
Subcommittee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ABBOTT SUBCOMMITTEE

"Testimony on statewide preschool expansion"

LOCATION: Glenn Cunningham
Early Childhood Center
Jersey City

DATE: October 14, 2008
11:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF SUBCOMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Sandra B. Cunningham, Chair
Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair
Assemblywoman Joan M. Voss, Co-Chair
Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey



ALSO PRESENT:

Melanie Schulz
Executive Director

Sharon Benesta
Chief of Staff

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SENATOR SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM (Chair): I'm going to ask everyone to please take their places.

Good morning, everyone.

Can you hear me?

Actually, my mother used to tell me I was too loud, to stop projecting. So I will project today.

Thank you so much for coming this morning. We really appreciate this.

Before I introduce everyone, and before you hear an official welcome from our Mayor, I want to just say that New Jersey's School Funding Formula was signed into law by Governor Corzine in January. It includes a significant expansion of high-quality, State-funded preschools. This initiative is exciting, as we well know. And it will help many of our children get started.

For the last 10 years, over 40,000 3- and 4-year-olds living in the state's lowest-income districts have had access to high-quality preschool programs. And that's been required under the Supreme Court's *Abbott vs. Burke*. The results have been dramatic.

A recent report from Rutgers University showed that children who have participated in this preschool program are doing exponentially better in language, literacy, and math. The findings are clear: that providing high-quality preschool is money well spent. Research has shown a link between high-quality preschool and reductions in special education, grade retention, future public assistance costs, and crime.

We're here today-- We have wonderful speakers today who are going to be talking about how we're going to expand our program, how

we're going to help more children get started, what this is going to look like, who is eligible, and how we're going to begin.

So I applaud all of you for coming and being a part of this. I'm hoping that more people will come in as we go along. If not, we will carry on and do well.

But before we begin this program, I'd like to introduce our Mayor. You know, Jersey City is one of the greatest cities in the state. I am from Newark. I have to say that. (laughter) And my husband and I used to battle between Jersey City versus Newark. I always won. Newark has been the largest city in the state. I am now a true Jersey Cityan, and I am proud -- and Kabili's (phonetic spelling) over there laughing -- I am proud to say that hopefully in the next census, Jersey City will be the number one city in the state. (applause)

And we're very proud of Jersey City. We're proud of how far we have come. We're proud of all the wonderful things to see and do in our city. So whenever I have an opportunity to bring people into Jersey City, I look forward to doing that.

And our Mayor is here. And he is the leader of this city, and he is responsible for some of the growth that's taken place.

So please have our Mayor Jerramiah Healy welcome you. (applause)

MAYOR JERRAMIAH T. HEALY: I really don't need a mike, as you can probably tell.

Thank you, Chairperson, State Senator Sandra Cunningham, for that nice introduction.

We want to thank the Department of Education, also the Department of Human Services for participating. I see that we have our School Superintendent, Dr. Epps, in attendance.

Charles, thanks for coming down.

We have several of our School Board Members: Dr. Peter Donnelly, Eddie Cheatam. And I've probably missed somebody.

And we want to thank the distinguished panel for participating in this.

But as the Senator told you in her opening, the preschool initiative has been a big success. Rewards have been reaped. We know that the youngsters have been helped tremendously. And we also feel that it's been a good return on the investment for the taxpayers, so that for every dollar spent -- the money spent here, we have achieved something here in Jersey City and throughout the state.

So seeking to expand it, we think, is a great idea. And we know that this panel, under the leadership of our State Senator -- and I know that there is a Co-Chairperson (*sic*), Assemblywoman Amy Handlin, who is not here today. We think that we can continue to achieve very positive results for our city and for all the rest of the cities who participate.

So thank you for coming here today. We hope that through your efforts, this can actually be expanded so that the successes that we have seen in the past can be built upon.

Thank you all very much. We hope that you have a very productive session. (applause)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you, Mayor.

Is William DeRosa, President of the Jersey City Board of Education, here yet? (no response)

Okay. When we think about the board of education in our schools, we're very proud of how far our Jersey City School District has come. And a lot of that has to do with the wonderful, wonderful staff who works for our Jersey City school system. And everything begins from the top down. If we don't have people in high places who are working for the good of our young people, our schools will never improve. That is not a problem that we have in Jersey City. We have a wonderful -- and I'm not just saying it because he's sitting here -- we have a wonderful Superintendent of Schools. He's a former Assemblyman. He's a good friend and, more importantly, he's a community person and a good friend to our kids in our Jersey City school system, the Honorable Dr. Charles Epps.

Would you please come? (applause)

SUPERINTENDENT CHARLES T. EPPS JR., Ed.D.:

Good morning, Assemblyman, Assemblywomen. How are you?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I'm very well, thank you.

SUPERINTENDENT EPPS: I'm doing well.

Let me welcome you to our wonderful city. This is the city of the Board of Education where we're one of the first to have every student in Jersey City, from pre-K to 12, wear uniforms.

Welcome to the city. Welcome to the city that has the number two high school in the State of New Jersey. Welcome to Jersey City. This is the home of the Blue Ribbon School, McNair Academic High School. Welcome to Jersey City.

I want you to know that this is the only city that's committed to doing a secondary school initiative. And we have embarked upon that for this school year. But more importantly, welcome to the Early Childhood Center, the Glenn D. Cunningham Center, right here in Jersey City. This is one of our first buildings that we've built, and we have at least four more that have been approved. And we're going to build early childhood centers for our students. If you saw the students here today, you would see every student in uniform. Everyone is in session, everyone doing the right thing in Jersey City.

We are an urban district. We are the second largest district in the State of New Jersey. But we have wonderful Board Members who are here with us today. We have wonderful Associate Superintendents. And I'd really like them to stand: Associate Superintendent in charge of the Early Childhood Center, Pat Bryant (applause); Associate Superintendent of Schools, Maryann Hammer. (applause) I have the Deputy Superintendent with me, Frank Dooley. (applause) And, of course, I have my sidekick, Dr. Chris O'Neelan. (phonetic spelling) He tries to put all these things together for me. (applause)

I'm really a lucky guy, because this Board, Dr. Donnelly and Ed Cheatam, allowed me to be an Assemblyman for a term. And I thought I could do them both, but I found out that this was my love, and this is the job that I need to do. And I'm just happy to have you guys back here in Jersey City. So anything we can do to support you in your session this morning, we'd be more than happy to do that.

Thank you for selecting us. (applause)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Dr. Epps mentioned this beautiful school. I have to take some pride in it because, of course, it's named after my husband. And you'll see when you come in -- if you look straight ahead, you'll

see the picture of a gorgeous man. (laughter) And that was Glenn D. Cunningham.

SUPERINTENDENT EPPS: That's right. He was a gorgeous man.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: He was a gorgeous man, inside and out.

For you ladies, he was gorgeous, believe me. (laughter)

Now we'd like to hear from Dr. Peter Donnelly.

Is he here? (affirmative response)

Okay, great. Jersey City School Board Member.

And please, when you come up, would you introduce other members of the Jersey City School Board.

P E T E R J. D O N N E L L Y, Ed.D.: Ed Cheatam should come first because he's the Vice President of the Board.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Oh, is he here?

Come on, Ed. Your name isn't on the list. I'm sorry.

DR. DONNELLY: He's the Vice President.

E D W A R D C H E A T A M: You can stay up there.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: You can stay up there together. He doesn't mind company.

MR. CHEATAM: Good morning all and welcome to Jersey City again. I'm glad to have you here. Please come back again.

Just for the Board Members: Peter Donnelly, my fellow Board Member; Bill DeRosa is supposed to be here, but I guess he hasn't arrived as of yet.

I'm Ed Cheatam. I'm Vice President of the Board of Education right now. And I just want to welcome everybody here. Please come back and bring as much money to Jersey City as you can. (laughter)

Thank you very much, and welcome. (applause)

MR. DONNELLY: I too want to extend my greetings.

But as a Board Member, I want to thank you all for coming to Jersey City. But to Senator Cunningham, I want to say a special thank you. I can't greet her for coming to this building -- even though I'm a frequent visitor here, she's a more frequent visitor. Because if you want to have your spirits refreshed and renewed, just come here, read to the children, and you'll go out -- you'll leave dancing.

And that's why I have the microphone. Early childhood is so important. And if the meeting goes on, maybe I'll sit there and say a few words about that later.

Thank you, Senator. And thank you everyone for coming to Jersey City. (applause)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: And since Mr. DeRosa has not arrived yet, let me introduce, of course, the members of our Committee. I'm going to introduce them, and then we'll ask them to make comments.

First of all, Assemblywoman Amy Handlin -- she's Vice Chair. Unfortunately, she could not be with us today. Senator Ron Rice. If you know senator Rice, I'm sure he is in route. He is the Chairperson for the Committee. Assemblywoman Mila Jasey; Assemblyman Joseph Vas, who could not be with us; Assemblywoman Joan Voss; Senator Diane Allen, who is not with us. Senator Bill Baroni, Senator Kip Bateman, Senator Dana Redd, Senator Teresa Ruiz -- unfortunately they're not here yet. Assemblyman Patrick J. Diegnan Jr., Assemblyman Joseph R. Malone III, and Assemblyman

David W. Wolfe. Unfortunately, they are not with us physically, but they are with us in spirit.

And to my left, I'm proud to introduce someone who shares this district with me, Assemblyman Anthony Chiappone. (applause)

So before we begin, Anthony would like to make some comments.

You're not on this Committee, you're here visiting, but we're happy.

ASSEMBLYMAN ANTHONY CHIAPPONE: I'm here visiting, but my district, Bayonne and Jersey City -- early childhood education is very important. You talk about laying the proper foundation of that educational house, giving the kids the advantage of succeeding in grammar school, giving parents the opportunity to reobtain work to help the families out-- So I think this is a marvelous addition to our educational system.

I'm looking forward to hearing from the State on how we make this work within both the Abbott and non-Abbott districts. I'm from Bayonne and Jersey City, so I have an interest in both. So I'm here to learn and to help in any way I can.

And Sandra, Senator Cunningham, I thank you for putting this together.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you.

And speaking of putting this together, this would not at all be put together if it wasn't for Melanie Schulz here and her staff. (applause) And they're at the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

Assemblywoman Jasey.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

Just as a matter of background, I was a school board member for eight years. So to the school board members who are here, I thank you for your service. I absolutely understand how hard you work.

I just finished my first year in the Assembly. And education is extremely important to me, beginning with our little ones. Because as the Senator said, and as the Assemblyman said, if we don't have a strong foundation, it's very difficult to catch them up as they move through the school system. So I'm very excited about the initiative that New Jersey has taken on. It's an expensive initiative, but I truly believe it's an investment well worth it. And so as we move into very difficult economic times, I think it's going to be important for us to really understand how important the work is, how well our youngsters are doing, and the importance of protecting that investment as we go forward and not allow it to fall prey to budget cuts.

So I am here to say that it is a priority for me to protect funding for our preschool programs as well as for our youngsters, as they move through to 12th grade and then actually beyond.

The other thing I'll say is, representing a district that has some of the wealthiest communities and some of the poorest communities in New Jersey, the 27th, I am well aware of the tension and the possible conflicts that we're going to face in terms of everyone feeling slighted. And so we've got to do a good job of communicating the importance of investing in our youngsters and their futures as we move forward.

So I look forward to learning more this morning. And I'm very excited about everything that we're doing in terms of preschool in New Jersey.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much.

Assemblywoman Joan Voss.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Good morning, everyone.

It's a pleasure to be in this absolutely beautiful building.

Thank you, Senator Cunningham, for inviting us.

I have been an educator for over 41 years, and so education is definitely number one on my hit parade. I am fortunate to be able to serve on the Joint Committee, to be also on the Assembly Education Committee, and on Higher Education. So I run the whole gambit of education.

But the most important thing I have learned in all of my teaching career is that early intervention, early education is absolutely essential. In writing several papers, one of the things I came across was that we learn the most that we learn in our lifetime during the first five years of life. That seems very astonishing. But when you think about-- There's a wonderful book I'm sure many of you have read called "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." And that gives us our ethics, our values, our sense of community. And as I walked around the school today, I was just so thrilled to see the children really interacting. They weren't just sitting there, they were doing. They were very active in the classroom.

And I have to say, Dr. Epps, I think it's wonderful. I think uniforms are the way to go. If we could have academic robes on the teachers and uniforms on the kids, I think this would be a great leveling. (laughter) I think that it's so important that we have the children focus on what's really important, and it's not the sneakers, and it's not the clothes. It's the education. Because this is what is going to serve them well throughout their lives.

So I have to say I'm really very, very happy to be here. I'm so interested, because I taught college classes and seniors in high school. So for me to see the little ones is a treat-and-a-half, because I read about the education but now I'm actually seeing it. So it's a pleasure to be here today.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much, Assemblywoman.

The things that you've said are absolutely true. And this school is a wonderful example of what happens when the system works. It works, as I said, from the top down. The principal here has done a marvelous job with these kids. Every February they have Black History Month. And I have seen some of the best performances that you'll ever find with just tiny little kids singing, and talking, and knowing the words, and just being involved and understanding. So this is a wonderful experience and wonderful school. And at the end of the day, at the end of our time, if you'd like, there will be a tour available if you want to go and see more of the children.

We're going to start today with our Assistant Commissioner for Early Childhood Education for the Department of Education, Jacqueline Jones.

Jacqueline, do you--

Gerald Vernotica, is he--

Would you like to come up at the same time?

A S S T. C O M M. J A C Q U E L I N E J O N E S: There are three of us, actually.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Oh, there's three. Do we need another chair?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: No, that's fine.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: You're fine?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: We're good.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: This is Gerald Vernotica, who is the Assistant Commissioner for Field Services.

A S S T. C O M M. G E R A L D V E R N O T I C A: Assistant Commissioner.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Assistant Commissioner for Field Services.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: And with us is Dr. Ellen Wolock, who is the Director of Preschool Education.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Wonderful.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Good morning, Committee members. We are delighted to be here. Dr. Wolock, Dr. Vernotica, and I are absolutely thrilled to be in this lovely building to really share some of the fruits of the work. I snuck a tour earlier, so I'm delighted.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Oh, good.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: It's a wonderful thing.

We want to share with you today several things: the components of the preschool education program; a look at preschool expansion, and give you some of the details from the Department; and we also want to talk with you about the kind of technical assistance that we are providing to the districts as we prepare for preschool expansion.

We have a PowerPoint, and I'm hoping you can see that far.

You folks will have to turn around a bit.

We'll try to get through this.

And you have the PowerPoints.

What we want to talk to you about are the components of the preschool program.

MS. SCHULZ (Executive Director): Would you like to make your presentation from here? (indicating)

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Is that better? We're going to take turns.

Can you hear me? (affirmative responses)

This is good.

So there are really critical components of the preschool program. And we always talk about this as a high-quality program. And I want you to know that as I travel around the country, New Jersey's preschool program is considered one of the finest in the country, and you'll see why in a few minutes.

We are talking about a program that requires certified teachers. All of the teachers in the preschool program have a BA and P3 certification, and there are teacher assistants in each classroom. This is a full-day program. It's a six-hour educational program that runs the school year. That's typically 180 days. It is the year that the district runs their school program. We have a maximum class size of 15 children. And we have an evidence-based curriculum. That is to say, we have curriculum models that are research-based, they are proven to be effective, and districts can select which one is most appropriate for them. We have five from which districts select. But these are curriculum models that have been tested through research and proven to be some of the most effective for the children that we work with.

We also have a set of early learning standards that define what children should know and be able to do. So just as there are Core Curriculum Standards for K-12, the early learning standards or expectations are set across a range of domains for preschool children. Actually, this year there will be one document coming from the Department that is a set of preschool to Grade 12 standards that define what children are able to do across that continuum.

We also have support for early learning difficulties. We are not putting children simply in classrooms and leaving, and not paying attention to the kinds of problems that may occur. So there are several layers of support for classroom teachers as they struggle with sometimes challenging behaviors or

difficult learning problems. We have a whole series of supports in place for them.

And then the key piece to keep a program running is professional development. We have an ongoing program of professional development that is available at every level. That is from early childhood supervisors, to master teachers, to classroom teachers. This is an ongoing piece of the work.

The next slide.

Dr. Wolock is going to talk about the beginning of the program. So you'll get a sense of where we were -- and if you come up, Ellen, I think it's easier to do this -- where we were when the program started and where we are now.

ELLEN L. WOLOCK, Ed.D.: Okay.

As we go forward with expansion, it's really useful to look at where we came from. So when we started out, we had relatively--

If you can go to the next slide, Jessica -- no, that's fine. That's good. My eyes are terrible.

We had relatively low enrollments. So we were serving about 19,000 of the estimated preschool children that were out there. And this is in the 31 Abbott districts. We had very, very few certified teachers. It was even unusual to find teachers with bachelor's degrees. So we were working with a workforce that needed to get certified.

We had-- We saw a lot of piecemeal curricula, meaning that districts were either coming up with their own curriculum for preschool children or they were combining pieces from different curricula, not necessarily with the legitimate professional development that went along with that. And most importantly -- and I think that this was where the piecemeal curricula was reflected -- we had relatively low classroom quality.

And there's a-- You'll be introduced today to something called the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale*. We've used lots of different instruments in our preschool classrooms. But this is one that is used nationally, so it gave us a way of looking at how we do relative to other states that have preschool programs. And it doesn't just look at environment like the name implies, it also looks at teacher-child interactions, the types of activities that children are exposed to, how teachers support language and reasoning, math concepts, a whole range of skills and classroom practices.

The program components and initiatives that we used to improve the program are the same components and initiatives that we're going to be using as we expand the preschool program. So they're important to have some introduction to. We developed, as Jacqueline mentioned, sets of guidelines and standards. And these guidelines were really the brain of the preschool system. So from administration, to supports for English-language learners, how children are included with special needs, implementation of curriculum, how families are involved and how we'll accommodate the diverse needs of families. And these--

But you can't just throw a document out there and expect people to be able to implement it. And so we put in place a system of evaluation that would help districts evaluate what each component looked like and what they needed to do to improve the implementation of that component.

You can change slides.

So how are we doing? The enrollment of the program is now up to about nearly 44,000 children. And that includes children with special needs. I think there are just over 2,000 children who have special needs that are in that total number. And the percentage-- When the court mandate was put in place, the goal was to serve 90 percent of the preschool children in the

districts. And right now, you can see the percentages. We have 74 percent 3-year-olds that we're serving and 87 percent 4-year-olds. So we're getting there with the 4-year-old population. We still need to reach out more to the younger -- families of younger children. And actually, in the legislation for expansion, the 90 percent is also used as a goal. But that's down the line, so that's six years out, for 2013-14.

The teachers are now certified and have bachelor's degrees. And as of December 2007, we were able to pass the use of the Praxis for preschool through third grade teachers, which is great, because it further enhances the professionalism of the field.

Classroom quality: Now, this is just going to be -- I don't want to spend a lot of time talking about this, but I think it's useful when thinking about what we're trying to do in terms of expansion and improving quality. This scale -- the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, the ECERS: 1 is a very inadequate classroom. It assigns a rating, and there are seven subscales. Seven is an excellent classroom. When classrooms are at about a 5 level, or good, that's when you would expect to see learning benefits for children. So when we put the program in place, we were really shooting for a 5.0 or better.

Next slide, please.

So when we started out early on the program, we were at a 3.86, which is really just above minimal quality and not one that you would expect to have learning gains for children. Currently, the program in the last set of evaluations -- the program is now at a -- or as of last Spring, was at a 5.2. And that's the second year that we've been above a 5. So we're very happy with our progress.

Now, when you're looking at-- These are the subscales of the ECERS. And when you're looking at these, anything above -- around or above

a 5 is what we were looking for. Now, I just want to very quickly show you, we are-- The program is in excellent shape. And there's always room for improvement, but we're very satisfied with the results of each of these subscales. And as we'll talk about later, it seems to have positive benefits for children, which is the most important piece.

Space and furnishings: that looks at how the room is set up for children. So when children are sitting on a chair, do their feet dangle, or can they put their feet firmly on the floor? Is there a toilet in the room? That's important for a preschooler who is learning how to be independent in using the toilet. It also looks at whether there's a playground nearby and what you have to do to get to the playground. And if there's a playground, is it child size? Is it oriented toward kids? And you can see, we just got above a 5 in this area. Actually, this past year is the first year that we got above a 5. And that's because in the more urban areas, we still had challenges with children getting access to playgrounds. So we still have a little trouble there.

Next one.

Personal care routines: This is another subscale. This is where we haven't reached a 5 yet. And what personal care looks at is the extent to which children's independent skills are supported in terms of taking care of themselves. So for instance, are family-style meals served in the classrooms? That's very important, because family-style meals will support children's conversations, their social skills. Even other learning opportunities like setting the table will support their math understanding. And actually the reason we're not quite at a 5 yet is, the scale is very strict about sanitizing the tables and washing hands, and if a child blows their nose, they need to go wash their hands. And so it's a very difficult subscale to score high. And in other states it found the same thing.

Next item.

Language and reasoning: This is a critical part of the program, because this looks at the extent to which, during teacher-child interactions, teachers support and extend children's vocabulary and reasoning skills. So when a child, for instance, is playing in the block area and making something that they're trying to make as tall as them, does the teacher ask them questions about what they're doing, like, "How many more blocks do you think you're going to need to get as tall as you?" -- getting children to think about what they're doing during the play context.

Activities: This is also a really critical subscale because it looks at the materials that are in each area of the room, it looks at the additional activities that are provided in each area of the room, and how long children have to play with it. In a six-hour day, actually children are -- must be allowed to play with the materials and activities for each area of the room for two hours. So it's a pretty long time. And that's why we're not quite at a 5 yet, but we're really close. We're getting there. Hopefully this year we'll hit a 5.

Interactions are just outstanding in our program. This items looks at the extent to which teachers are warm and supportive, how they handle conflict or help children handle conflict, support the children's emerging social skills, what types of supervision techniques are used -- are they positive and constructive. And we're really excelling in this area. We're almost at a 7.

Program structure looks at the way in which the day is set up. So, for instance, preschool children can only handle very short periods of whole group time. So generally the rule of thumb is, they can't sit for much more than 20 minutes before they start to fall over or try to do something else. And it also looks at transitions: Are children waiting for a long time? That's why it's so important to have the bathroom in the room whenever possible.

Otherwise, you're going to have to line up, go to the bathroom out in the hallway. It takes 40 minutes, and we're more likely to have issues with that.

And finally, last but definitely not least, this subscale looks at how parents and staff are supported in the program. So for parent involvement, it looks at whether parents are involved in decisions about their children. Are there parent-teacher conferences to inform parents about their children? Are there education experiences where parents can learn about health risks or how to support their child's development at home? And then for staff, it looks at that item -- or that area looks at professional resources for staff and what staff can do if they're having trouble with a child. Do they have resources that they can go to?

Okay. This is really important. Just to-- What I didn't mention is that when we looked at the classroom quality, we did a sampling of classrooms across all of the 31 districts. At the same time, the National Institute of Early Ed Research at Rutgers was looking -- tracking a group of children who went to the program and compared their progress to children who did not go. And on measures of language and math, children who attended the program did significantly better than children who did not. And shortly we'll have the data right through second grade. And then we look forward to seeing how kids fair on the third grade tests next year.

And we are starting a new cohort of kids that we're watching, because we started measuring the progress of these children just before we hit the 5 mark. It was really close. But we want to see what happens now that we're nicely above the 5.

Okay. Next one, Jessica.

Now I'm going to tell you a little bit about preschool expansion. And when we put this together, we wanted to not overwhelm you with details

about it in terms of how we're rolling it out. But we wanted to give you enough information to ask the questions that you need to ask.

Okay. In the preschool expansion effort we have two types of programs. We have universal programs. These are districts in which all children are going to be offered the program. So all 3- and 4-year-olds. And those are district factor groups A and B, and then C, D with greater than 40 percent of children eligible for free and reduced lunch. So that's it in a nutshell. Those are universal. That means if they live in the district, regardless of income, they'll be offered the program. There are 117 of those, which I have a slide for that.

Then we have the targeted districts. These are the other districts in the state -- really the rest of the districts. And in those programs -- the targeted programs -- children must be offered the program if they're eligible for free and reduced lunch. So it's not for everybody in the school district but just those children who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. And I think there are about 380 of those -- 366 is what we've identified, based on the district factor groups and the free and reduced lunch rates.

And the way we calculated how many children in each district is, we used their first grade enrollment times two. That's for the universal programs. In the targeted programs, we took the first grade enrollment times two and we multiplied that times the percentage of children eligible for free and reduced lunch. Okay? So it's a pretty simple formula.

And as I said before, we expect a slow, gradual rollout. This will be a big change for some districts. And we-- In the legislation, the districts must implement the program by 2013-14, and the target is 90 percent of the children who live in that community that are eligible for the program. And

that, when you look at that-- It's about 30,000 additional children on top of the 43,000 we currently serve. And so it brings the total to just above 70,000.

And there's the number that I just mentioned. For universal programs, we're looking at 117 districts, or 57,000 children. For the targeted programs, the ones just with children eligible for free and reduced lunch, there are 366 districts that fit in that category, or 16,000 children.

Next slide.

You have to have super vision to see that. (laughter)

This is-- What this is, is-- I know that up here you do have the expansion estimates by county. All of this information is available on the Web for those of you who can't -- who don't have a copy of the presentation. So this is by county. And the districts who have the bulk of the kids are Essex, and Hudson, and Passaic, and Union.

Next slide, please.

And the program elements are the same as the ones that I described earlier. So we've really taken the program that we know works and we are putting those same elements in place for the preschool expansion effort -- same exact ones.

Jacqueline is going to talk a little bit about the cost now -- how we came up with those.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Thank you.

Over the course of the program, we had a detailed, line-item budget that districts needed to complete as they prepared their budgets, and we reviewed them for final approval. So we've had several years of data looking at the costs of specific components of the program. And we used that data as we tried to estimate what expansion would cost.

Because we knew that the program we had was effective, we were very committed to continuing to maintain those elements that we thought were really important. And so the numbers that you'll soon be seeing come from a detailed analysis of our line item budget and expenditure data so that there are real numbers. We know what people have been spending on the components of the program. It's for teachers' salaries, for classroom materials and supplies, recruitment and outreach, professional development, district support. All of these things we have specific costs for, and we tried to cost them out as we knew they had been spent.

So per-pupil amounts we have are adjusted for geographic cost differences across the state -- that are different rates of costs, especially for space and teachers' salaries. And so we've adjusted for that. And we also have adjustments for district-wide administrative costs, and those are sort of master teachers and the kinds of things that the districts pay for specifically. So some of these numbers will be adjusted for those two factors. But the next slide will show you the figures that we have, and these are in the legislation.

There are three statewide costs. And let me tell you, there are three costs because what we have proposed, what we have been using is a mixed model of delivery so that the program is delivered in school districts, in private provider settings, and in Head Start settings. And they come with different costs. So the provider-based programs -- we have an estimated cost of \$13,366 per child, in-district programs is \$11,890, and Head Start programs is \$7,385. So for those who are wondering why we are only giving \$7,000 to Head Start, I need to say that Head Start comes as a federally funded program. They come with their own money. They have their own program. And so we are supplementing the Head Start programs so that we can raise the level of quality of Head Start. And because Head Start programs really are targeting

children whose families are at the poverty level, they are particularly important to hit in this program. So they're a particularly important part of the success of this program. So those are the costs.

Preschool expansion: The 2008-2009 year is a planning year for most districts. And I say most districts, because there are five districts who have already started some degree of expansion. The legislation allowed districts that were ready to do that, and so we have five districts who have already started to do that this year. But for most districts, this will be the year in which they submit a five-year plan of implementation for preschool -- for all the eligible 3- and 4-year-olds in their districts.

And I need to say that the five-year plan is not seen by the Department as the definitive, final way in which they're going to implement this program. This is a program that we know will take time. And because New Jersey has such varied districts, we know that it will play out differently in different places. And so the five-year plan is the beginning of this conversation with the Department about how the district will best try to meet the needs of the children in their districts. It is entirely possible that in some districts they will say, "We need more time to plan." And if that is the case, the Department is quite open to having them start perhaps not in '09-'10, but in '10-'11, if that is what they need, as long as we're convinced that they'll be able to meet the needs of the legislation by '13-'14. And we think that that is entirely possible. But we recognize that there is enormous variability across the state. And there will be annual updates for the plan, so there will be time to have a sort of revisiting of this plan to see how it's working in each of the districts.

So what are we doing to help? The notion of expanding from 31 to 600 districts gives one pause. So we have tried to engage in a number of activities. And I have to say that, also, many of the advocacy groups have

worked to also try to give assistance to providers and districts as we move in this initiative.

We've started with a Statewide Preschool Needs Assessment. We were very clear about what was going on in the 31 Abbott districts. Outside of Abbott, we weren't clear what kind of private providers, what kind of Head Start programs were there. We really didn't know. And in the beginning of Abbott, NIEER did a needs assessment to see what was there. And so we're continuing this. We're looking at the kinds of space that's available, we're looking at the quality of teachers, the certification. We're also finding, by the way, that many more teachers have a BA in the beginning of this program than had BAs in the beginning of Abbott. And so we're looking at what's out there so we can help the districts to use their resources more effectively.

We are doing-- We've done a series of curriculum showcases and classroom visits. Because we have these five curriculum models, we've asked the districts to think about using -- well, to use-- We wanted to have a forum in which districts could come together, look at these models -- there are representatives from each of these five curriculum models -- and really think through, in a very deliberate way, which one of these models would most meet their needs. And so we've done that. We had three days at the War Memorial in which districts came and heard representatives from these programs talk about what would meet their needs.

We also have a list of programs in some of the Abbott districts that are model programs. And so some of the districts that are now engaging in preschool expansion for the first time can come to centers such as this one and see what programs are like, talk with the teachers, talk with the district folks to see how they can help to implement the program.

We also realize that the counties were going to be -- the county superintendents were going to be absolutely critical in this. And so we've looked at the 21 counties and tried to engage in a way of helping districts based on their -- at the county level.

Jerry is coming up to help me here.

We held, in September, over 40 technical assistance meetings. Every county has had a technical assistance meeting of at least two days that my staff has conducted. The county superintendents have been wonderful in supporting this work. And the districts have had many, many questions that we've tried to answer. We've tried to give them a look at what the program really has entailed; a look at code -- administrative code is really important, so they'll see what it is they're supposed to do; and a look at the program implementation guidelines that are also sort of more elaborations of code, to help them understand exactly how this program is implemented. We've done that in the month of September. We are now holding what we call *office hours* in the county offices so that those districts that have more questions can come in for individual help. And at times districts are asking to come together. So some of the districts are saying, "We want to sort of come together as a consortium of rural districts, or districts that have similar kinds of questions." And they're more than welcome to do that. So whatever it is that can be done to help them understand the program, help them implement this in a better way, we're certainly open to trying to do that. So our district office hours are in effect right now.

We also have our Web site up with a Q&A. So we have frequently asked questions and answers to those questions on the Web site so that folks can see very quickly if there are quick answers to questions that are popping up for them.

I have a staff of 10 liaisons who have been working very, very hard. And it is not possible to do this work simply with that group. And the Commissioner has been absolutely dedicated to making this initiative work, and so we've engaged in getting help from across the Department. So not only the Office of Field Services, but certainly the Office of Special Education and the Office of District School Support have been wonderful in providing us with staff. So we have pulled staff from other divisions to make this effort work, which is a new way for the Department to work but, I think, a really good one.

And so Dr. Vernotica is going to tell you the role of the county offices.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER VERNOTICA: Thank you, Committee, for having us here today.

My name is Jerry Vernotica. I am the Assistant Commissioner in charge of Field Services. Field Services is the department that basically oversees all of the county offices. All of the 21 executive county superintendents report to my office. And what we're going to be doing, as Jackie said, is working collaboratively together. The role of the county office will be one -- number one -- that basically works as a communication system or works in a role where we're providing, during the planning phase, any assistance that we possibly can to superintendents, to boards, as to what is expected of them and what problems they're having, so that we can help support them and work through those problems. It will be rolling out. The role of the county office will be -- rolling out the program, will be support and guidance, it will be problem-solving, it will be assisting in the implementation. If you were to go back to the slide -- I believe it was Slide 6 -- this is an effort that is so important to us. We want everyone to be able to assess, and analyze, and plan appropriately. And if, in fact-- You will hear from others -- I've

heard all weekend from superintendents and am taking many calls as to how we can possibly be doing that or this based upon this, that, or the other thing. Well, we're here committed to work through these problems together and helping in the planning phase. That will be my role.

Not only will we look at the analyzing and the planning phase, we'll also be looking and supporting in the implementation phase -- technical assistance and support in any manner that is necessary.

One of the things from the compliance perspective is, the county office would have to look at space and also look at any waivers regarding any type of space or classrooms that school districts may have. And as Jackie said, given 21 different counties, and given the expansion plan and the roll out, we expect tremendous variability in the different needs and the different challenges that we have in order to provide this extremely important work for our children. And we're here to support that.

One of the other things we're going to be doing is assisting not only in the plans and the review of the plans, but then annually working along with Early Childhood in order to look at these reviews and, again in the effort of continuous improvement, working toward making the programs even stronger and going above that 5-point scale.

So that's where the county office will play its role.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Next slide please.

So, where to learn more? We have a Web site that is growing with more and more information about expansion. And what you'll find -- Jess, the next slide -- what you'll find on that Web site is an overview of preschool expansion. We have a list of school districts and the estimated universe of the eligible preschool students in those districts, questions and answers about expansion. And as I said before, that is a growing list. We're

trying to hit as many of the questions folks are asking as possible. Technical assistance meetings: where they are, when they'll be held. And the five-year preschool program and enrollment projections.

We also have the school funding formula, we have research on preschool, our expectations -- those are our early learning standards -- our program implementation guidelines, and New Jersey Administrative Code. Those things are on the Web. I'm sure that more things will be there as we see what the needs of the districts really are.

The last thing I want to say is how important this is. You've been so supportive of this work. We want this to work well for those children who we think will benefit most across the state. We would love to have preschool for everyone. That would be wonderful. We are doing what we think we can afford in a very difficult financial period.

But for the districts who are new to this, I think we are so wanting them to understand that the Department's role is to help them implement this program and to help them implement it well. And so whatever the issues are that come up, we have staff who are willing to help, who are able to help. And I want them to know that those issues that seem very, very difficult seemed difficult and scary to the Abbotts in the very beginning. This is not an easy process. It's hard. It takes a new way of thinking, but I think the rewards -- I know the rewards are well worth it. And we will all work together to make this happen.

Thank you.

If you have questions, we can certainly answer them.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much for that presentation.

And before I ask the Committee members if they have any questions--

First of all, let me introduce the Chairperson of this Committee.

We knew you were coming, Ron, because you always -- you're a man of your word.

SENATOR RICE: The State Police stopped me.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I can't believe that. Really?

We won't get into that. (laughter)

This is the honorable Senator Ron Rice.

And if they stopped you, I know they were in trouble.

But I do have two questions I wanted to ask before I turned this over to the Committee.

You mentioned that this is the planning year, but you said that some districts were ready, have already begun the expansion. What districts are those?

DR. WOLOCK: Well, we have Pemberton. Pemberton Borough is sending their kids to Pemberton Township. So that was sort of a natural--

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Where is that, South Jersey?

DR. WOLOCK: It's in Burlington County.

We have Little Egg Harbor, Red Bank, Woodbine, and Fairfield.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay. I would imagine -- and you just briefly touched upon this -- space, it seems to me, would be a really big problem, especially in some districts. I would imagine in our district that space would be an issue. How are you going to deal with the issue of space, especially if the district doesn't have space and the service providers don't have space? How do you deal with that, or how are you going to deal with this?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Well, in many cases, children are in private-provider settings or Head Start settings already. In those cases, we are helping them to raise the quality of their program. So it's not that-- I don't want you to think that there are 30,000 children out there with no place at all. Most of these children will be located in some setting already.

We're working with the districts to try to find whatever space they can or to see if it is in their benefit to maybe send their children to another district that has space. So we're looking at districts that are close to each other. Some districts have a lot of space, some districts have none. We're asking them to work together, which is why the county office is so important -- to look countywide at this issue to see what kinds of space issues we have.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I would imagine if you start telling parents that you're going to send their child outside of the district to another district, that's going to bring up a whole other--

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: It's not our first request.

But remember, there is a rollout. And so in the beginning, they don't have to have 90 percent of their kids in the beginning. We've suggested a rollout of perhaps 20 percent to start.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Over how long?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Over five years.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: A five-year period?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Yes. So they have a way of going -- gradually increasing. And again, we'll be working with them to try to find those space settings that are most appropriate. We're working actually with-- The Head Start State Collaboration Office is now in our

Division, and we're working with the Director of Head Start to make sure that every Head Start program is involved and is able to help with this initiative.

DR. WOLOCK: I just wanted to add one thing. We're also-- Just from speaking to people in the districts, it seems pretty clear that there are a lot of -- well, very often there are willing and able providers that are out there who might have the space and would like to be part of the program. There's some trust building that we still have to do, I think, to help superintendents and decision-makers at the district level see that that's really a viable option, working with providers.

So I think that sometimes-- When we hear from districts that there is no space, sometimes there might be a provider, but they're not used to working with the providers so they don't know if that's something they really want to do.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: That's a good point. So if there are some providers who meet the mandated requirements, how will they find out about this? How are you finding them, and how are you giving that information to the districts?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: We have the needs assessment that is being conducted that gives us a list of what providers are out there. So as we look at the districts that we weren't familiar with, we can say, "Are there private providers out there, licensed providers? Are there Head Start centers?" And so we have a better sense of what's available and we can work with the districts. Each district gets that report.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: They're going to all get this information from you?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Absolutely.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER VERNOTICA: And if I may add, one of the other things is, we have such talented superintendents and board members. (laughter)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay. Press it over to them. Go ahead. Pass the buck.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER VERNOTICA: They know their communities, they know the private providers, they know everything that exists within the community.

But one of the things, from the county level that we're expected to look at -- and every executive county superintendent has a plan by 2010 -- is the consolidation not only of municipalities but of school districts. And one of the things that a number of counties are looking at right now during the planning phase for this particular program is developing consortiums where maybe the ESC, the special services group, whoever, can provide space and work along with districts.

There are challenges there also. One of the concerns is: How much time do you want a 3- or a 4-year-old on the bus? What is the expense? What is the administrative oversight for these types of things? These are all of the things we're going to be working with districts to basically work through.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: And I know that would be one problem that parents would have when you try to move their child from one district into another: How long do you want your little 3-year-old to have to travel back and forth?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER VERNOTICA: Exactly.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: And how far the parents are willing to have them from home.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER VERNOTICA: And that's what we'll be working through with them.

And I'm sure, as Jackie said, most have been-- I think we need to communicate further that most feel, "If I don't have this plan done this year, I'm in trouble, and I'm not meeting the mandate." And we're more than willing to listen to what some of the challenges are and work through them so that we can meet the goals of this particular program.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you.

Does the Committee have any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I do.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I'm very concerned with the oversight of the facilities. This is a marvelous facility. But if you recall about two years ago, there was quite a fervor over some of the facilities that were being used for early childhood.

Who comes and checks on the -- or how often is this going to be done to make sure that the programs are being implemented, that the children are being given the kind of instruction that they need? The accountability factor is always a big thing for me.

DR. WOLOCK: Part of the program is-- I think where we've been pretty strong is the administrative oversight part. And we have-- Every school district has to have an early childhood contact. It could be-- If it's in a very small district, it might be a principal. In a larger district, they'll have a person that specifically focuses on early childhood. That person is responsible for looking at facilities and then working with the county office to look at facilities and think about waivers if they're required. But they are responsible for doing that. So we do have a system in place, and we have sets of checklists

that they can use to go and figure out whether this is an appropriate facility or not.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Is there sort of--

DR. WOLOCK: And we-- I'm sorry, go ahead.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: For example, if you have nontenured teachers, you have to do a certain amount of observations of them. And everything-- There's got to be a paper trail.

DR. WOLOCK: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: And so my question is always: How often will the schools be inspected and reports written up on their progress?

DR. WOLOCK: Just like in the current program, the expansion program will have the same types of monitoring features. So for instance -- you know how you saw the ECERS, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale -- all districts will be administering that instrument. They'll be trained on how to do it. And then they'll be administering that instrument or another one, once their program gets to a certain level of quality, on every classroom. And it is monitored by the district. So they're responsible, no matter where the children are, whether it's a provider setting, or Head Start, or in a public school building -- that they have to make sure that those elements of high quality are in place. And they also do a self-assessment that gets reported to us on an annual basis. That will still be in the picture.

Also, we have master teachers at a ratio of about one to 20 classrooms. They're part of the program. So they're going into the classrooms approximately a half-day every two weeks. So there are a lot of-- And there are other people as well. We have the Preschool Intervention Referral Team people, we have the community parent people. These are all people who are

going in and out of the centers, and the public school buildings, and Head Start to make sure that it's all there.

And then the other thing that we'll do is-- Part of the reason I think that we've been so successful with the Abbott Preschool Program is, we use that system of evaluation. So we went in annually. In the first few years it wasn't a lot of fun to see what was going on. "Yes, we still have to work harder in this area or this area." But now it's there. The program is really terrific. And I think that we can use that same system of evaluation in expansion, that will be a critical piece of it, to look at what's happening at a classroom level, a program level, a district level; and ensuring that all those pieces are in place and, at the same time, tracking how the children do.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: It's an annual self-assessment that the districts do. Then they look at each component of their program facilities as a part of that. And our staff goes out (indiscernible) working with the county staff to validate their self-assessments. So that's an annual thing.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHIAPPONE: My concern is-- By the way, I sit on the Board of School (indiscernible) in Bayonne. And we had the discussion about having providers handle the preschool children, which is a concern of mine. Because when we talked about daycare centers, we talk about different institutions which may not provide the level of education as a facility like this, where there's so many different ingredients that are of high standards -- security for instance. There are so many different areas. Ideally, I'd like to see the State set aside money so we create preschool centers like this, and we have a consistent package of education.

But the question is: How do we assure that the teachers who teach at these daycare centers which exist now are held to the highest standards that we expect in the public school system? I think it's going to be a problem. And hopefully we're able to allocate money for the creation of schools like this. Because I see us -- if we have children who are sent to some daycare centers where there are different levels of -- degrees of achievement, the performance -- and I see that being a real problem. And ideally, I'd love to see everybody come to a place like this where the guidance is there, where the educational level is there. And hopefully, at some point, we can fund it.

But will these daycare centers, will these providers -- outside providers -- be held to the same standards in seeing we have teacher qualifications, for instance?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: When we talk about the mixed deliveries and private providers, and district and Head Start programs, they're all held to the very same standards. The expectations that we have for children, the early learning standards, are there regardless of the kind of site the children are in. We have the same expectations for program quality, same level of reviewing programs. The notions of having certified teachers are the same for every site in which children are going to be educated. So the notion of different levels of quality-- As we start out, we may not have the same level of quality. We'll be looking around to see what that looks like as we did in the beginning of Abbott. But I want you to know that with a good deal of work, and a lot of professional development, and very focused work on understanding what quality is and defining it very clearly -- and I think we are really clear about this program, and the components of this program, what we expect. We found in our latest data that as we look across the auspices of the private provider industry and Head Start, we don't really

see significant differences on major indicators of quality. So we're getting to a point where we can say we're leveling off and we're seeing-- And that's huge. I mean, that is really, really huge.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHIAPPONE: On a follow-up to that, who is responsible for the oversight? Is it the individual districts, is it State representatives?

SUPERINTENDENT EPPS: (speaking from audience)
(indiscernible)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Excuse me, Dr. Epps. We want to have a record of what you're saying. Do you mind coming over to the podium so that you will be recorded? (laughter)

Sitting there-- You have to be by a mike.

SUPERINTENDENT EPPS: I just want to tell you that the quality of the programs are wonderful. I have the best Associate Superintendent and Director in the State of New Jersey (indiscernible) programs. We have lead teachers going into our buildings on a daily basis. We welcome you to come and see what we do. That's what we welcome. I mean, I was reflecting back when I heard the Assistant Commissioner talk about expansion. I'm not in favor of the expansion, and I'm going to tell you why I'm not: Because it takes money from districts like Jersey City because now you have to spread out the money. And now you're going to say, "Well, you were Abbott" and all of a sudden now, for the next year, the year after, and the year after, our dollars are now going to be cut or they're going to be the same because you're expanding some place else that didn't have early childhood education. I think that it's more important that you look at the quality and continue that quality for early childhood education, as opposed to taking dollars away from districts like Jersey City, Newark, etc., etc., etc.

But as far as the monitoring, the accountability, we do that in districts. We do that with Pat Bryant, second to none. I was a little-- I wasn't an advocate for early childhood education years ago because I thought we were just spending tons, and tons, and tons of money. And then when I looked at it, and I looked at all the social workers, the (indiscernible) team, the lead teachers, all the people who were supporting early childhood education and looking at a difference as they move in from pre-K to first grade -- or Kindergarten into first grade -- you say, "Well, there's a real difference. They made a difference to those kids lives. They really did."

We have staff -- highly qualified staff that does this. They're not just people off the street, they're people who have gone to college, they're people who have gotten their degrees, and the P-3 certifications.

Is that correct? (affirmative response)

I mean, I even get annoyed about wraparound. Because when school is out, we still have them in school. So when they have their Christmas holiday, they're in school; when there's the Thanksgiving holiday, they're in school. Because those parents -- they call it *wraparound*. They just wrap all year long. I don't understand how they continue to go to school day in and day out. We opened up our school district to wraparound, and I made it stop. She said, "Dr. Epps, we have to." I said, "It's going to cost us a lot of money." Well, it cost us money. But you know what? Those parents bring those children to the schools on holidays -- on Easter holidays, on every break that we have because it's considered to be a wraparound program, and all those kids need to be in school.

So the question on accountability -- we do it. They give us the information, they give us the rules and regulations. We follow through with that. We have head teachers, principals, directors, associate superintendents.

We have people in place to monitor this. This is on a daily basis. And I forget how many lead teachers we have.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Not enough.
(laughter)

SUPERINTENDENT EPPS: Not enough. I didn't even know -- lead teachers -- they're running out, trying to make sure everybody's doing the right thing.

So if you're going to expand, please don't cut our money. I mean, I sat on that side, and I understand that side, and I understand this side a little bit better. But when you're going to expand, you can't take dollars for communities that didn't have it. You have to look for other dollars so they can have it. But you can't take away from a Jersey City, or even a Newark to say, "Well, we're going to expand the program." I thought expansion meant recruiting, I thought expansion meant building more. And it does mean that. But it means more for those students who don't have early childhood education.

That's all I wanted to say, Senator. I couldn't just sit back without you guys knowing that there is accountability. There are quality people who are doing the job. They're all highly qualified. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about it. There's a full curriculum in place. And the staff has professional development and training constantly, over, and over, and over again.

When you look at this center -- if you went to another center, you would see the same curriculum. If you went to another center, you would see the same curriculum. We're unique. We service all the 4-year-olds, and our center services all the 3-year-olds. Is that correct? But we have a full-day.

When you guys talk about full-day, we've been doing that for -- ever since I've been Superintendent. And that's been--

How long have we been doing it, 10 years, 15 years?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (speaking from audience) Yes, (indiscernible)

SUPERINTENDENT EPPS: Since '89.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHIAPPONE: Just a follow-up: My concern was in regard to passing off some of the responsibilities to facilities -- not like this, which I'd like to see, but some of the lower-case daycare centers. In a town like Bayonne, for instance, where we can't expand, we're looking to put it off to local daycare centers, which I'm concerned might not be able to provide the level of education and care that we might set in places like this.

So my concern is more or less with some of the lower-level daycare facilities that will now assume the responsibilities of taking care of a new influx of children, of kids.

DR. WOLOCK: I just want you to know that we don't assume that the childcare centers come necessarily with all the skills to do the program. We assume that we're going to have to support them in the implementation. And that does come to the district. Jersey City is a good example. They have a lot of providers, and they supported these providers through regular professional development. They involved them in the curriculum implementation. They were also trained at the State level. So there were lots-- When you talk about monitoring, monitoring is occurring at every level, from the classroom and the role of the teacher in the way that they work with children, to the director of the center, to the principal of the building, to the district, and the State. And that's how -- that's why the program works. Because it does occur at every single level. There's no

assumption. We don't just say, "Okay. You go ahead and do this program," because they may not be ready to understand all of the pieces of it. But we know that we can take them from where they are and help them implement each element.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much.

Do you--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I have a lot of questions in my head. I'm not going to ask them all this morning.

First of all, I appreciate the information that you've given and the Web site references, and I will go there and look at some of this.

A couple of comments and then a question about how you might deal with this: I mentioned in my opening remarks that I'm concerned about communication and I'm concerned about the tension between former Abbott and non-Abbott districts. Because my concern is for all children throughout the state having the opportunity for a quality preschool program. And especially given our economic situation going forward -- and we're going to hear more about it on Thursday from the Governor -- there's going to be a lot of pushing, and pulling, and tugging.

And so I'd like for you to comment on how you plan to address the rollout in the former Abbott districts, particularly the F, G, H, I, and J districts. Because I have intimate knowledge of an I-J district that I was on the board of where we have-- Actually, out of nine schools, we have four Title I schools. And Title I schools are schools with a concentration of kids on free and reduced lunch. So I'm trying to think of the big picture, and I'm trying to think of districts -- and there are many in the state -- where there are children whose families would qualify for the services. And I'm wondering how that is going to work. How are the funds going to get to those children without

diminishing the funds that need to be spent in the former Abbott districts? I think that's really important. We have to acknowledge those tensions, and those difficulties, and those competing interests and understand that we need to take care of all of our kids, and we need to communicate effectively with districts so that districts don't fall into saying, "Well, I can't do it," or, "I don't have the money," or, "Where is it going to come from?" and understand that this is something that we all need to join in to accomplish the goal.

So communication, implementation of this rollout, and-- How do you notify parents, for example, that they might be eligible for these services, and how do you help districts that can't possibly build centers like this one, which are wonderful, but still meet the needs of their kids?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: We have over, I think, since the legislation was passed -- we have been talking to districts on a multitude of forums. I think we tried, as a result of this legislation, to think about ways in which districts can work together, districts can come to understand the program. As I said, we have run a series of technical assistance meetings so that every district in the state has had an opportunity for at least one, two-day technical assistance workshop in which they were told what the program was about, what are the components, how does it work. They were -- they can talk to other districts. Because sometimes it's easier for a superintendent to talk to another superintendent before the superintendent talks to the state. And so we've encouraged those kinds of interactions.

In addition to those two full days of technical assistance, as I've said, my staff is now in the county offices. And districts can have appointments, office hours with those staff members. If they want to come as individual districts, if they want to come as a group of districts, they're more than welcome to do that.

We've had districts come to the Department -- bring a staff of people to the Department because they think they have a very specific and unique kind of issue. And we're more than willing to work with them in that regard.

So I think the notion that the Department has is that high-quality preschool has shown to be effective in the Abbott districts. However, we have children across the state who need this. And it is a challenge in a difficult financial period to do this, but we really want to have those services for all children.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Perhaps a quick follow-up to my question and your answer would be: What's the response been?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JONES: Oh, I think the response has been actually much more encouraging than we initially imagined. There are districts who are very excited about expansion. There are districts who have gone, on their own, to private providers and Head Start groups and said, "We want you to work with us." Actually, some of them have wanted to steal their teachers, but we told them, "No, you can't do that." (laughter) We have districts who have a lot of concerns about how this is going to play out.

Frankly, I think some of the smaller districts, the targeted programs, will have to work out some real issues that we didn't have to think about when we had Abbott. It was universal. These are districts that, I think, may need to wait another year, if that's necessary, to really think through: What are the options? How do we do this in a way that is thoughtful and reflective? The last thing we want to do is take taxpayer money, at this particular time, and have a program that isn't going to be effective.

We've been very positive about expansion and very aggressive, in fact, because we know the model that we've had, and we know that that's been

effective. We want to have a time when we can talk to districts, look at the issues. And if they are really, really not ready for '09-'10, I'd rather have them wait than to start and do something badly.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much.

Senator Rice, did you want to say something before we move on?

SENATOR RICE: I have a couple of comments.

First of all, we've been doing this for a number of years -- when we first went to this -- just in response to the question raised about daycare.

The whole notion -- we require certification even for daycares, if you remember. Because I was at the forefront of that, because I had to argue the timeframes for getting people certified. I also argued, when it came to the space issue, that we're lacking space. But it didn't make sense to me that the population we wanted to serve were already in daycare centers, which were facilities. And I argued maybe we should be retrofitting and helping some of those facilities. We're certifying the people -- we would finally put them out of business. Some of the people in the daycare facilities have operated daycares for so many years, they know more about those kids and the process than most of the people who are certified. And so we got them certified and they move in that direction. We expanded those times if you remember. I remember leading that fight, and I was very adamant about it.

But I am concerned. I want to make sure that-- A lot of daycares are popping up. We don't want them to pop up just for the sake of popping up. But I would suspect -- and I would say to my colleagues and others -- you know daycares in your community have been providers of -- we used to call it "babysitting services." The whole idea was to bring them up to Head Start level. This whole mission was about -- Head Start was getting dollars because

at the early age, Head Start was supposed to be -- and they do -- teach those cognitive skills. And so we had to move in that direction.

I mean, we found it shocking when we found out that even when we did preschool and we started to certify that in the minority community, we were 19 months behind when we get to first grade. And I used to say, "How can you be 19 months behind when you get to first grade if you never went to school?" It was the cognitive skills and relationships.

And so I would suggest that the county superintendents pay attention and don't get into the politics of daycares. Just evaluate the daycares and make sure that-- Because we -- there's some daycares where people were at a point where they were going to retire. That's fine. You had to at least -- you could keep your staff, but you had to bring a certified person in there. And I remember those discussions very clearly.

But I don't want superintendents to get into politics of organizations, if you will, or government, that when daycare providers come to you, you don't give it the kind of evaluation there should be. And I don't think the superintendents should be in a position where they aren't open-minded. There may have to come the time when we say, "We know you don't want it, but you're going to get it." I'm being honest about that. So I wanted to say that.

The other issue-- Well, not on this subject. When we get back, I have a question. I don't know if I can raise it now, but I do have a question on something that was raised up here.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay.

SENATOR RICE: Oh, I can raise it now? (affirmative response)

My question was: It's nice to say that you have 10 staff people. That's what you said. That was your number. It takes a lot more. And State

government has been very kind to you, because the Department has been using staff from other departments. Number one: Can you tell me what departments? Number two: How many staff people? And number three: Are we diminishing the abilities of other departments periodically by doing that? Because we don't spend dollars in the State. Governors like to cut money, and you have to do that. But when you cut here, sometimes you have to elevate this. That means you have to spend. And I'm just concerned, because I agree with Superintendent Epps -- that I've never looked for expansion to be taken from a district. That's my problem with charter schools. It's my problem. I've said it over and over. I will support anything. But don't take what I have if it's working and diminish that value of that and the quality of that to do something else. And so I do concur with the Superintendent. So could you answer those questions? If you don't have answers, can you get it back through the Chair?

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Can I suggest that perhaps -- because of the interest of time, Senator, and we have several more speakers -- that perhaps you can get that information back to us as soon as possible? As a matter of fact, would you send it to Melanie Schulz, and she will disseminate it to all of us?

Is that it, Senator?

SENATOR RICE: Yes.

Just make it simple language. I'm from an Abbott district. I don't know that technical stuff. (laughter)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay. Thank you for that wonderful presentation. We're very happy that you're here. Thank you.

And also, Dr. Epps, thank you for your input.

We're going to move along. I'm just going to ask you if you'll just keep in mind that we have several other speakers, and we absolutely have to be out of this building by 2:00. So we are enjoying the dialogue, but we just want to keep it moving a little bit.

Now we're going to ask Jeanette Page-Hawkins and Beverly Wellons, from--

Steve Barnett.

Steve, you have to catch a plane. Do you have to leave right away? Should we take you?

W. STEVEN BARNETT, Ph.D.: I have about a half-hour.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay. Ladies, would you mind letting him come up?

ELLEN C. FREDE, Ph.D.: If he leaves, he has to take his computer, which means my presentation goes with him.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Why don't you both come together?

DR. FREDE: Thank you.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: And we're all aware of time now, so it should not be a problem.

DR. BARNETT: It will be quick.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: So one is up, and one is down. Okay.

DR. BARNETT: We'll switch back and forth. And we have a packet for you from the National Institute. Ellen and I Co-Direct the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers. We've prepared brief presentations for you this morning. But we want you to know that we are a resource for the State. And if there are questions that come up for you as

individual legislators or for your Committee -- anything at all that you feel we could be helpful with, in terms of research-based information about preschool nationally, in New Jersey -- please call on us. We are serious about helping Rutgers fulfill its mission of supporting this state.

I'm going to give you an overview about early childhood education from a very high level, and then Ellen is going to fill you in on specifics for New Jersey. And so my remarks will actually be related to this PowerPoint that's New Jersey Investing in Pre-K 2008.

And so just quickly -- I'm sure you all are pretty familiar with the benefits of preschool education. But I think it is important to understand just how large those benefits are. So we see, not just in New Jersey but from research all across the nation and indeed in other countries, that preschool education increases achievement test scores, reduces grade repetition and special education, increases high school graduation rates. It also has positive affects on children's social behavior. So it reduces behavior problems, delinquency, and crime. All of these things together, when children-- I've been doing one study. We're now working on getting the age 50 follow-up funded. So we really do have long-term data that says, "Yes, even in true experiments, one group got it, one group didn't." We see that when they're adults, there's a difference in employment earnings; aAlso things we're now finding related to smoking, drug use, and depression.

All of these things are important for the citizens of our state, but they're also important to State government. Because if you think about the things that drive up costs in the long run, it's rising schooling costs, it's rising social services costs, rising costs of crime; the costs of incarceration have just gone crazy in this country, and health-care costs. So you need to think about preschool education as an investment in the long-term that brings down these

costs to State government. So you're investing in something that's going to have big returns later on in terms of reducing the cost of State government.

It's also important when you think about this to understand -- and I think you have, because of the questions I've heard you ask this morning -- that childcare and preschool policy have to be made together. These two things happen together. And so while there are all these long-term benefits, there are also short-term benefits of putting people to work because of childcare. And that has a substantial payoff. But you have to coordinate your policy and planning about childcare and preschool education together, rather than thinking about them as separate.

Most of the focus has been on children in poverty. Most of the focus in research has been on children in poverty. But increasingly, people are in -- are changing that focus to a concern with pre-K for all kids. And I want to talk just a little bit this morning about why that is. And the three primary reasons are: It's very difficult to reach all disadvantaged children if you don't have universal programs, partly because if you focus on income, you're shooting at a moving target; partly because some folks don't want to send their kids to programs that are just for poor kids; partly because this moving target moves very rapidly. So very few children, for example, would be poor three years in a row.

The second reason: If we're really trying to get at these big social problems, including school failure, they're not just problems of low-income kids. Most school failure is, in fact, accounted for by the middle class. And finally, it turns out that all children benefit from preschool education.

Now, we've been talking about kids who are already in places. So 70 percent of our preschoolers are already in some kind of center. The issue really is the educational quality and raising that up.

That's the major issue. There are about 30 percent of kids -- next slide please -- that are not in facilities. And one of the things to understand is, it's not equally distributed. A lot more 4-year-olds are in centers than 3-year-olds. And also, it varies considerably. So, for example, Hispanic kids have very low rates of participation. That seems to be not because they don't want their kids to attend their programs, but because their communities tend to have less access.

Now, I'm going to switch here. This is data on children at Kindergarten entry. I know that slide is hard to see. But basically that upward sloping line tells you the relationship between family income and cognitive abilities at school entry. The kids on the far left -- those are kids in poverty. They're pretty far behind, as Senator Rice noted this morning, at Kindergarten entry. But kids in the middle, kids at median income, are as far behind kids in the top 20 percent as children in poverty are behind them. So when we think about learning gaps at school entry, yes, they are very large gaps for children in poverty. But there are also pretty large gaps for kids who aren't in poverty. And we see the same kind of relationship for social skills.

Now, if we move forward to the other end of the education pipeline, this looks at grade retention rates -- kids who fail a grade and are held back, kids who drop out of school -- two of our biggest -- these are big markers of education failure. And you can see, kids in the lowest quintile -- bottom 20 percent -- for income have pretty high rates. Twelve percent are going to fail a grade and be held back, almost 20 percent of them will drop out of school. But if we look at the middle 60 percent -- that's the middle class -- their grade retention rate is still almost one in 10. Their drop-out rate is still almost one in 10. That means most of the school drop-out rate, most of the school failure problem is middle-class kids. And so while we have bigger problems on a

percentage basis for children in poverty, for the low-income kids, these problems are sufficiently big for the middle class. And if we neglect middle-class kids, we will not solve the problems of school failure.

So it really is the case that the problems of school failure are not the problems of somebody else's kids, or those kids, or kids in poverty. They are problems of all of our kids. And we need to start thinking about it that way if we're really going to really, seriously make the full dent that we need to make in this problem of school failure.

Now, we're only now getting to the point where we have good data on -- so what can preschool do about that problem for not just poor kids, but middle-class kids? One place to look at that is Oklahoma. Oklahoma is the only state in the country right now where 90-plus percent of all 4-year-olds go to public preschool, the state pre-K program. School starts at 4 in Oklahoma.

There's a very strong study -- 3,000 kids in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They looked at: So what difference does preschool education make for these kids? They found strong gains in literacy and math, they found that the gains were larger for minority children, larger for children in poverty, but still very large for the rest of the kids. So basically a preschool program for all kids in Oklahoma is lifting all kids up at school entry and closing more of the achievement gap for minority and low-income kids.

Now, we thought that was such an important study, we've actually now replicated the same kind of study in other states. What I'm trying to do with this chart is give you some idea of just how big an impact high-quality pre-K can make and why it's important for all kids. So on the very left there, these are the percentages of the achievement gap that a preschool program could close in one year. The Perry Preschool Program that

most of you have heard of -- it's a model. It provides a lot of that long-term evidence. One year of the Perry Preschool program closed about 75 percent of the achievement gap between rich and poor. Across eight states we found, on the same kinds of measures, one year of state pre-K is closing about a quarter of the achievement gap; when you move to language and literacy, larger parts of those achievement gaps.

So I think it's important that New Jersey is thinking about two years. I think it's also important that we're looking at intensive programs. If you look at Head Start as it's normally funded -- not Head Start as we supplement it in New Jersey or even Head Start as they supplement it in Oklahoma, where it works hand in glove with the public school system -- you're only closing about between a third and 8 percent of the achievement gap. So this supplementation, this improvement of these programs -- it's a big deal in terms of what we're doing for kids at Kindergarten entry.

Next, please.

Now, to do this, we have to do the kinds of things that we've been doing in New Jersey with the Abbott program and that we're talking about doing with expansion. You have to have high-quality programs because, as I said, mostly what you're doing is moving kids into higher quality, not moving them into necessarily different spaces. That means well-educated, adequately paid teachers, good curriculum, professional development, small classes, strong supervision, monitoring and review, high standards, and accountability. I think what you've heard this morning is that's exactly the State's plan to implement just those things that are going to produce the results that we talked about.

Next.

So stepping back a little bit to look at the big picture: There are about a million children across the nation in state pre-K programs today. That's a big increase, and it indicates that there is rapid growth across the country. There are seven states now that have committed to serving all children in pre-K, including our neighbors in New York. There are three states -- Oklahoma, Florida, and Georgia -- that already enroll most of their 4-year-olds. Texas, Vermont, and West Virginia are getting very close to 50 percent. The other states have been able to rapidly increase their enrollment in state pre-K and do it successfully. Oklahoma is the shining star in doing this so far, but there are plenty of other states. Illinois is committed to serving all 3- and 4-year-olds.

New Jersey is near the top when it comes to the resources and the standards we put behind this. But we do have a long way to go when it comes to enrollment in preschool. About 45,000 kids now -- you heard this morning -- expansion is another 30,000. We have 225,000 3- and 4-year-olds. So the expansion is a great thing. It's actually pretty modest. I know a lot of people are talking about the obstacles. Let me tell you, other states have knocked off increases of that size pretty easily. They do it the same way we're talking about doing it in New Jersey, by the way, by these public/private partnerships. And it's important to understand these public/private partnerships -- it's important to use the private providers to bring them up to speed, to work with Head Start. But that's not where it -- it can go beyond that. So for example, in Oklahoma, where did they get all those facilities? Well, some of them were private providers that already existed. But the private foundations, the community foundations, the Tulsa Community Foundation, the Oklahoma City Foundation-- Those foundations stepped up to the plate and provided a lot of the dollars that helped the public schools construct those new facilities.

I think that's certainly worth New Jersey looking into what extent we could get the private sector involved in helping to support the development of these new facilities in a public/private partnership.

So, in conclusion, pre-K can be a high-quality program that has a high investment. Ellen is going to talk about exactly how that worked in New Jersey. And I think we do have the potential in New Jersey to be first in the nation when it comes to preschool education.

Thank you.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much.

I must say, I don't quite know if we can-- We're so different from Oklahoma, so it's a little hard.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: That's what we're all talking about.
(laughter)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: It's a little difficult when you say Oklahoma is the shining star.

DR. BARNETT: How about New York and Illinois?

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Well, we're getting closer. But Oklahoma -- I think we're going to have to come up with something a little bit more closer to home.

Thank you very much.

Does anyone--

I'm sorry, go ahead.

DR. FREDE: I can wait.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: No, go ahead.

DR. FREDE: Thank you so much for having me today. I'm Ellen Frede. I'm Co-Director for the National Institute for Early Education Research. I'm also a developmental psychologist and former teacher/educator.

I just gave up tenure at the College of New Jersey in July -- and then the economy tanked, so that was a really smart decision.

But I'm also the former assistant to the Commissioner for Early Childhood Education at the Department of Education and oversaw the Abbott Preschool Program from 2002 to 2005. But currently, the reason I'm here is to talk to you about some research that we're doing at NIEER on preschool in New Jersey.

I want to start-- There are three studies I want to tell you about. One is the APPLES Study, the Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study. We actually have two versions of that that I will be telling you about. And then another is the Partnering for Preschool Study. It was a telephone survey with childcare center directors throughout the Abbott districts that was partially funded by NIEER, and also by the Schumann Fund for New Jersey, but conducted by researchers at Berkley University. And then finally the Preschool Expansion Assessment Research Study, or PEARS. We have a little theme going here in case you hadn't noticed that. I've trying really hard to work on BANANAS for this bilingual acquisition study I'm doing, but I haven't gotten some of the letters figured out yet.

We can skip this one because Ellen already covered it.

I will be very brief because Ellen and Jacqueline have said a lot of the things that I had on mine.

But the APPLES study has been a study of the Abbott Preschool Program and it's longitudinal affects. Some of the results have already been alluded to. But first of all, we have-- The mixed delivery system has been used here in New Jersey, where 60 percent of the children being served in childcare centers at the same quality as the public schools results in the same high quality across all settings. It also results in a more diverse workforce than

other-- The workforce within the childcare centers and Head Start is more diverse than the workforce within the public schools. And so it's a model that needs to be continued when we think about expansion.

We also-- These results are not out yet, so all I can do is give you preliminary ones. But we are finding meaningful affects through the end of second grade on children's vocabulary and math skills as a result of going to the Abbott Preschool Program. So we're really excited to see that that's continuing into the early grades. And so the Abbott Preschool Program has clearly been the first link in a chain that can produce long-term school success and economic benefits. And we are finding also that two years of public pre-K is twice as effective as one. So the model for expansion is very important -- that it is a two-year model.

I just wanted to say one other thing about that. One of the things that's been challenging for us about measuring the affects of the preschool program in the context of the Abbott school districts is the K-3 education in the Abbott school districts is also improving. It is also effective for children. And I think that's a very important message for people to be hearing, because I think they will get little bits of information. But the truth is that the Abbott intervention has been important not just at the preschool level.

The other study that I wanted to quickly highlight was this interview with childcare center directors in the Abbott Preschool Program. Senator Rice alluded to some of the issues that went on early in the Abbott program. And I've got scars to prove it. (laughter) But it was very exciting to see the results of this study. Basically, the center directors said this was a lot, a lot, a lot of hard work, but it was worth it. And they see that they have access to more and better services for children. They now have a stable and sufficient funding base for their materials and for their operations. They can offer the

kinds of services families will need, which they weren't really able to do when they were just receiving tuition from parents or subsidy from the childcare subsidy. And they also were very excited about their teachers getting certified, and getting their bachelor's degree, and now becoming a part of the profession in a more substantial way. And I think the results of this study are very interesting. And you can find them on the Web site that's -- on our NIEER Web site, I'm sorry.

And so the authors conclude that the New Jersey Abbott Preschool Program represents a public policy achievement that is worthy of emulation by other states and communities. I want you to know that when we go to Oklahoma, we talk about how good New Jersey is. (laughter)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: They must have the same concern that I did.

DR. FREDE: And Steve's about to take a flight to New Hampshire to tell them how great we are in New Jersey.

But I think it is important to understand that, because as we move forward in the expansion, we can't let go of what's worked. And I think that's really critical.

And now to tell you about-- We are-- NIEER has been -- has a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education to conduct the preschool needs assessment for the expansion. And the three main questions that we're trying to answer through this are: How many 3- and 4-year-olds can be offered preschool in existing programs? And we're looking at public school childcare and Head Start classrooms.

What is the basic space and quality of these classrooms? And here we're looking mostly at facility, but we're also looking somewhat at the interactions that the teachers are providing. We know, from Abbott, that we

can fix all those things. We did. And so we're not so concerned in gathering this information to have a really strong understanding of exactly what's going on in the centers or in the public school classrooms that currently exist, because we know that with the right resources and the right attention, the quality of that can be improved. But it is important to know if the facility is really inadequate for what we need.

And then we're also looking at the credentials and experience levels of the current workforce. And here we're not just talking about the teachers, although that's certainly critical to know whether they -- how many of them are going to need to work toward a bachelor's degree. We're also asking about center director credentials and principal credentials, as well as whoever is in charge of early childhood education in that school district. Because one of the things we found very challenging in the Abbott program was the fact that the level of knowledge of early childhood education was poor across the board. It was poor in higher education, it was poor in the public schools, and it was poor in the childcare centers. And now it's really great, and we're really excited about the possibility of expanding it and seeding out into these other districts.

The way we're collecting this data is via interview and direct site observation. But we're doing it in chunks. So we've completed the first Tier, the first 38 districts. That data collection period ended in June of 2008. And you can see on this map that it's a lot of districts that we're going into. Tier II districts -- 110. We're also visiting them. The Tier I and Tier II districts are the ones that will -- that have the -- that are either universal or will have large numbers of targeted children. Then Tier III: We're only surveying them via telephone. And that data collection period is just about to begin. And we are taking lots of drugs to make it through this data collection, because that's a lot

of data. We're going into every childcare center, calling all of these -- and all of these classrooms. And one of our data collectors is in the audience. She can tell you how time-consuming it is.

So some of the things we're hearing -- because we're also asking the school districts, "What do you see as some of the barriers to this?" And, obviously, "We don't have the space." Well, I just want to say that through partnering, having a mixed delivery system, through school construction and through converting self-contained classrooms to inclusion classrooms, we now know that over 80 percent of the Abbott preschool children are being served. So, again, it is doable if you give it some time.

The other thing I wanted to point out-- You were talking about how beautiful this center is. There are beautiful childcare centers out there too, and there are beautiful Head Start centers out there. And many of them figured out ways to get the funding on their own because they knew that they had a stable funding base with the Abbott funding. And it's not just public school facilities that can be as wonderful as this one. And I hope you'll go visit some, because they really are spectacular.

Another barrier that some of the districts are saying is, we don't have qualified teachers -- meaning enough that have the early childhood certification or the teachers in the childcare centers are not qualified. But again, we know through Abbott that with time and scholarship dollars they got there. And we are, again-- People are calling us all the time to say, "How did you do that in New Jersey," in other states. And, in fact, a delegation is going to be coming from California to learn how we did it. And they'll be asking to meet with you, as a matter of fact. And legislators from California are going to be coming here.

No additional funding-- We're not going to get additional funding for serving preschool special education children. Serving children with IEPs in general education classrooms is actually less expensive than serving them in self-contained. And by having a universal preschool, or larger numbers of children without disabilities being served, you can serve children in inclusive settings -- the children with IEPs in inclusive settings. It's better for the children, and it's less expensive. So again, that issue is a nonissue from my perspective.

And then the question also is, we don't know that we're going to get enough money. Well, we know from eight years of funding experience with the Abbott Preschool Program that it is adequate. And that's a concern that districts don't need to have. Again, I think they need to work with the Department.

So, I want to end with my little favorite set of pictures. Get on the horn, make some deals, develop a plan, and get this show on the road, because we can build a better future for children.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you so much.

And I love those pictures at the end.

DR. FREDE: (indiscernible) (speaking from audience) (laughter)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Does anyone have any questions on the Committee?

No questions? (no response)

Okay. Thank you so much for that presentation.

I hope you make your plane to New Hampshire.

DR. BARNETT: I will be fine, thank you. I appreciate you moving it up.

DR. FREDE: Thank you so much.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you.

Now we have Jeanette Page-Hawkins and Beverly Wellons. They're from the Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development.

Good afternoon.

J E A N E T T E P A G E - H A W K I N S: Good afternoon.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I'm glad that you're here.

MS. PAGE-HAWKINS: Beverly Wellons is the State Child Care Administrator, and I am the Division Director for the Department of Human Services' Division of Family Development.

And before I start, I'd just like to acknowledge Senator Rice and Assemblywoman Voss as Co-Chairs of the full Joint Committee, and to thank the Abbott Subcommittee for hosting this meeting today.

Senator Cunningham -- and Assemblywoman Handlin is not here -- but thank you for this opportunity.

For the sake of time, I want to go as swiftly as possible, but to give an overview of the Division. The Division of Family Development is responsible for the WorkFirst New Jersey Program. That is the State's--

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Is your microphone working?

Can the people in the back hear.

MS. SCHULZ: They're recording.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Would you feel more comfortable speaking from here? (referring to podium)

MS. PAGE-HAWKINS: Okay. I'll start once again.

The Division of Family Development is responsible for the WorkFirst New Jersey Program. That's the State's public welfare program. That's the financial assistance and support services for low-income families and

individuals to promote work and self-sufficiency. The WorkFirst New Jersey Program consists of the TANF program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, as well as the General Assistance population, which are the single adults or couples without children. This Division also administers the Food Stamp, Child Support programs. And DFD is also responsible for the oversight of the childcare services. Those funds include the Federal Child Care and Development Fund, known as CCDF, and Federal TANF dollars. Services are defined by the CCDF State plan. They may include the provision of childcare subsidy assistance to income-eligible families through vouchers or contracts. Voucher subsidy services for the New Jersey Cares for Kids and the WorkFirst New Jersey programs are administered locally through contracts and community-based childcare resource referral agencies, commonly known as CCR&Rs. These agencies also offer parent education regarding childcare options; as well as training, and technical assistance, and resource development for childcare providers and counties.

Additionally, subsidy services are provided through contracts with community-based centers and Abbott, as well as non-Abbott, communities. These childcare centers are used for infants, toddlers, and preschool, as well as school-age children, before- and after-school, and may be provided at childcare centers or may be provided through family and home-based care.

Services from our Division are frequently the safety net for the poor and the working poor. As of June, 2008, we were providing TANF -- welfare assistance clients -- which total to be approximately 38,000 families with children. We were providing them with that service. And we perceive in the upcoming months, given the uncertain economic downturn that we're all facing, that we're going to be challenged even further in providing services.

And therefore, we're looking for strategic thinking toward our commitment to young children.

As described by my colleagues from the Department of Education, we wholeheartedly embrace the early preschool program initiative, and we look forward to implementation. Research demonstrates that investments in these high-quality early childhood development programs consistently generate life-long benefits. And for the sake of time, I will not go into all the benefits, because I think we all know the benefits of that investment. But I will go on to say that I know, today, the Subcommittee's focus is on the preschool expansion initiative. However, we at the Department of Human Services are also concerned about ensuring that school-aged children, infants, and toddlers are receiving childcare subsidy services and that they have access to programs that offer high-quality services.

Unfortunately, our resources are limited and our Federal allocations are targeted to specific populations. As of September 2008, over 15,000 children received TANF or post-TANF childcare. Post-TANF is when a person leaves TANF, and they go to work, and they still continue to receive childcare. The Abbott wraparound served more than 30,000 children. And wraparound is before- and after-school care, as well as Summer programming.

Currently, we have close to 42,000 children in subsidized childcare slots, at an annual cost of \$190.5 million. We also provide childcare subsidies for about 700 children in our Kinship program. Those are children being cared for by relatives, most commonly the grandmother, or a great aunt, or someone like that. We have a waiting list of slightly over 4,500 children at the present time who require subsidized childcare. The waiting list includes infants, toddlers, preschool, school-aged, and children who do not reside in communities where the school district offers preschool services.

We understand that this Subcommittee wants to know the Department of Human Services' role in the implementation of the preschool expansion initiative and its impact on services. DHS and DOE have been in discussion regarding the implementation of the same since the initiative was announced. Our issues relate to expectations regarding wraparound services, scholarships, and our capacity to continue to meet Federal requirements within all available resources.

The most critical concerns are: expectations that DHS has the capacity to expand wraparound services to families that need it or simply wish to use it in these new districts. However, due to limited State funding, families needing to access wraparound childcare services in the expansion districts will be required to meet the regular income, which is 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Index, and work or school eligibility requirements for the NJKIDS voucher program. In most cases, a waiting lists exists for these services.

As a point of information, DHS currently administers a \$2.5 million program which offers scholarships to teachers employed in community-based childcare centers that offer full-time, full-year services. The program prioritizes tuition payments for teachers in Abbott and DFD community-based childcare centers. Teachers may apply for and receive up to \$5,000 in scholarships and a \$50 book stipend per semester. The scholarship funds are awarded on a promissory note to the institution of higher learning, which guarantees payment before the end of the semester. Income-eligible teachers -- those individuals who are at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty level, -- in non-Abbott school centers -- they're able to apply for the tuition reimbursement program after satisfactorily completing a semester with a GPA of 2.75. Teachers in childcare programs in the expansion district communities are currently eligible for this program.

The last concern I would express is the expectation that DHS can expand the scholarship program to all teachers in preschool expansion districts. DFD cannot commit to offering scholarships to all teachers in these districts due to funding limitations, the uncertainty of which centers will be contracted with their local districts once the program moves from the planning to the implementation stage, and the uncertainty surrounding the centers' willingness to offer wraparound childcare.

All childcare funding allocations are derived from the Federal Child Care Development Fund, which is targeted to programs that offer full-day, full-year childcare services.

In summary, the Department of Human Services fully, as I indicated before, supports the preschool expansion initiative, as it will provide the young children of today with the skills and services that they will need to become productive adults. And our concerns are limited to the constraints of available funding and our ability to maintain the compliance of Federal and State mandates.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Senator, can I ask her a quick question?

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Just a quick question, since you mentioned that-- The wraparound funding issue is one of my concerns because funds were cut during the last budget round. And I wonder if you have any information on the impact of that in districts -- or childcare centers where wraparound services were being provided to everyone involved but then, under the new guidelines, they're being limited -- they're being-- If a family income doesn't meet the income requirement of -- I think it's the 200 percent of

poverty -- then that family now has to pay for those services. And my last information was that it was pretty considerable. It was -- I can't remember if it was \$8,000 or \$10,000 for a family to pay for those services. My question is: How many-- Do you have any idea how many families we have lost or who are no longer sending their kids to preschool because they lost the wraparound services?

MS. PAGE-HAWKINS: Actually, wraparound services' funding was not cut. There was a new configuration in terms of funding fee, and that has been the impact.

We do have some figures, but I did not come prepared for that, because that was really childcare funding issues.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay. If you have that information, I would appreciate getting it. Because I would like to try to understand the impact in terms of-- If we're serving a certain group of children, and their families opt out of the programs because they don't qualify for the wraparound services that were being provided to them before this change in the funding-- I would appreciate that.

B E V E R L Y W E L L O N S: That has not been our experience statewide. We do have little areas of the state, small areas in Abbott districts, where the enrollment did decrease. But overall we don't see the evidence. Much of what we've heard has been anecdotal about families not participating.

Overall, our numbers increased over the last year -- the last school year. And essentially, we have not seen a major decline as of September 1. But this is the new year. So as of this year, families need to meet 250 percent of the Federal poverty level in order to be eligible for wraparound. So we may find somewhat of a fallout with the new changes as of September.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you. I appreciate that clarification.

And do you know if directors or supervisors are paying attention to this to see if there is falloff over the course?

MS. PAGE-HAWKINS: Yes, they are.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay. Great. Thank you.

MS. WELLONS: Also, we contract with childcare resource and referral agencies throughout the state who administer the Abbott wraparound voucher subsidy program, and they are also monitoring. We can also look at their numbers to monitor any change in trends. And we're able to report on those.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you. I appreciate that.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: And whatever numbers you have, would you please get them to Melanie?

MS. PAGE-HAWKINS: Yes.

MS. WELLONS: Yes.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I just have one question. Did you-- Because of this new funding, is there going to be a problem with getting teachers certified? Is the money going to be available for that?

MS. PAGE-HAWKINS: At this particular point in time, there's still the needs assessment that's going on by DOE. We don't know. As I said earlier in the testimony, we don't know who is going to actually come forth to offer the services in the new areas. Right now, we have many people not actually taking advantage of the scholarship program. So we can't anticipate, yet, a shortfall. We just know that we have no additional new dollars to accommodate them.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Do you have more questions? (no response)

Any more questions? (no response)

Thank you very much for your presentation, and thank you for being patient.

Ellen Boylan.

E L L E N M. B O Y L A N, E S Q.: Good afternoon, members of the Committee. It's a pleasure to be here.

My name is Ellen Boylan. I'm an attorney at the Education Law Center where I've been involved in Abbott work for a number of years. And I must say at the outset, when I walked into this building I was really overcome with a feeling of incredible excitement and joy to see the fruition of all the work. Because this is such a spectacular space. It's the kind of space that all children in New Jersey should have available to them. And it's a credit to all branches of the government -- the court for having the vision, and the Governor, and the Commissioner, and the Legislature for stepping up and making this happen.

And it's also really exciting to know that we're now on the road to expanding out this great program for other children in the state who also need high-quality preschool. And I think you've heard enough today about the benefits of preschool. And I'm not going to repeat any of it.

I would just point out and urge, at this point in time, when there are such dire State fiscal constraints and concerns, there are going to be a lot of tough choices to be made. And I would urge you to put expansion of preschool at the top of your list and to consider not only that it's the right thing to do for children, but also, as Dr. Barnett pointed out, in the long run, it's a really

smart economic investment, and the State stands to reap considerable gains from going forward with preschool.

We've identified basically four key components to make preschool expansion work in New Jersey. The first is a sustained commitment by the Legislature to full State funding of the program. The second is development of a qualified teacher workforce. Third, capacity within the Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education, to offer knowledgeable and skilled technical assistance and support to school districts who are going to need a lot of help at this time. And that's going to require new funding as well. And then finally, safe and adequate preschool facilities. And that's what I'm going to address briefly. All four of these, I think, are important. But I'm going to highlight the preschool issues.

Now, we've provided tables with our testimony that show the estimated need, the number of new preschool seats that are going to be needed in each district required to provide pre-K in the state, both universal and targeted districts. And the need is substantial. In the universal districts, we've estimated 17,316 new children must be offered the opportunity to participate. And in the targeted districts, it's 14,536 new seats that are required.

Now, some of the districts have limited capacity, but for most of these districts, the existing programs are part-day. They serve only 4-year-olds, and they lack the space to accommodate all the children who are now entitled to participate under SFRA.

In the absence of additional facilities, even assuming partnering with community provider programs, it's likely that school districts are going to be very challenged to meet SFRA's requirement for a full-day program for 90 percent of all 3- and 4-year-olds who are eligible under the Act.

There are different concerns -- facility concerns for school districts versus community programs and Head Start, and I'm briefly going to address those. But I want to point out that in the Abbott districts, we know that 65 percent of children served are in community settings or Head Start. So it's extremely important to pay attention to facility needs in those settings as well.

First off, I'll explain some of the issues that come up under SFRA. The Educational Facilities Act, the amendments that were made, allocates \$1 billion to the non-Abbott -- or the regular operating districts, as they're known. And for the first round of funding, the Commissioner has developed a plan under which \$200 million is going to go out to these districts. Many -- well, virtually all of the expansion districts are within these regular operating districts.

Now, it's a great start. It's a laudable start, the \$200 million. But it's not going to be nearly enough. And we anticipate that the \$1 billion isn't going to be enough to meet all of the facilities' needs that are out there in the state. And I'm just referring, at this point, to non-Abbott districts, because we know there are separate concerns for Abbott districts.

Now, the universal expansion districts, under the Commissioner's plan, have been given Level 1 priority to apply for new preschool and full-day Kindergarten facilities. However, these universal districts are going to be competing for funding under Level 1 with many other top-priority facilities' needs, including emergent projects and essential building system upgrades. Additionally, only projects that are 100 percent dedicated to early childhood facilities are going to receive funding under Level 1, which means that districts may forego early childhood projects because there are other, more pressing needs in the district, and they can't devote 100 percent to an early childhood facility.

Additionally, you have to take into account that unlike the Abbott districts, these preschool expansion districts aren't going to get 100 percent State aid for early childhood facilities. They're going to be dependent on the will of the local taxpayers to provide funding to meet the district's share of what's required. And many of these districts are low-wealth districts that are experiencing extreme tax burden.

And finally I'll add, under the amendments to the Facilities Act, the districts that are required to provide targeted preschool are not eligible at this point for this \$200 million that the district has allocated -- I mean that the Commissioner has allocated. And many of these districts -- the targeted districts -- have great needs, are required to serve 200 kids, 150 kids. It varies by district. And they are going to be hard-pressed to come up with spaces, even assuming partnering with community programs to serve all of the kids they're required to serve in five years.

And finally, I want to touch on some of the needs of the community providers and Head Start, because they are going to be serving, inevitably, the majority of children. And they play a very important role -- they will play a very important role in expansion.

Under the School Facilities Act, they are not eligible for any State funding for construction or renovation of early childhood facilities. And this has been a major ongoing problem in the Abbott districts that has not been addressed, and the problem is going to be replicated in the expansion districts. Unfortunately, what's happened, I believe, is that the State has created, or allowed to develop, a two-tiered system where children who are in Abbott districts that were able to secure funding are in beautiful facilities such as this that meet the State's preschool facilities standards. Similarly sophisticated providers, the larger providers that are within community development

corporations, have been able to secure their own funding. They've been able to go into the market and to foundations and get their own funding.

But children who are in the smaller community provider programs are served in facilities that are only required to meet DHS childcare standards. And just to give you an example of the difference, under the pre-K facilities standards that New Jersey has adopted, an early childhood classroom is required to be 950 square feet. Under DHS standards, children are served in a much smaller space of 450 square feet. So we have a real inequity in the existing Abbott program, and that inequity, I'm afraid, is going to be carried over into the expansion districts unless the State comes up with a mechanism to fund these community providers and Head Start providers.

So that leads me to my recommendations. The first one, which I did not put in my comments and I thought of it as I was sitting here, is that all of these expansion districts should be required to update their long-range facilities plans to account for the preschool facilities they're going to need in order to carry out SFRA requirements.

The second is that I think what's needed right now -- because these concerns really are critical -- is for the Legislature to establish a task force to study preschool facilities issues in the Abbott districts and in the expansion districts. As Steve Barnett pointed out, there are a lot of resources in New Jersey. We have great early childhood experts. And the State should be tapping into those experts to come up with some creative, concrete, comprehensive plans for preschool facilities.

So that's where I'll leave it.

Thank you very much.

If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much.

Does anyone have any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I just want to comment that I agree with you that we should spend a great portion of the money that we have for education in the preschools. I think that if we start at the 3- and 4-year-olds, and teach them to love learning and to get involved, it will just build, and build, and build. And what I think we've been doing as a State is, we're throwing a lot of money at the upper end and forgetting that the lower end is the foundation, and that's where -- and I will speak with my colleagues to say that this is where I think we should really focus our attention. Because they are the building blocks for the future. And so I think that's the most educationally sound program that we could follow.

MS. BOYLAN: Thank you.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you so much.

SENATOR RICE: For the record, we don't need a task force. We are the task force. (laughter)

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: We'll do it.

SENATOR RICE: As a recommendation for the record, because we're being recorded, if I can get the Co-Chair to agree--

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: I'd just like, on the record, to have this Committee that Senator Cunningham is chairing -- this Subcommittee to be the task force, and ask her to work with staff and proceed to work with those individuals interested in the task force as to exactly what direction we should be going in with it, informationwise, and report back to the full Joint Committee, if that's okay with you, Chair.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay. Thank you.

Barbara DeMarco.

SENATOR RICE: Also, while she's coming up, Senator, if there's resources necessary, in terms of the State departments, we'll set up a meeting with the Governor to make sure it's available.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay. Thank you. Very good.
Thank you so much for being patient.

And everyone, thank you so much for being patient. This went on a little bit longer than we anticipated, but we're almost through. And we're going to have another one to carry on where this one left off.

BARBARA DeMARCO: Good afternoon.

I'm pleased to present testimony on the impact of the preschool expansion on the community-based preschool providers. The universe of preschool providers I'm talking about are the tax-paying providers or the for-profits, the not-for-profits, as well as religiously and culturally affiliated preschool programs.

A recent *Asbury Park Press* editorial dated September 29 -- which I've attached -- urged the Department of Education to slow down the implementation of preschool by at least a year, because school district officials needed more time to develop a practical, affordable, and equitable plan. Community-based providers could not agree more that things need to be slowed down, because they're finding it difficult to establish relationships with school districts and make the necessary modifications, whether it's to their facilities or their staffs, to meet these deadlines.

Here are some of the concerns that community-based providers have. Community providers must enter into separate contracts with each individual school district. As a result, owners and operators who want to partner with more than one school district must meet with each individual school district to see if partnership is an option. Some superintendents do not

want to work with community-based preschool providers and would rather build or renovate classrooms to accommodate the eligible preschoolers. The community-based providers have no recourse to make partnering occur.

Community-based preschool providers who are allowed to participate need to utilize their existing buildings. Therefore, they're going to have to look toward waivers so that they can use their existing space. The buildings are out there.

Now, this is a hard one. Privately owned, taxpaying, community-based providers, or the for-profits, are only allowed a 2.5 margin of profit. The privately owned preschools cannot provide their private investors, such as banks, an incentive to invest in their preschool program and the building of new facilities or the renovation of current facilities unless they can offer those investors a legitimate profit margin. If privately owned preschools cannot make the economics work, then they can't participate. And I will tell you this, my providers can build a place like this for about a fifth of the cost the State can. But how are they going to get the funding to build a place from the bank if they're not offering the people who are investing into the center some sort of profit margin? So it becomes an issue of economics.

How do you transport preschoolers to school, and how are you going to pay for this? Preschoolers should never be transported long distances on a bus, and they should never be on a bus with their older peers. Many are not potty trained or geographically oriented.

The Legislature is looking for consolidation of school districts. Would it not make more sense to set up preschool programming on the county level, under the county superintendents, with parents being able to choose from a list of countywide preschool providers, including the public schools? Think about the administrative costs that could be avoided through

consolidation and structuring the program right from the beginning. Think how much easier it would be for community providers to forge one contract with a county superintendent as opposed to each individual school district. And think about how pleased parents would be to have a menu of options as opposed to just one or two to choose from. Preschool parents now have choice. Why wouldn't you want them to continue to have choice?

One thing I don't understand is why the DOE passed the regulations this Summer under emergency. It didn't provide impacted parties an opportunity to comment. That would have been very, very helpful to us. The Legislature did give them six years for the implementation. And when you rush a process it just makes it harder, because you're dealing with a lot of different entities that need to partner.

And this is the economics again. The preschool industry -- and by that I mean the childcare industry, for-profit, not-for-profit, etc. -- generates \$2.55 billion annually in gross receipts and provides 65,300 full-time jobs, mostly held by women. These are statistics from a 2005 study done by Thomas Edison State College. Given our current economic climate, do we really want to replace a \$2.55 billion industry with one paid for by taxpayers?

Let's be smart about this. Let's think about public and private partnerships. And if we have to take more time, let's take more time.

And there's something else I'd like to add. There are three impacted parties here. You have the taxpayer -- someone has to fund all of this. You have the provider: This could be the school district, or this could be the private provider in the community; in this case, it's mostly women-owned businesses. And then the third are the parents and the children together. Now, think about it from a parent or child perspective. The State is offering a six-hour program. Most parents -- especially of kids eligible for free lunch or

reduced lunch -- need a full day. They need holidays, they need just everything to make the workday work for them. Public schools have a hard time providing that wraparound care to go with it, where a community-based provider -- it makes it a whole lot easier. Parents have choice from a variety of qualified providers. And when I say *qualified providers*, I'm talking about people who meet -- the centers that meet DOE standards. Again, I always think it's better when you give parents choices. They might want to be closer to their work, closer to a grandparent who is picking them up, or closer to their home.

Steve Barnett talked about 60 percent of kids in Abbott districts being served at community-based centers. Think about that. All the studies that we have seen have included that 60 percent that's in Abbott centers. And they're showing that elevation of success. So to say that you have a different quality being offered-- The study showed, because it included the community providers, that they too were providing that level of success.

So these are some of the things that I would like you to think about when you're doing this. The public-private partnership model, from everything I've been told, has been something that the Legislature has embraced because of the cost of this program. And in this economic climate, I strongly urge you to look at that as, I want to say, the best alternative in making sure this gets done.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you so much, Ms. DeMarco. Certainly the points that you've brought out are very, very good, very interesting. And you do come with a different perspective. And we really appreciate that.

Does anyone have any questions for her?

SENATOR RICE: I don't have any questions, Senator.

For the record, I'd like to ask the staff to work with OLS and take a look, through your Committee, as you put together this intent of "task force," at the-- I need a cost-benefit analysis on this prospect of--

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: You need a what?

SENATOR RICE: Cost-benefit analysis -- a true one though. (laughter) The State doesn't do a true cost-benefit analysis (laughter) -- they leave out variables -- but of this county superintendent suggestion to see just what that looks like. And then hopefully the Committee, as you start to have hearings or work through this thing -- administration and with whatever other participants -- would be able to give us -- meaning the total Joint Committee now, the Legislature -- the pros and cons of this, because there may be a downside depending on what is being suggested: the role of the county versus the role of someone local that kind of touches these kids personally many times, and their family members, and stuff like that.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay.

Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I just want to say, I agree with so many things that you said. And I think one of my big things is that we need competition, and we need choice. And when we have that, the quality goes up, and up, and up. I don't like a one-size-fits-all approach to education. And some of the points you made were just really right on-target. And so I know that we are very much in agreement with much of what you said.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much.

I know that Cynthia Rice wants to be last.

We do have the Ringwood School District Superintendent, Patrick Martin.

In the interest of time, we're going to ask you to be brief, but please come forward.

SUPERINTENDENT PATRICK W. MARTIN, Ed.D.:

Good afternoon.

The New Jersey State Department of Education is mandating that, beginning next September, public school districts provide free, full-day preschool classes for qualified 3- and 4-year-old children. This seems like a good idea, getting young people off to an early education start, and it is. But taxpayers of New Jersey should be cautioned to hold onto their wallets.

In my district, Ringwood, the children invited to join these classes will be children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch; in other words, youngsters from low-income families. The State has pledged to forward to our district up to \$11,800 for every child included in this initiative. This is a reasonable amount and should pay for most of the resulting costs, although many public schools are already packed to the rafters with the students they already have, and do not know where they will find additional classrooms for preschool classes.

Even if classrooms can be found, however, serious problems begin to surface when one considers the ripple effect of this program. First, across the state, tens of thousands of special education children who are 3 or 4 years old currently receive free preschool classes. In many school districts, these classes take place for two-and-a-quarter hours each school day. When the low-income 3- and 4-year-olds begin to receive a full day of classes, six hours, the families of the special education preschool students will demand similar services, and I believe they will receive them. Not only do I support this, but State Education Department regulations -- Administrative Code 6A:14-4.1 -- ensures equal services for these children. The difficulty is that no additional

funding is scheduled to come from the State to support the expansion of the preschool special education classes.

In Ringwood, we educate three sections of preschool special education students daily. If each of these two-and-a-quarter hour sessions is given its own equipped classroom along with a full-time teacher and paraprofessional, the additional yearly cost would exceed \$100,000. If, as another option, our school district enrolls these students in an existing preschool for part of their day, the tuition, transportation expenses, and related special education costs will also exceed \$100,000. From where is this money to come? Not from the State. I know, because I have asked repeatedly and loudly.

The \$100,000 has to come from either raising taxes or reducing services to the other children who are already being served by our school district. Our school district, for example, could solve this problem by reassigning an existing teacher to teach the preschool class. We could then add her former students to other existing classes, thus increasing the class sizes throughout the school. The drawbacks to this, of course, are that with enlarged classes, the attention given to the individual pupils decreases, student achievement declines, and behavioral problems advance. Would you want your child or your grandchild to be part of such an enlarged class?

The second ripple has to do with half-day Kindergarten. Again, many New Jersey school districts offer half-day Kindergarten. Ringwood does. And one of the most frequently cited reasons why districts have remained with half-day Kindergarten is that they simply cannot afford a full-day Kindergarten program. Logically, moving from half-day to full-day Kindergarten entails doubling the number of classrooms and teachers involved. Hundreds of thousands of dollars each year would be required to support such a move.

But if 3- and 4-year-old children are being given a full-day educational experience, how do school districts now justify a half-day experience for 5-year-olds in Kindergarten? The State, however, includes no provision for financial assistance to districts for Kindergarten expansion. Again, children could be squeezed into existing classes, and teachers could be reassigned to additional Kindergarten sections. Art and music programs could go on the cart, and their classrooms could be used for Kindergartens. Other classes could take place on the auditorium stage or in the cafeteria.

Ironically, when these undesirable actions take place, and parents rightfully complain, it is usually the State that will appear and reprimand the school district for poor planning and oversight.

To do it right, more teachers will need to be hired, more classrooms will need to be built, and boards of education will eventually, reluctantly, look to local property taxes to foot the bill. But frankly, this is not fair to the residents of Ringwood. I have requested a formal hearing before the State Board of Education, where I will detail the educational and financial impact of the ripple effect of their preschool edict on Ringwood and other school districts. I plan to request the financial assistance necessary to appropriately carry out their proposal.

Full-day preschool and Kindergarten classes are desirable, but they are not free. I urge our legislators and State Education Department officials to study the projected financial ramifications of programs prior to enacting them. Meaningful pedagogical advancement requires forethought, and the taxpayers' purse is not bottomless.

Just as a quick afterthought: You know that school districts operate under a 4 percent cap. We can only increase our budget each year 4 percent and no more. So even if the answer is to go back to the taxpayers and

say, "Well, we need more money, because we have to hire teachers for these expansions," I'm not even sure I can do it legally, because I can't get past the 4 percent cap. So I'm really put in a corner.

I'm all for preschool, but the two ripple effects are very serious. One, by law -- by State law -- I have to provide then a full-day experience for preschool handicapped children -- the special education children who are 3 and 4 years old. They may not be low-income. As a matter of fact, we have no low-income 3- or 4-year-olds in our preschool handicap program. But they all have to get full-day, full-blown programs by State law. But I'm not given any way of paying for that. And so I will have to then go to my existing classes and increase class size. And I'm very passionate about this as a Superintendent, because as much as I care for my 3- and 4-year-old youngsters in my community, I also care for my second graders, and my fifth graders, and my eighth graders who will be forced into larger and larger classes so I can find the money to fund this mandate. And that's not fair to those children.

That's my statement.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much for your remarks.

Now we're going to wrap this up. Cynthia Rice, Association for Children in New Jersey.

We didn't give you a lot of time. But thank you anyway for being here and being patient.

CYNTHIA RICE, ESQ.: I think everyone needs a stretch.

Good afternoon and thank you for having us to discuss this important piece of the School Funding Reform Act.

Like so many other New Jerseyans, ACNJ views the State's preschool expansion initiative as a wonderful opportunity for every low-income

3- and 4-year-old, regardless of zip code, to obtain a quality early childhood education that currently is only enjoyed by the Abbott preschoolers.

Since the Formula became law, ACNJ has really been working very hard to provide information and support for planning and implementation of the expanded preschool program for all early childhood stakeholders. So we've been talking to school districts, we've been talking to private providers and Head Start, we've been talking to our colleagues in other educational associations, and we've been talking to parents. Since February, ACNJ has presented approximately 70 presentations all throughout the state -- I have the mileage to prove it -- talking, for example, with all of the resource, and the childcare resource, and referral agencies -- talking to them just this weekend.

Assemblywoman Voss, I was at the Office for Children at Bergen Community College. I've been at the Urban League and Programs for Parents, talking about what this law means and what it means for implementation. So we've done over 70 presentations and have, frankly, hundreds of phone calls and e-mails about this expansion initiative. So we kind of have a unique perspective because we've talked to a lot of the stakeholders.

And we've been hearing some things from all different stakeholders. And this is what I thought may be good to talk about today. First of all, what is it that we're hearing and seeing? One of the things is that, overall, there really has been a positive shift towards embracing this initiative. This is a wonderful thing, and most people are coming along.

I have to tell you, in the first few presentations I did in February, there was a lot of skepticism, and angst, and apprehension. Private providers frankly said, "Oh, my gosh, we're going to go out of business." And school districts, which very much know history is cyclical, very much like the Abbott districts, said initially -- was like, "Where are we going to put all these kids?"

And I have to tell you, initially, it was very surprising that so many non-Abbott districts knew very, very little about the nationally recognized mixed delivery system that we have in those districts and public preschool classrooms, private provider and Head Start programs.

And private providers, at the beginning, really didn't have a sense of where they fit in, in all of this. But fortunately, as time has passed and as information began to get out, that has changed and there's far more great -- not that everyone -- every presentation they understood this is the right thing for young children. It's just, how do you do it, and how do we work together? A lot of that angst has dissipated.

Really, from an incredible effort on the part of the Department of Education to try to get information out to the districts -- that has really been evident. And private providers, through working with the childcare resources and referrals-- For example, one of the questions was: How are they finding out? Well, early on, almost every resource and referral agency sent a letter to every school district saying, "We're here to help you. Here are the providers in your community," so that districts had the information to move forward.

But even with that, there really -- as Dr. Jones talked about -- there really is a significant learning curve on what districts know about early childhood. And that may affect program implementation. Those districts that already had some kind of program -- for example, early childhood program aid districts, which Bayonne is one, for example -- they are a little ahead of the curve, because they're already implementing something. Certainly it's not on the same level as this program -- as the expansion, but they have some information. For many districts that is not -- this may be their first foray into preschool. So that is-- So the learning curve is pretty significant.

And there's a lot to be done in a very short period of time. For those districts that are universal, their initial plan -- the date is November 14, when that plan is due. December 15 is the date for targeted -- districts who will implement targeted programs.

I think the main thing -- and I've heard it many times, and again - - to hear it again today -- is that, this is kind of -- these plans are a work in progress. One of the things that we are -- two things that we're seeing is that there are still a lot of very basic questions yet as to how this is going to move forward. And you can really see that learning curve -- what districts know about early childhood. And the other thing is that those critical connections that may have to be made between the school district, and private providers, and Head Start may not be at the point yet for -- that's so important in planning. So it's great to hear that the Department is -- this is just the beginning, and the Department is going to work with the districts as these plans evolve. Because those types of connections are critical.

For example, if you look at Bayonne, there are 1,300 kids who are going to be eligible. That's a lot of classrooms. So in all likelihood, the mixed delivery system is an option that Bayonne will have to move forward. So if those connections aren't made, it will be tough to put that plan together in just a few weeks.

Also, I wanted to talk a little bit about the teacher certification. One of the success stories of Abbott preschool was that, in 2000, the Supreme Court required that all teachers had to have their degree in specialized training by 2004. Today, in every one of those classrooms, there is a teacher who has a bachelor's degree in specialized training in early childhood. And the success of that program is largely due to the collaboration between the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services.

ACNJ has a report coming out very, very -- within the next month, looking at this scholarship and the impact that it's had. And I can tell you that part of that piece will be interviews with teachers who did not have their degrees at the time -- in 2000 -- and got their degrees, and are currently working in programs and in private providers. I can only tell you that they described it as a life-altering experience. So this was money well spent. And the teachers who never perceived that they would return to college and get their degrees, and begin to make comparable salaries as their colleagues in the public schools and comparable benefits -- this has changed their lives and the lives of their families. So this is an unintended byproduct of Abbott preschool. And it really is successful.

So now we know that we have 30,000 more children who are going to be in this program. And we're not quite sure how many teachers and private providers are going to return to school. Now, there's the needs assessment that we heard about. Most of all we have more information from the plans -- we'll have a better idea. But I can tell you that the regulations say that these teachers have to have their degrees by 2012. And that's the same amount of -- time period. The problem is the access to funding for this scholarship.

One of the things that was critical for the Abbott teachers was that they didn't have to put the money upfront. Our private -- our provider teachers are very low paid, and so they didn't have the money for tuition reimbursement. And so this -- the middleman was taken away. They were the middleman. And so the scholarships went directly to universities, and they never had to deal with-- They dealt with staying in school and getting their degrees. We're worried about that. Once we have more data, it will be clear as

to how worried we should be. But we want to make sure that in 2012 there is an adequate supply of a qualified workforce. We're not sure right now.

The other thing is, we talked about the wraparound. Meeting the needs of families is really linked with ensuring as many eligible children as possible are enrolled. That was one of the great successes of Abbott, because it met the needs of more working families. Now, this has nothing to do with the importance of the six-hour day, and the quality of that day, and how important it is to get children in the program. But we're worried that it may have an impact on enrollment because you're talking about low-income children, as we heard before, and low-income families needing to be at work. And so we're hoping that enrollment isn't affected.

And the last thing I just wanted to mention is that every single presentation that I did or we did at ACNJ, the full-day Kindergarten issue has come up. And although the preschool expansion will require about 450 school districts to provide full-day preschool, it's only the universal districts who have to plan for providing full-day Kindergarten by 2013-2014. We've got about 184 districts who still have half-day Kindergarten. It doesn't make sense to have full-day programs for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds, and then they're going to go to a half-day program. So what we need to do is, in this planning, think more globally. How is it-- Is this the right thing to do to ensure that we get the outcomes that we heard about from Dr. Barnett and Dr. Frede -- that we continue those important outcomes.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you, Cynthia. That was-- You brought up some very, very good points.

This has been a wonderful discussion. Hopefully we will be having another discussion similar to this.

I want to thank everyone -- all of the presenters, for giving us the kind of information and continuing on with this dialogue.

I want to thank all of our Committee members for coming.

I have to acknowledge Assemblyman Smith could not come, but he did send his aide who is here with us today.

Thank you so much.

I do have to thank Melanie and her wonderful staff over here, Sharon.

Thank you, Sharon.

And, of course, this school is run by a wonderful woman, Michelle West. And as you can see, she is doing a great job.

Thank you, all of you, who stayed with us through this. I appreciate it.

Thank you so much.

We can all go now. (laughter)

(MEETING CONCLUDED)