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STEVE ADUBATO, host:

Welcome. I'm Steve Adubato. Let me tell you, there are people who believe they understand what urban education is all about--the challenges, the opportunities, the promise of urban education. But you're about to see on camera a young lady who really understands. She is Marian Bolden. She is the superintendent of the Newark Public School. She is a leader in the educational community not just in the state of New Jersey, but in the country. She has been leading a school system with some of the most difficult challenges we face, and she is making great strides. And we are going one on one with Marian Bolden, so stay with us. We'll be right back.

Unidentified Woman: Are your kids getting enough art? Whether it's poetry, dance, music or drama, the arts open the doors to creativity. As a mother and teacher, I know that arts education can help our children develop confidence and a better understanding of the world around them. Even if you have just 30 minutes a week, get your kids more involved in the arts. Think about the kind of world we could leave behind for our children and our children's children.

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ADUBATO: There she is, Marion Bolden, the superintendent of the Newark public schools. Good to have you with us.

Ms. MARION BOLDEN (Superintendent, Newark Public Schools): Good afternoon.

ADUBATO: How'd you get into this whole thing in the first place?

Ms. BOLDEN: I'm a teacher. That's how I got into this.

ADUBATO: Was that the plan from the beginning, or were you going to be an educator?

Ms. BOLDEN: My plan was to be a teacher my entire career. As things turned out, I got into administration, and then, towards the end of my career, I was encouraged by community folks to consider being superintendent.

ADUBATO: Where did the passion for education come from?

Ms. BOLDEN: I--it--I don't know. I just always wanted to teach. Actually, an architect is what I thought I might be early on. I was encouraged to become a teacher, and I'm very glad I decided to do that.

ADUBATO: Let's talk a little bit about the Newark public schools. Again, we are seeing in Philadelphia--I'm thinking of other urban areas, I just want to be clear--Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Hartford. Right folks? Theresa,

help me out. I know I'm missing some urban areas all across the East Coast. Is there something that the rest of the folks out there might be thinking about urban schools that they just don't understand? What are the biggest misconceptions about urban schools?

Ms. BOLDEN: Well, I think one of the biggest misconceptions, particularly about Newark, is that you have a safe environment. That's one of the things. And I think that my youngsters come to us every day knowing that we are the safe haven. I mean, that we have a good environment, the number of incidents have gone down. And in terms of the quality of education, I think if people were to actually come into some of the urban districts--and I can't speak for all of them, but I can speak for Newark, New Jersey--that they would be very impressed with what they see, particularly in K to 8. We do struggle in high school.

ADUBATO: What's the difference?

Ms. BOLDEN: Well, there's a lot of difference in terms of, you begin to lose your youngsters to the environment that surrounds them. And if you don't have opportunities for them, they could very easily, because of the economics and the socio-issues that are out there, get misguided.

ADUBATO: Describe that environment.

Ms. BOLDEN: Well, my youngsters say to me, and I go into high schools--I'm a product of Newark public schools. I graduated from South Side High School, which is now Malcolm X Shabazz. But I was at Central one day, maybe two or three years ago, and talking about conditions in general. And one of my young ladies just looked at me and said, 'Superintendent, don't you understand that at 1:00, I'm more concerned about how I get home safe than I am about what goes on in an English class?'

ADUBATO: One o'clock in the afternoon?

Ms. BOLDEN: That's 1:00 in the afternoon. Well, where she lives is a very problematic area. And not to say that other urban districts don't deal with some of the same issues we have, but we're at a point now where we really have to begin to look at opportunities that give children something to do before school and after school, because we're--we're losing a number of them, even though we're doing so much better in the schools. So there--there are issues in urban districts, but they are worth the investment of time. And, you know...

ADUBATO: And money.

Ms. BOLDEN: And money. And as--as an Abbott district, because we...

ADUBATO: We should clarify that, because some folks in other states--by the way, people in New Jersey probably don't know what that means. There are 30...

Ms. BOLDEN: There are 31 now.

ADUBATO: Thirty-one.

Ms. BOLDEN: There are 31 school districts that get additional resources because of the circumstances of the economics in the district that...

ADUBATO: The Supreme Court has decided that there are 31 school districts that will get this additional state aid, additional money, because there are certain problems and issues that those communities face, and that the property tax base...

Ms. BOLDEN: Right.

ADUBATO: ...can't support, if you will, those public schools.

Ms. BOLDEN: Right.

ADUBATO: Some--OK let's play devil's advocate--some people say, 'Come on, we're just throwing bad money after a bad situation--good money after a bad situation.' That's--you hear that from a lot of folks. Your response?

Ms. BOLDEN: My response would be that everyone in the state of New Jersey and everyone in the nation should consider that education of all children is very important and we all benefit by a good education for all children.

ADUBATO: How so?

Ms. BOLDEN: How so? Because youngsters who have nothing else to--who have low expectations and opportunities and hope, those are the youngsters who fall victim to--they're out there. They're the ones that are perpetuating some of the crime because they feel 'I can't get a good job.' So there are issues of investment of resources that we all need to consider very, very seriously. I--I'm bothered by the fact that there seems to be a divide in the state of New Jersey of Abbott's getting additional resources. The best thing that can happen for anyone is for the youngsters in urban districts to be able to graduate from high school and be very productive citizens. And it is a--a--a great investment. And even though Abbott hasn't been around long enough to say what are the long-term impacts, there have been some immediate positive impacts.

ADUBATO: Such as?

Ms. BOLDEN: Such as the early childhood pre-K program. I think, of all of the components of Abbott, having youngsters in school, three and four year old, advantages urban districts in--in big ways. Before that, we had youngsters who would come to us in kindergarten 18 months behind. And people would say to me, 'How can they be 18 months behind? They're only five years old.' They haven't been exposed to language-rich environments like youngsters in the suburbs. And so you're behind already from the very beginning. And what we have seen over the course of the last four years--we have 33 percent of our fourth graders on grade level--we had 70 percent. And it is very much...

ADUBATO: Hold on, back up. You had 33 percent of the fourth graders on grade level for...

Ms. BOLDEN: That's about seven--seven--six, seven years ago.

ADUBATO: OK. And today?

Ms. BOLDEN: And today, talking about general ed students, we have 70. When you talk about total ed, we have about 67, which is doubling the number of

youngsters that can read. And that is very critical. You have to be able to read. Kids who drop out of school are those youngsters who can't read.

ADUBATO: Marion, what does it take? What does it take to--I mean first of all, we've talked off camera a lot, and we should--full disclosure, we have a partnership with the Newark public schools. We have a partnership directly with your office. We have a Stand and Deliver program.

By the way, do you have that clip? Have the clip--let me set this up, and we're going to make the transition. The Stand and Deliver program that we run is a not-for-profit leadership and communication training program in which we said, you know what, urban kids--I mean it started in Newark--urban kids should have every opportunity, as the superintendent is talking about, to reach their potential. And we--we said, you know what? A lot of kids in urban areas don't know how to present themselves. Don't even know how to shake your hand, look you in the eye, can't conduct themselves in the proper way in an interview to get a job, go to college, get up and speak, if you will. And so we have an annual Night of Eloquence at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. And you're going to see just a little bit of what we mean by "eloquence" from young people in the city of Newark on this clip. Let's go to the video tape.

(Beginning of excerpt from Night of Eloquence)

Unidentified Girl #1: I ask you for a simple quarter, and you're telling me you ain't got no quarter. But you're riding around in this big old Benz, and you ain't got no quarter? `You ain't getting no quarter from me. You'll just want to get high.' And I do.

Unidentified Girl #2: They call us the mothers of the earth, for we give fruits and air. The womb of the fruit of the earth, that is where they go to kill, delete and wipe us out!

Unidentified Boy: If a man speaks French, you can't speak to him in German. If a man speaks Swahili, you can't communicate with him in Chinese. You have to find out `What does this man speak?' Once you know his language, learn how to speak his language. He'll get the point.

(End of excerpt)

ADUBATO: Those are all Newark kids. What do you feel and think when you see that?

Ms. BOLDEN: I think it only demonstrates that our youngsters can perform at very high levels as long as you give them those opportunities.

ADUBATO: Is that emotional for you on some level? Seeing those kids?

Ms. BOLDEN: Yes it's very emotional for me. In fact, I'm a very emotional superintendent.

ADUBATO: What does that mean?

Ms. BOLDEN: Well, it means that...

ADUBATO: You lead from the heart?

Ms. BOLDEN: I--I--ab--without question.

ADUBATO: With the heart, from the heart.

Ms. BOLDEN: I--I would--I would be superintendent no other place. Because Newark is my home. My children need advocates. I am one of their strongest advocates, but it's--what you just saw on the monitor is an example of when you invest time, when you encourage children, when you tell them that the sky is the limit, they believe you. And having those opportunities make all the difference in the world. I believe in giving the youngsters in the city of Newark life-altering experiences. As this does. I mean, those youngsters get a chance to perform at New Jersey Performing Arts Center. It makes them feel very special.

ADUBATO: Big deal.

Ms. BOLDEN: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: By the way we should let everyone know that it's standing room only. When we do the program--and you should know, it's about 20-25 sites that we have where we do these weekly seminars, coaching and training on presentation skills. And all 10 high schools in the Newark public schools. Right?

Ms. BOLDEN: Right.

ADUBATO: And this upcoming year in 2006, we're experimenting; we're going to have two eighth grades...

Ms. BOLDEN: Right.

ADUBATO: ...participate in the program. Again, someone would say, 'Well public speaking, presentation skills, that's not,' you know, 'one of the four R's.' Right? You say:

Ms. BOLDEN: I say yes, it is. Communication is probably one of the most important skills that a youngster can graduate from high school with. One of the things that we're very often criticized about when we send youngsters out to get jobs or internships, they're not able to communicate. They're not able to write the way that people can understand what it is that they're trying to say. But communication skills is probably the single most important skill a youngster can have. Now, those opportunities I talk about are--there are lots of them. We have--we have other programs. We have robotics.

ADUBATO: Let's talk about that because I've seen the robotics program in action. A great program, intended to--what is it and why is it so important?

Ms. BOLDEN: Well, just in terms of underrepresented groups, minority youngsters don't go into careers of mathematics and engineering. And there are ways that you can get kids excited about math and science. And robotics happens to be one of them. I mean, robotics and debate and--and Stand and Deliver.

ADUBATO: You have a big debates/forensics program.

Ms. BOLDEN: Absolutely. We've--in fact, we're known across the nation as one of the top urban districts in terms of our youngsters' ability to stand up and debate and--and win major national competitions. We're looking to do the

same thing with robotics.

ADUBATO: Robotics is an opportunity--and I've seen this--some of the--or good friend Josh Weston invited us and--and former head of ADP--and we saw these kids, they're working in teams and they're building these robots.

Ms. BOLDEN: Right.

ADUBATO: And they're competing to do what?

Ms. BOLDEN: They're competing to learn how to work team, to understand mathematics in ways that they don't even know how enriching it is, but they're having a good time. What has happened is we've pushed this down into the elementary school. We have a First Lego League now, and now we have robotics in every single one of our high schools with the exception of one. And people still are surprised when we go out and compete nationally. We're not doing as well as we've done in debate, but we're on our way.

ADUBATO: Well, what does that mean for the future of these young men and women?

Ms. BOLDEN: Well, it means a lot because right now, when you look at Rutgers in the city of Newark and you look at NJIT and Essex community college, we have more youngsters going to NJIT than we have going to Rutgers.

ADUBATO: Which is a very prestigious school.

Ms. BOLDEN: Absolutely. And what has happened, there is partnerships that have been forged here. NJIT students mentor the high school students. And so it has become a program that is getting bigger and bigger. And so the college students benefit just like the high school youngsters do. And what happens, my kids get a chance to go on campus.

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. BOLDEN: And it--it just give them a sense of, 'Hey, I want to be here.' And so more and more of our youngsters are opting to go to college, and more and more of them are going into math and science. And so that's kudos to the partnership that we forged with NJIT. It's the village.

ADUBATO: It takes a village to...

Ms. BOLDEN: It takes--it takes a village to raise a child. You can't say it often enough. And so we've had forums to talk about don't leave us--don't leave educators out there by themselves to try to do all that needs to be done in the city of Newark. So some of the colleges now in--well, certainly those that reside in Newark have stepped up. But Montclair State and some of the others, too, really do understand that we need their help. And partnerships are about collaborating and hearing one another. You know, in the past, partnerships are, 'I come with my menu of things I want to do.' Hear what it is we need you to do first, and then we can sit and talk about how we can forge something that's--at the end of the day, makes a difference for children.

ADUBATO: Well, superintendent, let me say this to you, that there are urban school superintendents all across this country, and particularly on the East Coast where we're viewed, hat I'm sure are very proud of what they just heard

from you. Because you represent education, you represent leadership in the educational community, but, most of all, you represent your students in a very special way. And--actually, let's--Jeff, let's roll out to the clip. The name of the TV show that you do in the city of Newark, in the public schools, is?

Ms. BOLDEN: Focus on Education.

ADUBATO: We're going to roll out to that, and when we get back, Maya Chadda from William Paterson University's going to be talking to us about a very different subject. She is on the Council of Foreign Relations. She's an author, and we'll be talking about a whole range of interesting issues that--on the higher ed level.

But, Marion, I want to thank you so much for joining us. You honor us by your presence.

Ms. BOLDEN: Thank you. My pleasure to be here.

ADUBATO: And you come back any time.

Ms. BOLDEN: OK.

ADUBATO: We'll be right back after this. Stay with us. Let's go to the clip.

(Clip from "Focus on Education")

Announcer: If you would like more information on this program, or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at info@caucusnj.org. And visit us on the World Wide Web at www.caucusnj.org

ADUBATO: There she is, Maya Chadda, who is a professor of political science at William Paterson University and a member of the Council of Foreign Relations.

Good to have you with us.

Ms. MAYA CHADDA (Professor of Political Science, William Paterson University; Member, Council of Foreign Relations): Thank you.

ADUBATO: By the way, we should clarify. The Council of Foreign Relations is?

Ms. CHADDA: Council of Foreign Relations is a--a--the most eminent think tank of--that works on foreign policy of the United States. And its membership list runs like Who's Who of the establishment--liberal establishment of United States in foreign policy.

ADUBATO: Let's talk about your work at William Paterson. And one of our partners--our educational partners--Asian studies initiative. Why is it so important? What is it and why is it so important?

Ms. CHADDA: Well, in the last 10 years, we have been--we have seen that Asia is emerging as a major power, major force in international economy and some strategic interests for the United States, trade, investments, you name it. So we thought it was important that we have a program that would educate our students about this. In addition to that, New Jersey has a very growing

population of Asians, including in our--on our campus. So that was the other reason why we thought that it might be a good idea to do that. And there is a mandate in--in New Jersey education system to internationalize education.

ADUBATO: What does that mean?

Ms. CHADDA: So that means to introduce in the curriculum issues and topics that have to do with the outside world, beyond United States, and how--what is at stake for United States and these different parts of the world. To make them--give them an idea about its culture, its history, and its importance now. So that's what we are doing. So we applied to the Department of Education, and we got two--we won two grants consecutively to establish a major in Asian Studies. And this is...

ADUBATO: A major in Asian Studies?

Ms. CHADDA: Absolutely. This is a unique thing. There isn't one in New Jersey that I know of. And we have a full complement of languages. That means we teach Chinese, Korean, Hindi--so many of the Asian languages that one would need if one were doing a business with Asia, or you're posted in Asia, you had any dealings with Asia, or you're working for a corporation that deals with Asia. So it gives an advantage to our students to be able to do that.

ADUBATO: Let me ask you this, we've--we've talked about this, right before you got on the air, I said "ethnocentric." What does the term mean?

Ms. CHADDA: Ethnocentric is to really see everything from--from your own perspective, that is the perspective of your own culture and your own country.

ADUBATO: Does the United States do that to some extent?

Ms. CHADDA: Yes, indeed. United States is very ethnocentric, but so are many other parts of the world, so it's not a unique character of United States that it is so. But because it is a world power...

ADUBATO: It's more significant.

Ms. CHADDA: ...it's more significant.

ADUBATO: So what is it that we need to know about Asia as an emerging power?

Ms. CHADDA: Well--and, Steve, let me put it this way. If you look at the future, 2020, then there are three or four scenarios that everyone is talking about. One scenario is, of course, a globalized world where power will be dispersed as new powers come up, new countries come up, and new markets come up. The other is, of course, establishment of a Khilafat, which is what bin Laden wants. I hope that doesn't happen, and it's not going to happen.

ADUBATO: Of a what?

Ms. CHADDA: It's called Khilafat.

ADUBATO: Khilafat.

Ms. CHADDA: Yes. That is--that is a--a kind of an ideal Islamic world order.

ADUBATO: That's what bin Laden is seeking.

Ms. CHADDA: Yes, that is what bin Laden seeks to do.

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. CHADDA: The third is, of course, the emerging nations of Asia. Here you're talking about China and India, you know, who would really determine the 21st century. And by all accounts and everything that we know at this point, it seems that is the likely scenario, that the--the future destiny's going to be decided in Beijing and New Delhi, in Asia.

ADUBATO: In Beijing and New Delhi.

Ms. CHADDA: Yes.

ADUBATO: I--how? Why?

Ms. CHADDA: For a number of reasons. And--and you're looking at the future, I'm not saying this is so now. That doesn't mean that United States will cease to be a great power, but I think the West will have to begin to accommodate the interests of these countries as they rise in economy, as they become militarily powerful, and as they begin to play a far greater role in--in world economy. They're already doing that, as a matter of fact.

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. CHADDA: I mean, China has put together an extraordinary manufacturing platform for the world.

ADUBATO: The China economy is just exploding.

Ms. CHADDA: It--and it's been doing that for the past, you know, 20 years.

ADUBATO: Why don't we hear more about this?

Ms. CHADDA: Well, I mean, you're to ask media and the newspapers.

ADUBATO: But the mainstream media does not cover it with any great focus.

Ms. CHADDA: That's true. That's true, and it is--as much is the pity, because, you know, every sixth job in the United States has--deals with exports and largely with Asia because that's where it's happening. Europe is old story, you know.

ADUBATO: Well, Maya, do this. I'll tell you what else is happening. Our economics--we have to go to this last commercial break. I promise we'll be back more with Maya talking about some very important international issues. Stay with us; we'll be right back.

Announcer: The preceding program has been a production of the Caucus Educational Corporation, NJN public television, and thirteen WNET New York.

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Communications. Promotional support provided by NJBIZ, all business, all New Jersey; CN8, the comcast network; and New Jersey Monthly, magazine of the Garden State, available at newsstands.

ADUBATO: Welcome back. Maya, let me ask you this. You were talking more about China. Talk to us more about why we don't hear more about it in mainstream media.

Ms. CHADDA: Well, I think ethnocentrism is one thing that you already mentioned. So most of the newspapers think, 'Well, what is it my readers want to read?' And they don't want to read about this because they don't know enough about it. So it's kind of a vicious cycle.

ADUBATO: But how does it impact on our lives in the United States?

Ms. CHADDA: Well, it--it impacts greatly because if the whole balance of power is shifting in the world--which it is, and there is no debate about it, frankly. Everyone agrees that this is the case. It's shifting to Asia, but we are not waking up early enough. And I must say, William Paterson has done rather well in a sort of farsighted way to start this program.

ADUBATO: Leading the way.

Ms. CHADDA: Yes, in New Jersey.

ADUBATO: So those who have graduated from this program, what will they be prepared to do if they, you know, because of doing this as opposed to if they hadn't gone through such a program?

Ms. CHADDA: Well, first of all, there are so many firms in New Jersey that are dealing today with Asia. They would get, immediately, an advantage in--in trying to get jobs there. I have several students who have risen so rapidly because of the knowledge of the country, their background about the--about Asia, and because they also know the language. See language, we are so bad at teaching languages, as you know. It's very important today. You want to do a good job, you want to rise up somewhere, international market, you must know a foreign language.

ADUBATO: Professor, I want to thank you so much for joining us. And I promise you, the next time we get together, we'll get together with a larger group and talk about this in a more global sense. You did a great job.

Ms. CHADDA: Thank you.

Announcer: Don't miss Steve Adubato and co-host Raphael Pi Roman each week on "Inside Trenton," Saturdays at 8:30 AM on Thirteen WNET New York and Sundays at 7:30 AM on NJN Public Television.