

**14th ANNUAL GESU SYMPOSIUM ON TRANSFORMING INNER-CITY EDUCATION:
Educating Inner-City Children in the 21st Century**

**November 7, 2011
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.**

Panelists: Robert J. Birdsell, *President and CEO, Cristo Rey Network*
Bryan H. Carter, *President and CEO, Gesu School*
David Hardy, *CEO and Co-Founder, Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School*
Maria Kefalas, Ph.D., *Professor of Sociology and Director of the Richard Johnson Center for Anti-Violence, Saint Joseph's University*
Joseph Watkins (moderator and panelist), *Political Analyst, MSNBC; Chairman and Founder, Students First; Pastor, Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church*

TRANSCRIPTION OF PROCEEDINGS

PERFORMANCE BY THE GESU GOSPEL CHOIR DIRECTED BY H. L. RATLIFF

Kimberly: Good afternoon, welcome to the Gesu School. I am Kimberly _____, I am in the 8th grade and I am student council president. I have attended Gesu since Kindergarten. I have come to know and love the teachers, staff, and students here at Gesu. I have had many opportunities for enrichment. I am also a member of the Gesu School Choir, and the Akybra Gesu Theater Project, where I have had leading roles in numerous plays. I am also on the Forensics team. One of the greatest opportunities I have had is being a part of the Saturday program at Merion Mercy Academy. I have applied for acceptance into Merion Mercy Academy and The George School. After college, I will become a criminal justice lawyer. Because of what I have learned at Gesu, I know I will achieve my goals. Thank you for joining us this afternoon.

Susan Shea: Good afternoon, and welcome to Gesu School. Those are the magical words that you will hear if you encounter our students when you walk through these halls. My name is Susan Shea, I'm a Trustee at Gesu since 2004. But more important, I have been a volunteer at Gesu School since 2004. I see magic happen in the classroom, in the office,

in the hallway, even in the cafeteria every week. Our chairman of the board, Gordon Cooney, could not be here today. So on behalf of Gordon and the board of trustees, I would like to thank you for your interest in Gesu and the challenge of inner-city education.

Gesu School has a dual role. Under the leadership of Sister Ellen Convey, our faculty and staff believe in each and every child, and they teach the whole child. Gesu School also recognizes its role as leader in the ongoing dialogue of improving educational opportunities in the inner city. The subject of inner-city education has gained popularity lately. Through everything from the eye-opening movie *Waiting for Superman, No Child Left Behind*, Oprah, but Gesu School has been dealing with these issues since 1993, and I'm proud to say that this year it's our fourteenth symposium. We will continue to try to serve as a catalyst for the issues in the years ahead of us.

We have a very distinguished panel this year, and you'll get to meet them in a few short moments. They are all leaders in urban education. After the panel discussion, there will be a reception, and I would highly recommend that you try to meet some of our students. They are our Picasso's, they are our one-of-a-kind masterpieces, and I hope that they enrich your life as much as they have enriched mine. Now it is my honor pleasure to introduce our moderator and panelist, Joseph Watkins. Joe is an MSNBC political analyst, the chairman of Students First Corporation, pastor of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in North Philadelphia, managing director and equity partner in an asset management firm, government relations professional who worked in the U.S. Senate staff for Senator Dan Quayle and was on the White House staff of President George H.W. Bush. He is also a parent, a grandparent, and we are lucky that you are joining us today. Mr. Watkins, welcome to the Gesu School.

Joseph Watkins: I want to thank you for that very, very kind introduction, very generous introduction. As for the last part of that introduction as it related to our kids and grandkids, my wife would have my head if I didn't include her in the process. She's had everything to do with it. I have been the beneficiary of some of the finest human beings

ever being involved in my life. I am married to my best friend and the love of my life, Stephanie Taylor Watkins. She's not here today, but she is my best friend and the love of my life, and we've been married for thirty-six years, and together we have three beautiful children, a son-in-law and two grandkids, and so we're very, very blessed. That's really, that is our wealth. It's what we have that money can't buy that we are so thankful for, and I'm delighted that you're here today, and delighted to be here at this school. I am just so impressed by how upbeat the staff and the students are here. If you were like me, you were greeted at the front door by a smiling group of young people saying, "Welcome to the Gesu School." I think it's extraordinary, and we ought to give the faculty and staff who are responsible for this a round of applause for what they've done. (Applause)

Joseph Watkins: This is great. Wouldn't it be great if in every school in Philadelphia there was this same kind of nurturing and encouragement? That'd be a great thing if that could be the case in every school in this city. It's not, and that's why we're here today. We're here because we want to talk a little bit about transforming inner-city education, and educating inner-city kids in the 21st century, and this is a great topic and one about which I am very passionate, and the reason for it is that we don't really have the freedom to fail. We talk about education and the future of education, especially for kids who are perhaps least well served in the system, and the reality is that we don't have the option for these young people to fail. If we don't transform the system, if we allow things to continue on the way they are, we're in for very, very difficult times, because what it will mean is that scores of young people who are talented and bright, and who have dreams like we did, won't make it, and we already know what the statistics say, which is a large number of African American boys especially who don't finish high school, will go to prison, and you and I will pay for that, and when they get out of prison, they'll do whatever they have to do to survive. So we have a chance to change that. We don't have to continue the cycle. We don't have to let it be as it has been. We can transform this system of education and get young people all around this commonwealth and all around the city of Philadelphia educated, and really change what has been a very, very sad pattern. I got involved a couple of years ago with Students First, which is a not-for-profit organization, really dedicated to the notion of school choice and the full menu of options

for parents, and the reason why I got involved with this was because of what happened to me. I came from a wonderful family of six kids and two parents. My parents did not have a lot of money. My father was a schoolteacher in the public school system, my mother worked every bit as hard as my father, but she worked inside the home, and she did a marvelous job, as did my dad, and before we started school, my mother and my father, my mother taught us how to read, every one of us how to read, and we knew how to read well by the time we reached Kindergarten, and my father would take it upon himself to test us in the summers to make sure that we were at least at grade level in reading and math and hopefully far beyond grade level in both of those areas, and every single night in the household in which I grew up, my parents, I said didn't have much money. We had six kids. Eight people lived in a three bedroom, twin house. Three girls in one bedroom, three boys in the other bedroom, and my parents in their own room. One bathroom to share for the eight of us. But every day when we got home from school, we went down to the basement, which had been turned into a makeshift study hall, and this table that my father had became the desk for all of us, and we gathered around the table and put our chairs there, and we did our homework, and at the end of the night when we were done with our homework, it wasn't just a matter of saying, "Well, I'm done, let me just watch some television and go to bed," or whatever. We would have to bring our homework upstairs for our parents to check and every single night my mother and my father would take it upon themselves to check our homework. Not only had they already asked us how our day of school was and how our subjects were and our extracurricular activities, but at night they checked our homework every night and if there were mistakes, you had to do them over, and if the homework was messy, even if it was correct, you had to do it over, because it couldn't be messy. They demanded of us at an early age to be excellent, to be excellent. They said, "Do the best that you can. Everyone is not the same, but do the best that you can do, and don't accept mediocrity." That had a profound impact on my life and on the lives of my siblings.

We all got a chance to go to private school when some of the private schools began looking for inner-city kids of color to attend them, and I got a chance to go away to a great private boarding school, Middlesex School in Concord, Massachusetts, which

changed my life. Now to show you the difference between the public school I was attending, which I think was a pretty excellent public school, I was the salutatorian of my school in the sixth grade. I had the second highest scores in all the testing my sixth grade year, and in seventh grade I went into what was called in the public school at the time the SP Program, which was a Special Progress Program. It meant you could go through from seventh straight to ninth grade. You skipped the eighth grade, because you could accelerate, and I was in the seventh grade SP, and got the scholarship to Middlesex School in Concord, Mass, and went straight to the eighth grade at Middlesex, and I'd gotten all A's and one or two B's in my whole academic career in public school, and I got to Middlesex School, and my first year, I got an improvement prize in the spring semester. I got an academic improvement prize because I had improved my average from 67 to 68. (Chuckle) A little bit of a shock. But I got a great education at Middlesex School, and then on to Penn, and on to Princeton Theological Seminary, and for me my education and the support that I had from my parents taught me that it wasn't just about finishing school and getting a job, it was more a matter of considering how you can contribute to the world. What is your place to be in the world? How will you contribute? What are your talents and how will you use them to help other people, and to make a difference in the world in which you live, and how will you change the world? Well, I want that for every single kid. Why can't every single kid have what I had? Why can't every single parent have some of the same choices that my mom and dad had? They ought to. Why should any parent, because they are poor, be stuck without choices, or forced to send their kid to a school that's non-performing or persistently failing? Why should anybody have to put up with that? For parents who have the means, of course, you can send your kids to the best schools, and because I went to private school and I had a chance to get a great education, my wife and I, after our kids got to be of an age, sent our children to private school, and they went to great private schools in the Philadelphia area, and they all graduated and went on to college, went to graduate school, and they're all in their professions right now. But why can't every parent in this city have that same opportunity?

Well, that's why we started Students First, because we wanted to make it law. We wanted to change the law. We want to change the law so that parents can have choice and freedom, especially the parents that are stuck in the persistently failing schools that we've got in the state. There are one hundred and forty-four schools in the state that are persistently failing. I'm not talking about bad schools. We've got schools that aren't very good. Try the hundred and forty-four that are persistently failing. Those are terrible schools, and not only are kids not getting educated there because the quality of education in the classroom may not be what it's supposed to be, but they're also forced to put up with violence in the schools.

What if your children came home from school and said, mom or dad, "I'm scared, I'm scared for my life every day." "If I don't take a weapon with me to school, I don't know what's going to happen to me." Well, that's got to change. That's why we're trying to change the law, and there's a bill called Senate Bill One that's being considered as we speak, which can change it. I'm going to show you a little film. It's a five or six minute film. It's a documentary that we did some months ago, just to highlight for you the problem, and how serious it is, and the beauty of this is that this is not a partisan effort. This is an effort that is taking in people who are Democrats and Republicans, people of all religious faiths, the one common denominator is that we all care. We all care, and we know that it has to change, because if it doesn't change, if we don't change it, it won't change. If we sit back and just accept what has been...if we say, "Oh, well, I don't live in those horrible inner cities, so it's not my issue." No, no, no, it's your issue too. When you consider the hours of lost productivity and the lives that have been lost, and that are going to be lost if we don't change it, oh, yeah, it's on us also. Watch this film and let me know what you think.

(Pause on recording. Shows film.)

Speaker one: *"I think that every kid in Pennsylvania, no matter who that kid is, what they look like, where they're from, what their circumstances are, they deserve the opportunity to have a great education, to learn, and to be prepared for the challenges of society. My biggest fear is that so many kids aren't getting the shot to get a good education, and we see the results of it, of course, in society."* (Pause in film)

Speaker two: *“I think having access to a great education is probably the last civil right. It's probably the last barrier to America being everything that it possibly can be.”*

Speaker three: *“While it's no longer legal to segregate school systems, in effect we have done just that, either by one's income, one's zip code, or artificial one that is drawn by a school district.”*

Speaker four: *“I saw a statistic that alarmed me. It said that in the city of Philadelphia, out of twenty kids starting kindergarten today, only two will go to college, the other eighteen not only won't go to college, but eleven out of those eighteen won't even finish high school, and what happens to those people who don't succeed in the system, that don't finish high school, that drop out along the way? Well, too often they end up becoming the statistics that we read about, they end up becoming the kid that goes to prison.”*

Speaker five: *“There's nothing that you can't do when you're educated. There's almost nothing you can do if you're not. So learning opens up a child's mind, and when you're exposed to a whole variety of information that you might not normally have because you are confined to a poor area or to a zone that is exposed to drugs and crime on a regular basis, that's all you know and that's what you trust.”*

Speaker six: *“There's a lot of things that happen when a child does not have the foundation of a quality education, and all of them are bad. They're limited in their ability to function in this country and in the world, and there was a recent report in a local newspaper here that talked about nine in ten youngsters are graduating from Philadelphia Public School system don't qualify for military service. They would not be able to be picked.”*

Speaker seven: *“The biggest problem in our education system now is we have a bureaucracy that's impervious to change. We have systems that every year open their doors to children every September, regardless of whether or not the end of June they were working or not with the same people in place that are re-hired or just walk in the door automatically whether they were effective or not.”*

Speaker eight: *“For me, I'm very concerned, you do need to support it financially, but that's not the fix. You actually have to be creative about your application, where the money's going, is it accounted for, and demand results.”*

Speaker nine: “You have hundreds of millions of dollars being spent politically to defend and preserve the status quo. The only way to break up that system, that bureaucracy, is to give parents and students more options, more choices to divert themselves out of that system.”

Speaker ten: “When I started to discover how much money we're spending on public education, almost forty percent of our state budget currently, and I started, I'm seeing the consequences of what we weren't getting for that, and having children trapped in failing schools and no options, it really, really, really frustrated me. You don't fund failure. In Pennsylvania, we spent almost 23 billion dollars. That's a lot of money. The fact that public school teachers on average, on a great day, might get seventy thousand dollars in a classroom which you get twenty five or thirty children. That classroom probably houses about 450,000 dollars. Where's the rest of the money going?”

Speaker eleven: “We have the ability to educate our children at a world class level to be competitive globally, and I don't care where they live.”

Speaker Twelve: “There are hundreds of proven different approaches that we have in our toolbox of education in this country that often never get to the child, because we've been doing it the same way with the same cookie cutter mold.”

Speaker Thirteen: “We have to grow up and face the fact that wherever you are in the school choice issue, that you understand that children have to be given escape issues when that school is not working.”

Speaker Fourteen: “What works in education is having the opportunity to make a choice that best meets the needs of a child. What makes a difference is having really high standards and a school culture that holds those students to the highest expectations.”

Speaker Fifteen: “Why am I so excited now? There seems to be a convergence between those who are no longer concerned about party affiliation, Democrat or Republican, or ethnic background, black or white, or even rural or urban, and we've laid out a program that actually saves money and still delivers a quality education, and there's still revenue for those who choose to keep their kids in the traditional neighborhood school.”

Speaker Sixteen: “Opportunity scholarships allow low income kids in failing schools to gain access to quality education, while at the same time improve our traditional public schools. Here's how it works: Currently, a failing public school typically spends about

seventeen thousand dollars per student. Under the Opportunity Scholarship Program, a low income child receives a nine thousand dollar scholarship voucher to attend a quality school of the parent's choice. Because the child only uses nine thousand dollars of the seventeen thousand dollars being spent, there is eight thousand dollars left behind to benefit the children who remain at the public school. That money results in higher per pupil spending in the public school, and can be used to create smaller class sizes. The result is that all kids get a better education, while at the same time, parents are given real choices. It is win-win all around if people can sort of get past what change actually looks like to the reality of what the actual model looks like.”

Speaker Seventeen: *“Everybody wins if public schools are great. We want to have the best public schools available to kids, we want to have the best charter schools available to kids. We also want to have the best private schools available. But we want parents to have the opportunity to choose where they send their kids. Students Voice Pack will ultimately help lots of kids, I hope, all around the state.”*

Joseph Watkins: Thank you so much for showing that, for doing that. We've assembled an outstanding panel for you today. I hope this helps you to kind of understand the issue and some of the challenges that we face in transforming inner-city education for our kids, and we've brought together a panel that is second to none to talk about this, and to give you some different perspectives. I'm going to tell you the order of the people that we're going to have speak, but I guess first I'll introduce everybody briefly, and then I'll tell you what order you're going in. Robert Birdsell, is the president and CEO of the Cristo Rey Network. He's seated right here to my right. You can clap, it's okay. (Chuckle)
(APPLAUSE.) Bryan Carter is no stranger to any of us. He is the president and CEO of Gesu School. (APPLAUSE) Maria Kefalas is a professor of sociology and the director of the Richard Johnson Center for Anti-Violence at Saint Joe's University. (APPLAUSE.) David Hardy is the co-founder and chief executive officer of Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School. (APPLAUSE.) Now here's the order in which they're going to speak with you and to you. First up will be Bryan, followed by David, followed by Bob, Rob, followed by Maria. So in that order you will hear from them, and then we'll open it up.

Bryan Carter: Thank you for the introduction, Joe, and welcome everyone to Gesu School. I'm going to talk about Gesu and I love talking about Gesu School, but I would be remiss before starting if I didn't recognize someone who's been very important to Gesu School for many, many years, and that's my predecessor, Chris Beck. (APPLAUSE.) as a member of the board for six years, and then subsequent to that, the president and CEO of Gesu School, we recognize all that you've done for the school, Chris, and I hope to do something even more special in the future for Gesu School as well, and I'm appreciative of your support. Thank you very much.

Joe, the video that you showed was very impactful. As the father of a four-year-old who's in Pre-K, the one statistic among the many impactful statistics that jumped out at me was that of the twenty Kindergarteners starting school today, two will go to college. Two Kindergarteners starting school today will go to college.

So that statistic emphasizes the importance what we do here at Gesu School each and every day. That emphasizes the importance of getting it right and getting a solid education for inner-city children started here at Gesu School and at schools like Gesu School, so that this statistic can turn around, and I think about when I grew up, I'm one of six boys, four older, one younger, single mom, five foot two, and the things I remember about my mom the most is that she did not play when it came to our education, she did not play when it came to doing what she told us to do, and she especially did not play when it came to respecting adults, and I can recall my brother and I in the summer being a little mischievous, and knowing that the person across the street just corrected us and told us to go sit on the porch. So we couldn't wait for our mother to come home, because we knew she would go over there and tell him, "Don't talk to my sons like that." But we were wrong. She told us, she asked us, "What did you do when he told you to sit on the porch?" And we told her, "We sat on the porch." She said, "Good, that's what you should do," and then she went over and told him that he could continue to discipline us in that manner. That was an example of, "It takes a village to raise a child," and that's our theme here at Gesu School, "It takes a village to raise a child," which means it's a shared responsibility for the children here at Gesu School. Everything we do each and every day

has that Gesu student at the center. Our dedicated faculty is second to none in making sure that children who come to Gesu School, many of them at a reading level at a grade two to three levels behind as far as reading is concerned, making sure that they catch up, they excel, and they attend the schools that they want to attend, and that are the best fit for them.

But also it's important for the other part of that shared responsibility is our coaches, our counselors, who make sure that the individual students who have specific needs, those needs are met. The third component of that shared responsibility, which we're working very hard on, and I don't know if that was part of your video, is the parental support, parental involvement. That's something that is part of that whole, if you look at a triangle, that's the piece that's probably most critical, because the parents really are the first teachers for the children. So that's the theme that we operate under, and I believe that's been the theme for many years.

At Gesu School, our mission is to provide inner-city children, the children in the six zip codes that surround this school, with a quality, innovative education. We do so based on a non-selective admissions policy, which means when they take an exam to come into Gesu School, it's not to say you scored this level and you're welcome to come into the school, or you scored at this level, and I'm sorry, we can't admit you. It's more to just gauge school readiness in the situations where we have someone that can go right to the advanced math class, or advanced reading, we'll know that. But we welcome everyone on a first-come, first-served basis, and then as they say in football, we coach 'em up so that they're ready to excel in school and to do the things that they're interested in that they dream of.

We do so because we have, again, a dedicated faculty. But we have the support systems in place as well, where we have advanced math, advanced writing, where we have remedial opportunities for children who need that type of work, where in the summer, because of the opportunities for summer learning, we have a Youngest Scholar's program for those students who are the poorest among our students, but also the brightest among

our students, to make sure that they maintain the gains that they've achieved over the year. So that's what Gesu School is all about, and it's about, based on the video and the statistic that will stick with me now that I'll share with my wife when I get home, two of twenty kindergarteners starting school today will end up going to college, and that's just not acceptable. So after we talk to or hear from our other panelists who are at the high school level, we know it's imperative here that we it right for the students in the inner city, and especially in the surrounding zip codes that Gesu lives in. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE.)

Joseph Watkins: David?

David Hardy: Good afternoon everyone. Boys' Latin, the first and only single gender charter school in the state of Pennsylvania, we started in 2007. This is our fifth year of operation, and we decided early that culture was an important part of success for the young men that we would serve. So we wanted to instill a strong culture of brotherhood, cooperation, and personal responsibility. We have an extended day. We have classes from eight till four every day, and then from four to five, we have mandatory extracurricular activities. All our boys, as the name would imply, are required to take four years of Latin. We also have Saturday school two Saturdays a month. If you're on academic probation, you have to come, but we see just as many honor students there, and that's how come they're honor students. In an all-boys school, competition is key, and we want our boys to be able to compete. They compete within the school for grades, but they also compete citywide through the state tests, and they compete nationally because all of our boys take the SAT's and they take the national Latin exam. As a matter of fact, we had fifteen medal winners last year in the national Latin exam, and we're the only public school who takes it. (APPLAUSE.) Thank you.

Our first graduating class was last June, and we had a ninety-six percent college acceptance rate. (APPLAUSE) Thanks. Those boys garnered one point eight million dollars in scholarship and our school has a ninety-five percent attendance rate and virtually no violence, and I say all this not because I want you to applaud. Because I want

you to know it's possible, because a lot of times there are people in this city who make you believe that you can't achieve with young people in this city, and especially the boys. What we've done is created a place because we're an all-boys school, we had to create a school for boys, and the needs of boys.

So the first thing we realized is that we had to get them engaged in something in school. So we had, we were recognized by Philadelphia Magazine, Best After School Program in a high school, and we do things like mock trial, robotics, entrepreneurship club, debate, Certamen, which is a competition of Latin students that goes on at Penn State. We look for competitive types of extracurricular activities, so our guys can know that they not only have to be the best one in the school, that they're going to have some other competition.

We also have drama, dance, music, and art, and we have a full sports program, football. We just won our first playoff game last Saturday. Now you can applaud for that, 'cause that's a big one. (APPLAUSE) We had an undefeated soccer season, we had cross-country, track, basketball, we made the playoffs in basketball every year we've been in the public league. We had an undefeated baseball team last year, and we also are the only public school with a crew program, and when you go to a crew meet, and it's different than any other high school sport you'll go to, because everybody out on that river is going to college, and we want our boys out there with them, so they can go with them. This stuff happens because we have a very engaged faculty, board of trustees, and very engaged parents, and we built a place that can be a good space for our boys to not only get a good education, but to do the other things that engage them in life.

When we opened up our school five years ago, the head of the upper school for Chestnut Hill Academy wrote a letter to his parent community congratulating us on taking that step, and he talked about the things that make a great boys' school. One is a strict code of conduct and dress because it builds an *esprit de corps* with the guys who go to the school. The second is rigorous academics. School has to be hard. But also you have to have

support for guys who may struggle in a rigorous academic environment. Then a couple of other things. One is very little tolerance for those who don't want what we want.

If you come to our school, you have to want to do hard work, you have to want to stay till five o'clock. You have to want to be involved in extracurricular activities. If you didn't do...if you don't want that, you pretty much chose the wrong school. So we encourage our guys to take advantage of the whole menu of the school and not pick and choose what they think is important, and the other thing is the insistence on parental involvement, and our parents are involved through something called the Extended Family Network.

Whenever a boy enrolls in our school, he has to sign up with three adults, and that could be two parents and one other adult or any combination. But he has to have three adults with him. The purpose of that, and we call that the parent-led team. The purpose of that group is if the boy needs help, if he needs someone to advocate for him, there's three different people that we could call to be able to do that. But also, anytime there's a play or a concert, or a game or anything, the boy has three adults that he could call on, somebody should be there to support him, and we think that's important.

You know, when we started our school, we heard a lot of these same statistics about the drop-out rate, and you know, that is a devastating rate. But the thing that alarmed me more than that was that the students who graduated weren't any more prepared than the ones that dropped out. So it was important for us that if we were going to have these young men invest their days, these long days and months in school, that when they finished, they would be able to compete, and we looked for ways to have our guys compete. We're a member of the National, a member of the International Boy's School Coalition, along with the Prep and Chestnut Hill and Haverford, because we want our boys to have the advantage of all of the pedagogy that is being developed about teaching young boys. It's important that we put our young men in a position where they can not only get to college, but finish college, and that's not just academic, that's a lot of soft skills. There was an article in the *New York Times* a couple of Sunday's ago about the KIPP organization, and they were concerned about their children not being able to finish college, and one of the things they realized, it wasn't because they weren't academically prepared.

Part of being in college and doing well in college is if you get a bad test, you go back the next day and work harder. Can you take it on the chin and come back, and fight another day? Those are the types of skills, those soft skills that we also believe are important and that we're developing in our guys, and we have our first class. Like I said, ninety-six percent of them were admitted to college. Seventy percent of them are sitting in the seats. We know about the guys who didn't get in, and we've got a plan to kind of work on them. A lot of that was financial and we think we can help with that. But we also want the guys in the seats to know that if they run into a problem, that they have a place to come back to for advice and support, because you can't leave. You've got to stay. The race is a marathon, it's not a sprint, and you're going to have to get through it.

So we've created an environment where boys can do well, where they can treat each other respectfully, regardless of their differences, and we've got guys from, sixty percent of our guys are from West and Southwest Philadelphia, but the other forty percent come from all over the city. We have guys that will get up and travel an hour and fifteen minutes each way to school. They pass a lot of high schools to get to us. So we feel like it must be important that they reached our destination, and we take that job seriously. Thank you.
(APPLAUSE)

Joseph Watkins: Rob?

Robert Birdsell: First of all, thank you for inviting Cristo Rey to be a part of this panel. Before I begin, we're very excited to share with you that this fall Cristo Rey Philadelphia will be our twenty-fifth school and John McConnell, the president, is here. So we are grateful for this partnership and the chance to tell you a little bit about Cristo Rey. But when I was on the airplane over here this morning, I read in the *Wall Street Journal* some staggering statistics that furthered the discussion we've had. That today young men ages twenty to twenty-four that don't have a college degree have about a twenty-four percent unemployment rate. Twenty-four percent. That's compared to college graduates who have about a five percent unemployment rate. It's a very simple reality that today you must, as David was saying, you must complete college to have any chance of contributing and

finding your God-given talents, and contributing to society. So it was just interesting. As I was on my way over here reading that statistic that not only should they get a choice for a good Kindergarten and high school, but they have to complete college today. Without a college degree, all this work is for naught.

So Cristo Rey is an interesting story. Over the past twenty years, 2000 Catholic schools have closed in urban America. Philadelphia is no different than cities all across America. The traditional Catholic school model is broken, to be very frank with you, that if you look back forty years ago, over ninety percent of the faculty and staff in Catholic schools were religious, and they were working for very low wages, if any. Today, over ninety percent of the faculty and staff in Catholic schools are lay people that have to have a living wage 'cause they have families. So our expense structure went up, and in the meantime, our revenues through tuition have gone down. Most businesses adapt pretty quickly. The Catholic schools have not adapted. Fifteen years ago there was an innovation in Chicago, and it was simply, "How do we change this model?" We can't change expenses, 'cause those of you that have worked in Catholic schools, Bryan certainly knows, you can't cut much more expenses. We've cut expenses in Catholic schools. We've cut to the bone. So we had to change the revenue model, and that simply said if we're not going to charge tuition, if we want to serve low income students, how are we going to get more revenue? The innovation was something very simple. Many of us worked through school. I mowed lawns and worked at a five and dime store, but that isn't going to bring in enough money to pay for tuition in this market today. But what if they actually went and worked in real jobs in corporate America? That innovation created Cristo Rey. In 1996, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School opened on the southwest side of Chicago, and the success became staggering. Featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Sixty Minutes*, and many other periodicals and media placements.

But what's even more important to me is yes, we have a revenue model that can keep Catholic schools alive in urban America, that's critical. What's even more important is that we're giving these young people exposure to a world they've never seen before. We have a student in Chicago that I met the other day that lives three and a half miles from

downtown Chicago. She had never been through a revolving door. That student is now studying at Franklin and Marshall on a full scholarship. We have students who have never been on an elevator. We have students who are three and a half miles from Lake Michigan, they've never seen Lake Michigan. It's astonishing the cloistered world these kids are living in, and by bringing them to downtown Philadelphia next year and downtown New York, and downtown L.A., they're seeing a world that we all want them to be a part of, and they're seeing it at fourteen, and what happens is it clicks in their mind. But if they're working at a law firm, and all of a sudden they're working with this partner and they realize, you know, "This guy is not that much smarter than me, maybe I can do this," (LAUGHTER) and they begin to dream, they begin to dream of hopes, and then they begin to dream of something more, that "Maybe I can contribute."

You know, I was with a student last week speaking on a panel, and she wants to become a social worker, even though she has offers to go on to business school. She said, "I've been given so much, I have to give back now." That's what we hope these schools will contribute. So that's Cristo Rey in a very quick nutshell. Today we have twenty-four schools. Philadelphia, we're still excited to have our twenty-fifth, and I think one of our best starts and openings here next year. Sixty-nine hundred students are studying in these schools, and the students this year will generate thirty-seven million dollars to support these schools. That's real revenue, and that is working. There's a venture capitalist, who in 2001 started this replication. He gave us twelve million dollars, and every time I talk to him he said, "Rob, you know, I took twenty-four companies public." He's made a lot of money, He said, "The best investment I ever made was in Cristo Rey, because the students in Cristo Rey schools are tripling my money every year." That's pretty phenomenal when you think about it. That's how he views us as they're tripling his money. But as David said, it isn't just keeping these schools open. It's not just the revenue. What's most exciting for us is in 2008, we began a partnership with the National Student Clearing House, which is the only database tracking students in college, and since 2008, we've had every one of our graduates accepted to college, and over eighty-four percent have enrolled in college, and eighty-five percent of them have matriculated into sophomore year, and if they go to a partner university like Villanova here in

Philadelphia, they have a ninety-seven percent freshman to sophomore matriculation. Now we'll be the first to share with you data that says, "This doesn't make sense, because their ACT scores aren't there." They're coming to us at about a fifth, sixth, sometimes seventh grade level, and we're doing a good job (Inaudible) academics, so they're going off to college and they are telling us, "You gotta do better in academics, Mr. Birdsell, you've got to help us get better prepared," but they're staying, and I firmly believe it is the job that when they're working, they're learning persistence, tenacity, and grit. They're learning how to ask questions. As you said, when you fail, you know, if you've never had a job, you don't know that you're going to fail and go back and ask questions. I mean teachers are pretty nice, they let you make, re-do tests, re-do exams. At work they don't let you do that. You know, one student said to me when I asked, "What's the difference between work and school?" He said, "Well, at work, I have to get it right the first time, otherwise they fire me." At our office, Father Foley, the founder of Cristo Rey actually fired a student. Imagine that. He wasn't getting the job done. If you don't get the job done, you're gone. This is a business proposition.

So one minute I think I have left here. The future, this is about educating inner-city children, about innovation, what gets me really excited is the role technology is going to play in this. I've got young kids, like Bryan, I don't know if your four-year-old is into Angry Birds yet. Your grandkids might be, Angry Birds. I don't know anything about this, but they're obsessed with it, and what intrigued me about this game, this is where you shoot these little birds and they get, I don't know, something like that. But I was listening to my kids talk about the game, and it fascinated me because they were talking to each other about competencies, how to move from level to level. Then all of a sudden I started thinking and talking to other educators who were interested in this, and they're saying, "Now imagine if that game weren't about some stupid birds sending something or another up in the air. What if it were about World War II, and the kids were talking to each other about how to solve World War II, or how to solve the Plague?" They are engaged in technology all the time, and we as educators need to see this and get in front of it. Especially in Catholic schools. How can we embrace this and be at the lead of this? Because it can increase student learning, it can increase student engagement, and at the

same time, potentially mitigate some costs, I don't think a lot. But there is a way to mitigate some costs. So that gets me very excited about the future when we think about education. How is technology going to allow us, especially for the students we serve, we're all serving up here, they're coming to us so far behind, we don't have a minute to waste. So if we had a technology tool to help us with that, that I think is going to be where we'll be sitting here in two or three years talking about.

Joseph Watkins: Thank you. Maria?

Maria Kefalas: Well, thank you for having me here. Can you hear me? Okay, great, I can't tell with the acoustics in here. I am not a teacher in a school in urban areas. But I am a college professor, and I work, I have a great pleasure and joy of working with young people through the Richard Johnson Center for Anti-Violence youth engagement initiatives, and doing this kind of work, which I think I'm going to be a little immodest here, is pretty cutting edge. We realized pretty quickly that one, young people were an untapped resource, that while people debated what to do in terms of school environment and school climate, and there was a lot of hand ringing and hair pulling, in reality I think a lot of educators were missing the opportunity of our own amazing young people and how they could teach us how to transform their schools. They could teach us how to make them work better, and we were very immediately interested in the issue of violence, because I don't like that word, "at risk" kids. I prefer to think of it as young people coming of age and many of our cities like Philadelphia, live much closer to dangerous things, and when you live close to dangerous things, it's easier for them to hurt you. So it's about social proximity as opposed to something about our kids being more dangerous. That said, it occurred to us, my wonderful associate director, Amy McHugh, and myself, that how do young people communicate? How do young people make sense of the world? Well, like it or not, they use technology, they use social media, and we old people, that is everyone over the age of thirty, we're very slow to understand this technology. Young people embraced it, like your daughter, and the Angry Birds. But we were a little slow. Young people are there, and we were, I think, afraid, because we didn't understand Facebook or MySpace, or Twitter, or twitting, or whatever it's called. I have a social

media community and I don't even know half the terms. But in reality, here is a space that we had, in a sense, abandoned young people to, and young people were growing up in this space, and they were figuring out who they were, their space, and they were doing some good things and some bad things in this space, and we have been far too reactive. Something bad happens and then we decide to punish them, or don't know what to do really, and so our idea was, if young people are using this space, why don't we join them in this space? Why don't we use this space to have a conversation with them? They can teach us and we can teach them. So one of the first things I want to sort of throw out to you, not that teachers at Gesu and these other wonderful schools need more work, but I'm afraid I'm going to give you another curriculum, another lesson plan, which is teaching citizenship through social media, what some people call cyber-citizenship, and this notion of cyber-citizenship is already out there. We see it every day and we see it played out in this past year, and maybe in not such a great way in the Philadelphia flash mobs, and we see it played out in unimaginable ways in Cairo and in Tunisia in terms of youth movements taking hold and basically doing what the old people couldn't do for thirty years, overthrow dictators and transform their societies.

But this is a powerful technology, and we need to use it with our young people. So we direct a program called the Philadelphia Youth Solutions Project, and it is a social media community. It is not a place for young people to go by themselves on the Web. It is a place for young people to come together with adults, their teachers, their parents, and it is a way for them to engage, to problem solve on the issue of violence, because, and again, I want to reiterate, I don't want to throw out more statistics, but I'm going to throw out one more, one that I use all the time, is that here in Philadelphia in 2006, when the violence in our city reached, as my friend, Waddell Ridley always says, "biblical levels," and they had more than a homicide a day, for young African American men from some of our most disadvantaged communities, young African American men in Philadelphia were more likely to die a violent death than a soldier on the battlefields of Iraq.

That number has gotten better, but that number, that fact keeps me up at night, and then there is the work of the amazing Dr. Felton Earls at Harvard, who said, "You know, we can fight youth violence," he learned this in Chicago, "We can fight youth violence, he

learned this in Chicago, we can fight youth violence by engaging our young people to be leaders in their communities, to transform their communities,” and while there is indeed a war going on in our city, we need to work to make our schools sanctuaries, and this, believe it or not, this scary technology of social media, and cyber-citizenship, can help us do that.

So here's some of the things that we've been doing that I believe are very exciting, that they're still in their infancy, and we at Saint Joe's have been really pioneering these projects and the response has been extraordinary, and we are welcome to work with all of you in any school, in any community to continue these efforts, which would not be possible without the wonderful Jesuits I work with at Saint Joseph's, and George Bur, in particular, at the Prep.

But basically what we do now is we go into schools and we work with various groups of young people, and we have them tell us what's going on. We have them tell us what's dangerous and how do they protect themselves and their communities and we have them teach us about the violence and then we use this tool to help them take control. So here are the projects we're doing, which I'm so proud of.

One is, just this week we went to Kensington High School, which is one of the most (inaudible) dangerous high schools in the city, and we talked to young people about how fights happen. They mapped it out for us. They told us exactly how fights happen in their community, and we went back and we basically created a short animated film, and we went back with them, and were talking with them, and I said, “Well, this is how a fight happens, how do we stop the fight from happening? What can you do when you see a fight happening?” And they talked about someone pushes your shoulder, and then they don't say excuse me, and then their friend says, “Are you gonna take that?” And then their friend starts grilling the person who talked to them, and then the kids pull back into kind of a circle, and they pull out their phones and they start taking pictures, and the principal of the schools calls the kids who egg on these fights co-signers for the fights. We went back and we said, “Well, how can you break this down?” They came up with

the solutions, and then we came up with this idea of creating a short film, a short animated film, which they could use with younger children and in their own school. We have another project about dating violence and sexting, and cyber stalking, which these beautiful, amazing, talented students at the Multicultural Charter School wrote, scripted, and starred in, and now the city wants to use their (Inaudible) campaign here in the city.

Our other project this year, which is my favorite, I think, one of my favorites, is we were approached by the Prison Society of Pennsylvania, and they said that the men who were locked up as juvenile offenders wanted to work with children in Philadelphia, but they didn't know how. They wanted desperately to reach out to young people, and help them learn from their mistakes. So...but the men in prison couldn't talk to anyone, they couldn't visit anyone, they couldn't be videotaped, they couldn't be audiotaped, all they could do is write, and they wanted to do a comic book. But of course, we said, "Well, a comic book, that's okay, but why don't we think of doing something better that might work on the social media website?" So we came up with the idea of having a group of young people take, the men were going to write their stories. They were going to tell about how they came to be in prison as young men. The worst days of their lives, the worst mistake they ever made, and then young people were going to tell their stories as these young men. They were going to use their words, but their faces and their voices to tell the story, and there's been such energy about this event.

So this is, I want to wrap up and just open up the discussion, but I want to, I don't want to give you guys any more work. I'm so sorry, but we have to engage this media as a means for teaching citizenship, and also learn from, not be afraid of it, understand its power and look to Cairo, look to Tunisia to see how young people are changing the world. I believe we here in Philadelphia can use this media to teach our young people to be citizens, to transform their schools, their communities and also to fight violence in ways, rather than using this, letting this media wash over us. We can use it and transform our community. Thank you very much.

Joseph Watkins: So let's get the conversation started and I may ask questions, we can ask questions of each other, and we would encourage you to ask questions of the panel, or if you have something that you want to say or share with us, we'd be glad to have you share it as well. But this is your moment to do that. We don't have as much time as we'd like, so please do not be bashful. So let me start off by asking a question of the panel. So what do you see is the biggest challenge? You've all outlined, everybody has a different perspective, given where you are. What in your mind is the biggest challenge and needs to be dealt with first to transform education for inner-city kids? What would that be?

Brian Carter: I'm a proponent of Senate Bill One, or Opportunity Scholarships, and this is just me speaking, this may not be Gesu School speaking, since you asked me directly. But I think we've demonstrated here at Gesu School that when the students who come from a difficult background and difficult surroundings are properly resourced, meaning the school is properly resourced as well, that the students understand that they are now held to high expectations academically, that the students excel and the students achieve. So the opportunity scholarships, the opportunity to resource the schools properly, therefore resourcing the students, is I think the biggest challenge, and I'm prayerful and hopeful that the next step will be taken where that will be in effect.

Joseph Watkins: Excellent. Anybody else on the panel?

David Hardy: I think we need to break the monopoly, and monopoly is the government run schools, and the fact is, is that when you have the government running the schools, and they run all the schools and they have the big budget, it's hard for people to kind of wean themselves off that budget, and that budget has gone up, and I mean I guess a lot of you have seen John Stossel and some of his reports that show that spending has gone off the roof with public schools, but performance has not, and so until we break that monopoly and give other people like Gesu, like the charter schools and Cristo Rey schools, give them a chance to tackle this problem with adequate resources, until we do that, we're just going to be chasing our tails in this thing.

Robert Birdsell: You know, it's interesting, we go to the grocery store and get old homogenized milk or two percent milk, or skim milk, or milk that's not milk, or strawberry milk, or chocolate milk, but yet we can't go in and choose what school our kids will go to, and it's just amazing to me in a country that's founded on freedom that the most important choice a family makes, they're not free to make. So I agree with the two of you. I do think there are two other key things. One, our teachers. If you look at internationally where countries are having massive gains in education, they're investing a tremendous amount in teachers. In Finland, only the top third of high school students can apply to become a teacher.

One of our partners from (Inaudible) University, that is actually the case too. All of their students in the School of Education are the top third of their high school class. I think that driving high achieving students into education will have a transformative impact, and I think the way to do that is to treat them more professionally and pay them, you know, a real wage commensurate with the work that they're doing, and then I think (APPLAUSE) the other key thing we have to do is data, especially schools, parochial schools, we have to be more honest in sharing, and open about our data.

Joseph Watkins: As the son of a teacher, I wish my dad would have made more money. (Chuckle) I'm with you a hundred percent.

Robert Birdsell: As a former teacher, I agree.

Joseph Watkins: Maria?

Maria Kefalas: Yeah, I would say really working on transforming school culture, and creating safe and peaceful schools as an absolute priority and when you think about how do we make schools peaceful when our young people are exposed to such high levels of violence, which literally re-wires their brains? Researchers here in Philadelphia have really compared what our young people are sometimes exposed to to soldiers, again, and PTSD, with the level of violence, which once it gets into their bodies and brains, it

literally re-wires the chemistry of their, how their brain operates. So this is a devastating psychological, traumatic impact on our young people that we need to work on, because in terms of understanding some climate, I would also suggest that we need to stop thinking of young people as either good kids or bad kids. There's no such thing as a good or a bad kid. The perpetrator can just as easily be the victim from one day to the next, and so creating a proactive vision of peaceful school climates, where basically we make violence face an inhospitable environment, where we basically suffocate the violence in our schools. Not that we deal with kids and we punish the behavior, where we just make the violence impossible to thrive there. So that would be my priority moving forward.

Joseph Watkins: So here's a challenge that we face. I heard several of you say in your remarks about how important a role parents play in all this. I know it was certainly true in my own life, because my mom and dad played a huge role in the quality of my education. So given that, given the fact that several of you have said that parents play a big role and have a major responsibility, how do we engage parents, and how do we engage parents who haven't previously been engaged or haven't previously been active in their kid's education? I would dare to say there's a group of parents that would say it's the job of the school to teach my kid, and they take their kids to school or send their kids to school with the expectation that teachers and administrators and all the folks in school will handle all of that. How do we change that mindset, and get more parents to be involved, engaged with their kids, take an active interest in what their kids are doing academically every single day?

Maria Kefalas: I think we have to remind ourselves that many parents are afraid of schools and very anxious about schools and rather intimidated by them. So one thing I would recommend working with families is to empower parents to feel that they do have something to contribute to their education of their children. I think that for many parents, this is, dealing with a teacher is a really intimidating experience, and so I think we're going to have to go to them in many ways, especially for families that are not, that have not gone through the educational system, and also I would say to give them more information about, if your child wants to be a nurse, by seventh grade, I think they should

know what they need in terms of training and curriculum to be a nurse, as opposed to sort of finding out very late in the cycle. So I think engaging young people with their parents early on to connect the dots between education and the world beyond school is really critical in making parents not feel like they have nothing to offer, because I do feel that many of them are just very intimidated and very afraid and very anxious about dealing with....

Joseph Watkins: Do you think that parents ought to be required, not just in your school, but in all the schools in Philadelphia to do what you require your parents to do? You say that in order for a kid to come to the school, there have got to be three parents, or three adults involved. Do those adults have to be birth parents, I mean the actual...

Maria Kefalas: No.

Joseph Watkins: ...blood parents of a kid, or...?

David Hardy: No, and quite frankly, I have parents that will come to me and say, "I don't know two other adults that I want involved with my kid," and I believe 'em. So what happens is that teachers at the school take that role. We have board members who have taken that role. We go out and recruit people to take that role. Listen, you can't change the parents. You're not going to change the kids who come through the door. What we have to do is change the school to adapt to who's walking through the door, and if we do that, we're not going to get a hundred percent, but we'll get a lot better than the thirty percent that we're getting now.

Joseph Watkins: Do we find that a lot of the parents of kids that are not doing well in school are themselves failed students?

Bryan Carter: I've been talking to parents over the last three weeks a lot on different issues, and one of the questions I ask the parents when they come in is, "Tell me what Gesu School means to you, and to your child before we have any other discussion," and

the parents love the education that their children are getting, and they have high, high aspirations for their children. So once they tell me how much Gesu means to them, then I have a discussion with them on, "If it's important to you, then it will be important to your child, and you need to, you have to demonstrate to your child that it's important, and one of the basic elements of demonstrating that it's important to your child, is do what your parents did, have a home learning environment, where when that child comes home, it can be the kitchen table, but the radio and the TV have to be off, and that child knows when he or she comes home, their first priority is to do their homework, because it's important to their parents. I think it's, I don't know that the parents communicate to me what makes Gesu special to them to the children, so it's important to get the parents in and have an initial dialogue, just so they can understand, "This is important to me and that you need to make sure it's important to your child."

Joseph Watkins: Are the heads of school doing what you're doing? I mean if we go to schools outside of this wonderful school, do you get the sense that other heads of school are talking to parents, engaging their parents the way you are? And if they're not, do you think it ought to be mandatory?

David Hardy: I'm not sure whether they are or not. I'm finding it, however, very valuable. I'm four months into my job, and I'm finding it very valuable to engage the parents in a meaningful dialogue, and I do think everyone should do that. It's just whatever means you need to take to get the parents to come into the office to see you. But once they're there, you can have a multitude of discussions with them, and making sure that, again, they have very high aspirations for their children. If their children were sitting right there listening to what the parents were saying about them, then they would take it seriously as well. So just following up on those aspirations that the parents have for their child, and that will force them to get involved.

Joseph Watkins: Rob, what do you think about that?

Robert Birdsell: I think in schools like David's and Bryan's, yes. I think parochial schools, charter schools do that very well. Just the realities of, you know, a four thousand person public school, that's just not possible. There's no way the head of that school can meet....so I think some of it is just the culture and the type of school that has been built here, but I don't think the large, government run schools are doing that.

Joseph Watkins: So what mechanism do you have in place to not lose kids? You know, the biggest challenge we have is we lose so many kids. Right now in Philadelphia, we are losing kids by the barrels, and so what mechanism do you put in place to not lose kids, to not have them slip through the cracks? Are there any methods that you employ that others could maybe copy?

David Hardy: The absolute number one thing we've found in our exit interviews with students, because we do lose, we lose about thirty percent of our entering freshman to senior year, and the number one thing the students that leave say versus those that stay through graduation is there's an adult in the building other than a teacher they've identified with, that they have a relationship with, somebody that if they don't go to school, they're going to be checking on 'em, and it's not a teacher, which is interesting, because teachers, they're just, of course they're there. But it's a coach, it's the president, it's the principal, it's the receptionist. Having an adult in the building that identifies with them has been the one correlation...we actually did this with the KIPP Schools. Between all of our schools and all their schools, that was the number one thing, having an adult in the building other than a teacher that they identified with.

Joseph Watkins: Well, now here's a question .We've got all these great people in the audience, many of whom are not...how many currently in the audience have children in school? Raise your hand if you have kids in school. Okay. How many have kids in school other than college then, as in high school or below? That's an even smaller number. How many of you have kids that are in private school? Okay, and how many of you have kids who are in public school, and/or parochial school? That's a small number. So we don't have lots of people represented here today who have kids in public school, or even

parochial school for that matter who are school age, that is not, not college age, but high school, junior high, or lower. So how do people who really care, because obviously you're here because you care, how do people who really care help change what currently exists? You saw the movie, you know what the statistics say, you know what currently exists. How do we help people who want to help us get involved to change it?

I'll answer one of those questions. I mean obviously for organizations like mine, we've been funded by some wonderful people who care deeply about us, and they have given us money, and we need more to build permanence because the forces that we are fighting against have a lot more money than we have, and there are other good organizations out there as well, like Students First that need resources, but, and schools like your schools, of course, benefit from the generosity of folks with regards to resources. But what other ways besides actually writing a check can people be involved? Can they be mentors? Ah! So all right, how many of you, we have somebody raising their hand. Are you a mentor?

Audience member : (Inaudible) ...my college alumni classes starting first thing for our university to do a partnership with an inner-city high school. We've got almost a year into it, and my daughter's actually a recent graduate of a public magnet school in Philadelphia, it was a new magnet school. About half the school that she went to was free and reduced lunch, and ninety-eight percent of them went on to college, (inaudible) it was also like ninety-eight percent no violence. Part of the reason that that has compared to what happened at the charter school at MLK, and the sort of grab for fifty million dollar contracts, this is why I have to say something which may make me unpopular in this room, is I'm a strong opponent of Senate Bill One, and I think I find it's a lot of big corporations tied to education looking for large contracts, and so I'm looking at, now how do we not say we're going to ignore all these kids in the city and all these kids in neighborhood schools, who, you're right, they don't, they've never been to Center City, and there are a lot of kids with a lot of reasons go to their neighborhood school. So our goal as people, our class, it was after our thirtieth reunion, most of us have gotten our kids off to college, we now have time. We want to make that same involvement contribution to help these kids who were in these inner-city schools, so what can, you

know, a group of educated, experienced people who are concerned about kids in these existing city public schools, how can we reach out in that way, and how can we in an organized way help give the opportunity, the education, and especially that critical ninth to tenth grade drop-off, where very often city schools, half the class is not there in tenth grade, what can we do at that level to really help keep those kids in school, expand their world, reduce the violence, show them alternatives, and that's why I'm here, and hoping that these people have done amazing work and great things in your wonderful schools can help give some advice for how you transfer that knowledge to the existing schools where these kids are now, and need help. Thank you very much.

Joseph Watkins: Thank you very much. (APPLAUSE) Wonderful what you're doing. Does anybody on the board, on the panel want to respond to what he said with regards to helping? Obviously, do any of you need people to help? Looking for board members, looking for people to mentor kids at your schools or in your programs? You've got a great program for Saint Joe's, are you looking for people to assist, to help?

David Hardy: I think every school, every inner-city school always needs (Inaudible.) Anybody who can help with the job of educating the children, whether it's mentoring, whether it's tutoring, whether it's coming in with some kind of talk that could open up a window for children, that's always helpful. I think what people have found is that when you try and do that in a lot of neighborhood schools, your help seems unwelcome, and they're so busy trying to put out fires every day, that they can't look, you know, five minutes down the road to kind of see that we could use some of this help, we could do some other things. The reactionary situation that they're in makes it impossible for them to take that kind of help.

Joseph Watkins: Have any of you found that to be the case that you've offered assistance and been turned away or scared away or shooed off? I have a friend who has a private equity firm, and he wanted to reach out to an inner-city church, and help them, and he called me up because he had reached out, and the people were frightened of him, and he just couldn't understand why. So we had a great conversation about that. But that's

one of the challenges that a lot of folks face when they reach out and try to help. They get turned away or they run into a brick wall, because the people they're trying to help don't realize that it's outreach and that it's real help, and so they turn good people away. Yes.

Audience member two: Hi, as a parent of two children here at Gesu, as well as an administrator, I've worked in various nonprofit and charter schools here in Philadelphia, one of the things that I've noticed is that the dynamics of education is changing. No longer are we charged with just solely teaching our children academically-wise, I think it's important that education be developed in a way where we cater to the whole child, and we focus on that here at Gesu. So those children that are in violent neighborhoods, those children that are coming from broken homes, and single parent families and they're experiencing so much, and it's not fair to us as parents, as administrators to pretend that those problems don't exist. Here at Gesu, we have full-time counselors and support services in place, so that we are also addressing their emotional needs. So a lot of these students that are thriving academically still won't make it on to high school and to complete and go on to post-secondary education, because issues inside are not being addressed. You know, we can provide a safe environment here at school, but the reality of it is they're still going home to a lot of things that we didn't experience when we were children growing up in school. So I think one of the important aspects of teaching, of educating our children, is making sure that we provide services that cater to them emotionally, academically, physically. We need to do more in that aspect. We can't ignore that part.

Joseph Watkins: That's a great point, that's a great, great point. Yes.

Audience member three: (Inaudible)...the same idea. My name is Kathy Henley, and by the way, I'm a public school teacher, and I will politely say I am not the enemy. I'm also the product of twelve years of Catholic school, and one of my children went to public school, one went to Catholic school. So I have quite a broad background here. But our Penn class, at our thirtieth reunion said, "We don't need to get together every five years and fete ourselves and spend money, we have quite a diversity of talent, and what can we

do to give back?” And what I might suggest to this group here is we're in our infancy, but we are trying to create a model working through Penn's Netter Center for Community Partnerships, where we work through the university, who has funded positions within different schools within the city, so that we don't show up. If I were to knock on the door, they would tell me, “Thanks lady, but go away.” But working through the university, they have Penn students there, they have Penn grad students throughout in various schools in West Philly, and now we're trying to create a model where we tap into those reunion classes coming up, maybe our kids are in college or out of college, and we start to take the people like all of us sitting here who care, and give them a vehicle for actually making a difference in those schools. So we're in our infancy, but we're trying to create an exportable model for just that.

Joseph Watkins: Excellent! Thank you very much.

Audience Member Three: Thank you.

Joseph Watkins: It's great to know that we have those resources available to us, and I'm glad audience that you're raising your hand and taking part in this. We do have microphones so that you can be heard. If you have a comment to make, or if you want to ask a question of anybody on the panel. So we want to...

Audience Member Four: Hi, I'm Carol Hill, at, Director of Development and Community Partnership School, and like these other schools that have addressed the urban education, our biggest challenge is always funding, is always resources, so I was going to ask Robert Birdsell if we could expound a little bit about how you get corporate, the thirty-seven million dollars you get your hands on, if you could elaborate.

Robert Birdsell: Sure. The way our program works is each student works five days a month in a real full-time job, so it's not philanthropy. It's a business expense. They work in entry level, clerical positions. They're doing photocopying, filing, scanning, reception work, telephone work. If you actually go to bestbuy.com and hit the Spanish language

version, our students do the translation. They actually had a very smart academic doing it, and the kids were all making fun of it because it wasn't language of the people, and now our students at Cristo Rey Minneapolis do the translation of bestbuy.com. They also have a similar, at Crate and Barrel, they have a social networking website which they launched and all the store associates loved it, but in the warehouse most of the people were Spanish speaking, so our students translated the social networking website, the weekly memos from the chief operating officer. Now the warehouse people are on the social networking website.

So they're going in doing real work to generate that thirty-seven million dollars. So when you ask, how can you get involved, I would be remiss if I didn't say if you know companies here in Philadelphia that would be interested to partner, John McConnell's here and willing to take contracts. (LAUGHTER) In all seriousness, they do need twenty-five jobs when they start a school, so that freshman class will then all be working next year. So is that...? We do get a bit of corporate philanthropy, but corporate philanthropy is small compared to individual and traditional foundations.

Joseph Watkins: Community Partnership School goes up to the eighth grade, isn't that right?

Audience Member Four: No, Pre-K through five.

Joseph Watkins: Yeah, Pre-K through five. It's a great school. Eric, I know Eric, he is a great guy, it's a wonderful school. You know, I didn't realize, we were having so much fun that we have gone past our time limit for this panel discussion, but you have been a wonderful audience, and let's thank again this wonderful panel for their expertise and their sharing. (APPLAUSE.)

Bryan Carter: I was dying to add one more thing how people can get involved. But my mic was not working, so as the host, I'll take executive privilege and mention that volunteering and mentoring here at Gesu is similar to what Rob mentioned, is that to have

someone who's outside the faculty is a real benefit to our students. But when I see the volunteers at Gesu, I tend to think that they get more out of it than our kids get out of it. An example...(APPLAUSE) we have the real person who drives the school every day is Sr. Ellen, and early on (APPLAUSE) she mentioned to me that there were a couple of young men who have high, high potential, but were on the border of making the right decision or the wrong decision, and she basically assigned me to mentor, if you will, these young men, and so one of the young men, we spent time on the weekend together going out to lunch with his longtime mentor since he was in the second grade, and then we went shopping a little bit and now this Saturday we're going to the Lawrenceville School for a tour and an interview for this young man. High, high potential, but is on the border where he can make one decision to go the right way or one decision to go the wrong way, and it's interesting for me having a four-year-old interacting with this young man. It takes a lot of time to build trust with the kids, and so I'm finding that I'm working through that and I talk to him about my story. I'm hoping that he'll share his story, because I let him know we all have stories. I can tell you some things about me growing up and you'll be surprised, and so feel free to share your story with me. Because it's just part of your life. So hopefully, he'll share...he told me we'll have a lot of time to drive to Lawrenceville and he'll share his story with me then, so I'm looking forward to Saturday. But please do, if you're interested, there are numerous volunteer opportunities here at Gesu School and again, I think you'll get more out of it than the students will, or you'll enjoy it more. I want to thank our presenting sponsor Cozen O'Connor, without whom this would not be possible, but I was also like to thank our panelists and we have a special gift for you for joining us today, and I often find these types of exchanges. Like I said, I love talking about Gesu, but the opportunity to hear from other individuals and learn is the true benefit of this, so thank you very much for joining us. (APPLAUSE.)

Bryan Carter: These are actually framed pictures that our students painted themselves. (Pause) In addition, we talk about all of the things that Gesu has to offer, and I want to take a moment to thank the choir and Mr. Ratliffe (APPLAUSE) and I also want to thank our student council president, Kimberly _____, for her remarks. (APPLAUSE) Sue Shea, our trustee, who pinch hit at the last minute, thank you very much. I encourage those of you who haven't toured the school to come back when the children are here, and you'll

see not only how vibrant and excited to learn the children are, but you'll see how well kept the school is, and I want to thank our facilities team led by Mr. Tinsley for doing a nice job in the gymnasium, (APPLAUSE) and last, but not least, I do appreciate, as do all the panel members, you taking time from your day to join us to hear about and contribute to this important discussion on inner-city education. So thank you very much for that, and then I don't want to stand before you and your wine and cheese. But there's one person here we need to recognize as today is her birthday and that's Sr. Ellen. (APPLAUSE) Happy Birthday! So again, thank you for joining us and this concludes the panel discussion of our program. (End of recording.)