

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

----- X

November 25, 2013
Start: 10:08 a.m.
Recess: 2:10 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E: Robert Jackson
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Charles Barron
Fernando Cabrera
Margaret S. Chin
Daniel Dromm
Lewis A. Fidler
Daniel R. Garodnick
David G. Greenfield
Vincent M. Ignizio
Andy King
G. Oliver Koppell
Karen Koslowitz
Jessica S. Lappin
Steven T. Levin
Ydanis Rodriguez
Deborah Rose
Mark Weprin

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Council Members:

Eric A. Ulrich
James Vacca
Albert Vann

Dennis Walcott
Chancellor of Department of Education

Paul King
Executive Director of Arts Program at Department
of Education

Simone D'Souza
Executive Director of Research and Accountability
and Data at Department of Education

John Khani
Associate Director for Political Affairs for the
Council of Supervisors and Administration

Richard Mantell
Vice President from Middle Schools for UFT

Martha Kessler
CPAC

Michelle Kupper
CEC District 15

Jeff Nichols
Change the Stakes

Martha Foote
A Time Out from Testing

Doug Israel
The Center for Arts Education

Abja Midha
Advocates for Children of New York

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Moira Flavin
Citizens Committee for Children

Max Ahmed
New York Immigrant Coalition

Ken Cohen
NAACP New York State Conference

Joseph McGivern
Advocates for Healthy Education

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Good morning
3 on this beautiful cold morning in New York
4 City. Today is, what, November 25th. I
5 believe a couple days from Thanksgiving. My
6 name is Robert Jackson. I chair the Education
7 Committee. We've been joined by our colleague
8 Mr. King from the Bronx, and no one else as of
9 yet. Along with appropriate staff of the
10 Education Committee, Asia Schomberg [phonetic].
11 Our normal counsel is out. Her grandmother
12 passed away. She's up above at 91 years of age.
13 So we celebrated her life yesterday at the wake
14 and her passing. We've been joined by the
15 acting Counsel, Jeffery Compano [phonetic]. So
16 with that, welcome to the Educations
17 Committee's Oversight hearing on the impact of
18 standardized testing on students in New York
19 City schools. We will also hear testimony on a
20 resolution and two bills today, Resolution
21 1394, which I sponsored, Intro 925, which I
22 also sponsored, and Intro 1091 sponsored by
23 Andy King, my colleague to my right. I will
24 talk more about these items shortly after some
25 opening remarks, and then we'll move on to hear

1 statements from my colleague, Andy King, the
2 lead sponsor of Intro 1091. Standardized tests
3 have been used in schools for more than a
4 century, but in recent years their use has
5 increased dramatically, mainly as a result of
6 the 2001 federal No Child Left Behind Act,
7 commonly known as NCLB. NCLB required every
8 state to set education standards and to develop
9 tests to measure student's progress towards
10 meeting those standards. Specifically, NCLB
11 mandates that states administer annual
12 assessments in reading and math to all students
13 in grades three through eight. An annual
14 science assessments for students in three
15 different grade levels, one grade in
16 elementary, middle, and high school. NCLB has
17 also made these tests more high stakes, because
18 it's attached consequences to them. All
19 schools must make adequate yearly progress
20 towards proficiency standards or face
21 escalating sanctions. Ultimately, NCLB requires
22 that schools bring all students, 100 percent of
23 them up to proficiency levels in reading and
24 math by the year 2014 or face the loss federal
25

1 funding or closure. Despite all of the
2 attention and resources devoted to the testing
3 and other NCLB requirements, Secretary of
4 Education Arne Duncan told Congress in 2011
5 that more than 80 percent of the nation's
6 public schools were failing to meet NCLB
7 benchmarks. Furthermore, all of the emphasis
8 on testing has produced some unintentioned
9 consequences. Because there's so much writing
10 on these reading and math tests, there's been a
11 lot of teaching to the test, that is focusing
12 instruction on what is on the test and spending
13 less time on what's not on the test. In fact,
14 studies show that across the nation there has
15 been a narrowing of the curriculum with many
16 school districts reducing the time spent on
17 science, social studies, and the arts by an
18 average of two and a half hours per week in
19 order to focus more time on reading and math.
20 In addition, the threat of the loss of federal
21 funding has created added pressure and a strong
22 incentive for states to where some people refer
23 to as dumb down the tests to make it easier for
24 them to meet federal standards. New York is a
25

1
2 prime example as we learned in 2010. For
3 several years, scores on state English language
4 arts, known as ELA and math have been rapidly
5 rising, leading state and city officials to
6 boast about the success of their education
7 reform efforts. However, at the same time
8 state test scores were rising, scores for New
9 York City students on the National Assessment
10 of Educational Program known as NAEPs
11 considered the nation's report card remain
12 relatively flat, or in some cases declined.
13 After much public criticism of inflated state
14 test scores, New York State Education
15 Department commissioned a study by outside
16 experts which found that indeed the test had
17 become much easier for students to pass. So, in
18 2010, the State recalibrated tests to more
19 closely align with the NAEP Exam and with
20 higher college readiness standards. Not
21 surprisingly, scores on the new harder tests
22 plummeted. Three years later in the Spring of
23 2013, the State again raised test standards
24 considerably to align them with the new Common
25 Core standards and curriculum, and once again,

1 test scores plunged. In New York City, ELA test
2 scores dropped from 46.9 percent of students
3 passing in 2012 to just 26.4 percent this year,
4 a difference of more than 20 points. The
5 decline in math scores from last year was even
6 steeper, with a drop from 60 percent of the
7 City's third through eighth graders deemed
8 proficient in 2012 to 29.6 percent in 2013, a
9 drop of more than 30 points. However, State
10 and City officials say there will be no
11 negative consequences for students, educators,
12 or schools from these lower test scores. To
13 me, that remains to be seen, and we hope to get
14 some more clarity on this today. Many
15 respected educators, testing experts,
16 advocates, and parents say there has already
17 been too many negative consequences. Some
18 critics contend that schools are turning into
19 little more than test prep factories with far
20 too much time spent on preparing for, taking,
21 and scoring tests. That's time taken away from
22 other essential subjects like Science, Social
23 Studies, Art, Physical Education, as well as
24 from extracurricular activities. In short,
25

1 most of the things that really engage students.
2 Parents complain that all of this testing and
3 test prep is turning kids off from school and
4 denying them the rich well-rounded education
5 they deserve. It's harming children in other
6 ways, too. Like creating more anxiety as kids
7 worry if they'll be left back or if they don't
8 do well on the test. Parents in New York City
9 and elsewhere are increasingly frustrated and
10 angry by what they perceive as excessive
11 testing and have launched petitions and
12 boycotts or have chosen to opt out their
13 children of taking exams. Many teachers and
14 administrators are also angry and frustrated,
15 particularly about the State's new Common Core
16 aligned tests and have begun their own protest.
17 A letter written by a group of eight prominent
18 school principals from around New York State--I
19 meant Superintendents, and signed by more than
20 500 Principals and nearly 3,000 parents and
21 teachers describe some of the problems with
22 these new tests, particular their impact on
23 students. The principal said tests were too
24 long with too many questions for students to be
25

1 completed in the allocated time. They also
2 claim there were many ambiguous questions which
3 made it even harder, and some students simply
4 gave up while others cried, vomited or lost
5 control of their bowels or bladder. But by far,
6 parents and advocates maintain that the most
7 worrisome impacts of these tests on students
8 come from high stakes attached to them. The
9 Department of Education has attached even more
10 consequences than are required under NCLB.
11 Children have often on the basis of a single
12 test score been denied admission to a school or
13 program, held back one or more grades, or
14 unable to graduate. City students have also
15 had their schools closed and been forced to
16 transfer or languish in a school that is slowly
17 phasing out or losing staff--and losing staff,
18 classes and extracurricular activities or
19 perhaps dropped out as a result. This school
20 year, there's more tests than ever before, and
21 as a result of the State's new evaluation
22 process for teachers and principals, according
23 to the law, 40 percent of the evaluation must
24 be based on the student's performance measures,
25

1
2 20 percent of the States ELA, the English
3 Language Arts, and math scores, and 20 percent
4 on local measures. Because the evaluation is
5 based on student growth, the local measures
6 involved a pre-test early in the school year as
7 well as end of the year post test. Also,
8 because state tests only cover ELA and math in
9 grades three through eight, teachers in other
10 subjects and grades are evaluated on a school-
11 wide ELA and math scores. However, there are 36
12 early elementary schools in the City that only
13 have students in grades K-2. So there are no
14 school-wide test scores to use for teacher
15 evaluation. At these schools, students in
16 kindergarten through second grade have been
17 given paper and pencil to bubble test to
18 complete, which is inappropriate for that age
19 group according to educators and advocates. At
20 the Castle Bridge School in Upper Manhattan so
21 many parents refused to allow their children to
22 be tested that the school had to cancel the
23 test. In addition to all these tests, the
24 Department of Education administers other state
25 tests including the fourth and eighth grade

1 science test, Regents exams, tests to identify
2 English language learners, which are known as
3 ELLs, achievement tests for ELLs, and
4 alternative assessment for students with severe
5 cognitive disabilities. The Department of
6 Education also administers some other tests to
7 eligible City students including tests for
8 admissions to gifted and talented programs, the
9 specialized high school admissions test,
10 foreign language achievement exams, and Chinese
11 and Spanish, and second language proficiency
12 exams in French, English, Latin and Spanish.
13 City students also take periodic assessments
14 several times throughout the school year to
15 give teachers more information about what
16 students have learned. Now, if that's not a
17 lot, what is? I'm sure I left some out, and
18 I'm not even considering tests that teachers
19 create and give students throughout the school
20 year. School officials and test proponents say
21 that tests provide important data and prepare
22 students for life, but critics say that over
23 emphasis on tests does more harm than good.
24 They argue that standardized tests do not
25

1
2 prepare students for the real world where
3 skills like creativity and collaboration with
4 others are far more important. Instead,
5 parents and advocates say that excessive
6 testing and test prep robs students and
7 teachers of motivation and joy in school.
8 Further, teaching to the test narrows
9 curriculum and instruction thereby limiting
10 kids world rather than expanding their
11 horizons. Clearly, this is an important topic
12 and we have a lot to examine today about the
13 impact on standardized testing and students in
14 New York City schools. The committee also look
15 forward to hearing testimony from parents,
16 students, educators, advocates, unions, CEC
17 members, and others on this issue, and as I
18 stated earlier, we will also be gathering
19 feedback on resolution number 1394, Intro 925,
20 and Intro 1091 today. Resolution 1394 calls on
21 the New York State Education Department, the
22 New York State Legislature, and the Governor to
23 re-examine public school accountability
24 systems, and to develop a system based on
25 multiple forms of assessment which do not

1
2 require extensive standardized testing. Intro
3 number 925 would require the Department of
4 Education to submit to the City Council and
5 post on the Department's website data regarding
6 the provisions of instructional arts
7 requirements in schools. Specifically, the
8 bill would require the Department of Education
9 to report the total number and percentage of
10 students grades five through 12 who have
11 completed all 75 percent, 50 percent or less
12 than 50 percent of the State requirements for
13 arts instruction. The bill would also require
14 that the same data be provided for English
15 language learners and special education
16 students, and that all data be aggregated city-
17 wide as well as disaggregated by city council
18 district, community school district and school.
19 Intro number 1091 would require the Department
20 of Education to distribute information on
21 college savings plans to all students.
22 Specifically the bill would require the
23 Department of Education to develop written and
24 electronic materials containing information on
25 how to open a bank account and college saving

1
2 programs available to students. The bill would
3 also require that such written or electronic
4 materials be produced and distributed to each
5 school for distribution to every student upon
6 entering into kindergarten, grade six and
7 grades nine and to every student upon entry
8 into a school as a new student. Everyone who
9 wishes to testify today must fill out a witness
10 slip, which is located on the desk of the
11 Sergeant at Arms near the back of the room or
12 depending on which way you came in, and please
13 indicate on the witness slip whether you are
14 here to testify about the impact on
15 standardized testing on students, or one or
16 more of the bills or the resolutions as to
17 whether you are in favor or are in opposition
18 to the resolution and/or bills. And please
19 note that all witnesses will be sworn in before
20 testifying. I also want to point out that we
21 will not be voting on the resolutions or bills
22 today, as this is just a first hearing. To
23 allow as many as possible to testify, testimony
24 will be limited to three minutes per person. So
25 if you have written testimony, please summarize

1
2 the contents. And before I turn the floor over
3 to my colleague Andy King for his remarks
4 regarding Intro 1091, I want to introduce our
5 additional colleagues that have joined us. To
6 my left, Jessica Lappin of Manhattan, Danny
7 Dromm of Queens, Ydanis Rodriguez of Manhattan,
8 Jimmy Vacca of the Bronx, Margaret Chin of
9 Manhattan, Debbie Rose of Queens, and to my
10 left--I'm sorry, Staten Island, forgive me. I
11 don't know. I'm thinking of Queens. Fernando
12 Cabrera of the Bronx and Oliver Koppell of the
13 Bronx and Lou Fidler of Brooklyn. And with
14 that, let me turn the floor over to Andy King,
15 our colleague for remarks regarding his Intro
16 1091.

17 UNKNOWN COUNCIL MEMBER: Could I ask
18 permission to add my name to 1091?

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Sure.

20 UNKNOWN COUNCIL MEMBER: Mr. King's
21 Bill.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Counsel, take
23 note, please. Thank you. Andy King, please.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good morning
25 and thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the

1
2 opportunity to share some remarks. If I could
3 be as sentimental with my colleagues, this is
4 actually my first bill that's actually hitting
5 a committee. So I thank you all for all for
6 allowing me this opportunity. Mr. Walcott,
7 it's always a pleasure and honor to be in the
8 room with you and listen to you, always listen
9 to your testimony and learn something. Intro
10 1091 is an inspiration. Before I got into the
11 Council working with students and understanding
12 the financial impact of what higher education
13 means. Throughout the community that I work in
14 in the North Bronx many young people have the
15 challenges trying to raise such money. I
16 thought that it would be a good way to come to
17 the Council and figure out how do we educate
18 parents and students of how they invest in
19 their own education early on. As I learned,
20 there are a lot of savings plans that parents
21 are not familiar with and should have access
22 to. 1091 is designated to educate parents when
23 their students, when their children start any
24 school, whether it's elementary, junior high
25 school or high school or if they transfer into

1 a new school that they're automatically aware
2 that these savings plans exist. The motivation,
3 again, is helping young people understand the
4 importance of investing in their future as
5 opposed to playing the knock out game, that
6 they will be looking at how to improve their
7 education, how to invest in their education,
8 how they understand the value of a dollar, how
9 to open up a bank account, as opposed to making
10 your priority buying the first pair of Jordan's
11 that come out that you're investing on how I
12 become a better productive person. I'm hoping
13 that Intro 1091 will do that. In addition to
14 educating parents that the value of serving
15 goes a long way other than just an education,
16 but helping people manage their finances as
17 they grow older. So again, I thank you for
18 allowing me to share this morning my thoughts
19 and motivation for intro 1091, and I urge you
20 once it does come up to a vote that we're able
21 to push this legislation through and making
22 sure that every child has a better opportunity
23 for a better future. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well thank
3 you, Council Member King. I say to you as a
4 grandparent, my wife and I have already opened
5 a college saving plan under the state plan for
6 our two grandsons which is very, very
7 important. Our grandsons just turned a year on
8 Veteran's Day, and will four on December 3rd,
9 so we're already looking at their future as far
10 as investing for their education. So
11 congratulations to you. We've been joined by
12 our colleague Mark Weprin of Queens, and now
13 I'll turn the floor over to Dennis Walcott, our
14 Chancellor. We have Paul King, also with the
15 Department of Education, and Simone D'Souza,
16 Department of Education. But before we begin,
17 Chancellor and staff that are going to testify,
18 would you please raise your right hand. Now, do
19 you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the
20 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
21 testimony before this Education Committee
22 hearing and to respond honestly to member's
23 questions?

24 DENNIS WALCOTT: I do.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you very
3 much. Chancellor, you may begin.

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, Chair
5 Jackson. It's a pleasure to be with you once
6 again, and to the members of the Council,
7 especially the Education Committee, it's a
8 pleasure to see you at the end of November, and
9 really an honor to testify before you once
10 again. As you indicated, with me today are
11 both Paul King, who is the Executive Director
12 of our Arts program, and Simone D'Souza, the
13 Executive Director of the Office of Research
14 and Accountability and Data. I just wanted to
15 give you a context of Simone's responsibility
16 because it really encompasses, I think, a lot
17 of what you talked about, Chair, and imagine
18 the questions that will come up today. Under
19 Simone's purview is the data management arm of
20 the DOE, the policy and the research arm of the
21 Department of Education, our progress report
22 division as well as our research and policy
23 support group, our school surveys. As you know
24 we conduct surveys every year, and last year we
25 had 985,000 responses from parents, students,

1
2 and our teachers on our survey, and Simone is
3 responsible for that as well, as well as state
4 and federal evaluations. So she has a very
5 comprehensive job, and so it's a pleasure to
6 sit both with Simone and Paul. And after years
7 of appearances before your committee, I will
8 testify before you for maybe the last time. I
9 don't know. I thought I said that once before
10 and low and behold, here I am again. So you
11 never know what's going to happen in the month
12 of December. You know, I've always teased that
13 I plan to have a press conference on the 31st
14 of December, so maybe you'll have a hearing on
15 the 31st of December and we can do it together
16 as we fade off into whatever awaits us in the
17 future. I am here to address the topic of
18 today's hearing which is the impact the
19 standardized testing on our students. The
20 conversation about how to best assess
21 performance is taking place, as you indicated,
22 across the country, as the global economy is
23 demanding more from our graduates like ever
24 never before. Today's students must be
25 prepared to compete, not just in school, but in

1
2 jobs and in life. Tough academic standards
3 that require students to think critically,
4 creatively are the only way we can be prepared
5 to succeed in our City, and our Country can out
6 compete the rest of the world. As you know
7 from all of our hearings and just the
8 conversations that the United States has fallen
9 further and further behind and we have a
10 responsibility not just for the United States
11 but for students of this City to make sure that
12 our students are able to compete in a world-
13 class economy. The world that we grew up in,
14 Council Members, is totally different as far as
15 the world that exists now for our students. We
16 were basically competing for jobs just in New
17 York City and that was it, and that was our
18 competition, and back then, while our parents
19 wanted us to go to high school, high school was
20 deemed possibly maybe just enough for some
21 students. That's not enough for our students
22 any longer. We cannot tolerate our students
23 only being successful through high school. We
24 have to make sure they're college and career
25 ready and they're not just competing for jobs

1
2 in New York City. They're competing for jobs
3 across the world, and we have that
4 responsibility. That's why this administration
5 was one of the first in the Country to identify
6 college and career readiness as a very
7 important goal. We implemented programs to
8 improve the college readiness among our
9 students, developed a relationship with the
10 City University of New York and set benchmarks
11 for achieving it. Just having this
12 conversation alone, whether we agree or
13 disagree is extremely important, because the
14 issue of testing and preparedness is a type of
15 conversation we need to be debating on a
16 regular basis on who we improve ourselves to
17 make sure our students are competitive in
18 today's society. It is why we refocus our
19 instruction towards a higher baseline and
20 started arming student's schools with
21 information on student's performance at their
22 next academic institution. It is why we're one
23 of the first urban districts in the country to
24 objectively measure student, teacher, and
25 school performance. It is why--it is what has

1 transformed the educational landscape of this
2 city and it is one of the primary reasons why
3 record numbers of students are graduating today
4 prepared for future success. We celebrate
5 these accomplishments, but we know that there's
6 definitely more work that lies ahead if our
7 students are able to compete in the 21st
8 Century economy. According to research by
9 Georgetown University Center on Education and
10 the workforce. Over the course of this decade,
11 there will be 3.3 million job openings in New
12 York State alone. The vast majority of which
13 will require a college education or higher. In
14 fact, only eight percent of those new jobs will
15 be open to candidates without a high school
16 diploma, eight percent. And in order to
17 prepare our students to compete, it is
18 imperative that we raise the bar and fine-tune
19 our rigorous assessments, which we continue to
20 do on a regular basis. There is no question
21 that the experience of test taking is
22 stressful. When I was a student, I went
23 through the stress of taking tests. It's not
24 something that's new, that's defined by today's
25

1
2 parent. It existed for years and years and
3 years and will continue to exist throughout
4 life. However, tests do give us a sense of
5 what students know and where they need to
6 improve. When the state test results were
7 released last summer, there was an
8 understandable reaction to test scores that
9 reflected the new Common Core standards. A
10 consequence we knew would be inherent, part of
11 raising standards and moving forward. We made
12 widespread efforts to prepare school
13 communities with presentations about the new
14 tests in every borough, posting public service
15 announcements in 40 percent of our subway cars
16 and sharing public videos and webinars which
17 were viewed by thousands and thousands of
18 times. We wanted educators and families to
19 regard these tougher standards with an eye
20 towards the future to prepare students for life
21 of a success tomorrow. It is imperative that
22 our students receive adequate preparation for
23 that future now. There are clear signs of
24 progress. The city students out perform
25 students in every major city in New York By

1 leaps and bounds. You've heard me talk about
2 this before. In math, 29.6 percent of New York
3 City students were proficient compared to 14.5
4 percent in Yonkers, 9.6 percent in Buffalo, 6.9
5 percent in Syracuse and 5.0, five even in
6 Rochester. In ELA, 26.4 percent of New York
7 City students were proficient compared to 16.4
8 percent in Yonkers, 11.5 percent in Buffalo and
9 8.7 percent in Syracuse, and 5.4 percent in
10 Rochester. It is true that no single test can
11 capture the full range of knowledge and skills
12 our students are learning in the classroom each
13 day. However, assessments provides feedback
14 which in turn leads to more effective
15 instruction. Our emphasis, attention, and
16 resources must always return to instruction.
17 That is why we have invested more than 175
18 million dollars over the past three years to
19 support teachers and we will continue to invest
20 in our teachers. Tests also provide important
21 data for our annual progress reports. Progress
22 reports hold schools accountable and have been
23 an invaluable tool since we introduced them in
24 2006, both by helping families choose the best
25

1
2 school for their children and to reveal what is
3 and what is not working in our classrooms. We
4 are continuously fine tuning our accountability
5 system. The high school report, for example,
6 now includes measures of college and career
7 readiness, never even talked about a number of
8 years ago, and now that's part of the
9 measurement of how a high school is doing.
10 While the middle school report includes
11 student's results in core academic courses. We
12 share your concern about the progress of
13 English language learners, which is why we have
14 invested more than 80 million dollars over the
15 last two years directly to schools to provide
16 them with additional support. We have also
17 created more professional development
18 opportunities for educators who work with
19 students with disabilities. Since the city-wide
20 roll out of the special education reform in
21 September 2012, more than 50 thousand general
22 and special educators, power professionals and
23 school leaders have taken advantage of these
24 trainings. This summer's test data also
25 reviewed that our City's teachers have been

1
2 more successful than their colleagues across
3 the state in shifting their instruction to
4 align with the new standards. This summer,
5 state growth scores, formal measures of how
6 much students improved over the last school
7 year, revealed that New York City had twice as
8 many highly effective teachers and almost half
9 the number of ineffective teachers as the rest
10 of New York State. This is only part of the
11 historic progress New York City school system
12 has achieved over the past decade. Since 2005,
13 the percentage of students who are graduating
14 from high school ready for college or career
15 has doubled. At the same time, the drop out
16 rate, which to me is a true benchmark as well,
17 has been cut in half. Only 11 percent of our
18 students are dropping out. Again, we want to
19 reduce it further, but it's been cut in half.
20 This year, as our school communities have had
21 to deal with a multitude of challenges, the
22 Department of Education has intensified our
23 focus on communicating with schools, families,
24 and the public. Since fall of 2012, we have
25 renewed efforts to share information about the

1
2 Common Core standards and the new state test by
3 sending resources to principals, back packing a
4 letter home to families, redesigning the Common
5 Core library, leading interactive webinars, and
6 giving dozens of public presentations all
7 across districts of the City. We must ensure
8 that parents are aware of these changes and how
9 their children are effected. That is why the
10 Department of Education as part of a
11 collaboration with the United Federations of
12 Teachers, and I want to read this paragraph so
13 you hear this correctly because I think this is
14 just the headline alone in the news item. Let
15 me say it again. In collaboration with the
16 United Federation of Teachers, the Council,
17 supervisors, administrators as well as the
18 Coalition for Educational Justice vested five
19 million dollars to establish extended
20 parent/teacher conversations, and important
21 coalition to make sure that we're able to make
22 sure we extend the time for parents to
23 understand what was going on with their child,
24 especially those children who may have been
25 either at a level one and level two and

1
2 devoting five million dollars for that
3 purpose." All elementary and middle schools
4 have been asked to meet with families of
5 students who scored a below a level three on
6 the new state test. An extended conversation
7 of up to 30 minutes will go a long way to
8 support a student's progress. Our work is
9 about supporting student's development and
10 ensuring that they have options when they
11 graduate from high school. Last week, the
12 Department of Education released a policy brief
13 that summarizes the evolution of the
14 accountability system, shares current
15 initiatives, and lists possibilities of moving
16 forward. For example, Simone's team is
17 identifying ways to incorporate additional
18 measures into school accountability including
19 measures of academic attitudes and behaviors
20 and tailor accountability reports to our
21 various audiences. In addition, this fall, the
22 Department of Education launched the
23 accountability measures pilot, which allows
24 select network teams to work with their schools
25 to develop accountability measures other than

1 state tests that are best fit for them, for
2 instance, student work or course grades. To
3 ease the pressure on students and educators,
4 the Department of Education is appealing to New
5 York State Education Department to create more
6 flexibility for students. For example, because
7 of the structure of the new teacher evaluation
8 and development system, as you indicated Mr.
9 Chair, 36 early childhood schools with grades
10 K-2 have been required to administer bubble
11 tests in math. Both the Department of
12 Education and the United Federation of Teachers
13 found this requirement developmentally
14 inappropriate, and earlier this month, I sent a
15 letter to Commissioner John King to request
16 more options for this subset of schools. The
17 changes we are implementing now are extremely
18 important. While the new tests have helped us
19 achieved a higher standard for our students,
20 they also tell us that we have more work to do.
21 With time and support, I am confident that we
22 will all rise to the challenge. We must
23 continue to focus on rigorous instruction and
24 higher quality tests to support the deeper
25

1
2 learning our students need to achieve futures
3 they deserve, to graduate high school, attend
4 college, thrive in a career and earn wages that
5 will allow them to support a family. A slew of
6 independent studies this Fall have reached a
7 strikingly similar conclusion. This well
8 administration has achieved a historic turn
9 around of the school system many had all but
10 given up on a decade ago. It is now up to the
11 next administration to build on that progress
12 and we look forward to that building on the
13 progress and working with them in whatever way,
14 shape, and form. Finally, being honest about
15 academic achievement both is a strength and
16 weakness. It is the best legacy we could leave
17 our students. Thank you once again for the
18 opportunity to testify. It has been a pleasure
19 to work with all of you during my tenure as
20 Chancellor and also as Deputy Mayor, and I look
21 forward to any questions that you may have.
22 Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well thank you
24 Chancellor Walcott. I hope this is not the
25 last hearing of this year. We have a lot more,

1
2 as you know, education is continuous. It never
3 stops, and I'm sure there's a lot more things
4 that we will come up with before our last--

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I'm
6 confident about that as well, sir.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But thank you.
8 Let me turn to Andy King, our colleague, for
9 some questions. Council Member King? Followed
10 by Council Member Weprin.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good morning
12 again.

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: Council Member.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And as I said,
15 it's always a delight to listen to you testify.
16 But I'm--I'm going to shift right now. You
17 started out earlier in your testimony talking
18 in regards to how we've done this before. We
19 come to these conversations, and how do we make
20 sure that testing is not necessarily taught to-
21 -teaching to the test. One of the things that
22 I'm hearing from being in the school and around
23 a lot of students, sometimes when we testify
24 the testimony seems almost cold, that when
25 you're in a classroom with students, how do you

1
2 motivate their juices to want to learn? So I
3 really want to--I wanted to ask the question in
4 regards to, is there an evaluation system that
5 shows how the students level of eagerness to
6 participate in learning, other than statistics,
7 you know. We got to make sure that they--we
8 put together a curriculum with Common Core and
9 the teachers. What are the things that we're
10 doing outside of the white and black that
11 stimulates the child when they come into the
12 classroom, that they want to learn when they
13 come into it as opposed to looking at them as
14 robots and we got to get them through a
15 curriculum that will--that we believe as adults
16 will get them to an end game.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, that's a great
18 question. One, I don't view them as robots at
19 all and far from it. I'm sorry that, you know,
20 the hearing is cold. I mean, I'm in classrooms
21 all the time, and I'm in schools all the time,
22 and when I walk into a classroom you can feel
23 the vibrancy of learning taking place, and I
24 think part of what Common Core has been about
25 is making sure that we improve that vibrancy.

1
2 Like I go into a school and I see our students
3 having debates and having evidence to support
4 their answers and the type of stimulation
5 that's taking place by our great teachers in
6 making sure they're both educating but also
7 getting the information from our students. I
8 see that on a regular basis, is a living
9 breathing attitude that takes place in the
10 school. When I go into a school and I hear
11 parents talking about teachers who assign not
12 just homework to the students but to the
13 families around Common Core, and having them
14 jointly participate in that. That to me is
15 great learning. It's all connected to
16 everything that I've testified before the
17 committee about, whether it's principal
18 empowerment, making sure the principals are
19 empowered to create great learning environments
20 in the schools to learning environment survey
21 as well, which measures that. It's the type of
22 debates that occur incorporating whether it's
23 English language arts, or math, or science or
24 arts or whatever the case may be. That should
25 be part of the learning that's taking place in

1 school. The evaluation system that's new is to
2 measure a lot of that instead of having the old
3 arcane fossilized SMU system now with a four
4 point review of our teachers. We'll be able to
5 give them better feedback in talking about how
6 effective they are or if they're not effective,
7 what they need to do to improve, and that's all
8 part of this. So the blending of both Common
9 Core, the blending of evaluation is all to
10 benefit our students along that, and I see that
11 when I walk into it. There are some schools
12 and some classrooms you walk into you can tell
13 that great learning is not taking place.

14
15 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay.

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: And it's the
17 responsibility of the principal through the
18 informal observations and the formal
19 observation and working with that teacher,
20 developing a teacher improvement plan to
21 increase the learning that's taking place in
22 that particular classroom. We can feel it. I
23 don't want to be able to walk into a classroom
24 and see a student being treated as a special
25 education student and one as a general

1
2 education student. I don't want to be able to
3 tell the difference, and I see that when I walk
4 into classrooms for the most part, and then if
5 I walk into a classroom where I see
6 distinctness, there's something wrong in that
7 particular classroom, and the principal should
8 be working on that, and I think part of the
9 role of both the network and the
10 superintendents is to provide the support to
11 the principals to make sure of that vibrancy.
12 So it's all part of all the reforms that have
13 taken place over the years to benefit the
14 students in the long run, and I see the results
15 of that. So, I see learning taking place when I
16 walk in. I went to a school in Brooklyn one
17 time where I think it was either the sixth or
18 seventh grade, it was definitely a middle
19 school, and they had to work on a math problem,
20 and the students came up with the same answer,
21 but their approach to answering the question
22 were all different because they were allowed to
23 think. They weren't robots, and said two plus
24 two is four. They were able to apply their
25 theory and have the evidence to support it.

1
2 When I hear the students talking about the
3 reports they read or the books they read and
4 more non-fiction books than ever before. It's
5 being able to analyze it, and I think the piece
6 that wasn't captured in my testimony in that,
7 you know, the teaching to the test and we're
8 talking about bubble test. As we move forward
9 in this new system, all the tests, most of the
10 tests are going to be around essays and not
11 have to think about it. When I give
12 presentations by the students it's about them
13 thinking and having the evidence to support
14 their answers. All that is taking place in the
15 classroom and I think is night and day from
16 especially when I was a student.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. I'm just
18 ask two more questions, and I'm--oh, you have
19 answer, okay.

20 DENNIS WALCOTT: Can you--somebody
21 give us a little more wire space here? A little
22 more slack. Thank you, sir. There we go. Never
23 mind, I got it.

24 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Okay, thank you. I
25 would just add to Dennis' point. We have

1
2 started to measure some of these elements in
3 the learning environment survey. So we measure
4 for students and for teachers academic
5 expectations, communications, and engagement,
6 and what we've seen is both high levels of
7 satisfaction, but also an increase over time.
8 So we do see students reporting that they are
9 more engaged in their classroom, that their
10 teachers expectations of them to try harder and
11 some of the other, sort of, academic personal
12 behaviors that we know result in high
13 performance when they leave is also continuing
14 to increase. So I think that's a positive sign
15 as we continue to--the shift to the Common
16 Core.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: And just to build
18 on that, I think one of the things that hasn't
19 gotten a lot of attention, but if we haven't
20 shared it with you, we should get it to you,
21 are the summary results of the Learning
22 Environment Survey. Second to the census, this
23 is the largest survey conducted in the Country.
24 I mean, 985,000 responses is not something
25 that's small, and a key part of that is what

1
2 Simone talked about, is always fine tuning the
3 survey, but better measuring what you've asked,
4 Council Member, and that information is the, I
5 think, bread and butter of giving us feedback
6 as well from the teacher, the parents, and the
7 students as far as what they feel is going on
8 within their schools.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Right. Well,
10 I think, and I don't dispute the majority of
11 the things that you've just, both of you just
12 said. I was just extremely curious because the
13 couple high schools that I work with currently,
14 some of the teachers are a little annoyed of
15 how the system is set up that they have to
16 train children to take the test and not
17 stimulate their creative juices that helps them
18 learn more, and like I said, there are a number
19 schools that are doing exactly what you're
20 saying, but there are a number of schools that
21 are falling short of this initiative, and
22 that's what I--I'm addressing those students
23 and those concerns from those principals and
24 those teachers that are having these
25 complaints, and that's why I asked about how do

1
2 we--motivating students, because in some school
3 buildings, since you have five schools in a
4 building, you know, the school camaraderie is
5 not even there. You know, students are
6 demoralized, you know. I know I may be going
7 off, but from, you know, standing--to standing
8 outside trying to get into a building and now
9 have to try to figure out what the teacher's
10 trying to teach me. There's a whole host of
11 things that are going on, and then we can come
12 up with test scores that show that in
13 comparison to the rest of the state that we're
14 doing a whole lot better, but and in some
15 individual spots in the borough, some of our
16 students are not fitting in those numbers, and
17 I want to address how they--how do they--don't
18 fall through the cracks.

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: I don't necessarily
20 disagree with you at all, sir, and that, you
21 know, in a system this large, you're going to
22 have schools that are not meeting expectations,
23 and I think you and I were in a school when
24 probably you were first elected.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yeah.

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: And that was
3 definitely a school that was meeting
4 expectations, and the principal of that
5 particular school created a culture that
6 allowed his students to thrive, and we're very
7 big on school culture as well. Excuse me. And
8 but there are those schools that don't have
9 that culture, per say, and so it's our
10 responsibility to work with them and to improve
11 the overall culture, and I think the survey
12 does that, observations do it, the work with
13 the staff and especially through the principal
14 hopefully creates that learning environment
15 that I talked out.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, thank
17 you. I thank you Mr. Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
19 Chancellor, as I indicated in my opening
20 statement and not only are we having an
21 oversight hearing on testing, but there were
22 two bills, Intro 1091 which is about the
23 college savings plan that Council Member King
24 introduced, and also Intro 925, which is a
25 required reporting on data regarding arts

1
2 educational requirements. I don't believe, and
3 correct me if I'm wrong, if I heard--did I hear
4 anything that you mentioned about these two
5 Introductions, or whether or not you're going
6 to comment on those?

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: You did not hear me
8 mention it in my testimony. So that is
9 correct, sir. And, you know, I never commented
10 on bills before. This is the first time that's
11 happened. I knew that you would have these
12 bills as part of the discussion, so, I mean,
13 I'm not into having DOE and especially DOE
14 under a new chancellor respond to a bill that
15 would basically concretize something. I think a
16 lot of the work that we do is done by principal
17 empowerment and putting suggestions out there.
18 I've asked Paul to join around the art side
19 because we have done a lot of work in the arts,
20 and as you know, we have a special arts
21 committee as well, and the arts committee I
22 think reported to our panel for education
23 policy around two months ago, give or take.
24 And so we'd be glad to comment on that, and I
25 think what the Council Member has proposed is

1
2 laudable, and when I was Deputy Mayor, I doing
3 a lot of work through one of my former staff
4 members, Anthony Tasse [phonetic] around
5 financial literacy, the important financial
6 literacy, and we try to incorporate that, but
7 by mandating it through bills, I would not
8 alpine [phonetic] on that, but I believe in the
9 goals of creating bank accounts and college
10 incentives through financial planning for our
11 families, but not necessarily comfortable for
12 saying that it's something that should be in
13 law that schools have to do, because then you
14 have something else that's imposed on the
15 system by law, and I think our goal has always
16 been through principal empowerment, providing
17 the information and allowing the principals to
18 do job, and if you want, Council Member, I
19 could have Paul respond to the arts piece.
20 I'll defer to--Paul?

21 PAUL KING: Hi, thank you very much.
22 I apologize for my cold. Let me know if you
23 can't hear me. So, first of all, I just want
24 to reiterate that as you probably know, the New
25 York City Department of Education has done an

1
2 annual arts survey for the last seven years,
3 and this is a comprehensive report of all our
4 1,700 schools that respond. More importantly,
5 however, each school gets an individual arts
6 report that is posted on that school's website
7 that is available to community members, arts
8 partners, organizations in the community so
9 they can see the level of arts instruction and
10 arts programing at the individual school site,
11 and those are widely available. Schools use
12 them as a diagnostic tool to think about their
13 own arts programming and how they bring
14 additional resources to bear. Those individual
15 arts reports look at the hours of instruction
16 that are provided, how schools allocate space,
17 who the personnel is that is teaching and who
18 the arts partners are among other things. As
19 you were probably or also aware, we provided
20 the City Council Members with CD's of all of
21 the individual arts reports for the schools in
22 their district. We have done that for the last
23 four years, have burned CDs and delivered them
24 to the Education Committee for distribution.
25 At this point in time, in terms of the deeper

1
2 dive that you're looking for in terms of data
3 related to ELS [phonetic] and--excuse me--
4 Ellison [phonetic] students with disabilities.
5 We actually believe that we're capturing most
6 of that data in the individual arts reports.
7 We look forward to working with the Council,
8 should this resolution move forward. There are
9 some very challenging elements of the current
10 resolution the way it's constructed in terms of
11 the level of data we could get to, how that
12 would be captured and what that means in terms
13 of additional resources. So we look forward to
14 working with you on that to help refine that
15 resolution.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, that--
17 this is not a resolution. It's a bill that will
18 be a law, but my staff has informed that the
19 information being provided is only by
20 individual schools and is not aggregated by
21 City Council district, by borough, by school
22 districts. As far as meeting the requirements
23 on the state law with regards to education.
24 Now, if in fact, you have that information by
25 individual schools, I would think in today's

1
2 computer age that it's easy to aggregate that
3 by City Council district so that I would know,
4 you know, how things are going as far as
5 meeting a requirement by community school
6 districts, since we do have 32 districts, by
7 borough, by elementary school, intermediate
8 school, high schools. That should be pretty
9 easily accessible and put together
10 understanding I'm not a computer programmer,
11 but I would assume that that's pretty easy to
12 do. So my understanding is that you don't have
13 that aggregated by those factors, but only by
14 schools, specifically.

15 PAUL KING: So you're correct. It
16 would be easy to aggregate. However, what I
17 want to point out is there are issues in the
18 way the bill is crafted that address elementary
19 school where the capturing of data at
20 elementary schools is very different. So as
21 you probably know where elementary schools
22 don't have course codes. It's much more--don't
23 have course codes.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

25

1
2 PAUL KING: It's much more
3 challenging to capture that data at this school
4 level. Elementary school data in terms of the
5 arts remains mainly self-reported. So we can
6 certainly report back on that, but I just want
7 to be clear that is a different kind of data
8 set. But certainly we could run the data in
9 terms of Council districts. I think what we
10 want to ask is, is it necessary to run it both
11 by Council districts and community school
12 districts as well as by individual schools, and
13 that's something we could certainly discuss.

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: As you know, Chair,
15 we meet on a quarterly basis and we sit down
16 and have very productive meetings with you, me
17 and our respective teams, and so we're always
18 interested in seeing how we can cut data to
19 meet the requirement of the Council. And so,
20 that's something that we can start to process.
21 Obviously, the next Chancellor will take that
22 one, I imagine as this moves to fruition, but
23 you know, as you want something, your folks and
24 my folks talk all the time, and if there are
25 ways to cut it, whether you're trying to--try

1
2 to find ways to cut it to meet your
3 requirement.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Sure. And Mr.
5 King, I do understand what you said in response
6 to the elementary school is mainly self-
7 reporting. I do believe based on my historical
8 aspect and dealing with arts education and the
9 funding for arts, and I remember art used to--
10 specifically amount of money used to be
11 targeted for arts and then it became more
12 general based on the school, and I remember the
13 representatives from the Department of
14 Education giving testimony I believe after
15 that, that more money was being spent on arts
16 education than is required by the law, and I
17 just think that is important that we know
18 whether or not all of the requirement, self-
19 reporting or not are being met with regards to
20 the minimum requirement, that's what--that's a
21 minimum. I mean, we'd like to see a lot more
22 than that, but so--and one of the things that I
23 say as an individual as you know, Dennis,
24 you're leaving. I'm leaving too. I'm out 12-
25 31. Is setting the parameters for the next

1
2 Chancellor and the next administration. I think
3 that that's what Mayor Bloomberg did when he
4 put forward last week. What he said was he's
5 leaving the Administration with a balanced
6 budget. So this is the first time he's come out
7 with a budget prediction before the end of the
8 year and obviously from his perspective it's
9 because he's leaving now, and he wants to
10 communicate publicly about the shape that he's
11 leaving the City in. There's certain things
12 that we're putting forward as far as
13 legislation that we want in place before the
14 next administration so that they have to deal
15 with it. And so this is one of the things that
16 has been out there for a while in which we want
17 to try to lock in now and not wait until next
18 year.

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, as you know,
20 Chair, that the mayor way of education has put
21 in an additional two billion dollars to make up
22 for the short fall from the feds in the state
23 and as you well know that the distribution,
24 percentage distribution of funding from the
25 state and the city has changed drastically.

1
2 Whereas the City now through city tax levy has
3 picked up a way higher percentage than the
4 state historically had put in before, and as a
5 result of that, you know, schools have had to
6 have made difficult choice but what we've tried
7 to do is not go by the way of other districts
8 where they have laid off teachers in record
9 numbers. Just go a little bit further south and
10 take a look at what they did in Philadelphia.
11 And as far as the laying off of teachers, and
12 we've tried to preserve funding. And I've
13 always said this, while over the last several
14 years funding has basically been stable, we
15 understand the buying power of schools as a
16 result of step increases on salaries erode some
17 of that buying power, but at the same time
18 through the arts, we've tried to maintain as
19 much both of monies going to our schools around
20 arts, but at the same time giving the
21 flexibility for our principals to decide on how
22 to use the money and Paul can talk a little
23 further about that.

24 PAUL KING: So, you're absolutely
25 right in 1990's--excuse me, in 2007 the project

1
2 arts funds were unrestricted. Those monies,
3 however still go to the school budgets. This
4 year SAM [phonetic] allocation, the school
5 allocation memorandum for the arts for
6 supplementary arts funding was 63 dollars per
7 student that went out to every school in the
8 system. SO those monies still exist within
9 school budgets. The other thing that we're
10 seeing is pretty much a flat trend in terms of
11 the school's spend at the local level on the
12 arts over the last five years, not seeing a
13 substantial increase or decrease, but more
14 importantly as a percentage of the school
15 budgets art spend remains at--has remained
16 consistent at three percent of school budgets
17 over the last five years. We are absolutely
18 aware how challenging is it for school leaders
19 to make these decisions in terms of how to
20 allocate resources. We have seen schools
21 struggle with buying basic art supplies, but
22 what is more encouraging is that they have not
23 laid off teachers in substantial numbers. We've
24 actually maintained our numbers of arts
25 teachers for the most part. We've seen a small

1
2 decline of about 200 teachers or seven percent
3 of arts teachers over the last five years,
4 which is comparable with other content areas.
5 So there's certainly work to be done and I'd
6 love to see sort of fine arts teachers in all
7 of our 1,700 schools, but we're not in a dire
8 situation. What we're seeing is principals
9 making smart decisions in really difficult
10 recessionary budget times.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Let me
12 turn to our colleague, Mark Weprin for some
13 questions and then we'll move on.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chair. I won't be long. Chancellor, it's
16 good to see you as always.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Good seeing you
18 again. District 26 doing well?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Still doing
20 well, yes.

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: Excellent. Glad to
22 hear that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: As is
24 district 29. So I just got a--I was curious
25 about the Common Core, just as far as the

1
2 assessments go or the test goes, how are they
3 different? I know you referenced more writing,
4 but could you describe exactly how they're
5 different than the other standardized tests
6 they were taking before the Common Core?

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure, I mean, in a
8 very simple way and then we could get into a
9 more sophisticated description as well, it's
10 not as wide as before. It's more deeper in
11 depth as far as the type of content knowledge
12 that's being measured. I think Common Core also
13 deals with more non-fiction texts and making
14 sure students are able to analyze and support
15 the answer to question. You will see it moving
16 away and it had been moving away from bubble
17 test type of responses and dealing with more
18 essays and critical thinking in their responses
19 to questions as well, having evidence to cite
20 it. I've seen it in evidence in other subject
21 areas as well. With math, as I indicated, I
22 think you were here as well, and how one comes
23 up with an answer and be able to support him
24 coming up with the answer and being able to
25 think critically along that process as well.

1
2 So I think it's that deep analysis of answers
3 to questions and the research that goes into
4 preparing for it. I think the overall teaching
5 you see it differently where you see more
6 shared discussion taking place with our
7 students as well as far sharing information,
8 being able to analyze that information, be able
9 to debate each other around the questions and
10 the answers, and teachers facilitating that
11 process instead of pointing to one student and
12 then putting that student on the spot.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: The shared
14 answers part is not part of the exam. You're
15 saying in classrooms, you're talking--

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Yeah,
17 it's about Common Core in general, not about
18 the test.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.
20 Right.

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: [cross-talk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Now on the
23 test, though, there's still bubble answers on
24 the test, some?

25

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: Simone can get into
3 the actual test part of it. Some, but it's been
4 moving away, and the State is gearing up
5 through a variety of measures in having total
6 moving away from bubbles, but Simone?

7 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sure. Yes, there
8 still are some multiple choice response
9 questions, but the difference is that they're
10 much deeper multi step questions. So even the
11 math questions that are multiple choice ask
12 students to do sort of multi-step math problems
13 to get to the answer. So even those multiple
14 choice questions are richer.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Do they still
16 have Stanley Kaplan packets to send home with
17 the kids for these questions as well, or no?
18 They used to get packets home from Stanley
19 Kaplan telling them how to get the right
20 answers on tests, like the little tricks, you
21 know. If it says always or never, it's the
22 wrong answer, those type of things. Do they
23 still make those for this test as well?

24 DENNIS WALCOTT: There will always
25 be companies that have, I think, supports for

1 families and students and families and students
2 seeking out companies, whether it's Stanley
3 Kaplan, or--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN:

5 [interposing] No, no. This wasn't parents
6 seeking out the companies. This was going home
7 with their regular curriculum in their folders,
8 Stanley Kaplan packets. Are you unaware of
9 that?
10

11 SIMONE D'SOUZA: For this test--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]

13 No, no. I haven't been--

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: It sounds like

15 you're asking a general question and I'm not
16 sure I want to--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]

18 No, no.

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: So then they--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]

21 I'll be more specific.

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: Yeah, please.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: The old test,
24 the kids used to get Stanley Kaplan packets
25

1
2 home with tricks on getting the right answer on
3 tests. That was given to them by schools.

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: Every student would
5 get this?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Well, I don't
7 know about every student. I only--

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: I know District 26
9 has been one of the highest performance. Are
10 you saying there's something wrong with what
11 they were doing?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: In a high
13 performing school district, kids were getting
14 Stanley Kaplan packets home, teaching them how
15 to get the right answer on the old standardized
16 test. I was just curious--

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing]
18 Teaching them how to take a test? Because I
19 mean, I wanted your distinction between test
20 prep and test sophistication.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Okay.

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: And that, to me, in
23 knowing how to take tests is an extremely
24 important part of life for a student and a
25 family as well and lot of students just don't

1
2 know how to take tests, and they need to become
3 more sophisticated in taking tests, and that's
4 something that I believe in. In test prep, we
5 should not be teaching to the test. I've been
6 very clear about that before, and the way
7 you're asking the question and not familiar and
8 Simone's not familiar, it sounds like there's a
9 pejorative attached to Stanley Kaplan packets
10 going home, and so I just wanted to try to
11 tease out where it's going with the question.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: I don't want
13 to belabor this. I know, I mean, they used to
14 have packets go home actually written by
15 Stanley Kaplan, that would go home as part of
16 their curriculum. I mean, well probably the
17 school giving them out and it would give you
18 tricks. Like, they would say if an answer
19 choice says always or never, it's the wrong
20 answer, or they tell you to read the first line
21 of every paragraph. I mean, that may be--

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] It
23 sounds like the old things when they used to
24 take the SAT, and then--

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]

3 Yeah.

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: I would go to--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]
6 When you went privately--

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: when you went
9 privately to a tutor probably and they taught
10 you how to trick the test. I wouldn't be a
11 lawyer today, probably--

12 DENNIS WALCOTT: No, no, it wasn't--
13 [cross-talk]

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: more sophisticated
15 in taking and SAT and different steps of things
16 to do and things not to do in taking the SAT.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: So I'm not sure if
19 that's the distinction--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]
21 Well, I--

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] that
23 you're--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: But alright,
25 alright, so you're saying that--I was just

1
2 curious whether these new tests still allow for
3 that. It does, obviously. It seem like,
4 right? I mean you could still send what you say
5 is ways to take the test to make it easier to
6 get the right answer.

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: I think you missed
8 the overall point around Common Core. It's
9 allowing a student to think critically,
10 allowing a student to think critically to come
11 up with the answers on their own, and the
12 teacher's preparing that student with evidence
13 based--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]
15 I didn't mean to--I really didn't mean to
16 belabor this point. Could I ask this question,
17 on the test as far as the Common Core, how are
18 they graded compared to the other tests? What-
19 -the grading system the same as far as, you
20 know, how they come back with threes and fours
21 and do you come back with a number?

22 SIMONE D'SOUZA: There is a four-
23 point scale. So students are given a
24 proficiency score and a proficiency rating that
25 ranges from 1.0 to 4.5.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.

SIMONE D'SOUZA: Each score means something slightly difference because the standard has been raised. So proficiency on the new test means that students are college-ready.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.

SIMONE D'SOUZA: And on the old test, proficiency meant a different standard. It was more similar to sort of the graduation standard.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [cross-talk]

DENNIS WALCOTT: Just if I may for one second. I really want to highlight that because I think that's not really been part of the public debate as far as how one views proficiency now and what a three actually represents, because that's a key marker now as far as the college readiness itself, and then to me what we've been able to do if you do a two, while two is below where we want that student to be, the two does mean that that student is ready potentially to graduate from high school and it's been part of that change

1
2 that I think is an important part of the
3 discussion as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Now, are the
5 grades norm referenced or with a bell curve or
6 are they criteria referenced with just like a
7 passing grade? Because I was even curious
8 about that last year when every body said the
9 grades are so bad, but why were--were they
10 curve or they just were--they were just bad and
11 they just--they didn't make the level?

12 SIMONE D'SOUZA: They are largely
13 criterion [phonetic] reference. There was a
14 standard setting process at the state where
15 educators came together to look at what each
16 level meant and what a student's understanding
17 was at every level, and they established the
18 sort of cut off for each grade and level at
19 that meeting. So they are largely criterion
20 referenced benchmarks.

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: Right, and so the
22 state had a very, very comprehensive process
23 that they put in place to establish that
24 benchmark, that line, and the criterion
25 reference that Simone talked about.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: And that'll
3 probably happen again this year. That's the
4 way we do this. We have the state set a number
5 of what you're trying to reach, and then you
6 figure out--

7 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing] It
8 was just especially important in the first year
9 as we for the first time established what those
10 benchmarks were--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN:
12 [interposing] Right.

13 SIMONE D'SOUZA: for the Common Core,
14 and they're probably will be some review of
15 that, but I think now, the benchmarks have been
16 established of what each level cut off is.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: So for the next
18 round of tests, hopefully there's a commonality
19 around that benchmark referencing that will
20 take place. So again, as we always tried to
21 say in the beginning in the implementation of
22 the new Common Core tests, it is not fair to
23 compare one versus another because a whole set
24 of criterion were established and benchmarks
25

1
2 were established that were totally different
3 than the prior test. That would have been--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]

5 So that's what we expect to happen this year,
6 too. Again, like sort of having the state will
7 set the number or city will set--

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] State
9 every--go ahead Simone.

10 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Alright. I think we
11 expect the standards to be the same, and then
12 student's performance against that standard
13 could and hopefully will improve, but this
14 standard should remain the same as they were
15 this past year.

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: But that is
17 something that the state will let folks know
18 about, but again, we expect and the State, when
19 we've been aware the state has basically said
20 that what Simone said, that it will be
21 basically the same, and that way we will have
22 an apple to apple comparison or a better
23 comparison versus--really there is not a
24 comparison from this year's results to last
25 year's results.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right. Look,
3 I don't have a problem with the Common Core. I
4 think it, you know, I think it is good to raise
5 the standards for students. I, you know--you
6 know I've always had a beef with the way we
7 assess students and I think it's unfair of you
8 to say that you know, the tests are similar to
9 when we were younger. Because when I was
10 younger I took those standardized tests that
11 you referenced, and I don't ever remember
12 feeling the pressure that the kids today feel
13 because mostly because they weren't really
14 assessing the teachers back then with my grade.
15 They were assessing me. Now we're assessing
16 the teachers, principals, chancellors and
17 mayors with the tests and the kids feel it. I
18 mean, I didn't have subway ads when I was a kid
19 telling me standardized tests are coming. All
20 I did was literally the day before the test,
21 the teacher would say, "Tomorrow, bring two
22 number two pencils." That was the build up.
23 There's a lot of build up now, Chancellor that
24 wasn't there when you were younger and I was
25 younger.

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: Well, first I want
3 to thank you for including me in your
4 generation. My generation was totally
5 different than your generation, so I want to
6 thank you for that, but two, quite frankly and
7 I'm not joking, I do remember when I was third
8 and fourth grade feeling the same pressure, and
9 it wasn't about just a regular test. It was
10 about that reading test and whether I would be
11 promoted to the next grade. And so there was
12 pressure when I was taking the tests, and I
13 always dedicate my life to my third grade
14 reading teacher who took extra time to make
15 sure that I was prepared for that, and so yes--

16 [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Was it Mrs.
18 Brown was it? What was her name?

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: Mrs. Long.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Long, okay.

21 [cross-talk]

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: I can tell you all,
23 every elementary teacher that I had because
24 they had a significant part of my life, and
25 then hopefully, and I can't talk to this for a

1
2 fact, but there was some form of evaluation,
3 but that form of evaluation that I can say from
4 fact was an SMU system. So the system that's in
5 place now is even fairer for our teachers to
6 give them a better measure of their performance
7 and then the feedback, as far as making sure
8 they're doing the job because we want great
9 teachers in front of the classroom to succeed
10 for our students to benefit in the--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]
12 And I'll agree with you on that, that the more
13 broad base the evaluation I think the better it
14 is, because then the teachers don't feel as
15 much pressure about this one test and making
16 sure these kids are doing well on this one
17 test, because that's how I'm going to be
18 evaluated. You know, that's always been my
19 beef all along, honestly. You know, I have, as
20 you know, three kids in New York City public
21 schools, so I do see it myself not only my kids
22 schools, but I visit schools as an elected
23 official. When I visit as an elected official
24 and I go into a classroom they know I'm there,
25 and you know, and you feel that vibrancy, but

1
2 I'm telling you that a lot of these
3 standardized test succession has deadened a lot
4 of the education in other classroom, and I have
5 a feeling it's different when I walk in a room
6 as an elected official and when I'm watching
7 what happens as a parent.

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: There's a school in
9 your district that we both been to, maybe not
10 together, but that that vibrancy exists and--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]
12 That's true.

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: the schools
14 throughout your district and other districts
15 throughout all of the--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]
17 No, it does.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: Because where the
19 vibrancy exists, you see the learning taking
20 place. You see the teacher energized, but we
21 do understand, a lot of new has taking place
22 this year, and we respect what people are
23 saying, but the same time it is our
24 responsibility to put this in place to benefit
25 our students in the long run. Life would have

1
2 been easy not to do anything that's new, but
3 then that would have been totally unfair to our
4 students. We have to tackle these difficult
5 topics and make sure that we put the systems in
6 place to make sure our students are able to
7 compete, and that's the challenge that we too
8 on and I am not shying away from that
9 challenge, and I think in the long run it will
10 benefit our students and we're laying a solid
11 foundation for the next mayor and the next
12 Chancellor to build on and that's something
13 that this debate will allow us to build on that
14 as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Well, good.
16 I don't disagree with that. It's a good
17 challenge, and I want to see the kids
18 challenged. There's just a question of how we
19 assess it. I apologize, Mr. Chairman, I have
20 to run across the street to another committee
21 meeting and apologize--

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
23 Can I say that as well?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: No.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So before we
3 turn to my colleague Danny Dromm, since we're
4 talking about tests, I have one question maybe
5 you or staff can answer it, then I'll move to
6 Danny Dromm. How many tests to New York City
7 students take on average over the course of a
8 school year and over the school career?

9 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sure. So the only
10 state mandated test for the sort of our general
11 education population is the three through eight
12 state test that students take, so a math and
13 the ELA test every takes in third through
14 eighth grade. In high school students are
15 required to pass five Regents to graduate. So
16 over the course of their four years in high
17 school, students must take and pass five
18 Regents in order to earn a diploma. There are
19 some other alternative assessments that are
20 English language learners take that our
21 students that don't take the standardized tests
22 take. So our alternative assessment students
23 take another set of tests, but in general there
24 is one set of state tests that our students
25

1
2 take and that adds up to sort of day or so of
3 instructional time.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, let me--
5 I've heard your response. So is it 10, 15, 20,
6 30 tests over the course of a school year? I
7 know you broke it down specifically three to
8 eight, they take the math. They take the
9 English, the ELA, and then a certain grades
10 take others. So on an average, so based on all
11 of this stuff that I mentioned--not stuff, but
12 all of the exams that I mentioned in my opening
13 statement, what would you say if you know, an
14 average number of tests that a student takes
15 over the course of a year, 15, 20 or what?

16 SIMONE D'SOUZA: So there's
17 actually--it's just one ELA state test and one
18 math state test, and then for the measures of
19 student learning as part of the teacher
20 evaluation, there are performance based
21 assessments that students might also take.
22 Those are much more rigorous sort of essay-
23 based assessments that really feed into the
24 instruction that's happening in the classroom.
25 So there really are sort of in terms of more

1
2 standardized tests, there's just the state ELA
3 and math test and then for some students they
4 take some form of the performance based
5 assessments for measures of student learning.

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: Because I was going
7 to ask you, Chair, it depends on how you're
8 defining tests as well. So as Simone indicated
9 there are those, and then as you know, with the
10 Regents, over the last number of years the
11 requirements have increased to the five now.
12 It was at four once before, then the grading of
13 those changed from 55 to 65 and that's changed
14 as well. And then the--

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
16 Appropriately so, too. Appropriately so.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Agreed. And so
18 again, it depends, and then some schools have
19 flexibility as well. So I think that's what
20 you hear Simone talking about.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. But well
22 what about now with the evaluations in place
23 and, you know, people being evaluated based on
24 student's progress. I believe there's in
25 place, and correct me if I'm wrong, a sort of

1
2 like a test at the beginning of the year to
3 determine where they are and then a test at the
4 end to determine what they've learned so that
5 that can be part of the evaluation. And I'm
6 just trying to get an assessment based on all
7 things considered. Not only the mandated
8 exams, but exams if I had to take one for ELL
9 or if I had to take one for my competency in
10 Chinese or French, on the average 10 exams a
11 year, 15, 20, on the average? I'm not talking
12 about a little test as a teacher. I may say,
13 "Okay, you're going to do a teacher assessment
14 of how you're doing in this subject area on
15 this chapter." I'm just talking about on an
16 average, 15, 10, 20?

17 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sorry, to not
18 answer the question. I think it's really hard
19 to give an average. So for some students, for
20 many of our students it's just two. It's just
21 the state math and the ELA exam if they use
22 those exams for teacher evaluation. I think for
23 others, it could be five or six. I don't think
24 it's going into the range of 10 or 15, but I

25

1
2 think that it could range from just the two
3 state exams to sort of up to five or six.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Let me
5 turn to our colleagues, Danny Dromm. We've been
6 joined by Eric Ulrich from Queens. Earlier, we
7 were joined by colleagues Charles Barron of
8 Brooklyn--and who else? And he said he'd be
9 back. Okay, Danny Dromm of Queens?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you.
11 Thank you, Mr. Chair. A lot of what I wanted to
12 ask about has been questioned already. I would
13 like to say that it's my belief as well as I
14 think a number of people on this committee that
15 the problem isn't so much the test but how
16 they're used, and since tests are now being
17 used to evaluate teachers, evaluate principals
18 to determine the report card for the school,
19 determine raises for people in the school,
20 etcetera, and there's even talk in political
21 circles of even furthering that. For me, it's
22 this over emphasis on testing that determines
23 so much of how we evaluate schools that is the
24 problem, and I think we need to move away from
25 that and the resolution that we're talking

1
2 about today actually addresses that, and that
3 is to have alternative types of evaluation
4 going on in the classroom, and I'm sorry I
5 forgot your name?

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: Simone.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Simone, when
8 you were talking you had mentioned the
9 classroom assessment, I guess, but you know as
10 a teacher for 25 years before I got elected to
11 the Council, and when I left in 2009, we were
12 required to give a pre-test and a post-test
13 almost for every chapter in every subject in
14 the school, and then to record that as well
15 because of this over emphasis, what I believe
16 to be an over emphasis on testing. That still
17 occurs in the schools, am I right?

18 SIMONE D'SOUZA: In some cases, yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So when you
20 add the fact that kids are taking a test, pre-
21 test and post-test once a month at least
22 probably in all of those subjects and then you
23 have the standardized test on top of that,
24 that's the type of pressure that we're talking
25 about, and when the Chancellor mentioned that

1
2 we all took tests when we were younger, yes,
3 but the difference was that the tests weren't
4 used in the same way. And I think that's part
5 of what the problem is that's going on here. So
6 I don't recall when I was younger, when I was
7 in school having the test used to evaluate
8 teachers or schools per say in such a way that
9 they're being used today. I also don't recall
10 when I was teaching, for the most part. I
11 mean, the principal would bring you down in the
12 beginning of the year and he would say to you--
13 in those days would raise them by year, 2.1 or
14 3.4, wherever they fell on the spectrum, and
15 he's ask you to go through it. Then at the
16 year he'd bring you down again and say to you,
17 "Well this is how far your kids have come."
18 Part of the problem today also, and maybe it's
19 changed a little bit since I left, is the fact
20 when the tests are given. So when I left they
21 were being given in January. I think maybe
22 there in March or April--

23 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] March,
24 April.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Right. So
3 that it doesn't fully reflect the full year of
4 teaching of the person who's actually giving
5 the test. So I don't know if you can respond to
6 that as well.

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: So let me take the
8 general and then we can get into the specifics.
9 And that I think we've talked about this in
10 various appearances before you, the body
11 itself, and that I think we may just have a
12 philosophical disagreement around the value of
13 testing and what tests are used for, and I
14 think tests are extremely important tool for
15 accountability and measure not just student
16 performance but how well a teacher is doing and
17 also the principal and the school, and it all
18 goes back to students performing at a high
19 level to compete in today's society. And I
20 believe in that. We have talked about and I
21 talked about it a little bit in my testimony
22 and we've talked about it before, also that not
23 having tests be the sole criteria, and I do
24 understand that, and there should be a variety
25 of mechanisms. And I think the difference from

1 when you were a teacher now as far as
2 evaluation, more informal observations, and
3 then in New York we are one of the few
4 districts that will have students as a part of
5 that process as well, because students know
6 what's going on in their respective classroom.
7 That builds a robust system of benefitting our
8 students in the long run, and I think testing
9 is a key component of that. And so, yes,
10 students do the pre and the post and that's
11 part of something that's used for developing
12 teachers, but I guess there's nothing wrong
13 with that. I mean, it's all about connecting
14 the dots, and the connecting of the dots is,
15 school are you doing well? Teachers are you
16 doing well in teaching our students? Students,
17 are they performing at a level that we expect
18 them, and will they be able to move on to that
19 next grade at a higher level, and all of that
20 is a direct line connection of accountability
21 of the performance and assessing how well a
22 school, a teacher, but most importantly how
23 well our students are doing. So I think that is
24 just how you view it sometimes and how maybe I
25

1
2 view it are different. And with specific
3 answers, Simone can give you those.

4 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sure. It might be
5 worth just talking through how the tests are
6 used for the various stakeholders and the other
7 information that's really valuable to our
8 decision making as well. So when we think about
9 students, certainly the tests are part of the
10 data that we use in terms of understanding
11 whether students are ready to move to the next
12 grade level, but we also look at other
13 performance assessments. Principals have a lot
14 of discretion in determining whether or not
15 students are in fact ready to be promoted and
16 can promote students outside of their test
17 performance. From a teacher perspective, as
18 Dennis mentioned, the teacher evaluation system
19 does incorporate test performance, but it is
20 the minority of what is used in evaluating
21 teachers. So the actual measures of practice
22 of teachers and those observations matter a lot
23 more to the overall teacher evaluation, and
24 then finally for school accountability, there's
25 various components and the progress report is

1
2 the one that is most focused on test
3 performance, but even the progress report looks
4 at much more than just tests. It looks at
5 course grades for students. It looks at how
6 students perform when they move onto their next
7 institution. It looks at the school survey
8 results that we just mentioned, attendance, and
9 a variety of other factors, and then beyond the
10 progress report, the quality review is really
11 deep and rigorous assessment of a school from
12 the inside. So educators spend two days in the
13 building and really understand the
14 instructional work happening in the school.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: But those
16 quality reviews today are done internally or
17 they're done externally? Does somebody come in
18 from the outside? Because when I was teaching
19 also, we used to have the Australians come in,
20 and they'd be--

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Is
22 that your definition? No, it's our team of
23 individuals from different schools and networks
24 and others and superintendents as well that go
25 in and do the quality review and I think it was

1
2 a good throw away line, but the reality was
3 that, you know, we listened to a variety of
4 different stakeholders and building in the
5 process for the QR, the quality review, but
6 it's teams of individuals and our staff prepare
7 for the quality reviews including teachers and
8 all, and that's what the process is, and I
9 think what Simone indicated, that is a very
10 rigorous intensive process on talking about the
11 overall performance of a school and the deep
12 understanding of what's going on both the good
13 and the bad.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: What about
15 portfolio of planning and portfolio--and the
16 portfolio planning, but portfolios using as--to
17 be used as systems of evaluation? Why has that
18 been eliminated?

19 SIMONE D'SOUZA: So there are in
20 certain cases portfolios that are used to
21 evaluate students, particularly some of our
22 higher needs students that we think the test
23 doesn't fully evaluate that student's
24 performance, and so portfolios are used in many
25

1 cases across schools. They're not use system-
2 wide in part because of scope, but the--

3 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: [interposing]

4 And by scope you mean?

5 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Just the reality of
6 the work involved in assessing portfolio for
7 every single student in our system. So we use
8 portfolios where we think they're most needed
9 in terms of evaluating student performance.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: To be honest
11 with you, in some ways he's a teacher and the
12 information that I've received from the prior
13 teacher that contained a writing sample and an
14 art sample, a math sample, a problem solving
15 piece gave me more information about where that
16 student was at than a standardized test score.
17 So do you have any plans to go back or to
18 systemizing that or, you know, making it across
19 the whole system because that's really the type
20 of information that I think teachers want about
21 students rather than just a standardized test
22 score.

23 SIMONE D'SOUZA: I mean, teachers
24 also have student grades and information from
25

1
2 prior teachers. So that's a sort of proxy, I
3 think, for some of what you're talking about,
4 understanding how students did in the course at
5 large, not just on the test, but certainly,
6 there's other pieces of information that
7 teachers have about their former students when
8 they--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So I hate to
10 keep harping back to my old days as a teacher,
11 but from my experience in the classroom I
12 remember when the principal would come to me in
13 the beginning of the year actually and tell me
14 not to look at the record cards because it
15 would pre-judge. Sometimes teachers would pre-
16 judge their students by how they performed on a
17 standardized test, and he said, "Put those
18 record cards away and get to know your kids
19 first." We've come so far from those days. Do
20 you feel that these scores prejudge, because
21 basically you're testing a student on how they
22 perform on one day. Maybe that student came to
23 school when they were sick. Maybe they were
24 throwing up because of nervousness from the
25 exam. And I taught elementary school, so the

1
2 experience in high school is probably somewhat
3 different. And maybe that child can actually
4 perform better as they go through. So, I think
5 that this reliance on just that one test or
6 those two tests, the math and the reading, is
7 an emphasis on those tests.

8 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Yeah, I mean, I
9 think that there is certainly other information
10 that is used besides just the over--I think
11 you're speaking to sort of the overall result.
12 One thing that teachers do find very valuable
13 is understanding sort of how that test breaks
14 down. So what we provide to schools is how
15 students performed on various elements of the
16 assessment. So figuring out what their
17 strengths and weaknesses are, and I certainly
18 agree that actually spending time with the
19 student is another very good way to get at this
20 information. The test performance is just one
21 other piece of data--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: [interposing]
23 One, yeah.

24 SIMONE D'SOUZA: that I think helps
25 understand the strengths and weaknesses of a--

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Yeah,
3 I don't think we're that far apart. I mean,
4 it's one part of understanding where a student
5 is and making sure. And I think Simone
6 indicated as well that it just doesn't look at
7 the raw score, but it really goes deeper into
8 that in understanding what's going on and then
9 also sharing that information with families as
10 well. I mean, one of the things we've tried to
11 do really well, we've done very well, is
12 getting information out. I think we got more
13 information out to families in a variety of
14 different ways about the performance of their
15 child and how well their child is doing, some
16 areas of strengths, weaknesses, and what it
17 actually means, and we will continue to work in
18 improving on that and making sure that language
19 is very clear and understandable for families
20 to understand as well as for staff to
21 understand, and we continue to work on that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So on those
23 extended time sessions that you had promoted
24 with the UFT and the other unions, what
25 parents--

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] And an
3 advocacy organization.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Yep, advocacy
5 groups as well.

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: I mean, that's
7 rare. So let's--I mean, you guys beat us up on
8 that one. Let's give us some credit on that
9 one.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: We're not
11 going to beat you up on that. I'm going to--
12 I'm going to ask you though, were writing
13 samples included in those discussions? Were
14 parents shown samples of the children's work?
15 Was there an opportunity--

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] That
17 just start. So we just allocated the five
18 million. It started earlier this month. So I
19 mean, schools will be doing it differently, but
20 principals were providing the information
21 including writing samples and other types of
22 information that they feel necessary to get the
23 families a better understanding of what's going
24 on. And specific to the, you know, the test
25 itself. So it's not just parent/teacher

1
2 conference, but it is a deeper meaning, full
3 understanding of what's happening with that
4 particular--

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
6 Thank you. Thank you Council Member Dromm.
7 We're going to move on. You can come back for
8 a second round.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Just one
10 quick--

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
12 You've had about eight minutes already, and
13 other colleagues want to try to get in. you
14 can come back second round.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Alright.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Margaret Chin
17 followed by Debbie Rose.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Good morning,
19 Chancellor. So in your testimony on page two
20 you talk about assessment provides feedback,
21 which in turn leads to more effective
22 instructions. So what are the subject test that
23 student takes in each class? I mean, every
24 class, what are the subject they are taking?
25 They also have tests as a routine. So why

1
2 aren't those tests in terms of good enough as
3 assessments, but you just rely on the
4 standardized tests?

5 SIMONE D'SOUZA: You're talking
6 about sort of social studies, science, other
7 subject tests in the class?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah.

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: I'm not sure--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [interposing]
11 Even math and English. I mean, the kids gets
12 regular testings from their teachers?

13 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Yeah, I think that
14 all goes into the overall grade of a student,
15 the value of the standardized test is that it's
16 standardized across all students in New York
17 City and across the State, so you get a
18 comparable picture of student performance on a
19 relative basis, but certainly course grades and
20 how students are performing in their classrooms
21 is incorporated into school accountability.
22 It's a component of how teachers think about
23 whether or not students should be promoted to
24 the next grade as well. So I think both of
25 those pieces of information are useful.

1
2 Standardized tests are just a sort of
3 standardized way to look at performance across
4 the City.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So if it--I
6 mean, now we're talking about the Common Core,
7 so the classwork are more aligned with the
8 State standards. Then some of these extra
9 assessments would still be necessary? To sort
10 of like reflect more of a standard.

11 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, if I understand
12 the question correctly, I mean part of the
13 assessment is as a result of law, and so it's
14 forming the basis for evaluation, which I think
15 several of the Council Members have talked
16 about and whether they are for it or against
17 it, I mean, that's part of the linkage of if I
18 heard you correctly, the pre and post
19 assessments that are given as well. And then
20 as Simone indicated, then you have the ELA and
21 math standardized tests. So I mean, all of
22 these are necessary, but it gives a picture of
23 how well a student is doing and how well the
24 teaching is taking place in helping that
25 student reach that particular goal.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But because--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] If I understood you correctly.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, but because the students are taking regular tests, which their teacher will have more information in terms of assessing what the students knows. So I think the point is that standardized tests should not be, you know, the main emphasis.

DENNIS WALCOTT: But I think Simone-

-

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [interposing] Because we used to compare, you know, student--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Simone has commented standardized test is not solely the main emphasis, but standardized tests are those tests that are system wide and that gives you the baseline comparison to how the peers are doing as well as state-wide how they're doing as well. The whole thing that this--we have to very clear that we believe in tests. We believe in having rigorous tests. We believe in having tests that measures a student's performance and where that student is

1
2 at at any given point in time, and then having
3 the ability to compare that student to their
4 peers and that's how grades are formed and
5 everything else is formed as far as
6 accountability, and that's something we believe
7 in that will benefit our students in the long
8 run, and so it's not how many, it's the quality
9 of the tests that is extremely important and I
10 think the quality has improved significantly,
11 and we want to make sure that we have those
12 rigorous tests that measure performance to
13 allow our students to compete for today's jobs.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I guess my
15 following question with that is that is really
16 how the teacher gets the information, how the
17 parents get the information and how the student
18 get the information in how terms of how well
19 they did on those tests, because I think I'm
20 glad to hear there's some changes when you are
21 spending more time to explain to parents,
22 because in the past, the test comes down to
23 student just hearing the number, "Oh, I got a
24 four. I got a three. Oh, I got a one." So it
25 already sets a stigma that if you get a two or

1
2 a one you're really bad. If you get a four,
3 you're terrific. So I think it's really the
4 component of explaining where this strength and
5 weakness are how a student or parent could help
6 the student improve. Same thing with the
7 teacher.

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I think that's
10 the piece that needs to really be expanded on
11 and getting support to teachers so that they
12 have the time to really do that with the
13 students, so they don't feel bad that they got
14 a one, and to be able to explain, you know,
15 what they did well on the test, what they need
16 to improve on.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Right. I mean, I
18 totally agree. So for example, this represents
19 information that we've sent out to parents
20 alone, and it goes into chapter and verse about
21 Common Core, what it means, giving information,
22 and it lays out very detailed way Common Core
23 standard shift, was is taught in literacy and
24 math across subject areas, for example, I just
25 happened to open it up to this. And it talks

1
2 about instructional shifts in math, focus,
3 learn more about less, build skills across
4 grades, develop speed and accuracy, really know
5 it really good. I mean, all of these are
6 things that have been sent out to families. I
7 think we've done a very comprehensive job in
8 getting information out and also trying to de-
9 stigmatize what it means in the schools. As I
10 indicated in my testimony as far as even the
11 public service campaign with the ads that we
12 have in the subway cars, information, the
13 webinars we've done. I mean, we've done a
14 comprehensive job in getting information out,
15 and we'll always do more. As you know,
16 penetrating the media market in New York is
17 always a very difficult market, just because
18 we're so big and large. I mean, we're talking
19 about 1.1 million students, and with this
20 particular case with three through eight, you
21 know, less than a million students. But we have
22 sent out a tremendous amount of information and
23 we will continue to make sure we do that, and
24 that's part of the allocation also of the five
25 million dollars around extending the

1
2 information out to our families so children
3 have a level one and level two.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I think that's-
5 -I mean, I think it's as important. I don't
6 want to focus so much on the mass media, really
7 within each specific school in getting to
8 parents. I mean, even if that information, I
9 assume is translated into the major languages--

10 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing]
11 Translated into the mandatory languages.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I mean, any
13 parent, if you just give them a stack of paper
14 like that, they're not going to understand,
15 because I have constituents that couldn't
16 understand why, you know, her second grade kid
17 was put into with first grade kids and the kids
18 start like, "Am I a second grader or am I first
19 grader?" and they didn't understand the concept
20 of which class and how teaching is going to be
21 taught. So I think there's still a lot of time
22 that needs to be spent, you know, by the
23 teacher to really talk to the parents and
24 explain the concept, and also to the student in
25 the class.

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: Well I don't
3 disagree with you, and I think one of the
4 things we try to do, I mean this is just one
5 example, the public service campaign is just
6 another example, and you know we've devoted 75
7 to 80 million dollars for parent coordinators
8 and parent coordinators have been working in
9 our schools, providing that information and we
10 will continue to do this. I think the flame of
11 this discussion is that this is something brand
12 new, and it's something that people correctly
13 so have a lot of questions about, and we
14 understand the anxiety, but it was part of our
15 responsibility to make sure that we put this in
16 place and not delay it, delay it, delay it,
17 because then we delay learning for our children
18 to be prepared for today's society, and we
19 cannot do that. And part of our goal as a
20 system is to make sure we find various vehicles
21 for getting the information out to our families
22 so our families understand exactly what's going
23 on and addressing the questions. So again,
24 we're always interested in other ways to do it,
25 but we have done, I think, a very comprehensive

1
2 job at getting information out and we will
3 continue to do that, and I never sell our
4 families short in what they can understand, and
5 our goal is to make sure we continue to provide
6 that information so they're able to absorb
7 something that is so brand new, that people
8 rightfully so will have questions and saying,
9 "What is going on? What does it mean for my
10 child?" because like us, their best interest is
11 in what's in the best interest for their
12 children.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well we've been
14 joined--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [interposing]
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you
18 Council Member Chin. We've been joined by
19 fourth grade students from the Brooklyn Charter
20 School. Welcome children. And their teachers
21 is must Gina [phonetic] and Ms. Laura.
22 Welcome. You're at--

23 [applause]

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You are hearing
25 a discussion. Chancellor Dennis Walcott is here

1
2 along with other representatives from the
3 Department of Education at a hearing
4 concerning--

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I'm
6 more scared of their questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: the issue of
8 standardized testing, and so the committee
9 report is--what's the subject of it again?

10 DENNIS WALCOTT: Your subject?

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Impact on
12 standardized testing on New York City's
13 students. That's the oversight hearing that
14 were hearing the discussion about in the last
15 five to seven minutes while you were here. So
16 thank you for coming and enjoy your tour of
17 City Hall. Okay? Thank you boys and girls.
18 Now, we're going to turn to our colleague,
19 Debbie Rose, and then we're going to follow up
20 with our colleague Vincent Ignizio is here, I
21 mean, if you were here, but Eric Ulrich has a
22 question after Debbie Rose. Council Member
23 Rose of Staten Island.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Good morning,
25 Chancellor.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Council Member.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: It is--it's not close enough? Good morning, Chancellor.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And staff. In recent discussions with teachers in my district, I've been told that they do not have the teacher's guides to the Common Core curriculum. Do you know when they will actually receive them?

DENNIS WALCOTT: So, let me deal with that, in that if their specific case, then you should let us know because both with guides and information, we put material out to the field, and so if there's a specific school that's missing something, please get to our staff and we'll respond accordingly.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Was there a delay in schools getting the materials and things or guides that they needed for Common Core--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: before in fact it was implemented?

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: I've been public
3 about that. When we delivered roughly 1.6
4 million new books. I think the largest delivery
5 in the history of the Department and then there
6 have been cases where some didn't get material
7 or some got the wrong material, and some
8 deliveries were late, some went to other
9 schools. So, you know, there are a variety of
10 cases, and I've said that super majority have
11 been delivered out there, and any type of
12 questions or concerns that are raised, we have
13 a team in place to respond to that and we've
14 been doing that. So, again, that's why if you
15 hear something that's current now, then let us
16 know. You know, we can respond that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Do you think
18 that the delay in the materials or anything
19 will have any particular effect on the testing?

20 DENNIS WALCOTT: No, I do not. I
21 mean, because materials have also been
22 available online as well, and so online
23 material has been there and our teachers have
24 been extremely resourceful as well as our
25 principals. So, again, I have not know the

1
2 specific case that you're talking about or
3 cases, so let us know and we'll get back.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I will.

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: Okay.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Do you know how
7 long that delay was?

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: It varies. Some was
9 very short and some--it depends on what it may
10 be. Maybe manipulative at a school. It may
11 not be a book itself. So it varies. There's no
12 one answer to that question.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay. But you
14 feel that it won't impact the outcome of the
15 exams?

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: Not at all.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Council Member
19 Eric Ulrich of Queens?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman and Chancellor. Good morning.

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sir.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: I am not
24 sure if this will be your last appearance
25 before the committee.

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: Before you came in
3 we talked about doing something jointly on the
4 31st of December.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay,
6 alright. Well then--well that was my question.
7 No, I'm just kidding. No, that wasn't my
8 question. But I want to thank you again. You
9 have a very difficult job, but I think that you
10 and the administration, your predecessors have
11 made remarkable progress in our schools in
12 several areas. Certainly when I was attending
13 public schools I remember trailers being
14 outside every public school building because of
15 over-crowding. That is slowly become a--not
16 slowly, but rapidly becoming a thing of the
17 past because of the tens of thousands of seats
18 that have been added to the public schools.
19 Violence in the high schools has been cut
20 drastically in the past 12 years, and I think
21 we have raised standards considerably so, you
22 know, really challenging students to reach
23 their full potential and teachers to do the
24 best that they can possibly do. But one of the
25 areas that I think the administration is

1
2 leaving to the next man it's a tremendous
3 challenges, is closing the achievement gap in
4 our schools. We've seen graduation rates rise.
5 We've seen the use of standardized testing to
6 measure student performance and how we've been
7 able to track progress from year to year, but
8 the achievement gap, you know, is still--it's
9 still there. And what steps are we taking to
10 address that today? And what steps do you
11 think the next school's chancellor, you know,
12 ought to be able to take to address closing the
13 achievement gap in the schools?

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure. So before I
15 ask Simone to go into some specific numbers,
16 because I think we have made strides in dealing
17 with the achievement gap, but the gap still
18 does exist and the gap existing is still
19 unacceptable, and our goal has always been, and
20 that's what the reform was about, to close the
21 gap. So as you know, we have put in place our
22 new small school movement. We have roughly
23 created 684 new schools and roughly close
24 around 190 some odd poor performing schools,
25 and I think we've seen an improvement in our

1
2 rates and part of that also goes to reducing
3 the gap in a number of areas. I think all the
4 reforms we're talking about is to address some
5 of that as well, to make sure that we continue
6 to narrow the gap. I think the mayor does not
7 get enough credit for this, but the mayor
8 deserves a tremendous amount of credit in
9 creating our Young Men's Initiative, and part
10 of our Young Men's Initiative is to address not
11 just from an education point of view but from
12 health, corrections, you name it.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Personally
14 financed.

15 DENNIS WALCOTT: Both from a
16 personal.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Right.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: From a political
19 and from city tax levy dollars, commitment to
20 address the gaps that occurred, especially with
21 young men of color, and other that in
22 conjunction with the Open Society and the
23 SoHo's [phonetic] foundation, they've been in
24 partnership together. We created our expanded
25 success initiative, what takes a look at those

1 high schools that have been beating the odds as
2 far as graduation rates for young men of color
3 and deepening that within those high schools as
4 well as replicating that as well, and that's
5 something that is not talking about the next
6 administration, because I'm not going to be
7 saying anything about what they should do,
8 because they know what they want to do and
9 that's their responsibility to talk about that
10 and do that when they come into office. But I
11 think with ESI, Expanded Success Initiative
12 through the Young Men's Initiative, that's
13 another way of doing it. We created a program
14 called Summer Quest and located that in the
15 Bronx and took a look at a number of districts
16 in particular in the Bronx and I think some in
17 Council Member King's district and preventing
18 summer reading loss and working and the results
19 are coming in, and this is our second year
20 doing it where we expanded it and we're seeing
21 some progress in a number of areas in our
22 second year. And so we've tried to tackle it
23 in a variety of ways, but I think the overall
24 school reforms are a key way of addressing
25

1 that, and the reforms are showing the benefit.
2 So MDRC has shown that that actually works.
3 Georgetown and others, I mean, so we have had
4 positive results from that and I think
5 continuing down that path will help
6 tremendously. I think the one thing that has,
7 while I understand it creates a problem for
8 people, but I think it really does go to the
9 heart of accountability in not allowing poor
10 performing schools to stay open. I think for
11 too long we've allowed our poor performing
12 schools to stay open. This administration took
13 it on. Schools that have been just existing,
14 existing, existing where students were not
15 performing, performing, performing were allowed
16 to continue. I think that's unacceptable. One
17 of the things that we created hopefully that
18 will continue on as well, and it's been a
19 really good program that hasn't gotten a lot of
20 credit are transfer schools, and our transfer
21 schools focus on overage under credited
22 students, and so taking a look at how we bring
23 those students back into the fold and what that
24 actually means. One of these things that we
25

1
2 need to talk about is how we--that goes to the
3 heart of the cutting in half of the drop out
4 rate. And all that will go together around the
5 new evaluation system, Common Core, what it
6 means and including rigorous evaluations of our
7 schools through progress reports and quality
8 review will get to the issue of the gap and
9 reducing the gap.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: There's no
11 question, by the way, that some of those
12 reforms I would agree with have made a
13 considerable dent in trying to address the
14 achievement gap. I also think, though, that
15 offering parents a choice where to send their
16 children is key to addressing some of those
17 issues. We had the Brooklyn Charter School
18 here. That was a big--that was not planned by
19 the way. I don't represent that district. They
20 just happen to be here on the trip, but when I
21 hear the next administration talking about
22 charging rent to charter schools, I think that
23 would be detrimental to students, many of whom
24 are of color or from minority communities and
25 are now receiving an excellent education in

1
2 public charter schools, and we should not be
3 making it more difficult for charter schools to
4 exist in this City. We should be supporting
5 them the same way that we should be supporting
6 traditional public school, regular public. I
7 went to regular public school. I didn't go to
8 charter school, but I think giving parents a
9 choice where to send their children is a key
10 component of that. Other people might not
11 agree with that. I want to talk about
12 accountability and then we have to move to the
13 next question. We talk a lot about
14 accountability. This City has ponied up
15 billions of dollars for public education, and
16 when it comes to accountability in my honest
17 opinion, the State gets a pass. When mayor
18 Bloomberg was elected in 2001, the school
19 governance law was passed, 2002 or 2003.

20 DENNIS WALCOTT: 2002.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: And since
22 2002, the State's portion of education funding
23 has shrunk when you consider it, you know, to
24 be proportional to the City's. Now, we used to
25 be about half, 50/50 and now the City's paying

1
2 60 percent of education expenses in the city
3 and the state is down to 40 percent, and they
4 like to send out press releases and have, you
5 know, all the record funding, another 300
6 million dollars in funding. Well that's all
7 well and good, but it's a drop in a bucket
8 that's not paying bills. And what
9 accountability does the state have to support
10 the students to 1.1 million public school
11 students in New York City. I think they've
12 gotten a pass on. It's not right.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Before you
14 respond, and appropriately so, just Council
15 Member, the focus of this oversight is the
16 impact on standardized testing overall, okay.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Right.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, I just
19 wanted to stay focused. Chancellor, you want
20 to respond--

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] So let
22 me tie the two together then, in that I think
23 part of what we try to do is use the money that
24 we have to focus on how we improve our schools
25 locally, and as a result of the diminution of

1 dollars from the state. What we've done
2 through the mayor's office is as I indicated
3 had an increase of two million dollars, and
4 with that, Council Member Jackson, Chair
5 Jackson, what we've tried to is devolve the
6 dollars from the administration to put more
7 emphasis to the dollars going directly to
8 schools and the building the overall supports
9 around testing and accountability and what it
10 means to have performance being measures of our
11 students and how well they're doing, and I
12 think by doing that we've empowered our
13 principals, and it's all direct line connected,
14 because by giving principals the authority of
15 utilizing their budget through fair student
16 funding, it is built in the accountability of
17 what it means and the expectations around
18 performance or lack of performance and the
19 consequence for the lack of performance, and so
20 there is a direct correlation to both the
21 dollars, because we've been able to hold
22 funding flat for the last couple of years and
23 not have mid-year cuts, and that has impacted,
24 I think, the testing how a test is used and
25

1
2 making sure the supports are there for teachers
3 and our students to benefit from those supports
4 of the dollars. So that's my connecting the
5 dots of the dollars and testing. And you know,
6 the mayor has stepped up to the plate over and
7 over again. Even when we lost the 250 million
8 dollars, you know, we tried to make sure we
9 protected the schools and dealt with the
10 accountability of making sure that with peer
11 reviews of testing results that we don't
12 penalize our schools, and we talked about that
13 as well.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Chairman,
15 thank you for your indulgence. Thank you,
16 Chancellor.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So let's go
19 back to--first, go back to Andy King had some
20 clarification, Chancellor, on your comments
21 regarding the Intro 1091, so he just needs some
22 clarification on that. Council Member King?
23 1091 deals with the savings information.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And I don't
25 know if I--I just want to get clarification,

1
2 because I heard you say that you didn't really
3 support it because you thought it was adding
4 another layer of responsibility to the
5 administration, whereas it's not creating
6 anything new, but it's just saying that
7 information that's already, that should be
8 available, should be made available and be--
9 parents should have access to it when their
10 child first enters into the school system. IF
11 they're going into a new--like as you graduate
12 from elementary, you're going into middle
13 school, they should access to do it again when
14 they graduate from junior high and high school,
15 they should have access to it again, just in
16 case they didn't get it earlier, and if a child
17 transfers into a new school, that they know
18 that this information is there. So it's not
19 creating any--no new system or anything like
20 that. So, it's--

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Well,
22 let's have our folks talk then. I mean, because
23 you know, I'm always interested on how we could
24 improve information getting out there. It's
25 just whether it's through a law or not is I

1
2 think the distinction. So we'd love to talk to
3 you and have our staff talk about that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Would love to,
5 love to.

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you for the
7 clarification.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: If I may take
9 30 seconds. Is that okay with you, Chair? I
10 may go off the reservation on this one just a
11 little bit, but I'm going to try to stay on it.
12 When it comes to the Common Core tests again, I
13 know that I was listening to my colleague talk
14 over--Council Member Dromm in regards to when
15 teachers are being more evaluated and
16 principals are being evaluated, you know, the
17 building and school staff are being more
18 evaluated, it almost appears that the student
19 kind of can take a back seat, because the
20 adults have to make sure that they are solid in
21 what they're supposed to be doing, and how does
22 that take away from the development of the
23 child? Because testing doesn't develop a
24 child. You know? There's a whole bunch of
25 learning factors you know as an educator that

1
2 goes into helping a child develop, and testing
3 is just one aspect of it, and you kind of can
4 kill the motivation if I'm always nervous about
5 having to take a test and I forget about all
6 the other creative juices that get stimulated
7 that make me want to learn. So, I want to know
8 is there--because when we come to these
9 testimonies, we hear all the good things, but
10 we never really hear all the real, you know,
11 the things that are really challenging for our
12 students all the time. We get all the good
13 conversation. So I want to know, is there any
14 way that we can a little bit more start talking
15 about the real hard challenges that students
16 are having in the classroom sometimes as
17 opposed to all the success stories?

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure. I mean, let
19 me broaden your question. This may be--you're
20 off the reservation, I can go off the
21 reservation too. We can get in mutual trouble.
22 I mean, it's not just about the classroom, but
23 it's life challenges of a student and how a
24 student has to navigate the life challenges,
25 and yeah, we talk about that. It may not be me

1
2 all the time in the different hearings before
3 the Council, whether it's Kathleen Gwen
4 [phonetic] or Lana Constant [phonetic] and
5 others who deal with the life class challenges
6 of a student. I got an email first thing this
7 morning that really was a very eye opening but
8 unfortunately--I won't say common, but it's an
9 occurrence that occurs unfortunately too
10 frequently where a principal sent me an email
11 about a student that she was advocating on
12 behalf who unfortunately came to her from out
13 of state ill prepared for high school. She
14 accepted this student into the high school and
15 I'm glad she did, because this student didn't
16 have a lot of credits, 19 years old, got caught
17 up into the criminal justice system and then
18 she went to court to be there for this
19 particular student because the student missed a
20 couple of days. She called the student, "Where
21 are you?" I got arrested around x, y, and z.
22 Didn't sound correct. She went. Child's lawyer
23 didn't show up. Judge was about to remand the
24 kid to the 15 days. She called the lawyer
25 said, "Where are you?" He thought it was

1
2 another hearing date, and she said, "No, get
3 over here now." He got over there, and then as
4 a result of her advocacy, this student
5 basically was released on his own recognizance
6 and is back in school. And I say that because
7 that really captured, unfortunately, what some
8 of our students have to go through in not just
9 the classroom, but their life and it carries on
10 into the classroom. And then we got the new
11 title that we've done. I always remember the
12 old title of this award ceremony we have called
13 "Beating the Odds." And I loved beating the
14 odds. The beating of the odds ceremony are
15 those students who had challenges, student like
16 this particular one who may be living not with
17 family members and navigating on their own, and
18 how we provide the support. We provide those
19 type of supports whether directly by the school
20 community or in partnership with the community-
21 based organization. We've tried to provide the
22 support to that child to navigate all the
23 issues around testing, and we see that in our
24 schools, you know, all too often.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Right. I got
3 to ask you something before your time explodes.

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: I thought it was
5 my--

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Council
7 Member, you said 30 seconds, and it's been five
8 minutes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I'm sorry.
10 This one comes from a high schooler--

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Who wanted to
13 ask you a question in regards to testing.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, but I'm
15 going--I'm going to yield to Council Member
16 Dromm, and then you can come back.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Alright, thank
18 you. I apologize.

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: We do provide the
20 supports to deal with those both in classroom
21 as well as life issues to try to help our
22 students.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Council Member
24 Dromm. We've been joined by colleague David
25 Greenfield of Brooklyn.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you.
3 SO my last question was going to be before, in
4 light of all that has happened with regard to
5 the drop in the test scores last year, because
6 I think we rank somewhere around 30 percent, 33
7 percent maybe proficient in English and in
8 math.

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: Right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Do you think
11 that you've become victim to your own over
12 emphasis on the testing?

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: Not at all. I mean,
14 I was very clear and Simone can go over in more
15 detail, but I was very clear in response to
16 another question. This is a new baseline.
17 It's a more rigorous baseline. It's not being a
18 victim. If anything, we have the guts to do
19 this, and the guts to take this on. As far as
20 saying we want a tougher standard and put the
21 information out there that if you do a
22 comparison, one is not correct to do, but you
23 will see a drop and that's what everything has
24 been about and preparing us for that. It's
25 ripping the band aid off and saying, "We have a

1
2 responsibility as a state and a district to
3 make sure that our students are being measured
4 on a higher level of expectation than what
5 success actually means to prepare them for
6 college. So, no, I don't think we've been a
7 victim. I think if anything we've taken on a
8 very difficult challenge and taken it on with
9 vigor and I believe in what we're doing.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And Mr.
11 Chancellor, from my experience as well, any
12 time we've brought in a new reading program
13 into the school, a new math program, whether
14 it's everyday math, whether it was close
15 reading, whatever it might be, teachers
16 college, we only saw those drops in the reading
17 scores, and then that's ultimately what the
18 problem is with this emphasis on testing is
19 that they change, the companies are not
20 reliable. It's comparing apples to oranges.
21 It's comparing how a group of third grader
22 performed in third grade and then how they did
23 it in fourth grade and one thing has nothing to
24 do with the other, and that's the point that
25 I'm trying to get at. With all due respect,

1
2 this over emphasis on this testing when we know
3 that it's not 100 percent reliable is a huge
4 part of the problem.

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: We had reached the
6 kum by yah moment in the earlier round of
7 questioning that we said test is not the only
8 thing, and we said that. I thought we were
9 there. I thought we had that mind meld that
10 took place.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: It still
12 remains in the mind for many of the teachers--

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] But
14 the Common Core is so important and it's not
15 just about New York State. It's about 45
16 states and the District of Columbia that's
17 taking this on. It's about those states that
18 took it on, those few states that took it on
19 initially and New York State is one of them,
20 and then as a result of taking it on, they're
21 seeing more--they're seeing deeper learning
22 that's taking place that will benefit the
23 students in the long run and really the key
24 example is Massachusetts, and Massachusetts is
25 light years ahead of most states, and you'll

1
2 see it in New York State and having New York
3 State, and I think New York State to their
4 credit didn't wait for the other states to jump
5 in. The Commissioner and the Chancellor of the
6 state felt it was important for us not to wait
7 and we whole heartedly support them in that
8 regard.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So with regard
10 to the kum by yah moment, would you then say
11 you agree with the resolution that's presented
12 here before us today?

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: To say what?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: That the
15 resolution reads that we use other--let me just
16 quote it, that we develop a system based on
17 multiple forms of assessment which do not
18 require extensive standardized testing.

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: No, because it
20 says--I mean, again, I'm not backtracking from
21 standardized testing. I believe in standardized
22 testing. I believe in standardized testing. I
23 believe in what we're doing, but I think as
24 Simone has articulated, in our schools we take
25 a look at a variety of different measures as

1 well, but what--bless you. What Common Core
2 does is something extremely important that will
3 benefit our students in the long run, and I
4 whole heartedly support the standardized
5 testing that we have in place, and we're always
6 evolving the system to make it better and
7 stronger and a new Mayor and a new Chancellor
8 will take it to the next level.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Alright. And
11 then finally, I do have a concern, and my
12 colleague, Council Member King, as well, in
13 regard to the other--the other, I guess, intro
14 on providing the data, providing the
15 information on savings accounts because of what
16 you had stated and I don't always agree with
17 you, but I think a lot of burden often times is
18 placed on the school system where by teachers
19 are asked to provide this thing or that thing
20 and library cards and voter registrations and
21 stuff like that which is all good and well, but
22 I also do think as an educator that sometimes
23 it takes away from the classroom time and/or
24 administrative time to do--to make sure that
25 all of those mandates happen, and so I do have

1 a little bit of concern about that as well.

2 Thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: We've been
5 joined by colleague Dan Garodnick of Manhattan,
6 and you can't--I'm going to hold you in
7 advance. I'm going to ask my questions. I
8 want to keep you here at the hearing so I'm
9 going to let you hang in there. You have my
10 back? I appreciate it. Chancellor, I have a
11 couple of questions, and I know it's getting
12 late, but I have to ask these questions or else
13 my staff will not allow me to leave this
14 hearing. So, let me turn to this question
15 here. Both the New York State Education
16 Department and the Department of Education,
17 your agency, claim that student, staff, and
18 schools will not be negatively impacted by the
19 lower 2013 test scores. However, New York City
20 students score at level one on state ELA and
21 math tests are in danger of being held back,
22 and many more students scored at level one in
23 2013 than any other year. In 2013, a total of
24 155,000 students or 36.8 percent of all test
25 takers scored at level one on the math test

1
2 compared to 39,000 in 2012. And doesn't that
3 mean that more students are or will be held
4 back? Yes, or no, or maybe so?

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: My answers not, but
6 we can tell you the why.

7 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sure. So I think
8 the way that we look at the test performance is
9 really important in understanding why students
10 in schools are not penalized, which is that we
11 are using test performance in a relative way,
12 not in an absolute way, and so for example, for
13 student promotion as you're mentioning, what we
14 publicly announced was that a similar
15 percentage of students would go to summer
16 school and then would be held back and need to
17 attend summer school this past year and prior
18 years, and so what we did was we said the
19 bottom students, so the bottom approximately 10
20 percent of students were sent to summer school,
21 which is a similar percentage of students that
22 were sent in the past, and that's because we
23 understood that with this transition we would
24 see more students at level one, and we didn't
25 want to penalize a larger percentage of

1
2 students or send a larger percentage to summer
3 school. From a school accountability
4 perspective as well, we look at students
5 performance relative to each other and then we
6 look at schools performance relative to similar
7 schools, and so acknowledging that many schools
8 saw a change in their overall performance,
9 we're comparing each school to 40 other schools
10 or to other schools in the City that are
11 similar to them. So when all schools do see a
12 decline, you're not negatively impacted by just
13 having that decline because you're being
14 compared to other similar schools and
15 understanding your school's performance.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. So I just
17 want to be able to assess this from a
18 perspective of I'm not a budget analysis
19 person. I'm more an oversight, and if I was a
20 parent, okay, so you're telling me that
21 basically the same percentage of students that
22 went to summer school last year, even though
23 the percentage that scored at level one, which
24 is the lowest level, there's 36. Whatever,
25 155,000, but not all of those are going to be

1
2 held back or forced to go to summer school, but
3 certain percentage as last year. What number
4 was that last year, meaning 2012? If in fact
5 30--155,000 or 30--and I'm not going into the
6 details, 155, dah [phonetic] dah, dah, but 155.
7 How many students went to summer school in
8 2012?

9 SIMONE D'SOUZA: In 2012? So the
10 approximate number last year that was released
11 was in the range of 25,000.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And so
13 basically what DOE has said that basically it
14 would be about the same amount in 2013 as it
15 was in 2012?

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: It was.

17 SIMONE D'SOUZA: This--

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
19 It was?

20 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

22 SIMONE D'SOUZA: And just to
23 clarify, that's the number of students that are
24 mandated for summer school based on the state
25 test, about 25,000.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And how
3 did you do that? Was there a certain
4 percentage by each district, by each school, or
5 the total number of 155 that scored in level
6 one, did you just say, "Okay, the bottom 10
7 percent or x percent of that total." And then
8 you go in the school? And so it could be for
9 example all of the kids in district six and
10 district five and none in Brooklyn based on
11 that number or what?

12 DENNIS WALCOTT: Depends on where
13 they fell. And so we announced before we knew
14 the results, that it would be the bottom 10
15 percent.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Of that 36
17 percent in level one?

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: Of the overall level
19 ones, whatever.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Whatever it
21 was? Okay, no matter where they were from or
22 what district?

23 DENNIS WALCOTT: The bottom 10
24 percent, right, across the system, across the
25 DOE.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. So 10
3 percent of the 155 is about 15,000.

4 SIMONE D'SOUZA: It's 10 percent of
5 the overall number of students that took the
6 test, not 10 percent of the level ones.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And the
8 overall number of students that took the exam
9 was?

10 DENNIS WALCOTT: Because we didn't
11 know what the number would be beforehand, so we
12 announced this beforehand.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: How many
14 students took the exam?

15 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Overall it's 450,000
16 approximately, but all of those students, the
17 test is not used to determine their promotion
18 level. So it will be in the range of 25 to
19 30,000 students. Our expectation is it will be
20 in that same range as last year. So the number
21 of students that are mandated for summer
22 school, this past summer should be. We haven't
23 publicly or finalized that number, but should
24 be similar to that 25 to 30,000 that went to
25 school summer last year.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: About 25 to
3 30,000. How many students were left back as a
4 result of their scores compared to those that
5 were left back the year before?

6 SIMONE D'SOUZA: So, again, our
7 expectation is that it will be approximately
8 the same amount. So the summer school test then
9 determines whether students are promoted from
10 the summer into their next grade, and our
11 expectation is that it will be a very similar
12 percentage from 2012 to 2013. In 2012 it was
13 about two and a half percent of students that
14 were eventually left back, and so it should be
15 approximately in that range again this year.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And two and a
17 half percent, what numbers are we talking?
18 Equate that into numbers

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: Of the 25 to 30,000.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Say that again,
21 Dennis. I'm sorry.

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: Two and a half
23 percent of the 25 to 30,000.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. So--
25

1
2 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing] Sorry,
3 of the over--two and a half percent of the
4 overall numbers of students taking the test.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Taking the
6 test?

7 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And how many
9 students are taking the test, about--

10 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing] About
11 450,000.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So that's--so
13 one percent of 400,000 is, what, 400?

14 SIMONE D'SOUZA: 4,500.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Huh?

16 SIMONE D'SOUZA: 4,500. So it would
17 be in the range of slightly over 10,000.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: 10,000 that--

19 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing] In
20 that range.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: that were not
22 promoted in essence left back, is that correct?

23 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Yeah, I mean that's
24 an approximate number. We can get you the
25 exact--

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, and were
3 there any students that started the school year
4 and were told they had to return to repeat the
5 previous grade as result of the test scores as
6 happened in 2010. I remember one high school
7 girl very specifically. She came to a hearing.
8 Her mom--but I'm just--I don't want to focus in
9 on her, because I don't even remember her name,
10 but I remember that very vividly, but how many
11 as far as numbers that move forward and then
12 told that no, a week or two weeks into the
13 school year, "I'm sorry, you got to go back and
14 repeat the grade."

15 SIMONE D'SOUZA: We don't know of
16 instances--that should not have happened, and
17 we don't know of instances where that happened,
18 but we're happy to look into it at the school
19 level, but to our knowledge--

20 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] You
21 said that was this year, Chair?

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: No--

23 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing] 2010.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I don't think--
25 that was I think last year or the year before.

1
2 It was one very clear example, and that's just
3 in my mind. I was just asking in situations
4 like that were there 10, 20, 50, 100? You
5 don't have any numbers?

6 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Of situations where
7 that has happened and it should not happen.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. In 2010,
9 the last time the tests were recalibrated to a
10 higher standards and the scores fell
11 dramatically, the state granted districts
12 state-wide a one year waiver from having to
13 provide academic intervention services to the
14 additional students who failed to meet the new
15 proficiency standards. But they did give
16 districts and option of providing the academic
17 intervention services to all of them. Has the
18 state granted a similar waiver this year, and
19 where do we stand as far as New York City
20 Department of Education regarding that waiver,
21 whether we are taking the waiver, not taking
22 the waiver and providing AIS, Academic
23 Intervention Services to all the children that
24 need? Can you give a little clarity on that if
25 you can?

1
2 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sure. So in terms of
3 what's happening this year, so we did announce
4 also when the state test results came out that
5 four of those level one students that you were
6 mentioning that were not attending summer
7 school, that there is Academic Intervention
8 Service funding that is going towards providing
9 them with additional supports through this
10 school year because we know though we did not
11 send them to summer school that they still have
12 work to do to continue to move forward and
13 progress on in terms of their overall
14 performance, and so funding AIS funding has
15 been provided to those students to help them
16 throughout the academic year.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Is that after
18 school funding, in school funding or summer
19 school funding.

20 SIMONE D'SOUZA: It's not summer
21 school funding. It's supplementary service
22 funding. So it could be after school. It could
23 be various--

24 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing]
25 Schools can use it as it see fits. Again, it's

1
2 around the empowerment of how that principal
3 wants to utilize those dollars.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And from a
5 budgetary point of view, each school receives x
6 amount of dollars based on the number of
7 students that are in that category?

8 SIMONE D'SOUZA: That's exactly
9 right, yes.

10 DENNIS WALCOTT: Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Do you know--

12 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing] and
13 math.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: How much is
15 it? What's the course factor? For example, I
16 know that there's a formula that if you have x
17 amount of students, that equates to x amounts
18 of dollars. Basically if you can provide some
19 insight. Is that for example, one dollar per
20 student? I'm just giving an example. Ten
21 dollars, 50 dollars, 100 dollars per student?
22 So for example, if I'm the principal and I have
23 75 students, that's 75 times 100 or 75 times
24 200, so I can hire intervention specialists or
25 teachers to provide students with the extra

1
2 help they need. What is the funding formula
3 for AIS?

4 SIMONE D'SOUZA: So I'm not sure what
5 the specific dollar per student is for the
6 additional funding because it was sort of
7 rolled up into broader AIS funding, but we can
8 get that to you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah. Because
10 I guess I'm going to ask a couple of schools as
11 to how many students in that category and what
12 additional funding that they receive in their
13 budget for AIS. So I can--because I don't know
14 for example is there enough money for them--I
15 would assume that, correct me if I'm wrong, if
16 I'm a principal and if I--let's say math for
17 example, and I have a very good math teacher to
18 provide AIS, I'm paying per session I would
19 think. Is that what the process is in order
20 for that teacher to do the extra work that
21 needs to be done, is that correct?

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: That's one way of
23 doing it.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Is there
25 other ways, Chancellor, that anyone can

1
2 elaborate on so that I can get a better
3 understanding?

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: It depends, I think,
5 on the relationship with the school with the
6 providers. I mean, most likely through
7 procession, but there may be other supports
8 that a school may do. What we can do for you
9 so we can give you specific answers, is get
10 back to you both with the funding mechanism,
11 and if there are other options that schools
12 have taken advantage of for those AIS services
13 so that way you have the range of information
14 as you reach out to your respective schools.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: We'll have staff
17 follow up with you on that.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Sure. I'm going
19 to halt my questions because we've been joined
20 by Council Member Barron as I indicated earlier
21 and Council Member Greenfield, and so Council
22 Member Barron and Greenfield have questions.
23 And we'll turn to Council Member Barron who was
24 here earlier and then Council Member
25 Greenfield.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you
3 very much--

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
5 My colleagues. I'm just saying you--all of us
6 are on the five minute clock. Just want to
7 give you FYI. Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: If I'd
9 notice you make that announcement when I start
10 speaking, Mr. Chair, I just wanted to let you
11 know that I noticed that. Standardized
12 testing, you know, a lot of u have serious
13 problems with it. First of all, there was an
14 over emphasis on standardized testing. When I
15 got to a lot of schools in my district, it
16 seems like every other period was test prep,
17 test prep, test prep. The anxiety around that,
18 the amount of teachers that were pressured by
19 it, parents, students, and there was a great
20 emphasis on standardized testing. Some of us
21 were concerned that one, it may not be the most
22 accurate reliable way of evaluating student
23 performance. You know, some people still
24 believe that teacher evaluation and other kinds
25 of projects that students can get involved

1
2 with. Students know a 1,000 more ways to learn
3 than we know how to teach them, and I think
4 some of those methods, thousands of methods
5 were not used, and I firmly believe that
6 standardized testing usually helps politicians
7 more than children, because you're focusing on
8 getting test scores up, and then it helps those
9 who manufacture, who produce the test. They
10 become millionaires because it costs a lot of
11 money to purchase the test so that the people
12 who produce the test make a lot of money. The
13 elected official, mayor, if they can get the
14 scores up, they look good because scores are up
15 and there even were some cases where cheating
16 was involved, and some of that was exposed in
17 the City. And even cases where there was so
18 much emphasis put on test scores, that looking
19 at the creative development, looking at a
20 school system that had arts and crafts and
21 recreation and all kinds of other creative
22 things were put aside for testing. Then the
23 state changes the testing and the school system
24 does even worse on these new standards for
25 testing. I've always detested the over use of

1
2 standardized testing. So I guess, I'm hoping
3 that as we go forward that we learned a lesson
4 from this, that it wasn't the best way to
5 evaluate student performance, number one.
6 Number two, it created a tremendous amount of
7 pressure. Do you actually--could you actually
8 sit here and say that it was successful, and
9 that we achieved the objective with a
10 standardized testing and what I considered as
11 over emphasis on it?

12 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, yeah, I think
13 that we just have a philosophical disagreement
14 around the role of standardized tests and the
15 benefit of standardized tests, and I think that
16 we have seen benefits of standardized testing
17 that's taken place, but I think more
18 importantly with Common Core, I think what we
19 talked about earlier is the deepness and the
20 richness of these tests and what they measure
21 as far as student's performance and the ability
22 for our students to think critically, to have
23 evidence support that critical thinking and
24 what it actually means, and so I think we just
25 have a philosophical disagreement around the

1
2 role of standardized tests. And one of the
3 things I mentioned earlier was not just the
4 issue around standardized tests, but test
5 sophistication and having our students being
6 able to think things through and how they think
7 in preparing for tests because it's preparing
8 for life. I mean, you prepare, and we all
9 prepare in different ways, and having our
10 students be able to understand that and
11 conceptualize that I think is extremely
12 important. I think we just have a basic
13 disagreement around the role of the test, but
14 in fairness to your question also, we continue
15 to learn and establish a foundation to make it
16 better, and it's not just here in New York
17 City, but it's throughout the country as far as
18 the Common Core test and what it means and
19 preparing our students to understand things in
20 a deeper richer way in preparing them for
21 college and careers.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, one
23 thing, you can reduce it to a philosophical
24 disagreement, but let's look at the practical
25 results, and I mentioned this at every hearing

1
2 we have, that of the 65 percent of the students
3 that graduate, whatever the number is now, I
4 left it at 13 percent, but now they say only 15
5 percent are prepared for college or a career.
6 Isn't that correct?

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: So we've doubled the
8 rate since we started measuring college and
9 career readiness and as I think I may have said
10 to you and others in the past as well, that was
11 never even part of a debate or a discussion
12 before. I mean, we took that debate on knowing
13 that people would criticize, but we're fine
14 with people criticizing because it is
15 unacceptably low. You will never hear an
16 argument from me about that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right, and
18 I'm--

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Let me
20 just round out my point if I may. I think what
21 goes into measuring the metrics of determining
22 someone being college and career ready is
23 extremely important. I mean, we've had that
24 discussion now over the last number of years
25 where that was never analyzed before.

1
2 Performance of schools were never measured
3 based on them reaching those metrics, and also
4 taking a look at what we've included in our
5 progress reports around the where are they now
6 as far as what happens when they leave the high
7 schools, and all that's part of a continuum of
8 accountability and assessing the performance of
9 a school, and I think that's extremely
10 important as far as preparing our children for
11 future success. So, yes, we do agree, believe
12 it or not, that that is not a number that we
13 should brag about, but it's a number that we
14 should talk about because we've increased it,
15 one, over the last number of years, and we've
16 doubled it, but more importantly, it gives an
17 idea of what the expectations are now in our
18 schools that were never part of that debate and
19 expectation as far as a system-wide
20 understanding of performance's concern.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But the
22 bottom line is 15 percent. The bottom line--

23 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing]
24 Clarify, it's actually--there's--it's 31
25 percent, 31 percent of our students that enter

1
2 high school in 2009 are college ready by the
3 time they graduate.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, we
5 have a difference there, because all of the
6 studies that I read, it was 15 percent. First
7 it was 13 percent for a while, then it went up
8 to 15 percent, and--

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] We'd
10 be glad to get you the updated information.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So are we
12 talking about, if you look at--you talking
13 about the total number or the number of blacks,
14 or the number of Latinos--

15 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I
16 think the Council--

17 [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Because my
19 understanding is black and Latinos, I'm sorry.

20 [cross-talk]

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: That's right.
22 That's where you're going.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I think that
24 whites were going--coming in at 50 percent
25 college ready, if I'm not mistaken, but if you

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

add them all together, it reduces the total number to about whatever that is. Is that correct?

SIMONE D'SOUZA: Yes, the black--the black rate is about 19 percent, but yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, what I left it at is city-wide was 17 percent. You say it's 31 percent, and black and Latino was 15 percent. But let's just take your numbers. Let's take your numbers for 24 billion dollar investment in an education system to only have 31 percent of our students prepared for college, and I just think that that is a failure of the system. I think standardized testing is a part of the over emphasis on standardized testing is a part of that failure, and we should have looked at more creative approaches to education. A lot of us have made suggestions for things that I think would work better than an over emphasis on standardized testing. So the bottom line at the 12 years of this education system and a budget as high as 24 billion dollars, we probably spent over 150 billion dollars on education, which is an

1
2 incredible amount of money in the last 12
3 years, and after all is said and done no matter
4 what was happening before you came in office,
5 the bottom lien only 15, 19 percent of our
6 black and Latino students are prepared for
7 college and/or a career. To me, that's a
8 failure.

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: So let me, if I may,
10 just with my side of discussion around your
11 points, in that one, for years prior to this
12 administration, the high school graduation rate
13 had flat lined basically at 49 percent.
14 College and career readiness was never even
15 talked about much less measured at all, and so
16 you don't have a comparative number as far as
17 success, but I would say it would probably be
18 in single digits based closed to one to two
19 percent, and when you take a look at the
20 numbers when we started measuring college and
21 career readiness, we have doubled it. Is it
22 woefully low? Sure it is. Does it need to
23 improve? By all means it does, but this
24 administration has been able to double it. We
25 have shown in significant increase in the

1 students who are graduating from high school.
2 On the flip side, we've cut in half the number
3 of students who are dropping out from school as
4 well.
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Let me say
7 this Dennis, because my time is going to run
8 out.

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: It ran out.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Let me just--
12 -this last thing.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: No, go ahead.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: This last
15 thing.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Go ahead,
17 Charles.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: Let's do this then,
19 let's just--

20 [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: This will be
22 the last one. Even when you talk about the
23 prior administrations before you came in, they
24 didn't have 24 billion dollars. That's number
25

1
2 one. You had twice as much money. When I came
3 in the education--

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] That's
5 not a fair--Charles--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]
7 Wait, let me finish. Let me finish.

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I just
9 want to--because context of--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON:
11 [interposing] You're going to have to give me
12 extra time because he's cutting me off, Mr.
13 Chairman.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Chancellor--

15 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] You
16 have to look at the personnel.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Wait, wait,
18 wait.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But tell him
20 to wait until I'm finished, please.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Wait.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: You have to
23 wait until I'm finished.

24 DENNIS WALCOTT: This is part of us.
25 This is who we are. Yes.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: You have to
3 wait.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Please, no, no,
5 both of you wait.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Please, I
8 can't hear both you talking over each other.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: He's the one
10 who interrupted.

11 DENNIS WALCOTT: I did. I apologize.
12 I apologize.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So Charles
14 asked you a question. Let the Chancellor
15 respond. Then we're going to move to our
16 colleague David Greenfield.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I was
18 talking when he interrupted me.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I understand
20 that. Go ahead, please.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I was just
22 trying to--I'm trying to let him know that for
23 prior to him coming in office, the prior
24 administration didn't have near the money you
25 have and you know it. They had much less money

1
2 and see, if you are working in a corporation
3 and I've seen this before, if you take over and
4 you only improve a little bit, then you have a
5 lot more, you get fired. So you can't base
6 your growth and improvement on those who had
7 much less than you in terms of capital budget,
8 need me to talk about that, and your expense
9 budget. Your capital budget is very very high
10 compared to the capital budgets prior to your
11 years and your expense budget is off the hook,
12 and your contracting budget I always have
13 problems with, about a 4.5 billion dollars in
14 contracts. So I just think when you look at
15 the resources and the money and then look at
16 the so-called achievement, it's been a failure.
17 So--

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: Along that line,
19 just to be really fast. You just can't say
20 that the budget is x without analyzing why the
21 budget is x. And so when you take a look at 24
22 bill compared to what existed before, you
23 really have to analyze personnel costs that go
24 to support that as well as you well know that.

25

1
2 And so when you--no, no, we're going to take a
3 look at the personnel.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Allow me to
5 finish.

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: That was his one
7 interruption to me, so now we're even. And so
8 when you analyze that, roughly 70 percent of
9 the costs of the dollars are in personnel when
10 you take a look at school costs, and that's
11 been going up every year, and our teachers
12 deserve the money that they got from this
13 administration and we increase teacher salaries
14 by 43 percent, and so as a result of that,
15 that's where you see a bulk of the dollars. As
16 far as the capital piece, we're very proud of
17 our capital budget, and the capital budget over
18 last--over the last 11 years has allowed us to
19 build 126,000 new seats in the entire city,
20 including seats in your district and in schools
21 that are in Spring Creek and other places in
22 your district, and so that as result as well as
23 if you take a look at every building, a lot of
24 buildings around, you will see the scaffolding
25 where we're making major capital improvements

1
2 to our school. The average age of our school
3 building is roughly 64 years old and we've been
4 investing both from a technological point of
5 view and as well as the brick and mortar point
6 of view with a CIP, a Capital Improvement
7 Projects, and the next Council will have before
8 it a 12 billion dollar five year capital plan
9 that they will review in conjunction with the
10 new mayor, and that's something that we propose
11 because it will still be a continued need to
12 invest in the infrastructure of our schools as
13 well.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
15 Council Member--thank you. Council Member
16 Greenfield. Council Member Barron, thank you.
17 Mr. Greenfield.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank
19 you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And by the way,
20 Mr. Barron, I refer you to Wall Street for
21 CEO's who do a little bit better and get paid
22 millions of dollars. I'm not sure about that
23 comparison. I think unfortunately it happens
24 all the time.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Nobody was
3 talking to you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD:

5 [laughter] Alrighty then. I have--you know,
6 I'm a little melancholy at our last hearing
7 over here, not just because it's your last
8 hearing testifying, but it's one of the last of
9 our great Chairman Robert Jackson. He's done
10 an outstanding job as a steward of this
11 committee and provided an important check on
12 the Department of Education and its budget, and
13 so I thank him for his leadership as well. I
14 actually just was curious about one thing you
15 said, and I just want to have some broader
16 questions. I hear you say a lot and I respect
17 where you're coming from and I certainly
18 understand the need for testing, although I
19 think we can agree to disagree on the level of
20 testing, but testing is critical for the next
21 stages of life, right? Are you referring
22 specifically to college or to those of us who
23 sort of are adults? I mean, I haven't taken a
24 test in years. I imagine you haven't take a
25 test in years either. So I'm just sort of

1
2 trying to understand the philosophy behind it.
3 I certainly understand it if it's a college
4 philosophy. I'm just trying to understand the
5 focus of testing being important for further
6 success for the rest of a child's life.

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: Well, it's the skill
8 sets that are involved in testing. I consider
9 this a test, quite frankly. It's a test of
10 discussion. It's a test of having evidence to
11 support your belief system and how you interact
12 with others as far as the ability to articulate
13 that, whether we agree or disagree. That's a
14 test. I prepared for this hearing. I prepared
15 very vigorously for this hearing.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: We can
17 tell.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: And as a result of
19 that I think that's part of the preparation
20 that goes into life in preparing our students
21 for being successful in college and as adults.
22 So when you go for a job in any industry,
23 you're going to be measured on your ability to
24 do that job and how well you do it. That's
25 part of testing. That's part of life

1
2 preparation, and that's what we mean with
3 Common Core. It's the ability to understand, to
4 support your answer, to engage in thoughtful
5 interaction with others, to have the evidence
6 to back it up, knowing how to do the research
7 in preparing for whatever that life issue may
8 be. If you go into the Army, if you go into the
9 military you are tested. If you go for working
10 on a construction site, you're tested.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: So--

12 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] All
13 that is part of it as well as getting that
14 degree, and you've heard me--you alright--
15 talking about the new career technical
16 education schools and what that--I mean, all
17 these are part of a system of preparing our
18 students to be successful as adults.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: So,
20 Chancellor, I'm going to agree with you that
21 testing is critical in our lives, I'm just not
22 going to agree with you that necessarily it's
23 standardized testing, and I think that part of
24 the challenge, and I think part of the
25 frustration is that the testing that we're

1
2 engaging in and especially the high stakes
3 testing specifically focuses on one kind of
4 test, where as you know you could get straight
5 100 scores on all the standardized tests and
6 you could still be a colossal failure in the
7 real world, and so I just sort of--I'm just
8 throwing it out there. I know it's sort of late
9 in the tenure, just throwing it out there, that
10 I'm not disagreeing with you on testing. I just
11 think that there's more than one of test, and I
12 think the test that we focus on, the
13 standardized test does not necessarily prepare
14 you for the cross examination of a hearing, for
15 example, that perhaps other kinds of tests
16 might prepare you for.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, I think Simone
18 talked about this earlier as well, Simone can
19 chime in as far as testing, but I think with
20 Common Core, let's just focus on Common Core.
21 There's something that's been adopted by 45
22 states and the District of Columbia and it's a
23 deeper, richer, understanding of what it means
24 to be measured on performance and what's being
25 measured itself, and I think it's important to

1
2 really have the ability to do that and to have
3 standard comparisons to what we've done here in
4 New York City is measuring against peers, and--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD:

6 [interposing] I understand.

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: it takes away the
8 excuses, and I think all that--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD:

10 [interposing] I'm just referring specifically,
11 Chancellor, to the comparison, and it's not a
12 point that necessarily needs to be defended.

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: Okay.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'm just
15 trying to observe that I appreciate the
16 importance of testing, but I think that the
17 variety of ways to test in order to allow
18 students to have the ability to be successful
19 in the future, and standardized testing in
20 terms of the ability to succeed beyond the
21 college classroom, I think is not necessarily
22 the only form of testing that we should be
23 looking at.

24 SIMONE D'SOUZA: We certainly agree
25 with that, and so we don't just look at tests

1 and we talked a little bit about his earlier.

2 Of course, grades are very important. Other

3 kinds of--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD:

5 [interposing] Got it.

6 SIMONE D'SOUZA: more formative

7 assessments are important, and so we look at

8 all that, but to your point, you're certainly

9 right that you could do very well on lots of

10 tests and not be successful in the future, but

11 that's--we don't see that that's very likely,

12 actually. So test performance is a pretty

13 strong indication of future performance in

14 college, but even beyond, it's not fully

15 correlated, but we do see some--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD:

17 [interposing] I'm not sure. I mean, I'm going

18 to disagree with you. I just want to make a

19 final point because I'm running out of time. I

20 would agree with you that it's--you can measure

21 success in college because obviously you have

22 similar tests in college. However, I haven't

23 seen and I would love it if you had some sort

24 of study that proves that those people who do

1
2 well on tests do well in the future. I do just
3 want to make one final, one final point and ask
4 one final question if the Chair would permit
5 me, and that is, I do want to thank you,
6 because I think that despite the fact that
7 we've agreed to disagree on many occasions, I
8 firmly believe that you and your staff, you
9 work hard and it's a--comes from an honest
10 disagreement over where we should be going, and
11 certainly you're some of the hardest working
12 folks in the City of New York and I'm grateful.
13 And I will leave you because I don't think it's
14 fair that in a final hearing that we should
15 completely end our relationship beating up on
16 you. So I'll leave you with a final open ended--
17 -

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I got
19 a smile on my face.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: open--
21 you're smiling because it's your last hearing.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Council Member
23 Greenfield, no one said this is the final
24 hearing of the year.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: For the
3 Chancellor, for the Chancellor. He said it's
4 his last testimony. The Chancellor said he's
5 not testifying before us again.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I said just the
7 opposite.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: What's
9 that?

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I said I expect
11 us to have a hearing on December 31st. I mean,
12 I'm willing and ready. I'm not slowing down.
13 I'm still full speed ahead. I got a job until
14 December 31st. Charles Barron's taxes pay my
15 salary. So, you know, I got to earn my salary.
16 [off mic] One of the things I'm glad that we
17 have a sense of humor and can laugh while
18 taking care of serious business and that's
19 important. Council Member, you're finished,
20 Council Member?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I do. I
22 have one final question, and as retrospective I
23 am curious about. From your perspective as the
24 Chancellor, what would say is your biggest
25 achievement and what's your biggest

1
2 disappointment over the last few years, not
3 just as Chancellor, but both as Deputy Mayor
4 for Education?

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: If you don't
6 mind, I mean, this is an oversight on
7 standardized testing, and that's--they'll
8 clearly be another hearing after this, and I
9 would rather stay focus on the--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD:
11 [interposing] I've been over ruled by the Chair
12 and I respect that process. Thank you Mr.
13 Chairman. Thank you Mr. Chancellor, and I'm
14 actually going to run across the street to vote
15 on a transportation hearing. Thank you very
16 much.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
18 Now, Chancellor, concerning the ELL, ELA and
19 math tests, they're given in April and May, and
20 test scores are being released later each year.
21 And my understanding is that we receive test
22 scores in June to mid July to early August.
23 Why is it taking so long to get test results
24 back in today's technological age where, for
25 example, kids are--students are already been

1
2 determined to be promoted and now they're
3 getting results back in July and August where
4 they may be left back. How can these test
5 scores be used for high stakes decisions such
6 as promotion and graduation when they are
7 received so late, which is totally unacceptable
8 by anyone's standard. I don't know who can
9 justify taking an exam in April or May and
10 waiting until August to get the results.

11 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sure. So I think
12 that we similarly experience some of your
13 frustration that state tests are--the results
14 are determined by the state and so we are sort
15 of at the mercy of the state to receive the
16 results. This year, part of the delay was
17 because of the standard setting process we
18 mentioned. So the state went through a process
19 where they brought educators from around the
20 state together to really determine what the cut
21 off should be for proficiency and other levels
22 on the test. And so that added another layer
23 to the processing of the results, but I agree
24 that, you know, we would love to see the test
25 results earlier as well from a promotion

1
2 perspective, because as I mentioned we're
3 promoting students that performed in that top
4 90 percent. We're only sending schools--kids
5 to summer school that were in the bottom 10
6 percent. We have that data in advance of when
7 we receive the state test results. So we know
8 who those bottom 10 percent are before summer
9 school starts. So that information is actually
10 accurate when we're sending students to summer
11 school, and as soon as we get the results, we
12 do everything that we can during the month of
13 August, this year, to process and get
14 information to families and to schools and
15 teachers and kids on how they performed on the
16 test. So from the day we get the test, we
17 really try to quickly get that information out
18 to families and we wait for the state to
19 publicly release their results before we're
20 able to do that.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, with my
22 understanding and discussions that we had
23 earlier this year that you actually get the
24 results in July, then parents can go on the
25

1 computer and look at their kid's tests scores.

2 Is that correct? In either July--

3
4 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing] That
5 was in August, this year.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: In August.

7 SIMONE D'SOUZA: In August.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: That's the
9 earliest--

10 SIMONE D'SOUZA: [interposing] It
11 happened in July in the past, but this year it
12 was in August.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, as far as
14 determining the cut off, you had indicated in
15 your response to my question that the
16 stakeholders and educators and people involved
17 in order to determine what the cut off is going
18 to be. This is after they have already scored
19 all of the exams and they see where it is in
20 order to make the cut off or is it before they
21 measure all of the exams?

22 SIMONE D'SOUZA: So it's after they
23 sort of score the exams on a correct/incorrect
24 basis. So they know at the question level how
25 many kids got which questions right, and that's

1
2 part of a separate process and then this
3 process was to understand looking at the
4 content of the exam, irrespective of sort of
5 student performance, looking at the content of
6 the exam, how did students--what level should a
7 level three be? So how many questions do you,
8 do the educators think a student needs to get
9 right in order to be proficient on this new
10 test.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, have you,
12 when I say you, the Department of Education
13 have you expressed your frustration to the
14 state Education Department why it's taking so
15 long, and what response if you have, and I
16 don't know if you have or have not, what type
17 of response if you have, you received from the
18 State Education Department? If I--if
19 Commissioner King or Merril Tish [phonetic] was
20 in front of me, I would say it's totally
21 unacceptable from April and May to wait until
22 August to get results. So I want to know
23 whether or not you've expressed that
24 frustration and what type of response you've
25 received?

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure. I mean, we
3 talked to both the Commissioner, the
4 Chancellor, and they understand our need,
5 especially in New York City based on our
6 promotion standard to try to get the
7 information in as soon as possible, but they're
8 also responsible for the state and coordinating
9 it and part of the challenge is to make sure
10 they do it correctly, and so they hear us, and
11 I think what has happened as a result of those
12 conversations, is that our teams work close
13 together, closely together as far as trying to
14 predict so that way we don't have students who
15 should not be in summer school in summer school
16 or those students who should be in summer
17 school not in summer school, and I think over
18 the last several years, we've been able to work
19 collaboratively along that line, and that's
20 part of their own internal needs and what they
21 have to do as far as trying to make sure they
22 expedite the process.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Chencellor, how
24 much does the Department of Education spend, if
25 you know, on testing every year, as far as

1 testing to administer, to score the exams, and
2 all of the processes that we have to go through
3 as a system in order to have these exams, and
4 not just the standardized ones but all of them.
5 If you had to evaluate how much money are we
6 spending, what is the average or give me a
7 range of how much money we're spending on
8 administering or scoring and dealing with test
9 results?
10

11 DENNIS WALCOTT: Simone?

12 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sure. And are you
13 speaking specifically to the state tests, the
14 math the ELA test or more broadly?

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, if you
16 could respond one to the state and then more
17 broadly to overall, all of these tests, exams,
18 and I'm not talking about where a teacher says,
19 "Okay, we're going to have a little test on the
20 chapter that we're dealing with." I'm talking
21 about standardized tests and other tests that
22 are administered system-wide.

23 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Sure. So for the
24 state tests, our responsibility in terms of
25 funding is largely scoring. So the funding that

1
2 we provide to teachers to score the assessment,
3 and that is approximately, this past year was
4 approximately 15 million dollars, and then for
5 some of the broader assessments, so assessments
6 such as the gifted and talented assessment,
7 summer school assessments that we administer,
8 that's another approximately eight million
9 dollars.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So give or take
11 approximately--

12 [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: 25 million?

14 SIMONE D'SOUZA: Yeah, 24 or so
15 million dollars.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Overall?

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Rounding, yep.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So and the
19 whole framework of a 19 or rounded off 19.5
20 million dollar, billion dollar budget not
21 including the debt service and what have you
22 and so forth, you're spending about 25 million
23 at the most give or take 25, 30 million at the
24 most.

25

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: You upped it to 30,
3 but round it to--

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
5 Around 25?

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: you can say 30, I
7 mean, but it's still a very small percentage,
8 but again as Simone Indicated is based on more
9 of the procession and responsibilities in
10 scoring the test because the districts have to
11 score the tests.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And the
13 procession is for educators that are in the
14 system that are basically scoring the
15 examinations, is that correct?

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: That is correct,
17 sir.

18 SIMONE D'SOUZA: In part that's
19 because our goal is to not take teachers out of
20 the classroom as much as possible, so we want
21 them to be scoring as procession after class so
22 we're not taking out of the--

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
24 Sure. I would agree with that. I don't have the
25 complaints about that. You--the education and

1 learning is in the classroom. Obviously, it
2 could be outside of the classroom, but we don't
3 want any teachers to be taken out of the
4 classroom to be scoring exams where our
5 students are missing out.

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: Right.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, I want to
8 thank you and your staff for coming in this
9 afternoon. We're going to be going to a couple
10 of panels here from the unions and advocates--

11 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Thank
12 you, sir.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: on this very
14 important matter.

15 DENNIS WALCOTT: And obviously, based
16 on the feedback from members who are here
17 before, I'll guess we'll be seeing each other
18 again before the end of December. Look forward
19 to it. Thank you, sir.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you Council
22 Members.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Our next panel
24 we're getting for--is this it here? Richard
25

1
2 Mantell, Vice President from Middle Schools for
3 UFT, and John Khani, Assistant Director for
4 Political Affairs for the Council of
5 Supervisors and Administrators known as CSA.
6 Let's take a two minute transition of the
7 environment. Okay? Okay, we're going to
8 administer the oath. Would you please raise
9 your right hand. Do you swear or affirm to tell
10 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
11 truth in your testimony before this education
12 committee hearing and to respond honestly to
13 Council Member's questions.

14 JOHN KHANI: I do.

15 RICHARD MANTELL: I do.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Good. So,
17 think the first individual I'll call, the UFT
18 representative. Just identify yourself for the
19 record, your position, both of you, if you
20 don't mind, then you can proceed with your
21 testimony.

22 RICHARD MANTELL: Okay. My name's
23 Richard Mantell. I'm the newly elected Vice
24 President for Middle Schools for the UFT.

25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON:

Congratulations.

RICHARD MANTELL: Thank you. My first time testifying.

JOHN KHANI: Okay, and I'm John Khani, Assistant Director Political Affairs for CSA.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, proceed.

RICHARD MANTELL: Okay. So on behalf of our 200,000 members, I just want to thank you for this opportunity to testify, and we have written testimony which we're going to give to you. So I'm just going to basically summarize. So standardized test results determine everything in a school, from whether a student move on or not, the level of funding a school receives, to the evaluations for teachers and administrators. Weeks of valuable classroom instructional time are lost every year. For the so-called reformers obsessed with testing, only data matters. Forget student portfolios of work over the course of the year, and forget too whether or not the students had a bad day on the day of the exam. That simply

1
2 doesn't matter, excuse me. Our students and all
3 of us teachers have been reduced to nothing but
4 test scores. To compound the situation,
5 teachers are asked to produce better results
6 with absolutely or missing curriculum, and I
7 disagree with the Chancellor's statement
8 earlier that the delay in quick deliveries to
9 schools will not have an impact on test scores.
10 How could they not? Regardless of what one
11 thinks of the Common Core standards, higher
12 standards are vitally important for our
13 students, and we do them great harm if we fail
14 to ask them to retry, but how can you raise
15 standards when the short term bottom line test
16 scores has come to define who are children are?
17 The standards are not the problem, it's the
18 high stakes attached to these standards. The
19 UFT Delegate Assembly recently passed two major
20 resolutions to address some of the major
21 testing issues facing our schools. The first
22 resolution is a moratorium on attaching
23 consequences to standardized tests. Some
24 teachers, as I just mentioned still have not
25 received curriculum or training for teaching

1
2 the Common Core standards. It's unfair and
3 unacceptable for teachers to be judged on tests
4 for which they cannot properly teach their
5 students and where they also lack the necessary
6 supplies, reading material, and curriculums.
7 Therefore, we have called for a moratorium on
8 testing until representatives of all interested
9 parties including parents, educators have
10 worked with members of Congress, the State
11 Legislature, the State Commissioner of
12 Education, the Board of Regents, and the New
13 York City Panel for Educational Policy to
14 carefully examine how well the new curriculum,
15 professional development, and tests aligned to
16 the Common Core standards. We've also asked
17 for a ban--well, passed a resolution, rather,
18 to ban standardized testing for pre-k to second
19 grade students. We have done this along with
20 parents--I'm sorry. The UFT along with parents
21 and NYSID [phonetic] have called for his ban
22 because teachers have always assessed k-2
23 students for purposes of instruction and
24 promotion, but we've never had to use
25 standardized testing before. Bubble tests

1 don't accomplish anything at a young age.
2
3 Certainly nothing remotely close to helping to
4 develop cognitive thinking or problem solving
5 skills, and New Yorkers understand that, which
6 is why we've had an online petition and in the
7 first week we got over 10,000 signatures.
8 Testing does not have to be a high stake gotcha
9 game in which children, teachers, and school
10 communities face the potentials of being
11 labeled as failures. When we use correctly, a
12 quiz here, a written exam there, tests can be
13 used as an important diagnostic tool for
14 teachers, a tool that actually helps teachers
15 teach. To that end, we support proposed
16 resolution number 1394 and thank Councilman
17 Jackson for support on these issues. Regarding
18 the two other resolutions before the body
19 today, we also support proposed Introduction
20 925 and we support proposed introduction 1091,
21 and thank Council Member King for his
22 leadership on this issue. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

24 Next please?

25

1
2 JOHN KHANI: Yes, good afternoon,
3 Chair Jackson and distinguished members of the
4 Education Committee who are still here. I'd
5 like to begin by saying that we support
6 resolution number 1394 that calls upon the
7 State Ed Department, the State Legislature and
8 the Governor to re-examine public school
9 accountability systems and to develop a system
10 based on multiple forms of assessment which do
11 not require standard--extensive standardized
12 testing. I've had 30 years of experience in
13 the system, 18 of them as a principal, and I
14 can tell you that high stakes testing should
15 not be the sole factor used to judge student's
16 performance. Let me make this very clear. We
17 are doing the 1.1 million children in New York
18 City a disservice if we continue to judge their
19 academic preparedness solely based on high
20 stakes testing. We are all different, and
21 therefore, learn differently, and Councilman
22 Barron said that earlier. As educators and
23 responsible members of society, we must make
24 every effort to help and nurture the student as
25 a whole. High stakes testing and testing

1
2 results should not be used as a tool to tear
3 down schools and demoralize students, teachers,
4 and administrators. I could sit here and quote
5 statistics and show you charts explaining why
6 the overuse of high stakes standardized testing
7 does not work. I can also sit here and quote
8 research stating how high stakes testing could
9 be partially to blame for the growing number of
10 school suspensions in recent years, which has
11 doubled from the 1970's to about three million
12 students a year nationally according to a study
13 by Liz Sullivan of Dignia Schools (SIC). Many
14 of our most vulnerable students in some of the
15 neediest neighborhoods already have to deal
16 with tremendous amounts of stress outside of
17 the school environment and we've heard about
18 this earlier. Anecdotally, several of our
19 colleagues reached out to us to share their
20 concerns about the undue stress these tests
21 have caused our students. One principal told
22 us, and I quote, "For the first time in my
23 career, I have witnessed children crying during
24 and after the test. I also children completely
25 shut down to the point in which they stopped

1 taking the test." We are being forced to add
2 additional pressure on our student. My members
3 are seeing more students being turned off from
4 learning, often labeling themselves as
5 failures. Kids are getting sick, vomiting due
6 to the stress of testing or with worry about
7 promotion and retention. With the added
8 pressure of the teacher and principal
9 evaluation that mandates that evaluations be
10 solely based on testing, teachers are being
11 pressed to get away from teaching and focus
12 more on testing. The school administrative
13 from Syracuse with over 27 years of experience
14 decided to retire early regardless of the
15 penalties. He became disheartened by the data
16 driven education system that seeks only
17 conformity, standardization testing and zombie-
18 like adherence to generic Common Core
19 standards. He went further to say, and I quote,
20 "I am not leaving my profession. In truth, it
21 has left me. It no longer exists. I feel as
22 though I had played some game halfway through
23 its fourth quarter, a time out has been called.
24 My teammates hands have all been tied. The goal
25

1
2 post moved. All previously scored points and
3 honors expunged and all of the rules altered.
4 How are we to guide the leaders of tomorrow
5 with our hands tied?" Testing can be helpful
6 in some instances. Some testing can give
7 educators a great deal of useful information as
8 a tool to teach. However, the DOE's using
9 testing to make decisions about situations that
10 the tests were not meant to assess. How can
11 the DOE justify closing schools based on a week
12 of testing done during one school year? Why
13 not provide much needed assistance to the
14 school administrators? Why not speak to parents
15 and members of the community that have a vested
16 interest in the education of these students? I
17 would like to begin by saying we support
18 resolution 139--excuse me. Next page. Testing
19 has become a big business and we've heard about
20 this before. It is disheartening that millions
21 of dollars in potential school funding are
22 being squandered every year for profit
23 companies that specialize in test preparedness.
24 Millions wasted that should be put into the
25 ever shrinking New York City school budget and

1
2 utilized to lower class size, increase physical
3 education programs, combat obesity, or just
4 restore much needed programs that we have had
5 to do without. Learning time is lost for
6 students who are spending weeks preparing for
7 the test. Students are losing precious learning
8 time in order to learn test taking skills.
9 Teaching for the sake of testing is doing a
10 disservice to our students, and finally, we
11 must therefore develop a system based on
12 multiple forms of assessment, assessments to
13 see the student as a whole, not just a member
14 or statistic. And we also are fully in support
15 of intro 925, 1091, and Resolution 1394. Thank
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
18 So, now both of you in your capacities
19 representing principals, assistant principals,
20 administrators, educators, guidance counselors,
21 all of the people that deal with the students
22 at the level of in the classroom, and what I'm
23 hearing from both of you representing your
24 various constituencies is that there is high
25 stakes testing going on to the extent that is

1
2 detrimental to the student's overall
3 educational progress. Am--I'm summarizing that,
4 and I want to know whether or not you agree or
5 disagree with that.

6 JOHN KHANI: I absolutely agree with
7 that. I think it's the over utilization that
8 we have an issue with because testing can be a
9 useful tool if it's used for teaching and
10 learning, but it doesn't seem to be.

11 RICHARD MANTELL: Absolutely. It's
12 the be-all end-all for almost everything in the
13 school, from how the kids are promoted or not,
14 the funding, the teacher ratings, principal
15 ratings, everything. School opens or closes.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And what about
17 you've sat here, you heard some of the
18 responses to the questions that were asked, in
19 your opinion, as CSA or UFT, how many tests on
20 average do students take every single year?

21 JOHN KAHNI: I respectfully disagree
22 with the numbers that we heard earlier, because
23 they take at least one for ELA, one for math,
24 they take an early assessment. They take a
25 post-assessment.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Early
3 assessment meaning for this--

4 JOHN KHANI: Earlier year.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: for this
6 evaluation that's in place, you mean?

7 JOHN KHANI: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, go ahead.
9 Continue.

10 JOHN KHANI: And then they take a
11 post assessment. This is besides if you are in
12 high school you're taking a bunch of tests in
13 your majors. So it's far more than five or six
14 tests. And we're talking about the tests that
15 are institutionalized city-wide as opposed to
16 the ones just given within the school or just
17 by the classroom teachers.

18 RICHARD MANTELL: I agree. I mean,
19 at minimum five or six. That's ridiculous.
20 Easily many more than that.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm trying to
22 get a assessment. Now they are--the Education
23 Department and you represent when I say you,
24 both of you in your capacity represent the
25 employees at--principal, AP, and administrators

1
2 and as teachers and educators, and guidance
3 counselors and other staff, would you say 15 to
4 20 exams a year on average? Obviously, you
5 know, I'm just trying to get an assessment on--
6 you disagree with them as far as what numbers
7 they say. I'm trying to get an opinion as you--
8 -would you say 10 to 15 or 15 to 20 exams on
9 average, a year?

10 RICHARD MANTELL: I would--you know,
11 I don't want to give you misinformation. I
12 would have to, you know, check back and we can
13 get, easily get that information to you.

14 JOHN KHANI: I would say it's closer
15 to twice as many as they had announced. So I
16 think they said five to six. I think it's at
17 least 10 to 12.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Council
19 Member King?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you both
21 for testifying today. First I want to really
22 thank you because what I heard today, I heard
23 blood flowing through veins. You know, I was
24 trying to ask the administration where's the
25 blood flowing through the veins, because

1
2 everything was so cold. It's like liquid
3 nitrogen was running through as that testimony
4 was spit out to us today, and this is what I'm
5 trying to get a point, when you're teaching
6 young people, there's more components to
7 learning just sitting them down and having them
8 lose their minds trying to pass a test, and I
9 want--and I'm sorry I didn't get a chance to
10 ask the question, but I'm going to give it to
11 you, and because one of the students that I
12 have, they ask the question in which maybe you
13 can answer it or maybe you can be an advocate
14 of this, they want to know is there a way that
15 the testing that they take doesn't weigh,
16 change the percentage of how it weighs in their
17 overall grades. Because a few of them have done
18 exceptionally well throughout the year, but
19 when it came to that end of the school year
20 exam, they didn't do well on the Regence. Then
21 they got put into summer school, even though
22 they were 85 students and 95, they had to
23 exhaust their whole summer taking the class
24 over again to pass a--and then they would get a
25 failing grade and then they would take a summer

1
2 class, pass the Regence, but still, the first
3 grade that they got was a 95, was dramatically
4 reduced because of what they got in summer
5 school. So, I'm like, how do they change the
6 way--is there any way to advocate the change to
7 percentage of how testing plays out on the
8 overall grades of a student? And secondly, was
9 there anything that the administration said
10 that you agreed with?

11 RICHARD MANTELL: To the second part,
12 no. To the first part, look, we believe there
13 should be alternate assessments. Not every
14 student does well on the exam. We all know
15 that.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Right.

17 RICHARD MANTELL: You happen to wake
18 up, you're not feeling well, you have a bad
19 day, you're hungry, there could be a million
20 factors. You don't know. Portfolios, student
21 work for the course of the year, their
22 participation in the classroom, homework
23 assignments, all these other factors. There
24 are hundreds of factors that could be utilized

25

1
2 instead of just focusing on one test, and if
3 you have one bad day, you're punished--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Right.

5 RICHARD MANTELL: for every--for the
6 entire year, for your whole career.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Well, I thank
8 you. Thank you for asking that question. And
9 I know, and I know my colleagues here. I know I
10 will stand with you in any way that we can to
11 make sure that it's not about the dollar. I
12 know missed some of the early testimony,
13 because I did want to know from summer school
14 was--is there money being made from the DOE
15 when children go to summer school or do they
16 lose money? Because I'm trying to figure that
17 one out, why you take kids--you know, they
18 taking the class over more than once if they
19 were successful during the fall and the spring
20 semester, but they have to take a class over in
21 the summer time. Thank you.

22 JOHN KHANI: Thank you.

23 RICHARD MANTELL: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

25 Council Member Barron?

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you for
3 your testimony. I wanted to know what
4 percentage of the teacher evaluation is based
5 on student performance. Forty?

6 RICHARD MANTELL: Overall 40, 20
7 percent for the state measure on the exam and
8 then 20 percent for what is referred to as the
9 local measure, which is another type of
10 assessment or exam.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So it's 40
12 percent. What is the other 60 percent based
13 on?

14 RICHARD MANTELL: Classroom
15 observations.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Classroom
17 observations and 40 percent teacher evaluation.
18 How does that fair in other states, is there
19 any comparative studies of teacher evaluations?

20 RICHARD MANTELL: I believe that we,
21 New York City, New York State rather, we have I
22 think a lower percentage for the exams, 40
23 percent. I believe other--many other places
24 have at least 50 percent for the exams. I don't
25

1
2 have the exact number. Again, we could easily
3 get that for you, though.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And when--I
5 know we talked about other ways of evaluating
6 students, teacher portfolios, classroom
7 participation, homework assignments, and I even
8 think like field, independent study, you know,
9 assignments, but my concern about education in
10 New York City, of course, the highest testing
11 and that's a part of Bloomberg's idea of
12 evaluating students so that he could look good.
13 Well, they--when he--when they had to do the
14 state requirements, it shot that down. So now
15 they're making all kinds of excuses. But just
16 in the evaluation of students and the whole
17 idea of evaluating students on certain things,
18 I think in our education system, I remember
19 when I was growing up not very long ago, just a
20 few days ago, they had things like electric
21 shop and they had wood shop and they had home
22 economics and they had an enriched cultural
23 arts program and recreation program. It seems
24 like all of that has been gutted out for high
25 stakes testing. Do you--

1
2 RICHARD MANTELL: [interposing] It
3 has. I actually teach in the same middle
4 school I went to, and when I went there I took
5 sewing. I took a cooking class. I took
6 woodshop. I took electricity class, ceramics--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]
8 Right.

9 RICHARD MANTELL: Gone. All those
10 classes are gone. There's no such thing
11 anymore. It's all about test prep, test prep,
12 test prep.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And I even
14 noticed that my wife, I happened to be married
15 to a fantastic lady. She's been in the
16 education system for 36 years, about 10 years
17 as a principal and 20 some odd years as a
18 teacher, and I remember when she used to come
19 home a lot, and there's just so much paperwork
20 that a principal has to do that they don't get
21 a chance to do the paperwork. So they have
22 these paperwork, particularly around testing.
23 The principal doesn't even have a chance to get
24 in the classroom and teach teachers how to
25 teach because they respond so much of the

1
2 paperwork and the bureaucracy that goes along
3 with these standardized testing, and the whole
4 school is just under tremendous stress just to
5 pass these tests, which are not accurate
6 evaluators of what the teacher's doing or what
7 the--how the student is really performing.

8 JOHN KHANI: I was just going to say
9 you have to prioritize if you're more into the
10 people or if you're into the paper, and
11 hopefully people.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right, right,
13 and that's a real challenge, because you're
14 focused on the people like you should and get
15 behind in the paper, you can get fired. Then
16 you'd be in trouble for not having the paper in
17 place. But just in school management, looking
18 at the principal as a visionary, as a creative
19 thinker, I remember--what was it? Kline
20 [phonetic] Chancellor Kline said it was one of
21 the most ignorant statements I've heard is
22 that, "Students cannot get into creative
23 thinking until they're properly tested." Or
24 something like that. I couldn't believe he said
25 that, you know. As though that without properly

1
2 testing them and evaluating them, they can't
3 get into creative thinking. I mean, one, two
4 years old are into creative thinking. Shows
5 you how creative his thinking is. But I think
6 this whole system has been really, really a
7 failure, you know, to our children. It's been
8 a challenge for teachers and principals. What
9 would you want to see around the whole
10 evaluation process for the new mayor who, as
11 he's progressive, we will see, and his
12 response, what would be good for the new Mayor,
13 the new Chancellor in responding what we can do
14 to really do a better job educating our
15 children?

16 JOHN KHANI: I would just de-
17 emphasize the over emphasis of testing and
18 create multiple venues to look at such as the
19 portfolio assessment, teacher recommendations,
20 homework, field work. There's just a ton of
21 other ways to go, not just one test that a
22 child has taken, and they could have frozen up.
23 That's what Councilman King was saying. We need
24 to look at the whole child and not how they did

25

1
2 one day when they could have been very much
3 under stress.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And what do
5 you think--last question. What do you think
6 about the Montessori open classroom, open
7 corridor, non-grading system in terms of
8 evaluating including some of those open
9 classroom kinds of things, open corridors, non
10 grading, keeping multiple centers in a
11 classroom for a child to advance at the rate
12 they're capable of advancing as opposed to
13 having everybody in the third grade taking a
14 third grade math test when someone in the third
15 grade may be able to function on a sixth grade
16 math level, but if you had these centers in the
17 classroom, it allows for the child's individual
18 rate of growth to occur without keeping them on
19 a third grade level or someone's on a second
20 grade level and can't do third grade and get
21 frustrated or someone's in the third grade on
22 the fifth grade level and gets frustrated
23 because they're way advanced. What do you think
24 about--

1
2 JOHN KHANI: [interposing] I think
3 if you have a strong leader with a great staff
4 they can make any system work, and there isn't
5 any one system that's better than another. You
6 have to be basically working with your
7 community to see what's necessary within the
8 community.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you
10 very much.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well thank you
12 panel for coming in and we appreciate your
13 testimony. The next panel we're going to hear
14 from is Martha Kessler, CPAC, Michelle Kupper
15 from CEC District 15, and Jeff Nichols, Change
16 the Stakes, and Martha Foote, A Time Out from
17 Testing. Please come forward, please. Okay.
18 Martha, we'll hear from you first, and we'll
19 continue. So, please now be seated.

20 MARTHA KESSLER: Which Martha? I'm
21 Martha Kessler.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Foote. Foote.
23 So panel, would you please raise your right
24 hand? And do you swear or affirm to tell the
25 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the

1
2 truth in your testimony before this Education
3 Committee hearing and to respond honestly to
4 Council Member's questions?

5 JEFF NICHOLS: I do.

6 [off mic]

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Thank
8 you. And just state your name and your position
9 and your organization, and you may begin your
10 testimony.

11 MARTHA FOOTE: My name is Martha
12 Foote. I am here from Time out From Testing.
13 I'm a public school parent, and I want to thank
14 you, Chairman Jackson, for holding these
15 hearings and giving me this opportunity to
16 speak today. I'm here today to ask for your
17 support of Resolution 1394 calling upon the New
18 York State Education Department, the New York
19 State Legislature and the Governor to re-
20 examine public school accountability systems
21 and to develop a system based on multiple forms
22 of assessment which do not require extensive
23 standardized testing. Simply put, high stakes
24 testing does not work. It does not improve
25 teaching and learning, and it does not improve

1
2 our schools. Under Mayor Bloomberg, New York
3 City has been at the forefront of high stakes
4 testing policies and what do we have to show
5 for it? New York City's NAEP scores, the only
6 testing measure that has not been corrupted by
7 teaching to the test, have stagnated, and our
8 high school graduates are woefully unprepared
9 for college academic work. Our school children
10 are not being taught to think, to write deeply
11 and critically, to research and analyze.

12 Instead, they are being taught to fill in
13 bubbles and write, formulate essays on state
14 standardized tests. Why is that? Because their
15 state test scores are weighted so heavily in
16 high stakes decisions, school closings, grade
17 promotions, middle school and high school
18 placement, graduation, and now teacher
19 evaluations. My own son, who is now in 6th
20 grade, is usually engaged and enthusiastic
21 learner. He was also fortunate to attend an
22 elementary school that was not at risk of
23 closure, and thus did not engage in year-round
24 test prep. However, once the state teacher
25 evaluation law was passed and his teacher's

1
2 jobs hinged on their students test scores, I
3 saw the test prep at his school ramp up
4 considerably, and his enthusiasm for school
5 dropped precipitously. Painfully, he began to
6 hate going to school, resenting the suspension
7 of in depth and creative class projects for
8 daily practice writing mind numbing wrote
9 essays and answering multiple choice questions
10 over and over and over. All this test prep, all
11 this teaching to the test did nothing to
12 increase or enhance my child's learning.
13 Instead, it served to ensure his test scores
14 would be as high as they could be so his
15 teacher would look like a good teacher. It's
16 ironic isn't it? His teacher engaged in lousy
17 teaching so the measure of his teaching, that
18 is the state test scores, would look terrific.
19 As City Council Members, you now have a chance
20 to make history. By passing Resolution 1394 you
21 can send a strong signal that New York City is
22 ready to move away from high stakes testing and
23 toured a system of multiple measures that truly
24 reflects a child's achievements. You can send
25 a signal that New York City is ready to listen

1
2 to parents who have had enough of policies that
3 are harming education and crushing their
4 children's spirits and their hopes, that New
5 York City is ready to stand up to Albany and to
6 the federal government and to urge a better
7 way. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
9 Next please? Jeff? Yeah, you can go that way.
10 Pull the mic up to you and identify yourself
11 and your position and your organization. You
12 may begin your testimony.

13 JEFF NICHOLS: Thank you, Councilman
14 Jackson, Councilman Barron. It's an honor to
15 be here, and I'm here to testify in favor of
16 Resolution 1394. My name is Jeff Nichols. My
17 Anne Stone [phonetic] and I have two young
18 children, Aaron and Gabriel in 5th and 4th
19 grades, respectively. We belong to Change the
20 Stakes, a group of parents and educators with
21 no budget, no hierarchy, which anyone can join,
22 a group of citizens united by outrage over the
23 astonishing direction education has taken in
24 recent years. In an era of economic scarcity,
25 we are wasting billions of dollars on the

1 search for an illusory accountability system
2 that will finally allow us to quantify the
3 relationship between a teacher and a child.
4 Think about that for a minute. Is there a more
5 complex structure in the universe than the
6 human brain? And we're talking about
7 interactions between two of them. We want a
8 single score or rating to explain how one
9 effects the other. It is beyond my
10 comprehension, but this futile search is the
11 driving force in national education policy
12 today, despite the fact that not only teachers
13 and parents in ever increasing numbers, but
14 testing and assessment experts as well decry
15 this practice. Not because any of thinks our
16 children shouldn't be challenged by difficult
17 tasks at school or that the performance of
18 teachers in the classroom should not be judged
19 by the highest standards, but because there is
20 no scientific validity whatsoever to the use of
21 these tests is the primary instrument for
22 evaluating children and teachers. We cannot
23 kid ourselves that just because high stakes
24 testing has become predominant in our schools
25

1
2 it is moral or even rational. Excuse me.
3 Societies go astray just as individuals do. The
4 greatness of the United States is not that we
5 are immune from committing profound social
6 wrongs, but that our system of government
7 allows us to write them. The tide is turning
8 against the abuse of standardized testing.
9 Now, city education officials say they agree
10 with us that test driven education is wrong,
11 but their hands are tied by state officials,
12 and we saw that in Chancellor Walcott's answer
13 to Councilman Jackson about timely return of
14 test scores. It's not our fault, it's under
15 the control of the State. That's not an excuse
16 for something that's completely unacceptable.
17 When the state tries to--sorry. This passing
18 of the buck, which is endemic and which we were
19 seen today has to stop. In the United States,
20 we do not accept, "I was just following orders"
21 as an excuse for violations of basic rights,
22 like that of our children to a public education
23 based on best practices of the profession.
24 When the State tries to compel educational
25 malpractice, as Martha just outlined. It is

1
2 the right of citizens to civilly disobey. My
3 wife and I have boycotted standardized tests
4 since they stole our then 3rd grader's love of
5 school from him two years ago. We and our
6 fellow parents and teachers at Change the
7 Stakes ask that our local leaders refuse to
8 follow misguidance from above and fulfill their
9 obligation to meet the educational needs of
10 their constituents' children. Resolution 1394
11 is a great step in that direction, but we want
12 more, much more. New York City is universally
13 recognized as a major cultural and economic
14 center. Let us also become known as world
15 leaders in education, not just rejecting wrong
16 policies but promoting true innovation in the
17 classroom by allowing public school teachers
18 the same intellectual freedom that teachers
19 enjoy in the exclusive private schools most of
20 our political leaders send their children to.
21 As the great education scholar Yung Jao
22 [phonetic] has argued, "If we need everybody to
23 be creative, entrepreneurial, globally
24 competent, we need a new paradigm." It would
25 not be to reduce human diversity through

1
2 pervasive testing and standardized curriculum,
3 but to expand human diversity through the
4 values of progressive education. As he says,
5 "America cannot afford to catch up to others.
6 We must lead the way, be the first to take on
7 so-called progressive education not as
8 something nice to do, but as an economic
9 necessity, and the central value of progressive
10 education is the empowerment of the individual
11 mind, be of teacher or child. It's liberation
12 from arbitrary and constrictive external
13 mandates." Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Mr. Chair, I
16 just have to be excused because I have a
17 Woman's Issue Committee meeting.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So I mean no
20 disrespect, but I have another Committee.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

22 Next please? Identify yourself and your
23 position. You may begin.

24 MARTHA KESSLER: Good afternoon. My
25 name is Martha Kessler. I am the Co-Chair of

1
2 CPAC, which is the Chancellor's Parent Advisory
3 Committee. I mean Council. Sorry. We
4 represent parent associations and PTA's from
5 every public school district in the city as
6 well as high schools in District 75. I'm here
7 to testify very briefly on the following two
8 items. On number 925 in relation to requiring
9 the Department of Education to provide data
10 regarding the provision of--that's not for me,
11 right? Regarding the provision of arts
12 instructional requirements. We're in favor of
13 this law. Parents want to see their children
14 have a well-rounded education. Music and arts
15 classes outside of school are often
16 prohibitively expensive. We worry that with
17 every continuing budget cuts and every
18 increasing pressure from the standardized
19 testing that access to arts instruction will be
20 curtailed in the majority of schools. It would
21 also be illuminating to gather data on the
22 funding sources of arts programming currently
23 in schools as many parent associations are
24 actually raising the money to support these
25 programs, which is creating further disparity

1
2 in access to arts instruction because wealthy
3 schools can afford to raise money and pay for
4 programming. Besides gathering this data, we
5 would like to see follow through. Other
6 results of the studies regarding the benefits
7 of art instruction among other things
8 compelling enough for the DOE to make a real
9 commitment towards sustaining and increasing
10 meaningful arts programming in schools from K
11 to 12th grade, and is the DOE willing to
12 mandate and invest in arts curriculum with the
13 funding obviously, is what that's about. Are
14 they willing to put their money where it
15 belongs? In regards to Resolution 1394, that
16 my colleagues have just spoken on, while
17 generally parents do accept that there is a
18 need to track student progress and testing
19 should be part of this, most of us agree that
20 the reliance upon test scores for so many
21 things, schools grades, teachers grades,
22 principal grades, eligibility for promotion,
23 it's just not working. It discriminates
24 against schools and teachers that serve our
25 most needy communities. It discriminates

1
2 against our children who have special needs,
3 and our children for whom English is a second
4 language. And I lost the second page right
5 here. Sorry, I thought it was still beside it.
6 What did the test scores from the last academic
7 year show us? It actually illuminated,
8 illustrated very clearly the fact that children
9 of New York City living in poverty with special
10 needs, English language learners are all
11 lagging terribly. What we believe is that the
12 way to fix this is not with more testing. We
13 would be better used serving the vast quantity
14 of money that I disagree with the Chancellor
15 when he said it was 25, because that's the
16 lowest number I've ever heard. I heard 37
17 million, and I'm sorry I don't have the
18 information to back that up, but that seemed
19 very low balling to me. That it would be used
20 these funds, the funds that it takes to create,
21 administer, and evaluate tests to support our
22 schools and our teachers in a real way, by
23 reversing some of these crippling budget cuts
24 that have impacted our schools. This disparity
25 that the tests show in academic performance

1
2 caused by economic disadvantage. It's not
3 surprising piece of news, and I know that each
4 one of us who is a stakeholder in this system,
5 parents, teachers, advocates, principals,
6 networks, and the Chancellor himself want to
7 see every last one of our children thriving in
8 their school, and whatever our differences of
9 opinion are, I believe that we're all working
10 for the same goal. Thank you very much.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

12 Next, please? Just identify yourself, your
13 position, organization. You may begin your
14 testimony.

15 MICHELLE KUPPER: Hello, members of
16 the Council. My name is Michelle Kupper, and
17 I'm the mother of three year old and also a
18 second grader who goes to PS29 in Cobble Hill,
19 Brooklyn. I have career background in
20 education including a doctorate in Sociology of
21 Education. So as a parent and as a
22 professional I'm deeply concerned about the
23 direction of education. I'm also a member of
24 the Community Education Council, the CEC, for
25 District 15 in Brooklyn, and I'm here today to

1
2 speak on behalf of fellow CEC members from
3 around the City to urge you to pass Resolution
4 1394. Representatives from CEC's as well as
5 the city-wide education councils have been
6 coming together holding monthly meetings and
7 they forged a letter to mayor elect De Blasio
8 regarding the changes we need to see in
9 education, and I will read an excerpt from the
10 letter on the impact of high stakes testing on
11 students, schools, and teachers because it's in
12 full support of what your resolution would
13 allow. From the letter, "Parents, teachers,
14 and administrators are all increasingly troubled
15 by the growing emphasis on high stakes testing
16 and its impact on our schools teaching
17 environment. Under the rubric of
18 "accountability" high stakes tests have
19 archived a dominance that is dramatically
20 changing our classroom culture. Instead of a
21 classroom environment which encourages
22 curiosity and critical thinking rooted in
23 teachers freedom to make professional
24 independent decisions about instruction and
25 curriculum, we're seeing our schools pressured

1
2 to teach to the test and supplant their regular
3 instruction with test prep since school test
4 performance takes administrative priority. The
5 number of classroom hours spent in test taking,
6 six days this past spring, for example and
7 preparing for them takes away valuable and
8 irreplaceable teaching time and the quality of
9 teaching in our children's classrooms is sadly
10 compromised. While we acknowledge that testing
11 in and of itself has its uses for assessment
12 and to gauge aspects of student achievement,
13 most educators and many education policy makers
14 concur that the state tests do not fit the
15 extremely high stakes purposes for which they
16 are being used. Many of the test questions
17 currently in use have been flagged as
18 pedagogically unsound, and the test produce
19 overly narrow, inconsistent, and unreliable
20 measures of student progress and
21 accomplishment. High stakes tests are also
22 completely developmentally inappropriate for
23 kindergarten through second grade students, the
24 newest youngest age group targeted for these
25 tests and as a whole chorus of child

1
2 development specialists and educators are
3 attesting to this. Yet the test continue to be
4 used as both gate keepers to determine
5 student's qualifications to advance a grade and
6 to judge the overall quality of schools. We
7 recommend that you," this is to De Blasio--
8 "place a moratorium on the use of these tests
9 and these high stakes capacities and take a
10 firm stand against the use of tests in
11 kindergarten through second grades which seems
12 a harmful trend. Most recently, and perhaps
13 most insidiously, the state test results are
14 being used as a measure of teacher performance.
15 The decision to link student performance on
16 state tests to a value added algorithm
17 assessing teacher quality makes students and
18 parents unwitting or unwilling collaborators in
19 an evaluation system that lacks validity,
20 contributes to lower morale, and may result in
21 wrongfully negative teacher assessments and
22 time commitment job insecurity. Poverty is the
23 root problem in struggling schools, not bad
24 teachers. We recommend that you work to modify
25 this aspect of the teacher evaluations and we

1
2 recognize that this may involve renegotiating
3 race to the top monies." So City Council
4 Members, passing this resolution to re-examine
5 our current accountability system is a
6 necessary step in the right direction. Lets--
7 the tide is turning. Let's get this going as
8 quickly as we can before we sacrifice a whole
9 generation of kids education. So thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me
11 thank all of you for coming in and listening to
12 the testimony and being advocates on behalf of
13 your children and children of New York City,
14 and clearly we need more engaged parents that
15 can come down to these hearings like yourself
16 and give testimony so that hopefully the system
17 will move in a direction that we want to see.
18 Thank you very much. Thank you. Our next
19 panel is Doug Israel, The Center for Arts
20 Education, Abja Midha, Advocates for Children
21 of New York City of New York, Moira Flavin,
22 Citizens Committee for Children, and just Max
23 Ahmed, The New York Immigration Coalition.
24 Please come forward please. Okay. So panel,
25 would you raise your right hand. Do you swear

1
2 or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
3 and nothing but the truth in your testimony
4 before this Education Committee hearing and to
5 respond honestly to any Council Member's
6 questions.

7 [off mic]

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
9 Okay. In the order in which I called your
10 name, Doug Israel, just state your name, your
11 title, and your organization and you may begin
12 your testimony each one of you at the time that
13 you begin.

14 DOUG ISRAEL: My name is Doug
15 Israel, Director of Research and Policy with
16 the Center for Arts Education. Thank you today
17 for the opportunity to testify on Introduction
18 925 in relation to the establishment of
19 reporting requirements arts education as well
20 as the impact of standardized testing in public
21 schools and the city and state accountability
22 system. I'm going to direct my comments
23 primarily to Introduction 925, although I will
24 share thoughts on the other two, and would like
25 to note that we believe these, all these issues

1
2 are intricately related. To begin with, thank
3 you Council Member Jackson for the introduction
4 of 925 and to all the co-sponsors of the
5 legislation. We believe that transparency in
6 terms of school-based arts education can help
7 parents become formed advocates for arts in
8 their child's school, make critical decisions
9 about where to send their children and provide
10 a map that the public and private sector could
11 use to target resources and efforts to close
12 the educational opportunity gaps that exist in
13 city public schools. And I believe it's
14 important to note as Mr. Paul King did earlier
15 from the Office of Arts and Special Projects
16 that most of the data that is requested in the
17 legislation is already collected by the Office
18 of Arts and Special Projects and the Department
19 of Education, and it is reported out on
20 individual annual arts and schools reports, but
21 as you noted, Council Member Jackson, it is not
22 really user friendly or provided in a way that
23 Council Members, elected officials, parents,
24 CEC's can look at the data and be able to
25 analyze it and really figure out how their

1 schools do in comparison to others and whether
2 or not there were real kind of pockets or
3 deserts of Arts Education that's being offered,
4 and I argue that providing it in this type of
5 format is extremely important and will help
6 drive improvements in what's being delivered in
7 public schools, and also as you noted, what's
8 important is that what's requested and required
9 now is voluntary, and we don't know what will
10 happen next year or in future administrations,
11 and by putting this into law we ensure that we
12 are getting a baseline of data about what is
13 being offered in our public schools in terms of
14 arts education. And we're not asking for a
15 million different indicators. Their
16 legislation primarily asks for what's being
17 offered in terms of what the state requires of
18 the state mandated arts education that every
19 single child should be receiving k-12. So we
20 believe that is important information and we
21 urge the Council to pass the bill. However, we
22 do have a couple of suggestions to strengthen
23 the bill. One, we feel strongly that the
24 legislation should require reporting at the
25

1 elementary school level. As Mr. King noted,
2 this is a little more difficult to do.
3 However, they already do collect that
4 information, and it would seem to be a logical
5 extension to include that in this bill. And
6 finally, the second point is we believe
7 potentially what's already included in
8 legislation could be streamlined to provide--
9 and still provide the key information on school
10 compliance with arts education requirements.
11 In fact, that we feel that some of the things
12 that are being asked to report on could
13 potentially be burdensome to public schools, a
14 little bit confusing to the public, and kind of
15 obfuscate the important bottom line of what
16 percentage of students are being offered the
17 state requirements. For example, the
18 legislation asked for, you know, the number of
19 students that have met less than 50 percent,
20 less than 70 percent in any given school year,
21 and you know, the state requirements at the
22 middle school level. For instance, a student
23 needs to complete two courses by the end of
24 eighth grade, and they can complete them both
25

1
2 in eighth grade or both in seventh grade or one
3 in seventh and one in eighth, and so I'm not
4 sure of the value of asking for what percentage
5 of students completed course work in the
6 seventh, because you can have zero percent
7 completing the seventh, yet still be in
8 compliance with state requirements, and I would
9 hate to detract from the real core important
10 information which is whether or not a school is
11 ultimately in compliance. And so I just want to
12 touch quickly on standardized testing and
13 school accountability. It's been the Center
14 for Arts Education's position since the
15 introduction of the school progress reports and
16 the advent of the school accountability system
17 that the reports did not really paint a broad
18 enough picture of what is being offered in
19 public schools and whether or not those schools
20 are providing the education that we believe is
21 essential for children to be ready for college
22 and career and life, and in fact, in a forum
23 last week Chief Academic Officer Shale Seranski
24 [phonetic] actually mentioned that he did
25 believe that in many instances testing and

1
2 accountability system has led to a narrowing of
3 the curriculum in public schools and that even
4 to the disengagement of many public school
5 students. We agree with this analysis fully.
6 It's been a long time coming, and we know from
7 research and experience that the arts provide a
8 great tool to engage students in school and
9 their education and this is particularly true
10 for students who are struggling and students
11 who are risk of dropping out, and so we
12 advocate the accountability system that reports
13 being broadened to include additional array of
14 metrics, not only in the arts, but in physical
15 education, foreign language, health, and the
16 other core subject areas. And we also believe
17 that what's being asked to be provided through
18 925 could be that core information on arts
19 education that could be transferred over into
20 the school accountability system and the school
21 progress reports. I think whether or not
22 schools providing the minimum requirements is a
23 good measure that parents would be interested
24 in knowing, and it would be great to see that
25 in a school progress report that really looks

1
2 at a broad array of measures. In conclusion, we
3 believe that transparency and reporting on arts
4 education serves an important educational
5 purpose and provides useful information that
6 can help focus resources and efforts to close
7 the educational opportunity gap, and we believe
8 the inclusion of the arts and the other core
9 subjects in the school progress reports would
10 send a very clear message to parents and
11 principals and school communities that the City
12 understands that these subject areas are
13 essential to the education of our public school
14 children and it would also provide them
15 critical information about the public schools
16 and their child's education. Thank you for the
17 opportunity to testify today.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
19 Abja--how do you pronounce your last name?

20 ABJA MIDHA: Midha.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Midha. And
22 you're Advocates for Children?

23 ABJA MIDHA: Yes, I am.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Just
25 pull the mic up a little closer if you don't

1
2 mind. Pull up--yeah, pull the whole thing up
3 closer.

4 ABJA MIDHA: Better?

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, go ahead.

6 ABJA MIDHA: Okay, great. Good
7 afternoon. My name is Abja Midha, and I'm a
8 project director at Advocates for Children of
9 New York. For more than 40 years, Advocates
10 for Children has worked to promote access to
11 the best education New York can provide for all
12 students, including students from low income
13 backgrounds, students who are learning English,
14 students with disabilities, and students of
15 color. Advocates for Children also coordinates
16 the Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a
17 Diploma--excuse me--a statewide coalition of
18 educational and advocacy organizations and
19 families who have come together to urge the
20 creation of multiple pathways to a diploma in
21 New York State, each of which holds all
22 students to high expectations, provides them
23 with quality instruction, and opens doors to
24 career and post secondary education
25 opportunities. At Advocates for Children, we

1 see the impact of high stakes standardized
2 testing in a variety of ways, including
3 cumbersome processes for providing
4 accommodations to students with disabilities
5 and English language learners. I'm going to
6 focus my testimony today on high school exit
7 exams. In New York City, approximately 40
8 percent of high school students fail to
9 graduate from high school within four years.
10 The figures are even higher for students with
11 disabilities and English language learners at
12 approximately 72 percent and 65 percent
13 respectively. Many of these students do not
14 graduate high school because they are unable to
15 demonstrate their knowledge and skills on high
16 stakes standardized exit exams. New York State
17 has amongst the most onerous high school exit
18 exam requirements in the nation. All students
19 must pass five Regents exams in order to
20 graduate from a public high school here in New
21 York State. While we support high standards of
22 student achievement, based on our experiences
23 working with New York City youth, we believe
24 that the focus on high stakes standardized exit
25

1
2 exams creates unnecessary barriers to high
3 school graduation. For example, we recently
4 worked with a 22 year old student who attended
5 a comprehensive high school in New York City
6 and has taken the Regents examinations 37 times
7 over the course of the past six years. This
8 student had excellent attendance throughout
9 high school and passed all of his classes on
10 his first try. He also finished the 12th grade
11 on time, having earned all of the credits
12 necessary to graduate and also having passed
13 all of the courses necessary to earn an
14 automotive career and technical education
15 certificate. The student loved his automotive
16 classes and during his senior year applied to
17 technical colleges where he could continue to
18 study automotive sciences and start his career
19 as an auto mechanic. However, because he did
20 not pass the Regents exams necessary in order
21 to earn his diploma, his school could not
22 release his CT certificate. He could not
23 receive a diploma, and he could not start
24 college. Without a high school diploma,
25 students are being denied access to college and

1 careers. It is time for New York to move away
2 from a one size fits all approach and take
3 responsibility for the thousands of students
4 who are at risk of dropping out of high school
5 because of high stakes standardized testing.
6 Specifically, we recommend reducing the number
7 of Regents exams required to graduate from five
8 to three. The English Regents, one math
9 Regents, and one science Regents would still be
10 required and maintaining exam requirements in
11 these subjects would help give flexibility for
12 using these assessments to comply with federal
13 testing requirements. We also recommend
14 creating a pathway to graduation that would
15 allow all students to demonstrate their
16 knowledge and skills through performance based
17 assessments in lieu of the Regents exams.
18 Performance based assessments allow students to
19 show their attainment of standards by
20 completing a series of tasks or projects in
21 context that are familiar and relevant to their
22 high school experiences. We urge the City
23 Council to call upon the New York State
24 Education Department and the Board of Regents
25

1
2 to create viable paths to graduation and
3 college and career readiness for our students
4 that do not rely on high stakes standardized
5 testing. Thank you for this opportunity to
6 speak today.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

8 Next, Moira Flavin, Citizen's Committee for
9 Children.

10 MOIRA FLAVIN: Good afternoon. I'm
11 Moira Flavin. I'm the policy associate for
12 Early Childhood Education, Education and Youth
13 Services at Citizen's Committee for Children.
14 CCC is a 70 year old independent multi-issue
15 child advocacy organization dedicated to
16 ensuring every New York child is healthy,
17 housed, educated and safe. Thank you, Chair
18 Jackson, and to the Education Committee for
19 holding this hearing today. CCC believes that
20 all students in New York State deserve a
21 quality education that inspires in them a love
22 of learning and ultimately prepares them for
23 college and careers. We recognize that
24 standardized tests play a role in our education
25 system and is important to have quality metrics

1 with which to measure and compare students. We
2 are concerned, however, that the growing
3 emphasis on high stakes standardized testing
4 may detract from other subjects and skill
5 development. Further, we are troubled by the
6 ongoing gap in achievement on standardized
7 tests for math and ELA for students of color,
8 economically disadvantaged students, students
9 in special education, and English language
10 learners. We urge the city and state to take a
11 balanced approach to using standardized tests
12 and other measures of assessing students, such
13 that all students have the opportunity to
14 demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and I
15 will just add that CCC is a member of the
16 Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma as
17 well. Regarding Intro 925, CCC believes that
18 arts education is a critical component of a
19 rigorous and well-rounded curriculum and that
20 all students should have access to quality arts
21 instruction during the school day. We feel
22 that this data collection effort will promote
23 transparency as well as giving students and
24 parents, school leader and elected officials
25

1
2 important information about the strengths and
3 needs of school. While CCC is generally
4 supportive of this legislation and interested
5 in tracking the data on arts instruction, we
6 urge the Council to work with the DOE to ensure
7 that the data requested is not too onerous for
8 the DOE to produce. We recommend in addition
9 that the definition of arts instruction include
10 clearly refer to music, dance, theater, and
11 visual and media arts. We recommend that the
12 legislation be amended to include the
13 elementary grades and we recommend that in
14 addition to reporting on arts instruction,
15 including requirements that the DOE report on
16 physical education and the percent number of
17 students meeting state requirements for phys
18 ed. We believe that including phys ed in the
19 bill would be an important step in holding
20 schools accountable for meeting state
21 requirements for phys ed. Regarding 1091, CCC
22 supports Intro 1091 which would require
23 distribution of college information on college
24 savings plans. To students to enhance the bill
25 and make it less onerous for DOE, we recommend

1
2 shifting the responsibility for drafting the
3 materials to the Department of Consumer
4 Affairs, including information about where
5 parents can seek free counseling and answers to
6 their questions about college saving plans in
7 the material, and providing these materials to
8 families with younger children such as through
9 ACS, child care, Head Start, or UPK centers.
10 Thank you again. We're very grateful for the
11 opportunity to comment on these bills and we're
12 encouraged by the public dialogue about how to
13 ensure that students graduate from high school
14 prepared for college and career, both
15 academically and financially. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you. Max
17 Ahmed, New York Immigration Coalition.

18 MAX AHMED: Good afternoon Chairman
19 Jackson and members of the Council. My name is
20 Max, and I am an education program associate at
21 the New York Immigration Coalition. We are an
22 umbrella policy and advocacy organization with
23 nearly 200 member organizations and we aim to
24 achieve a fairer and more just society that
25 values the contributions of immigrants and

1 extends opportunity to all. There are nearly
2 160,000 English language learners, or ELLs, in
3 New York city public schools. ELLs have
4 enormous potential. Once they learn English,
5 they out perform their native English speaking
6 peers, and ELLs have unique language skills, a
7 major advantage in today's global economy.
8 Despite these assets, ELLs are being left far
9 behind. A meager 35 percent of ELLs graduate in
10 four years and proficiency scores on this years
11 grades three through eight test are at 3.4
12 percent for English and 11.4 percent in math.
13 There is still abysmal the amount of crisis for
14 our ELLs, both in how we educate them and how
15 we evaluate their capabilities. ELLs face
16 tremendous challenges in school. They must
17 simultaneously master new content and a new a
18 language, and those born outside the US must
19 also navigate a new culture. Standardized
20 tests are by their nature language dependent
21 and make it harder for English language
22 learners to show what they've learned. These
23 tests are not full measures of what ELLs know
24 and they're not capable of assessing
25

1
2 characteristics like tenacity and grit so
3 common among immigrant families that influence
4 persistence in school and success in life.
5 Using standardized tests for high stakes
6 decisions exacerbates the problem and
7 constricts opportunity. The state English and
8 math test scores are used to inform decision
9 about admission to some middle and high
10 schools. Admission to the City's specialized
11 high schools is based on another standardized
12 test which is the SH SAT [phonetic]. In order
13 to receive a diploma, New York's students must
14 pass at least five Regents exam as you
15 mentioned earlier. According to a report by the
16 CSS, the Community Service Society, after CUNY
17 senior colleges raised their minimum SAT
18 requirements. Their representation of Latino
19 and black students decreased. We're concerned
20 about this trend following English--we're
21 concerned about English language learners being
22 a part of this trend and facing fewer
23 opportunities for higher education as a result.
24 Given these dynamics and the fact that English
25 language learners are being left behind now,

1 the City should take immediate action. It
2 should stop using standardized test results for
3 ELLs in high stakes decisions within the City's
4 control, advocate on behalf of the City's
5 students for the state to encourage broader use
6 and give greater rate to performance based
7 assessments as my colleague Abja mentioned
8 earlier, which have particular value when
9 educating English language learners, and
10 support the possibility of New York State using
11 the Federal Waiver process to allow native
12 language state assessments for recently arrived
13 students in grades three through eight and also
14 work with community to address barriers to ELL
15 admissions. While standardized tests are
16 problematic, English language learners lag so
17 far behind that the City cannot afford to focus
18 on assessment issues alone to boost
19 achievement. The City must act now to create a
20 system-wide initiative to expand ELL's access
21 to the quality programs and additional supports
22 they need to master English and be ready for
23 college and careers. We know that with the
24 right kind of support like that provided by
25

1
2 models such as the International's Network for
3 Public Schools. ELLs achievements are
4 extraordinary. We must honor that potential.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And let me
7 thank all of you for coming in and giving
8 testimony on behalf of your organizations, and
9 obviously to me, moving forward on the Intro's
10 that have introduced by my colleague King and
11 myself and also the Resolutions are very
12 important. You may have been here when I said
13 to Dennis Walcott, our Chancellor, that yes, we
14 want to put these in place now in order to lock
15 in whoever the next administration is. We know
16 based on all things considered that the next
17 administration is going to be more progressive
18 overall, but having the minimum requirement and
19 documenting it and aggregating the data so we
20 can evaluate and determine if the minimum
21 requirements in arts education is being done is
22 extremely important. And we don't want to wait
23 until next year. We want it done now. And as
24 far as the standardized testing, you know,
25 alternate assessment methodologies are very

1
2 very important overall, and especially for
3 English language learners or ELLs, and when you
4 were--when you were giving you presentation,
5 Max, I was thinking about my girls who are not
6 English language learners. The language that
7 they only know is English and maybe a little
8 Spanish, and them passing the Regents exams and
9 what have you and so forth, which was not a
10 problem for them, but I can just imagine if
11 they came here from another country and their
12 language was not English and it was the
13 different cultural aspects and all the other
14 adjustments, it can be pretty difficult. I can
15 only assume that I do know that I think at the
16 time when they were in school the passing grade
17 for exams was 65 and not 55. And obviously
18 it's going up and you have to pass all five
19 Regents exams in order to graduate from high
20 school. And the testimony that you gave as far
21 as 36 times, oh my gosh. It just--just have a
22 devastating impact on individuals trying their
23 hardest to achieve, to get that high school
24 diploma. Do you know what I mean? I can
25 imagine it's not easy, but that's why we must

1
2 find alternative assessment measures in order
3 for people to move forward with their
4 education. So let me thank you all for coming
5 in and giving testimony, and I look forward to
6 work with you in the future. Thank you very
7 much. Our last panel, Ken Cohens, NAACP New
8 York State Conference and Joseph McGivern,
9 Advocates for Healthy Education. Ken and Joe
10 come on down or up depending on which way
11 you're coming from. Both of you, would you
12 raise your right hand and do you swear or
13 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
14 nothing but the truth in your testimony before
15 the Education Committee hearing and to respond
16 honestly to my or any other Council Members
17 questions that may arrive, do you?

18 KEN COHEN: I do.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, good.

20 Ken, you may begin, Ken.

21 KEN COHEN: Okay. Good afternoon.

22 The NAACP New York State Conference is honored
23 to be here to give testimony on standardized
24 testing and on behalf of Doctor Hazel M. Dukes
25 and the 14 branches of New York City, we are

1
2 definitely in support of the Resolution and the
3 two Intros. The question of standardized
4 testing has been a strong issue for more than
5 12 years, but more recently the recent eight
6 years where we have looked at what our schools
7 and children are getting out of these
8 standardized tests every year. We know that in
9 many of our communities children have issues
10 with taking these tests. Parents have issues.
11 We also see that the result, the resolve, the
12 results come so untimely that even if you can
13 evaluate a student, it's coming almost too
14 late, because you're getting it now in
15 September, and if you take the test in April
16 and May and that child now moves onto another
17 grade or is held back, the evaluation
18 technically can't be impacted--in place until
19 either the following January or the following
20 September. So we do need to see that if we are
21 looking for true reform and education in this
22 City as well as this State, that these, that
23 the resolution must be put forward. We also
24 see that this resolution will impact because we
25 have 53 branches throughout New York State, and

1
2 we just recently, our convention addressed the
3 issue of education especially in the big six
4 cities of New York State, which pretty much
5 suffer with the same issues that we suffer here
6 in New York City. And we all know, as New York
7 City goes so does the State and the nation. So
8 it is so important that as we move forward we
9 take a better look at how we're going to
10 evaluate and monitor our children and give them
11 the proper tools and resources so that they can
12 succeed in this world, because truthfully they
13 are the future of not only the city, state, but
14 the country and truthfully, the world. We must
15 really look at the way we're doing education,
16 and we know that one place in this government
17 in New York City that has been looking at
18 things has been the Education Committee of the
19 City Council. We know that the challenges that
20 have come out of this particular Committee has
21 been one that has represented not only the
22 children but the parents and the communities,
23 which feel that especially now as we do come
24 into a new administration and we do agree that
25 this will set the tone by doing it now and put

1
2 it in writing and making it law as we carry
3 over, because no one knows the future. And but
4 we do know that what is in place can be broken
5 but it's a process that takes a lot of work,
6 but if we put it in writing and make it law,
7 this will change the tide of the way things--
8 the way things are done in New York City, the
9 way the education process is done. We have been
10 in this struggle with you and with the City of
11 New York for 30, 40 years now, but as we see
12 our children being challenged consistently,
13 it's important that we now move forward. So we
14 are both--the NAACP New York State Conference
15 Metropolitan Council definitely is in support
16 of the Resolution and the two Intros. Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

19 Next, but not least the last.

20 JOSEPH MCGIVERN: It's nice being
21 last. I know nobody--[off mic]

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Turn on your
23 mic.

24 JOSEPH MCGIVERN: It's nice being
25 last. I know no one's waiting after me. There's

1
2 a sense of freedom there. Nice to be back,
3 Chairman Jackson. I have been working out of
4 Long Island with Senator Jack Martins who is
5 the only Senator who's called for Commissioner
6 King to resign. I believe maybe one other
7 Assembly person, he's been very active with the
8 community out there, and I wrote him a letter
9 with some talking points relating to
10 standardized testing and sometimes standardized
11 testing and materials and things like that
12 they're all part of the same package. I'm not
13 sure. It may be good to have a broader view,
14 but this letter I would like to read to you.
15 It's called Common Core Hearings at Mineola
16 High School and the Protection of Children's
17 Data, which I won't go into. That's not the
18 nature of this hearing, but I said, "After
19 listening to your extraordinary hearings at
20 Mineola I am convinced that we will need to
21 start all over. Like the story of the blind men
22 trying to describe an elephant by holding a
23 different part of its anatomy, the numerous
24 issues and current concerns make it obvious
25 that no care was invested in the process that

1 usually takes three years with close
2 observation and input from actual teachers and
3 administrators in the classroom. This is an
4 issue that directly impacts the safety and
5 emotional well-being of all students,
6 particularly early childhood, and the integrity
7 of the educational systems outlined recently in
8 a letter by the Catholic Scholars in their
9 letter to the bishops. Evaluations, testings
10 are evaluations, they are not assessments. The
11 evaluation of students mistakenly called
12 assessments needs to be revisited while we
13 return the excellent New York State curriculum
14 that was recently in place. Teachers and
15 students are unable to use this data for their
16 own growth and understand or receive it in a
17 timely manner. One suggestion was to have
18 testing on alternate years, which could offset
19 the cost of being able to provide testing
20 questions and answers for our own enlightenment
21 and legitimacy. These evaluations will add to
22 the cost exponentially as Common Core
23 proponents look to the use of computers in the
24 future. At your hearings, we learned of the
25

1
2 recent study indicating the severe costs to
3 economically challenged communities due to the
4 federal government's unfunded mandates in the
5 race to the top program. It was indicated that
6 the community of Rockland County foresees an
7 increase over four years of 11 million dollars
8 with a meager distribution of 400,000 dollars
9 from the Race to the Top program. Commissioner
10 King indicated that it was federal law that
11 permits the schools to be governed by the
12 states, when in fact it is by default in the
13 Constitution that mandates state's control of
14 education and not the federal government.
15 Another issue of concern is that parents who
16 refuse to permit their children to be exposed
17 to this questionable testing and cause their
18 excellent local schools to be labeled in danger
19 of failing, which would lead to state control
20 and the advent of new charter schools on these
21 sites. Materials--Commissioner King indicated
22 that resources are being provided to the
23 schools but they have the option of not using
24 them. This may be the most pernicious problem
25 with the Common Core, since testing questions

1
2 are drawn from the materials which are the
3 costliest component of the Common Core regime.
4 Who controls the resources controls the
5 evaluations of both students and teachers, and
6 these resources "crowd out" good instruction.
7 The Commissioner indicated that these
8 publishers would provide informational text
9 materials when in fact the research from their
10 own Common Core indicates that publishers
11 continue to dumb down the text books that they
12 produce and provide excerpts from texts about
13 numerous children with emotional stress
14 creating an atmosphere of questionable social
15 engineering, both in literature and testing.
16 Teachers become dependent on the resources
17 provided by the State's publishers in the
18 absence of authentic literacy materials and
19 expect that they will appear on the annual
20 testing evaluations. The Common Core research
21 for English language, arts, and literacy and
22 history social studies, science, and technical
23 subjects indicates that there is also evidence
24 that current standards, curriculum, and
25 instructional practices have not done enough to

1
2 foster the independent reading of complex texts
3 so crucial for college and career readiness,
4 particularly in the case of informational
5 texts. Of major concern is that time and money
6 is being spent by municipalities for staff
7 development surrounding these resources that
8 are not required and are untried and unproven
9 as indicated by the local school board
10 representative from Port Washington. Those who
11 created the curriculum and materials were said
12 to be educators by the Commissioner. I'm not
13 certain what that term means. Are these
14 teachers that have spent at least five years in
15 a classroom and are familiar with
16 developmentally appropriate instruction and
17 learning theory? Senator Martins, you need to
18 get a list of those that design the curriculum,
19 materials, and evaluations along with their
20 credentials as classroom teachers." Now the
21 Senator has a letter of response, but I'm sure
22 my time must have run out.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Why don't you
24 read your summary.

25

1
2 JOSEPH MCGIVERN: Can I read the
3 letter from the Senator to that letter?

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: No, I--

5 JOSEPH MCGIVERN: [interposing]
6 Okay. In summary, the point I'm making is that
7 there--standardized testing is very pernicious,
8 but there are other accoutrements to
9 standardized testing which are equally as
10 dangerous, and as we look at standardized
11 testing, we also have to look at the publishing
12 companies, the materials that are being used
13 that are directed toward these standardized
14 testing which are basically dumbing down the
15 curriculum and crowding out excellent
16 instruction. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And now, this
18 letter from Senator Jack Martins, is this
19 before or after you wrote your letter?

20 JOSEPH MCGIVERN: It's a response to
21 my letter, and it's a--

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
23 Summarize what he said.

24 JOSEPH MCGIVERN: Well, he talks
25 about how he's been very active and that he has

1
2 called for the Commissioner to resign, and he
3 talks about all the different facets of that
4 are being addressed over the Common Core, and I
5 mentioned a few of them, and he refers to the
6 metaphor I used about the blind man and the
7 elephant, referring to my letter and it's just--
8 --it was just a positive shot in the arm for
9 some of the ideas that I did present, and he
10 has been a great leader in the state
11 legislature against Common Core, and I think
12 that--I think that the City Council might pay
13 heed to recognizing affiliation between the two
14 parties.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, thank
16 you. And Ken and Joe, let me thank you for
17 coming in and giving your testimony. I
18 appreciate it, and I know--

19 JOSEPH MCGIVERN: [interposing]
20 Thank you Chairman.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: you sat
22 through the entire hearing, whether you gain
23 anything out of it. I know I have, and I
24 appreciate you coming in. Just for the record,
25 we've received testimony from Fair Tests, the

1
2 National Center for Fair and Open Testing. For
3 the record we've received testimony from the
4 Annual Report from the Arts Committee to the
5 Panel of Educational Policy, dated September
6 19th, 2013. For the record, we received
7 testimony from Cynthia Watchtell [phonetic]
8 Director of the S. Daniel Abraham Honors
9 Program and Research Associate Professor of
10 American Studies at Stern College at Shiva
11 University, and for the record we received a
12 statement on Proposal to Distribute Information
13 on College Savings Plans to Department of
14 Education Students from Daniel Ruez [phonetic]
15 Senior Manager Vanguard Education Savings
16 Group, and finally, for the record we received
17 testimony from Stephen Tennen, Executive
18 Director for the Arts Connection Inc. We also
19 have been joined by our college Steve Levin of
20 Brooklyn and with that, we are now closing this
21 hearing out on the Oversight of the Impact of
22 standardized testing on the Department of
23 Education's students and also a hearing on
24 Intro 3--Intro 1091 about savings college
25 plans, information being given out to parents

1
2 and students when they're entering school in
3 various grade levels, and also Intro 925 which
4 is the requirement for the Department of
5 Education to give statistical data broken down
6 by specific aggregates of not only individual
7 schools but school districts, community school
8 districts, council districts so that we can
9 determine whether or not the Department of
10 Education is meeting its minimum requirements
11 in providing education instruction to our
12 students. With that--and Resolution 1394 about
13 alternate assessment measures in evaluating our
14 students. So with that this hearing on these
15 particular matters is hereby closed at 2:10
16 p.m.

17 [gavel]

18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is no interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date 12/09/2013