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STEVE ADUBATO, host:

Are New Jersey schools making the grade? Find out next on CAUCUS:
NEW JERSEY.

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ADUBATO: Welcome to Agenda New Jersey, a special CAUCUS series
looking at key issues affecting the quality of our life in the Garden
State. I'm Steve Adubato.

You know, despite recent efforts of education reform, many of New
Jersey's public schools are still receiving failing grades. What can
be done on a state level to better prepare our young people for the
future? Here to discuss that question and many more are Dr. Larry
Leverett, who is superintendent of schools in Plainfield, New Jersey;
Paul Tractenberg, a professor of law and founder of the Education Law
Center, a public interest project designed to assist both parents and
students; and finally, Gordon MacInnes, a former state senator and
assistant commissioner of education in the great state of New Jersey.
Good to see you all of you.

Unidentified Guest: Thank you.

Unidentified Guest: Steve.

ADUBATO: Old friends of this series, so we can speak candidly of
education.

Unidentified Guest: Absolutely.

Unidentified Guest: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: And I just want to let folks know that throughout the
program, you're going to see a Web site, our Web site up there,
telephone number and please, log onto the site, call the number for a
variety of things. First is our Agenda New Jersey free-of-charge
resource guide, important information about this series, particularly
right now, about education. But also when you log on to our site, it
will connect to the Better Schools Report put out by The Fund For New
Jersey.

So let--let's go through this because education's a huge area, right,
Gordon? We could be all over the place.

Mr. GORDON MacINNES (Assistant Commissioner, New Jersey Department Of Education): Sure.

ADUBATO: As I said before the program, let's focus on a few areas. One, improving the quality of the teachers who come into our schools; two, state takeover: Where are we? Where should we be? And, finally, the third area that we wanted to talk about: deals with the Abbott districts.

Mr. MacINNES: Right.

ADUBATO: Let's first deal with quality teachers, or the effort to get better teachers, into the classroom. What's the problem?

Mr. MacINNES: Well, I think--lookit, this is--I'm not the expert on this, but I think that the problem is the following. First of all, I don't think we have respected teaching enough in the United States. We don't respect that, you know, it's--it's the--it's the--it's the occupation when you give it at a party where people sort of move away. I've heard that said by so many teachers compared to if you were working in a--you know, a research situation or you were on Wall Street, where people want to get a tip and, you know--so we don't respect teaching. And I think that has--that has an effect on--on people in college about whether they want to b--select that field, whether they want to train for it.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. MacINNES: Secondly, teaching is a very difficult job. It's connected to the first part. We don't--we don't appreciate how difficult it is. And a test for anybody who's watching this, if they've had the experience that I've had, imagine doing your birthday party with 17 fifth-grade boys. I did that a couple of times, three times, and I don't--the party only lasted a couple of hours. Think about doing that 180 days a year, six hour--that's hard work. So...

ADUBATO: Real hard work. We don't appreciate that, do we?

Mr. MacINNES: We don't appreciate it. The third thing is--and this is where I think we can make some changes; Larry will know a lot more about this--teaching is something that occurs in isolation. And we have increased that problem in the way we manage our schools and the way we manage our districts. So instead of giving more opportunities for teachers to talk to one another about how we're going to work out this new curriculum or how we're going to deal with the problems of Billy, who h--who's--you know, who's given us this kind of--we don't give a lot of time for that, and teachers work by themselves. They don't get the support, they don't get the encouragement, they don't get the opportunities to upgrade their skills to stay current, to--and--and to deal with each other in a professional way or to deal with people who--who are on the outside and--and have something to

help...

ADUBATO: And--and along--along those lines, Larry, just real quick because each one of you contributed to this report...

Dr. LARRY LEVERETT (Superintendent, Plainfield Schools): Correct. Right.

ADUBATO: OK, you wrote what area, Larry?

Dr. LEVERETT: I wrote a piece on accountability assessment.

ADUBATO: And your area, Paul?

Professor PAUL TRACTENBERG (Professor, Rutgers Law School): State takeover.

ADUBATO: And finally...

Mr. MacINNES: Abbott, the Abbott districts.

ADUBATO: All right. Let's stay on the quality--attracting quality teachers. Some of the recommendations in this report--I'm not going to go through all of them--add incentives for experienced teachers, like allowing them to collect pensions while being paid to teach. Second, provide scholarships for new teachers in a--in--may--when there's a major shortage in a certain area, particularly in terms of minority teacher recruitment. All teacher education programs should be nationally credited. And finally--accredited--and, finally, how about the minimum salary for teachers being raised to \$40,000? Those are just some of the reports, Larry.

Dr. LEVERETT: And I--and I think those are some very important recom--recommendations. I think that the issue of teacher co--quality is the central issue for education reform in New Jersey.

ADUBATO: Number one?

Dr. LEVERETT: Number one issue. Every child deserves a well-prepared, qualified teacher standing before them in the classroom every day, whether it's in Princeton or Pemberton, Paterson or Passaic. The problem in New Jersey is that we have not made a legislative commitment and focused on improving teacher quality. We have no coherent, legislatively supported, publicly funded, full-court press on this most central issue.

ADUBATO: While we are doing this program in mid-September, the day after Governor McGreevey announced a major--it was an education summit--series of proposals dealing with education--because he has done that, Paul, are we any closer to doing what Larry Leverett just said?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Well, certainly dramatizing the issue and focusing on the need to get a much improved teacher corps i--is absolutely indispensable. I--I just want to emphasize something that I think both Gordon and--and Larry adverted to, which is it's partly about money. I mean, after all, we're a society that tends to value people and--and position by how much you receive for holding them. But it's much more than about money. I think it's really about increasing the professionalization of teachers. I mean, look, assistant professors or instructors in higher education, you get 20 or 30 well-qualified applicants for every position for a lower salary than starting teachers make. So there's some dynamic which is...

ADUBATO: So it's not only about money?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: It's not only about money. I mean, we've said about, you know, Abbott and school finance reform, adequate money is essential, but not sufficient. And I...

ADUBATO: So I want to be clear. If, in fact, we talked about raising minimum teachers' salary to \$40,000, that alone--none--none of these things alone do it...

Mr. MacINNES: No.

ADUBATO: ...none of these recommendations in the report. But that is critically important, though, Paul.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Absolutely. A--again, adequate money--salary money for teachers is essential, but not sufficient.

ADUBATO: How do you make it more prestigious?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: I think you have to professionalize it. Gordon was talking about the isolation of teachers. You have to create a professional environment within the school and outside the school, better professional development; really, a focus on teaching and learning skills and mechanisms.

ADUBATO: Jump back in.

Mr. MacINNES: See--see, the--I think that--that behind the words `professionalization,' which I absolutely agree with what Paul said, teachers need to be treated as adults. I think that what happens in education is that people are treated as if they were juveniles, and they--therefore, they are given these orders from somebody who's higher on--on the--on the ladder than they are, and they're told to ha--and--and we need to have a much more respectful, much more serious, much more profession--reflective conversation going on with people who are involved in education. And they need to be treated like adults, and that's not happening right now.

ADUBATO: Well, along those lines--and I don't want to--you know, this

is a Pandora's box potentially, but I'll quickly try to get into it and out of it. Can you treat teachers like professionals, real professionals that they are, and give them the respect that they deserve and, still, after just a few years, if a teacher gets tenure, pretty much lifetime employment--can you still you do that, Larry Leverett?

Dr. LEVERETT: Well, absolutely. I--I--I don't think the issue in New Jersey is tenure. Tenure is...

ADUBATO: It's part of the discussion, but go ahead.

Dr. LEVERETT: Well, it--it's part of the discussion, and it's something for New Jersey to--to examine. But good supervision, well-prepared school leaders, creating learning organizations and--and taking steps to improve the culture and the overall teaching--the conditions for teachers to work in is very--is really important.

ADUBATO: But--but, Larry, wait. I--I hear what you're saying. You're talking about now the leadership question: superintendents. You told our producer...

Dr. LEVERETT: Big issue.

ADUBATO: Larry, you told our producers--and we've had this discussion before off the air and on--that being a superintendent--you said it's real hard to get talented people to want to do that. It's not that good of a job.

Dr. LEVERETT: Well, being a superintendent absolutely is not the greatest job, but the--but the press of getting talented pa--people, I think--when we look at our urban schools particularly, we have a major equity issue. In terms of--if you look at, for example, the alternate route to certification...

ADUBATO: Right.

Dr. LEVERETT: ...and there's a disproportionate number of alternatively certified teachers who end up in our poorer schools. If we follow the example of Singapore, which is probably leading in terms of international developed countries, they put their best teachers to--in classrooms with the most challenged kids. In our society and in New Jersey, we find pretty much the opposite; that the kids with the greatest needs are getting the least-prepared teachers.

ADUBATO: I noticed that the Teacher of the Year in New Jersey very rarely comes--and I could be wrong--very rarely comes from an urban area. Is that right?

Dr. LEVERETT: That's--I think that's the history.

ADUBATO: OK. Again, I wish we could have the entire half-hour to

talk about attracting quality teachers. And, again, if you want to get a sense of all of the recommendations that are put out in the Agenda New Jersey Report: The Better Schools--you see it right there. That is our resource guide, Agenda New Jersey Resource Guide. We promise you it will include the Better Schools report. But I also want to let you know if you log on to our site, you can click over to Agenda New Jersey, and you'll find all of the education recommendations.

Can we now talk about Abbott? The term gets thrown around in policy discussions: the Abbott districts, Abbott decision. Break it down for someone watching saying 'I don't know what they're talking about.' What's the issue?

Mr. MacINNES: Abbott refers to a series of decisions by the New Jersey Supreme Court. And it--what it does--and I'd like to think of it not as a court decision, not as a--something where you're talking about compliance and whether you hit the checklist right in terms of what--the quotas order. I think of it as the--giving New Jersey the vehicle for closing the achievement gap. That's what Abbott is to me, and that's what I think it is to Larry Leverett--I don't want to speak for him--and I think it's for--for educators they see in the public and the governor, frankly. I mean, he's--he has taken a chance in a year that is a financial disaster--unprecedented financial disaster.

The only program that gets an increase this year in the New Jersey state budget is the Abbott Required Prekindergarten Early Education Program, the one that says let's start with kids at the age of three because if we don't, by the time they get to kindergarten, it's frankly too late for too many of them. And...

ADUBATO: Real quick, some people watching are saying 'Come on, Gordon MacInnes, you've got to be kidding me.' "Throwing more"--quote, "Throwing more money at failing urban districts." Your response?

Mr. MacINNES: My response is we're--we're throwing--throwing. That's--that already biases it, doesn't it? We're investing in children who have every right to be--have the same chance as your child or my child to a quality education and, therefore, the options that come with being literate and educated in this society. And nobody denies that when the kids are three, I think--there's very few people who would say that the--that the three-year-old is responsible somehow. We should...

ADUBATO: That's why the preschool recommendation is so important?

Mr. MacINNES: And so the--the New Jersey Supreme Court, as a part of the Abbott decision, which is complex and involves a lot of different remedies and everything else, says we've got to start early because the research tells us that we sh--if we don't start early, we're going to--we're not going to make it. Why? Brain research says kids develop in the first five years much more than they are going to

develop in the next 15 years, and that's when you need to get those--the stimulation and the words and the c--ideas working and the pictures and the words connected.

ADUBATO: So let's break it down. The report--the Better Schools Report...

Mr. MacINNES: Right.

ADUBATO: ...made specific recommendations regarding Abbott districts.

Mr. MacINNES: Right.

ADUBATO: And there are a lot of them. Some...

Mr. MacINNES: Right.

ADUBATO: ...of them include?

Mr. MacINNES: Some of them include let's be serious about this as an educational opportunity. That's the primary organizing principle in--of--of what's in that report. Let's not treat this as a compliance issue, where you--let's get it out of the courtroom. Let's start focusing on teaching and learning on the issues on quality instruction, on the issues of getting an early start that's high quality, getting small class sizes in the early grades, getting kids to read at grade level by the time they're in third grade. Start at three, get them read--reading by the time they're third-graders, and we're going to change all of the schools in the Abbott districts going forward, because when you have 85, 90 percent of your kids reading on grade level...

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. MacINNES: ...by the time they're in fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh grade, you change the experience for the teachers, the principals, everybody involved.

ADUBATO: Well said. Let me shift real quick. Paul, you've been involved in this from day one. Before Abbott, there was Robinson vs. Cahill...

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: ...1972, if I'm not mistaken. You have been an attorney leading this effort. What would "victory," in quotes, be defined as, as it relates to this Abbott case? What does victory look like?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Well, victory looks like what we're really on target to achieve, but--but ultimate victory is the equalization of education, educational opportunities...

ADUBATO: Yeah, I don't mean in the courts. I mean in the classroom.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: That...

ADUBATO: What does it look like?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: I'm--that's what I'm talking about, because we never saw this as just in the courts. The courts became the vehicle to do what the political process wasn't able to do; namely, it's--it's very much like what Larry was saying earlier about good teachers. We have fewer good teachers teaching the most educationally challenged students. We have fewer resources going into the education of the most educationally challenged students. We've really righted that, and now we've got to make it pay off in education.

And one of my concerns, frankly, is that the public has enough understanding and patience to let this reform process take hold. We--we--it took a lot of years to create the problem. It's going to take some years to cure the problem. And we just--we can't say, 'Gee, the last two years you've had more money. Where are the test results?'

Dr. LEVERETT: Right.

ADUBATO: Sure. And--but, no, that is what a lot of people are saying.

Mr. MacINNES: That's right.

ADUBATO: I mean--and politics drives a lot of this.

Mr. MacINNES: Sure.

ADUBATO: I mean, the Legislature, no doubt, as everyone understands--well, may not understand--but is dominated by s--quote, unquote, "suburban interests," many of whom are not particularly sensitive to the argument you just made. What do you say to those, Larry Leverett, who say, 'Wait a minute. I read the Star-Ledger the other day, interview with Marion Bolden'--at the time we were doing this program, he was the superintendent of schools in the city of Newark, one of the districts taken over by the state. 'Wait a minute.' They asked Superintendent Bolden, 'You're spending \$15,000 per kid in Newark. Where are the test results?' Exactly the question you said shouldn't be asked, why shouldn't that question be asked?

Dr. LEVERETT: Well--and--and I--and I think that's a--an important question, but it is in--an--an insufficient inquiry into what we should be looking for in our schools.

ADUBATO: What should we be looking for?

Dr. LEVERETT: Well, test scores are obviously very important. You

know, Abbott is about opportunity in terms of the inputs in--into the educational system, but Abbott is really about achieving equitable outcomes across socioeconomic, d--disparate groups of children coming from our urban cities.

ADUBATO: Define outcomes. And if it is not test scores, what is it?

Dr. LEVERETT: Out--out--outcomes--one measure of outcomes: high standards. Another measure of outcomes: kids getting into college, kids staying in college, kids staying out of jail, kids living, kids having access to healthy lifestyles, kids being less and less involved in violence. I mean, the--the--in order for the benefit of Abbott to der--be derived by New Jersey, we must focus centrally on teaching and learning, but there are a--a lot of issues around quality of life that we have to work for...

ADUBATO: And--and--and on test scores...

Dr. LEVERETT: ...to prepare these kids...

ADUBATO: ...let's just put...

Dr. LEVERETT: ...for success.

ADUBATO: ...let's put--let's finally put this out there. Test scores have a place.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Oh, yeah.

Dr. LEVERETT: Certainly. No question about it.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: And I want to--I want to make...

ADUBATO: The right place is, Paul Tractenberg?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: ...make--look, I--I'm not saying test scores are not the right question to ask. I'm saying don't ask that question prematurely. Don't expect the kind of improvements in test scores that we know take the reform seizing hold...

ADUBATO: How long does it take?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: I think it probably--you ought to show some incremental movement, but to really equalize test scores, you're talking about years, frankly.

Mr. MacINNES: Gordon.

ADUBATO: Gordon.

Dr. LEVERETT: Well, I--I think the issue is about continuous progress.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: That's right.

Dr. LEVERETT: I mean, around test scores, student performance measured against New Jersey core-curriculum, content standards.

ADUBATO: Don't compare Plainfield and Newark with Princeton and Glen Ridge. Is that what you're saying?

Unidentified Guest: Right.

Dr. LEVERETT: No, no. Please compare Plainfield and Newark with Princeton and Bedminster because kids from Plainfield and Newark, in society, have to be prepared to compete equal--equitably--equally with the children of Princeton and Bedminster. See that's--that's the challenge here. How can we eradicate this--this p--pernicious gap in performance of kids from urban areas and suburban areas, poor kids and high-wealth kids?

ADUBATO: Gordon.

Mr. MacINNES: You know, we know a lot that--where we, I think, can apply some early measures and some early tests. They're not the standardized fourth-grade tests that's required now by the federal government--or the third-grade tests. I don't think that's the only thing that we should look at. We should look at that. And we should look to see that continuous improvement is that--is what we're achieving in the Abbott districts. We can start looking, though, at this question: Do children who benefit from a high-quality, pre-kindergarten start under Abbott--when they show up for kindergarten, are they better prepared than the kids who--from those same neighborhoods who don't have that opportunity? Do they have a bigger vocabulary? Are they more comfortable with ideas?

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. MacINNES: Do they--you know, do they--can they do they alphabet? Do they know 10's larger than seven? Tests like--that's not a test, but--but that's an--that's an indicator of preparation for life because if you don't start there and you don't have those tools in kindergarten, as a kid, you're not going to be as quick to be ready to learn to read. And we know all of this. And we know that showing up at kindergarten not knowing the alphabet, not knowing your numbers, not being able to identify colors, not having a familiarity and a comfort with stories and ideas, that that makes it so much harder.

ADUBATO: Real quick follow-up.

Mr. MacINNES: Schools can't catch up real well.

ADUBATO: Real quick follow-up. I don't want to turn this discussion into one about charter schools or alternatives to the public school

system, but--but--but I just want to touch on this. There have been some charter schools that have made a significant difference.

Mr. MacINNES: Right.

ADUBATO: Are they just a blip? Are they just a tiny, tiny, tiny piece of the education equation? And how much time should we spend talking about them then?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Well, I--I think you want to seek out excellence wherever it exists...

Dr. LEVERETT: Exactly.

ADUBATO: Right.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: ...and draw on it. On the other hand, the results of charter and even voucher schools are really...

ADUBATO: Mixed.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: ...pretty mixed.

ADUBATO: Mixed.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: So I don't think there's a--a clear single message out there.

ADUBATO: But--but--but how about--how about the best practices? Say you find a charter school or--a charter school that's really...

Mr. MacINNES: Right. Right.

ADUBATO: ...doing well, and you say--you know, we're playing the best practices game.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Right.

Mr. MacINNES: Right.

ADUBATO: You want to find out what makes that school work...

Mr. MacINNES: Right.

ADUBATO: ...from an administrative point of view, the teachers, the classroom environment. Can you see that school and then say, 'OK, why can't we have it in the public school down the street?'

Mr. MacINNES: Because we've done this for a long time, Steve. And sometimes it's been a public school...

Dr. LEVERETT: Right.

Mr. MacINNES: ...where people have been able to say, 'Hey, lookit...'

ADUBATO: Great model.

Mr. MacINNES: '...they're a bunch of poor kids, right? They're a bunch of poor kids and they're achieving like they were suburban kids, right?' just to make it real simple. And so what's going on in that school?

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. MacINNES: And we went and studied what happened in that school. What did we find? Great leadership, high standards, consistent attention to those standards, no excuses, high-quality teaching, lots of support for teachers. That's what we found. That's what you find in high-performing charter schools...

ADUBATO: No difference.

Mr. MacINNES: ...in the cities. Here's the question, though: You've got 12,000 kids in the state enrolled in charter schools...

ADUBATO: That's it?

Mr. MacINNES: ...after six--12,000...

ADUBATO: How many kids do have in the public school system?

Mr. MacINNES: One point--3 1/2 million. We've got 1...

Dr. LEVERETT: Right. Right.

Mr. MacINNES: So you're not even talking about 1 percent. Why--why do those charter schools work? Leadership--the same things you find in good public schools. Leadership, high standards, attention to--all of those things.

ADUBATO: Let me do this--excuse me, Gordon, for interrupting.

Mr. MacINNES: Yeah. Sure.

ADUBATO: We have five minutes left. Your slogan--your slogan--your mission: All kids, no excuses.

Dr. LEVERETT: No excuses, no alibis, not except--no exceptions. Whatever it takes.

ADUBATO: OK.

Mr. MacINNES: Pretty clear, isn't it?

ADUBATO: Whatever it takes.

Dr. LEVERETT: Whatever it takes.

ADUBATO: Finding any means necessary.

Dr. LEVERETT: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: Someone...

Dr. LEVERETT: Yes.

ADUBATO: Someone who's better known than I once said that. How--how about this? Last subject I want to bring up. State takeover. In 1987 a law is passed that the state can come in and take over certain districts. First district taken over is Jersey City...

Mr. MacINNES: Jersey City.

Dr. LEVERETT: Jersey City.

ADUBATO: ...in 15 years, Paterson then Newark.

Mr. MacINNES: Right.

ADUBATO: Talk to us about the recommendations here and what should be done in a ge--if the agenda of New Jersey is the right agenda with respect to state takeover and what we do now, what does that look like?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Well, it--it's easy. It grows organically out of what we're talking about. It's the focus on the capacity of the local district where districts don't seem to have the capacity. The state ought to be involved in helping them to develop it. If there's a breakdown in that process, the state may have to take over operations. But their operations should be directed at building local capacity unless the state wants to run the district forever.

Mr. MacINNES: Yeah. Here's the deal: We have a system right now that doesn't even mention the Abbott remedies. Abbott--Abbott took place after the law was passed effectively. So here we have this central organizing educational program affecting Newark, Jersey City and Paterson that's not even a part of the consideration of whether...

ADUBATO: Well, explain that to the average person. I'm not following you.

Mr. MacINNES: The average person would say--well, lookit, schools are about teaching and learning and making sure students do--do learn. And so one of the measures for deciding whether Newark, Paterson and Jersey City are ready to--to go back to local control is how they're

teaching their kids. Are the kids learning? Are the--is there steady improvement in the number of kids who are mastering the core standards that New Jersey has laid out? That's the--that's the test that most people would want to see met, I would think. However, that's not even really a part of the--of the test right now for those districts, and it needs to be made a part of it. There are other things, financial mismanagement, corruption, business practices, they all have to meet--they have to meet the same standards that any other district has to meet. But you can't say it has to be 100 percent across the board. The law that we're operating under says that it's gotta be 100 percent across the board. That's silly.

ADUBATO: It doesn't work.

Mr. MacINNES: It can't. It can't. It will never happen in our lifetime.

ADUBATO: A couple minutes left. On state takeovers, again, a variety of recommendations in the report, in the Better Schools Report, that talk specifically about what this agenda should look like with respect to state takeover. What else should we be talking about, Larry?

Dr. LEVERETT: Look, we--we must talk about community engagement. If--if we think about state takeover, what is the community's role? Certainly an overseer from Trenton and an army of overseers from Trenton cannot replace the voice of the community in owning the responsibility for the education of their children. Much attention has to be focused, as Steve--as Paul said, building capacity, but not only within the school district, within the community...

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Right.

Dr. LEVERETT: ...to sustain a--a--a...

ADUBATO: But...

Dr. LEVERETT: ...comprehensive, broad-based coalition to support school change.

ADUBATO: But you have to be ready to do that. And, Paul Tractenberg, you've written extensively on this subject...

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Right.

ADUBATO: ...helping communities prepare for the end of a state takeover so they can be ready to take control of their own destiny.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Right.

ADUBATO: What does that entail?

Prof. TRACTENBERG: Well, i--I think...

ADUBATO: The TV version.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: The--the TV version, I--I think it involves a process of interaction which engages parents increasingly. Because if you're talking about effective schools, whether they're schools that were once taken over or not, one of the characteristics which perhaps we haven't highlighted enough is the engagement of the community. I suspect one of the reasons some charter schools is effective is because parents buy in in a way they may not generally in some of the public schools. So...

Mr. MacINNES: I think it's an impossible test. I think you've got to talk about...

ADUBATO: Impossible test?

Mr. MacINNES: Impossible test. I think--I disagree with both Larry and Paul on this, and that's all right...

Dr. LEVERETT: I--I think there must be...

ADUBATO: Well, what do--real quick. Got a minute left.

Dr. LEVERETT: ...fight training for parents.

ADUBATO: What do you disagree with? Real quick.

Mr. MacINNES: I--I think--I think that the--I think that the state can do certain things. It can say, 'You know, you've got to get the financial books in order. And unless you do that and you do it perfectly...'

Dr. LEVERETT: Well...

Mr. MacINNES: Just a minute...

Dr. LEVERETT: ...Newark ran up a \$70 million deficit under state control.

Mr. MacINNES: Under a different administration. That's absolutely correct.

ADUBATO: What is that?

Dr. LEVERETT: Well, regardless of administrations...

Mr. MacINNES: Wait--just a minute. Just a minute. Just a minute.

ADUBATO: You've got 30 seconds. Go ahead.

Mr. MacINNES: All right. And--and the state can do that and insist

on it. In terms of talking about the state helping communities build communities, I think that's a different--and a--and a--and a test that's beyond the capacity of the Department of Education or the New Jersey State Legislature. That's something that's gonna have to be done with homegrown--homegrown leadership. It's not something you can impose. There's not a checklist or...

ADUBATO: But you can help.

Mr. MacINNES: You can help.

Dr. LEVERETT: That's right.

Mr. MacINNES: You can help.

Dr. LEVERETT: You can facilitate.

ADUBATO: I still...

Mr. MacINNES: You can help. You can help. But it--but it's...

Prof. TRACTENBERG: I think at this point, Steve, we're gonna have to agree to disagree because...

ADUBATO: We're gonna keep talking off the air, but go ahead.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: ...but I think there is a role for the state.

Dr. LEVERETT: Absolutely.

Prof. TRACTENBERG: The state has to trigger a...