

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

OCTOBER 10, 2024

9:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS:

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MS. KATHY McFETRIDGE-ROLLINS, Vice Chair
MS. LISA HUNTER
MR. KEN BRAGG
MS. LEIGH KEENER
MR. RANDY HENDERSON

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

MR. JACOB OLIVA, ADE Secretary
MS. STACY SMITH, Deputy Secretary of Education
DR. KIFFANY PRIDE, Assistant Commissioner - Learning
Services
MS. KARLI SARACINI, Assistant Commissioner - Educator
Effectiveness and Licensure
MR. BEAU McCASTLAIN, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. WHITNEY JAMES, PLSB Managing Attorney
MS. COURTNEY SALAS-FORD, ADE Chief of Staff

LOCATION:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1: REQUEST TO APPROVE ATLAS CUT SCORES

CHAIR MOORE: Then we will get started on item number one. We have Stacy Smith to present the cuts for us. We had a great work session yesterday and really appreciate you and your staff for all -- and thousands of teachers for all of the work that has gone into this.

MS. SMITH: Thank you very much.

Stacy Smith, deputy commissioner.

We have a short video we're going to show that kind of gives an overview and actually has some interviews with folks who have participated in the process.

(The video recording was played and is transcribed as follows)

Arkansas students deserve an education that is rigorous, challenging and prepares them for life after high school. To help educators accomplish that goal, the Arkansas Teaching Learning and Assessment system, or ATLAS, was created. A fully aligned comprehensive learning and assessment system, ATLAS was designed by Arkansas educators for Arkansas Public school students in grades K through 10.

So how does ATLAS work? Picture a system of

gears, at the core are the Arkansas Academic Standards, which clearly outline in straightforward language what students should know and be able to do at each grade level and in each subject area. The curriculum then determines the materials and sequence used to teach the standards.

The teaching and learning component of Atlas is essential, as it directly addresses the teacher-student relationship. With ATLAS teachers no longer have to guess what is important for students to learn. It's all laid out in the standards.

When it comes to assessment, students take classroom and interim assessments at key points during the school year to ensure they're on track, followed by a summative assessment at the end of the school year. In short, the standards drive the curriculum which guides instruction, which in turn informs assessment.

At every stage of this process, from writing the standards, to developing test items, to setting the cut scores, Arkansas educators, our experts were involved. Arkansas educators know what is best for Arkansas students, so it's essential that our teaching, learning and assessment system reflect that as well.

1 I'm excited that it's an Arkansas product. We
2 brought in Arkansas educators from all over the state
3 to help write our Arkansas State Standards. And when
4 we talk about what state standards are, that is what
5 we want students to know and learn at every grade
6 level. Well, once we had those standards written by
7 Arkansas educators, we also brought in Arkansas
8 educators to help write the test item. So we have an
9 aligned system that is created by the experts right
10 here in this state that measures whether or not
11 students are learning what we expect them to learn.

12 One of the things that I've been particularly
13 pleased with is that the teachers in the state of
14 Arkansas have set the standards for what our students
15 should know to make sure they're ready when they
16 leave high school to go off and do whatever they want
17 to do for the rest of their lives.

18 What I like most is by far the alignment. We've
19 been talking about this for over a decade. It feels
20 weird for me to say that now, like, for well over a
21 decade, we've been talking about alignment. This
22 system is a stab in that. And really gives us what
23 we need on the building level and the district level
24 to create better assessments on our end. So we know
25 that if we're assessing our students on a daily

1 basis, on an interim basis, within our units and our
2 quarters, we can be more predictive of how students
3 are actually doing. That's been the rub all along,
4 us not knowing exactly where kids are. We had good
5 guesstimates about where kids are in their progress.
6 We now can do that better.

7 I am very confident in the cut scores that we
8 set as Arkansas educators because it was a lot of
9 conversation that went into that. When we first got
10 in the room, we had to identify our cut scores based
11 on what we thought; and then after -- then they
12 showed us a meeting of where everybody's scores were
13 and we had conversation and we collaborated and we
14 was, like, why was your score this? And why was your
15 score that? And then after that, we got a chance to
16 go back and rethink our cut score. And then everyone
17 felt confident in that process because we were able
18 to collaborate, but we also had the last say so.

19 The test itself is an Arkansas test fully
20 designed. Arkansas teachers who have reviewed all
21 the items. Arkansas items that have been developed
22 just for Arkansas. It is all about Arkansas
23 standards. What makes this important is that we are
24 comparing our students' performance to the state
25 standards, what we expect them to know and be able to

1 do. And the test items just represent different
2 demonstrations of that. And that's what we're hoping
3 is that this new system brings the resources, takes
4 away the guesswork, takes away the extra time and
5 gives you a place where you can really focus on what
6 am I learning about this learner; and what do I do
7 next because of that?

8 Arkansas educators know what is best for
9 Arkansas students, so it's essential that our
10 teaching, learning and assessment system reflect that
11 as well. With ATLAS, Arkansas is paving the way and
12 setting a standard of excellence in education. This
13 new, aligned comprehensive teaching learning and
14 assessment system connects learning across all grade
15 levels, preparing Arkansas students for the bright
16 future that awaits.

17 For more information, please visit the website
18 displayed on your screen."

19 (The video recording was stopped and the
20 proceedings were resumed as follows)

21 (New video begins playing)

22 Arkansas LEARNS is a bold, innovative approach
23 to improving education --

24 MS. SMITH: Yeah, I think we're ready. We're
25 done.

1 -- one of the biggest things --

2 (New video is stopped)

3 MS. SMITH: Cut.

4 SECT. OLIVA: That's terrible.

5 MS. SMITH: Jacob's favorite part right there;
6 right?

7 Well, yesterday I think we spent about 2 1/2
8 hours actually talking about this process and this
9 work with the Board in the work session. So today
10 I'm going to quickly hit some slides, some topics
11 that we hit on yesterday for the general audience
12 that's watching; and then ask today for the Board to
13 approve the cut standards -- the cut scores.

14 Okey Dokey, Kim? Okay. Now put -- there we go.

15 All right. So ATLAS is our assessment system in
16 the state. It's -- over and over again you've heard
17 that the assessment is measuring the Arkansas
18 Standards -- the Arkansas Academic Standards. It's
19 very closely aligned, and Arkansas educators have
20 been involved in every step.

21 Arkansas has maintained the rigor, and our
22 assessment gives a clear picture of how Arkansas
23 students are doing, comparing students across the
24 nation in the future. The ATLAS system also lowers
25 the burden on teachers by providing a one stop place

1 for all assessments; right? No longer will you have
2 teachers doing a variety of assessments from outside
3 resources that are required by the state. It's all
4 in one place. And it also allows us to be able to --
5 over the next years, being able to use one system to
6 be able to track our students and track achievement
7 across the years moving forward. And really, really
8 making sure that we have a unified progress
9 monitoring system.

10 In the development of this assessment, Arkansas
11 teachers, Arkansas educators, were at the core. We
12 -- over 3,700 teachers were involved in this process.
13 That's a lot. Over 500 educators were actually
14 involved in approving individual test items. There's
15 not an item on the assessment that an Arkansas
16 teacher has not approved. That's huge. This is our
17 test, our items, our standards. We had 200 educators
18 actually working directly on setting the standards,
19 and that was led by national experts. Over half of
20 the districts in Arkansas had a teacher participating
21 in that process.

22 ATLAS again, is aligned with our Arkansas State
23 Standards for ELA, math and science. Components of
24 the new assessment system: in K-2, we have the
25 screener component which we've talked about a lot in

1 our workshop yesterday. That is that piece that --
2 we have required dyslexia law; we have required
3 screening requirements. Within Arkansas LEARNS, it's
4 built into one system. The reporting, the parent
5 friendly communication is all within a system, again,
6 lowering the burden on teachers. The testlets is
7 another level of diagnostic assessments that once a
8 student is identified as being potentially at risk on
9 that screener, they then can move to testlets to
10 again give that teacher and the parent more
11 information about what that child needs.

12 On your 3rd through high school system, you also
13 have your classroom assessments and classroom tools.
14 That is a big thing. That was one of the things when
15 they were surveying teachers about what do you want
16 in the assessment system? They said very clearly, we
17 want tools that we can use that are aligned and this
18 actually provides that for them. It actually gives
19 them a very clear picture of what the rigor is of the
20 standard and the expectation of what students need to
21 be able to do. It also allows us to have these
22 interim assessments that schools can participate in.
23 And this is where we really want to lean in to
24 identifying students at all levels of what their
25 needs are. And this is where acceleration becomes

1 part of our conversation; right? If we know that a
2 student is ready at the beginning of the year,
3 they've already mastered the standards at the grade
4 level that they're in, the question then becomes:
5 now what? What are we doing? Pushing students
6 forward and making sure they're giving them the
7 education that they need and deserve. The summative
8 assessment again is meeting that federal requirement
9 piece.

10 Building the ATLAS system, it was a process;
11 right? And again, it starts with that foundational
12 piece of the Arkansas Academic Standards. I think
13 I've said Arkansas Academic Standards at least 12
14 times already, okay, because again, that is the
15 foundational piece. That is the piece when we began
16 this process, that Secretary Oliva pushed us to make
17 sure that we got it right; right? Teachers around
18 the state feel like our standards are now very clear.
19 They're concise and we know what we're assessing our
20 students on. Being able to provide a blueprint about
21 exactly what's on the test is out there for teachers;
22 right? Every step along this way involved educators,
23 involved our staff, involved deep conversation about
24 decision points, specifications, what the test looks
25 like, how -- the length of it, the types of

1 questions.

2 Item acceptance review: again, Arkansas
3 educators reviewed the items on the test to say, yes,
4 these align; yes, these are appropriate for our
5 students.

6 Item development: we needed to develop new test
7 items for our assessment because when we reviewed, we
8 didn't have enough for some of the math items.
9 Right? So we had to go back and actually create and
10 develop items.

11 Spring summative: we were able to launch that
12 last year for -- across the state. And the thing
13 that's really kind of unique about it is whenever you
14 launch something this big, you know if it goes right
15 or wrong; right? And you know that based on the
16 complaints that you get. I'm very proud to say that
17 last year when we launched the ATLAS Spring
18 Summative, it went fairly smooth. You guys weren't
19 getting tons of emails. School districts weren't --
20 I mean, there was support that was needed, but for
21 launching something that is impacting and touching
22 every student in the state, every school district in
23 the state, that says something about our assessment
24 team and the work that they did.

25 Scoring and data review: that happened during

1 the summer piece and the standard setting has been
2 going on during this fall. And so that's why we're
3 here today is to say that the standards have been
4 set. And again, that decision point involved
5 Arkansas educators every step of the way.

6 So performance level descriptors: and I want to
7 spend just a moment kind of sitting on this slide
8 because this is what -- this is one of the biggest
9 changes; all right? Making sure our families and our
10 educators and districts across the state understand
11 what the different levels mean. And this is
12 different from our previous assessment. Arkansas is
13 setting a new baseline. Arkansas is setting a new
14 baseline; all right? And when you look at the
15 performance levels, Level 1 is a student that
16 demonstrates limited knowledge about the grade level
17 standards. Level 2 is a student demonstrating basic
18 understanding of the skills required at those grade
19 level standards. That means they have not mastered
20 at -- the end of the year assessment; they've not
21 mastered the standards for that grade level; right;
22 but they're showing some basic level understanding.
23 Level 3 is proficient understanding, meaning they've
24 demonstrated mastery of the standards of the grade
25 level that they just completed. And level 4 is that

1 they have an advanced understanding. And so when you
2 think about where our supports needed, levels three
3 and four are students who have -- that are
4 proficient. Students in Level 2 may need some
5 support. Okay? Students in Level 1 will need some
6 support.

7 So looking at the proposed cuts and what that
8 means for our state. Again, our teachers had high
9 expectations for their students. And when they
10 examined the test items, they were very clear about
11 what they thought their students should be able to
12 do; right? And so they maintained the rigor. The
13 Department didn't go in saying this is how we're
14 going to divide this up. Teachers actually took the
15 test items; they had to rank the items; and they had
16 to say this is what a student should be able to do if
17 they're Level 1, level 2, Level 3 and level 4. The
18 teachers who participated in this did not know how
19 this was going to come out in the data on the front
20 end. They put where their marks in and then we
21 dumped the data in to see how it spread put; okay?
22 So it was a very rigorous process, but also at the
23 same time held true to what we expect our students to
24 be able to do.

25 So here you can see the ELA results. When you

1 look at the overall proficiency -- and a lot of folks
2 look at that 3rd-grade line -- and you're looking at
3 that 36 percent of students that are kind of in that
4 proficient level to Level 4 on advanced.

5 When you go to math and you look across the cuts
6 on the math scores, the area that kind of jumps out
7 to everyone on this one is algebra and geometry. I
8 want to remind folks that previously we had a grade
9 level assessment that was not tied to an end of
10 course exam. In Arkansas, in high schools, we have
11 individual courses. We have algebra; we have
12 geometry; we have Algebra 2; okay? Before, if you
13 were in 9th grade, you took a 9th grade assessment
14 and there were multiple questions across the math
15 strands; okay? It was not, you take an assessment
16 for the course that you're in. We have returned back
17 to end of course exams. And so if you're take -- if
18 you're in algebra, you're going to take the end of
19 course algebra exam based on the algebra standards.
20 If you're in geometry, you're going to take the end
21 of course exam on geometry standards. And this is an
22 area where right now we can see that we are going to
23 -- our teachers are going to lean in and they're
24 going to start making sure that they're now being --
25 they're teaching the standards that they're being

1 assessed on; and that they're charged to teach with
2 the course that they're teaching. So we expect those
3 scores to change over time.

4 Science, the science cuts for 3rd through 8th,
5 you can see those how they have -- they flushed out.
6 Overall, this kind of gives you a snapshot of the
7 percentages very clearly of how the state scores sort
8 out into the different levels; and this is all the
9 grades combined; all right? So when you look at
10 Level 1 for math at 35 percent, again, that's
11 averaging in those very high levels from the math
12 scores for algebra and geometry as well.

13 This slide right here, again, I want to say that
14 we are creating a new baseline for Arkansas this
15 year. And comparing the scores to previous
16 assessments doesn't necessarily work because the
17 assessments mean something different. So on the
18 screen right now you can see three different tests:
19 ACT Aspire, which was our previous assessment, Atlas,
20 which is our current assessment, and NAEP, which is a
21 national assessment.

22 ACT Aspire assessment, those students were
23 measured on their progress towards going to college
24 readiness -- for college readiness. Okay?
25 Yesterday, Denise Airola did a great job explaining

1 how it was backwards mapped from students'
2 performance at that level entering college all the
3 way back; right? And so is the student going to
4 score a 22 on the ACT when they're going into math;
5 right? That's what that predictor was.

6 And so when you look at 46 percent on ACT aspire
7 and what that meant, again, it's tracking towards
8 that. It means something completely different than
9 what we now have with ATLAS in the middle; right?
10 This is directly tied to our standards and students
11 showing proficiency or mastery to the standards. So
12 comparing the two in this way, it doesn't work; it's
13 two different things.

14 NAEP is a national comparison on subgroups of
15 students in states and the different levels that
16 students are scoring. Overall though, if you had
17 something to gain from this or garner from looking at
18 the three across, what I want you to see is when you
19 look at that mid cut, right -- especially in how
20 we're comparing at a national level -- what we're
21 saying is proficient for our students in the State of
22 Arkansas, closely aligns with the National assessment
23 on how our students are doing. It also -- that mid
24 cut point with our students ready for post-secondary
25 work. So you can kind of see a cut right across the

1 middle that kind of goes together. But each of the
2 cuts mean something different.

3 So I'm going to pause right there. And today,
4 again, I want to know that we are requesting the
5 State Board to approve the following cut scores. And
6 this is actually the cut score chart and the scale
7 that we will be using that we've applied to those
8 graphs that you just saw. So these are the scores
9 for ELA; these would be the scores for each level
10 from math; these would be the scores for science.
11 And again, this is what was applied to the data
12 points I just showed you.

13 So I'm going to pause there -- and Jacob --
14 Secretary, if you'd like to add?

15 SECT. OLIVA: So thank you, Stacy, for providing
16 an overview. And just kind of remind the Board -- I
17 know we spent a lot of time on this yesterday in the
18 workshop and going very deep into the process of how
19 did the educators determine where to draw that line
20 when you're saying, this is our definition for Level
21 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4. But I want to remind
22 everybody that this is a big deal because when we
23 started with LEARNS and educating -- looking at the
24 priorities of what we wanted to achieve with LEARNS,
25 it was about improving student outcomes.

1 For far too long, our metrics are telling us
2 we've been ranked in the bottom in education. And I
3 got asked a lot when I got here, why are we
4 consistently 45, 42, 48 when you look at what's
5 happening in our schools? And it became very clear.
6 And I always go back to a common saying that says bad
7 systems beat good people every single time. Our
8 system was not aligned as a state. And that was the
9 foundation and priority of what we need to do
10 accomplish with LEARNS.

11 We had standards that were confusing, and
12 teachers didn't know what they meant, so everybody
13 was coming up with their own definition of how to
14 implement them. We had instructional materials and
15 curriculum that was not aligned with those standards.
16 The professional development that the teachers needed
17 to implement those standards weren't aligned with
18 their curriculum and the strategies that work best
19 for their students. And then we had a college and
20 career readiness assessment that wasn't giving any
21 useful information to our educators. So when we
22 pulled those 3,700 educators and started pulling
23 those teachers together and said this is our chance
24 to hit refresh, this is our chance to build a new
25 system, what do we have to get right? And what we're

1 recommending today is based on those feedbacks. They
2 want to know, can I get real time information
3 throughout the year that's consistent with what we
4 expect students to know and learn? We're doing that
5 through progress monitoring. Can we reduce the
6 burden of over-testing with all the different
7 requirements with dyslexia screening and additional
8 assessments? We have done that by embedding that
9 into this system. Is there a way that I can pull
10 test items and create my own formative assessments as
11 -- throughout the year based on the standards so that
12 I can see if my students are getting it? This system
13 allows that. Can I get this information immediately
14 during progress monitoring right after we get -- we
15 give those assessments? Yes. Can you tell me what's
16 on the assessment? Because that was one of the
17 biggest things that we heard from teachers all along.
18 We can get better performance of our students if you
19 would tell us what's in the blueprint. The previous
20 assessment, they didn't have access to the blueprint.
21 We were like, here it is. This is what we want our
22 students to know and learn in clear and concise
23 language, and this is how we're going to measure it.
24 This is not a got you. This is a tool. This test
25 doesn't define overall student performance. The

1 educators know what their children can do, and it
2 shouldn't be a surprise. So by being able to create
3 a platform that's going to be a one-stop shop for not
4 only educators, but for parents to be able to log in
5 and see how their children are doing is a big deal.

6 I like to say we've been on offense getting the
7 system aligned and marching down the field. Today
8 we're first and goal and when we set these cuts
9 scores and start being able to release these tools,
10 we're going to be able to spike the ball in the end
11 zone. So when we approve -- or we recommend that we
12 approve these cut scores -- we'll now be able to
13 apply that to the data. Because we administered this
14 new assessment in the spring, the data doesn't mean
15 anything until we come up with definitions. Now that
16 we're having recommendations of those clear
17 definitions, we can apply those definitions to the
18 data; and then we can start doing the processing of
19 validating individual student scores so that we can
20 give that information to parents, to students and to
21 teachers. Because we hear a lot from our schools,
22 when are we going to get our test scores? When are
23 we going to get our results from the new assessment?
24 We've been very clear enough front that this takes
25 time because we're going to have that in new

1 assessment, but then we've got to go through this
2 standard setting process to determine what these cut
3 scores are. And we have to get it right. So all
4 summer, we've asked those teachers -- hundreds of
5 teachers -- to come in and we are so appreciative of
6 the time that they gave to help in making sure that
7 our state gets this right so that we can go through a
8 process that when we make these recommendations and
9 if a student gets that score, it's a reliable and
10 fair assessment measure. And I'm confident that the
11 team and those educators did a wonderful job leading
12 up to this today so that we can get this across the
13 finish line and then start on the next phase. I
14 would be remiss if I didn't recognize Hope and
15 Michelle and --

16 MS. SMITH: Denise.

17 SECT. OLIVA: -- Denise and some of the folks
18 that are in this room because they have been carrying
19 this football and running these plays on offense for
20 about a year and a half. It's the longest game
21 they've ever played. So when we say that they have
22 really gone above and beyond, it's been nights and
23 weekends and a lot of time to get this right. It's
24 truly reflected in these tables that we're presenting
25 today.

1 MS. SMITH: That's why we don't need a video of
2 the Secretary. We got him -- the real deal right
3 here.

4 Yeah. So this is the time to ask if you have
5 any questions or comments, would love to take them
6 right now.

7 CHAIR MOORE: Board members, I'll start to my
8 left. Ms. Rollins, questions?

9 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: I don't have any questions
10 this morning. I thought you did a great job
11 yesterday during our work session to really explain
12 everything and I appreciate that so much. I do want
13 to thank our Secretary for his vision and for making
14 this happen. This is exciting to see everything
15 aligned the way it needed to be aligned all along.
16 This will -- I think -- will make a big difference in
17 our schools and in our students' learning and I
18 appreciate you so much. I also appreciate all the
19 teachers that have spent their time doing this. It's
20 wonderful and I think it's going to put Arkansas on a
21 really good path of learning.

22 SECT. OLIVA: Well --

23 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: And I think there's always
24 a comment, it's when we do it together, it's better.
25 And this speaks volumes to that. So thank you so

1 much.

2 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

3 SECT. OLIVA: Well, thank you. And we have a
4 wonderful team, and we have a wonderful state. We
5 have people that are really passionate about helping
6 children and when you get them in a room and say,
7 let's figure this out together, we're going to come
8 up with a high-quality product. So I always say I
9 don't think this is going to improve outcomes, I know
10 this is going to improve outcomes. We are setting
11 that baseline today and that's where we start. And
12 for year after year after year, we're going to see
13 these trends start moving in the right direction.

14 MS. SMITH: Absolutely.

15 CHAIR MOORE: More questions or comments? Ms.
16 Hunter? Ms. Keener? To my right, Mr. Henderson?

17 MR. HENDERSON: Yeah. To add to Kathy's point,
18 2 1/2 hours is a long time sitting in a meeting
19 discussing a very important topic. One thing that
20 really, really impressed me was the number of
21 engagement from teachers and school districts. You
22 know, you say if you want to make a positive change
23 on anything, you got to have the team buy-in. And I
24 tell you the team is aligned on this one. This is --
25 my opinion it would be a great win for Arkansas.

1 CHAIR MOORE: Mr. Bragg? Mr. McCastlain?

2 Thank you.

3 MS. SMITH: Okay. So we're going to do
4 something a little bit different.

5 SECT. OLIVA: Oh, no.

6 MS. SMITH: Jacob's going -- did you hear Jacob
7 say Jacob, oh, no?

8 Denise, Michelle, Hope at least come up here and
9 stand. Just come up here and stand. Come on
10 quickly, quickly, quickly. Jacob's already going to
11 be mad at me for delaying time. Just come stand
12 right here.

13 Okay. Board, this is the opportunity for you to
14 spike the football. We're asking for you to approve
15 the following cut scores for ELA, math, science
16 assessment.

17 Now you guys give them very serious looks.
18 Okay? All right.

19 So we're asking for a motion.

20 MR. BRAGG: I would make the motion that we
21 accept the cut scores.

22 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. There's a motion by Mr.
23 Bragg to accept the cut scores. Is there a second?

24 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

25 CHAIR MOORE: A second by Mr. Henderson. Any

1 questions or comments?

2 (NO RESPONSE)

3 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. With that all in favor, say
4 aye?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIR MOORE: Any opposed?

7 Motion passes.

8 Thank you. Thank you all and those that work
9 with you. Again, that represents lots of hard work
10 and now there's more work to be done. But we're
11 excited for this next phase as schools are digging in
12 this school year.

13 **2: 2025-2027 ARKANSAS GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL SITE SELECTION**
14 **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

15 CHAIR MOORE: With that, we will move on to our
16 second agenda item, the Arkansas Governor School
17 selection site. We have Dr. Pride coming to present.

18 DR. PRIDE: Good morning. Kiffany Pride, the
19 Commissioner of Learning Services.

20 All right. So I stand before you for the
21 recommendation for the 2025 through 2027, Arkansas
22 Governor School site selection committee
23 recommendation. Presidents and chancellors of all
24 four-year colleges and universities were invited to
25 submit proposals to host the 2025 through 2027,

1 Arkansas Governor's School.

2 A proposal was received from Arkansas Tech
3 University. The site selection committee reviewed
4 the proposal and conducted a site visit to the
5 institution. Their recommendation for the proposed
6 site for 2025 through 2027, is being presented to the
7 State Board for your approval. And of course, you
8 had all the attachments.

9 And so I am here for that recommendation and
10 approval.

11 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you, Dr. Pride.

12 Questions, Board Members? To my left, Ms.
13 Rollins?

14 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: I'm just wondering if --
15 had the budget increased or has it stayed pretty --
16 pretty flat?

17 DR. PRIDE: So it -- typically, it depends on
18 the size -- the number of weeks. So it's been about
19 the same. If it's a -- it depends on if it's a four
20 or a five or a six-week program, but it's about the
21 same.

22 And we also have -- I was remiss to say -- we
23 also have online, Summer Williams who was the chair
24 of the site selection committee. And she is the
25 AP/GT coordinator from Sheridan. And then we also

1 have the cochair -- I just want to recognize them for
2 their work -- Jill Clogston.

3 Sorry for that mispronunciation, Jill.

4 And she is -- she was also the cochair, But it
5 has been about the same.

6 CHAIR MOORE: Ms. Hunter? Ms. Keener? Mr.
7 Henderson? Mr. Bragg? Mr. McCastlain?

8 I have a few questions if that's okay.

9 So just to be clear, this was the only
10 university that applied --

11 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

12 CHAIR MOORE: -- for --

13 DR. PRIDE: It is the only university that
14 applied, but all of them did receive the request for
15 proposals.

16 CHIAR MOORE: Okay. Last time, how -- do we
17 know how many universities?

18 DR. PRIDE: I can't remember the number, but I
19 could --

20 CHAIR MOORE: It was more than one, though.

21 DR. PRIDE: It was more than one --

22 CHAIR MOORE: Yeah.

23 DR. PRIDE: -- time. I know at least two last
24 time --

25 CHAIR MOORE: And --

1 DR. PRIDE: -- the last cycle.

2 CHAIR MOORE: -- this will go through 2027?

3 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

4 CHAIR MOORE: The one thing I noticed when I
5 reviewed it, that I had a question on was the
6 calendar of it. I know that it goes in -- through
7 late July up into August. And we have some school
8 districts starting August. I don't know if that's
9 something that -- you know, earlier with the extended
10 year --

11 SECT. OLIVA: Year-round.

12 CHAIR MOORE: Yeah. I don't know if that's
13 something that you all talked with them about? If
14 they allow students to leave early if their school
15 district is starting --

16 DR. PRIDE: Yeah.

17 CHAIR MOORE: -- extended calendar?

18 DR. PRIDE: Certainly, we would work with them
19 if their school district was starting early. I can't
20 remember if we talked about that, but I definitely
21 can check. But we definitely work with students if
22 they -- because they're all rising seniors. So we
23 definitely would work with them to make sure that
24 they're in their schools. The calendars also can be
25 adjusted. If we see it before it starts, we could

1 talk with the university about changing it.

2 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. Because it is a four-week
3 program. Was it six weeks at one point?

4 DR. PRIDE: It can be four to six weeks. I
5 believe --

6 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

7 DR. PRIDE: -- there is a four week --

8 CHAIR MOORE: And they proposed four.

9 DR. PRIDE: Yes. They proposed -- yes.

10 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. That's how it works.

11 Okay. That was my main question. I assumed
12 they would accommodate those students --

13 DR. PRIDE: Yeah, we always --

14 CHAIR MOORE: -- but don't -- want to make sure
15 that --

16 DR. PRIDE: Students first.

17 CHAIR MOORE: Yeah.

18 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

19 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

20 With that, any more questions, Board Members?
21 Comments?

22 So looking for a motion on the site selection.
23 I think our motion would be to approve or not approve
24 the recommendation for Arkansas Tech University to
25 host Governor's School.

1 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: I'll make that motion to
2 approve.

3 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

4 There's a motion by Ms. Rollins to approve your
5 recommendation for Arkansas Tech University to host
6 Governor School. Is there a second?

7 MS. KEENER: Second.

8 CHAIR MOORE: So second by Ms. Keener. Any
9 questions or comments?

10 (NO RESPONSE)

11 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. All in favor, say aye.

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIR MOORE: Any opposed?

14 Okay. Motion passes.

15 DR. PRIDE: Thank you

16 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you, Dr. Pride.

17 SECT. OLIVA: And while Dr. Pride is there, I
18 think Dr. Pride and her team from Learning Services
19 gets a lot of credit too for where we arrived when we
20 started building out the system of alignment around
21 standards, high-quality instructional materials,
22 professional development and aligned assessments. So
23 they -- they've been a big part of this process.
24 So thank --

25 DR. PRIDE: Yeah.

1 SECT. OLIVA: -- you as well.

2 DR. PRIDE: Thank you.

3 CHAIR MOORE: Awesome. And thank you, Ms.

4 Williams and Ms. Clogston for being online today and
5 for the work you all did and continue to do on the
6 committee.

7 **3: CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF**
8 **ADMINISTRATIVE RULES**

9 **3A: DESE RULE GOVERNING CAREER-READY PATHWAYS TO DIPLOMA**

10 **3B: DESE RULE GOVERNING CONSOLIDATIONS AND ANNEXATIONS OF**
11 **SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

12 **3C: DESE RULE GOVERNING DOCUMENTS POSTED TO SCHOOL DISTRICT**
13 **AND EDUCATION SERVICE COOPERATIVE WEBSITES**

14 **3D: DESE RULE GOVERNING STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF**
15 **ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

16 **3E: OEC RULE GOVERNING THE ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE PROGRAM**

17 **3F: OEC RULE GOVERNING BETTER BEGINNINGS, ARKANSAS TIERED**
18 **QUALITY RATING AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM**

19 CHAIR MOORE: With that, we will move on to
20 rules. We have a set of rules under item three that
21 Ms. Smith will be presenting.

22 MS. SMITH: Okay. Quick reminder of our rules
23 process and where we're at with these set of rules.
24 Again, when a set of rules comes, it gets released
25 for -- it gets released for public comment. Once

1 approved by the State Board; it goes out for a period
2 of no less than 30 days. If there is substantive
3 changes, it goes back out again for 30 days; then it
4 comes back to the State Board for final approval.
5 Once it's finally approved by you guys, it then goes
6 over to the Arkansas Legislative Council. Okay?

7 So the set of rules I'm going to go over with
8 you, you've already seen them; and we've already
9 workshopped these rules. They have been out for
10 public comment and now they are back with you. Some
11 of them have gone out for two rounds of public
12 comments with some minor adjustments. And then,
13 they're here for you today for final approval. Okay?

14 So the first one that's on the list today is the
15 career pathway rules. Again, this is providing the
16 clear path for high-wage, high-growth jobs in
17 Arkansas alignment to LEARNS. It begins with the 9th
18 grade class for the '24-'25 year. This one went out
19 for a second round of public comment because we had
20 the word "may" in and it changed to "shall." And
21 that had to do with Section 7 about reimbursement to
22 employers. So that was the tweak there of it having
23 to go for two rounds. There was a collaborative
24 process to identify the different pathways and
25 require school districts to make sure that they are

1 providing a high -- a career-ready pathway. So each
2 school district has to offer at least one in the high
3 wage, high growth of their three.

4 And I'm going to batch these like we normally
5 do, if you guys are fine with that.

6 All right. The second one has to do with
7 consolidations and annexations. This set of rules is
8 a legislative change, so it took the -- it took the
9 350 that a school had to automatically close with the
10 350 piece. And so those were the components here
11 that were changed. So it removes the authority from
12 the State Board to involuntary (sic) consolidate
13 district, establishes a process for district boundary
14 changes because we're starting to see some of those
15 pop up and final changes to district lines filed with
16 the county auditor at the request of GIS.

17 The next one is website. It's website changes.
18 This was really trying to get everything aligned,
19 okay, getting the alignment dates. We had a lot of
20 different dates as far as when things had to be
21 posted by districts. Some of those are legislative
22 dates and some of them are dates that were in
23 different rules. So where applicable, we were able
24 to streamline and line up dates. We did that in
25 these rules.

1 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: Question.

2 MS. SMITH: Yes ma'am.

3 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: Yesterday you talked about
4 the family portals. And I'm wondering if that could
5 be something that's required to be put on that local
6 districts' website, you know, the link?

7 MS. SMITH: Right, the link to the family
8 portal? Yeah. So what we will do is we'll make sure
9 that that link is posted on our sites, and we'll work
10 with districts to make sure that they're giving
11 access to that. As far as requiring it in our rules
12 that they have to require, at this point, that would
13 require us to --

14 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: Go --

15 MS. SMITH: Yeah. We would -- it would be a
16 substantive change at this at this moment.

17 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: Yeah.

18 MS. SMITH: But most definitely, that is -- we
19 want parent friendly information out. The family
20 portal for ATLAS is going to be a big component of
21 that. Our hope is that we create a communications
22 toolkit for districts to utilize that they -- that it
23 lends itself for that; right? And so we'll be
24 guiding the districts along the way for that. So if
25 we see that districts are not utilizing it, I

1 definitely would agree with you that that would be
2 something that we might want to come back and change.

3 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: Thank you.

4 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

5 All right. The next one is Standards for
6 Accreditation. Again, these Standards for
7 Accreditations were updated to reflect LEARNS. It
8 added the middle C -- the middle school CTE career
9 awareness and exploration that's required in LEARNS.
10 It added the high schools must offer that one
11 career-ready pathway that's reflected in those other
12 rules. It added the class size for hiring determined
13 by October 1st for a standards violation. It edited
14 the -- it added the 75 hours of community service
15 requirement, clarified components of what needs to be
16 in a school level improvement plan and again
17 streamlined dates that you just saw in the website
18 rules.

19 All right. I've got two more. I'm going to
20 keep going if that's okay.

21 The next one is Arkansas Better Chance Program.
22 So again, the Office of Early Childhood transitioned
23 from DHS to the Department of Education, defines the
24 components for kindergarten readiness; it's shifting
25 language for a new quality rating tool; it requires

1 up to 178 days for a minimum of seven hours a day for
2 a program, and we added in these rules that less days
3 would be prorated based on a daily rate. So if they
4 don't go the 178, they'll be prorated. Extended
5 hours do not count as additional days. Literacy
6 curriculum for our programs need to be aligned to the
7 science of reading and streamlining and clean up from
8 the transition.

9 Better Beginnings. So the Better Beginnings is
10 the quality standards. So it's again reflecting the
11 transformative change of moving it from Department of
12 Human Services to the Department of Ed. Better
13 Beginnings transforms early learning by improving the
14 standards for licensing and it helps childcare
15 providers by improving the rankings using the tools
16 and trainings.

17 This is an area that we're going to -- you're
18 going to continue to see this one coming back, okay?
19 This is in transition. We have a third-party group
20 right now that's working with the Department on
21 reviewing our licensing rules and the standard
22 settings. We've got different tools we're using for
23 how we're evaluating programs. And so these rules,
24 while we're approving them today for programs
25 currently -- as they are currently functioning --

1 you're going to continue to see early childhood rules
2 coming back.

3 Would you agree with that?

4 MS. KEENER: Amen.

5 MS. SMITH: I got to amen today. There we go.

6 So with that, I would ask that the Board approve
7 these rules for final approval so that they may be
8 released to go to the ALC.

9 CHAIR MOORE: Board Member questions or
10 comments? Ms. Rollins? Mr. Hunter? Ms. Keener?
11 Mr. Henderson? Mr. Bragg? Okay.

12 Okay. Well, thank you. I know again this
13 represents a lot of work by many people to get here.

14 And so with that, we'll keep the floor open for
15 a motion to approve item No. three, set of rules.

16 MR. BRAGG: I'll move for final approval of the
17 rules.

18 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. There's a motion by Mr.
19 Bragg to approve the rules. Is there a second?

20 MS. HUNTER: Second.

21 CHAIR MOORE: A second by Ms. Hunter. All in
22 favor say aye.

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIR MOORE: Any opposed?

25 Motion passes. Thank you.

1 **4: CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST TO REPEAL THE DESE RULE GOVERNING**
2 **EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM ACCOUNT PAYMENT PROCESSING**

3 MS. SMITH: The last rule -- the next one that's
4 on here is a repeal. And this is a repeal of an EFA
5 rule for payment. So if you'll remember that -- you
6 have to come back in time a little bit -- you had to
7 pass a set of rules for us to be able to process
8 payments for the first EFA rules when they came out,
9 while the other EFA rules were in draft. Everything
10 that's in this for payment has been included in the
11 previous EFA rules that you just finalized in the
12 last few months. So this is no longer needed. So
13 we're repealing this stand-alone set of rules on
14 payment because this is now within the encompassing
15 EFA rules that you have already approved. So we're
16 asking for a repeal of this one.

17 CHAIR MOORE: Board Members questions or
18 comments to my left?

19 MS. SMITH: Let me do a question real quick to
20 legal. I needed to ask a question. Is this -- is
21 this going to go out for public comment for 30 days
22 or is this going straight to ALC?

23 It's already gone over there, so this is for
24 final?

25 MS. SALAS-FORD: (Nodding head up and down)

1 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you. Sorry.

2 So this is for final approval --

3 CHAIR MOORE: Final approval --

4 MS. SMITH: I just wanted to clarify that. Yes.

5 CHAIR MOORE: -- to repeal?

6 MS. SMITH: Yes, final approval for a repeal.

7 CHAIR MOORE: Board Members to my right,
8 questions or comments? Okay. Then the floor will be
9 open for a motion.

10 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: I make the motion that we
11 repeal the DESE rule governing Educational Freedom
12 Account payment processing.

13 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you, Ms. Rollins. We have a
14 motion to repeal the rules. Is there a second?

15 MS. HUNTER: Second.

16 CHAIR MOORE: A second by Ms. Hunter. Any
17 questions or comments?

18 (NO RESPONSE)

19 CHAIR MOORE: All in favor, say aye.

20 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

21 CHAIR MOORE: Any opposed?

22 Motion passes.

23 Thank you.

24 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

25 **5: REQUEST FOR WAIVER - LA-25-002 - SHERYL ROSS**

1 CHAIR MOORE: Next we have item No. five, a
2 request for a licensure waiver.

3 Ms. Saracini.

4 MS. SARACINI: Good morning, Board. Karli
5 Saracini, assistant commissioner for educator
6 effective effectiveness and licensure.

7 And before you this morning -- I'm going to let
8 Whitney James, our managing attorney for PLSB, go
9 over the rules because this is a waiver; and then I
10 will start.

11 Ms. James.

12 MS. JAMES: Good morning, Whitney James with the
13 Department.

14 The rules here are, of course, the Chair will
15 swear in any witnesses who are testifying today.
16 Each party will have the opportunity to present an
17 opening statement of five minutes. Then each party
18 will be provided 15 minutes to present their cases,
19 beginning with the representative of the Division.
20 And then following that, the Board can ask questions
21 and have discussion. Then each party will be allowed
22 to make a closing argument, ending with the Division.
23 So the first is the Division's opening statement,
24 five minutes.

25 MS. SARACINI: Again, good morning.

1 This is a licensure action and usually it's a
2 DHS child maltreatment registry. This morning it's
3 not. It's based on a state police background check.

4 Just to kind of give you a synopsis, I know you
5 have your exhibits, and you've looked at it. The
6 pre-educator was 23 at the time of this offense and
7 is currently 60 which is a good age because I just
8 turned that age. The incident took place, again, 37
9 years ago. She has worked in that district since
10 2017, as an ALE paraprofessional, and has really
11 shown her character to do so.

12 Anyway, I just want to make sure that you
13 understand this is a long time ago. The district as
14 -- working as a classified employee per statute and
15 law, they can waive this, and they did waive it for
16 her to work. And now she is ready to do her
17 internship. And that's why she's coming before you
18 today to ask for this waiver.

19 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you, Ms. Saracini.

20 Ms. Ross, are you prepared to speak? I'm going
21 to swear you in before you speak. Do you swear the
22 testimony you're about to give is the truth, the
23 whole truth and nothing but the truth?

24 MS. ROSS: Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you. You may proceed.

1 MS. ROSS: Good morning. My name is Sheryl
2 Ross. And I committed the crime in 1987. I was a
3 employee at a fast-food restaurant. I did not make
4 the deposit as scheduled. Actually, I made it a
5 couple days later, but before then -- before I made
6 it, the law had got involved. But from that point on
7 I have changed my life. Well -- I've been educated.
8 I went to nursing school. I've obtained an LPN
9 license. I worked for -- as a nurse for over 13
10 years. I left there. I have started school at SAU.
11 I've maintained a good grade point average. I have
12 been working at Camden Fairview Elementary School as
13 an ALE parapro for the last seven years. There has
14 been no incidents, no problems. I haven't had any
15 problems anywhere. I volunteer in the community. I
16 -- my husband is here. I'm married to a preacher. I
17 have asked for forgiveness from the people that I
18 committed the crime against. I've asked for
19 forgiveness from God. I asked for forgiveness from
20 my family. I have tried to move on with the process
21 of life. I have children, grandchildren.

22 And so I'm just here today asking for a waiver
23 to be able to continue my education at SAU, get my
24 license and become an elementary teacher.

25 CHAIR MOORE: Awesome. Thank you, Ms. Ross.

1 With that, do we go back to the Department if
2 anything of open up for questions?

3 MS. SARACINI: Are there any questions for
4 either one of us or someone can make a motion?

5 CHAIR MOORE: I will say, Ms. Ross, it's amazing
6 to hear your story and what you've done. And so
7 admirable to be going back to school as a second
8 career in that sense.

9 Board Members, to my left questions or comments?

10 MS. KEENER: Just that I'm just impressed with
11 you as an example of both the caregiver and a
12 lifelong learner, someone who's gone from nursing to
13 teaching. It's remarkable. And what an example
14 you'll set for the students that you'll impact down
15 there.

16 CHAIR MOORE: Board Members to my right,
17 questions, or comments?

18 MR. HENDERSON: Well, I too am very impressed
19 with the fact -- I know it was in '87, we're talking
20 about 37 years ago. So I'm impressed.

21 MR. McCASTLAIN: Just -- I'll back that up just
22 to thank you. You have a great story to tell I
23 believe and -- about overcoming odds. No matter how
24 long ago actions were taken that you can still
25 overcome them. And just thank you for your service;

1 and hope you share your story.

2 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you.

3 Well, with that, if we don't have any other
4 questions, we can proceed on to go ahead and open the
5 floor for a vote; correct?

6 MS. SARACINI: Correct.

7 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. Well, then we will open the
8 floor for a vote. And this vote -- we have one vote,
9 and it is to -- if you don't -- if you don't mind
10 reminding us --

11 MS. SARACINI: Accept -- yes. Accept the waiver
12 or deny the waiver.

13 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

14 MS. SARACINI: Or grant the waiver or deny the
15 waiver. Excuse me.

16 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. So the floor is open for a
17 motion to grant the waiver to receive the license or
18 to --

19 MS. SARACINI: Yes.

20 CHAIR MOORE: -- deny it.

21 Board members, any questions on that? The floor
22 is open.

23 MS. HUNTER: I'll make the motion to grant the
24 waiver.

25 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

1 A motion by Ms. Hunter to grant the waiver. Is
2 there a second?

3 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

4 CHAIR MOORE: A second by Mr. Henderson. Any
5 questions or comments?

6 (NO RESPONSE)

7 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. All in favor, say aye.

8 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

9 CHAIR MOORE: Any opposed?

10 Motion passes.

11 MS. ROSS: Thank you.

12 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you, Ms. Ross. Good luck in
13 your endeavors.

14 **6: REMOVED FROM AGENDA**

15 CHAIR MOORE: With that, item No. six has been
16 pulled.

17 **7: CONSIDERATION OF THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL**
18 **LICENSURE STANDARDS BOARD FOR CASE 24-199 - JAMES WILSON**

19 CHAIR MOORE: So we will move on to item No.
20 seven and that is you, Ms. James, to present.

21 MS. JAMES: This is regarding a PLSB case for
22 Mr. James Wilson. This is one that you all reviewed
23 on the consent agenda last month and chose to pull it
24 to look at the file and get some more information.
25 And Mr. Wilson is here with his attorney.

1 And just a reminder of the rules, each party has
2 ten minutes to present an oral argument. I believe
3 he will want to -- or he is -- his attorney may want
4 to make an oral argument. And then the PLSB will
5 have ten minutes for oral argument. And then we're
6 open for discussion or a motion.

7 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. Thank you, Ms. James.

8 MS. JAMES: Yes.

9 CHAIR MOORE: So I will swear in Mr. Wilson or
10 anyone speaking -- any non-attorney speaking on his
11 behalf.

12 Good morning.

13 MR. WILSON: Good morning.

14 CHAIR MOORE: Do you swear the testimony you're
15 about to give is the truth, the whole truth and
16 nothing but the truth?

17 MR. WILSON: Yes, I do.

18 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you. You have -- you and
19 your counsel have ten minutes now. Thank you.

20 MR. CASTLEBERRY: Thank you, may I proceed?

21 CHAIR MOORE: Yes.

22 Good morning, Madam Chair, Mr. Secretary,
23 Members of the Board. My name is Casey Castleberry.
24 I'm an attorney here in Little Rock. And I'm here
25 today on behalf of Jimmy Wilson in this matter before

1 you.

2 As an initial matter, I'd like to thank you for
3 your time and attention to this matter and more
4 importantly for your service to our state. I've seen
5 the good work you've done already to -- this day and
6 as a as a father to a child that attends school in
7 this state -- or a couple of them actually -- I
8 appreciate y'all.

9 You were provided some materials that were
10 created by -- pursuant to an investigation involving
11 Mr. Wilson. I presume you've read all those
12 materials, so I don't want to belabor the point and
13 tell you things you already know; so I'll try to be
14 brief and point out the things from that report and
15 from the incident that I think are relevant to your
16 determination today.

17 As you know, this matter involves Mr. Wilson's
18 communications with a female student when Mr. Wilson
19 was a teacher and coach at Russellville School
20 District. I've watched several of your meetings
21 regarding these disciplinary matters involving
22 teachers and students; and there's no doubt this
23 Board takes these matters very seriously, as it
24 should. From watching those meetings, it appears to
25 me that there are a few factors that are critical --

1 or have been critical -- to this Board in its
2 determinations of similar cases. And this is not an
3 exhaustive list, but just from what I've seen, it
4 appears that physical contact is something that is
5 very much an aggravating factor if you will. A
6 romantic relationship between an educator and a
7 student. A history of similar conduct by the
8 educator. A pattern of grooming conduct from the
9 educator toward the student. And finally,
10 inappropriate photographs are often at issue in those
11 cases.

12 I want to be clear that none of those are
13 present in this case. I'd also like to be clear I
14 think it's important that Mr. Wilson takes
15 responsibility for his actions. He appreciates that
16 he acted inappropriately in texting with this
17 student. It's important to note that he cooperated
18 fully with the investigation. When approached, he
19 turned over his phone immediately. He didn't try to
20 prevent the investigators from accessing his phone or
21 from accessing anything that they felt was necessary
22 in order to conduct a full and thorough
23 investigation.

24 When the Ethics Subcommittee made a
25 determination of violations of Standards 1 and 2, Mr.

1 Wilson accepted those; he signed that form and
2 returned it; accepted his punishment, did not contest
3 it, which I think is further evidence of his
4 acceptance of responsibility, which I think is also
5 an important factor for the Board to consider.
6 Finally, along those lines, he was terminated from
7 his position of employment at the Russellville School
8 District. And he did not seek an appeal or any other
9 legal or administrative remedy to challenge that
10 termination.

11 Importantly, following that termination, Mr.
12 Wilson was hired at Dover School District, a school
13 district nearby. Dover was given full knowledge of
14 this incident. They were provided all information
15 relevant to this incident. They also had the
16 opportunity to interview and consider recommendations
17 from individuals who work with Mr. Wilson over the
18 years. And taking all of that into account, they
19 felt that it was appropriate to hire Mr. Wilson. And
20 although we're early in the school year, he does have
21 a significant track record both at Russellville and
22 now at Dover; and there have been no other incidents
23 even in any way similar to the incident before you
24 today.

25 As you're also aware -- I think it's overused

1 anytime someone says this is a unique situation.
2 Every situation is unique. They all involve their
3 own facts. They all involve circumstances which are
4 unique to that case. But in this one, I think it's
5 especially pertinent to point out to the Board the
6 connection between Mr. Wilson and his family and the
7 student and her family. So Mr. Wilson's wife is also
8 -- who is here today -- is also a coach and teacher
9 at Russellville. She has coached the student in the
10 past. She is very close friends with the student's
11 mother -- lifelong friends with the student's mother.
12 These families are close. They live close by the
13 student. The student has babysat Mr. Wilson and his
14 wife's -- they're both coaches. So if I say Coach
15 Wilson, I'm referring to both of them sometimes. But
16 the student has babysat their children. These people
17 know each other well, have been in each other's
18 houses on numerous occasions, go to church together.
19 In fact, the way the student obtained Mr. Wilson's
20 number was from the student's mother; the student's
21 mother was aware that the student and Mr. Wilson were
22 texting each other. And I would suspect that you've
23 read the letter from the student's mother. She
24 submitted a lengthy letter, and she is here today as
25 well in case the Board finds that to be to be

1 relevant; and to confirm her position has not
2 changed, that she has no problems with the
3 communications between her daughter, the student, and
4 Mr. Wilson. I'm trying my best not to use names
5 here. I know this is public and would like to
6 protect the student as much as we can possibly do.

7 I think that letter again adds to the factual
8 record that makes this case different than probably
9 most of the ones that come before this Board with
10 respect to the parent's position on this issue. And
11 I think it's also important to say that I don't bring
12 up the mother's position as an argument to relieve
13 Mr. Wilson from his responsibilities to comply with
14 the ethical code that applies to all teachers in the
15 state. He understands that his communication was
16 improper, should not have been done through text
17 message, should have been done, if at all, through
18 school district approved communication avenues. He's
19 not -- not bringing that up as a -- as an attempt to
20 avoid responsibility for the incident, but as what I
21 would consider a mitigating factor when this Board
22 considers what is an appropriate remedy in this
23 situation.

24 So again, in conclusion, I'd like to reiterate
25 that Mr. Wilson accepts responsibility for his

1 conduct, recognizes that he acted inappropriately,
2 and we would respectfully ask that the Board uphold
3 the recommendation made below. As we mentioned at
4 the outset, Mr. Wilson's here, has been sworn and is
5 available to answer any questions the Board may have
6 and as am I if it would be any benefit to the Board.

7 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you.

8 MR. CASTLEBERRY: Thank you.

9 CHAIR MOORE: Let me clarify, Ms. James, is it
10 the Agency that presents next or do we -- can we do
11 questions first?

12 MS. JAMES: I really don't have an argument.
13 This one did not go to an evidentiary hearing, so I'm
14 here to remind you of what the recommended sanction
15 was. If you have any questions about the facts.
16 We've sent you everything that was part of the
17 investigation: the full final report as well as his
18 response. And the recommendation in this case was
19 probation from the Ethics Subcommittee and you have
20 their rationale.

21 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

22 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIR MOORE: Can you remind us -- at the point
24 in time when a motion is to be made later, there's
25 three stages of the motion; is that correct?

1 MS. JAMES: Yes. There are three parts to that
2 motion -- or three motions. The first is whether or
3 not the educator violated the Code of Ethics, and
4 then the Standards are part of that motion. The
5 second is to accept or modify the recommendation of,
6 in this case, the Ethics Subcommittee. And then, the
7 third is to accept or modify the rationale of the
8 Ethics Subcommittee.

9 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

10 With that, then we'll open the floor up for
11 questions --

12 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

13 CHAIR MOORE: -- for both Mr. Wilson and the
14 Agency. I'll look to my left, Ms. Rollins? Ms.
15 Hunter?

16 MS. HUNTER: Not right now.

17 CHAIR MOORE: Ms. Keener? Mr. Henderson?

18 MR. HENDERSON: Not at the moment.

19 CHAIR MOORE: Mr. Bragg? Mr. McCastlain?

20 Okay. I know it was pulled from the agenda by
21 Ms. Woods and she's not here today.

22 So, Board Members, thoughts, questions,
23 comments?

24 MS. HUNTER: Well, I -- I am going to make just
25 a general comment. It's not directed to this case

1 specifically, but I do appreciate your recognition of
2 this Board's very low tolerance level for
3 inappropriate behavior. You know, the safety and
4 security of our students is No. one, so I am pleased
5 to know that that word is getting out.

6 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you, Ms. Hunter.

7 Additional comments or questions?

8 You know, we had -- I'll offer some comments. We
9 had a string -- we've had a string of cases that
10 involve text message communications with students,
11 some more severe in nature. And I think we've hashed
12 that out and -- and I know Ms. James, you've passed
13 that along to PLSB and kind of starting to think more
14 broadly of what support, what information, what
15 training are we giving to teachers and coaches
16 particularly regarding text messaging or any
17 messaging with students overall.

18 MS. KEENER: Can -- to go kind of beyond that.
19 It -- this is -- I think there was a comment by Mr.
20 Castleberry that these communications should have
21 happened, rather than over text message, but on
22 district communication devices, things like that --
23 over email. But I want to be sure that we go beyond
24 that, that it's not just the method or the means of
25 communication, that this communication was overly

1 familiar. It crossed lines. That -- the inherent
2 dynamic between a teacher employed by a district and
3 a student should remain professional in that way as
4 well. That it's beyond just the means of
5 communication if that makes sense.

6 CHAIR MOORE: Did anyone have any questions of
7 Mr. James (sic) or I will offer Mr. James, if you
8 wanted to make a remark yourself?

9 Okay. And so thinking-wise, questions or
10 comments?

11 We have -- Ms. James, would you mind presenting
12 again the sanctioning. And thank you for leaving --

13 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIR MOORE: -- the sanctioning rubric for us.

15 MS. JAMES: Are you asking, Dr. Moore, for the
16 motions or for a refresher of --

17 CHAIR MOORE: Remind us of what the
18 recommendation for PLSB was.

19 MS. JAMES: Yes.

20 So the PLSB found that Mr. Wilson did violate
21 Standards 1 and 2; and recommended a probation of
22 license for one year; a \$200 fine; there's some
23 coursework and readings listed there; and then
24 written reflections and quarterly reports from the
25 educator's supervisor. So he will have to turn those

1 in every quarter so that the ethics subcommittee can
2 monitor -- monitor his progress.

3 CHAIR MOORE: I will ask of Mr. James or Mr.
4 Castleberry, so do you all feel that this incident
5 that occurred will never happen again and that this
6 sanctioning is going to prevent any sort of further
7 interaction with the students?

8 MR. WILSON: Yes, ma'am, I do.

9 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

10 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: What is your current
11 position in the district that you're working?

12 MR. WILSON: At Dover, I'm a 6th grade social
13 studies teacher and a junior high and senior High
14 football coach.

15 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: Did you have anything else
16 you wanted to say to us?

17 MR. WILSON: I just -- I regret, you know, the
18 means. Like I said, I've accepted responsibility for
19 that. I let, you know, our family relationship --
20 how familiar with the families were -- I guess, I was
21 -- I didn't understand that any communication was a
22 violation of that ethics 1 and that I now do and
23 accept that, you know, that communication should have
24 happened.

25 MS. KEENER: Well, and beyond that. Not just

1 any communication, but an overly familiar
2 relationship --

3 MR. WILSON: Yes.

4 MS. KEENER: -- perhaps --

5 MR. WILSON: Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. KEENER: -- which is tricky as I've --

7 MR. WILSON: Yes, ma'am.

8 MS. KEENER: -- navigated myself when my
9 children --

10 MR. WILSON: Right.

11 MS. KEENER: -- were of the age that, you know,
12 we often had similar situations, and it can -- that
13 line can be blurry.

14 MR. WILSON: Yes, ma'am.

15 MS. KEENER: So I'm going to be clear that it's
16 overly familiar.

17 MR. WILSON: Yes, ma'am.

18 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: Do you feel there is a lack
19 of professional development in that --

20 MS. KEENER: Boundaries training?

21 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: -- in learning how to
22 communicate what's proper and not proper with
23 students?

24 MR. WILSON: I don't know if it was a lack of or
25 if -- I -- again, just my familiarness maybe. It

1 clouded, you know, like, Ms. Keener was saying, just
2 trying to tow a line of what that was. And you know,
3 this coursework that I've -- that Ms. James has given
4 me, I think will help with that. And, you know, I've
5 -- I much more understand that as well now just
6 diving deeper into it.

7 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: Okay. Thank you.

8 CHAIR MOORE: Board members anymore questions of
9 Mr. Wilson?

10 (NO RESPONSE)

11 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. Anyone have questions on
12 how -- you know, we did a few of these last month --
13 but how the motion should go? We have the three
14 separate ones.

15 MS. KEENER: We'll have three separate motions,
16 you said?

17 CHAIR MOORE: Yes. Oh, we -- we missed you last
18 month. Yeah. So the first motion is regard to the
19 Code of Ethics and which standards have been
20 violated.

21 MS. KEENER: Okay.

22 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: I'll make a motion then
23 that Mr. James Wilson did violate Standards 1 and 2.

24 CHAIR MOORE: There's a motion on the floor that
25 Standards 1 and 2 were violated which was the

1 recommendation of the PLSB -- or the finding of the
2 PSLB. Is there a second?

3 MS. HUNTER: Second.

4 MS. KEENER: Second.

5 CHAIR MOORE: There's a second by Ms. Keener.
6 Any questions or comments?

7 (NO RESPONSE)

8 CHAIR MOORE: We'll take a vote. All in favor,
9 say aye.

10 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

11 CHAIR MOORE: Any opposed?

12 Motion passes.

13 MS. JAMES: Thank you.

14 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. The next motion is in
15 regards to the sanction --

16 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIR MOORE: -- to accept or modify --

18 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

19 CHAIR MOORE: -- the presented sanction. And
20 the presented sanction is one-year probation, \$200
21 fine, and the set of trainings as you have --

22 MS. JAMES: Yes.

23 CHAIR MOORE: -- and reflections.

24 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am. Everything that's
25 listed in there on the IDR that you received which is

1 the -- it is -- there are three courses and a book,
2 written reflections on the training and book and then
3 quarterly reports so that he -- he is still having to
4 turn in something every quarter from his current
5 employer.

6 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: And does that go to you,
7 Ms. James? I've forgotten. Where does -- the
8 written reports come to you?

9 MS. JAMES: If the State Board orders this, they
10 will come back to you. If the Ethics Subcommittee
11 orders them -- and I probably misspoke earlier --
12 then those would go back to the Ethics Subcommittee
13 for approval. But if it -- since he's been to the
14 State Board, we'll bring him back to you every
15 quarter.

16 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

17 Any questions on that, Board Members?

18 (NO RESPONSE)

19 MS. HUNTER: So we need a motion to accept or
20 modify?

21 CHAIR MOORE: Yes.

22 MS. HUNTER: So I'll make a motion to accept the
23 sanctions of -- by the --

24 MS. JAMES: Ethics --

25 MS. HUNTER: -- Ethics --

1 MS. JAMES: -- Subcommittee.

2 MS. HUNTER: -- Subcommittee.

3 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. HUNTER: Thank you.

5 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

6 There's a motion to accept the sanctions by the
7 Ethics Subcommittee. Is there a second?

8 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: I'll second that.

9 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. A second by Ms. Rollins.
10 Any questions or comments?

11 (NO RESPONSE)

12 CHAIR MOORE: Okay. All in favor, say aye.

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIR MOORE: All right. Any opposed? Okay.
15 Motion passes.

16 And then our third is to accept or modify the
17 rationale.

18 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am. I could read that back
19 if you would like?

20 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

21 MS. JAMES: Okay.

22 The rationale from the Ethics Subcommittee was:
23 inappropriate communication with students;
24 inappropriate interaction with students; exhibited
25 inappropriate disposition inclusive of professional

1 and ethical behavior; violated district, state or
2 federal policies or law; text messages show that the
3 communication between the educator and student were
4 more friendly than professional; text messages were
5 about non-school related topics, but they were not
6 sexual; the educator willingly turned over his cell
7 phone and text messages to administrators when asked;
8 very low negative impact on the student; the educator
9 expressed remorse regarding the situation and now
10 understands the inappropriateness of text messaging
11 the student; the custodial parent of the student was
12 aware of the communication and did not find the
13 content of the messages as inappropriate.

14 CHAIR MOORE: Okay.

15 So, Board Members, the third motion is to accept
16 or modify that rationale as presented.

17 VICE CHAIR ROLLINS: I make a motion that we
18 accept the rationale from the Ethics Subcommittee.

19 CHAIR MOORE: A motion by Ms. Rollins to accept
20 the rationale. Is there a second?

21 MS. HUNTER: Second.

22 CHAIR MOORE: A second by Ms. Hunter. Any
23 questions or comments?

24 (NO RESPONSE)

25 CHAIR MOORE: All in favor, say aye.

1 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

2 CHAIR MOORE: Any opposed?

3 Motion passes. Thank you.

4 And thank you. I -- just some concluding
5 comments, Ms. James.

6 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIR MOORE: I know we have a number of PLSB
8 cases on our consent agenda item today.

9 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

10 CHAIR MOORE: And I appreciate that you all have
11 passed along our conversations here to PLSB.

12 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

13 CHAIR MOOR: And I hope that our conversations
14 and PLSB's conversation has also gone out to
15 educators across the state. Obviously, we have
16 thousands of amazing educators, and we just
17 unfortunately see things that happen sometimes, but
18 we want to make sure we have drawn that line very
19 clear of what's appropriate and not. And I think we
20 will have further communications -- and you all --
21 about -- particularly about electronic communications
22 with students.

23 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIR MOORE: Thank you.

25 And, Mr. Wilson, thank you for coming in today.

1 And we stand that we don't want anything else to
2 happen again -- move forward. Thank you.

3 With that, that is the end of our action agenda.
4 (The Action Agenda was concluded at 10:21 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)

) ss

COUNTY OF PULASKI)

I, Miranda McEntire, Certified Court Reporter #852, do hereby certify that the facts stated by me in the caption on the foregoing proceedings are true; and that the foregoing proceedings were reported verbatim through the use of the voice-writing method and thereafter transcribed by me or under my direct supervision to the best of my ability, taken at the time and place set out on the caption hereto.

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MIRANDA MCENTIRE, CCR

Certified Court Reporter #852

