

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING**

January 28, 2015 - 6:46 p.m.  
Administrative Offices

Presiding: Comm. Jonathan Hodges, President

Present:

Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent  
Ms. Eileen Shafer, Deputy Superintendent  
Sidney Sayovitz, Esq., General Counsel

Comm. Chrystal Cleaves  
Comm. Christopher Irving  
Comm. Errol Kerr  
Comm. Manuel Martinez

Comm. Lilisa Mimms  
Comm. Flavio Rivera  
Comm. Kenneth Simmons, Vice President  
\*Comm. Corey Teague

The Salute to the Flag was led by Comm. Hodges.

Comm. Simmons read the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend the meetings of the Paterson Public School District, as well as other public bodies at which any business affecting the interest of the public is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Paterson Public School District has caused notice of this meeting:

**Special Meeting  
January 28, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.  
Administrative Offices  
90 Delaware Avenue  
Paterson, New Jersey**

to be published by having the date, time and place posted in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Paterson, at the entrance of the Paterson Public School offices, on the district's website, and by sending notice of the meeting to the Arab Voice, El Diario, the Italian Voice, the North Jersey Herald & News, and The Record.

Comm. Hodges: I want to thank you all for coming tonight. It will be an interesting meeting, I assure you. We want to do a few things a little bit differently this evening. One of the things we wanted to do is give you the opportunity on the Board to take the practice test of PARCC to give you a sense of what our students are going through. We're going to hold that until the end. We have security at the door so you will not be allowed to leave. I'm just letting you know ahead of time. In the meantime, before Dr. Evans gives his presentation on the assessment, I would like you to indulge me in another kind of presentation. I would like to place Dr. Evans' staff tonight in the position that our students are often placed in to give them a sense of what our students go through. Unfortunately, tonight I'm going to be the teacher in the classroom. If you'll

bear with me, this is something many of you have seen before. This is a Krebs cycle. All I'm going to do is run through the Krebs cycle to give you a sense of what a classroom experience might look like. This sheet has the chemical composition of all the items I'm going to talk about tonight, except for the enzymes which are not important for you to see them chemically. The actual compounds of the Krebs cycle are detailed here so you can see the actual reactions, what's occurring and the reactions. The Krebs cycle is also called the citric acid cycle or the tricarboxylic acid cycle. It's a series of chemical reactions in the cell that breaks down food molecules into carbon dioxide, water, and energy. It occurs in the mitochondria, a cell organelle, in plants, and animals. It was discovered by Sir Hans Adolf Krebs in 1937. He was a British biochemist. Food enters the citric acid cycle and is broken into Acetyl groups which are the  $\text{CH}_3\text{-Co}$  groups. Below pyruvate you'll see the acetyl-CoA group. At the beginning of the Krebs cycle an acetyl group combines with a 4-carbon molecule called oxaloacetate to make a 6-carbon compound, citric acid. Essentially, oxaloacetate, which is a 4-carbon compound, becomes a 6-carbon compound, if you can follow the diagram there. Are there any questions? During the cycle, the citric acid molecules rearrange and are stripped of two of its carbon atoms. Carbon dioxide and four electrons are released. At the end of the cycle a molecule of oxaloacetate remains which can combine with another acetyl group to begin the cycle again. The process as follows is enzyme mediated. Acetyl-CoA, which appears above the citrate synthetase arrows, plus oxaloacetate, plus water forms citrate and acetyl-CoA, which is mediated by citrate synthetase. There's an error here because on your sheet it says citrate synthetase, which is different. A synthase is an enzyme that catalyzes the joining together of two molecules without the use of ATP, which is adenosine triphosphate – and some of this may be familiar to you or may be coming back to you – in this case using a condensation process where an OH group, which a hydroxyl group, from the  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and another H joins oxaloacetate. The acetyl group also joins shedding one of its  $\text{H}^+$  ions and the Co-A portion splits off taking  $\text{H}^+$  with it. Do you see that reaction now? Are there any questions? Okay. You didn't follow that? It's important that you follow it because I don't want any questions. It's going clockwise. The actions occurring are in red. So you can see the various molecules and atoms in red. Are there any questions? No? Good. Citric acid forms cis-aconitate plus  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , which is catalyzed by aconitase. Aconitase catalyzes what amounts to a summarization reaction that ultimately changes citric acid to isocitrate. The first step is to remove water and to create a molecule with a double bond, cis-aconitase. Isomers are molecules that have exactly the same atoms but are in different spacial arrangements meaning orientation to the same or different carbon atoms in the case of organic compounds. The next reaction is cis-aconitase plus water. Are there any problems following me yet? It yields isocitrate. Again, it's catalyzed by aconitase. Isocitrate is essentially the same molecule as citrate, except that the hydroxyl group, the OH group, is located on a completely different atom. Do you see that? It's moved from the third atom down to the fourth. Do you see that in red? No questions? Good. Isocitrate, which is the next reaction, plus NAD yields oxalosuccinic acid plus NAD, which is two hydrogens catalyzed by isocitrate dehydrogenase. A dehydrogenase is an enzyme that catalyzes the removal of hydrogen atoms from a particular molecule. So whenever you see a dehydrogenase you know that hydrogen atoms are being removed. In this case, NADH, which is nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide, picks them up and shuttles them away creating NADH – bear with me because there's a point to all this – plus  $\text{H}^+$ . oxalosuccinic acid yields alpha-ketoglutaric acid catalyzed by oxaloacetic decarboxylase. A decarboxylase is an enzyme that catalyzes the removal of carboxyl group, which is the carbon atom double bonded to an oxygen atom and single bonded to a hydroxyl group. Do you follow that? Are there any questions? Here it removes the  $\text{COO}$  group indicated in red which leads to the release of a  $\text{CO}_2$  molecule. That's the molecule that's written in blue. It comes off. The  $\text{COO}$  group is in red and it releases the  $\text{O}_2$ . So a

decarboxylase removes that COO<sup>2</sup> group. Alpha-keto glutaric acid plus NADH, plus enzyme CH yields succinyl-CoA plus NADH, plus hydrogen, plus CO<sub>2</sub>. This is catalyzed by alpha-gluteric dehydrogenase. You'll also notice that there's a CO<sub>2</sub> coming out of there, but this is called a dehydrogenase. The problem is alpha-keto dehydrogenase is also called oxalogluteric decarboxylase. It is actually a multi-enzymatic complex made up of three different types of enzymes responsible for the conversion of alphagluteric acid to succinyl-CoA. This step can be used to regulate energy production. It also allows amino acids making up proteins to enter the Krebs cycle and produce energy. This is a reversal reaction so sugars which enter the cycle can leave to make amino acids. It's good stuff. Succinyl-CoA plus GDP, plus inorganic phosphorus, which is the P<sub>i</sub> yields succinic acid plus Co-A-SH, plus GDP, which is catalyzed by succinyl-CoA synthetase. A synthetase catalyzes the linking between two molecules, especially using energy derived from the concurrent splitting off of a pyrophosphate group from a triphosphate such as GDP and subsequently ATP, energy bearing molecules. This is a reverse reaction. The splitting off of the two molecules is the primary direction of this reaction. So instead of linking, it's breaking molecules apart. GDP stands for guanine-phosphosphate. Succinic acid plus ubiquinone goes to fumarate and ubiquinol, which is catalyzed by succinate dehydrogenase. Succinate dehydrogenase is another enzyme complex bound to the inner mitochondrial membrane. It catalyzes the oxidation of succinic acid to fumaric acid by coupling it to the reduction of ubiquinone to ubiquinol. As a dehydrogenase hydrogen is lost from the molecule with the resulting creation of a double bond. Can you follow that? Do you see a double bond there? FAD, flavin adenine dinucleotide, is involved in the transfer of the released hydrogen ions via a redox reaction. Are there any questions? Fumaric acid plus water yields malate, which is malic acid, and is catalyzed by fumarase. Fumarase is an enzyme that catalyzes the reversal hydration/dehydration of fumaric acid to malic acid. Consequently, water is added, breaking the double bond. You see where that comes in? Malic acid plus NAD yields oxaloacetic acid plus NADH, plus H<sup>+</sup>, which is catalyzed by malate dehydrogenase. Malate dehydrogenase is an enzyme that reversibly catalyzes the oxidation of malic acid back to oxaloacetate, our original substrate. This is accomplished with a loss of two hydrogen ions. This process that is very dependent on the enzymes and the membrane structures that assist their reactions. If an enzyme is missing or in low quantities this causes a discontinuity that can block or significantly slow down the whole cycle in the area of the deficit. It can also block other pathways as there is some interconnectivity, as noted earlier. Are there any questions? Since there are no questions, and this is primarily for the staff, you've gone through the reactions. Are you prepared to take a test on the material that you've just received? If you're not, let me know why. I have a test. Are you prepared at this point to take a test on this material?

Ms. Maria Santa: I wouldn't be ready to take the test because there's a lot of vocabulary here that I'm not familiar with and I'm seeing it for the first time.

Comm. Hodges: The test will be given on what I said and I'm going to let you have this copy as a reference. You still wouldn't be prepared to take the test?

Ms. Santa: I would give partial answers.

Comm. Hodges: Remember, I'm going to give you a test that asks for mastery of the materials. Why not?

Ms. Susana Peron: (Comments were made from the audience and were not heard on tape)

Comm. Hodges: That's exactly right. So you would need more time to do what?

Ms. Peron: (Comments were made from the audience and were not heard on tape)

Comm. Hodges: I'm giving it to you, but you don't have enough time. What else would you need?

Ms. Peron: More hands-on examples and a breakdown. This is an eight-step process. We would need more hands-on time.

Comm. Hodges: More hands-on time to do what?

Ms. Peron: To see the chemical reactions and to study the different processes that takes place.

Comm. Hodges: So you want time to study? I'm giving you the whole reaction. Anybody here take notes? Did you do it in manuscript or cursive?

Ms. Peron: I actually did it in both.

Comm. Hodges: You took notes and you're still not happy with your level of comfort with the material. Who else? Studying and note-taking - you know that you need note-taking and studying techniques, which you all have, to feel comfortable in taking the test. Unfortunately, our students don't have a very systematic approach to either one of them in their schools. Just as you don't feel comfortable because you have an incomplete understanding of the material just by sitting in a classroom, so do our students. If we did test you and give you a test that I prepared I'm sure there might be some problems in terms of your being successful. The press is there who is going to write the story that the Paterson administration had trouble passing a test on material that they're giving their own students. That would be the headline. They wouldn't read about all the concerns that you justifiably have in how this was prepared for you. That's page three in the article, but nobody reads page three. Our students sit there and read about how bad they are, how ill-equipped they are, and how they can't learn even though there are disconnects in how they're being taught, I'm my humble opinion. Just like you know what you need to be successful in this kind of an environment they're not getting it, those same things that you expect for yourselves. Unless people think that I'm beating up on Ms. Peron, which I am, every one of you is in charge of schools or some aspects of schools. If you know what you need to be successful and you're not advocating it for the schools that you're in charge of, then that speaks to in part why some of our kids aren't doing very well. I wanted to put you in that position so that you could understand how some of our kids feel. That's not the only reason, but that level of discomfort is what our kids go through, in part. I'm not just beating up on anybody. It's just a generalized statement of the conditions and I wanted you to feel it yourselves. That's why I wanted to go through that. That's all I have. Thank you.

## **PRESENTATION ON ASSESSMENTS**

Dr. Evans: My goal for the next 15 or 20 minutes is to provide an overview of assessment information that we provided you last fall. I think it was November when we gave the Board the report, but there was not enough time because of the number of items that we were challenged with at that point to do a credible job in presenting it. It was postponed and tonight is the night that we are now revisiting it. The packet that you have in front of you includes a revised iteration of what we initially gave you. It's a few pages shorter. It's actually 10 or 11 pages shorter because there were some things

that were determined to be duplicative that we removed. So as the first page suggests this is a revised version. I would encourage you as I move through this to take notes. I would like to get through it so that everyone can understand all that's here. Then once I cover what I needed to cover in what's the better part of one PowerPoint and then one or two pages of a second PowerPoint, I've asked Ms. Peron and Dr. Kazmark to follow with some additional information to add to what I'm going to share that illustrates what we're doing to improve student achievement. I know that's one of the questions that President Hodges and some of you have asked as well. What are we doing about some of the outcomes that we're not pleased with at all as well as continuing to enhance some of those outcomes that we are very pleased with? Everything I'm going to say is represented in that PowerPoint and you have a hard copy in front of you. What you have first is a listing of what I plan to cover, which is the purpose of state assessments as communicated to us by the New Jersey Department of Education and review contexts. The example that Dr. Hodges just went through is a good contextual background piece that suggests the challenges that our youngsters face, particularly with the new Common Core and the expectations that we're going to be holding them to in PARCC that's going to be administered just over a month from now. Then we're going to review those outcomes. You've seen them before, but I will represent them in somewhat of a different way to dig a little deeper than we have in the past and in response to some questions that some of you have raised regarding those outcomes. We will review initiatives and strategies that are in place to improve not only our academic outcomes, but some of our process outcomes. Then we will consider some next steps we've taken in some cases already and in other cases that we are planning to take to be able to improve our students' outcomes. That slide, very simply, states from the New Jersey State Department of Education's perspective the purpose of assessments. That first sentence says it all.

\*Comm. Teague enters the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

Dr. Evans: The purpose of New Jersey State Assessments is to provide a fair and equitable assessment system that reliably measures the state learning standards. That's what HSPA did and that's what NJASK did, to be able to determine where our kids are and whether or not they are mastering the standards that are represented in first the New Jersey expectations but now the new Common Core which drives curriculum and everything we do in terms of content moving forward. The next slide presents some additional contextual information. You've seen that before, but embedded therein represents some challenges that our students present that we have to address as we provide instruction to them. You see a distribution of our pre-k through 12 populations. Obviously breaking out the k-12 population you see special education and LEP represented. Both of those represent challenges that our students bring to the table when it comes to educating them. Special education students have special needs that require specialized instruction in many cases. LEP students bring to the table language challenges that require specialized instruction to help them to acquire English. Then free and reduced price lunch - 92% of our students receive free and reduced price lunch, which means that poverty represents one of our challenges. Helping our students to overcome poverty means in many cases you may not find reading material at home that helps students be better prepared when they come to school. Or mom or dad or both have to work two or three jobs and as a result there isn't an adult to read to them when they are very young in some cases because they're working or engaged in other activities to put food on the table. Those slides do more than simply represent our population, but they also suggest some challenges that our students bring to the table which then begs for certain instructional strategies and accommodations to help them to learn to their potential. Also of consideration is the fact that we have a number of our schools that are identified by the Department of

Education and Priority and Focus schools. You've seen this list before. It's not a new list. That means that these schools have had challenges in the past. Priority Schools, as you know, are schools that were in the lowest 5% of schools in terms of performance across the state when they were first identified. This may be the third year now. Mr. Johnson, are we in the third year of Priority Schools? Three years ago they were identified and now the DOE has come up with a process for removing them from the list and we think some of those schools are going to come off that list as we actually apply those standards. Focus Schools are schools that may be performing very well but have in them a subgroup that may be low-performing. That's how those lists are comprised. But the challenge for us is then making sure we address those factors that were contributing to their becoming Priority and Focus Schools and we work with the Regional Achievement Centers to that end. Another contextual piece involves the assessment timeline and the transitioning into the Common Core represented in whatever test is used. In our case it's PARCC. There are actually two different tests across the nation that are being used. PARCC is one of those. Many states have adopted PARCC. Many have adopted the other. But during the past two years those Common Core standards have been integrated into NJASK. In fact, this past year most, if not all, of those standards were integrated into NJASK. It was the second year that that was occurring. This year NJASK is being replaced with PARCC and HSPA is being replaced with PARCC. I would suggest to you that our high school students now for the first time are going to be tested on those new standards whereas our elementary students in grades 3-8 in the past at least had a sampling of those standards the first year and then the second year they were all integrated into NJASK. One additional contextual piece I will provide for you is that for the past four years – and I'm not telling you anything you don't know – we have been negotiating in earnest with the Paterson Education Association to reach an agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement and we have been successful in accomplishing that. Last summer, as you recall, we reached agreement and signed off on that agreement. However, the challenge that it presents for us is four year without a new contract has presented some challenges for our teachers. Morale has been an issue. While our teachers have continued to work very hard, and I appreciate their effort, there's no question in my mind that lowered morale has impacted on instruction that takes place in our classrooms. That's another factor that has impacted and to an extent still is impacting. I see morale going up, but it's not where it needs to be. Getting into the data, what you have in the first two slides is an overview or summary of outcomes for English language arts and math for grades 3-11. You have the 2013 and 2014 scores. You'll see, particularly for the elementary students, as the Common Core was introduced into NJASK that did have an impact. Typically when you introduce any new tests students are challenged by it. But I think our students are now getting past that challenge thanks to some of the interventions that we've put in place. You'll see that our 11<sup>th</sup> graders, particularly in language arts, have continued to improve but the new standards were not introduced at the high school level. Then for math you see similar performance as well in terms of impacting on elementary students. An interesting observation here and this answers one of your questions, Dr. Hodges, in terms of problem areas and I have a summary page at the end that summarizes areas that we're challenged by or are in need of improvement, at the elementary level English language arts performance is lower than it is in the middle grades. In fact, you will see it represented on that slide there. You see on my left the elementary scores and then at the extreme right are the high school scores. You'll see it higher at the high school. It's just the opposite for mathematics. That represents a challenge. We have to do a lot more to make sure our kids are mastering particularly the higher order skills that are represented in the new Common Core and improve performance. Similarly at the high school level we have to do the same as it relates to mathematics. It's English language arts in elementary and mathematics in the high school. Looking especially at high school you've seen this before. Our HSPA scores,

particularly at English language arts, continue to be the highest they've ever been since the test was administered. 2003 was the first administration. In mathematics there was a drop this past year and we think we have a good sense of why. A lot of that has to do with expectations and following up on some practices that were put in place to ensure that they continue to go up. I'll come back to that a little bit later as well. One of the pieces of information that you asked for as well had to do with subgroups as it relates to both HSPA and elementary. This was HSPA and you'll see how subgroups break out in terms of special education, general education, LEP, male, female, African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Latino as well. Some of you had asked for that data specifically and you have it there for English language arts and also for mathematics as well. Graduation rates continue to climb and we're especially proud of that. We are up to 74.2% and that's means that 74.2% of our students that enter ninth grade together graduated four years later together. That's what that illustrates. That's the methodology behind calculating those figures. The next slide is another way of looking at our high school graduation rates, but also includes dropout rates and some of the factors that impact on it such as transfers or a broad category referred to as 'other.' This slide represents a serious challenge for us that we must address. It has to do with science. This is the biology test. While there were increases we are nowhere near where we should be and must get. Even though there were increases from 15.4% to 18.8% for total students it should be much higher. Obviously a lot of our efforts are aimed at improving those outcomes. An even greater focus is being placed on PSAT and SAT. Here you have the PSAT. We actually begin administering SAT a few years ago as a strategy for improving SAT. Now we're at the point where more kids are taking it. In fact, all of our 11<sup>th</sup> grade students are administered the SAT and that's why the numbers are where they are. The desire is ultimately for them to do better on SAT having experienced the tests over a period of time. SAT is problematic but I will caution you on these. We're still waiting for updated scores from the College Board. We've called and asked if they could accelerate their inquiry and they politely tell you they'll do it when they're ready to do it. But our SAT scores are higher than that. We did determine that what we received previously only included seniors. Since most high school students take SAT in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade those scores aren't represented there. Or if they took it earlier in the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade as some do they're not represented there. Those scores aren't accurate and as soon as we get them – I'll keep bugging them and eventually we will – I'll get that information to you. In fact, the next few slides focus on SAT, but again, this is not accurate information based on the latest that we've received from our inquiry. Nonetheless, we continue to see significant increases in students' acceptance into colleges. Of particular interest and note is the number of students admitted into four-year colleges. That was a concern the Board expressed over the past couple of years as we were focusing on both two-year and four-year. We continue to focus on both. The two-year figures were questioned in terms of did we really want students to go for two-year colleges? Yes, we do. But we also want more and even the students who go to two-year colleges to go to four-year colleges. What you see there is more students are now being accepted upon graduation into four-year colleges and we want those numbers to continue to improve. Moving into NJASK - just a reminder, the new Common Core standards have been introduced into NJASK over the last couple of years. I think that's one of the reasons those scores in many cases are depressed in terms of growth. What you will see when we look at grades 3-5, and I have them three ways here, 3-5 and 6-8, and then the aggregate from 3-8, first is language arts. You see performance there and I would again suggest that while the 2012 scores are disappointing and not where we want them to be, 2013-14 were directly impacted by the introduction of the new Common Core standards. As a result, you don't see the increases that we want to see. In fact, for 2014 there was a 2-point drop. When you look at 6-8 you will see improved scores. You will see that they are higher than the 3-5 scores. But again, you see the same anomaly in terms of what happened as the new

Common Core standards were introduced. You see the aggregate scores for 3-8 English language arts. That's combining the two sources that you saw earlier, which illustrates the same trend as it relates to the data. Our performance is better for math scores. You'll see a steady trend upward from 39.1% in 2010 to 47.3% in 2014 and it has continued to improve. We're proud of that but we want it to continue to improve at a much faster rate. You'll see that same trend mirrored both for grades 6-8 and then you'll see it with the aggregate scores. They continue to improve. The reason for that trend is we have a disproportionately large group of youngsters coming into our district who are non-English speakers and over time once they get beyond a year we're required to test them. So we have youngsters who are LEP who are limited in their English acquisition for whom we are required to administer the test. What we see as a result is lowered performance on English language arts because of the size of that population. Interestingly, as they acquire English then you see improved English scores as they move up through the grades, but that's a continued challenge. The result is that at the elementary level our math scores are much better and at the early elementary you see lower scores because those are the grades that are impacted in a greater way by the size of our youngsters who are acquiring English skills. Then another way to look at the performance of our students, whether it's English language arts or math, is to follow the same cohort of students. The previous slides compared different groups of students. If you look at and compare 2013 performance with 2014 performance you are comparing two very different groups of students. The students who were in the third grade are in the fourth grade the next year. But if you follow, as this next slide attempts to do, the third grade who was fourth grade in the next year and fifth grade in the next year you will see a very positive trend, a growth trend. I think you see one or two anomalies on the page where you don't see the growth. But most of what you see, particularly in English language arts, is growth and to an extent you see a similar trend in mathematics when you compare the same cohort of students moving forward. The next slide gets at one of your favorite topics, Dr. Hodges, science. It looks at fourth and eighth grade science performance. The first slide is fourth grade and you will see that almost 71% of our total student population in the fourth grade performed at or above proficient on the science test. If you look at the general education population almost 80% of our students performed at or above proficient on the fourth grade science exam. Fifth grade dropped just a bit from the fourth grade scores. 51% roughly of our total students who took the science test in the eighth grade were proficient or above proficient. 66% of the general population similarly was at or above proficient. In language arts literacy if you look at general education, and we're getting into a deeper look at the subgroups starting with general education for language arts, you'll see that performance illustrated on the next slide. You'll see much higher scores generally represented there because it doesn't include any students who are special population students, either LEP or for special education. The next slide does the same for mathematics. Again, that's the general population in mathematics performance. Again, you will see the anomaly I mentioned a little earlier in terms of elementary versus high school performance in mathematics. Special education is the next subgroup and these are students who are determined to be disabled and have a challenge. This represents their performance. One of the big questions we're asking ourselves now is are we including or excluding all of the students that we need to include or exclude. Particularly if they have a cognitive disability then do we include them or not. We're still working through that issue and asking ourselves some hard questions regarding which students to include and exclude. Generally speaking, if I remember correctly, one or two percent of our students were excluded. Was it more than that? What I'm learning when I talk to my colleagues is that they're excluding large numbers of students who are special. They are not including them in the test and in some cases they're excluding whole populations of youngsters rather than looking kid by kid. That's a challenge. The Department of Education does provide guidance to school districts and we want to



make sure we're following that guidance as it's intended. I would also say to you remember over the past couple of years we've brought back into our district special education youngsters who were in centers outside the district. So all of that I think is impacting on our special education performance. Interestingly in math you see at the elementary level, which is consistent with the previous slides, the younger kids seem to be doing better, even if they're special education, than some of the older youngsters. Then you see the performance for LEP for language arts literacy and their performance. You obviously see the same for mathematics. ACCESS is the test that's given to our ELL students. You see the numbers there, but those numbers actually should be low. When a youngsters gets a higher score on ACCESS they are by design moved out of a structured LEP program into a general education class. They've earned their way into a general education class because it means they've acquired the English skills that they need. Those scores are going to be always low compared to some of the others and it's intended to be. If they start scoring well, up to 50% and 60%, then it's time to move them into general education. In summary, and this is in response to a question that Dr. Hodges asked me to be prepared to address, what areas are we doing well in and what areas where improvement is needed and we're not doing so well? There are areas that are not represented there and that's because performance is flat and we always need to improve all our scores. But we've determined that the flatness came as a result of the new Common Core standards being introduced and that's a statewide phenomenon. Improved performance in high school English language arts, elementary math grades 3-8, the graduation rate, two and four-year college acceptance, the biology test can go either way - the performance there is low, but it's improved. It really needs a lot of work - then science in grades 4-8. In need of improvement because of a significant decline in scores would be elementary English language arts, high school math, SAT, advanced placement tests, particularly for honors, and the achievement gap between the general population and LEP and special education. The question then becomes what are we doing about it? I've talked a lot about the seven objectives that we consider our major drivers for improving student achievement. I'm going to refer to an array of slides that you don't have so I'm going to pass them around to you. I'm not going to go through this entire packet. I only want to refer to two or three slides in that packet. This is a presentation that I do a lot to talk about our transformation. Again, you see our demographics there and our Bright Futures. Our transformation objectives I'm alluding to are represented there. We've talked a lot about them. They are research-based. They are what the research tells us and what best practice and experience tells us we need to do to improve student achievement. First of all on the list is to build healthy school cultures. We want schools where students really want to be and really want to learn. We want schools where parents are welcomed and where faculty really wants to go and teach and teach well. Those are just a few of the attributes of a school that has a healthy school culture. That's important to us. We want efficient and responsive district operations. That's an area that's challenging us right now. When I say district operations it's like the business function, human resources and those areas. Those are typically referred to as district operations. They aren't the only ones. There are a number of others. If the operational functions aren't taken care of then obviously you're not meeting the needs of your staff and supporting your staff in doing their jobs in schools. That's what that's about. So it's important that we have both efficient, meaning they're run and executed well, but they're also responsive to the needs of our principals and teachers in our schools to support the education that's taking place in those schools and ensure that our schools are safe, caring, and orderly environments. Revise the teacher and administrator evaluation system. We've done that. We have a new one in place and it's doing what it was purported to do in terms of identifying teachers who are doing real well and rewarding them as such and those who aren't. A little-known fact that perhaps you all weren't aware of is at this point in time about 10% of our teachers are on corrective action plans. That's a significant number and I don't

know that it's ever been that high in our district. The challenge is identifying those teachers who are not doing well. I will remind you that the number one factor associated with student achievement is the quality of instruction delivered in the classroom. So it's important that we evaluate our teachers in a way that determines whether not they are effective in their delivery. Implement the Common Core – obviously that's important, particularly with the expectations that our kids will be prepared for PARCC. Those standards are in place for a reason. They are determined to be the standards. If implemented properly and if our students do well then admission into college becomes less of a challenge for them. Implement high-impact academic interventions for our low-performing students to help the students who are several grade levels behind proficiency to accelerate their achievement. That includes intensive reading and math programs. It may include after-school programs and tutorials, a number of interventions that go beyond the typical instruction that takes place in the classroom to accelerate learning among our lowest-performing students. Strengthen the district's assessment system – for teachers to know where their kids are and to know whether or not they are effective we have to have data to determine that, inform that, and help them to know that. One of the areas that we have to make sure of and you've raised the issue is how much testing. Are we administering too many tests to be able to answer the question how are students doing. Do we have enough information to effectively inform instruction? The last item for me is the most important one on the list - build capacity among staff. Making sure that we have strong teachers in the classroom delivering instruction every day, making sure that we have strong principals who are not only strong managers but strong instructional leaders, making sure that the quality of instruction that's delivered in the classroom every single day is of sufficient quality that ensures that our students are mastering the skills that we expect them to master. Then the district administration is in place to support what's going. I say to myself all the time we don't have a math class down the hall or English classes upstairs. They're in our students so our job is to support them and hold them accountable for doing their jobs well in the schools as well. So it's important that we have district administrators who are doing that. You've seen this list before. It's not a new list. These are the strategies that are in place that are aligned with each one of those objectives. We've done presentations on many of them with the Board and we'll continue to keep you informed. In fact, we're due some additional presentations to you coming up and in February we're going to report on progress on one or two of those. We'll do that each month to keep you informed as to what's going on. A couple of examples, there have been a lot of conversations about the Institute for Learning and the work that they do. I would say to you that those areas where we see our students' performance going up then that's an artifact of the rigor that the Institute for Learning is teaching our teachers to teach with and reflect in their classrooms. I will also say to you that one of the strengths of the IFL work is they are the architects of one of the components of PARCC. They wrote it. They didn't write the whole test. They wrote the English language arts portion and did a lot of work on the math portion. So we're fortunate to have them working with our teachers and helping them to understand the rigor that's reflected in that test that needs to be reflected in their teaching. The reports I'm getting is that it has taken a while but our teachers are finally getting it. All it took was one look at PARCC and they saw the connection between what the IFL was teaching them and it is making a difference. In fact, we don't talk much about the effective schools model, but that's alive and well in our schools and that's the artifact of the work of Ron Edmonds a few decades ago. That continues to be the definitive array of strategies for operating an effective school in every area. I just alluded to the Principles of Learning and the IFL. This next one you're going to hear about in just a minute. I've asked Ms. Peron and Dr. Kazmark to take just a quick minute and make the connection to this. I don't know that people get what this is about and a lot of what I've said already is what it's about. It's about ensuring that the Common Core, those standards we are required to deliver, are represented in the

curriculum. There's a lot of curriculum writing that's going on. I'm actually getting into Ms. Peron's brief comments so I won't get too far. But I will say connecting the Common Core to the professional development that our teachers are subjected to, to the assessments that we hold them to, to the academic interventions and standards that we provide for our students, all of that is connected. If teachers aren't teaching what we expect students to learn and be tested on there's a disconnect. So this was a major effort to connect the dots. I'm going to stop at this point and ask Dr. Kazmark and Ms. Peron just to take a quick minute and orient you to that. If you're on the curriculum committee you've been a part of conversations relating to this.

Ms. Peron: Good evening. We have presented the Paterson Instructional Model before. So we're going to give you an overview of what it is. Basically, the work of the Instructional Model began before I became Chief Academic Office. It was the work of Dr. Cavanna and the C&I group the year before. They put together a really good framework based on the Common Core standards, the influences that go into what we teach, what we want our children to learn, and the type of learner we want our children to become. Then all of the strategies that are used in presenting the instructional academic Common Core Standards, what they need to learn, and the way they need to present it. It builds a framework. It's actually a systematic approach to teaching and learning. Out of the Instructional Model, and I'm not going to read the list to you, come the basic influences which come from our state, the Common Core, the Principles of Learning, which are the principles from the Institute of Learning out of the University of Pittsburgh, the Curriculum Content Standards, and the next general science standards. All the strategies are on the right and those are the different means that teachers present what they're teaching. The Instructional Model also talks about the approaches to teaching content areas like ELA, math, and science. The Instructional Model has a designed lesson plan template that we are currently piloting in some of our schools and the teachers are actually using to plan their lessons together. The Instructional Model also speaks to recommendations on interventions, intervention programs, the daily schedule, and how much time should be spent on the different content areas. So all of those specific recommendations and topics are included in the Instructional Model which has been presented to you and to our teaching staff in the schools on a small basis so that they are looking at it, working with it, and then providing us feedback on how they have administered it, how they're implementing it, and how it works in different settings because each school is different. Each school has a different need. It is really a whole complete listing of what knowledge children should have and the way that the knowledge should be presented. The knowledge is the curriculum. Out of the Instructional Model we have been working tirelessly since July. We started as a team in July and we have been looking at the work that has been developed and currently needs to continue being created, revised, and aligned to the Common Core. We took a look at the assessments that were developed by teachers and directors. We are revising them based on the influences, strategies, and the Common Core state standards. We'll speak to you a little bit about each of the different models because there are different models in terms of instruction. In English language arts we have a different approach to learning than we do in math and science.

Dr. Lauren Kazmark: I know that we spoke in the beginning of the year about the Instructional Model and how instruction varied in the different content areas. Right now in humanities, which is inclusive of language arts and social studies at this time, we use the Workshop Model which means that there is a specific teaching point for a mini lesson that starts at the beginning of the lesson no more than 10 to 15 minutes that focuses very specifically on a particular skill or strategy relating to ELA. Then it goes into guided practice where the teacher and the student are doing things together and where we move into the independent practice. The bulk of the lesson is an independent

practice. Over the years as we look at our ELA and social studies curriculums in our schools we see a lot of what Dr. Hodges showed us earlier where it was just a teacher talking to people regardless of whether or not they actually are following what's happening. What trips up students a lot of times – not just our students, but any students – is the opportunity to transfer that to independent practice. If you were like me in math many of you would understand if the teacher is doing it on the board you follow it completely perfectly and then you go home to try to do your homework and you don't know what you're doing. With a Workshop Model the bulk of the time is with the kids trying the independent practice. But not the independent practice of the entire lesson, but a specific teaching point that they get to practice at that moment. One of the things with Common Core that's become very evident to all of New Jersey is the emphasis on non-fiction writing and reading, technical reading and writing. That means that by the time you get into high school you're at an 80% non-fiction to 20% fiction, which is very different to what we've all been accustomed in English language arts. We've done a lot of time with literature. We read a lot of Shakespeare and Romeo and Juliet in high school. That's not the case anymore. That's a huge shift for our high school teachers and even in kindergarten you're looking at a 50/50 split between non-fiction and fiction. As a former kindergarten teacher that's a big shift as well because we didn't do a whole lot of non-fiction in kindergarten. We did a lot of stories. Across the state you're seeing a lot of shifting in terms of what kids are supposed to be reading, writing, and how teachers are supposed to be instructing. The Workshop Model for language arts and social studies specifically gives kids the opportunity to practice specific teaching points independently and then apply them to their learning. In math and science we use more of a conceptual based model and this is very new for our teachers this year. Again, it's very different than just providing procedural fluency and giving kids the opportunities to just watch you do the steps for math. We're encouraging our kids to really grapple and explore the problem and asking teachers to ask assessing and advancing questions so that they can move students' thinking along. It requires a great deal of communing on the teacher's part. It requires a really deep understanding of the math. And it requires the teachers to really know what kinds of problems and anticipate what kids are going to be asking so that they can move forward. We've been in a lot of classrooms over the last five months as our teachers explore these models and work with them. Workshop Model is in its second year, but math and science conceptually based models are in their first year. So in our infancy with this one of the biggest things that we've been working on in curriculum and with academic services as a whole is just making sure that the connections for teachers are there so that nothing is isolated, that IFL is not different than what they're being expected to do in Workshop or in conceptually based models, that everything is aligned together, and that everything is in preparation for college and career readiness including what we're doing for PARCC. In front of you, you have a one-page sheet. It's two-sided and it gives you an overview of some of the initiatives we've been working on this year. I kept it to one page. I could've gone on but one of the biggest things that we're working on is right on the first page in the middle in terms of curriculum writing and course auditing. The variations between the schools, as Ms. Peron stated, is great and there needs to be a little more consistency in terms of what's being taught across the board. The way that happens in a district as large as ours is to ensure that the curriculum is cohesive and systematically presented to teachers across all our districts and that courses that are presented to kids are the same. That's been really the bulk of our work this past six months.

Ms. Peron: When we first got into looking at curriculum we did an audit of what has been out there, what is currently on the shelf, and what we have in our course guides in terms of what courses we offer and this is more for the high school. We have really gone through an extensive review so that we are sure that we align the career and technical education, the pathways for the high schools. The academics have a clear set

path on what their courses are and they match their mission and vision. Lauren can tell you in her sleep how many CTE courses we have.

Dr. Kazmark: 101.

Ms. Peron: We have 101 CTE courses. So when we tell you that we have been extensively looking at all of the course offerings and all the curriculum work that needs to be done we really mean it. We have a group of curriculum writers. We have been searching for more curriculum writers and more teachers of writing. We developed also a template for curriculum because what happens when teachers get together and they're excited about curriculum everyone just brings to the table what they feel is important. But following our instructional model we need to have aligned curriculum, everything to the best that it can needs to be cohesive and aligned, and assure that we're meeting all the QSAC indicators. That's what's in code about the content areas and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning skills which are now called College and Career Readiness Practices. That just changed. One of the other things that we really are looking at in terms of having an instructional model and developing professional development it all comes back to curriculum. It all comes back to teaching and learning. If we don't have a viable curriculum we don't have a strong special education program. We won't have a strong bilingual program because everything is based on the central nervous system of the district and that's the curriculum. There are a lot of things in terms of the instructional model that are also coming out. The lesson plan template was one of them that I actually described for you. We are working on a new report card and we have a proposed grading system which is different and that I know that Dr. Evans has talked to you about in the past. We are expanding our special programs in certain areas and we continue to look at what we are going to introduce to you. You will be introduced very shortly on one of the new special programs for one of the high schools. Through curriculum we want to maintain an open communication and provide status reports on the work that we are doing. Each content area has developed with Dr. Kazmark an action plan and the steps, strategies, and timeline for what their plan consists of and when it's due. I know that Dr. Kazmark has really been working very closely with the content area directors to assure that the action plans are viable, that they're attainable, and that the work is on schedule.

Dr. Evans: Three other closing comments. You will notice on the handout to which Ms. Peron and Dr. Kazmark were referring to phonics. Some of you have been asking over the past few years what are we doing with phonics. As that clearly indicates, phonics instruction is daily for pre-k through 3 classrooms. It is a part of our expectation. The second thing is I am in the process now of meeting one-on-one with every principal. We've gone through all our high school principals and we are now meeting with our k-8 principals asking some hard questions about their test scores, what they're doing to improve them, and anything else going on in their schools that we have some concerns. But the primary focus is on instruction and making it clear that our expectations are high, not only for our students, but for our teachers and administrators to deliver. If they're going to continue to work in our district they have to deliver as well. We can't accept mediocre or low performance as the standard. It has to be high. The last thing actually relates to what I've just said. We all have to work very hard to continue to improve our scores. Some of the scores are encouraging, as I've mentioned, but some are not acceptable. They have to improve and that's the standard to which we're holding everyone in the district to. That concludes our presentation.

Comm. Mimms: What does CTE stand for?

Dr. Evans: Career and Technical Education.

Comm. Teague: Would it be possible for Ms. Peron to provide the Board with a copy of those PARCC test questions that she was referring to?

Dr. Evans: Are you talking about the ones on your screen?

Comm. Teague: Here there was a reference to PARCC-like questions.

Dr. Evans: I know that there is a presentation that the assessment folk have done and it included some PARCC-like questions. Is that what you were referring to, Ms. Peron?

Ms. Peron: What we're talking about are the unit assessments.

Dr. Evans: Oh, the unit assessments, not PARCC.

Ms. Peron: Currently, all of the unit assessments at each grade level do have and mirror the PARCC-like questions. So I can get you a copy of those by grade level or all grade levels. Which content areas?

Comm. Teague: I just want to look at the overview.

Ms. Peron: Ok, both ELA and math in every grade level.

Dr. Evans: You may already have some. Dr. Newell, did you send some PARCC-like questions and the information on our screen to Board members already? What's on your computer has already been sent out to you.

Comm. Kerr: Ms. Peron, I think I heard something to the effect that they are still modeling this test to the teachers. Is that the case?

Ms. Peron: Which test?

Comm. Kerr: PARCC.

Ms. Peron: PARCC has not been released yet. We actually did a field test last year in certain schools. The PARCC-like test has been out there, but all teachers in grades 3-11 will see them in March. There are practice tests. Ones we have brought to the attention of the administrators through professional development. We have actually offered all information for teachers to go onto the DOE website which has many sites and PARCC-like tests that they can actually take and go through it with their students. There are tutorials and short tests.

Comm. Kerr: You mentioned something about modeling. Can you go back into your presentation and see if you can make that connection? I didn't want to stop you then, but I heard something about modeling. I just need to know what is being modeled.

Ms. Peron: I have to think about that. Are you talking about the Workshop Model? That's where we would use that word. The Workshop Model is the type of instruction that would take place.

Comm. Kerr: I thought it was modeling.

Ms. Peron: I have to go back to the minutes and see.

Comm. Simmons: Ms. Peron, I had a question in reference to the Workshop Model. With all of the changes, how do those changes weigh into the teacher evaluation?

Ms. Peron: The teachers were professionally developed and we have ELA school-based supervisors who understand the model and know certain steps that teachers are supposed to be doing. There are certain behaviors and activities that through the model the teachers will reference and use with their students. Those are just actions that the principal, vice principal, or supervisor that's evaluating the teacher would understand and know to look for in the classroom. Did I answer your question?

Dr. Evans: Let me extend that just a bit. There are some effective practices that we expect our teachers to implement. When I go into a classroom there are certain things I look for. When principals go in to observe for evaluation purposes or if they're doing a walk-through there are certain practices they look for. In other cases there's a lot of flexibility in terms of how teachers may deliver, but particularly around the writing workshop, that is a particular model. I think that's the context in which you are referring to, Dr. Hodges. Our kids perform low in writing. So the Workshop Model we determined would be a methodology that the research has clearly associated with significant improvements in writing skills if done properly. So we're expecting our teachers to deliver that model. We really are. If I'm going into a class where the teacher is teaching writing that's what I'm looking for. Again, it depends on what the area is and what the need is.

Ms. Peron: It is a complex question because taking into account the evaluation of the teacher you have to look at the way she plans the lesson, what she's teaching, and how she delivers it. If she's following our Workshop Model it's "I do, we do, you do." Those strategies are presented in that manner. Then it's taking into account that you are all different and I need to differentiate instruction for each and every one of you. That's another aspect of evaluation too. There are a lot of factors and variables that go into it whether you're doing a long observation or a short observation.

Comm. Irving: Mr. Johnson and I had the pleasure in our course for this semester of having to do a data set project for our doctorate program. Mr. Johnson and I spent a lot of time looking at district-wide data. For my class in preparation for this it made me do even some more digging around. In just talking about our HSPA scores if you go from a 10-year projectile our students are clearly doing much better in language arts than they are in math. I remember there was an initial initiative three or four years ago for interventions with regard to math for the HSPA in particular. But given the fact that our total general education population from 2004 to present has risen and fallen but is still presently at 43%, and 10 years ago we were at 40%, by and large, you can make the argument that on some level we are indeed flat. No matter how you shake it you can only gauge the district in a group aggregate by the score that they have. What is the district's plan to address mathematics for the HSPA but also for NJASK or PARCC moving forward? Everything I'm going to say refers to NJASK and HSPA. But it's not just about PARCC, but about general learning in mathematics. If our kids can't break 50% proficient in mathematics and we're still hovering around the 40's over a 10-year period that's a problem. That's my first question. What are the districts' initiatives related to math for primary and secondary schools?

Dr. Evans: I'll make some introductory comments and then Ms. Peron can add to that. First of all, let me deal with the drop. You are right. Two years ago we went into classrooms. Actually, I asked one of our staff members who is very proficient...

Comm. Irving: Those scores were reflected in that year.

Dr. Evans: They are. Actually, I asked one of our staff members who is very proficient to go in and do whatever was necessary to change those outcomes and literally she took a team of supervisors and others who were the best of the best in our district in math. They went in and depending on what they found in high school math classes they either took over the class and made the teachers sit and watch what they were doing so they could learn from what they were doing, or they provided onsite professional development as they were teaching to improve their skills. They did that for a full year. That's when we realized those significant gains. The problem the next year was that there wasn't follow-through within the classroom on that. The change was not sustained. We know exactly which classes. We have data to show who followed through and who didn't. We've since changed leadership in mathematics. Ms. Lagos became our math director. She had picked up that torch, was moving with it, and was doing some great things that were turned around. Now another problem has developed. As you know, she's been recruited by another district for a significant increase in pay. So now we are struggling trying to find someone to fill that gap. But I think we're going to see some improvements. I can't say improvements in HSPA because we're not absolutely sure what we're going to get in PARCC for high school because they didn't have those standards introduced in HSPA as elementary did in NJASK. She's still here with us, but she won't be with us long. We should see some improved performance regardless of what it looks like on PARCC because she's done a lot with the teachers to follow up on that initial work that was done a couple of years ago.

Comm. Irving: I hear that, but the district over a 10-year period has been hovering around the 40's. Clearly, there was an implementation plan that you put in place that was effective in that year. So should the district not go back to that plan again once we find new leadership and go back to that intervention strategy that clearly data showed worked?

Dr. Evans: Yes is the answer to my question. It is a strategy that we need to replicate. It worked. I know there are some other things happening and I'm going to ask Ms. Peron to talk about that.

Ms. Peron: There is also a different test and different skills to be learned. There is a plan that was developed this year under the leadership of Virginia Lagos. One of them was a major focus on Algebra I and Geometry in the higher learning math classes. The teachers now have to understand that there is a transfer of skills. The heavy lifting doesn't rely on them. It is the child who now instead of following a procedure or a math problem has to understand the concept and what they need to learn. It's like learning less but learning it deeper. We did ramp up the professional development for math in every grade level this year and that's why there is an outcry about principals saying that the teachers are out of the building a lot. That's because we took a look at the professional development that went on for ELA two years ago and it was the same case then. This year this was the training year. This year was the year that teachers had to make that mind shift in terms of teaching and learning. Children had to understand the concept rather than just the procedure to divide. It's a different way of teaching. It certainly has taken its toll in classrooms, but it's one that we continue to focus on through professional development. Did you want to add something?

Dr. Kazmark: I'm just pulling one of our PowerPoints that we did with teachers on the PARCC for math. We didn't mention this before, but there are three types of tasks for math that are on PARCC test, types 1, 2, and 3. Type 1 is more of just a basic procedural fluency. The example is here  $A^2+B^2=C^2$ . That was 90% of the HSPA.



Currently with PARCC, especially with the piece coming out in March, the performance-based piece, most of what we're looking at are tasks Types 2 and 3, which are more about reasoning and...

Comm. Irving: Being able to explain their answers.

Dr. Kazmark: Not just your answer, but being able to explain your process.

Comm. Irving: The point I'm trying to make here is that there are two questions as far as how we measure next year's assessment. Furthermore, what you all just mentioned is the fact that there are two competencies that PARCC is going to evaluate in our students that we probably have not been focusing on. Those two areas in particular students have not been exposed to holistically in the years that they've taken standardized tests in the district.

Ms. Peron: Right, because the standards were different.

Comm. Irving: Correct. Comm. Simmons and I had a conversation earlier today. My expectation is that there will be a very low level of proficiency in the students when it comes to math in particular. I've looked at PARCC math given the numbers that we have and we're over 70% district-wide, which is actually pretty impressive for us as a district. The higher the better, but my concern though is that the math scores are really going to expose us for all the vulnerabilities that we have and, quite frankly, should have been watching if we're looking at the data that happens to be here.

Comm. Hodges: I want to piggyback on what you're saying. The reason I did this is because I sat in classrooms and watched kids just absorb the material. I went to great lengths to find something I knew you wouldn't be familiar with off the top because there are strange words and terms that you don't know and don't normally see. It would require you to spend some time to absorb this and go through all of this in order to master the material. The problem that I'm having is that we do not have an approach that teaches kids how to handle this when they're not in the classroom or process the materials in the classroom. I don't see that as being a systemic approach where they can go home and say, "I've learned this in the classroom which may be very good. But now I can go home with my materials and notes that people said they need and I can go through it on my own and process it at home." That's not there. That was a concern to me. The other part of that is there are people who have now flipped the classroom around to where they're sending kids home with actual videos of lectures. As opposed to lecturing during the day they give the students lectures with five or eight minutes of material and then the students look at that two or three times at home. The day is spent in the classroom working through your understanding of the material. That's a way to get around what's not happening in terms of the kids going home and studying and processing. Those are methods to address that. I don't see us addressing that that way and that's my concern. That's the whole point of this. You're absolutely right. We have classes where people stand there and there's absolute silence and they just plow right ahead on. What I really need people to understand is there are a lot of those kids. If you're a different language this is like listening to a different language. I made sure that's what you would get. So how are we going to be able to address that part where we want the kids to take the instruction and go home with it? What are we building in in terms of note taking and study skills so that they can go home and process the excellent instruction that you're giving in the classroom.

Dr. Evans: In addition, we're going to have to go to the extreme, as Comm. Irving was suggesting. We're going to have to. There's no question about it.

Comm. Irving: The next question I have is just on the SAT with regard to our plan of action to correct this issue. I'm going to share something with the group because I want to make sure we all know what we're talking about when we say college-ready. Before I did my data project I had no clue what that meant. The College Board says that for every student in your district who scores over 1,500 on the SAT they're college ready. End of story. They say for everyone who scores over 1,500 studies show that if they get accepted to college they're normally going to do pretty well. They'll get a B. They'll go on and be okay. But if you guys look at the mean average of our district over three years our kids are scoring with a total of 1,119 and 1,120. That's the mean average of all the kids. When they report that we only have 17 kids who are college-ready all that specifically means is that 17 kids scored over the 1,500 benchmark. But the important thing to remember here is that each section is 800 points. If you just do 5, 10, or 15 you're there. Our kids over the last three years have not been able to break 400. I'm happy to hear from Dr. Evans that there are going to be some numbers that are going to affect this. But even if they do, you would have to have at least 80 students all scoring above 500 to even raise this up to the 400 percentile in each section. So what's our plan as far as trying to get young people to perform better on the SAT? We know they're performing because their PSAT scores are reflective of it. If the 2012-2014 PSAT examinations are showing that out of 500 students no more than 20 or 25 are college-ready, we know that before kids even take the test. I'm looking at this stuff and I'm freaking out because we know the year before these kids take this test they're going to do bad on it. We know it. What are the hardcore interventions to teach kids how to perform better on the SAT? Again, on a scale of one to 800 our kids aren't cracking higher than 292. That was this year and believe it or not that was in math. In other areas such as writing our kids score as low as 360. The minimum point is 400. So there has to be some intervention associated with that.

Comm. Hodges: I don't know whether you can apply an intervention to an SAT test other than testing prep. The real problem is the scope of knowledge that the child brings to the table at that point in time.

Comm. Irving: I agree. But there are also ways we can at least teach our young people how to manage their time, evaluate options, and be able to cognitively decide if you have four options which two are the best two. There are different techniques, as you pointed out, that other districts teach for the students who aren't performing as high to teach them to at least be in the running and in the game so at least you have two options as opposed to four.

Comm. Hodges: There are test prep programs and Dr. Evans has created SAT programs here in the district three times a week and so forth. But there's a fundamental problem in terms of the education that the student brings to the table in terms of math, fractions, multiplication, and division. Our kids are not mastering those.

Comm. Irving: Right. SAT prep needs to go beyond prep and it has to be a very aggressive preparation program. Here's the point I need everybody to understand – for each year we continue to be flat and average at 1,119 and 1,120 the State of New Jersey's mean average score continues to rise to 1,511, 1,521, and 1,537. If we don't get our stuff together there will come a point where our kids will just be naturally outscored by the state average. Forget competing with any other district. When colleges evaluate our young people and ask are they worth coming here, if they can't crack the 1,500, 1,400, or 1,300 mark, we're doing our kids a disservice. The point I'm trying to make is SAT prep is the bare minimum. But there has to be an emergency button pushed right now for young people who are going to be taking the SAT in the

next year or two that seeks to bring them in on Saturday and weekends and not just teaches them prep, but also takes them up with the terminology and pedagogy that this test is going to specifically teach.

Ms. Peron: There are a lot of implications for just SAT prep. You have to talk about the rigor in the classroom. You have to talk about teacher expectations. You have to talk about the awareness and knowledge of what the SAT means. Before all of that you have to have the viable curriculum from pre-k through 8. Then you have to also bring in all of the community. You have to bring in your guidance advisories so that they can talk to kids about what the SAT means, why they should wake up on Saturday and take the test, and what it means for them and their future. There are a lot of things that are in place. I'll let Dr. Kazmark talk about this. We're having conversations with the College Board to develop courses that would help us with the items and the test prep for SAT. One of those is a vocabulary initiative and a program that helps with that. We've added that in the middle grades and that's coming up.

Dr. Kazmark: I think when we talked to you earlier about the need for the course audit and the need for the curriculum it may sound more compliance-driven than it is instructionally driven, but it really is kind of the basis for all this work. If the instructional model and the philosophy aren't aligned to what's happening in the classroom, the resources that are in the room, and what the kids are working on then their preparedness for things like SAT prep aren't there. The need for them to understand how to navigate the test is there as well, especially now that the test is more aligned to the new Common Core and some of the less memorization aspects of analogies and things like that. So there are a couple of things. If we're infusing more non-fiction texts into our classrooms and requiring kids to defend their answers, state their evidence, and move forward that way, if we're requiring them to defend their explanations when they're doing math and we're requiring them to come up with answers without us telling them how to do the steps then their ability to answer questions on SAT are there coming into the test. The test prep aspect becomes more about timing and being able to formulate something you do at home in three hours into a 45-minute response. The College Board has done a lot. We've met with them recently right before the Christmas break about some of the offerings that they can provide us for specialty courses in that respect and how to eliminate answer choices in multiple choice and how to respond appropriately in writing in a given amount of time. But the crux of the thinking work that's going to happen in order for them to be successful in the class has to start with some of what Ms. Peron talked about in terms of the curriculum being there, the rigor in the classroom being there, and the courses that are offered. Part of our course audit was to identify electives in ELA and math that would be eligible to infuse SAT prep into their daily course work. But that's in addition to what they're getting in their English and math classes.

Comm. Irving: Can I stop you? What you're saying theoretically and conceptually makes plenty of sense. But what I'm talking about is next year our kids are going to probably score 1,121. I'm saying until we get to that point the next year they'll probably score maybe 1,121 then 1,122. What I'm trying to implore to you folks to get on board with is the fact that we need something right now for kids who are going to take the SAT as juniors and seniors – whether it's an emergency intervention program – to at least give these kids a fighting chance. This is unfair. Look at these numbers. I'm sorry. I hear what you're saying and that makes plenty of sense. In an ideal world we have to fix the curriculum, align all the standards, make sure that the curriculum writing has been done, and the audit is all aligned. But in the meantime we still have kids this year who will take that SAT. I think we owe it to our kids to at least put as much energy and effort to get them at least as a benchmark to be able to break 400 as a mean aggregate

or to get into the high 390s. Then we say interventions could work and we try and shoot for the 400s. But we owe it to our kids at this stage in the game to do something in the immediate future to help these kids out. It's just not fair.

Dr. Evans: You're right. Actually, the place to start this year is with our tenth graders because most kids take it in the eleventh grade and doing something for them as we head for the summer and actually have some offerings for them during the summer into the fall. They'll take it at some point during the year next year. But you're right. That is the basics. As the floor rises in terms of curricular expectations and the new Common Core we need to be doing additional interventions, which is what you're saying, to get them ready and we will.

Comm. Hodges: Dr. Evans, instead of the Krebs cycle, let's say this is division of fractions that you're trying to work through. Our kids will struggle with that. If they're struggling with division of any kinds of fractions and they can't do multiplication and division then algebra is simply out of the question and they're not going to do well on the math portion of the SAT. So you can't wait until tenth or eleventh grade to teach them how to divide fractions. You simply can't do that. What really needs to be in place is some sort of individualized educational plan so that you can determine where they are and there's an early warning system that Mr. Irving is talking about where you intervene and say you have a deficit in...

Comm. Irving: Dr. Hodges, it's called the PSAT.

Comm. Hodges: Before you get there. That's too late.

Comm. Irving: At minimum that early warning system is when they take that PSAT in the ninth grade and they fall below the 1,400 percentile signs start going up.

Comm. Hodges: That is still too late because you want the kid before he or she gets to high school to be able to do...

Ms. Peron: We have these conversations all the time. There are plans to even offer the PSAT earlier than the ninth grade. There are kids who take the PSAT in seventh and eighth grade and then you develop the individual education plan and then you develop the interventions. Or you track them. Or you send them to the enrichment courses so that they can move beyond whatever score they have had. You're talking about the kids right now. You're talking about those. Those are the ones we have to look at during the summer. Those are the ones that we have to develop something for right now. But for the overall plan to increase SAT scores we do have to do it much earlier than the ninth grade. We do have to look at our PSAT scores and our data closely individually so that we recognize what the strengths and the weaknesses are for each of those kids. Then through advisory and through an individual plan we set them up for success. This part of it is not going to meet your sense of urgency right now because we do have our existing seniors, juniors, and sophomores that really need the help. We do have to look at developing those summer courses and those extra offerings. We could do it through Plato online so that they can practice. We are looking at those interventions.

Comm. Irving: We're going to have a conversation in a few weeks about the performance of the district and where we are. I'm going to make it very clear one of the things I'm going to push and advocate for is there needs to be some intervention programs right now for kids who are presently in their senior, junior and sophomore years. I can't say it's unacceptable. It's just not fair. We're supposed to be loving our

kids. We only have the last two years of data for PSAT, but if I asked you to pull the last four I'm sure...

Ms. Peron: There's not a big difference.

Comm. Irving: We're clearly getting an indicator from ninth and tenth grade that students are not going to perform as well when the time comes to actually take that test. I think it's incumbent upon us as you just said to take note of that trend and be able to apply that treatment and intervention as soon as we can to be able to track if that's helping. I think the goal is just to make sure that we move that bar of students who are college-ready. That college-ready benchmark means nothing. I'm just talking about students who can at least perform average enough and good enough to at least be able to go to the school of their choice. I have three other questions but I'm going to yield.

Comm. Hodges: Dr. Evans wants to comment and then we have some parents with some children here. I'd like to suspend this conversation after Dr. Evans has his comment and open up the public portion to give them an opportunity to speak and reconvene.

Dr. Evans: I just wanted to briefly comment on the fact that we are in agreement with the need to do something, but we should go even beyond what we're talking about. Very soon we're going to come to you with a proposal for an IB program. That's already drafted. We're vetting it and preparing to bring it to you guys to make you aware of it and get your support for it. That's an example of a long-term strategy that ultimately will help. But I think about some experiences that I've had that go back I won't say how far when I was in Durham County, North Carolina. The beauty of being in Durham County in North Carolina is Duke University. There was a program there that was well institutionalized called the TIP, Talent Identification Program. Seventh graders who performed at or above a certain grade point average in seventh grade or on standardized tests were identified by Duke University and the district in partnership using the SAT to participate in a program that got them on Duke's campus every summer. I think there were three consecutive summers to strengthen what they knew already. Those kids nearly aced the SAT when they took it later. Programs like that we need to be creating. So I'm in agreement with what you're saying. I really am. But we need to get on with putting something together.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**It was moved by Comm. Martinez, seconded by Comm. Irving that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

Ms. Patricia McNeil: Good evening. I'm not going to speak on what I came here to speak on. I need to do a little more work on it. My question to Dr. Evans is at what point were our children allowed to use calculators and cell phones to do their math work in the classroom? This causes a lot of confusion because if special needs children know their time tables, why aren't regular education students taught their time tables anymore? Are they taught them? This is what I want to know. I'm just saying what I read in the newspaper, that these students are allowed to use their cell phones. I don't know the policy on cell phones in the Paterson School System. I need to do a little more work on that. But the reason they're allowed to bring cell phones into the classroom that I'm reading in the newspaper is because they need to do their math. Is this helping them? Then they have calculators? I don't have any problem with the calculator, but I have a big problem with the cell phones to be used as calculators.

Wouldn't it be better for the Paterson School System to encourage these children to buy calculators instead of cell phones? Am I correct? Did you read the same thing I read?

Dr. Evans: I think I did. I think I know what you're referring to and it's not necessarily about calculators. There are circumstances under which teachers will require youngsters to have and teachers will provide in many cases calculators for youngsters to use. Because cell phones have a calculator built in, at least most of the smart phones do, they may establish that as an option. But that's done in advance and everybody knows it. There's communication with the administration in the school. It's not just arbitrary where one day teachers decide to bring their calculators tomorrow. That's not how it works. That's the function of having a curriculum and any materials and equipment necessary to support that curriculum is written in the course of study. That's known way in advance and that varies from classroom to classroom. The answer is a lot longer than I'm giving you. It requires an extended conversation that I'm willing to have with you and it would need to involve some of our curriculum folks.

Ms. McNeil: You took up some of my three minutes. I just want to ask you one other question. At what age are these students allowed to bring these cell phone calculators into the classroom? I need to do a little research on that.

Dr. Evans: What I should do is send you a copy of our student code of conduct because it is addressed in there. There are circumstances under which they can, but they can't interfere with instruction. That's clearly written in the student code of conduct.

Ms. McNeil: I'll request that.

Ms. Rebecca Fernandez: Good evening. My name is Rebecca Fernandez. I'm with PEOC, the Parent Education Organizing Council. We're a group of parents, grandparents, students, and community leaders concerned about the state of education here in Paterson. My first comment was to be directed at Comm. Irving but he seems to not care to hear public comments. What I do want to say is that the Board has owed it to our kids every stage of the game and every year of past presidency to make sure that our children are prepared to take the test. Learning how to take a test suddenly before the test is not going to give our kids the knowledge they need to make them capable of competing for their future. But that's not why I'm here. I'm here to talk about assessments. You should know, Commissioners and Dr. Evans, that parent awareness of the dangers of the PARCC exist and are growing, and so is resistance to the PARCC test. Parents know that PARCC is a better predictor or indicator of household income than of knowledge. It is proving not to be an accurate gauge of learning or of future success. Parents know, just as I continue to hear you know, that our kids are not ready for the PARCC, neither how to answer the questions, nor how to input the answers to the questions, nor how to maneuver from one question to the next question and then back. Our schools are not ready for PARCC neither in instruction nor in infrastructure. Our kids are over-tested and because of it they're under-taught. Indeed we do get what this is all about. You should know that parents will be opting out of the PARCC and that parents of Paterson need you, the Paterson School Board, to create and approve a districtwide policy that responds to and upholds the rights of parents to opt out. What we're asking for is a policy that ensures that no child or parent be punished, penalized or harassed for their option to refuse testing, that non-testing students will be provided with an alternative placement outside of the testing environment and be permitted to read and do academic work, that this districtwide policy be enforced districtwide, and that it is understood by every principal and administrator that this is not to be yet another districtwide policy on paper and do as you see fit policy in action. Our policies are only as effective as our ability and willingness to enforce them. I'm glad that this

conversation is being had, but I'm also entirely disappointed that a special session would be called on such short notice and without appropriate notification to discuss a topic with the gravity of annual assessments. The PARCC test has galvanized communities around education across the country, something I'm sure you're not unaware of, because of its' potential to injure our youth, our teachers, and our schools. Yet this Board calls a side meeting purposefully sidestepping an incredible opportunity to engage parents and the Paterson community in meaningful discourse about the academic future of our youth and of our city. The reason that our students are mired in stagnation in this district is because this Board and this district continue to fail to take real authentic parent engagement seriously. There is no more critical partner in educating children than their families. Do your homework, Commissioners. Look at the data. There are time-tested and proven ways of doing parent engagement that work to increase academic outcomes, raise test scores, and get our kids to college. Parent engagement is the missing link and we really need to evolve.

Dr. Evans: Were there any other speakers?

Comm. Hodges: I just want you to address that one point.

Dr. Evans: The PARCC and what it means?

Comm. Hodges: Yes.

Dr. Evans: I don't know if I can do that briefly, but I'll try. It's personal with me, to be frank with you. I told my staff a short story not too long ago as to the significance of PARCC and the Common Core to me. I will go on record with anyone who has a record that they want to make as being strongly supportive of both. I reflect on my growing up and my schooling. This was back in the dark ages, so to speak, a long time ago. I went to elementary school in the 1950's and high school in the mid-1960's and earned straight A's all the way through school. I went to college in 1968 at North Carolina Central University and nearly failed. In the first semester I had a 1.8 average and you had to have a 2.0 to stay. I went home to the farm and discussed it with my father and he said if they give you another chance you either do that or work the farm. I didn't want to work the farm. That was my option. That was a no brainer for me. But the reason I failed is the point of this monologue. My high school had caring teachers who cared about me. They knew my mother. They knew my father. They worked with us. They worked with everyone. I had straight A's as I said. But that high school did not prepare me for college. It did not prepare me for success at North Carolina Central University. That's why I nearly failed. They taught what they thought we could learn and they did their best they could. Instead I couldn't go to the high school in my neighborhood that taught to higher standards. I wasn't permitted because of my color. Those students went to college and were successful. I did get a second chance at North Carolina Central and the rest is history. I did very well. I learned what I didn't learn in high school and I was successful in college. If I had been taught just as we are trying to teach our students to higher expectations and higher standards like the Common Core and test it with a test that tested my mastery of those standards like the PARCC, I wouldn't have had the problems that I had as a freshman at Central. It is my desire to make sure that our kids don't have the same challenges that I had. If we do our jobs and prepare them to do well first in class mastering the curriculum that's driven by the Common Core and then represent that well on PARCC they won't be challenged as I was when they go to college. That's why it's important to me. It is very near and dear to me. I strongly support it.

Comm. Hodges: But the implications to students who are taking this test, what does this test mean for them?

Dr. Evans: Higher standards... First of all, they have to be taught to higher standards. But obviously it doesn't assure but it gets them closer to college acceptance.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening, Mr. President, Commissioners, Dr. Hodges, staff, and community. The previous President would allow me extra time.

Comm. Hodges: He's not here anymore.

Ms. Grant: I just wanted to state that for the record. I absolutely believe in high standards. I've preached it for a long time and I do believe that kids have to be assessed. We have to know how they're performing against those standards. I have some reservations about the PARCC though. It is being rolled out at warp speed. It is being rolled out with a lot of uncertainty. There have been discussions at the state level about whether or not it will be used as a graduation requirement. I hear that won't happen until 2018. That's because there was some pushback from parents and community members. There have been discussions about whether or not places are technologically ready for the PARCC. I look at the presentation that you gave tonight, Dr. Evans, and I see that there have been improvements. But as you said, we are far from in a good place with where our kids are scoring on the assessments. I think about that and I remember hearing Bari Erlichson at the State Department of Education who's in charge of a lot of these assessments say they were happy to get rid of the NJASK and the HSPA because it didn't indicate how well kids were doing. It was too easy and so a lot of kids in New Jersey passed it. That might have been okay for the rest of New Jersey, but Paterson kids weren't passing it at high rates. So to take them in this jump from the NJASK where they're still not doing well to the PARCC which we're being told is a higher stake exam and measures a higher standard is troublesome. Dr. Hodges talked about dividing fractions. If our kids can't yet divide fractions how will they divide fractions on a computer when they haven't had the kind of access that their suburban counterparts have had to the technology? They have cell phones and I-pads, but it's not the same as sitting in front of a computer time on task and doing these exercises that require higher level thinking skills, critical thinking, manipulating of objectives on the computer. I just keep asking please do all you can, Commissioners, Dr. Evans and staff, to make sure that our kids are ready. We don't want this to be a setup for them to fail. We want to get them there and we want the time to get them there. This is why we're working with legislators to push back the PARCC assessments, to push back the stakes that are attached to them, and to give parents that real option to opt out and not have the kids be penalized. So do consider a policy that speaks to the parents' needs to opt out when they feel as if their children are not ready or that their children are traumatized by it and provide some alternative setting for the children. It doesn't have to be 30 kids in a classroom, but a quiet space where they can read supervised. There are lots of alternatives that can be provided for children who opt out of the testing. So please do take this into consideration. I don't think we're ready and I want you to really examine how ready we are. I also want to point out the computer labs are going to be used for the exam and there are students who won't have access for regular teaching and learning for one month at a time in two different time periods. I want to make sure that there are some plans in place for these kids who have to interrupt their lessons while others take the PARCC. Thank you.

**It was moved by Comm. Martinez, seconded by Comm. Cleaves that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**



## PRESENTATION ON ASSESSMENTS

Comm. Martinez: We've gotten through a lot of heavy-lifting today. I don't mean to pile on, but there's another aspect to PARCC preparation that we haven't touched on just yet. Let me just say that PARCC is stressful for a lot of people because in a lot of ways we're building this plane as we're flying it at the same time. There's potential for... I'll leave that to your own discretion. The other point that I want to make when we talk about PARCC is we took a deep dive into the content and the instruction that leads up to the actual test-taking itself. The other side of that coin we haven't touched on is the operations portion. All of the instruction and preparation could potentially be for naught if we don't have the capacity within the district to support the pure number of computers in schools and power that we are going to need. We're talking about upwards of 50 schools with 'x' amount of kids in each school all logging on at the same time, which means our bandwidth needs to be expanded. I'm not a tech person so I can't speak to what maybe Comm. Simmons can. I can't speak to what that number should be and what the bandwidth needs to be. But we're going to have to expand that significantly. We're going to have to make sure that every single computer and every piece of software is up to par, ready, and programs are installed. This is a heavy lift. We're talking about the content and the instruction which is of utmost importance. I think it takes precedence. But let's not lose sight of the fact that all of this can be for naught if we don't have the capacity to withstand what's coming. One little power glitch can shut this whole thing down. I could be wrong, but I don't think the state will be looking at us and saying, "It's okay. You didn't have the bandwidth or you had a technical glitch. We'll give you another try." I don't think there is a second try here. Either we get it right or we don't get it right. Are we preparing to do test runs? How many? How frequently? How often? When are they starting? All of these things we need to address immediately because March 5 is right around the corner. I'm not sure who can speak to that, but we need to be very sure and of the utmost certainty that we can support with our bandwidth, computers, and every other technological aspect that's tied into this that we can actually make this happen. I'm not sure who can speak to that.

Dr. Evans: Let me call Dr. Newell to the mike and as she's coming I will tell you there are two test runs that are scheduled. We also provided information to the Board but more information needs to be provided regarding our partnership with PCCC to give us as much bandwidth as we need. They've already made the connections through Norman S. Weir. That's where the connections come in and will impact all of our schools. Plus there's a partnership. There's a backup system that's in the works as well taking advantage of a partnership or option that the DOE is giving us with one of the counties that has the backup. I should just shut up and let them talk. They have the details.

Mr. Kenneth Sumter: There was a great concern and it's still a concern with the things that you mentioned. One of the things that we're doing is the partnership with PCCC which is going to give us a 5-gig connection. The backup will be the consortium through Monmouth consortium that's being put together by the DOE and that's going to give us a 1-gig connection. That's how we're dealing with the bandwidth. One of the other things to remember also is a couple of weeks ago Newark did a practice test and they ended up failing because of the bandwidth. One of the things that we're doing is putting CAD servers in. We don't have 500 computers going to Pierson for the connection. We'll have 13 CAD servers being connected for the PARCC itself. Our main focus is for those devices to have connection to the servers. Once it's connected to the servers those are the direct connections to Pierson. That's pretty much it as far as what we're doing. We are planning two practice tests. The first one is at the end this month and that's with our current setup that we have now with the three CAD servers. The next

one will probably be within the next two or three weeks once we have the other 10 servers in. Then we can really test exactly where we'll be and any glitches that we may have then we'll have a detail of what needs to be done after that.

Comm. Martinez: That means by the end of this week we'll have our first run. Forgive me. I'm naïve. I don't know the difference between 1 gig and 5 gigs. Is that enough to support an entire district?

Mr. Sumter: Yes.

Comm. Martinez: On that top level we're in good shape. Are the computers in each school up to par? Are the programs installed?

Mr. Sumter: We're in the process of purchasing more computers. With the current system that we have what was required for PARCC was Windows 7. We had gone through every lab in the district as well as now we're backtracking and identifying other computers beyond the labs. We have to look at certain sections for the Sped students. We have to put together a mini lab for that area and then upgrading those systems to Windows 7. I can provide you more data on that. We went through just about every school and identified at least one or two labs in every school that has been upgraded to Windows 7 and PARCC-ready tools that we use to make sure that those devices are PARCC-ready. One of the other things that we implemented was the deep freeze which allows us once we have it totally set up for PARCC, which we have now, to freeze the computer totally out. Students can pretty much manipulate anything onto the computer because once you shut it down and bring it back up it goes back to that PARCC-ready configuration.

Comm. Kerr: What about onsite technical support for the test?

Mr. Sumter: We have identified at every school a device manager which we'll be training as far as being able to help out any technical situations that are handled. We also brought in five additional resources through a temp agency that's also out implementing their skills in helping to upgrade and becoming very familiar with the PARCC testing and the software. Our other end is identifying those device managers within the schools. Currently we only have 10 technicians throughout the district so we won't be able to be at every place at any given time. Additional resources and then each school has identified a device manager within that building to handle any particular situations that they may have.

Comm. Kerr: I was wondering about the nature of the problem. What if there is a technical problem that goes beyond the skill level of those technicians? What do you do? I guess this test has to do with timing. With a child not being able to work, how do we redeem that time?

Mr. Sumter: Because it's on a CAD server that student will be able to log back in and continue from where they left off. Now we have to look at additional devices or things like that for the student to be able to be replaced. What's happening is we have computer laptops. If there are enough devices what can happen is just take the device out and replace it and the student will be able to log in. That's why the CAD servers are so important.

Comm. Kerr: What's our number like? How many carts are you going to provide to support?

Mr. Sumter: I don't have the numbers off my head, but thus far we have purchased 1,500 devices and there are 30 computers to every cart.

Dr. Laurie Newell: Additionally, we're trying to model what we did for the PARCC field test in the spring of last year. In terms of your question we actually have a tiered process. Last year when we were having some issues I'm not sure if you know but the Pierson servers crashed while we were doing some of our PARCC testing. We had to actually do a lot of triaging. The techs onsite could not fix it because it was not something that was fixable there. So we actually will have a team here located in central office. It will be a chain of escalations that if they need to call Pierson we have people almost like a command center here that will be also calling in to Pierson.

Comm. Simmons: You mentioned that there was going to be a test at the end of this week. I'm not sure how many students will actually take the test at one time. Will that test simulate the total number of students that are going to be taking the test at one time? The district itself still has to be able to operate as well as PCCC if necessary.

Mr. Sumter: The test is still being put as far as scheduling. We're looking at a grade level test of a large middle school. That will give us a better assessment of our needs, strengths and weaknesses at that time and then putting everything in place that we have in the district office as far as technical support and practicing our communication piece from there.

Dr. Evans: The plan is to test one complete grade at a time and have two different testing cycles per day that are 90 minutes each. One group will be on say from 8:00 to 9:30. I'm making up the times but the 90 minutes is accurate. Then another group would be on from 10:00 to 11:30. So the test is to take a complete grade and make them fully operational at any given time. In fact, we should go beyond that just to be cautious. But that's how we're planning it.

Comm. Simmons: We've had this conversation, but anything that can go wrong will go wrong. I'm not completely comfortable with the way that the test is being administered because it doesn't encompass everything. It's the only true way to test the network, if you have everything that's going to be going on simulated. It's the only true way to test it. Secondly, if there are fixes that need to be implemented, how soon can we get those things done? I know that there's supposed to be some work done in the computer rooms. I've had the pleasure of walking into some computer rooms that were extremely hot, which for the life of me I don't understand. How soon can we get those issues at Eastside and Rosa Parks fixed? I know that there was a plan to get those issues fixed with air conditioning and so on and extra generators. How close are we to that?

Mr. Sumter: Considering the situation at Eastside it will take a little bit more time. We have spoken to facilities and currently they have an air conditioning plan in place to keep us going as far as during the testing part. They fully implemented it since the last time we visited there and it's been pretty successful so far.

Comm. Mimms: I have a question that doesn't really deal with this but I'm going another way. Dealing with parent engagement there are always gaps when it comes to the instructional learning time in the classroom and when the children get home with the parents trying to assist with homework with the children when they don't understand the concepts or what has been taught in the classroom. Now we're looking to introduce this new system of PARCC to our children. What do we have in place for parents if anything that will help the parents be able to help the children when they get home if we're trying to engage parent participation?

Dr. Evans: Actually, Ms. Shafer is more connected and Ms. Peron. I know that Kemper McDowell has done some things and he reports to Ms. Shafer directly. Before I say more, Ms. Peron, do you want to comment?

Dr. Newell: We're actually sending out communications to the parents in terms of getting them to understand what the PARCC is. We are going to be doing community forums. We did community forums twice last year. I can't remember the schools. We have been doing communications but we realize we need to do more as we ramp up towards the PARCC assessments. There are different pieces being done. There's a brochure that's being worked on. We're doing a question and answer and the plan is to do community forums as well.

Ms. Peron: Also sending home communications through report card night. That's coming out now. We're asking the principals to speak to the parents. We put together what was before, what is now and the difference so parents can understand. We've given them some sites for them to visit. They can try a tutorial on their own and they can actually work through some of the practice tests for students as well. We're also planning on just getting the awareness out to the community. There are different activities that are being planned that we will discuss at the curriculum meeting coming up next week. We've put together a package of all the things that we're doing around PARCC and building the awareness, not only for staff but for parents as well.

Comm. Mimms: You're talking about the informative piece and getting the information out. But will there be a hands-on tutorial piece such as a lab? The assumption is that every parent has a computer. That's not always true. Is there going to be space allocated throughout the district where parents can actually come in? There's real-time learning. Parents can sit down. They have a computer. They're coming to this place to see what's being introduced to our children.

Ms. Peron: Do we have anything planned like that? That's a great idea.

Mr. Kemper McDowell: I know there are available practice tests that folks can go on and get familiar with the test. That may help a parent prepare their child for the test in some way. We're planning to work with Ms. Santa and Ms. Peron in developing possibly some PSA video and instructional pieces to explain the PARCC to parents. We can diversify it in various languages. We can have it in Spanish, Bengali, and Arabic. We also can have that available to principals or PTOs so they can use it as a presentational tool when they have a PTO meeting or if principals have a meeting at the school. Many principals may already be well-versed in the PARCC and the workings of it. But just as a tool so no one can say they don't have a tool to assist them in at least the conversation and some stuff that's factual.

Ms. Peron: Through the after-school program that was scheduled to start on Monday children are going to be taking home both paper prep and they're also going to be working on computers. Through the paper prep they get workbooks and they get the materials and resources to use and practice PARCC-like questions and content area. The provision of having a lab or developing a space for parents is actually one that we haven't vetted fully but will be taking into account now. I think that it is a viable idea. It is an idea that we could possibly make work for parents. You're right. We can't assume that every parent has access to a computer or smart phone. Most of them do have a smart phone, but you can't practice a test on a smart phone. You really need either laptop or a desktop. So I'm definitely willing to explore that option.

Comm. Mimms: I know the PARCC preparatory testing is voluntary. They sent the notices home to the parents. They actually started today in the schools.

Ms. Peron: The after-school program?

Comm. Mimms: Yes. Are you going to do a compilation of the data to identify how many parents have actually filled out the paperwork to see how many children will be actually prepared through this testing versus those parents who haven't filled it out and to find out why? If you have 30 students in a classroom and only 5 parents have agreed to it, what happens to the other 25 students?

Ms. Peron: We have actually ordered all the material for all the students in those classrooms. We have made provisions through recommendations to principals and to staff that they are to infuse Measuring Up, which is the program and the materials that we purchased for this after-school program for children that are attending the PARCC prep to actually use during the regular scheduled day. We took into account that not all parents want their kids to stay after school. Sometimes kids have other things to do after school. It's a web-based program as well so they will have access to this online at home 24/7. They have to have the information and they will have the information about that Measuring program to take home.

Dr. Evans: Commissioner, you made a great suggestion in terms of making computers available to parents who want to come in and practice or learn more about it. That's something I want us to follow up on. We have a computer lab up on the second floor here. They can come here and practice if they want. We can set up strategically across the district some locations for them to go and access it.

Comm. Hodges: School libraries.

Dr. Evans: I love that idea. Secondly, communication is being prepared for me in my name to talk about the importance of PARCC to our students and parents to address some of the issues as well and some of the things I alluded to earlier with regards to myself as to why it's important for youngsters to master the skills and concepts aligned with the Common Core so that they can be ready for college. That should go out any time now. I need to get back with the individuals who are drafting that for me, but that's going out as well.

Comm. Hodges: In regards to the impact on their graduation, what does this first test mean to a student?

Dr. Evans: The first year is a norming year. Actually, Dr. Newell has more information than I do. It's a norming year. There are lots of options.

Comm. Hodges: Norming means what to some people?

Dr. Evans: Establishing the baseline from which we'll work. That's happening nationally for every district in every state that's using PARCC. Then the other test that's being used will go through a similar exercise to norm it. So we really don't have a basis for comparing these scores to anything else yet. After this year once it's normed then we will have a basis for comparison. We'll be establishing targets to increase by points, whatever that is. When you said what does that mean I didn't get that until just this moment. But we need to tell them that.

Comm. Hodges: They're not going to be hurt. This is not going to be the end of your high school career. That's what people need to know because that's what part of the fear is, that this test is going to be so severe that their child's records are destroyed moving forward. That fear is out in the community and they do not know what this first test means to people.

Comm. Teague: How is the PARCC assessment going to be administered to ESL classes?

Dr. Evans: I'm going to defer to Ms. Peron for that one.

Ms. Peron: The PARCC test is for the content areas of English language arts and mathematics. So if a child attends an ESL class because they are speakers of another language they will be included in their ELA and math classrooms. It won't be that they're going to take it as an ESL content area. They take it in their English language arts or their math classroom.

Comm. Teague: Will it be in their language or just in English?

Ms. Peron: If the student is here less than a year they will not be administered the ELA in English. They are exempt. If they're here for more than a year they will take that ELA in English. That's been the way for the NJASK as well.

Comm. Teague: Could that be why there were such bad numbers with that as well? Could that be one of the problems?

Ms. Peron: It could be one of the factors, the complexity of text, the reading, and the writing.

Dr. Evans: When we look at the number of students in structured ELL programs the larger numbers are at the elementary level and probably on the younger end of that continuum. We had that discussion today. I believe it is influencing the ELA scores particularly for the younger elementary kids.

Comm. Teague: The next question I had was about the system itself. I know various online programs require different system requirements. Every now and then it changes. Are we prepared if a change suddenly occurs and we need to update the system or server to be able to keep up with the test?

Mr. Sumter: The state provides a tool exactly if the device is PARCC-ready or not. We run that tool on every device to make sure that it's PARCC-ready. One of the main requirements was Windows 7. Windows 7 has been implemented in all the devices that we currently identified for PARCC testing.

Comm. Cleaves: This is also for technology. Is the testing being done live or in a sandbox?

Mr. Sumter: The practice test?

Comm. Cleaves: The testing that you're going to do by the end of this month.

Mr. Sumter: Everything is done through Pierson's website. It's already set up.

Comm. Cleaves: It's being done live?

Mr. Sumter: Yes. They can go on now and set up a practice exam.

Comm. Cleaves: They're not doing it in a sandbox where it's just for us right now.

Mr. Sumter: No.

Comm. Simmons: If we have eight students in the class and we have four that decide they want to finish the test early, how do we deal with those four students and the other four students who are going to use the unlimited time?

Ms. Peron: That's actually an operational piece. They all have the option. My piece of it is that each child in their IEP we prepare a PNP, Personal Needs Plan, which talks about what accommodations each child needs. Each child needs to have that so that the accommodations this time are preloaded into the computer and is packaged in their seal which is like their booklet. That time limit is for all of them. It's an operational piece and it's one that is handled through the testing coordinator and the principal.

Dr. Newell: If you have eight kids and four are done the test coordinator who is onsite has already started getting training and they will know if the child is finished they can go back and review. Then there are certain tabs they can click where it says, "You have answered all your questions. Are you sure you want to exit?" They can actually exit out of the test.

Comm. Simmons: I'm playing devil's advocate.

Dr. Newell: I know.

Comm. Simmons: If it's a self-contained classroom and you know you can't leave the classroom, and if a student decides that they want to leave the classroom or they become disruptive, do we have a plan to deal with that?

Ms. Peron: I would think that each principal would have a plan to deal with that. That's not something that hasn't happened in the past. It doesn't happen a lot, but there needs to be provisions for an adult to supervise the group or the adult who has the means to work with that child. They could be removed but they can't be in contact with other students because they can't talk about the test. There can't be an option or the possibility of that. Lunch will be brought to the classroom so that they take care of their needs. Short breaks are taken into consideration as well as bathroom needs. There has to be a provision and a plan and that plan needs to be developed by the teacher. Some of those students have personal aides and they are incorporated into that as well and they are there to assist.

Comm. Hodges: I would hope that there's a procedure manual generated that everybody participates in so that there's one standard approach as opposed to this principal versus that principal. That's what I would hope.

Ms. Peron: Yes, it's something that has always been in effect for statewide testing. It's something that principals are accustomed to when they talk about testing and accommodations and the provisions for special education. Sometimes children are taken into a different setting in a smaller room where they have the guidance and the supervision of a child study team member that can assist. Everyone is included in testing and proctoring. There's a test administrator and then there's a proctor. The proctor is the person who facilitates the group and the needs of the group and the test

administrator is the one who reads the directions, guides the kids, times them and things of that nature. The difference this year is that everyone is on a device and not on paper and pencil.

Comm. Kerr: I know that there has been a lot of discussion in the community regarding the PARCC assessment. I would like to find out the ramification if a parent decides to exercise their opt-out option. How would that child be treated? Would there be some other kind of assessment done in order to generate some scale as to the performance of that child?

Dr. Newell: The discussion regarding opt-out has been one that we've noticed has been ramping up recently. It is not our intention to penalize any student. We are working with cabinet as to how we're going to approach this issue because we do know that this is something that we've been getting communication from different individuals who are concerned about ramifications if they decide not to have their child tested. We know that we have documentation from the DOE where they say everything was sent out to different districts regarding parents not pulling their children. But in terms of the district's stance for a policy that's something that we're having further discussion about.

Comm. Kerr: This is the argument of the parents, "My child was not adequately prepared for the test. Therefore, I'm going to pull the child." Where does the responsibility lie in a case like that? The reason given was that the child was not prepared. This is a much more rigorous test. It's more demanding. There are more pieces that are involved in it. Based on that the parent decides their child wasn't adequately prepared. Who bears the responsibility for that - the kid, the parent, or the district?

Comm. Hodges: I would suggest that that comes under the realm of the Board to decide on what kinds of policies they want to institute regarding opt-out provisions and that wrestling with the administration in terms of consequences if any. That conversation needs to occur beginning at the next workshop with a referral to the policy committee ultimately.

Dr. Evans: Strauss Esmay recently made some recommendations to that end that Cheryl brought to my attention Monday for consideration. There was regulation for that policy as well. Some districts are just going with regulation or standard operating procedure. Some boards are adopting policy. In either case we need to discuss and determine where we need to go. We've already had a couple of discussions in cabinet and I asked that some things be drafted for us to consider. Obviously things like giving kids another option in school in terms of where to go and things to do is paramount. We're not going to tell any kid to stay home. That's not an option for us. We'll have them come in and go in a place where they can actually engage in some other academic work during that time is really where our heads are at this point. We do need to talk about it together and arrive at something that the Board and we are comfortable with.

Comm. Kerr: The child has to be assessed. Whether you have them here sitting in a classroom, how do we get to that point? That's what I'm trying to get at.

Dr. Evans: How do we get to the point of testing them?

Comm. Hodges: No. The child needs to be assessed as to where they are. If they're not getting a PARCC assessment, then what happens to them for that assessment?



Dr. Evans: Remember, there are district-driven tests that we give on which we make some decisions. But there are other decisions that are driven by the state test.

Comm. Hodges: But by your own testimony, Dr. Evans, you raised questions about local testing. That's the issue.

Dr. Evans: You're absolutely right. My preference is for all of them to take it. I'm not shy about saying that.

Comm. Rivera: I'm just sitting here listening being one of the newest Board members. My concern is that we need to have data to measure ourselves with other districts statewide. There has to come a time that we have to decide. It might not be the perfect timing to promote or push for this test or to go against it. That's something we have to decide as a Board. I just have many concerns. What actions are being taken statewide by other districts? I want to see the trend of what's going on. I don't like the fact that many of our discussions are around us preparing kids for a specific test. We should be teaching our kids to compete with other kids in the state. We shouldn't have to prepare them at a young age just for a specific test. They should have overall knowledge. There were a few things that I liked that were mentioned earlier. I don't mean to get off the subject, Dr. Evans, but you mentioned something that happened to me that is relevant. Dr. Hodges, I spoke to you a few times regarding my experience here in high school. One thing that I don't see in high school, and maybe we should start asking our kids if this is being promoted, is college. I was in advanced placement classes at Eastside. I always had the support at home and they always wanted me to go to college. But being the first one from my household they couldn't provide any guidance. So now we have guidance counselors at the high school level that in all four years I was there never spoke to me about college. We should grab them when they're freshmen and set goals of what their GPA should be and what they should do to prepare for the SAT. I said they shouldn't prepare for a test, but this is a meaningful one. We should prepare them for the SAT. We have to spend as much time and resources as we can to make sure that they succeed when taking this test. What I'm trying to say here is it's also about changing the culture in the schools. It's not about just passing grades. A lot of kids here in high school, and I'm speaking for myself when I was there, they're just happy getting a C, not knowing that a C is not beneficial when you're applying for college. Dr. Evans, that's a culture that you need to speak to your staff about, especially your teachers and guidance counselors, and change it. Maybe this is a poor choice of words when I say a business, but when you're running a business you ask your customers or clients what they would change and if certain things are being met. Why don't we ask our kids certain questions like, "Are your teachers promoting college? Are your guidance counselors doing this with you?" Just to finish this off, if it wasn't because of my baseball coaches that helped me fill out my FAFSA at that time and told me to go take the SAT, I just kept putting it off. I knew I wanted to go to college. I had all advanced classes, but I just didn't have the guidance. We need to push that. I know that's the job of the parents to do, but although some parents are supportive and they're there for their kids they just don't have the knowledge being that they didn't attend college to tell their kids what's right and wrong. We could teach them all they want, but it's also the culture in the schools. We have to change it.

Dr. Evans: We agree.

Comm. Rivera: Dr. Evans, you mentioned when you started college that you weren't ready. Although I was in advanced classes with my math I was okay. But when I went to college I needed help with my writing. It is a shame to say that I learned more in a month and a half than what I learned in all four years in advanced classes at Eastside.

Do you mean to tell me a teacher could grab me in college and teach me in one month what I couldn't learn in four years? I just thought I'd share that with you.

Comm. Simmons: I just wanted to make a point of clarification because we're talking about opt-out. There is no opt-out for this testing. What districts are dealing with is a process for dealing with students who refuse to take the test. I wanted to make that clear. I know that some districts are excusing students whose parents choose to keep them home. Students are being placed in different environments and doing some self-guided studying. But that's what districts are dealing with, to figure out a process for dealing with those students. To be clear, there is no opting out of this testing. You're just simply refusing to take it and the student will receive a zero.

Comm. Martinez: The zero gets averaged into the district. There's no penalty against the individual child. The district and the school essentially get punished because that zero will be averaged into the district.

Comm. Hodges: To the school's average, not the student's.

Comm. Martinez: Correct. The individual student will not be punished, but the school and subsequently the district will feel the weight of that because now you're adding a zero into that number.

Comm. Kerr: It still has to affect the student in some way. It has to because if that child is not assessed, how do you evaluate that child? It has to affect the child. The impact will be borne by the district, but in incidents of opting out it definitely is going to come back to that child.

Comm. Martinez: Perhaps that's felt when they go to apply for colleges and they notice they didn't take the assessment.

Comm. Rivera: I'm going to ask you a question and after you answer I'm going to add to it. What grades will be taking this test right now?

Dr. Evans: 3-11.

Comm. Rivera: Someone mentioned this to me and I just want to know if we have looked into it. It's not the popular thing to bring up, but a lot of kids in our district apply to go to PCTI. I know they look at their grades and everything else. Are they going to look at that?

Dr. Evans: That's a good question. I don't know the answer to that question.

Comm. Rivera: Although we don't want them to go there, it is not a decision that we make. That's a decision that them and their families need to make. Let's be careful. I know we're going to look into anything. But by us promoting the notion of supporting people or students that the parents feel should not take this test we might be putting them at a disadvantage. Let's just think of every possible scenario and make parents aware of the pros and cons.

Comm. Teague: One thing is for certain, there's a lot of uncertainty about this test. I think it's kind of unfair to base a child's level of learning on a test that has so many unanswered questions. When you take the time to actually research it instead of just grabbing the little garbage that they throw you that supports it, go online, talk to people, and actually speak to the people that are in the classrooms that have already went to

the workshops and got the information about this test. Sit down with them. Sit down with parents. You're going to get a whole other view on it. Maybe legally we cannot say we'll have a resolution to opt out of it or to refuse it. But I don't think that children should be criminalized if their parents decide that they don't want their child to be subjected to that. They should be placed in another area of learning. I'm not saying stop learning and let them sit home and watch TV. But I think there should be an alternative. There are other districts like Elmwood Park. They actually have provided for parents an alternative. I'm not saying that all the parents in the district are going to do it, but there are probably certain parents who have reservations about it and it's growing. We can't ignore that. It's growing. There's a growing concern about this PARCC. I think that if a parent decides that they don't want their child to partake in it there should be some alternative for them in school, not home, for them to be able to learn that day and at least be able to get some kind of credit for being in school and for learning.

Comm. Hodges: I don't want to stifle this conversation. I think that we need to continue this and I would like to have some portion of the workshop to discuss this. I think Comm. Teague has a proposal in terms of a policy around opt-out that we need to discuss. Perhaps what we need to do is adjourn this current discussion so we can complete the assessment. I don't mind staying here, but I know some other people do. I haven't even started my questions. I'm going to have to stop that. I know there are some more questions that Mr. Irving has and other people.

Comm. Kerr: Before you leave the subject, I kind of get different answers from the administration regarding the opt-out. I think we need to have the administration prepare credible answers regarding that piece of it so we have firmer ground to stand on and inform our community.

Comm. Hodges: I was going to ask him to do just that, particularly around what this means to the students and what kind of possible penalties. We're going to get phone calls. We're getting them now. We need to be able to speak to that as does the district need to have a firm and concise message about what this means.

Comm. Cleaves: And we all need to be able to say the same thing.

Comm. Hodges: Absolutely. Clearly, we're not there yet. In the intervening days we need to get some clear answers for the questions that you've already heard in terms of what this means, how will this hurt or help my child, what do we have to do, or what happens if I decide I don't want the child to come to school. We need to have that. We're going to also need to look at the proposed policy that Mr. Teague has presented. So I'm going to adjourn this part of the meeting and have that discussion in the workshop. Before we get to Mr. Irving's remaining questions, I'm going to get a chance to ask my own. I'm going to forego a lot of that. I spent some days doing this here because I sat in classrooms and I watched just this approach take place. It was very well identified as someone speaking to the students giving them information and no notes were taken. They clearly weren't going to go home and study it because they didn't have any notes. If that child does not totally absorb the information I do not see how they're going to pass a test on it. That's why I presented it just the way I did. I gave you terms that I knew you wouldn't be familiar with. It would just be a bunch of language thrown at you and when I asked you if you were prepared to take a test on it, I knew you couldn't do that. So what are we going to do to put in structure in terms of note taking and study skills so that every child has a baseline and you can extend the classroom day at home without costing you a dime and you can help reinforce the students' understanding of what they're learning in the classroom? How do we do that because we haven't done it yet?

Dr. Evans: There's a second question. What do we take out of the curriculum? That's what we would have to do. I'm not saying it's not important because it is very important. But the question requires more than just simply identifying the how we get it in. It's what do we take out. We were having a separate conversation earlier regarding the request that you made, and that is one of the requests that you made, and responses are being prepared. Those responses will take on new meaning tomorrow when I meet with my staff so we can more thoroughly respond. But that is one of the questions that we'll answer.

Comm. Hodges: That could just mean that you possibly change some of the approaches where the lecturing is sent out in a video. In Chicago or Detroit they actually sent lectures, taped them, and put them on online on YouTube. The students then went home, looked at the tape, reviewed it three or four times, and then came to school the next day and the teacher now works out problems asking what they understood in the classroom. Now there's a working session as opposed to the lecture. Now the student has gone home and has an idea in advance of what's going to take place in the classroom and come in and bring in questions about what they learned and didn't learn. That's one method of doing it and actually a principal changed his entire school around and several schools have followed suit. I don't care what the method is. You can't expect the child to learn everything that they need to do in the classroom. You have to facilitate some method at getting the child to extend that day. You just have to.

Dr. Evans: The reality is we may have to provide settings for them to do that. Remember, our kids don't go through the same accommodations at home as more advantaged youngsters do in other districts and other places in the suburbs and wherever else. The response that we come up with has to take into consideration what's available to our kids. That may mean doing more after school or providing that structure on our campus after school rather than waiting until they get home and they don't have the support in terms of technology, television, or other kinds of accommodations or even the push from the parents to do it. We'll take that into consideration.

Comm. Hodges: I'm especially interested in the elementary school. If you impose that structure early then those kids have at least a fighting chance of utilizing what they've learned and take it home. But if the child grows up and never sees that as an approach then it's hard later on as a high school student to say you're going to go home and study.

Dr. Evans: We'll have that for you at next week's workshop.

Comm. Hodges: Any additional questions on assessment?

Comm. Irving: Just two. I'll narrow mine down as well. How are we reporting the high school data? I know the first one on total college acceptances is down from a year before and most importantly it's just the total college acceptances of all the kids in our district. Chrystal gets accepted to one school, I get accepted to five, and Flavio got accepted to 17 because he's so smart. All those are added together. It's important to say what's that number based on. It's 1,682 college acceptances out of how many students? At least there are some numbers to gauge and measure by. The last two pieces I was talking about before is we just need to do some more work in guidance making sure that we're supporting and promoting four-year colleges as an additional option to two-year. Some young people said they get to go to two-year school for free.

All of a sudden it's not a bad option. The other question I had was with regards to special education. Our special education numbers are not just flat. They're underperforming significantly over the last three years. It's in the single digits in some years and in the low double digits. There has to be some level of intervention done at that level with our Sped students in mathematics in particular. Language arts are important, but our Sped population fails in comparison to our English language learners or the LEP population as well. When I look at this holistically there are just certain segments of populations of students that clearly are underperforming than others. Certainly, our special education students are more needy students when it comes to resources, time and academics. But there has to be a better idea than having them at 9% or 11% proficient.

Comm. Cleaves: We're preparing our students for college and careers. With the overall assessment you're only concerned with those that are going to college. Why don't we have a report on those who are going into careers or trade schools or the military? Why have you not included those? The numbers look bad, but if we're preparing them for college and/or, then why are we not reporting those numbers? Those numbers need to be reflected also in this report. I don't think this is a true assessment of what our students are really doing or where they're going.

Dr. Evans: That's a great observation. We do need to include those that go directly into a career out of high school. You're right.

Comm. Cleaves: Or even a trade college or a trade school which may not be considered a college, but it's still furthering your education.

Comm. Mimms: Is there a structured timeline in place up until execution of the PARCC that gives us rollout dates? I know the first testing for the operational technical piece is this Friday. Do we have dates and timelines in place that we can be provided with?

Dr. Evans: Is Dr. Newell still back there? There she is. She's the keeper of all things PARCC.

Dr. Newell: The assessment is from March 2-27 for the performance-based assessment. One of the things we're working on is what the schedule is going to look like. We have looked at different ideas and we actually had a meeting scheduled for Monday at 3:30 but it got cancelled because of the snow. We were bringing together staff members here along with staff members out in the district, principals for example, to come in together and look at the different possibilities to see how we could structure the assessment all the way up from March 2-27. One of the things that we were notified about a week ago from the state at the workshop is that we really need to try to get as much testing in the first 15 days of the 20 days so we can have five days for any issues such as absences, children getting sick and they have to retest, or whatever other issues. We're trying to come up with different schedules that will accommodate the different grades and the number of kids given this time period.

Comm. Simmons: I'm not sure if you're the person to answer this. I wanted to know in relation to PARCC what unit testing is. I don't think that those are far apart.

Dr. Evans: Unit testing is actually a function of the Regional Achievement Centers. It's supposed to be aligned with the Common Core to test students' progress on the Common Core. There are folks who know much more about it than I do, but that's the source of it. It came to us along with the RACs. That's a requirement for the Regional Achievement Centers.

Comm. Simmons: I'm not sure when those tests take place, but are they...

Dr. Evans: Are they overlapping?

Comm. Simmons: Or in close proximity.

Dr. Newell: Yes, they are. If I recall, the unit assessments are the week before the PARCC assessments. Both assessments are state assessments. We have to comply with the mandated time periods that were given.

Comm. Hodges: I think I asked in the past for a calendar of testing. I really want one that I can just look at. I just need to be able to see that.

Dr. Newell: I've sent it and I'll send it again.

Dr. Evans: We'll email it to all Board members.

Dr. Newell: I can also say that we have the ACCESS for ELLs that starts the same day as the PARCC assessments and the ACCESS for ELLs is also a state assessment.

Comm. Hodges: Dr. Evans, I know we've heard about the intent to increase the standards. Do we still have a 60% passing grade in this district?

Dr. Evans: As of today, yes. But that's going to change very soon.

Comm. Hodges: How soon would that be?

Dr. Evans: I'm trying to see who I assigned the responsibility to follow up on that one. We know what the system is going to be. It's a matter of rolling it out and bringing it to the Board.

Ms. Peron: We have to have the report card ready in March because we have to upload the information – I think I'm using the right term – to Infinite Campus. Everything is going online so the verbiage, the proposal for the grading system, and the different formats for the report cards from early elementary to high school need to be all vetted, designed, developed and created. So we're in discussion now about the report cards. We've been talking about that. We have the proposed grading system that we will bring to the Board for your review and approval hopefully. It's one that Dr. Evans has talked about before. It does change the grading range and the scoring. I want to say that the implementation of the new report card and the grading system will be for the new September school year. We can't just flip it and change it. We can't change the standards in the middle of the year almost toward the end. We want parents to have input. We want teachers to have input and all the stakeholders, not just impose it.

Comm. Hodges: I have some quick questions I'm just going to throw out. I guess I really don't want an answer tonight. I'll submit these to you. Are there any specific strands that are common in these students that are showing deficiencies, particularly at the elementary level? There are. Obviously my next question would be what are they and what are we doing to address them? Are we seeing problems in critical thinking and how are our students being taught to address that and to analyze information? I'm looking really at the elementary level because they need that skill long before they get to high school. This dovetails into what Mr. Irving and Mr. Rivera were talking about. I don't want to prepare for a test. I think that's just the worst possible approach. The

preparation should be a review and you should hone your skills in terms of the test. I'm all for that. But we have to find out when our students are falling behind or failing to catch up and there has to be some plan in place to address that over time. We can't have a kid coming into ninth grade three and four years behind in any area. It's way too late and we do. What I'm looking for is some sort of mechanism, individual educational plan, or whatever you want to do that looks at these children earlier on and develops an individualized plan to accelerate their improvement, whether it's enrichment or whatever they need. If you're arriving here from another country and you don't have any formal education it's tantamount to that because you've created a school for that. But there are kids who are here who are essentially in the same boat. They don't seem to have any formal education even though they were born here and we have to find some way to assess where they are, determine what period we're going to do that, and then address it. We haven't done that yet. You can go ahead and teach whatever you want to, but if they're so far behind there's no curriculum that's going to be able to reach them because they're just not in the same room educationally. The rest of this I'm going to leave. Are there any further questions? I really appreciated this conversation tonight. There are a lot of districts that are doing way better than we are that don't have this kind of conversation. That comes, not from me, but from the School Boards Association who had to create a task force in order to make districts aware that they should be doing this kind of thing. This is not going to be the last conversation. There's a lot more to talk about and a lot more plans that we actually have to see on paper and evaluate a timetable as to what we're going to do and how to ramp up where we are. This is a wonderful start. Hopefully, I will have a chance to offer more questions because I need to do what I like to do.

Comm. Rivera: I was just going to add that as a district, Dr. Evans, with the things Dr. Hodges mentioned we should be a little bit more proactive. When it comes time to prepare the budget maybe we can allocate some resources to make sure that we emphasize the issues that he just mentioned regarding the plan of action to address some student deficiencies. It has to be in the budget. In the short amount of time that I've been here, maybe it's because I came late in the year, I just want to make sure that we have the plan in place and don't just make decisions as we go along. We already have data showing that we have deficiencies in all those areas. Let's just put the plan in place.

Comm. Hodges: One of the things I really wanted to say is I'm hoping that we can arrange for budget training for the Board so that we'll have a better sense of what should happen, what kinds of questions we should be asking, and how the district intends to incorporate the budget priorities that we as a Board establish in their budget planning. It's kind of late because they've already done that, but that's part of what we have to really enforce, making sure that our imperatives are reflected in how the budget is arranged. I want to try to bring in training as soon as possible to help the Board work their way through that. We may or may not have time to do it tonight. If we don't have time to do it tonight I will give presidential remarks in the workshop to give you an opportunity to test it. We wanted the Board to see what the students are really going through and what the parents are going through. I wanted the staff to appreciate the point of view of some of our students. That's what this was all about tonight, to make sure the testing became real for everybody in this room so that we can then in a united fashion look forward to changing what we're doing and making it better. I thank you very much for your time and I thank you for your questions which I thought were excellent tonight. We need to come back and bring some more.

Comm. Martinez: I just wanted to ask Mr. Sumter for next week's workshop meeting if he could just give us a report on how this Friday's test went and just identify where we were successful and where we had some challenges. Thank you.

**It was moved by Comm. Martinez, seconded by Comm. Cleaves that the meeting be adjourned. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.