete the program become civil service
9 automotive apprentices.

10 Since the inception of the
11 program, DC 33 and its members have
12 worked with over 100 students. Over 50
13 have become full-time City employees and
14 approximately 35 remain working in the
15 public sector today.

16 But that's not all that we have
17 done. This summer, in conjunction with
18 the Philadelphia Academies Incorporated
19 and the Philadelphia Youth Network, we
20 hosted 25 summer interns in our computer
21 lab for the weekly career exploration and
22 development component of their summer
23 internship program.

24 We know that there is no magic
25 pill for dealing with the dropout crisis,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 but as the recent study on the dropout
3 crisis points out, engaging students in
4 career-oriented study helps. We knew
5 that before the study.

6 The union is already engaged in
7 discussion with the Department of Public
8 Property about launching an internship
9 and apprenticeship program for the trades
10 positions that are so critical in
11 maintaining the City's facilities,
12 including police and fire facilities.

13 In conclusion, District Council
14 33 is a willing partner to the City and
15 the schools in internship programs and
16 apprenticeship programs. We believe that
17 the more students are connected to
18 careers, the more likely they will
19 succeed. We ask that you're willing to
20 work with the Philadelphia Academies and
21 the Philadelphia Network to continue to
22 develop more programs. We want to expand
23 opportunities for students in career
24 areas beyond the auto and Internet
25 apprentice with the City. We ask that

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2 Council and the City Administration would
3 support and help bring about resolve and
4 resources to the table to expand
5 opportunities for the Philadelphia school
6 students to work with in City government.

7 I thank you for your time. And
8 I also would like to thank Council for
9 their patience and diligence in this
10 matter, because this is an important
11 matter, even as a parent. I have two
12 products of public school. One is a
13 nurse and one is going to school to be a
14 lawyer, and I think when we work on our
15 school system as parents and Council and
16 legislators, we benefit.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much. I only regret that Paul
19 Vallas is not here, nor the Mayor, but
20 they understand how important this
21 program is, and this is one of the
22 programs that we talked about in our call
23 for action as a way to reduce violence,
24 and we certainly are trying to see what
25 we can do. And the Mayor committed to

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2 working with us on truancy to see if we
3 could help get some programs funded and
4 some coordinated with other funding
5 sources so that we can have more
6 after-school programs and for job
7 training and libraries and rec centers
8 and certainly in our schools. And we
9 thank you for your commitment for all
10 that you do. It's a wonderful program.

11 MR. HARRIS: Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much.

14 Dr. James Roebuck was here. He
15 left his statement. He could not be
16 here. We will submit it in its entirety
17 to our record.

18 Dr. Arthur Evans, Commissioner,
19 Department of Human Services, was due to
20 speak on truancy. Our day has been too
21 long. And we saw Pamela Crawley from
22 Citizens Bank leave. So we regret that
23 she could not stay.

24 We see Shelly Yanoff, Executive
25 Director of PCCY, Philadelphia Citizens

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2 for Children and Youth. We invite you to
3 come. We also have down Sheila Simmons,
4 your Education Coordinator.

5 MS. YANOFF: Madam Chair, I'm
6 here today with the Youth Transitions,
7 the group that's working on dropout
8 prevention primarily. Could either I ask
9 them to join me and then we'll move to
10 Sheila --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

12 MS. YANOFF: -- or since it's
13 so late, would you prefer if we
14 reschedule? This dropout prevention
15 issue is so important. Would it be more
16 conducive to reschedule it or should we
17 go forward?

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: If we
19 had hearings on dropout rate later, I
20 can't tell you when they would be.
21 Thursday we recess. That's why we had
22 this hearing today. Thursday Council
23 recesses, and though we will be here in
24 our offices, we don't have another
25 session until January 23rd when the Mayor

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2 presents his budget. So that's going to
3 limit our time even further, because as
4 all of you here know, once we're on the
5 budget, we have to fight for time to get
6 in our hearings.

7 So we could have it, but it
8 could be -- I have hearings scheduled on
9 the 23rd and the 30th. It wouldn't be
10 until maybe sometime around Valentine's
11 Day and --

12 MS. YANOFF: Well, maybe we can
13 do some today and maybe we can reschedule
14 it for a follow-up after Valentine's Day.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Or we
16 can always have a Council briefing.

17 MS. YANOFF: That would be
18 terrific.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

20 Mr. Vernard Johnson, we're
21 going to call on you for testimony.
22 We're going to call any and everybody
23 here who would like to speak, will be
24 considered, and your statement will be in
25 full on the record.

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2 Also, as you're coming forward,
3 we will submit testimony, as the
4 President already said, from Alfred M.
5 Brown, Point Breeze Performing Arts; Jane
6 Kauer, Parents United for Public
7 Education and Powel School; Greg Wade,
8 Philadelphia Home and School Council;
9 Reverend Robert P. Shine, who left his
10 testimony as well. We will submit all of
11 that for the record.

12 Thank you. We welcome you all.

13 MS. YANOFF: Thank you. And
14 again, Madam Chair, I hope I'm not trying
15 your patience too much, but --

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: No.
17 You're fine. We thank you for your
18 patience.

19 MS. YANOFF: Candace Bell from
20 the William Penn Foundation has to leave
21 in five minutes and she was a part of our
22 testimony, so may she start and then I'll
23 come back?

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

25 MS. YANOFF: Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
3 certainly let me acknowledge that Mr. Len
4 Finkelstein was here. He was the
5 superintendent back when I was a kid in
6 elementary school. He wanted to testify.
7 He's worried about youth violence, as was
8 Dr. Audrey Brunson, Pastor of Sanctuary
9 Church of the Open Door and former
10 Professor at Cheyney University.

11 Welcome. I'm sorry. Thank you
12 for your patience.

13 MS. BELL: Well, thank you.
14 I'm glad to have this opportunity to
15 testify. My name is Candace Bell and I'm
16 a Program Officer at the William Penn
17 Foundation, and I'm in charge of their
18 education-related grant making, and I'm
19 here to speak in support of Project
20 U-turn, which I think has been referred
21 to by various names here, from Youth
22 Transitions to the Collaborative to any
23 number of other names, but we've been
24 calling it Project U-turn.

25 As you know, the William Penn's

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2 commitment to education in Philadelphia
3 is both longstanding and substantial, as
4 is our commitment to ensuring the
5 economic and social well-being of the
6 City. The dropout crisis as described in
7 the Project U-turn report, which I
8 believe you all have had opportunity to
9 look at, and testified to by those who
10 are going to come after me here is one
11 that has serious implications beyond
12 school reform or quality of life in our
13 neighborhoods. Philadelphia cannot move
14 into the 21st century with close to 50
15 percent of its young adults not having a
16 12th grade level of proficiency.

17 What employer is going to move
18 here with half the workforce unqualified
19 for jobs in this new high-tech economy?
20 This is a ball and chain on progress at
21 all levels that cannot be ignored any
22 longer. It impacts the City's economy,
23 its tax burden, its safety, quality of
24 life and its civic life.

25 The Foundation first became

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2 involved with this issue through a
3 national funders affinity group called
4 the Youth Transition Funders Group in
5 2002. We participated in the design and
6 funding of the seven-city initiative that
7 has produced what I am calling Project
8 U-turn here in Philadelphia, and similar
9 initiatives are underway in Boston, New
10 York, Portland, San Jose, Washington, DC
11 and Las Vegas. Locally, the Foundation
12 has invested \$2.4 million to date in this
13 issue as part of the local matching funds
14 that is required by the National
15 Foundations.

16 We feel a critical element to
17 the success of Project U-turn has been
18 the participation of multiple systems in
19 this initiative, because we feel this is
20 a problem that goes beyond what the
21 District can do on its own. We are proud
22 of the fact that the District, Department
23 of Human Services, Family Court and the
24 Youth Council have set aside politics and
25 brought their best minds to bear on this

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2 issue. And I cannot underscore that
3 enough. That has gone on in a way that
4 we rarely see in this initiative.

5 Not surprisingly, Philadelphia
6 stands out among the other cities in its
7 progress to date. In fact, Philadelphia
8 has an opportunity, with Council
9 support -- and I think that's really
10 important and that's why we're delighted
11 that you're going to actually have these
12 hearings today and prioritize them ahead
13 of some other things.

14 This is why Philadelphia really
15 is set to become a national leader on
16 this issue. The William Penn Foundation
17 for its part is committed to supporting
18 Project U-turn going forward. National
19 Foundation investment will also continue
20 through the Youth Transition Funders
21 Group, provided the City systems and the
22 District continue to work together and
23 prioritize this problem for investment.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 you very much. Your name again is?
3 MS. BELL: Candace Bell.
4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
5 I have it. Thank you.
6 MS. BELL: Thank you.
7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Is
8 Wyneshia Foxworth, City Year, still here?
9 (No response.)
10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I know
11 there were many folks here and they left.
12 What about Greenfield School,
13 anyone here from Greenfield?
14 MS. YANOFF: They were here
15 earlier.
16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: What
17 about the Philadelphia Education Fund?
18 MS. YANOFF: He's here.
19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good.
20 Thank you.
21 MR. ARMSTEAD: I'm not Carol
22 Fixman, though.
23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: No.
24 You must be Mr. Armstead. Thank you.
25 MS. YANOFF: Laura.

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2 MS. SHUBILLA: Good afternoon.

3 My name is Laura Shubilla. I'm the
4 President of the Philadelphia Youth
5 Network, and the Philadelphia Youth
6 Network is the lead agency, the convening
7 organization, in the Youth Transitions
8 Collaborative, which has recently branded
9 itself as -- and Project U-turn is the
10 initiative the Collaborative launched
11 this fall.

12 I'm happy to be here today and
13 speaking in front of you about what I
14 think is a critically important issue to
15 the City, as you've heard from many
16 people who have gone before me.

17 You have written testimony from
18 myself and Pamela Crawley that's attached
19 to the two reports that the Collaborative
20 released earlier this fall looking at the
21 issue of sort of the scale and the
22 characteristics of young people who drop
23 out of school in the City and also a set
24 of recommendations about what we can do
25 about it. So given the time, I'll be

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2 very brief with my written --

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You
4 are again?

5 MS. SHUBILLA: Laura Shubilla
6 from the Philadelphia Youth Network.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you. Thank you very much.

9 MS. SHUBILLA: I'm just going
10 to highlight three things that I believe
11 that we've learned through the work that
12 we've done this year, and then other
13 members of the Collaborative will go into
14 more detail about some of the work.

15 But the first is, we talked
16 earlier about whether this was prevention
17 or whether it was early intervention or
18 whether it was reengagement and recovery,
19 and I think what we've learned from the
20 research on the projects that we've done
21 this year is that it isn't any one of
22 those things but it's all of them. So we
23 must do as much prevention as we can,
24 intervene as early as we find red flags
25 and then continue to work with young

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2 people through their transition into high
3 school and on to college.

4 The second thing that young
5 people pointed out repeatedly over the
6 last 18 months is, it's about
7 connections, and those connections are
8 about young people feeling connected to
9 adults, whether it's adults in the school
10 building and adults in their community,
11 and making connections between what young
12 people learn in school and what they want
13 to do with the rest of their lives,
14 whether it's employment or college.

15 The third thing is that most
16 young people really want to come back to
17 school, and the obstacles they faced in
18 doing that are varied. One thing we've
19 learned from the 500 young people we've
20 been working with who came to Project
21 U-turn or who have been calling the
22 hotline ever since has been the top two
23 obstacles they faced are child care and
24 housing, and the top two opportunities
25 that they're looking for are employment

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2 and the ability to earn a high school
3 diploma.

4 Several of the recommendations
5 that are in the reports I think sort of
6 stress what we think are some of the key
7 elements to the success of this. The
8 first is really building multiple
9 pathways to graduation. The second is
10 ensuring cross sector collaboration, and
11 the third is accountability.

12 I thank you for your time.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you.

15 MS. COLLINS-SHAPIRO: Good
16 afternoon. My name is Courtney
17 Collins-Shapiro. I'm from the School
18 District of Philadelphia and I'm running
19 the new Multiple Pathways to Graduation,
20 a program in the District, and the focus
21 of that department is really to sort of
22 identify all of the programs that service
23 out-of-school youth and students at risk
24 of dropping out, figuring out how we
25 create new options for them so that they

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2 can graduate and be successful.

3 So, again, given our brief
4 time, I have printed comments that I'll
5 make sure that you have.

6 I want to focus on five
7 programs that we've created within the
8 past 18 months that we're either starting
9 or we've retooled so that we can really
10 reach this group of students.

11 First we have accelerated high
12 schools. You heard Mr. Vallas talk
13 briefly about those, called them our
14 transition schools. We have four
15 accelerated high schools in the City of
16 Philadelphia right now. We're serving
17 775 students and we have 830 students on
18 wait lists, who actively signed up and
19 are ready to enroll if we had seats for
20 them. We'll be opening 125 new seats in
21 January of 2007. And when we look at our
22 data in the School District of
23 Philadelphia right now, when Mr. Vallas
24 talked about overage undercredited
25 students, we have about 7,100 students

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2 currently enrolled in the high schools
3 who are one or two years behind either in
4 credits or in age to graduation. So we
5 have a pool right now in schools of more
6 than 7,000 students who could enroll in
7 an accelerated high school if we had
8 seats.

9 Additionally, our researcher is
10 not here any longer, but from the dropout
11 reports that you have, the Project U-turn
12 reports, it does show that there are
13 about 8,200 students dropping out every
14 year. So if you took those 7,100
15 students who are highly at risk and those
16 8,200 students who have dropped out,
17 we've got a pretty large pool of students
18 who need additional services through
19 things like accelerated high schools.

20 We also have our Educational
21 Options Program that also serves overage
22 undercredited students who are a little
23 further along towards their diploma but
24 have dropped out. We serve 2,000
25 students in that program now. We had 800

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2 students earn a high school diploma in
3 that program last year, and we estimate
4 we have about 1,000 students who would be
5 eligible for that program if we can
6 provide seats.

7 This year our sort of jewel in
8 the crown is the Gateway to College
9 Program. We just started that program at
10 Community College of Philadelphia. The
11 School District of Philadelphia and the
12 Gates Foundation fund that program. We
13 had 40 high school dropouts who joined
14 the program in fall of 2006. We'll have
15 60 more students who will enroll in
16 January of 2007. And if we get to our
17 estimated full enrollment in 2009, we'll
18 have 400 students who were previously out
19 of school who will be enrolled full time,
20 earning both a high school diploma and an
21 Associate's degree at CCP. So it's a
22 really great program. It requires an 8th
23 grade literacy level.

24 One of the things I think if
25 Center for Literacy were here to talk

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2 more about some of their programs, we
3 find that about 90 percent of the
4 students who apply to that program aren't
5 eligible because they're reading below an
6 8th grade level, and these are high
7 school dropouts. So we're creating -- 90
8 percent of the students who apply are not
9 eligible because they are so low
10 literacy, so we're starting to address
11 that issue and create some new literacy
12 programs for those students so that they
13 can come back and earn their diplomas.

14 And then two new programs that
15 we've just started. One is the Dropout
16 Prevention Specialists Program. We're
17 hiring trained social workers in seven
18 high schools to focus specifically on the
19 most at-risk 9th grade students in those
20 schools and on students who have dropped
21 out of those high schools who are going
22 to be coming back to earn a diploma. So
23 students who are coming back from
24 juvenile placement, teen parents, that
25 demographic.

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2 So those folks are going to be
3 doing this work starting in January.
4 We're modeling after a program in Boston
5 that's been very successful at bringing
6 students back to school and keeping them
7 in.

8 And, finally, we have a program
9 that's really targeted in school youth.
10 It's called the Student Success Center
11 Program. We have eight of them currently
12 in neighborhood high schools. They
13 provide college support, academic
14 preparation, career exploration services
15 and social support services. So we take
16 School District staff and non-profit and
17 community-based organization staff and
18 resources, we pull everything together.
19 We create like a one-stop shopping for
20 students in high schools. So, again, we
21 have those in eight neighborhood high
22 schools, and they really are focusing on
23 every student in the school and, in some
24 cases, students in the community. So
25 students can come in after school, before

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2 school. There are summer programs that
3 operate out of those centers.

4 So those are five major things
5 that the District is doing.

6 And, again, in closing,
7 everybody sort of talked a little bit
8 here about we need funding, we need
9 resources. You heard Candace Bell talk
10 about how Philadelphia is becoming a
11 national leader in these efforts. We've
12 had folks from Annenberg in. We've had
13 folks from Gates in to take a look at
14 Philadelphia. They need to see that the
15 City is investing in our out-of-school
16 youth and our at-risk youth if they're
17 going to continue to invest in
18 Philadelphia.

19 So thank you for your time.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you. Very important testimony. Thank
22 you very much.

23 MR. ARMSTEAD: Good afternoon
24 again. My name is Brian Armstead. I'm
25 the Director of Civic Engagement for the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Philadelphia Education Fund. I also
3 submitted written testimony, but I'm just
4 going to hit the essentials since we are
5 running short on time.

6 But I do want to thank you,
7 first of all, for having these hearings
8 and encourage you, again, to follow up
9 with Shelly and with Laura to really hold
10 either continued briefings or hearings,
11 because this is an issue that is going to
12 require the entire City of Philadelphia
13 community to really get our hands around.
14 I think that it's easy just to have
15 several people get up and start talking
16 about initiatives that we're working on,
17 but the true fact of the matter is, it's
18 going to take the political folks in the
19 City, it's going to take the business
20 community, the civil leaders and the
21 people at large to really make a
22 demonstrated difference in this. And so,
23 again, I would encourage you all to use
24 the resources, the stature that you all
25 have to really galvanize people and

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 influence ideas in the City working in
3 conjunction with the steering committee
4 from the Collaborative to really make a
5 profound difference here.

6 The Philadelphia Education
7 Fund, our particular role in this process
8 has been we were working with Johns
9 Hopkins University to conduct the
10 research that you all have heard a lot
11 about today; in particular, tracking the
12 cohort of over 12,000 Philadelphia
13 students that entered 6th grade in
14 1996-'97 and followed them through to
15 2003-2004 to look and see who graduated,
16 who didn't, what were some of the factors
17 that can be pulled out to identify as
18 early as 6th grade as being indicators
19 that these kids are not going to
20 graduate. And four things jumped out.
21 The first is if the young boy or girl in
22 6th grade was failing math; second,
23 failing English; third, had low
24 attendance, which was attending school 80
25 percent or less of the time; and the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 fourth was poor behavior, which was
3 having a poor behavioral grade in the
4 last marking period.

5 With those four things, if a
6 child has any one of those four things,
7 then the way the study played itself out,
8 nine out of ten of them, nine out of ten
9 of those kids, will not graduate on time.
10 And so the fact that we're able to
11 identify these factors becomes very
12 important, because by the time a child
13 gets to 9th grade, normally they're
14 hitting the trifecta or the quadfecta,
15 whatever you want to call it, with all
16 four. They may be failing math and
17 English, have behavior problems, they're
18 not coming to school. But in 6th grade,
19 generally the child only has one, maybe
20 two of those factors going on, so that we
21 can apply much more specific targeted
22 interventions.

23 And we've started to do that.
24 We've started working with the School
25 District to begin to apply some of those

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 interventions and see what's the best way
3 that we can steer these kids back on
4 course to graduation.

5 But, again, the fact of the
6 matter is that working in 6th grade is
7 only a part of the issue and that we have
8 to make sure that the entire continuum of
9 secondary education moves kids toward
10 graduation.

11 And so, again, with my limited
12 time, I'm just going to say, before
13 Shelly yanks the microphone from out in
14 front of me, just, again, continue to
15 encourage you all to exercise real
16 visible leadership around this issue.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you.

20 MS. SHIPLER: Good afternoon.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
22 afternoon.

23 MS. SHIPLER: My name is
24 Kristin Shipler. I'm the Director of
25 Civil Engagement with a community-based

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 non-profit organization called Congreso
3 de Latinos Unidos.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

5 MS. SHIPLER: We're the largest
6 Latino social service agency in
7 Pennsylvania and we are also a part of
8 the Philadelphia Youth Transition
9 Collaborative, because we do prioritize
10 the issue of out-of-school youth within
11 our organization.

12 We want to thank City Council
13 for prioritizing the needs of the Latino
14 population in our great city, especially
15 knowing that the Latino communities have
16 unique challenges and they're actually a
17 growing population in Philadelphia.

18 Since 1990, the Latino
19 population in Philadelphia has increased
20 by over 65 percent, with our current
21 population estimates now placed at over
22 145,000, and almost 50 percent of Latinos
23 in Philadelphia are younger than 25 years
24 of age.

25 Let me start by introducing a

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 statistic that was highlighted in the
3 Project U-turn report. Latino males have
4 the lowest on-time graduation rate of any
5 group in Philadelphia, and it ranges
6 between 29.3 percent and 38.2 percent.
7 So we've been talking a lot about the 50
8 percentile, but we're actually in the
9 Latino community talking about 30 percent
10 graduation.

11 Less than 40 percent of our
12 population in Eastern North Philadelphia,
13 which was where we are located, has
14 graduated from high school. We know the
15 crisis is real for all of our youth and
16 it's especially so for Latinos. And when
17 you look at the language and cultural
18 barriers and the poverty that faces the
19 Latino community, that's why we're seeing
20 that the dropout rate is so profound
21 there.

22 But we've been in the community
23 for 30 years, and our services reach more
24 than 10,000 youth per year. Our client
25 base is about 23,000. We're also working

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2 with the parents of these youth.

3 We view the schools as the
4 heart of the community, and as such,
5 we've strategically aligned many of our
6 youth programs with the education system.
7 Our contribution to the school system
8 provides supports to prevent high school
9 dropouts, and we need to address the root
10 causes that lead youth to drop out of
11 school in the first place, and we've
12 heard a lot about that today.

13 We realize this isn't enough.
14 There are many youth already out of
15 school who need the community's support.
16 So in response to this, I've been asked
17 to talk specifically about what Congreso
18 does to serve out-of-school youth, and
19 that is, by managing one of the City's E3
20 centers.

21 The E3 centers were designed as
22 intensive career preparation programs for
23 youth age between 14 and 21, and students
24 who drop out of schools are very unlikely
25 to return. So that's why E3 centers are

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2 really great for them, because they
3 provide an appropriate and youth-driven
4 context. Students who come to the youth
5 centers actually have some
6 decision-making within the process of how
7 the program is run.

8 And we help educate our clients
9 toward reaching a high school equivalency
10 diploma and we help them build skills
11 that they need to enter the workforce.

12 Members work with our staff to
13 identify career interests, set goals and
14 gain the skills they needed to achieve
15 them. But this is hard work and it takes
16 extensive dedication to each of the youth
17 to ensure that they meet the goals set
18 out for them.

19 On average, currently \$3,000 is
20 dedicated to each youth slot in an E3
21 center. This is an amount that differs
22 quite dramatically from upwards of 40,000
23 that can be spent on youth placed in
24 residential treatment centers.

25 The research demonstrates that

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 the primary critical factor in successful
3 intervening with this population is a
4 caring adult, and as such, we have
5 committed a case worker to each of the
6 youth that come into the E3 centers.
7 This differs a little bit from what you
8 see in the schools.

9 But as such, we propose
10 increased capacity within the current
11 centers to fully address the myriad of
12 needs that each of our clients present.
13 In addition, we advocate for additional
14 E3 centers that are substantially less
15 expensive than the alternative of
16 residential centers and, if implemented,
17 can demonstrate the same outcomes if
18 funded adequately.

19 With an emphasis on quality
20 over quantity, we will more likely ensure
21 real positive change in the lives of the
22 clients we serve. We have seen in the
23 year that we have operated the E3 center
24 the absolute essential component of
25 personal connections with adults. Again,

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 an adult connection is one of the most
3 influential components that lead an
4 out-of-school youth towards success. And
5 I just want to give you one example of
6 one of our students that goes there.

7 Christina -- and this is not
8 her real name, but she's a 17-year-old
9 Latina who dropped out of high school
10 when she was 14. She was in 9th grade.
11 She became pregnant, and when her baby
12 was born, her mother kicked her out of
13 the house. So where does this leave
14 Christina? She doesn't have consistent
15 child care. She's been evicted three
16 times from housing. She doesn't have
17 relationships with her parents, the
18 father of her daughter or other
19 relatives, and she's an only child. And
20 she's currently looking for work, but
21 because of her child care situation, she
22 hasn't been able to hold down a job. And
23 this is very common for the students that
24 we serve in these E3 centers. She's not
25 a rare case.

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2 But she connected to the E3
3 center in January of 2006, and so far,
4 her skills have improved from 4th grade
5 to 7th grade reading and math levels.
6 She's currently enrolled in a GED
7 program. She's completed a six-week
8 program in computer repair, and she works
9 15 to 20 hours within the E3 center.
10 Just as important, though, through case
11 management she has found more stable
12 housing and child care. She's built
13 better peer and social networks, and
14 she's working toward involving the father
15 of her daughter in their lives.

16 So the E3 center is really a
17 wholistic approach, and case management
18 is very essential.

19 The connection she's made with
20 her case manager and the direction the
21 case manager has been able to provide her
22 have been the successful keys. But she's
23 not quite there. We can't give up on her
24 until she actually receives her GED and
25 she receives sustainable employment. And

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2 we're committed to get her there, but it
3 takes a lot of time and it takes a lot of
4 resources.

5 There are many Christinas in
6 Philadelphia, and we aim to provide
7 quality, outcomes-based results that will
8 lead our clients to self-sufficiency.
9 The collaboration of all these
10 organizations here is significant, and we
11 need support. With City Council
12 prioritizing this grave issue of
13 dropouts, we attend to, in tandem, the
14 overrepresentation of Latinos and
15 African-Americans in the juvenile justice
16 system, the violence that's gripping our
17 City, and the economic and social impact
18 that's debilitating Philadelphia's
19 efforts to become a more prosperous urban
20 center.

21 Thank you for listening.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you very much. Very important testimony.

24 Sir.

25 MR. RAND: Yes. My name is

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Charles Rand. I'm with the Center for
3 Literacy. The Center for Literacy is the
4 largest community-based non-profit
5 literacy provider in the country.

6 On behalf of the Center for
7 Literacy, I am pleased to be here today
8 to discuss the needs of youth at risk of
9 dropping out of school because of low
10 literacy levels.

11 During the 2004-2005 fiscal
12 year, CFL, Center for Literacy, worked
13 with 985 out-of-school youth age 16
14 through 21. These were high school
15 dropouts, both male and female,
16 representing all races. These young
17 people came to CFL with goals, wanting a
18 high school diploma or a GED.

19 Who are these youth? They are
20 under 21, and 77 percent were reading
21 below a 6th grade level, and 87 percent
22 had math skills below the 6th grade
23 level. Some were in special education,
24 while others were low achievers. Many
25 have adult responsibilities as parents

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2 and workers, and need support as they
3 search for housing and strive to overcome
4 barriers.

5 The Center for Literacy's
6 Citywide programs are open to these youth
7 in neighborhood centers, in community
8 programs and family literacy programs.
9 Some of the classes were designed
10 particularly with youth in mind. In
11 others, the youth were integrated with
12 adult learners of all ages. Starting in
13 July of 2005, literacy coaching was in
14 the E3 centers.

15 At the same time, the Center
16 for Literacy was developing a toolkit for
17 teaching out-of-school youth with low
18 literacy skills as part of the City of
19 Philadelphia's response to the challenge
20 of working with struggling youth using
21 funding from the Youth Transition Funders
22 Group, the Collaborative. The research
23 and professional literature were analyzed
24 for this project, and it can be
25 summarized as follows:

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2 Serving the literacy needs of
3 out-of-school youth, particularly those
4 reading below the 6th grade level, is a
5 complex task. Adolescence is a time for
6 upheaval for the vast majority of people
7 and is made more difficult by the kinds
8 of situations that require youth to leave
9 school early. If teachers serving the
10 out-of-school youth population come to
11 better understand how adolescents
12 develop, how they are different from
13 adults and how to provide quality reading
14 instruction to meet their needs, these
15 learners will be better served regardless
16 of the educational setting.

17 The toolkit contains a
18 Literature Review, including research as
19 well as reflections of the evaluator and
20 several teachers, a professional
21 development plan, standards and
22 indicators of quality program, and sample
23 lesson plans. Examples of the standards
24 and indicators of critical importance to
25 a quality education program for low

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 literate youth include direct reading
3 instruction is systematic and structured.
4 That's Standard No. 6. Which must work
5 hand in hand with Standard No. 7,
6 instructional methods capture the
7 learners' attention and actively engage
8 him or her in the learning process and,
9 as we've heard time and again today,
10 class size is kept small. That's
11 Standard No. 12. Furthermore, quality
12 staff development is critical to the
13 literacy skills development of these
14 youth.

15 In implementing this toolkit,
16 what have we found out? First of all,
17 students with small group tutoring by
18 reading specialists or a trained adult
19 educator can achieve results of two to
20 three grade levels in four months of
21 instruction.

22 Second, to enable these youth
23 to continue in the program, they require
24 a system of providing caring adult
25 guidance.

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2 There's a great deal of work
3 ahead for all of us as we hope to provide
4 promise to these youth. We believe that
5 the collaborative partnerships are
6 essential in creating, implementing and
7 bringing to scale the educational options
8 being discussed, and we strongly
9 encourage the leadership of Philadelphia
10 to reflect on the impact low literacy has
11 on our region's economic health and the
12 power of literacy in helping youth
13 contribute to the future of our great
14 city.

15 Thank you for the opportunity
16 to speak before you today.

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

19 Thank you, Shelly, too, for
20 putting this important, important panel
21 together.

22 MS. YANOFF: We're trying.

23 MS. MALLOY: Hi. My name is
24 Meredith Malloy and I am speaking on
25 behalf of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 School.

3 YouthBuild Philadelphia is an
4 innovative academic and job-training
5 program for young adults 18 to 21 who
6 have dropped out of high school.
7 Students enrolled in the program rebuild
8 abandoned houses for low-income families
9 and refurbish computers for community
10 organizations.

11 As the young people develop
12 these valuable job skills, they also work
13 toward earning a high school diploma.
14 Students spend half their time on the
15 hands-on vocational work site and the
16 other half of their time in the classroom
17 where they receive individualized
18 instruction and life skills counseling.

19 Our unique program design draws
20 on the assets inherent in these young
21 people and provides at-risk,
22 out-of-school youth an opportunity to
23 become a positive workforce reversing
24 urban blight, while rebuilding their own
25 lives at the same time.

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2 Each year YouthBuild receives
3 about four times as many applications as
4 there are slots. We provide each student
5 with academic instruction, job training,
6 case management, in-house mentoring, life
7 skills training, leadership development
8 and career development. The program does
9 not end with earning a high school
10 diploma. We offer real supports and
11 opportunities that create clear pathways
12 for future success.

13 Programs like YouthBuild are
14 essential for out-of-school youth in our
15 community. The level of service that
16 YouthBuild provides cannot be sustained
17 without a financial commitment from our
18 community. When we commit resources to
19 our youth, we make a wise investment in
20 the community that reaps benefits for
21 years to come.

22 Young people come to YouthBuild
23 depleted. They have significant needs
24 that we are fortunately able to meet.
25 Our ability to meet these needs of the

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 students so that they can become
3 productive citizens requires an
4 investment from the community. It's an
5 investment that pays significant
6 dividends.

7 Since 1992, more than 1,200
8 young adults have graduated from the
9 program. YouthBuild students have
10 rebuilt 61 homes for low-income families
11 and donated 1,000 refurbished computers
12 to community organizations and schools.
13 Over 80 percent of our last three
14 graduating classes have gone on to
15 meaningful full-time jobs or continued
16 their education. These outcomes are
17 impressive, but they do not come cheap.
18 YouthBuild has successfully leveraged
19 public funding from local, state and
20 federal sources as well as private
21 investments to achieve these results, and
22 we urge your continued support for
23 programs like YouthBuild.

24 Thank you.

25 MS. YANOFF: Okay.

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you very much.

4 MS. YANOFF: Thank you. Well,
5 I will be brief, no matter how long it
6 takes.

7 My name is Shelly Yanoff and I
8 am Executive Director of Philadelphia
9 Citizens for Children and Youth. We are
10 the major trial advocacy organization in
11 the region.

12 You've heard a lot about young
13 people who drop out and its impact on all
14 of us. This is the story: There are
15 13,000 kids every year, 13,000 that we
16 lose. If we're going to survive as a
17 city with a future, we have to change
18 that. There are things Council can and
19 should do that can make a difference.
20 The first is what you are doing right
21 now, and that's pay attention to it.

22 If 13,000 people were infected
23 with a virus, they would close the
24 bridges. We'd be a quarantined city. It
25 would have been noticed. We would have

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2 had lots of newspaper headlines. We
3 would have done something about it. We
4 would have found the money and found the
5 solutions, because we were quarantined.

6 Well, there are 13,000 kids
7 every year who we're losing, and we can
8 do a whole lot better than we have.

9 It's not the School District's
10 job alone. It's not the City's job
11 alone. It's not the community's job
12 alone. It's not the parents' job alone.
13 It's not the students' job alone. It's
14 all of our jobs.

15 Most of the kids who dropped
16 out said they had no one to talk with
17 about school and school problems or about
18 their own problems. Many said that their
19 absences were not even noticed when they
20 dropped out.

21 Some who dropped out had been
22 in foster care during high school.
23 Between 70 and 80 percent of these kids
24 drop out. You, the City, can do
25 something about that. These kids are

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2 known to us. You can provide DHS with
3 support to place social workers in high
4 schools to provide the counseling and
5 help these youth need. We urge you to
6 support DHS in taking responsibility for
7 these young people who age out of care
8 and drop out. You can support funding
9 for follow-up with these youth and
10 funding for reentry.

11 We also urge you to look again
12 at what's happening to teen parents.
13 They give birth, they leave school.
14 Again, many of these young women, almost
15 70 percent, will drop out if they have a
16 baby during high school. Many times they
17 would like to return, but do not have
18 anyone helping them put the parenting,
19 caring, school pieces together. These
20 young women go to prenatal care. They
21 need someone to help connect them back to
22 school.

23 We have in the City, in the
24 City Health Department, in the hospitals,
25 teams of nurses and other community

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2 outreach programs that support new
3 parents. Many of these are
4 evidence-based services. They have good
5 records. But there's not enough of them
6 to pay special attention to teens and
7 their needs to connect back to schools.
8 Council could support such a team in the
9 health centers in collaboration with
10 local hospitals and outreach programs.
11 You have supported those outreach
12 programs over the years. You can make
13 this a special initiative. The support
14 would help two generations.

15 We know that students who fall
16 behind stay behind, and so we urge you to
17 support a variety of efforts to assist
18 these kids the minute they start to fall
19 behind, whether it's in 6th grade, as
20 Brian has discussed when kids are having
21 trouble with math and reading and
22 starting behavior problems, or in 8th
23 grade or 9th grade. We know what to do.
24 We just don't do it because we don't
25 dedicate the dollars to it. You can do

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 this. Keeping clear of all of the other
3 educational laws, you can do this as a
4 city.

5 We need many new pathways, and
6 Courtney has described many of them that
7 the School District has started, but
8 she's also told you that there are huge
9 waiting lists, and these are waiting
10 lists of the kids that have been
11 awakened. There's a gazillion kids out
12 there that we haven't knocked on their
13 doors that don't know to come in. So you
14 know what it's like to work with kids who
15 are invisible. These kids have been
16 invisible, and we've got to make them
17 visible and respond to them.

18 If ever there was a time to put
19 more supports in our schools so that all
20 youth could be engaged and connected,
21 this time is here. Yet, once again,
22 we're facing rounds of cuts, making
23 regular school less and less inviting to
24 many of the disaffected and disconnected
25 youth. We are awfully glad that the cuts

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2 that have been proposed are less than
3 they could have been, but we didn't start
4 with a fat cushion in this District. We
5 need to spend more in our schools at the
6 city, state and federal levels.

7 We know what to do. We need to
8 continue supporting successful projects
9 that look out for kids, especially those
10 that are in transition, like the
11 reintegration project which supports
12 educational transition for youth
13 returning from placement. We need to
14 provide extra supports for kids in 6th
15 and 8th and 9th grades.

16 The problem of youth not
17 finishing high school is not new. It's
18 not even particularly escalating.
19 However, its impact is new. We do not
20 have jobs anymore for kids who do not
21 have a high school education. If they
22 don't have jobs, they're going to get
23 into trouble. If they get into trouble,
24 we're going to end up paying a whole lot
25 in many different ways for it. So it

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2 makes sense for us as a city, as a
3 community and as a school district to
4 figure out how we can collaborate to
5 really make a change, to really make a
6 U-turn, in these kids' lives, and in
7 doing so, we will have made a U-turn in
8 Philadelphia's hopes for a better future.

9 Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you very much. Thank you all for your
12 very, very important testimony and your
13 patience. Thank you all.

14 MS. YANOFF: Thank you. Madam
15 Chair, one more thing, Sheila Simmons
16 from our office was going to talk for a
17 minute, just a minute, on the City
18 budget, School District budget.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
20 right. As she's speaking, we want
21 Vernard Johnson, Southeast Pennsylvania
22 Network for Family Health and Education
23 and Welfare to know he'll be next.

24 Did we hear from Carol Fixman?

25 MR. ARMSTEAD: No. She had to

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 leave.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Is
4 there anyone here from Citywide Student
5 Government?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
8 guess Jerome Chaney, President of
9 Nu-Juice, had to leave. I know Eric
10 Ward, Keeping It Real, CEO, had to leave.
11 What about John Hopkins University?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She had
13 to leave.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Oh,
15 it's all so very sad. So if er schedule
16 it in two bits, then you miss the Mayor
17 and the CEO of the School District and
18 you feel disrespected. If we do it like
19 this, it's called we lose, we lose.

20 Is Courtney Collins-Shapiro
21 here?

22 MS. YANOFF: She testified.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We had
24 her. What about Build the Bridge
25 International?

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Nobody
4 knows? Natalie Payne.

5 Okay. Mr. Johnson, thank you.

6 Ms. Simmons, begin, and then
7 Mr. Johnson.

8 MS. SIMMONS: Yes. Thank you,
9 Madam Chairwoman. This past week the
10 School Reform Commission reportedly
11 approved the final step toward resolving
12 the School District's \$73.3 million
13 budget deficit. It did so through a
14 number of painful cuts to programs,
15 services and personnel that had been
16 instituted to improve the education of
17 our children. Chief among the losses is
18 the apparent lack of a commitment to
19 smaller class size.

20 In a May 2003 staff memo,
21 school CEO, Paul Vallas, called reducing
22 class size our number one priority.
23 Finally, he said, We are eliminating the
24 practice of staff reductions in a school
25 due to downward leveling. Such efforts,

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2 he said, would reduce teacher turnover
3 and increase the District's ability to
4 attract and retain highly qualified
5 teachers. The result of such targeted
6 attention was, in part, more stable
7 learning environments and double digit
8 test score improvements.

9 SRC Chairman James Nevels cited
10 the Council of Great City Schools in
11 calling our gains among the largest
12 posted by any of the 50 biggest urban
13 school systems in the country. Among the
14 reasons to which he attributed such
15 results, he pointed to improving
16 conditions for teachers by reducing class
17 sizes in 2,300 classrooms and by adding
18 225 academic coaches who help teachers
19 tackle deficiencies in literacy, math and
20 science. He made this citation in a
21 March 2005 magazine article titled
22 "Reading, Writing, ROI." ROI is a
23 finance term meaning return on
24 investment, the comparison of the money
25 earned on an investment to the amount of

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2 money invested.

3 Now, what are we investing and
4 in what areas? We call on you to provide
5 more funding. For kindergarten to the
6 third grade, the national norm for class
7 size is 25. In Philadelphia, the School
8 District has capped class sizes at 30
9 students for kindergarten to third grade
10 and 33 students in upper grades, and the
11 PFT did testify that we now have 172
12 overcrowded classes.

13 Numerous studies have pointed
14 out the advantages of smaller class size.
15 Chief among them is the well-known
16 Project STAR, which is Student/Teacher
17 Achievement Ratio, that looked at 7,000
18 students in 75 schools over five years.
19 Some students were in classrooms with 13
20 to 17 students per teacher, and others
21 remained in standard size classes with 22
22 to 25 teachers.

23 That report found that students
24 in smaller classes in K through 3 earned
25 significantly higher scores on basic

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2 skill tests in all four years and across
3 all types of schools. The students from
4 the smaller classes continued to achieve
5 at higher rates than their peers, even
6 after they returned to standard size
7 classes in grades 4 and beyond.

8 In kindergarten, 55 percent of
9 the students who scored in the top ten
10 percent on standardized measures came
11 from the small classes. Once those
12 students moved to the third grade, 78
13 percent of the top-scoring students were
14 from the small class group. The effects
15 of this study were largest for students
16 in inner city classes.

17 Other reports have shown that
18 when teachers spent time with students,
19 test scores rose and discipline problems
20 dropped.

21 Recent census data showed that
22 nearly one in four Philadelphians live in
23 poverty. We know that a quality
24 education for our children and future
25 workforce is the greatest determinant in

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2 escaping this fate. We as a community
3 need to set some priorities for what we
4 envision of our public educational
5 system. If many of these priorities are
6 determined by funding, then it is time
7 that we as a community fully explore the
8 directions of that funding, including the
9 expenses involved in educational
10 management organizations, alternative
11 disciplinary schools and any number of
12 private contracts.

13 While PCCY encourages such
14 exploration, we also stress that no
15 further studies are needed to confirm the
16 positive impact of smaller class sizes.

17 Every day that our children
18 spend in this scientifically discouraged
19 environment is a missed opportunity
20 towards improving our children's future
21 and our own.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much, Ms. Simmons. Thank you.

25 Mr. Johnson, thank you. Thank

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2 you for bringing the youngsters with you
3 and for your work over the years in this
4 field. Thank you.

5 MR. JOHNSON: They just wanted
6 to know if you was providing supper for
7 tonight.

8 How are you, Councilwoman?

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Just
10 fine.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Good. I really
12 after being here all day, I really don't
13 have a whole lot more to add to what's
14 been said, other than a few things.

15 I believe the District could
16 use more dollars to support the expansion
17 of some of its efforts, and specifically
18 I'm just going to talk about attendance,
19 truancy, dropout, that kind of thing.

20 If you don't mind, can I bring
21 this forward? These are some students,
22 about 50 students, that we've worked with
23 over the last three or four years.
24 They're students from a school in South
25 Philadelphia.

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2 If you look at where the names
3 should be, I blanked the names out.
4 You'll see unexcused absences and then
5 you'll see excused and VOS, means out of
6 school suspensions, the number of days
7 that were assigned to those suspensions,
8 and I believe there's a category for
9 lateness. We don't talk about lateness
10 very much. Maybe I'll spend some time
11 talking about lateness. And if you'll
12 flip the page, you'll see that the
13 unexcused absences get progressively
14 worse to the point that one student --
15 that was from grades K to 7 -- to the
16 point that one student almost had an
17 entire year, 340-some days, of unexcused
18 absences.

19 Nothing new, Councilwoman.
20 We've been talking about, you and I and
21 other people, have been talking about
22 this for years. I mean, literally years.
23 When Secretary of Welfare Richman was the
24 Health Commissioner, I remember a meeting
25 that we had in the Caucus Room with her

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2 and the DHS Commissioner talking about
3 this issue.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
5 thought about it today as well.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
8 remember when we even talked about trying
9 to get places for them near University
10 City High School, whether they should be
11 emancipated adults and places for them to
12 stay, all these issues.

13 MR. JOHNSON: That's right.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: The
15 scripture says there's nothing new under
16 the sun and I suppose there isn't.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Sometimes I
18 wonder if I've been doing this too long,
19 because we've seen all this come before
20 us before. And this is not new, but the
21 impact is more extreme in our
22 neighborhoods.

23 Programs come and go,
24 Councilwoman, as you know. When the
25 dollars are there, the programs are

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2 there. When the dollars are gone, the
3 programs are gone.

4 And so I'd just like to stress
5 that you hear very little about supports
6 to the family. We heard about services
7 to children in schools, programs to
8 children in schools. Our families are in
9 dire need of support.

10 The Secretary of Education was
11 just out in the hallway with one of my
12 students trying to see how she can link
13 services, and I appreciate that, trying
14 to see how she can link services to a
15 student of mine.

16 I think that when the School
17 District looks for homeless students,
18 they look in shelters. That's not the
19 only place people are homeless. You can
20 be homeless living with your aunt, living
21 with your uncle, but it's not your home
22 and you're not in control of it, and
23 that's what many of our students are
24 facing.

25 I now have about 25 students in

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2 cyber schools that we're managing every
3 day in my wife's non-profit. These
4 children stay home three days a week,
5 they come to us two days a week. We have
6 students from grade levels 7 through 12.
7 Most of them are undercredited, most of
8 them. The students that spoke at the
9 table today were not undercredited, but
10 they're struggling, and if we don't watch
11 out, pretty soon they won't be able to
12 find a way into the classroom.

13 So we put them in cyber schools
14 at the suggestion of their parents. We
15 provide them with the social supports,
16 and we do that from our own resources.
17 And I just wanted to say that a lot of
18 the agencies -- and I preface that by
19 saying agencies -- that provide our
20 children and families with services come
21 from outside of the community where the
22 children live, and that the
23 community-based organizations that are in
24 those neighborhoods, I think we need to
25 be looking at those organizations and

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2 seeing how we could put a collaborative
3 partnership together with those
4 organizations and the William Penn
5 Foundation so that those organizations
6 that are going to provide the service
7 with or without money -- and I think
8 sometimes people take that for granted,
9 but with -- I'm glad you're looking at
10 that, because some of those organizations
11 are listed right there in that book.
12 That's a report that we gave to the
13 School District last year. We gave it to
14 the School Reform Commission. I know
15 each and every one of those students by
16 name, see them on the street. And 90
17 percent of those students still have poor
18 attendance. And we gave that information
19 to the SRC last school term.
20 It's nice to talk about new
21 programs, but what are we going to do
22 with those students and far more students
23 than those that I'm sure are in our
24 classrooms every day? The Mayor talks
25 about bringing students back into

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2 buildings. What are we going to do with
3 them when they get back into the
4 building? Are they going to run the
5 hall? Are they going to go to class?
6 Are they not going to go to class?

7 So those are the kinds of
8 things that I wanted to come forward and
9 talk about today. And I'm kind of wiped
10 out listening to all this other
11 testimony, but I really wanted to stay to
12 the end so I can hear other people. And
13 someone from the School District is here,
14 so I'm sure that she'll go back and talk
15 about some of the things I'm saying.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you. So they go 6:00 to 8:00 on Tuesdays
18 and Thursdays?

19 MR. JOHNSON: No. It's
20 interesting, because they can wake up at
21 8:00 in the morning or 12:00 in the
22 afternoon and still get their lessons.
23 They come to us from roughly 9 o'clock in
24 the morning and they stay with us until
25 about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

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2 Our focus with them is, we do
3 their health and we do their gym with
4 them, their physical education, but we
5 also talk to them about work, about
6 careers. So now we're working with the
7 Free Library downtown. On January the
8 11th in the Education Department, they're
9 going to do a seminar for our children
10 and their families on how to enter into a
11 career. A lot of our kids got to go to
12 work. We're talking about college, and
13 that's great, and we can talk about trade
14 school, and that's great.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: How
16 old are your children?

17 MR. JOHNSON: They're between
18 the ages of, I'd say, 13 and up. We have
19 several girls from Girls High that got
20 into situations and stopped going to
21 school. So we have all kind of kids.
22 All of them are bright. Just because
23 they stay home and they're truant don't
24 mean they're not bright. A lot of our
25 kids are facing and trying to deal with

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2 adult situations. If we could train and
3 work with the parents and work with the
4 families to handle their business, as the
5 kids might say, so then the kids could
6 handle their business, and that's going
7 to school, and keeping them out of adult
8 responsibilities and adult business and
9 free them up so they could pay attention
10 to themselves, then that's what we try to
11 do. And so I'm not picking us up and
12 putting anybody else down, but our
13 children -- Ms. Bussey wants to go to
14 work. She wants to help her family.

15 And I've been here not too much
16 in the recent years, but in the past
17 years I've come in and the Health
18 Department comes in and says that they
19 have entry-level positions that go
20 unfilled. We went over with my students
21 here, we went over to the Municipal
22 Courts to the Human Resource Department
23 at the Municipal Courts and we talked to
24 the lady over there, and she said we're
25 going to have a lot of people retiring

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2 over the next four or five years, but the
3 challenge where the kids coming from the
4 Philadelphia public school system for
5 them is that they can't type 50 words a
6 minute. They can't take words in
7 constructive letter, because if they
8 could do that, then there may be some
9 entry-level position right here in
10 government that our children could fill.

11 So the only thing I'm saying is
12 that a lot of our kids want to go to
13 work. I didn't hear anybody really talk
14 about work today.

15 And, Councilwoman, you can keep
16 that and make a copy of it and I can just
17 get it --

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you.

20 MR. JOHNSON: I can get it --
21 what's today? Monday. I can get it
22 Thursday when I come down. Is that okay?

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Because I think

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2 maybe that would be helpful to you.

3 So if you have a student from
4 kindergarten to 6th grade who has missed
5 200, 300 days of school, just unexcused,
6 that family needs some support.

7 Now, that's when the parent was
8 more responsible to getting them to
9 school, right? So now the student goes
10 to 7th and 8th grade. We expect him to
11 go to school on his own without stopping
12 at the corner store?

13 When the students come to
14 school late, I'd take Mr. Vallas up on
15 the idea about visiting schools. Go to
16 any high school. When students are late,
17 they get put into the auditorium. They
18 miss first period class, and they go to
19 class. There's an opportunity where you
20 have them right there to begin to do
21 something with them with the dollars and
22 the staff that you have right there.

23 So I'm not going to take any
24 more time, but I just wanted to come in
25 here and say that -- tomorrow we're

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2 meeting with Brenda Taylor, a group of --
3 Ms. Taylor, she wasn't here today. She
4 runs the Office of Specialized Services,
5 is the provider of special services for
6 the School District. We're meeting with
7 her tomorrow and we're going to create a
8 network over the next year of
9 community-based providers. Those
10 providers are -- the Boards of Directors
11 are made up of people who live in the
12 neighborhood where the organization
13 provides services and have an operating
14 budget of less than a quarter million
15 dollars. Not very many organizations
16 that were before you today fit that mold.

17 So Ms. Taylor wants to meet
18 with those groups so she can talk to them
19 and get an understanding of what kind of
20 services that they provide to see how we
21 could develop a relationship. And all
22 these dollars don't have to come from the
23 School District. Because I heard
24 somebody else up there today talk about
25 there are other organizations out here

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2 that have funding to do some of this
3 work, and if we went and got them and
4 brought them in, maybe we could convince
5 them to pay more attention to children
6 and families of school-age children and
7 their families, is what I'm trying to
8 say.

9 So Greg Nelson and -- you
10 understand what I'm saying? And
11 Dr. Jones down there on Broad Street and
12 his wife, Yvonne, who has a letter in
13 there of Urban Solutions. There are all
14 kinds of groups that are out here. The
15 bureaucracy is such that sometimes those
16 groups don't want to get involved with
17 the School District. They don't always
18 want money; it's just the bureaucracy.
19 And I'm not saying organizations don't
20 need money. I know you're not taking my
21 words wrong, but there are a lot of
22 people out here who would like to help
23 the School District.

24 The School District has to
25 learn how to be a partner, not always be

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2 the lead player, but be a partner at the
3 table. And so I'm hoping that with your
4 guidance and support and the guidance and
5 support of your colleagues and people at
6 the state level that we might be able to
7 pull together a coalition -- maybe the
8 Secretary could work with us -- to pull
9 together a neighborhood-based type of
10 coalition so that you can -- I used to
11 chair Healthy Start. I'll close with
12 this: I was the Chair of Healthy Start.
13 We sit here and we talk about infant
14 mortality. We talk about babies being
15 born to teenagers, yet Lee Tolbert was
16 the -- Francis Walker were Chairs before
17 I was the Chair and yet you don't see
18 those folks in schools the way they want
19 to be in schools.
20 So maybe there's a way that
21 coming out of this meeting and going into
22 the first of the year we can work
23 together to bring the community-based
24 providers and families together with
25 people like this so that the William Penn

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2 Foundation sitting at the table, well,
3 let's spread it around, because when all
4 those folks go home at night -- I don't
5 know any other way to say it -- those
6 organizations, the Tom Henrys of the
7 world are at the Kingsessing Recreation
8 Centers trying to figure out what to do.
9 So when the Mayor says that schools
10 should be open on holidays, so should the
11 rec centers.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Of
13 course.

14 MR. JOHNSON: The rec centers
15 are -- you understand what I'm -- without
16 beating up on anybody, do you understand
17 what I'm saying?

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes,
19 indeed. I remember when we had hearings
20 on health emergencies after we had a
21 child, a seven-year-old, die at McMichael
22 School from bacterial meningitis. We had
23 those hearings.

24 MR. JOHNSON: That's right. We
25 had the library hearings with

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2 Mr. Hornbeck when Hornbeck was here. The
3 people from the library came. I had
4 another group of students. We took those
5 pictures with Hornbeck. We talked about
6 how the City and the School District
7 could work together to -- if you can't
8 have a library in every school, why can't
9 at least one or two high schools in every
10 region have the type of library that
11 offers students and families the
12 opportunity to come in and do research
13 and read together and those kind of
14 things? So maybe the day is gone that
15 you can't have a library in every -- I
16 don't know how you run a school without a
17 library.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
19 I'll tell you, during those hearings, we
20 talked about if a school didn't have a
21 library, there should be a school across
22 the street from a library, like maybe
23 Turner with Blanche Nixon Library. We
24 know we have the Lucien E. Blackwell
25 Regional Library on 52nd Street. But out

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2 of that, one good thing happened. When
3 we had an opportunity to fight for
4 reopened libraries and books, the
5 University of Pennsylvania worked with us
6 at Lea School, but it was an initiative
7 we had to fight for. We said, Okay, do
8 we want to save the Alexander School?
9 Then okay, then help us at Henry C. Lea
10 School and help us to fix up a library,
11 reopen a library, staff it, get books and
12 then the school then could commit to a
13 librarian. And they helped us also do a
14 garden outside. So it's a battle.

15 MR. JOHNSON: It really is.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But it
17 does come down to what my philosophy is,
18 as is obviously yours, that each of us
19 has to be a committee of one to improve
20 our community. If we see a need, we have
21 to step in.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Step up.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

24 Whether it is a library or a garden or
25 helping a senior, making sure a kid who

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2 doesn't have things to do during day has
3 some place and somebody who cares about
4 him or her --

5 MR. JOHNSON: Absolutely.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: -- has
7 some place to go.

8 MR. JOHNSON: May I close with
9 this last comment?

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Last week my
12 students -- and Mr. Bruce is back
13 there -- we went out to Swarthmore
14 College and we had an impromptu meeting
15 with their President of Swarthmore
16 College and then we met with the Director
17 of Swarthmore's civic and social
18 responsibility clinic, I'll call it. And
19 we went out there because I had -- of all
20 the students that we have in the cyber
21 school, half of them are homeless. And
22 so I thought it would be a good
23 opportunity maybe to encourage my
24 students to work real hard, and the
25 harder they worked, with the right kind

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2 of supports, maybe we could get them into
3 Upward Bound this summer.

4 It was interesting, because the
5 Upward Bound program is being changed
6 now. So you had to have a 2.5 grade
7 point average to be considered for Upward
8 Bound, and now some universities are
9 pulling out and colleges are pulling out
10 because the criteria has been changed.
11 The criteria is now 1.9 GPA and back.
12 And the reason why Swarthmore is pulling
13 out is because there's not enough
14 dollars, so they say, in the program that
15 would allow them to deal with the social
16 issues that a student with a D average or
17 below would bring to the table, and at
18 the same time, the students that the
19 government know benefited from Upward
20 Bound, the 2.5 students and above, that
21 program has now been cut.

22 So we're just facing cuts all
23 over the place. I mean, everywhere. And
24 so any way you can help us to -- I'll
25 close with this -- put a task force

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2 together with the Secretary, I'm sure,
3 that would bring us to the table as
4 community people and parents, maybe
5 that's the thing I'm looking for coming
6 to these hearings.

7 Thank you, Councilwoman.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you. We're happy to work with you.

10 Thank you all.

11 Is Mr. Matthew Zakochany still
12 here, High School for Creative and
13 Performing Arts?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: What
16 about Carmen Rivera or Carmen Lebron?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Pat
19 Baltimore, would you like to testify?
20 Not today. We're talking about the
21 truancy rate in schools, the dropout rate
22 in schools and the overall budget cuts.
23 We have a \$73.3 million budget cut. So
24 we're talking about schools today.

25 MS. BALTIMORE: Okay. Yeah. I

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2 know the schools.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you.

5 MS. BALTIMORE: I wasn't
6 prepared for today.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
8 right.

9 Is there anyone else who would
10 like to testify?

11 Yes, ma'am. Come forward.
12 Thank you.

13 We have enjoyed such excellent
14 testimony and you've all been great and
15 wonderful and patient. Thank you.

16 MS. THOMPSON: Thank you for
17 letting me speak. I appreciate the
18 opportunity.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
20 Certainly.

21 MS. THOMPSON: My name is
22 Cecilia Thompson and I am the Secretary
23 for the organization called The
24 Philadelphia Right to Education Task
25 Force, and in addition to that, I'm a

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2 parent of a child with autism, who is in
3 the Philadelphia school system.

4 I won't be long.

5 Briefly about the Task Force,
6 in 1972, the Park consent decree required
7 a local task force in every intermediate
8 unit. Philadelphia is unique in that
9 it's a school district, but it also
10 operates as an intermediate unit as well,
11 which is kind of a good and bad, because
12 if it was a separate intermediate unit,
13 it would advocate programs for children
14 with special needs, but because it acts
15 as a school district, it kind of wears
16 two hats.

17 But nevertheless, one thing I
18 wanted to touch on briefly that I'll read
19 through this is, they were talking about
20 the dropout rate, and out of the dropout
21 rate, 19.8 percent of children who drop
22 out are children with disabilities, and,
23 unfortunately, there aren't any programs
24 to recapture them in the school
25 population, because a lot of those

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2 children do have some type of
3 developmental delays where their
4 behaviors manifest in such a way that is
5 very disruptive to the class, especially
6 if they don't have a TSS through their
7 insurance or support staff through the
8 School District. So, unfortunately, the
9 staff, be it teachers and administrators
10 of that particular school, don't go after
11 them because that's one less behavior
12 that they have to put up with in that
13 school. So there isn't anything to even
14 recapture those students at this point in
15 time.

16 And also in reference to the
17 charter schools, the Office of
18 Specialized Services does fund some
19 funding to the charter schools, but
20 because there is no way to audit -- for
21 example, there are children who are
22 supposed to be in charter schools that
23 are supposed to receive special education
24 monies, but those children aren't in
25 school but they still receive the money.

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2 So I feel that before Mr. Vallas and the
3 SRC and those powers that be cut some
4 funding, they should try to recover
5 funding that was due to the School
6 District from the charter schools before
7 taking any step to cut any funding.

8 But nevertheless, Philadelphia
9 serves a higher number of students with
10 disability compared to the rest of the
11 state. Although we have more students
12 identified with disabilities, we have far
13 fewer kids included in general education
14 and the least restrictive environment.
15 Students in Philadelphia need more
16 support in order to be educated and make
17 progress on the general education
18 curriculum.

19 Proposed cuts to school nurses
20 concern us, when more children receiving
21 medical management come to school with
22 chronic conditions and medical
23 advancements have allowed severely
24 disabled students to attend public
25 schools more than ever before. School

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2 nurses are also required to monitor
3 Section 504 plans, and that's
4 accommodations for children who are
5 eligible for special education services.

6 Cuts to counselors who have
7 taken on truancy, mental health, case
8 management and special education liaison
9 roles are unacceptable, and students with
10 emotional disabilities need more, not
11 less, support.

12 Development and monitoring
13 IEPs, which are Individual Education
14 Plans, is a critical and time-consuming
15 task. Due process is even more time
16 consuming and costly, yet when there are
17 not enough personnel, due process will
18 continue to balloon out of control. Any
19 reduction in professional non-teaching
20 staff will most certainly impact special
21 education programs.

22 A tremendous number of students
23 with disabilities depend on specialized
24 transportation and well-trained
25 transportation staff. Even though the

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2 Individuals With Disability Act requires
3 reasonable travel times, stories tell of
4 routes exceeding acceptable times.

5 And as a side note, in the
6 School District of Philadelphia, an
7 acceptable time to be on the bus is one
8 hour.

9 We cannot imagine how
10 devastating transportation cuts would be.

11 Class size, important to the
12 appropriate education of all students, is
13 critical for students with disabilities.
14 Differentiating instruction and including
15 students with disabilities to ensure
16 access to the general curriculum is
17 nearly impossible with oversized classes.
18 This often forces children into more
19 restrictive settings.

20 The 19.8 percent dropout rate
21 for children with disabilities vividly
22 displays more hurdles we must overcome.

23 Our middle schools need more
24 supports to ensure students stay in
25 school, including remedial math and

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 reading.

3 And everything else was said,
4 but I didn't hear anything about services
5 for children with special needs. And
6 although legally they can't be cut,
7 everything that affects regular children
8 affects students with disabilities.
9 Cutting art programs, a lot of children
10 with autism have an innate gift for
11 drawing and if you cut the art program
12 because the principal has to make a
13 decision to get a literacy teacher
14 because she's under the pressure or he's
15 under the pressure of getting up AYP,
16 then not only does that art program or
17 that music program affect regular
18 children but it also affects children
19 with disabilities, because those are the
20 programs that they really need to enrich
21 their overall lives and make education
22 fun for them.

23 That's all I wanted to say, and
24 I do appreciate the opportunity to speak.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 you, Ms. Thompson. We agree this is a
3 very important area and an underserved
4 area. We work a lot -- we've had
5 hearings in past years on children who
6 take Ritalin, Prozac and other
7 behavior-altering drugs, and albeit they
8 don't fit into being autistic children,
9 they fit into children who have no
10 special program designated.

11 All schools, charter and
12 regular schools, take this population and
13 try to fit them into the general realm of
14 their everyday experience, and it's very,
15 very difficult to ask, as you have
16 indicated, already busy teachers to make
17 sure that there's a nurse on that given
18 day or to make sure the designated
19 program or person that provides nursing
20 services or medical services or
21 medication is in place. It's a whole, as
22 you've indicated, really unserved realm
23 that has to be dealt with, in addition to
24 just underserved children who are often
25 poor and don't have family and community

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2 support systems.

3 But I hope that you will give
4 your phone number to my staff and your
5 address so that we maintain contact with
6 you, and we want to work with you more
7 closely on this issue.

8 MS. THOMPSON: And just one
9 more thing that just popped into my head.
10 I haven't seen what Mr. Vallas submitted
11 to the Council, but I know transportation
12 was still one of those areas that was
13 considering being cut. One of those was
14 the bus matrons. Now, I know the bus
15 matrons can't possibly make that kind of
16 money where they have to be cut, because
17 the driver cannot drive the bus and watch
18 the kids at the same time. There's only
19 one bus matron on the bus, in addition to
20 their considering reevaluating all
21 children with special needs who have on
22 their IEP that they need somebody on the
23 bus with them. For example, my son runs
24 up and down on the bus, and I don't want
25 the alternative for him to be strapped on

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.
2 a bus because you're trying to save
3 money. He needs somebody to sit with him
4 just in case his behaviors get out of
5 control. And that's the same for any
6 child with autism or a developmental
7 delay where they can have a moment where
8 their behaviors are out of control. I'm
9 just afraid that trying to save a couple
10 dollars because Mr. Vallas made an oopsie
11 in the budget that now these kids are
12 strapped and restrained and sometimes the
13 restraints can be too tight and you can
14 just have horror stories go on from
15 there.

16 And in addition, as I close, I
17 think with the School of the Future, it's
18 a good idea and I do like it, but there
19 were some mix-up in the funding. The
20 person in charge of that was supposed to
21 take the paperwork to the Bill Gates
22 Foundation where they would have funded
23 it fully, and I believe that was a
24 funding of \$100 million, but instead they
25 took the paperwork to the Microsoft

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 Corporation, which does not fund the
3 school. All they do is give you
4 unlimited technical support. I heard
5 what he said, but if that flub had not
6 happened, we wouldn't probably be having
7 these hearings.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
9 we'll make a copy of the information he
10 gave to us available to you. And I just
11 checked as you were speaking and it says
12 that bussing is not to be cut, but the
13 whole issue of what individual principals
14 consider is certainly worthy of
15 consideration. But we'll make this
16 available to you as well.

17 MS. THOMPSON: Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you.

20 The Joint Committees on
21 Education and Finance will stand in
22 recess. Thank you everyone who has
23 testified, who is here, who is still in
24 the building and can hear the rest of
25 this testimony. It's been very, very

1 12/11/06 - EDUCATION - RES. 060806, ETC.

2 important, and we will be in touch.

3 Thank you.

4 (Joint Committees on Finance

5 and Education adjourned at 5:05 p.m.)

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