JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS
AND CHARTER SCHOOLS HEARING

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

Gloucester County Institute of Technology
1360 Tanyard Road, Sewell, NJ

MEMBERS PRESENT:
CHAIRPERSON JOAN M. VOSS
SENATOR RONALD L. RICE
SENATOR STEPHEN M. SWEENEY
ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILA M. JASEY
ASSEMBLYMAN PAUL MORIARTY

ALSO PRESENT:
MELANIE M. SCHULZ, Executive Director
SHARON BENESTA, Chief of Staff

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Good afternoon, everyone. I cannot tell you what a pleasure it is to be here. I'm an educator by profession, and so schools are my passion, and particularly technical and vocational schools. This is where I think it's at as far as education is concerned. We have traveled all over the state to many of the technical and vocational schools, and each time I visit one, it's better than the one before. So right now, you're on top of my list.

I just love the fact that the students are enthusiastic about what they're doing, which is what education is all about. But the teachers are enthusiastic about it, and what a great relationship that is. And I can say all kinds of wonderful things, but I think I got it across how wonderful I think this school is.

This is where I think education needs to go, and before I go on and on and on, I will turn it over to Senator Rice.

Thank you very much. I'm going to apologize; I wish I could stay all day, but I have to be back in Essex County. It's good to be here in Gloucester County with my good friend and colleague,
Majority Leader Stephen Sweeney, who is doing a great job down here in Gloucester and across the state, and with my colleagues on the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

Let me just indicate for the students and those who may not know, the Joint Committee on the Public Schools is not the Education Committee or the Senate. We are a combination of legislators from both parties, Republicans, Democrats. Democrats (indiscernible); Republicans, as you know -- but we are from both Houses and both parties. It's our job to kind of oversee and get accountability for the court decisions in the Abbott districts. But then they're charged also with the responsibility to look at vocational schools and education.

And we in the past -- as Chair and working with Assemblyman (indiscernible) putting together subcommittees -- one of the committees we put together was this innovative choice type of committee that we see on this Committee, meaning the Joint Committee. She's also the Co-Chair of this particular subcommittee, who has just taken this thing to a height that is unmatchable in the Legislature. We have been up and down the state.
What you do here is important to us. Where education is going in the future is important to us. And we prefer seeing institutions like this to seeing prison systems. We've been very, very pleased with the student population and the quality of academics we have seen throughout the state, from Bergen County down to here. We're going to continue to do this. And I do excuse myself. Please accept as love.

The only thing about this school, though, Senator Sweeney, I was talking to a lovely young lady right there, and she was telling me her major, and I was trying to teach her some new technology, and she said, "Oh, a beeper; it scared me," you know, like it was something antique. So my pager just went off, and that's why I went over there. It still works. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VOSS: Thank you Senator. We are so pleased today to have Senator Sweeney with us, and I have just been talking his ear off, because I just think that this is such a great educational institution, and I think he agrees with me. So we are now going to put our heads together to make sure that everybody in the
state knows what's going and where education should go. And without further ado, Senator Sweeney.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you, Chairwoman and my esteemed colleagues from way up north. Several of these members traveled a very long distance to be here today, and it gives me a chance to brag a little bit about what we think is probably the finest campus situation in the state. I want to recognize our college president; Dr. Russell Davis is here. I know everyone met our Superintendent earlier, Ellen Herdegen. We have our special needs schools here, Bankbridge Regional, Bankbridge Elementary, our autism school, Bankbridge Child Development Center, Gloucester Institute of Technology and Gloucester County College.

And we do a lot of partnering. This is one of the few school districts in the state that actually merged administrations. As we've talked about how we can do things better, we saved $1.5 million annually in administrative costs, which we actually put back into education, because we feel there's a value being produced here.
Several years ago, actually in 1996, my start was on the vocational school board, and we came to this idea that we were going to make the vocational school, which was called "Gloucester Institute of Technology" -- and I'm not ashamed to say that I'm proud of that. I'm old, and that's what we say. But there was a decision made that we were going to make this an academy school. And I have to be honest with you, it was one of the worst decisions I made in my political career, because we were crowding out children that needed vocational training, and there were only so many seats.

We were quite proud of our academy, quite proud of the children that achieved. You're going to hear from some of them. They're the best and the brightest around. And we were thrilled. But we had kids that needed vocational training, and the fact is, if we can't provide it, who will? So what we have done here is a wonderful blend of children, who accelerate to children who are going to have careers, like myself, as an iron worker. But they mix well together. They made each other
better from being in the same building.

And what we have done recently, we just did an expansion of 240 seats; because once you build a school like this, there's a great demand. And a lot of parents and a lot of young people want to come here. We just built a new building with the most modern technology, wireless classrooms, new labs for 240 more students. And we're now embarking on an expansion of our academy school, which will partner with the college, where children will graduate high school in five years with an associate's degree.

Now, I think we're going to get it to four years some day. And I make everybody cringe when I say that, but children that can excel should have the opportunity to excel. And we're going to have that facility here. And the nice thing is, by moving this new expansion, we're going to create more seats in our traditional welding, and bricklayers, and carpentry so that we're not going to leave any children out.

What we saw here, one of the biggest mistakes when we made this conversion,
was we were crowding out the kids that need this education. They need these facilities, because they're not in home districts anymore, and we have to remember it. We can call ourselves "Institute of Technology." We can give ourselves whatever name we want to give us. We need to train children for vocational opportunities also.

So I think we have the best of both worlds, Madam Chairwoman, and everyone benefits from it. And the other component is, our special needs children are actually getting added benefits. And Gloucester County is the only county in the state right now that has a program for children that age out of education; they're special needs, and it's here in our vocational schools. We're all benefiting from our coordination and cooperation.

And one last plug: The college has been a wonderful partner also. We can't do it alone. And all those barriers -- and this is ours, and this is yours, we don't do this, and you don't do that -- they need to come down today, and we need to work together to make sure that these young people have the very best opportunity to excel and have careers. Thank you.
ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I love
the Senator. His ideas are very, very akin to
mine. I have always said that we cannot have
an education system as a one-size-fits-all
education, because we all learn differently.
And one of the wonderful things I
learned about this school is that it's
practically open 24 hours a day, which is one of
my big things about -- we spend so much money
building schools, but then they're only open from
8 to 3, and then what happens? We need adult
training. In this economy that we have today,
people are going to have to get alternate job
skills, and with a wonderful facility like this,
I think it's really terrific, and I thank you for
pointing that out to me.
Assemblywoman Jasey?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Good
afternoon; I just want to take a moment to thank
everyone who has made our stay so wonderful
today. As Senator Rice mentioned, the Joint
Committee, we've been on the road this year.
This is my first term, and it has been very
exciting to go from county to county to see the
different kinds of educational opportunities that
we are providing through the public school system. And it gives me a lot of ideas. I think we're going to take these ideas, hopefully, back to the Legislature and say, "Look, we don't necessarily need to spend more money. We need to spend it more effectively and more creatively so that we meet the needs of all of our students throughout the state, so that we invest in a workforce that can support us as we move through our lifetimes." We're going to be looking to all of you young people to keep our economy strong, and to take care of us, and to make the future even better and brighter.

The other thing I want to say is, to each of the students that I have had the pleasure of talking to today, it's always wonderful to talk to young people, because you're so full of hope and energy and ideas, and it gives me hope that we will indeed answer the questions we need to. We will solve the problems that we're facing, and the world will be a better place. So I know that sounds a little Pollyannish, but I really do believe that. I have not been disappointed by any of the students that I have met up and down the state, from
county to county. Our young people are fantastic, and we need to do a better job of communicating that message out to the rest of the adult population.

You know, most of what you read about in the newspaper is negative. I don't feel that way at all about young people. I think you guys are great. I think your teachers are doing a wonderful job. I think your administrators are very devoted and hardworking. And I think that we, as legislators, because we have an opportunity to speak out and give voice to you, part of our job -- at least I see it as part of my job -- is to make sure that that message gets out there, and that we support you, and that we continue to invest in your education. So I'm looking forward to hearing from each one of you and learning more about what you do. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Assemblyman Moriarty?

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARTY: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and thank you for bringing the Committee down south to see what we are all excited about down here, which is just a fantastic, fantastic school. And I want to
commend the freeholders, the senators and
representatives who have done an extraordinary
job in supporting this school.

You know, far too often I think
that when we sit up in Trenton and debate laws,
and hold hearings on regulations, and discuss
education, we are armed with spreadsheets, and
facts and figures. And it's so important to get
out and put a face on an institution, to put a
face on the people, their learning. And the
faces that I see here at GCIT are just incredible.
I mean, from the visual arts to the culinary arts
to the trades, there is great learning going on
here. People are enthusiastic, both the students
and the teachers.

I wish there was an institution
like this when I was in high school so I could
have spent a portion of each of my days working
on video production, which is what I ended up
going into. I might have been a better
broadcaster if I started earlier. It has been
very exciting today, not to mention the great
meal that was made for us, and I'm just excited
to hear from some of the students. And we need
to continue to support vocational education in a
very big way. As you said, there is not a one-size-fits-all, and there is great learning going on here.

And I applaud each and every person here. The President is doing a great job, and thank you very much. And thank you again, Madam Chairwoman, for bringing these people down here to see firsthand the great stuff going on at GCIT.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thanks so much. And now one of the most important parts of our program, the student panel. And we have Ashley Taylor from the Performing Arts, Michael Shisler from Construction, Kenneth Kehler from Transportation, and Ajay Vulimiri from Finance. Did I do that correctly? I used to say to my students, "If I mispronounce your name, please forgive me and teach me how to say it properly."

And so, Ashley, would you like to start?

ASHLEY TAYLOR: Hi, my name is Ashley Taylor. I'm a senior in the Academy of Performing Arts for drama. I want to welcome you to Gloucester County Institute of Technology today. I am currently the student council
president for the 2008-2009 school year. And I 
love GCIT because it offered me a lot of 
opportunities, and it helped me come out of my 
shell. When I came here, it was very small, and 
even after they expanded the teachers really 
care about you as an individual and as a class. 
So the education here is amazing.

And I also want to say thank you 
for believing in our generation, because we do 
have a lot to offer, and it's nice to hear that 
you guys appreciate us and to hear from people 
who really do work for us. And thank you for 
being here today.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: You make us 
very proud. Let's see, Michael Shisler (phonetic 
spelling), would you go next?

MICHAEL SHISLER: Good afternoon; I 
would like to thank you all for coming this 
afternoon. I'm Michael Shisler. I'm part of the 
School of Construction and Technology. I major 
in welding. What I like about this school is 
that it has furthered my options for more 
technical studies. I'm currently enrolled at 
Gloucester County College. I take technical 
studies. I'm a junior here. So it has been an
honor to further my education at such an early stage in my schooling. It helps me with my apprenticeship coming next year so I can go to work as a senior, and I can start off at an early (indiscernible). Thank you.

        ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you very much. And now we have Kenneth Kehler (phonetic spelling).

KENNETH KEHLER: Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to thank you for coming here today and listening to us share about GCIT. First off, I'm a junior here. I'm a student of Transportation Technology. And the reason I love GCIT so much is because it has jump-started my career as an automotive technician. It has taught me to become a hard worker and given me the tools for a successful career one day. And without this school, I believe that I wouldn't be as successful.

        So as you guys were talking about earlier, I mean, the demand for this school is huge. There is no school around like this where we go to class and we concentrate on our studies and other trades. So I would just like to thank you for checking out what GCIT is all about.

        ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you.
1 Ajay?
2 AJAY VULIMIRI: First I would like
3 to welcome all of you to Gloucester County
4 Institute of Technology. My name is Ajay
5 Vulimiri, and I'm a senior in the Academy of
6 Finance and Business Management. What I like
7 about GCIT is helping me prepare for college.
8 Coming here for my freshman year, I wanted to do
9 something in business, but I didn't know exactly
10 what. And as you all know, there are plenty of
11 things you can do. Thus, I'm going to St.
12 Joseph's University to major in finance and
13 business management.
14 And, also, GCIT has lots of things
15 to offer, as you all say, from culinary to
16 finance, and it gives everyone an opportunity to
17 see what they like and what they don't like. So,
18 when you get to college, you know actually what
19 you want to do. And, thus, it has helped me
20 become a hard worker and to become the
21 valedictorian for GCIT.
22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS:
23 Congratulations. Would anyone like to ask these
24 young people some questions?
25 ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Thank you.
It not only helps you understand what you might like, but what you might not like. I'm sure there must be some students that come here that decide after they embark on a vocation that maybe this isn't what they like to do. Do you know students like that? Because that's just as helpful. You know, you don't want to go through life and then start a career and find out you hate it, and you don't like going to work every day.

MR. VULIMIRI: Yes, I do. I've heard of seniors who went to class like, for example, business, and they have gone on to do engineering and so forth, and others. And that's the good thing about it. When you come to eighth grade, some people don't know what they want to do, but it gives you the opportunity to try different things. So, when you leave here, you might say, "Okay, I like business, but I don't want to take it in college.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Yes; I think it's important earlier than later, because when you end up graduating from high school, and you select a major and you start embarking on that path, my goodness, if you've gone through
two or three years of college and spent a lot of money, your parents' money, and then find out "I'm miserable--" And then you're really probably in a much larger predicament, because now you feel like you've wasted your time, and it's very difficult to start over. So I think that's another level to look at these things.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: In the construction school, you have an opportunity to have a half-year of being involved with, say, welding, and a half-year as an electrician, and a half-year as a plumber, and things of that sort, so that you really get a hands-on understanding of these professions. And I think that's very important, because one of the things in education that I think is very important is that students realize why they're leaning what they're learning and how it's going to help them in their lives, whether it's to understand the world or to understand the professions that they're going into. And that's what makes these schools we have been visiting so very important to me, because I always said when I was teaching, "If you don't understand why you're learning what you're learning, you stop me immediately, because
why would you learn something that you can't
use?"

And so I think teachers are
becoming more aware of the fact that there has to
be an interaction between teachers and students.
I said to somebody today, "I'm old, so I didn't
have computers when I was young. And so when
we first got them, I would go and sit with a ninth
grader. 'Could you please show me how to do
something?" And the child would look at me:
"You want me to teach you?" And I would say,
“There are things I can teach you, but there are
things that you teach me,” and we become a
community of learners. And that's the wonderful
thing that I see here, and that's great.

Any more questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Is there
something that you would like to tell us that we
need to know in order to better support not only
this school, but other schools like this; or as we
move forward to perhaps offer opportunities like
the ones you have here to students in other parts
of the state?

MS. TAYLOR: I think the important
thing is, like Senator Sweeney said, the growth
of the school. And as a senior, I'm leaving the
school, and I'm very proud of that process, the
educational process here, because so many
students are going to come here and have the
opportunity that I had. One thing I learned at
GCIT is leadership, and I always had that
quality. I was in student government in middle
school and elementary school, but here you can
really get involved, and I think that's one of
the most important parts. I think if you have
your academics, you have -- like for me, I have
performing arts, but at the end of the day, I
also have student council this afternoon, and
there's so many things that students may add.

My friend from Camden County, she
doesn't have those opportunities because her
school is open 8 to 3. And we're open until --
I don't even know when we close, honestly. But
that's one thing that I do enjoy, and I wish
other schools had that opportunity to really be
involved with other clubs and also within the
community.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Anyone else?

SENATOR RICE: Let me say that I
agree with you. Let me give you the realities of
life. I grew up in the City of Newark, and we
made some mistakes there as well. When you look
at Camden and Newark, we don't have the luxury of
all this open space, but we do have the greatest
asset around -- as you have here -- our young people.
But if you don't become the ambassadors as we
work -- as Senator Sweeney had to fight for
resources here -- to let people know in these
political conversations about money going into
the Passaics and Camdens and Newarks, where we're
tight -- that we can change the structure to meet
some of these needs that our student populations
have, then we're always going to be doing this.
And what you're going to see
happening is people like me, who look like me,
who have been a part of the civil rights movement
and struggling, who understand the history of
women and minorities, traveling the state,
beating up on Senator Sweeney if I think he's
doing the wrong thing, or supporting him if I
think he's doing it right, raising the same
question: Why don't women and minorities have
contracts, and accounting, and professional
services? Because the population is there. But
we're not -- we're criticized, and government
and accounting is going to tell you that you're going to be supported, and you find out that people abused the money. They're going to find out that people stole the money.

But that has nothing to do with the young people. They didn't abuse the dollars, and they didn't mismanage the dollars. And we said, of course, if it's not there, we're not going to find the means to maintain the drive that could process and provide the kind of facilities -- like all this new development that is taking place out here -- that's needed, because of what some adult did. So I guess what I'm saying is that, as we're very impressed with what is taking place here-- But the first thing I notice is, I was getting ready to look for the cows, and I saw nothing but open space. We don't have open space, but we do have students who are no different than the student population here: very diverse, hungry to learn. But newspapers and people put them down because their peer groups in other areas of the states are not speaking up and saying, "Well, we disagree with you, mom and dad and Mr. Politician. We don't know the students in Camden, but it's our generation, and
if we can do it here, then they can do it there,
and we can support their cause.” So I just want
to go on record with that, in overseeing today's
visit, and in talking to the Governor and my
colleagues. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I just want to
echo something that Assemblywoman Jasey said.
The money is there, but it needs to be spent
wisely and well. And I don't think that we have
always spent the money wisely and well. And this
is a wonderful example of the educational dollars
getting the biggest bang for the buck. So I'm
very pleased to have seen all of you, what you're
experiencing here, and I know all of us will go
back and try to educate our peers about what we
really need to do in education. So thank you
very much, students. You did a great job.

SENATOR SWEENEY: This is a little
bit of bragging, Senator Rice, and you know I
don't do that too often. When we merged our two
school campuses, our administrations when we
first started, our vocational costs -- when I
started in 1996, we were 18 out of 21 in
administrative costs. We were 8 out of 8 special
services school districts in administrative
costs. We are now number one in the state for the
lowest costs in special services. We're number two
in vocational schools in administrative costs.
And what I'm most proud of is we took that
money, the savings, and put it back into these
facilities for these children to get these
wonderful programs.

There is a better watch to be
made, a better clock; whatever you want to say,
that says you can't change nature. You
absolutely can if you look at it differently.
Children are children. They're gifted, as you
say, Senator, in North, Central, and South, and
they have to be provided opportunities. We have
to find ways to get money out of government, end
wasteful spending, and get it back into the
classrooms where these children can benefit the
most. And that's actually what we're most proud
of, is reducing our administrative costs and
turning those dollars and putting them right back
into the young people. And that's why you're
seeing so many wonderful young people coming
here, because we found a way to squeeze the
dollars down to make sure it got into education,
not into someone's pocket, which happens from
time to time. So we're very proud of the fact that we're basically the lowest costs in the state, and we have some of the best programs.

SENATOR RICE: Give me clarity; when I keep hearing we merged the two schools, what two schools are we talking about? Two vocational schools, two --

SENATOR SWEENEY: Gloucester County Special Services School District and Gloucester County Institute of Technology, the administrations merged. We eliminated a superintendent, a board secretary. When we started out with saving, the first year was roughly around $800,000. As we progressed, we found ways to do things even more cost-effectively and more cost-efficiently. We now are up to $1.5 million annual savings.

Now, those dollars that we were spending to administer and run these programs -- well, we only have one buildings and grounds person now instead of two. It's economies of scale. And what we were able to do when we merged the administrations, we didn't lose teachers. We lost administration, where I don't think it added a whole lot of value. Nothing
against my principals in the room, but if we have
too many, it impacts the level of education a
child gets because those dollars go away from the
classroom.

We were able to merge these two
school districts; and Senator Turner recently
allowed to us do a bill, because once we merged
the two administrations, we had two separate
school boards. Well, when we wanted to merge the
school boards, it was against the law to do that.
So we said we want to do that. Well, Senator
Turner's district in Mercer just basically copied
what we did here, and two school districts
merged. And they realized what we were saying:
that we need one school; one meeting,
instead of opening a meeting and running the
meeting, closing the meeting, opening up another
meeting, bringing some new players and running
another meeting. We have one meeting now. The
school district has a real long name now. I
think it's "Gloucester County Institute of
Technology Special Services School, Gloucester
County." It's a big long name, but it's one
school board now. And Mercer just did what we
did. Bergen, I know, has a shared service, and
that's actually where we learned from it, and we think we have taken it to the next level.

But the most important thing we can do as legislators is find ways to cut money, to cut the dollars in administrative cost and actually pour them back into education. Gloucester County was 76 out of 3,300-some counties in job growth in the nation. We're number one in the state, this little county, in job growth, because we invest in these types of programs. Education is key for us, and we're going to continue to strive to try to have the finest county education system, between the college and these schools, of anywhere, because it's an investment that's well made.

You know, when someone wants to move to a region -- what are the schools like, how's the crime rate? -- those are the things that people ask. We figured it out, and we're putting the money back into the school district, which really makes it a premiere program. And these young people actually know what they want to do. And that's the other thing, when a young man says, "I know what I want to do when I go to college."
I have a nephew who graduated from LaSalle University who thought he wanted to be a teacher. In his last year, he realized he hated it when he did student teaching. He is now unemployed with a degree from LaSalle, but he doesn't want to teach. So it's so important that young people have an idea where they want to go earlier, because it's a large waste of money for parents. Like my son wants to be a teacher, and if he changes his mind, I'm going to kill him. But it's a large sum of money, and the fact that these young people are learning earlier where they want to go, that's a great thing. Let them explore here so they're ready when they get to the next level.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I'm telling you that teaching is the best profession in the world, and I wouldn't have been anything other than a teacher and it was the most rewarding thing. And I would encourage young people, you will never be happier than when you're interacting with young people, conveying knowledge to them and seeing them grow.

The other thing I just wanted to say: I'm so impressed here, because the special
needs students are integrated so well in so many
of the classes, and it's so important. The
Senator and I were talking about how important it
is for some of our special needs students to have
the socialization that all of you enjoy. And the
whole school here has just impressed me no end.
So I just want to thank you all for today.

Now we have a panel --

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: One more
question I wanted to ask the students: I know
when you come here, it's exciting to be able to
go and do whatever you want to specialize in,
whether it's auto mechanics or construction or
finance; but does it help with your academic
subjects? Have you found that it helps improve,
let's say, math, if you want to be in automotive?
Maybe you weren't so keen in math before, because
you didn't know how it related to what you were
doing or what you might do in life, but maybe now
it's helped you.

MR. KEHLER: Well, as an
automotive student, we're introduced to our
future; so if we need to go to college one day
or grab a degree, we need math and science for
engineering. So it's set in our minds, as our
The great thing about our school is our teachers. As you walked around with two teachers of ours, they're people who have succeeded in the profession or their skill. They may have gone to a technical school just like this. So they're giving back in a way, giving their knowledge to us. They have already experienced everything, and they're lending what they know to us.

So, to answer your question, they're telling us that we need math, we need science -- we go for it. And our teachers, they know what we're going through. They know, “Okay, Ken, he's an automotive student. This might be better for him to learn.” They adapt to what we need. So, yes, the school is great for that.

Thank you. That goes to what I was saying. When you understand why you're learning what you're learning, how important it is -- because I am the worst math student in the world, but if I have to get carpeting for my house, believe me, I can figure it out without any problem whatsoever. And in
one of the schools, they had a school of carpentry, because you really have to be so precise when you're doing all of the construction and things of that sort. So this is why schools like this are so important: because you see what you use it for, that learning, and that's the most wonderful thing in education.

Anybody else? Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. You did a wonderful job. And now we have a panel of educators, so if we can switch places. Thank you again.

Now we have an education panel, and we have Ellen Herdegen, who is the Superintendent; Gina Mateka, principal; David Kloss, Performing Arts teacher; Charlie McBride, Culinary Arts; and Catherine Hughes of Virtua Health System.

ELLEN HERDEGEN: And Daniel Moskowitz, who is our welding teacher.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Okay.

Ellen Herdegen, the Superintendent, would you like to begin?

MS. HERDEGEN: I would, and I would like to echo the sentiments of our students in welcoming you and thanking you for making the
trip down here to South Jersey. We're glad to be able to show you what we do. I think that the students said just about everything that needs to be said about education, and it just makes me feel so proud to see that they are so aware of the opportunities that they have been given.

The issue that I would like to put on the table for the panel today is something that Senator Sweeney began to touch upon, and that's cooperation. I think that in this day and age it's almost impossible for any school district, or any organization for that matter, to say we can do it all on our own. Resources are too precious. It's too important that we make sure that every penny of public money is being spent in a trustful and respectful way. And we're looking constantly for ways in which our resources can be shared.

That goes to the board of education, in terms of our ability to operate as one board serving two school districts. It goes to the district. You saw today the cooperation between GCIT and the Special Services School District. Our students move in both directions. Our special needs students were here in the
baking shop today. Other days they come to see
the students perform in the plays that are
presented here. But it goes in the other
direction. Our students from GCIT will provide
mentorship to these young people. Our softball
team has adopted the Special Services School
District's Miracle League team. And it just makes
me so proud to see these students understanding
that you don't do this in isolation, that it's
not appropriate to think of yourself as your own
little island. Community services (indiscernible)
understand that the world is diverse and that we
need to be a part of it.

In addition, what we're being able
to do recently with the college -- Dr. Davis is
here today -- the cooperation that we're getting
so that our students, in five years, can receive an
associate's degree. The opportunities for
students who are in our Transportation Department
to take advance classes, in our Welding
Department to take construction classes -- this
just enriches their opportunity as students, and
it also helps their families when you realize the
cost of college education these days.

Our partners in business, you're
going to hear from one of our advisory members this afternoon. But you also saw what WaWa Corporation has done for us, in terms of providing a place where our special needs learners can actually use WaWa's equipment, follow WaWa's procedures. And we have about six students now who have graduated from our Special Ed Department who are working in WaWas in the area, successfully, happily.

And then I think that you have also seen the cooperation that is necessary between the disciplines that we have here. It's not an academy school on one side of the fence and a career technical education school on the other side of the fence. Our students work together. You know, what is the old song, "The Farmers and the Cowboys Can Be Friends." Well, the welders and the dancers can be friends. And they bring such a unique perspective and such unique balance to the table, that I think the message that we would like you take away from Gloucester County today is that we do it better because we do it together.

It doesn't diminish the resources to spread them out. It only enriches them. And we're
very proud of what we've been able to do, very
grateful for the support of our freeholder board.
We hope that you'll be able to bring our message
back to the State and let people know that we
would be thrilled to have more of this kind of
educational opportunity available in New Jersey.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you very much. Principal Mateka?

GINA MATEKA, Ed.D.: Thank you, and welcome.

It is my honor to be an administrator
here at Gloucester County Institute of
Technology. I have been here for the past 11
years, and I'm proud to be part of a model that
offers young people the opportunity to couple a
career pathway with high academic standards.
We pride ourselves on high
industry standards in addition to the academic
component, and our focus is on relevance,
relationships, and rigor. And with those three
components, in addition to our commitment to
community service, being recognized as a national
service learning leader school, we here at GCIT
aim to educate the whole student -- not only for
industry and academics, but as a member of
society in which they can go, beyond high
school, and be productive members; where they can pursue their career theme and be proud of what we have offered them here at GCIT.

And, as Assemblyman Moriarty pointed out earlier, it's just as important for young people to determine their career pathway when they are seniors, as this may not be what they want to do. It is a very costly venture to pursue this in higher education. For middle-class Americans, it's almost unaffordable to send young people to higher education. So this generation does not have the luxury of switching career majors at the higher ed level. So to determine a career pathway, given the opportunity to explore various areas within a particular program, is monumental to where they're going to go beyond high school.

And I am just so grateful to be part of such a program that offers such a unique opportunity for young people to explore, because the meaning that it brings to them, and I think the benefits to their families, is unparalleled.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Thank you.

David Kloss of the Performing Arts Department?

DAVID KLOSS: Welcome. My background
is totally vocational professional. The 

I don't know whether you realize 

I teach ballet, with dance as a profession. 

There are certain demands that are put 

on the child, and it evolves quickly. In other 

words, they start to count down at about 27. 

If they meet 27, if the body holds out, 

ironically that's when their artistry starts to 

be developed. So our focus is technical and 

to protect the body, and what they learn here 

in the next four years will actually determine 

how long they will be able to dance, if they 

choose it as a profession. 

Not all of our students do. I have 

one young lady right now, here, who was 

injured, and she won't be pursuing that. But 

she's going into physical therapy. So we have a 

lot of changeover. 

Also, the innovative practices that 

are developed or innovative technology that 

has been developed, it has (indiscernible) function, 

because we fix everything. We use our dancers. 

They were editing their senior pieces, in other 

words, their pictures. 

And since it's mandatory to have
your credit course to graduate in the arts in the
State of New Jersey, now we have been teaching
the welding students and everyone else. And it's
working out a little rough in the beginning. But
may I also state that the way it was written for
the state for this to happen is, it should have
started in K through. So we're getting 11th and
12th graders, and they're doing ballet, and it
has been a little bit of a rude awakening, and
we're still working on it. But everyone is
going along. It's unfortunate that it couldn't
have worked the way it's supposed to.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: That's great.

I did a program with the Lincoln Center with
dance when I was teaching, and I had the football
team, the basketball team out there with the
dancers. And I said, “Your (inaudible) at
shooting baskets will be so enhanced” and to the
football team, I said, “You will be able to
shimmy and sway down the field without a
problem.” And so, again, it's showing them the
relevance of how they can use what they're
learning and give them an appreciation for the
arts as well. So I think you're doing a great
job.
Charlie McBride? Your food is wonderful.

CHARLIE McBRIIDE: Thank you. I've been a teacher here 26 years. I've seen it go from good to better. Right now I'm part of the Culinary Arts Program. I teach baking and pastry arts. We have two years of culinary arts and two years of baking. At the time they leave here, they have a good, solid base in both trades. A lot of our kids go to college. A lot of our kids go out to work. We have a wide range of students. We do have students from next door, and they have been successful. We have one student who graduated two years ago who is working for Walmart. I won't mention his name. Everybody here knows who he is. And he's making around $13.50 an hour right now, and he was from next door, Bankbridge. It's just a great program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: And I bet they all watch the Food Network.

MR. McBRIIDE: That causes more problems than you know.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I was going to say, I have a suggestion that you have a
television program, a video program, and you have
the culinary. You should be trying to train some
TV chefs. You should be doing a cooking show,
and you could merge those two. And there's more
integration and cooperation.

MR. McBRIDE: There you go. I do
want to do a little bit of bragging. We recently
came back from competition, and won seven-some
medals in baking. I'm very familiar with the
baking part, obviously. A sophomore came back
with first place gold and goes on to the
nationals. And then we have students who are
doing other programs who are going to the
nationals, also, in construction.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I know
there were young ladies working on a wedding cake.

MR. McBRIDE: Yes, that is correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: And
it's so professional; it was amazing to me. So you're
doing a great job.

MR. McBRIDE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Catherine
Hughes?

Catherine HUGHES: Hello, everyone. My
role here, I'm a member of the advisory board for
the Allied Health Program, and, proudly, I have been part of that board since the beginning, since the first day that we put that together. And I have seen that grow and happily seen the graduating classes come through. So I have very proudly talked about the program to everybody who will listen. I call myself the “number one fan” of this wonderful Allied Health Program.

My role on the committee is to bring my expertise and experience the best I can to the school setting. What I do is advise about some of the curriculum, really just minor recommendations. The people here at the school know best, but I bring in things from the employment world, especially the hospital world and health care. I bring in things that I see that are new trends in health care, new requirements, new advances perhaps that we should be looking at even at the high school level. I'm also able to represent the employment world by describing trends or employment trends for hiring.

Part of what I have done is (indiscernible) in interviewing some of the students who want some practice before they go out to look for their jobs. And I'm also able, I think, to give
some recommendations and suggestions about the things that are most in demand, whether that's a shortage in a certain specialty -- you're all familiar with nursing shortages. So we talk about this a lot. But there are also many things in the technical fields like radiology technicians and echocardiograph technicians. So lots of things that I bring, as well as my partners, who are obviously from many different fields. Some are in private practice, some are in large institutions like I am.

So I think we -- or I hope we are valuable as an advisor to the committee, and supporters. And, again, I would just finish by saying I'm so proud of the program. I'm a Gloucester County resident, as well as someone who has been in health care for 40 years. So I speak as often as I can about the value of it and how impressive it is to look at these students and to see that, as they graduate, they will be the most employable, most coveted employees when they hit the workforce. So I'm very proud of the program. Thank you for letting me address you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Well, I think it's wonderful, because one of the things that's
so essential for students to know is where the job opportunities are available. Because a lot of kids want to go into something that they think is going to be very financially lucrative, like, for example, so many people go to law school, but we only need X amount of lawyers. But we certainly need many more nurses. So whenever you're thinking of what you want to do, you have to know where the opportunities will be. And I think not enough of our kids are getting that kind of information. So I thank you very much for what you do. It's great.

Does anybody have any questions?

We have Mr. Moskowitz (phonetic spelling).

MR. MOSKOWITZ : Thank you. I want to thank you for coming to our school, first of all. I can't tell you how impressed I am as a vocational teacher. As a vocational student, I graduated a couple years ago from Camden County Vocational School, and we have always felt like the ugly duckling of education -- when I was a student and as an instructor. And to hear this distinguished panel talk about coming to vocational technical schools and wanting to take back to the State level what you saw, what you've
learned, hearing you say that we are on the cusp of something great here and that education should -- and we should finally get the recognition that that a vocational technical education deserves, is awesome. I commend you.

I think, when you look at today's -- I teach in the construction trades program. So we just, obviously, had an historic election and the new President. What does he want to do to spur the economy? Invest in this country, invest in the construction trades, build our country back up. Who's going to do that work? So vocational technical students who come to a school like this give us what they got, and the teachers give them what they have. I think that's the trend that is being set here today and in the national level.

So I want to thank you for it. I'm one of those vocy guys that the Senator talked about, and I've always been a very proud guy. So thank you very much for your vocy support, and continue on with the good work that you're doing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I think we're finally getting the Legislature to realize how
important vocational and technical education is.

And I have so many pieces of legislation to encourage people to go into teaching vocational and technical education, because, as I said before, this is where it's at, as far as I'm concerned, in education. And I'm very concerned about some of these things that we're doing in our regular public schools, because I don't think they're doing the service that they should be doing to our students. And so, as I said, I am just thrilled to be here today to see what you're doing. And each time I go to one of the technical schools in the state, I'm more impressed. And so far now, you're on top of my list, as I said before, so thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Let me say this: I grew up a few years ago in a different kind of academic setting, where vocational schools were the schools you went to when you didn't want to pursue a college education in a liberal arts program. That has been transformed. That has changed so much. And then we went to -- and I think Senator Sweeney was alluding to the specialty schools, which is more of a science high school with academic topnotch students whose
peers don't get an opportunity to be with them anymore. So you take away the competition.

When I was in school, believe it or not, I was an honor student, and we had in high school what they called *Special English*, *College English*. They called it *Freshman English* because we were a little bit more advanced.

So we all had to go to this new high school. The problem was, my best friend, my sidekick, was playing around, not doing all his homework, bright but didn't care; so he didn't go in the class with us. But what in fact that did was anchor him, number one, and made him buckle down to start to pull the grades back up so he could come into the class. So this whole notion here, what I've seen up and down the state, is that we're talking vocational schools -- we're going to change that name, number one. Most of you have changed it anyway. But we just went with academies, and these other kinds of names make more sense.

We also believe that vocational education should have, as much as it can -- whether it's open space like this or tight in the cities -- as much of an environment of a college kind of
setting for young adults who are moving, so they can start to interact. They've got to perform in a certain way in an atmosphere of a real college campus, whether they're in cities like New York and going in one building up and down, or whether they're going out where it's spread out and you go from location to location, so they know that.

I've always argued that students cannot go -- I don't care how bright they are -- from the ninth grade to twelfth grade into classrooms, break for lunch, and just keep looking at blackboards and blackboards. And I guess there are computer screens now, but that can be like a blackboard. They have to feel like there's something else they're doing. I learn best not in reading. If I'm going to read, I have to read three and four times. I've got to highlight everything. But if you show me how to take that heart out, I'll figure it out. I may kill somebody first, but I will figure it out.

So we do see vocational education not as vocational education. I think the word vocation is (indiscernible) a noun, because that means work. When you start talking about career, career seems to stick to people, coming up from
here, subliminally: "Well, I'm working on a career." And if they understand what a career means, it really means "vocation." And so we're looking to change that, but we're also looking to see how to maximize the dollars we have and spend them more wisely and efficiently. And we know we're going to run into some problems with that. But I'm looking forward to this Committee coming up with recommendations as to how we can pull some of this together to start to open the doors to make changes.

So you're in the forefront with us, because we don't see you as a vocational school. We see you as a public school, and we just want to know what is different about it that can be duplicated.

So, Madam Chair, I do have to leave, but I do want you to know that I have given the charge to staff to take what we have so far and to analyze it for us and lay it out, and let's see what a particular school that we will visit in a county is doing versus another programmatically. We will look at demographics and things like that, but what the commonality and what the difference is, to try to determine
something that makes sense.

And I do have one question to the Superintendent and the principal: Have you had visits from other superintendents or principals of vocational schools throughout the state, like from Essex County, for example, to take a look at your program, how you're situated?

MS. HERDEGEN: This is my first year as Superintendent; so I can answer that this year. No, we haven't had that opportunity, but through the Council of Vocational Technical Schools, we do share information on a very consistent basis. And as a matter of fact, we met yesterday in Burlington County, and one of the things that we were talking about was, we do have a lot of commonality and things that we can share, but we also have some very unique differences, and those are special also.

And we're planning to spend some time this Summer just giving an opportunity for the superintendents to kind of do best practice sharing. And, yes, the doors are always open. We would love to hear from the Essex County Superintendent, to come down.

SENATOR RICE: Through the Chair
and through Melanie, can we monitor and work with that organization to see what those differences are and kind of figure out what they view as the best practices? Can we have that information provided to us? And the reason I raise that is because we may encourage, but we may have to mandate if we can't encourage it, that principals and superintendents -- because the freeholders get a little funny sometimes -- go and visit other locations physically, because it's a lot different than sitting at a table talking about it than to come and walk through, which has been our experience, and then have these kinds of discussions and input.

I mean, if you're telling me about your partnership, say, with the special needs students, for example, it sounds good to me. I kind of understand it. But for me to see it, to see exactly what they're doing and what the outcome is makes it a lot better and more worthwhile, whether or not it's something I can incorporate into my system and get the limitation on dollars, et cetera.

So I apologize to everybody.

Thank you very much for having me here. Thank
you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I think one of the things that you're doing with your students is to show them that education is a lifelong pursuit. It's not just something that you do until you graduate from high school. And I used to tell my students, I guess the smartest man I have met was my grandfather, who was a plumber. But he taught me philosophy. He taught me poetry. He taught me theology. And he knew all these things, but his job was a plumber. So you can kind of bifurcate yourself and have many, many interests. And I think that's one of the things that you're doing to your students: to show them, through all of these programs, that life is a smorgasbord, so take advantage of it.

I would like to introduce you to Judy Savage, whom I'm sure you know.

JUDY SAVAGE: Thank you for inviting me up to the table to an available microphone. I just wanted to kind of build on what Senator Rice was saying, because I think he made a really good point about how important it is for not only legislators to get out, but also for educators from around the state to get out.
And that is a big part of the Council of County Vocational Technical Schools' mission, to bring together all the superintendents. And although we have not done a lot this year, since Ellen has been the Superintendent here, we do have a tradition of having road trips. So we do a lot of those kinds of visits. I think it's really important. Sometimes, as you know, it's hard to get people up North to come all the way down to Gloucester County, but absolutely we're worth the trip.

And just on behalf of the Council, I want to echo what has been well said by all the legislators: What a fantastic school, what fantastic students. It has been just a great day. And even though I have been here a number of times to talk with your students, today I had the chance to see some classrooms and some programs that I have never seen before. So I also really want to take the chance of having the microphone to thank you, the Joint Committee, for all that you have been doing. This is the third full day that the members of this Committee have devoted to actually getting out and seeing schools, seeing programs, and I really can tell
that there is so much that is going to come out of this.

And I will be very happy to work with your Executive Director at the staff level to put together all the information that you need to do some kind of analysis and not just -- to kind of take the show-and-tell to the next level and really analyze what we have seen, and help you develop what comes out of this. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VOSS: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Jasey?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I have to go back to Trenton for a hearing that is going on, but I want to ask Mr. Kloss a question: You said something that triggered a question in my mind, and that has do with the requirements. We have had quite a bit of discussion about high school redesign and the changes that are being proposed. How has that impacted you, or how do you anticipate those recommendations impacting your school here?

MR. KLOSS: You mean the fine arts credits?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Well, you mentioned the fine arts credits, which can be
MR. KLOSS: It has to be physically done, and it can't be an appreciation course.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: For example, you have to actually paint or draw or something. So, if it's dance, you have to actually dance?

MR. KLOSS: When we reviewed the -- I was on the panel my second year here full-time, to review the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Dance is a stand-alone. It was always in phys ed, and now it's a stand-alone, like music and drama. And it took a long time to get there. In doing the new Core Curriculum Content Standards, we did a K-through-12 of not only the Standards, but how to get to the Standard in terms of: you teach this to get up to there, to get to there, right through 12. It was like a roadmap; which has been kind of dismissed -- even though the core content standards took five years to go around from committee to committee -- and came back in the same way it was written, because they thought it was too strenuous.

But the implementation of it really has to start in the lower grades, and it's
all four -- are you familiar with what the
requirements are?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: No.

MR. KLOSS: Drama, visual arts, dance and music, K-through-6, all four must be taught. Six through eight, two, and by the time you get to high school, you can major in one, or you can carry two, and that's a five-credit course. If you don't have that course, you can't get your diploma, and it goes right through. Now, that has been adopted. I don't know how much it is happening in the lower grades, but it's so necessary for that to build so that by the time it gets to the high school level, it's really worth something.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you for that clarification. I'm also wondering about the other requirements, the academic requirements in order to graduate with a diploma.

MS. HERDEGEN: I think that one of the most critical things that we could maybe emphasize about our program is that we want excellence in every standard, not only the industry standards that relate to the career technical paths that our students take, but also...
academic standards.

As Dr. Mateka said, we look for rigor in our curriculum, and we expect that our students perform at a level that is not diminished from anything else in the state. The core curriculum academic standards are alive and well in vocational technical education.

I think that we're hoping that there will become some broader understanding that there's just not one way to do it, that students are different. In our school, about 33 percent of our students are classified as special education students, and we need to be able to individualize and to help those students learn in the way that is best for them. A curriculum that would be so directed and so devoted to certain kinds of mathematics, certain kinds of learning may not serve all the students well. I think what Kenny said when he was talking about his transportation classes -- it's one thing to say that you need to know algebra; it's another thing to understand that you want to be an auto technician and that you're going to need these skills. Mr. McBride would understand mathematical skills with baking; obviously, in
welding, in dance, some of the science things that would go along with that. So I think that we are in favor of a very rigorous, very strong standard for these students, and raising the bar is great. We just need to have some understanding that all of our students don't learn in the same way, and that to be so directed in some of the things that have been discussed would probably not benefit all of the students.

We need some flexibility.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Understood.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I think Assemblywoman Jasey and I are very concerned about some of the things that are being proposed, and we have been very vocal about our concerns. And we have a bill in that -- hopefully long-range plans can come about that they will evaluate how successful certain things are in the first year of implementation. Because, again, I keep saying, a one-size-fits-all education is not the way to go, and I have been saying that for 45 years, and I'll say it until the day I die. And, hopefully, the people in Trenton will listen to us, because we certainly have gotten the message. They need
MS. SAVAGE: With the Chair's prerogative, allow me to ask a question: I wonder if you can just explain a little bit what has been involved in expanding the program? Because if everybody does know, this used to be a half-day shared time traditional vocational school, and it has really been transformed, and there has been a lot involved in that, both fiscally and otherwise.

MS. HERDEGEN: Yes. It has been an exciting adventure and, fortunately, I think that we did it the right way. We did not jump into transforming from a shared time vocational school to a full-time school in a couple-year period. It actually took us about six years to do the transition, for several reasons: We wanted to make sure that we were doing it right. We wanted to make sure that we introduced steps in a sequential way. We wanted to make sure that we gave our vocational teachers an opportunity to develop programs that would be appropriate for 9th through 12th grades, rather than just 11th and 12th grades. We operated dual pathways so that all students in Gloucester
County would have an opportunity to take advantage of the programs at the vocational technical school.

In order to do that, we would be admitting freshman to a full-time program, but we didn't want to miss those juniors who would be applying as juniors to be in the shared-time program. So, logistically, it was tricky, I guess would be the best word. Fiscally, we kind of got caught in a trap. We started to increase our full-time population just at the time that State funding was frozen, so that as our student population grew significantly, our funding was based at a number that was way lower. And it was really through the understanding and the generosity of our freeholders who filled in the blanks for us that we were able to succeed.

Now, last year we did get a bump in our State aid. This year, I'm sure you understand and we understand that there are constraints in the budget, but we were expecting a 20 percent increase in State aid for every student; we got 5 percent. And it has been challenging to be able to find ways of -- if we hadn't been able to merge some of the
administrative functions in the district, it really
would have put us in a horrible position.
So we believe that the
comprehensive approach to education is
appropriate with the rigorous standards that are
in place for all students. To put them on a bus
for an hour a day in the middle of the day is
impractical in this day and age, unless the
subject taken is in a particular category where
it's significantly different than ours.
But as we move to a comprehensive
program, I think that our students said it best.
You understand the importance of the academic
subjects when they are placed in the context of
what you want to do in a career pathway. So I'm
in favor of the program as we have it. We have
now completely converted to full-time with a
minor exception for a couple of part-time options
that we kept open for seniors. But it was a long
path. It was a long path, because we needed to
do it in an incremental and thoughtful way. It
was a bumpy road with the funding, but we're
here, and we're delighted.
If other districts are embarking
on that path, we would be happy to have them come
down and talk about it. It's an evolutionary kind of process, and it needs to be taken in a very thoughtful and very considerate way.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I apologize; I have to leave now.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I have a couple quick questions: Can you give me the number of students that are currently enrolled?

MS. HERDEGEN: We're close to 1,000 students at this point.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: What is the process to getting accepted?

MS. HERDEGEN: We go out in the Fall to 8th grade students, offer them a presentation at their schools, then invite their families to come in for an information session. We offer four information sessions in the late Fall, early Winter. Students provide us with an application. The application includes information about their attendance, their standardized test scores, their grades; and we put that on a matrix, a rubric, and we evaluate each application and accept the students based on the ranking.

In the Performing Arts, we also
have an audition that is included in the rubric for their acceptance.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So, in the last year, how many applied? How many were accepted?

MS. HERDEGEN: We had about, I think, over 800 applications, and we accepted about 260 students.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So would you say there's a very large need? You could accommodate more if you were able to?

MS. HERDEGEN: The construction that you saw outside will take us eventually to a 1,500-student capacity, which we feel will be optimal. We will have 500 students in our academy programs, in the programs that are college-prep oriented; and a 1,000 in our career technical programs.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: What percentage of the students that graduate will go on to further education?

MS. HERDEGEN: I'm going to have to get some help; Gina?

DR. MATEKA: Well, currently, we only have statistics on our academy -- because
this is our first year of a graduating class in the
career-technical side -- and over 90 percent of
our students in the academy model go on to
higher education.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Are there
programs that you would like to start, but you're
unable to start because of financial constraints?
Are there programs that there is a need for?

DR. MATEKA: Well, nationally,
there's a need for engineering, but Williamstown
is currently hosting an engineering academy, and
we would not really like to compete with any
other school within our county. And we would
like to expand on what we're doing well, and we
believe that the eight programs that we offer
here is what we do well. And we would like to
expand an opportunity to pursue those career
pathways.

MS. HERDEGEN: We're looking to
refine some of the programs that we have. For
example, in the Medical Arts Department right
now, that is only an academy program, but we
understand there are certificate-type programs,
associate's degree programs, that are appropriate
and needed in the medical field. So we are
looking to a non-academy-type medical arts

program.

We're also looking to expand our
collection program to include more than what we
offer now, perhaps plumbing as a separate option
for students, or maybe masonry; but we're looking
to kind of move out within the areas that we have
already defined rather than add new areas.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY:  How would
you say the students -- you have a limited
history to look at, but how would you say they
compare educationally to other students in
surrounding districts in terms of scores?

DR. MATEKA:  In terms of scores,
we can only compare ourselves with the high
school proficiency assessment test, and we have
done rather well over the years in scoring in the
areas of mathematics and language arts.  We have
ranked either one or two in the county.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY:  Great.

Thank you.  One last question:  Did I hear you
right?  You said that dancers are, like, past their
prime after 27, and that's when the artistry
starts kicking in?  That's a rather cruel twist;

isn't it?
MR. KLOSS: It sure is.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I'm glad I didn't take that profession. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I want to thank you all. It has been a thoroughly enjoyable day, and we will certainly bring the message back to Trenton. And I think you're doing exactly what I as an educator think should be done in education. So I thank you very much for everything that we have seen today.

(The hearing was concluded at 2:30 p.m.)
CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the proceedings are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me on the Hearing of the within cause and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

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DEBRA RICE

PROFESSIONAL COURT REPORTER

DATED: May 21, 2009