

In The Matter Of:

*DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL*

July 14, 2020

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ARKANSAS DIVISION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL
JULY 14, 2020

(Via Zoom/Livestream due to Covid-19)

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. IVY PFEFFER	Chairperson/DESE Deputy Commissioner
MR. GREG ROGERS	DESE Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal and Admin. Services
MS. TOYCE NEWTON	Past State Board of Ed. Member
DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS	Past State Board of Ed. Member
MR. PHIL BALDWIN	CEO, Citizens Bank
DR. ANGELA KREMERS	Deputy Director - CTE/Ark. Dept. of Career Ed.

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT DESE Attorney

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. TRACY WEBB DESE Coordinator of Monitoring
and Systems Support

TIME: 9:05 a.m. - 11:13 a.m.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: All right. So we will go ahead and call the meeting of the July 14th Charter Authorizing Panel to order. I'd like to welcome all of you. Thank you for being with us today. We will have --

Oh, I think Ms. -- it looks like we're having Ms. Newton joins us, so I'm going to pause for just a second.

Ms. Newton, let us know if you can hear us.

Good morning, Ms. Newton. Can you hear us?

(MOMENT OF SILENCE)

CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: If you can un-mute and we'll do a sound-check that would be great.

(MOMENT OF SILENCE)

CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton?

(MOMENT OF SILENCE)

CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Webb, can --

Toyce, can you hear us?

(MOMENT OF SILENCE)

CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Webb, do you have someone who can try to do a sound-check with Ms. Newton and get in touch with her?

Ms. Webb, you're muted.

MS. WEBB: I'm sorry. I un-muted her, so she

1 should be able to hear you.

2 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, can you hear me?

3 (MOMENT OF SILENCE)

4 MS. WEBB: She's un-muted, so it may be an issue
5 with her computer. I'll give her a call on the
6 phone.

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Well, we'll go ahead
8 and get started with the meeting this morning. Just
9 -- Panel Members, we appreciate you being here with
10 us. Guests, we appreciate you as well. Just check
11 your microphones and let's stay muted until time to
12 talk, and we'll just all be patient with each other
13 as we try to go through. And we have three of us
14 here in the board room, so we're going to try to be
15 able to respond to questions as well and hopefully we
16 will have a productive meeting.

17 So we'll see if we can get Ms. Newton with us
18 here in just a second.

19 CONSENT AGENDA

20 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So let's go ahead and
21 get started with the Consent Agenda. And on the
22 Consent Agenda we had minutes from the May Charter
23 Authorizing Panel meeting. If you've had a chance to
24 review those, we will entertain a motion to accept
25 the minutes or make revisions.

1 DR. KREMERS: I move to approve.

2 MR. BALDWIN: So moved. This is Phil.

3 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I have a move to
4 approve the minutes from Mr. Baldwin.

5 DR. KREMERS: Second.

6 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: And a second from Dr.
7 Kremers.

8 All those in favor please say "aye."

9 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. The motion is
11 approved.

12 A-1: CONSIDERATION OF DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOL
13 AMENDMENT REQUEST - FAYETTEVILLE VIRTUAL ACADEMY

14 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: And we will move on to the
15 action agenda, and our first action agenda item is a
16 request from the Fayetteville Virtual Academy. Ms.
17 Webb, can you present this item to us, please?

18 MS. WEBB: Yes, ma'am. And Ms. Newton, I think,
19 is getting tech support so that she -- so that we can
20 hear her; so they're working on that.

21 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay.

22 MS. WEBB: The charter for Fayetteville Virtual
23 Academy was authorized in November of 2015. The
24 school serves students in grades 4-12 with a maximum
25 enrollment of 500 students. Assistant Superintendent

1 Dr. Megan Slocum is here today requesting an
2 amendment to add grades K-3 and to increase the
3 enrollment cap.

4 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. And who do we have
5 here speaking on behalf of Fayetteville? I have Dr.
6 Megan Slocum; is that correct?

7 MS. WEBB: That is correct.

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Is there anyone in addition
9 to Dr. Slocum who would be speaking?

10 MS. WEBB: I don't think so.

11 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Slocum, I need to
12 swear you in. Are you ready?

13 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Do you swear or affirm
15 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the
16 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

17 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you. And you
19 will have 20 minutes, if you need that, in order to
20 make your presentation.

21 DR. SLOCUM: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank
22 you, Board Members, for joining us and being here and
23 allowing us to join via Zoom. This for us in
24 northwest Arkansas is an amazing time-saver, so we
25 really appreciate that.

1 I am sure that you have heard and will continue
2 to hear that there are new and changing approaches
3 happening with Covid-19, and we are trying to meet
4 that change, be ready for that change, and accept
5 whatever education is going to look like. We're
6 ready for the challenge.

7 And so one of those deficiencies that we quickly
8 saw was from surveying parents, talking with parents,
9 meeting with groups -- and as you know, for Ready to
10 Learn they've required that we have a committee in
11 place, and we had put that committee in place prior
12 to Ready for Learning requiring that. And in that
13 committee, the outcomes that we heard consistently
14 was we need some more options; we need some other
15 things for our children to be able to access
16 education.

17 And so in this effort to try to truly provide a
18 personalized experience we quickly saw, when we were
19 looking at the survey data and then we were comparing
20 that survey data with what was there, that the
21 numbers that we had were simply not enough. Our
22 enrollment is roughly 10,500 and the enrollment cap
23 that we have in place is not enough. We also see
24 that we need to serve students larger than grades 4-
25 12.

1 So as the times have changed, as the pandemic
2 has helped to refine what our understanding is, our
3 request to the Panel is to allow us to increase that
4 cap to 5,000, which is roughly half of our
5 population, and in addition allowing us to serve
6 grades K-12.

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Are you ready for
8 questions, Dr. Slocum?

9 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am.

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: All right. I'll go ahead and
11 start with panel members who are here in the
12 auditorium.

13 Dr. Kremers, do you have questions?

14 DR. KREMERS: I do.

15 I would like to know a little bit more about
16 your survey data and the responses you received back
17 from the survey.

18 DR. SLOCUM: Yes. So at this point we've only
19 had about 44% to respond. And in that percentage we
20 are anticipating a potential virtual impact of about
21 25% of our students, of those that have responded.
22 And our concern is -- and as you know, any time you
23 do a survey 100% would be amazing. We are trying to
24 get this survey information out in multiple forms, in
25 multiple ways to make sure we reach all parents. The

1 difficulty is some parents are not checking their
2 email, some parents are not engaged in school at this
3 time. It's that kind of understanding of summer, and
4 so I think that's been one limitation to the survey.
5 So our next step is to make home calls and to try to
6 reach students directly. The difficulty with that is
7 some of our student population their numbers change
8 frequently. And so the number we may have had on
9 file, which may have been correct in May, in July is
10 no longer correct; and the same thing with addresses.
11 So we're trying to work through on a case-by-case
12 basis to make sure we reach our students.

13 We are providing devices to students and we've
14 allowed them to keep those through the summer so that
15 they have enrichment opportunities. We're trying to
16 provide some other options for them based on our AMI
17 process that we ended the year with.

18 And so our next step is trying to reach all of
19 those parents. But our primary data tells us that we
20 need some additional solutions in place.

21 DR. KREMERS: And as you met with your parent
22 groups or your Ready for Learning community group,
23 what was the main rationale for wanting to do this as
24 a charter versus just offering this as blended
25 learning, as a part of what, you know, all districts

1 are going to do within their own regular LEA versus
2 doing it as a district conversion?

3 DR. SLOCUM: That's a great question.

4 I think one of the things that sets Fayetteville
5 Virtual Academy apart -- Ms. Lieber [ps] started the
6 process for Fayetteville Virtual Academy and she kind
7 of passed the baton over to Ms. Kim Cook. And in
8 that process what I think you'll see, if you look at
9 the data that's there, is this excellence in
10 education. I think that it has -- since its
11 inception has done incredibly well academically. So
12 parents who desire someone who has experience with
13 virtual teaching, someone who has experience with
14 virtual learning may prefer that option. We are
15 going to provide as many options as we can to parents
16 and we feel like this one needs at least the ability
17 to serve all students K-12.

18 DR. KREMERS: Thank you. And I'll just share
19 right off the bat I'm very concerned about the cap,
20 with such a significant increase to 20,000 from
21 5,000. So I think your survey results -- you know,
22 if you look at 44% responding, still that's 25%; you
23 know, that's an increase of, if I calculated that
24 right, about 125 new students possible. And, again,
25 that's taking the blended learning and assuming that

1 needs to be a part of district conversion charters.

2 So I do have multiple concerns on this one, both
3 that, you know, the strategy is to put this within
4 the charter for blended learning and then also the
5 cap number. So I just would like to share that with
6 the Panel.

7 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am. And just to make sure
8 -- I think I may have been unclear. Our current cap
9 is 500 and we're asking to increase that to 5,000.

10 DR. KREMERS: Oh, excuse me. I apologize. 500
11 to 5,000, yes, and that number is a significant
12 increase --

13 DR. SLOCUM: Yes.

14 DR. KREMERS: -- from where it is existing.

15 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am.

16 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Mr. Rogers, no questions?

17 MR. ROGERS: (Shaking head from side to side.)

18 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Baldwin, do you
19 have questions?

20 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. Thank you.

21 So the -- really, two questions.

22 The proposed cap of 5,000, that's a large
23 increase from 500. Is that a -- just a big number
24 that would cover any potential increase in students?
25 And I guess the question is how did you arrive at

1 that number? And then on the change in grade levels
2 describe your thoughts on the new grades that you'll
3 have, which I guess would be K-3, as far as
4 attendance and curriculum?

5 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, sir. So the first question of
6 the enrollment increase, the number at that 50% is if
7 we have about half of our surveys in and about half
8 of that number is interested in virtual learning.
9 We're just trying to prepare ourselves, particularly
10 for the people we have not heard from yet for
11 whatever reason. And we're going to allow parents to
12 make that choice all the way up until school starts;
13 so at that point we want to make sure that we have an
14 available seat. If there isn't an available seat
15 that's needed, obviously we may have the cap and we
16 may not use all of the cap that's there. But we
17 would like the flexibility to be able to have that at
18 about -- it's a little less than half of our total
19 percentage of student population. So if parents want
20 to choose it, we'd like to offer it.

21 The second prong for K-3 is we feel like we have
22 some good data on our side from our elementary
23 schools that exist right now. And so moving those
24 into a virtual environment with virtual teachers --
25 we've heard from many teachers who may have some

1 precluding health impairments that will not allow
2 them to return to campus for whatever reason. And so
3 our plan was to hopefully transition them into some
4 of those potential teaching spots as we actually
5 determine the particular numbers that we have at each
6 grade level K-12.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

8 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Williams, do you have
10 questions?

11 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

12 I'm tracking along with the others here. The
13 current enrollment that I see listed here in the
14 support documents is 221. What is the current
15 enrollment at Fayetteville School District?

16 DR. SLOCUM: Roughly, 10,500.

17 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So you all are requesting
18 an increase to 5,000. And do you all really expect
19 that or are you just -- I guess what are you basing
20 this off of?

21 DR. SLOCUM: Well, we're basing it off of our
22 total population, but we're also basing this off of
23 -- we have not had great response from parents yet.

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

25 DR. SLOCUM: And I think that it may be the fact

1 that we're sitting in July and parents just aren't in
2 that mind-frame yet. And so in terms of by the time
3 we get to, now, August 24th we just want to make sure
4 that if a parent is requesting it that we can
5 actually enroll and place a child in the program. We
6 also don't know the level of interest that will come
7 across for K-12, but we're seeing that parents have
8 that level of interest. And as we continue to
9 transition the traditional, we anticipate that our
10 traditional is not going to look like our normal
11 traditional; our traditional is going to look like a
12 varied approach where we're going to have some days
13 where students attend and some days where students
14 attend virtually -- and that may not be a good option
15 for all parents. So what we anticipate happening is
16 even the respondents of the initial survey may come
17 back and say, "Well, if this is how it's going to
18 look, then I would prefer to be virtual." But we're
19 trying to adhere to what the CDC and what ADH is
20 recommending in terms of social distancing. We are
21 not going to be able to build a building in the next
22 six weeks, and so we're trying to navigate these new
23 waters and just be as prepared as possible in the
24 midst of this pandemic to serve kids and families in
25 the best way possible.

1 So this request is truly about just flexibility
2 in trying to answer requests that we've had from
3 parents. And, thankfully, we have had FVA. It does
4 have a great track record. It had great leadership
5 in the beginning, and it continues to have great
6 leadership; so that definitely is on our side. And
7 because of that it has had a lot of interest and we
8 want to be able to say "yes, we will educate you."
9 We do know that there are also students who may be
10 interested that aren't served currently by
11 Fayetteville that might choose Fayetteville, and we
12 want to be able to do that as well.

13 So ultimately those are our reasonings. We are
14 kind of in uncharted waters in terms of school, but
15 we've referred to it as this is all going to be our
16 first year of teaching. If you go back to the first
17 year of teaching, that's exactly what this year is
18 going to be like for everybody. We just don't know
19 what those things are around the corner, and it's
20 very difficult or has been very difficult for us
21 since March and I would say for most districts to
22 plan for something. And this is actually one thing
23 that we could plan for, based on feedback, to go,
24 "Okay, at least the Charter Authorizing Panel would
25 support this; the State Board would support this.

1 And if you would like a seat in this placement, if
2 this fits your family best, then we're able to do it.

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Great answers.

4 You also answered my other question I had and
5 that's just whether if you all expect all the seats
6 to be taken up by Fayetteville students or are you
7 going to open it up to other students. And I think I
8 heard you say that there may be other students who
9 are not part of the Fayetteville district that may
10 want to take advantage of this, which I think is a
11 great thing, if that's the case.

12 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

14 DR. SLOCUM: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, I know you're --
16 you were struggling with some of your tech issues.
17 Are you able to communicate with us yet?

18 (MOMENT OF SILENCE)

19 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. She may --
20 Ms. Webb, is she still having some issues?

21 MS. WEBB: She is. She's trying to call in, so
22 I've given her the meeting ID and the call-in number.

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. All right.

24 MS. WEBB: But I don't hear her yet.

25 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: It may be a few more minutes

1 before she can ask questions. Could she type her
2 questions into the chat box?

3 MS. WEBB: Yes. I think she's been putting
4 stuff in chat, but she should be able to do that.

5 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So, Ms. Newton, if
6 you're struggling with your sound, if you want to
7 type in a question in the chat box then I can read
8 that for everybody, if that would be okay.

9 Ms. Hyatt, is that an acceptable solution?

10 MS. HYATT: I'm sorry; I was having trouble
11 hearing you. Did you say for her to put her
12 questions on -- in the chat box, is that an okay
13 solution?

14 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Yes.

15 MS. HYATT: Yes, that's fine.

16 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. All right. So we'll
17 work with her to do that.

18 Dr. Slocum --

19 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: -- could you --

21 DR. SLOCUM: I'll hang tight until you're ready
22 for me.

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Could you -- one of my
24 questions -- I'm thinking back to when this charter
25 was approved, and one of the things that I remember

1 it being was flexible options for parents, even
2 within the charter. So some students would be all
3 virtual all the time, some students might be virtual
4 part of the time but coming onsite part of the time,
5 and then there might be cases --

6 DR. SLOCUM: Right.

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: -- where there are students
8 who might come to the Fayetteville Virtual Academy
9 every day.

10 DR. SLOCUM: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: So describe for us please,
12 now in thinking about the Ready for Learning model
13 that Fayetteville will employ, what's going to be
14 different about your Fayetteville Virtual Academy and
15 what you're doing for all students? And is it
16 necessary for students to actually move into an
17 entirely different LEA or will they have that option
18 already available to them?

19 DR. SLOCUM: Absolutely. That is [inaudible,
20 sound becomes jumbled]

21 MS. NEWTON: Can you hear me now?

22 MS. WEBB: Ms. Newton, we can hear you.

23 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. We're getting some
25 feedback though, so I think that line is going to

1 need to be muted.

2 DR. SLOCUM: Dr. Pfeffer [inaudible, sound is
3 jumbled]

4 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: I'm sorry, Dr. Slocum.

5 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am. I'm asking if I might
6 need to wait or proceed?

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Hang on just a moment.

8 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am.

9 MR. DAN DAVIS: (inaudible, speaking from sound
10 booth)

11 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Newton, we're
12 getting such bad feedback -- that may be better now.

13 Okay. Dr. Slocum, see if you can go ahead,
14 please.

15 DR. SLOCUM: Yes, ma'am. So I think your -- to
16 your point is one of the beginning tenants of
17 Fayetteville Virtual Academy was this idea of
18 flexibility. And so, one of our concerns is we may
19 be offering some AP courses or some specialized
20 courses online only. And because of this new
21 flexible schedule that we've not done before, we've
22 not had it in place before, we are anticipating that,
23 as usual, we'll have several FHS students who enroll
24 in FVA classes, and so we want to make sure that
25 those options are still on the table; however, when a

1 student does that that is counted as a seat, if you
2 will -- a virtual seat on the Fayetteville Virtual
3 side if a student wants to access that. So we need
4 to make sure that we, you know, balance that
5 enrollment. So in -- one of the outcomes of our
6 Ready for Learning process was parents still want
7 options. Although we're going through a pandemic,
8 they still want as many offerings as possible, and
9 Fayetteville Virtual Academy does that in an
10 extraordinary way to provide as many options as
11 possible for kids. And so this request again goes
12 back to the case of us not actually knowing what is
13 coming toward us and trying to poise our-self to be
14 in the best position possible once we actually do
15 hear from parents and we have the requests, so that
16 if they make that request we can say, "Absolutely,
17 here's your choices; you can do this, you can do
18 this, you can do this." And we anticipate a lot of
19 meetings and we think that those are probably going
20 to happen probably right before August 24th for
21 parents that come to us finally. Maybe we've tried
22 to reach them in multiple ways and we can't get them
23 by email or a phone call or mailed letter or home
24 visit. It will allow us to contact -- get in touch
25 with them so that they can tell us what their

1 preference is and we can get their child enrolled in
2 the best fit for them.

3 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

4 DR. SLOCUM: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Panel Members, do you
6 have any additional questions?

7 MS. HYATT: Dr. Pfeffer, this is Mary Claire. I
8 wanted to clarify something. I apologize; I was
9 having some trouble hearing the Zoom. But district
10 conversion charters are limited to enrolling students
11 that are within their school district. They're not
12 open-enrollment charters, so they're not permitted to
13 enroll students that are not residents of their
14 school district. And I just wanted to make sure that
15 that was clear.

16 DR. SLOCUM: Sorry. Correct. Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Any additional
18 questions?

19 DR. KREMERS: I have a question.

20 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Kremers.

21 DR. KREMERS: When is the district conversion up
22 for renewal?

23 DR. SLOCUM: We will be coming back to you this
24 year for our five-year renewal.

25 DR. KREMERS: So just kind of what I'm thinking

1 is, you know, the numbers are still not fully known.
2 And it's such a large increase it almost seems like
3 it might be a better approach to do a reasonable
4 increase and then, you know, if the numbers are
5 showing greater need then that can be brought back
6 forward as a request with the renewal, when there's a
7 better idea of numbers.

8 DR. SLOCUM: And one of the things that we
9 discussed on our end is the question of that waiting,
10 but the pandemic kind of changed us in a different
11 direction. We are just making sure that we are as
12 prepared as possible. Our goal is not to have 100%
13 in FVA; however, if parents have that desire, we just
14 want to be able to say yes if that's the best option
15 for their family. So we're, again, trying to brace
16 ourselves for whatever is coming toward us and making
17 sure that we are as prepared as possible. And so
18 that is again the reason for, one, the grade
19 configuration change, and also the enrollment
20 increase request.

21 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Are there any other
22 questions from panel members?

23 MS. NEWTON: Good morning. Can you hear me now?

24 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: We can. How are you this
25 morning?

1 MS. NEWTON: Hello?

2 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Good morning, Ms. Newton.

3 MS. NEWTON: Good morning. I'm sorry for the
4 problem and the reverberation causing you guys not to
5 be able to communicate while I'm on the phone.

6 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, do you have any
7 questions?

8 MS. NEWTON: No, I don't.

9 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Panel, is there --
10 does anybody want to make a motion regarding the
11 request?

12 DR. WILLIAMS: I move to approve the amendment
13 request.

14 MR. ROGERS: Second.

15 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion to
16 approve the amendment request and a second.

17 Is there any discussion?

18 DR. KREMERS: I'd like to see us consider a
19 decreased enrollment number for approval -- decrease
20 the cap for consideration.

21 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So Dr. Kremers has
22 asked the Panel -- she would like to see a decreased
23 enrollment cap. Is there -- do you have a number in
24 mind as far as the decrease request?

25 DR. KREMERS: I mean their survey results so far

1 would add another 125. And of course, to their
2 point, they don't know. But then even if you double
3 it you're at 1,000 versus 5,000. So I just -- I
4 think the 5,000 cap is really too much. Half of the
5 population of the school district I think is
6 excessive.

7 DR. WILLIAMS: And just a comment on that, my
8 understanding -- and correct me if I'm off-base --
9 when y'all are talking there in the auditorium there
10 there's a huge echo around it, so I'm missing some
11 things here and there. But my understanding is the
12 reason for the 5,000 is to allow the district the
13 flexibility to be able to offer basically up to half
14 their students by virtual in order to meet the -- I'm
15 just going to call it the Covid guidelines. So I
16 don't know whether we should take away that
17 flexibility during these times. So that's just my
18 thoughts.

19 MR. ROGERS: I agree. Under normal
20 circumstances, Dr. Kremers, I would agree with you.
21 But right now with Fayetteville not knowing how many
22 students may under these times want to look at
23 different options, and since they did -- and that was
24 a good question about when they come up for renewal.
25 I think since they come up for renewal very soon,

1 once we allow school to start and we see how many
2 students have elected to go to that would give the
3 Charter Panel an opportunity to review and see if
4 that cap is maybe a little too high. But right now
5 with the situation that we have everything in, I
6 think if they're asking for flexibility to make sure
7 that they're providing everything they can for their
8 students and the parents of their students, then I'm
9 hesitant to say that we need to change that cap right
10 now.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Let me ask a question. I think I
12 would support the flexibility too, given the
13 extenuating circumstances we're all dealing with. If
14 we approve the 5,000, does that approval -- is that a
15 permanent approval or is that a temporary approval
16 during Covid, that we would reconsider at the point
17 in time things get back to a more normal position?

18 MS. HYATT: This is Mary Claire. I think I can
19 answer that for you. If you approve it, I believe
20 that you wouldn't review it until their renewal
21 hearing. But they are up for renewal this year, so I
22 think that's December.

23 Is that correct, Tracy?

24 MS. WEBB: That is correct.

25 MS. HYATT: So you will have an opportunity to

1 review the enrollment cap at their renewal hearing in
2 December.

3 DR. WILLIAMS: That's good to know. I think
4 that's a good option there to review it in December
5 to see exactly what their enrollment looks like.

6 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So we have a motion to
7 approve the amendment request, and a second.

8 All of those in favor say "aye."

9 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Let's do a roll-call
11 vote because I'm not sure that I'm hearing everybody.
12 So I'm going to go --

13 So, Mr. Rogers.

14 MR. ROGERS: Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Kremers.

16 DR. KREMERS: Nay.

17 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Williams.

18 DR. WILLIAMS: Aye.

19 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Mr. Baldwin.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Aye.

21 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

22 MS. NEWTON: Aye.

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. The motion has been
24 approved. Congratulations. And we will, I guess,
25 see you all in December then. Is that correct?

1 DR. SLOCUM: Thank you, Dr. Pfeffer. And thank
2 you, Panel Members. We appreciate your support as we
3 enter this new territory. And thanks for your time.

4 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Thank you for being here.

5 A-2: CONSIDERATION OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT
6 REQUEST - ARKANSAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So we're going to go
8 ahead and move on to item number 2, which is for the
9 -- an amendment request for Arkansas Virtual Academy.
10 And, Ms. Webb, can you present that for us?

11 MS. WEBB: The Arkansas Virtual Academy charter
12 was authorized in October of 2003. The charter
13 expires in 2025. The school serves students in
14 grades K-12 with a maximum enrollment of 3,000
15 students. Superintendent Amy Johnson is here today
16 requesting an amendment to increase the enrollment
17 cap.

18 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. We have Amy Johnson.
19 And is there anyone else that will also be speaking?

20 MS. WEBB: Amy, is Kristin Allen also present,
21 your assistant superintendent?

22 SUPT. JOHNSON: Yes, she is.

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I'm trying to find
24 both of you just because I'm going to need to swear
25 you in and I'm going to need to make sure that I'm

1 talking to the right people. Okay. There we are,
2 Amy and Kristin.

3 All right. If you'll raise your right hand --
4 do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're
5 about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth and
6 nothing but the truth?

7 SUPT. JOHNSON: I do.

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Allen?

9 MS. ALLEN: I do.

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

11 All right. You have 20 minutes, if you need
12 that much time to present your request.

13 SUPT. JOHNSON: Thank you. And I'm going to
14 share my screen real quickly. There we go.

15 Madam Chair, Members of the Panel, thank you so
16 much for the opportunity to be with you today, to
17 voice this request. I saw you not very long ago.
18 Last December, we presented to you for ARVA's renewal
19 and we really talked with you all about owning the
20 academic outcomes, the direction that we had set for
21 our students. And in that process one of the things
22 that we talked about was being committed to not
23 necessarily what's easy, but what is right for our
24 students. And I don't think any of us, when we were
25 together in December, could have imagined what our

1 spring would look like. I don't think we could've
2 dreamt that up in our wildest dreams. But we were
3 blessed in that our longevity as a virtual school in
4 the state of Arkansas did allow us to continue to
5 focus on what is right for students and we were able
6 to continue our students' education through the
7 school year. We did not stop our services for
8 students; school was not canceled at ARVA. And so we
9 were able to make some gains in the areas that we did
10 outline for you in December academically.

11 So we are coming today asking for an enrollment
12 increase of 1,000 students. This would move our cap
13 to 4,000 total. And while Covid is definitely the
14 instigator for this, I think all of us have learned
15 in this time that we definitely need to have an
16 opportunity to be prepared for things that we can't
17 expect. And this cap increase not only allows us to
18 do that, to nuance what might be ahead that we can't
19 even predict with this current Covid environment, but
20 also allows us to continue to provide a consistent
21 virtual -- an experienced virtual education for the
22 students of Arkansas.

23 So we based this need on our current enrollment,
24 and right now -- we actually pulled these numbers as
25 of this morning. So we have 2,931 students who are

1 currently active enrolled students with ARVA. Right
2 now also we have 918 applications that are sitting,
3 what we call, in the hopper; they're sitting in cues,
4 students that are interested in coming to school with
5 us in the fall. Now normally, if we can think back
6 to a normal time -- it's hard for all of us, I think,
7 right now -- but on a typical enrollment season
8 families like to shop us, much like you would shop
9 online. They might put an application with us,
10 they're thinking about coming to us, and very much
11 like we might put something in our shopping cart and
12 then not come back, not all of our applications
13 become actively enrolled students. Now in years past
14 this sort of transfer rate or this take rate from
15 application to active student has been around 40%.
16 What we've seen through the month of June is that
17 this transfer rate is at 76%. So people are not just
18 shopping, they're choosing and they're looking for
19 that trusted virtual option for their students.

20 So if you take that same assumption of 76% and
21 you apply it to the applications that we have in cue,
22 if we could sort of magically process all the
23 applications today without the 3,000 cap that would
24 give us an estimated current enrollment today of
25 3,628 students. This is also keeping in mind that

1 July and August are our highest yield enrollment
2 months and we feel like this is definitely going to
3 be the case this year as families and students are
4 making those choices.

5 So I also want to make sure that I update you on
6 our current academic progress because I'm very
7 excited to share some of the pieces that we've been
8 able to accomplish, even just since we were with you
9 in December.

10 So because we were able to finish the school
11 year, we did do end-of-year testing for our students.
12 We utilized STAR 360 for beginning, middle, and end-
13 of-year assessments for our students, and we were
14 able to perform that test -- have our students take
15 part in that test at the end of the school year. So
16 one of our first goals with our students -- our first
17 academic goals we put out in front of our staff and
18 our team -- was that we wanted to insure that our
19 students were making a minimum of one years' growth.
20 That's our due diligence. That's, you know, a base
21 expectation for every single school. We know that,
22 and shared with you in December, that 62% of our
23 students come to us in the bottom two levels of the
24 ACT Aspire. And so we know we have more than a
25 years' growth that we need to gain, but this was our

1 starting spot for really honing in and focusing on
2 our academics. We created -- or we maintained a 22%
3 improvement year-over-year for our students, making a
4 minimum of one year -- one years' growth. And so
5 while we're not at 100%, we definitely are going to
6 continue to move towards that goal. But we finished
7 with 70% of our students making a minimum of one
8 years' growth. And I actually dove into this a
9 little bit more even yesterday because I wanted to
10 see what is the percentage of our students that made
11 more than one years' growth, because we have that 62%
12 that comes to us off grade level. That datapoint is
13 64% of our students in ELA and 65% of our students in
14 math made more than one years' growth. So we
15 definitely feel the changes that we have made and the
16 different steps and directions that we shared with
17 the Panel back in December have made a positive
18 difference.

19 The other portion of this datapoint that I'm
20 also particularly proud of is that all of our
21 demographic groups -- race, ethnicity, free-and-
22 reduced lunch -- all the different ways that we can
23 slice-and-dice this data all had the same growth
24 scores. There was only 2% variance in any of our
25 demographic categories. So we are getting these

1 results consistently across the board for our
2 students.

3 We have continued participation success in our
4 testing and 96% total participation for all of our
5 online assessments last year, with 99% in grades K-5.
6 And I point that out because we know it's very
7 important to insure that that foundation is there.

8 You might ask yourself, well, if it's an online
9 assessment how come it's not 100%? They just have to
10 go to the computer and log in and take the test. We
11 actually monitor and proctor our tests via Zoom. We
12 have agreements with our parents that they can be in
13 the room just long enough to insure that their
14 students, especially our elementary students, have
15 logged in and successfully accessed the assessment,
16 and then they're required to leave the room.

17 Students test with their cameras on, with their
18 microphones on, and if there's any concern we also
19 ask them to share their screen as they complete the
20 assessment. So these are scheduled test times and we
21 do, you know, ask those students to come in and
22 fulfill that responsibility. Covid did impact us a
23 little bit with trying to get folks in -- students in
24 so they'd be able to complete those assessments.

25 Face-to-face assessments have been on average the

1 last several years 99% participation or better. So
2 we feel like we are establishing a culture of
3 assessment and accountability with our students.

4 One of the other things we talked about in
5 December was really increasing teacher efficiency,
6 effectiveness, and partnering in a more accurate and
7 accountable way with our teachers and our families.
8 So I'm happy to report teacher satisfaction continues
9 to climb. Our teachers reported this spring 80%
10 teacher satisfaction. And while, again, that might
11 seem like an interesting statistic that it's not
12 higher, this is a 7-point scale survey, and in order
13 to be counted in this 80% teachers have to score us
14 at a 6 or 7. So truly what we're saying here is that
15 this is 80% of our teachers that are highly satisfied
16 with their employment and experience at ARVA. This
17 is up from 76% last year, which was my first spring
18 as Head of School, and then up from 56% the year
19 prior. We have a successful teacher return rate;
20 97.7% of our teachers are returning. And as I know
21 you're aware, the more experience teachers have,
22 especially in a virtual environment, the better
23 return we have on student growth.

24 And then, additionally, family satisfaction is
25 also rising. This is the same seven-point scale

1 survey. We have to score a 6 or 7 to be counted as
2 satisfied as a family with our -- their experience.
3 And that's up from 76% last year and 75% the year
4 before.

5 I also wanted to take just a quick moment to
6 highlight our continued partnerships. This is
7 something we shared with the Panel last December and
8 something that you all spoke very positively about
9 that we are making efforts toward. The minute that
10 Covid hit and started to really impact education, our
11 teachers sort of really without even any request
12 started reaching out to hold Zoom training sessions
13 for their peers. We're very used to Zoom. It was
14 interesting for me to log in to a panel meeting today
15 and not be in person with you and see you all and
16 what we lovingly call the Hollywood Squares, because
17 that's sort of our environment. And so our teachers
18 reached out and began to hold Zoom sessions with
19 other teachers, not only in our state but across the
20 country. We held Zoom sessions for teachers in New
21 York and California, and helped teachers understand
22 the nuance of Zoom, how to engage students through
23 Zoom, and all the different tips and tricks through
24 the platform. We've also collaborated with different
25 portions of the ADE for how to move particular pieces

1 virtually. We had a reach-out from Yvonne Greene in
2 special education, really asking about how do we hold
3 IEPs virtually, how do we assess students, how do we
4 fill the gap for therapies when we can't see students
5 face-to-face. And then, most recently, our district
6 testing coordinator sort of had an open-door policy
7 with the Department for how we virtually monitor and
8 proctor assessments, how we do that with fidelity and
9 validity.

10 We're currently partnering with some districts
11 for back-to-school training. Jacksonville North is
12 one that we have in the works right now to really
13 pair our teachers. We really want to be there for
14 teachers. Virtual instruction is hard work, it's
15 very different work, students attack virtual
16 education differently; and so we really want to help
17 nuance that with teachers. We're not doing any
18 platform training, anything like that. Our platforms
19 are totally different. But what we are doing is
20 pairing our teachers and administrators to be able to
21 have grassroots sort of granular conversations about
22 what works and what doesn't. We're in an agreement
23 with UALR to house some of their clinical and field
24 service observations, their student teachers. Not
25 only do they need a situation where their teachers

1 can consistently complete those requirements for 10
2 weeks or more, but they also are recognizing the
3 importance of their students understanding virtual
4 education. And what we really tried to do is just be
5 open to even any one-off opportunities,
6 collaborations, opportunities to talk about how we
7 nuance virtual for the success of students. One of
8 the things that I think is very important for the
9 Panel to know is that we do this for any school, any
10 student in the state. We're looking at Arkansas
11 students as our students, whether they're sitting in
12 our seat or not. This is an interesting time and we
13 want to do everything we can as one of the longest-
14 standing virtuals, the legacy that we have in this
15 environment to really be able to positively impact
16 any student across the state, whether they're sitting
17 in our school or whether they're sitting in their
18 brick-and-mortar district.

19 So, finally, just a quick reminder -- the ask
20 here is 1,000 students to a total cap of 4,000.
21 Again, we want to be able to house students that are
22 coming to us in this current environment, but also
23 make sure that we have the ability to stay ahead of
24 anything that might be coming that we can't predict.
25 And I will honestly tell you because we can't predict

1 this, I don't know, you may see me again in the fall.
2 We don't know how this is going to go. But we do
3 want to make sure that we step it out wisely and
4 carefully, that we're strongly prepared for the
5 students that are coming to us to insure continued
6 academic success.

7 So if you all have questions --

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Yes, we will proceed
9 on to questions. So I'll start with Dr. Kremers
10 again.

11 DR. KREMERS: Thank you. I think the cap
12 increase request is, you know, more reasonable based
13 on the numbers you've run, the surveys you've done,
14 the applications you already have in the cue. So
15 that part is -- so I think my only remaining thing
16 would be, you know, the student performance. I'm
17 glad that you presented the data on some of the STAR
18 360 assessments that you've done that is showing some
19 growth, because that was my main concern of
20 increasing the cap when there is a, you know, report
21 card that is not where it should be on student
22 performance. And so can you just share just a little
23 bit -- I know that that's your current assessments
24 that you're receiving. But just in general, is there
25 anything you -- also that you're implementing for

1 student performance with this? What changes will you
2 have? You're going to increase the enrollment cap.
3 Does this increase, of course, the number of teachers
4 and kind of the services that will also expand to
5 support the students coming in in larger numbers?

6 MS. ALLEN: Absolutely. So in light of the
7 increase, what our plan is is basically we're going
8 to sort of in triage fashion, if you will, each week
9 just look at the enrollments; how they're coming in,
10 what grade levels they're coming in I think is also
11 something that we're very keenly aware of right now.
12 We have a higher enrollment right now at the
13 elementary level than we do at the middle school and
14 high school level, which is a little bit unusual for
15 us. And so one of the things to your point, Dr.
16 Kremers, is what we understand about our elementary
17 students is that we're not just teaching our
18 elementary students; we're also training their
19 learning coaches. And so we have increased the
20 preparation and the week-by-week training and
21 partnership with our learning coaches to be prepared.

22 Rolling out staff, we will continue to maintain
23 the exact same student/teacher ratios that we did
24 last year; so this will require adding staff as the
25 enrollments come in. Our goal is to add those

1 systematically as we see those ratios sort of shift
2 and add. What we don't want to do is add, you know,
3 50 new teachers all today and sort of overwhelm, you
4 know, everyone. So we want to roll that out
5 systematically as our enrollments begin to uptake.
6 And then what we'll do is continue to create that
7 cycle of training for our new teachers, partnering
8 them with our experienced teachers.

9 Academically -- and I just had this conversation
10 with our admin team this last week -- our expectation
11 is that there will only be the same growth and better
12 for the coming year, even with more students in tow.
13 And so several things that we're doing and creating
14 and continuing to innovate, we're utilizing cross
15 content PBL. We're starting that in each building
16 level. So we'll have cross content PBL built out --
17 project based learning built out in grades
18 kindergarten, 3, 6 and 9 for the coming year. And
19 then we'll start to consistently roll those to those
20 next grade levels throughout the course of the next
21 three years. We're doing a more fine-tuned -- we
22 started this last year -- Circle-Up with our
23 teachers. Our teachers actually meet with their
24 principals quarterly to review their data, to review
25 their progress, to set goals for the next quarter.

1 So it's a tight observation. Our administrators did
2 -- completed over 1200 observations of our staff last
3 year. That's spread out about -- over about five
4 administrators. So we are consistently in
5 classrooms, consistently looking at what's happening
6 in those classrooms. Our teachers have a tight
7 spiral of looking at student data. We started PLC's
8 last year and it was highly successful for teachers
9 to be able to come in and look at their data; compare
10 their common assessment data in the same courses and
11 grade levels; try to figure out where the gaps are,
12 if one teacher's students are doing slightly better
13 than the other.

14 And then we're also creating a tight spiral of
15 intervention for our students where we see that
16 they're not mastering. We're also introducing our
17 families this fall through an app -- believe it or
18 not, we've created an app that houses each grade
19 levels' standards and I Can statements. And we're
20 releasing this app to our parents and students and
21 they're going to be able to give us feedback on how
22 they -- how comfortable they feel with their mastery
23 of their standards. And this is going to be starting
24 again a three-year progression to rollout to more
25 standards-based feedback and grading for our students

1 so that we know where our students are in their
2 mastery at all times.

3 So I could talk to you a very long time about
4 some of the things that we're doing, because we're
5 excited about it. But we're very fine-tuned on the
6 academic success of our students, even with the
7 increase of 1,000. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Johnson, I want to
9 follow-up then. So you're anticipating quite a large
10 enrollment increase in the elementary grades. Is
11 that what I heard you say?

12 SUPT. JOHNSON: Uh-huh. Yes. So we're at 900
13 in the elementary right now, which is -- for us it's
14 one of the highest elementary enrollments that we've
15 seen. We don't really know how to estimate whether
16 that's going to sort of plateau out if our elementary
17 parents were more eager and making decisions earlier.
18 But it is something that we're definitely gauging
19 ourselves for and supporting --

20 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: So in your description of all
21 of your instruction and planning I didn't hear you
22 talk about your curriculum alignment to the Science
23 of Reading and the assurance that you're fully
24 prepared for an increase in a number of elementary
25 students; that, you know, if moving to a virtual

1 environment is going to be a new thing for them that
2 there will need to be a lot of additional supports.
3 So I just wanted to get some affirmation that that is
4 something that you all are preparing for if your data
5 are showing an increase in elementary; so just
6 something very brief about that.

7 SUPT. JOHNSON: Yes. So you were breaking up
8 just a little bit, but I think I got the gist of the
9 question; so if I don't hit on all the elements,
10 please circle me back.

11 So we are completing all of our training for
12 Science of Reading. We're actually utilizing Brain
13 Spring and Phonics First training for -- we found
14 that to be highly successful with our dyslexic
15 students. And so we're using their Structures to not
16 only satisfy some of our Science of Reading pieces,
17 but also to train teachers that have a more minimal
18 requirement for Science of Reading. We found that
19 the Structures training has been very helpful all the
20 way up into even our upper levels, and so definitely
21 we are completing that.

22 Kristin, do you want to add anything?

23 Kristin oversees our Science of Reading. She's
24 a former elementary principal, so she is all about
25 our Science of Reading.

1 Do you want to add any detail about those
2 trainings and the things that are happening in the
3 summer?

4 MS. ALLEN: Our teachers will fall in Pathway
5 "D" and all of them are finishing up their training
6 again this summer so that they're prepared.

7 I'm currently going through the assessor
8 training and just completed the first phase of the
9 assessor training and working -- I already have the
10 second phase scheduled. So we're getting everybody
11 up-to-speed.

12 We have a RISE trainer in our district who's
13 also working as we get new teachers who are coming
14 onboard who may not have the preparation prior. But
15 we really have seen, just like Ms. Johnson said, just
16 high success with Structures and Phonics First that
17 Brain Spring provides, and so we are training our
18 teachers through that.

19 And then also the upper levels who have students
20 who are struggling with reading, trying to really
21 identify what those gaps are and fill them based on
22 those needs.

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

24 Mr. Rogers, do you have questions?

25 MR. ROGERS: No, ma'am.

1 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. -- Dr. Williams?

2 DR. WILLIAMS: No questions.

3 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Baldwin?

4 MR. BALDWIN: No questions.

5 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton?

6 MS. NEWTON: No questions.

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So -- excuse me -- we
8 don't have any additional questions -- or do we have
9 additional questions?

10 Okay. So, no additional questions.

11 Is there -- are there any questions just in
12 general from the Panel?

13 Okay. If not, we have -- I can accept a motion
14 regarding Arkansas Virtual Academy.

15 MS. NEWTON: I move approval of the charter's
16 application.

17 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion from
18 Ms. Newton.

19 Is there a second?

20 DR. KREMERS: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Second from Dr. Kremers.

22 Is there any discussion?

23 Okay. Seeing none, all those in favor say
24 "aye."

25 (CHORUS OF AYES)

1 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I don't think I heard
2 all of -- I'm going to do a roll-call because I don't
3 think I heard from everybody.

4 And can we do a stop-sharing on the screen,
5 because it helps me to be able to see more of the
6 panelists.

7 SUPT. JOHNSON: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: We're still seeing the
9 presentation.

10 SUPT. JOHNSON: I'm sorry.

11 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Thank you. That's helpful.
12 Okay. I'm going to go through and make sure.
13 Mr. Rogers.

14 MR. ROGERS: Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

16 MS. NEWTON: Aye.

17 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Kremers.

18 DR. KREMERS: Aye.

19 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Williams.

20 DR. WILLIAMS: Aye.

21 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Mr. Baldwin.

22 MR. BALDWIN: Aye.

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you. The motion
24 passes. And congratulations. Thank you for giving
25 us your time today and for your presentation.

1 A-3: CONSIDERATION OF DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOL
2 AMENDMENT REQUEST - DON TYSON SCHOOL OF INNOVATION (SPRINGDALE
3 SCHOOL DISTRICT)

4 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. We're going to go head
5 and move on to item number 3 on the action agenda,
6 which is a request for the Don Tyson School of
7 Innovation. Ms. Webb, will you present this item to
8 us?

9 MS. WEBB: Yes, ma'am.

10 Don Tyson School of Innovation is a district
11 conversion charter that was authorized in November of
12 2015. The current charter expires in June of 2021.
13 Currently, the school serves students in grades 6-12
14 with a maximum enrollment of 2,000 students.

15 Springdale School District attorney Kendra Clay
16 is here today requesting an amendment increase of the
17 enrollment cap.

18 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Good morning, Ms.
19 Clay. Are you going to be our only speaker on -- for
20 this petition today?

21 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

22 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Let's see. Ms. Clay, can we
23 do a sound-check?

24 MS. CLAY: I'm here. Thank you all. It's good
25 to be here.

1 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay.

2 MS. CLAY: As Ms. Webb mentioned, I'm Kendra
3 Clay; I'm general counsel for the district and I'll
4 be presenting most of the presentation. I do have a
5 couple others here if questions come up and I need
6 their assistance.

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Do we need to be
8 swearing in people who are going to be additional
9 speakers, Ms. Hyatt?

10 MS. HYATT: You don't need to swear in Kendra
11 since she's an attorney.

12 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Right.

13 MS. HYATT: But if there are going to be other
14 people speaking or answering questions it would be my
15 preference if you would just go ahead and swear them
16 in.

17 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So, Ms. Clay, if you
18 think you'll have additional help there, can we
19 identify those people and swear them in?

20 MS. CLAY: We can do it either way. I don't
21 anticipate really needing help. But if you want to
22 go ahead and swear the people who are here with me,
23 that is not a problem either.

24 I have Dr. Marsha Smith here beside me in
25 person, and then Dr. Shay Hopper is out there in

1 Zoom-land as well.

2 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Let's do it just in
3 case and that way we don't have to stop in the middle
4 of the presentation. Okay?

5 So, Dr. Smith and Ms. Hopper, if you would raise
6 your right hand -- do you swear or affirm that the
7 testimony you're about to give will be the truth, the
8 whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

9 DR. SMITH: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Hopper, I don't think --
11 I think you're muted.

12 DR. HOPPER: I do. Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. And I think we heard
14 Dr. Smith as well. All right. Thank you.

15 And, Ms. Clay, you may begin your presentation.

16 MS. CLAY: Okay. I have a very brief slide that
17 I'd like to share with you just to kind of guide some
18 of our conversation. I'm here today to ask for an
19 amendment request for the Don Tyson School of
20 Innovation. Normally when the district comes to
21 present anything about DTSOI we like to show off the
22 amazing things that are happening there, and
23 eventually we would like to do that with this group
24 again. We're opening Phase 2 of construction that
25 will allow the brick-and-mortar DTSOI to serve a

1 larger number of students this fall in person. But
2 the purpose of the request today is really just to
3 accommodate virtual students.

4 You'll see in your packet that the district
5 initially asked for the enrollment cap to be
6 increased to 23,000. I'm sure some people may have
7 thought that was a typo. It was not. When we
8 initially submitted our information we were, like
9 most school districts, still trying to figure out
10 just where we stand as far as serving students during
11 the Covid-19 pandemic. That 23,000 number basically
12 represented the ability to serve all of our students
13 one-hundred percent virtually if the need came to
14 that. We don't think that that need will be there
15 where a hundred-percent of our approximately 22,000
16 students would want one-hundred percent virtual
17 instruction. So the ask today would instead be to
18 increase the enrollment cap to 8,000.

19 I do want to share this graphic with you. I
20 think it will guide some of your thinking on how
21 Springdale School District intends to serve its
22 students under the Ready for Learning model this
23 fall. And this graphic is a district approach; this
24 is not specific to Don Tyson School of Innovation,
25 but I'll show you where DTSOI fits into this graphic.

1 So you'll see on the left that the district will
2 be open for onsite instruction at all of its 31
3 buildings, beginning on August 24th. That means just
4 what you would think it means: students are coming to
5 school, learning is taking place onsite. The middle
6 column represents what we are calling our version of
7 blended learning. Under the blended model parents
8 will have the opportunity to choose whether their
9 students attend onsite instruction on Monday,
10 Wednesday and Friday or on Tuesday and Thursday. So
11 on the days that those students who are not onsite --
12 when they are not onsite they will be doing remote
13 learning at home on their days of choice. But we are
14 leaving that to parent choice. But we know with both
15 of those onsite and blended models that if closure
16 happens due to Covid-19 -- so if you'll kind of walk
17 down the chart with me with that blue bar -- both the
18 onsite and the blended model will shift to remote
19 teaching and learning in the district. So that is
20 the plan that will be implemented at what we call our
21 traditional schools -- so every school in the
22 district, except for Don Tyson School of Innovation.

23 And then that brings us to the right-hand
24 column, where students would be served one-hundred
25 percent virtually. DTSOI has been offering virtual

1 instruction for grades 6-12 well before the Covid-19
2 pandemic. So when the need began to present itself
3 that the virtual instruction would need to be more
4 widespread and need to encompass all grades, rather
5 than just grades 6-12, DTSOI was the natural fit to
6 fill that need within the district. So you'll see in
7 the virtual column those students will attend school
8 one-hundred percent virtually and their teaching and
9 learning will not change regardless of any closures
10 due to Covid-19.

11 So, just some brief information before I'll
12 answer questions -- with the Phase 2 of construction
13 DTSOI will be serving approximately 2,000 students in
14 person. So even if the Covid-19 pandemic had not
15 occurred we would have been back in front of you
16 asking for an increase of enrollment cap just to
17 accommodate the in-person students that the new phase
18 of construction is able to serve. For historical
19 purposes, last year VIA, which is the Virtual
20 Innovation Academy -- so that's the one-hundred
21 percent virtual program housed at DTSOI -- served
22 approximately 200 students. And so far this year we
23 have approximately 500 students who have shown
24 interest in having one-hundred percent virtual
25 instruction through VIA.

1 Now I will say, just based on some conversation
2 that you had earlier with Fayetteville, we have not
3 surveyed our parents yet. A couple of reasons for
4 that: we want to make sure that we're able to get out
5 the most complete information that we can to our
6 families, in all languages that reaches all of our
7 families. And so that has been an additional
8 challenge that we're working through. We also know
9 that with -- several weeks before school starts
10 families may not be able to -- may not be quite ready
11 to make that determination. So we don't have solid
12 -- a solid projection of what the enrollment will be.
13 But we do want to have the increase in enrollment so
14 that any of our Springdale families that want to have
15 their students attend school one-hundred percent
16 virtually would have that option.

17 One thing I think it's important to -- although
18 the 8,000 enrollment cap seems high, again 2,000 of
19 those students are actually in-person brick-and-
20 mortar students who will attend Don Tyson School of
21 Innovation in person. And also, like Fayetteville,
22 our charter is up for renewal this year; so this is
23 basically a one-year request that allows us an
24 opportunity to serve our students how their families
25 choose. The school choice deadline has already

1 passed, so now we're just dealing with students who
2 are already Springdale students and making sure that
3 we're able to have the flexibility that we believe
4 the State has asked us to in serving our families.

5 So, again, the request would be to increase the
6 enrollment cap to 8,000. And I'll be happy to answer
7 any questions that you have.

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Clay,
9 and appreciate the presentation. And I think -- I
10 know whenever I had looked at the original
11 application I had -- I did have some questions. But
12 looking -- getting to see your entire plan I think is
13 very helpful for all of us. And I think in a lot of
14 ways your district has already taken the step with
15 this School of Innovation and learned a lot about
16 what blended learning already is. So I think that
17 the journey you've already been on is going to help
18 serve you well when looking at your district as a
19 whole. So that's going to be helpful.

20 I'll start with Mr. Baldwin to see if there are
21 questions.

22 MR. BALDWIN: I have no questions.

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Williams?

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah, just one point of clarity.
25 The 8,000 enrollment cap, is that only for virtual or

1 is that for the school itself?

2 MS. CLAY: That is for the school itself. So
3 that would be the combination of virtual and in-
4 person. So if you take out the approximate 2,000
5 that will be in-person that leaves about 6,000
6 virtual. But we believe that an 8,000 dollar --
7 8,000 dollar -- 8,000 person enrollment cap would
8 allow us the flexibility to move between in-person
9 and virtual. I will say the building with Phase 2
10 has a capacity -- not enrollment cap capacity, but
11 just building capacity -- of about 2200. So that
12 will give you some idea of what a maximum in-person
13 and virtual ratio would be.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. And do you all plan on
15 -- now the virtual students don't necessarily have to
16 attend -- be at the building itself; that's correct?

17 MS. CLAY: That's correct.

18 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So are you all just
19 allowing students to transfer from, you know,
20 Springdale High or Har-Ber High to the School of
21 Innovation? How does that movement work?

22 MS. CLAY: Sure. So we asked them to complete
23 an intent-to-enroll form, and then it's relatively
24 easy to transfer. We do ask students to commit to a
25 semester, and we have done this for pre-Covid as

1 well, just because once a student is doing work
2 virtually it's not always seamless to transition back
3 to a traditional school environment in the middle of
4 a semester.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, do you have any
7 questions?

8 MS. NEWTON: I'm sorry; did you say me?

9 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. NEWTON: Okay. No questions other than I'm
11 trying to understand again the initial proposed cap
12 of 23,000. What was that -- how did you explain that
13 before?

14 MS. CLAY: Yes, ma'am. We initially put that
15 enrollment cap because that would have allowed any of
16 our almost 23,000 students to attend one-hundred
17 percent virtually. So the district has a little over
18 22,000 students enrolled, and so it would have -- it
19 would have taken care of everyone, if needed.

20 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: And, Ms. Newton, I may can
21 help with that. Because I think that prior to
22 districts receiving all the additional details that
23 have come out regarding Arkansas's plan for Ready for
24 Learning I think that there were some unknowns early
25 on. And districts like Springdale that already had

1 models implemented with the availability for virtual
2 learning, they were thinking ahead. And I think --
3 now that there have been more and more things that
4 have been established with Arkansas Ready for
5 Learning and the flexibility that districts are going
6 to have to be able to provide virtual learning as a
7 component to their overall blended learning, I think
8 that has changed a little bit and maybe affected the
9 way Springdale now needs to plan.

10 Is that correct, Ms. Clay?

11 MS. CLAY: That is a good way to describe it.
12 Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So --

14 MS. NEWTON: Okay. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Mr. Rogers, do you have any
16 questions?

17 MR. ROGERS: No, ma'am.

18 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Kremers?

19 DR. KREMERS: No questions.

20 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: No questions, okay.

21 Panel, any other thoughts or discussion before
22 we make a motion?

23 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, just one quick point of
24 clarity. In the waiver document, there's 23,000
25 still listed there on the -- I believe on the

1 amendment request. So we are looking at this being
2 approved for 8,000. Is that correct?

3 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: That is correct. But I will
4 let Ms. Hyatt respond as far as if there's anything
5 that would need to be done differently.

6 MS. HYATT: No. As long as -- excuse me -- as
7 long as Kendra has said on the record that they wish
8 to change their amendment request from the 23,000 to
9 I believe she said 8,000 -- but maybe I have that
10 wrong, I'm sorry -- but it'll be fine if you approve
11 it as amended during the hearing today.

12 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Well, if we're ready for a
13 motion, I'd make the motion to approve the amendment
14 to increase to 8,000.

15 MS. NEWTON: Second.

16 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: I'm sorry. There was a
17 motion to approve the amendment request for an
18 enrollment cap increase to 8,000. And is there a
19 second?

20 MS. NEWTON: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Motion by Dr.
22 Williams, second by Ms. Newton.

23 All those in favor -- no, we'll do a roll-call
24 so I don't have to back-up.

25 All right. Dr. Williams.

1 DR. WILLIAMS: Aye.

2 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Rogers.

3 MR. ROGERS: Aye.

4 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Mr. Baldwin.

5 MR. BALDWIN: Aye.

6 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

7 MS. NEWTON: Aye.

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: And Dr. Kremers.

9 DR. KREMERS: Aye.

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Congratulations. The
11 motion has passed. Thank you for being with us and
12 we appreciate everyone for hanging in with us.

13 MS. CLAY: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Are we -- Panel
15 Members, are you all okay to move on to the next
16 agenda item or do you need a short break?

17 I think I'm getting --

18 MS. NEWTON: Yes, I'm okay.

19 DR. WILLIAMS: I'm good.

20 MR. ROGERS: I'm good.

21 A-4: CONSIDERATION OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT
22 REQUEST - NORTHWEST ARKANSAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: All right. Well, we're going
24 to go ahead and move to the next agenda item, and
25 this is a request for Northwest Arkansas Classical

1 Academy. Ms. Webb, will you --

2 MS. WEBB: The Northwest Arkansas Classical
3 Academy is an open-enrollment charter that was
4 authorized in 2012. The school currently serves
5 students in grades K-12 with a maximum enrollment of
6 1500 students. The current charter will expire in
7 2028.

8 Superintendent Steven Gast, as well as Suan
9 [sic] Provenza, the Director of Classical Education,
10 and Dennis Felton, Director of Innovation and
11 Expansion, are here to present the request and answer
12 any questions.

13 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I'm checking to see --
14 do we have everyone on the Zoom with us that's going
15 to be speaking for Northwest Arkansas Classical
16 Academy?

17 SUPT. GAST: Yes. In fact, I'd like to add a
18 couple of other names, just in case there is a
19 question that they want to go ahead and answer. I'd
20 like to include Mr. Curtis Shack, Ms. Rhonda
21 Bradford, Ms. Katie Stephens, and Ms. Marla Pearson
22 to answer any specific questions that the Panel may
23 have.

24 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So will all
25 representatives and anyone speaking in opposition

1 please stand -- well, it says "stand to receive the
2 oath" -- Ms. Hyatt, do we need to have everybody
3 stand up that's there to --

4 MS. HYATT: I think they can do it seated. I'm
5 sure that's fine.

6 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I just -- I didn't
7 think we'd been having everyone stand up. But if you
8 will, raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm
9 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the
10 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

11 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

12 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Are we good on the record,
13 Ms. Hyatt?

14 MS. HYATT: I think that there are four people
15 in one room and I only heard one "I do" from that
16 group. So maybe if you guys could say "I do"
17 separately so we can hear it.

18 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Each of the five people
19 in the room said "I do;" Supt. Gast said, "And I
20 did.")

21 MS. HYATT: Thank you. I appreciate it.

22 SUPT. GAST: All right. I did. I thought you
23 were just going to make us all stand up to exercise a
24 little bit.

25 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Well, it -- you were the

1 first group that I saw in a room and that just, you
2 know, threw me for just a minute here. So this is
3 not exactly easy to do remotely when you have several
4 people --

5 SUPT. GAST: Well, and I do appreciate it.
6 Again, my name is Steve Gast; I'm the superintendent
7 for Responsive Education, as well as for Northwest
8 Arkansas Classical Academy. And what I'd like to do
9 is just very briefly introduce the individuals that
10 are present today and their title so that the Panel
11 has an idea of who exactly is representing our
12 leadership team today.

13 We're going to have Ms. Susan Provenza who will
14 be doing the majority of the presenting for the
15 campus. She is our Director of Classical Education,
16 as well as the Campus Director for Northwest Arkansas
17 Classical Academy;

18 Mr. Curtis Shack is our Executive Director of
19 Operations;

20 Mr. Dennis Felton is our Director of Expansion
21 and Innovation and the State Director for our Premier
22 High Schools;

23 Ms. Rhonda Bradford is our Federal Programs
24 Director and Director of Leadership and Staff
25 Development;

1 Ms. Katie Stephens is our Director of Finance;
2 And Ms. Marla Pearson is our Director of Special
3 Programs and Special Education.

4 So we have all of them available and present in
5 case there are specific questions that the Panel will
6 have after our presentation.

7 So at this time I would like to turn the
8 presentation over to Susan Provenza, and she is going
9 to share her screen and talk a little bit more about
10 our amendment and some of the information about
11 Northwest Classical Academy. We are excited to have
12 this opportunity to speak in front of you. This is a
13 very highly successful campus. And based on, you
14 know, this part of our state to want to replicate
15 very high-performing campuses we feel this is a
16 wonderful opportunity to meet the demand that we have
17 for this particular brand of school in Northwest
18 Arkansas.

19 So, Ms. Provenza, I'm going to turn it over to
20 you.

21 MS. PROVENZA: Thank you so much. Can everybody
22 hear me okay, first of all? Hopefully so.

23 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Yes.

24 MS. PROVENZA: Okay. Thank you very much for
25 hearing us today. I want to just talk to you a

1 little bit about our expansion plan.

2 A brief history of our campus -- we opened in
3 2013 with K-8. We're the only classical academy that
4 is tuition free, open-enrollment, and a public
5 classical charter school here in Arkansas. And we
6 were created as a result of collaboration between
7 ResponsiveEd and Hillsdale College Barney Charter
8 School Initiative. We've grown over the years to be
9 K-12, and this past year we had over 840 students in
10 our K-12 program. We have had three graduating
11 classes so far, and we have had fantastic results
12 with those students. They have gone on to do great
13 things -- a hundred percent college acceptance for
14 all of them. This past year we had 17 seniors who
15 earned over 1.5 million dollars in merit-based
16 scholarships. We had two National Merit Semi-
17 Finalists that both went on to be National Merit
18 Finalists. We've been an achieving school and
19 district since we opened. We have "A" report cards.
20 We've been recognized by OEP for Outstanding School
21 in Multiple Areas. And because we are classical and
22 we believe in the whole child, we've had some amazing
23 athletic achievements as well. We currently have the
24 1A Triple Jump State Champion at our school, and
25 we've also had All-State Choir members. So, a lot of

1 great achievements that we have had so far.

2 Our current enrollment -- you can see here with
3 this chart for the 19-20 school year we had 846
4 students. And so we were at capacity in all of our
5 grade levels in K-7, and then we were under that just
6 a little bit in 8-12. Our waiting list in May for
7 the 19-20 school year was still at 610 students. So
8 even at the end of the year we still had families who
9 were applying and wanted to be a part of what we're
10 doing here at Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy.

11 For the 20-21 school year we've got -- we had an
12 open application period that last December and
13 January. And during that time we just were flooded
14 with applications for families who want to be a part
15 of this. You can see that chart there for the
16 different grade levels and how many applications were
17 -- we were receiving during that time. We had 848
18 students who applied for 87 available openings for
19 our 20-21 school year, just during that open
20 application period. We have had additional families
21 apply, even after the application period, and so they
22 have been added to the wait-list as well. So we have
23 a huge demand here in Northwest Arkansas from
24 families who appreciate what we're doing, who want to
25 be a part of what we're doing, and that's really why

1 we're coming to you today. Our current wait-list for
2 the 20-21 school year is at 810 students. We have a
3 wait-list in K-6 at all of those grade levels for
4 students who want to be a part of it.

5 So what do we want to do? You know, we have
6 done some remodeling here at our campus; we've
7 expanded into an adjacent building right here on the
8 property, as well. But we really do not have the
9 room to accommodate all the families who want to do
10 what we're doing here. And so our goal is we would
11 like to open a K-8 campus in Rogers. We would then
12 like to convert our current Northwest Arkansas
13 Classical Academy to a K-8 at the existing location,
14 with doing some renovations. And then we'd like to
15 open a 9-12 campus on the Rogers property in which
16 both the K-8 in Bentonville and the Rogers K-8 can
17 feed into.

18 So in terms of looking at, you know, kind of
19 what we're thinking there with the campus
20 configurations for Bentonville, for 20 through 24
21 stay at our current location. But then as we are
22 able to we would like to turn it into a K-8 campus,
23 and then transition that 9-12 over to the high school
24 on the Rogers property. In Rogers what we would like
25 to do is purchase land and build a K-8 campus,

1 complete with a gym area as well, and then open that
2 K-8 building. And then we've got kind of two plans
3 going here: we've got a conservative plan where we
4 would pay attention to our enrollment numbers,
5 increase those 7th and 8th grade sections so that we
6 can fully fill up that high school and then open the
7 9-12 in 24-25. The aggressive plan would be, if
8 we've already got all of those enrollment numbers, to
9 go ahead and work toward opening that 9-12 building a
10 year earlier.

11 As you guys know, northwest Arkansas really
12 continues to lead the state in growth. We've still
13 got 1,000 people per month moving to this area of the
14 state; so we have a huge influx of families, and so
15 many of them want to be a part of what we do.

16 So our goal then is to continue to provide an
17 open-enrollment public classical education to
18 additional families in northwest Arkansas who really
19 desire to be a part of what we're doing at our
20 school, and to be able to have facilities to match
21 the stellar education that we currently have taking
22 place at our school.

23 SUPT. GAST: Very good. And that concludes the
24 presentation.

25 And, Susan, what I'd ask you to do is maybe to

1 un-share your screen early here so that we can --
2 everyone has the opportunity to be able to see
3 everyone. There we go.

4 So we're open for questions now from the Panel.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

7 I'll go ahead and start with Dr. Williams to see
8 if you have questions.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Thank you.

10 Excellent presentation. And given that
11 presentation, my question is, first, what is your
12 amendment request? Is it just the enrollment cap or
13 is it the -- there was a lot of information that came
14 through on your presentation. So if you could kind
15 of succinctly just state what is the -- your
16 enrollment -- what is your amendment request, I
17 guess?

18 SUPT. GAST: So the amendment request is to
19 increase the enrollment cap, but it's also to be able
20 to move a campus or to build a campus in Rogers on
21 property that we're currently looking at wanting to
22 purchase. The property is contingent upon Panel
23 approval. We didn't want to go ahead and purchase 20
24 acres of land and then come to the Panel. We wanted
25 to make sure that we did it property and did it in

1 the right fashion.

2 So the amendment is two-fold: it is both to
3 increase our cap, and then to put a campus on the
4 Rogers property.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I have a question for
6 counsel in-house.

7 Do they need an approval to build a campus or
8 just the enrollment -- the approving of the
9 enrollment that will lead to the campus?

10 MS. HYATT: Essentially what they're asking for
11 is for a license. So, yes, they do have to have your
12 approval because they're adding an additional campus.

13 So when you originally approved their charter
14 you approved them for a K-12 single-site location; so
15 now they'd be adding a new location and be adding
16 essentially a different campus, so that's a license
17 request. So it's the increase in enrollment and it's
18 the license. And then once they decide that they
19 want to purchase property, of course, they will
20 follow the rules about getting debt approved by the
21 Secretary of Education.

22 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. That's very helpful. I
23 was trying to figure out -- I knew there was another
24 process to follow this, and I couldn't quite get it
25 all aligned here.

1 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Well --

2 SUPT. GAST: Yeah. And Mr. -- Dr. Williams,
3 this will also be -- it'll all be under the same LEA.
4 In other words, we're not asking for another charter
5 school; it all will fall under the NWACA charter.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Outstanding. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: And, Dr. Williams, I think --
8 I'm glad you asked that question. Because I think my
9 assumption when the meeting was scheduled was that we
10 were having this because of Covid and the need to
11 start looking at some enrollment increases because of
12 waiting lists with some of the virtual charters, and
13 I was a little unsure, as I started reading and now
14 seeing the request for a new campus. So in some ways
15 I have a little discomfort with trying to do this
16 virtually, trying to do this at this time.

17 So I'm going to just throw that out for the
18 Panel that to me this just feels like a whole lot
19 more than what I was prepared for us to review today.
20 But I might be alone in that.

21 Okay. Mr. Baldwin, do you have questions?

22 MR. BALDWIN: My question would be, as it was to
23 the increased enrollment cap, how did you guys come
24 up with the 2500 proposed cap? And is that enough?
25 We've seen much larger requests than this, and I

1 guess I'm just curious if this is enough.

2 SUPT. GAST: That's a great question. And I
3 guess, you know, we wanted to be somewhat
4 conservative in the numbers and looking at how big we
5 wanted the campus to be and how big a facility we
6 wanted to build. We thought that this would keep us
7 well within the range of students and staff that we
8 would feel comfortable with on that particular -- you
9 know, in this particular district. So, again, we
10 were trying to be conservative there and keep within
11 what we believe would be the wait-list and how many
12 sections in each grade level that we would be able to
13 provide.

14 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

15 SUPT. GAST: And, Dr. Pfeffer, I would also like
16 to bring up that one of the reasons -- one of the
17 main reasons for the amendment was we have found this
18 particular piece of land and the seller of the
19 property has kind of accelerated our timeline as far
20 as wanting to go ahead and sell that. This
21 particular company has students that do go to and
22 attend our school, and they are offering us a piece
23 of land at a price that we generally could not match
24 if we were just in the general market looking for
25 land up in Bentonville. It's at a premium and

1 they're quite proud of it. And so one of the reasons
2 for asking for the acceleration is because of the
3 fact that we were -- it was requested to move that
4 forward, that if we were not going to purchase this
5 property the seller wanted to be able to start moving
6 ahead with offering it out on the open market. So
7 that was another reason for us to request to come to
8 y'all with the approval.

9 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Thank you.

10 Ms. Newton, do you have questions?

11 MS. NEWTON: I don't. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Mr. Rogers?

13 MR. ROGERS: So the total overall increase that
14 you're asking for is 1,000?

15 SUPT. GAST: That is correct.

16 MR. ROGERS: But you're wanting to start a new
17 campus right now, but --

18 SUPT. GAST: No, sir. We wouldn't be starting a
19 new campus now; we would be building a new campus.
20 We're pretty much at capacity in our current
21 building. And so the 810 kids that we've currently
22 got on our wait-list, there's no place for them -- to
23 put them. And so the additional 1,000 students
24 really is the ask for when we build the new campus
25 being able to populate that with students.

1 MR. ROGERS: And that new campus won't be till
2 2022?

3 SUPT. GAST: Well, that -- yes, depending on how
4 we build -- yeah, the campus would start to populate,
5 yes, in 22-23.

6 Correct?

7 MR. SHACK: Correct. Yes.

8 SUPT. GAST: But, again, this is all contingent
9 on the purchase of that land.

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: So for the upcoming school
11 year, 2020-2021, how many students do you anticipate
12 serving?

13 MS. PROVENZA: At our current campus in
14 Bentonville we're going to have about -- between 920
15 and 940 students for the 20-21 school year.

16 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: But you're wanting an
17 increase to your cap to 2500 total; is that correct?

18 MS. PROVENZA: Correct.

19 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: But you -- so the 848 that
20 are on the wait-list, are they going to be able to be
21 served in 2020-2021 or are they going to have to wait
22 until a new campus is built?

23 MS. PROVENZA: Right. Those are the families
24 that definitely are interested in what we do and
25 wants to be a part of this, but currently with our

1 configurations we don't have the ability to serve
2 them. So we would need an additional K-8 campus to
3 be able to serve those families.

4 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Mr. Rogers, do you have
5 additional questions?

6 MR. ROGERS: Yeah, but I don't know how to --
7 I'm not comfortable right now. I don't -- this isn't
8 what I thought we were -- I thought we were looking
9 at increasing caps because of Covid and trying to
10 serve students.

11 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Yeah, I thought there was
12 immediate need.

13 MR. ROGERS: Now we're getting into a whole new
14 school, and so I don't know; I just -- right now I
15 just have concerns about moving that fast with it.

16 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Kremers, do you have
17 questions?

18 DR. KREMERS: No, mostly a comment: the
19 amendment request did check that they were asking for
20 an expansion of a new campus. So I felt like the
21 amendment request clearly marked that, so I -- you
22 know, I had taken that into consideration with the
23 enrollment increase, which was reasonable. You know,
24 they have a wait-list, so I think, you know, if they
25 can't serve them for the new campus -- you know, I

1 think they're basically looking for the land so they
2 can work on expansion; they can serve students where
3 they're at with a modest request on the cap
4 enrollment. So I feel like they were forthright in
5 their request, just from my perspective, because it
6 clearly said they wanted a new campus expansion
7 because they already see -- you know, in fact the
8 other cases, they're basing it on projecting and they
9 didn't even have full survey results, where here at
10 least, you know, they have a wait-list; you know,
11 there's high demand and they're trying to come up
12 with solutions to work toward that. So I felt pretty
13 good about the request.

14 I did have a question -- actually, I did.

15 On the budget pieces in Year 2 you added in
16 about a half-a-million in administrative overhead and
17 I'm wondering if that's related to the future new
18 campus that you anticipate that administrative
19 overhead that's such an increase. If you would, just
20 share a little bit about that?

21 MS. STEPHENS: Hi. Katie Stephens, Director of
22 Finance.

23 The additional item in the budget in Year 2,
24 traditionally you would see that every year.
25 However, in Year 1 our management fees -- we are

1 budgeting to waive those in the first year due to the
2 start-up costs that we will have in the first year.
3 The second year we have budgeted to collect a portion
4 of those fees.

5 Do you have like additional questions or you
6 just want to know what those -- those are our
7 management fees to our management organization.

8 DR. KREMERS: Right. Just clarification on the
9 difference of, you know, Year 1 is zero overhead and
10 then Year 2 over half-a-million.

11 MS. STEPHENS: So our management organization
12 first makes sure that campus needs are met prior to
13 billing us for those. And in Year 1 we have those
14 costs to start up the campus, those one-time --
15 furniture, IT, et cetera.

16 DR. KREMERS: Well, those are listed as separate
17 line items, but you're saying specifically
18 administrative overhead. So that's more of the
19 management company. You said some of that was waived
20 Year 1?

21 MS. STEPHENS: Can you repeat that please?

22 DR. KREMERS: I was just saying you mentioned
23 the furniture, but I think that's a separate line
24 item. So I was just -- are you saying the
25 administrative overhead Year 2 is kind of partial

1 payment back because Year 1 some of those
2 administrative costs were waived? Is that correct?

3 MS. STEPHENS: No. Year 2 -- in Year 1 we are
4 anticipating that those costs would be waived --
5 actually, ones that would be incurred in Year 2. So
6 it's not carrying over.

7 DR. KREMERS: Okay.

8 MS. STEPHENS: Is that what you're asking?

9 DR. KREMERS: Yes. Yes. Thank you for that
10 clarification.

11 MS. STEPHENS: You're welcome.

12 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Do any of the other
13 panel members have any additional questions?

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Just a comment. You know, as I
15 am looking at the wait-list and so-forth it seems
16 like there's a -- the request is reasonable. I was
17 somewhat -- when I go back and look at the amendment,
18 it does mention the fact of add a new campus; it's
19 listed there. And one domino has to fall before the
20 other. Really here in northwest Arkansas I do know
21 that enrollment is steadily increasing for -- we tend
22 to refer to them as the Big 5, but we may have to
23 start adding Pea Ridge to the Big 5 and it the Big 6,
24 the way they're growing also. So I think there is a
25 need. I think they're moving in the right direction.

1 You know, my question would be probably more
2 internal. Could there have been a better way to call
3 out the addition of a campus in this process or just
4 -- I say "need," my oversight in just not paying
5 close enough attention to the types of amendments
6 that's listed. When I go back, I see add a new
7 campus, address is Don -- Dotson Road, undeveloped,
8 in the Rogers School District. But it did not
9 register with me that we were talking about building
10 a school. So is there anything different that we can
11 do to make sure that that's highlighted for
12 ourselves?

13 MS. WEBB: Sure. We can look at changing the
14 format of the application.

15 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Webb, I would agree.

16 And I'm going to apologize to the Panel because
17 I would also have probably pushed for us to try to
18 have more people here in person, because to me there
19 is a difference. And I think part of it was just
20 because of an early conversation that I'd had; I
21 thought we were making an exception to hear for cap
22 enrollments due to Covid and needing to act quickly
23 to help schools. And not that this isn't a worthy
24 consideration, it absolutely is -- but I did not
25 prepare fully like I should have and probably did not

1 have it set up for you all as Panel Members to feel
2 good about what you're hearing today. But I would
3 also say that when you look at the application at
4 just first glance it is not very clear what was being
5 asked. So that is something we do need to work on
6 internally.

7 Okay. Does anybody have a question for the --
8 for any of the members from Northwest Arkansas
9 Classical Academy?

10 MR. BALDWIN: Madam Chair, let me ask a question
11 as it relates to the building -- or the land, I guess
12 is what we're talking about. Has that been vetted by
13 the Department, and is the Department supportive of
14 that purchase?

15 MS. HYATT: This is Mary Claire.

16 So typically when charter schools are going to
17 incur debt they're required to submit to the
18 Secretary of Education, the Commissioner, a debt
19 request approval. We have not received one from
20 ResponsiveEd yet for this. My understanding is that
21 they were waiting to get approval to move forward
22 before they entered into negotiations to incur the
23 debt. At that time we review the contract and make
24 sure -- Finance will review it to make sure that from
25 a fiscal standpoint it makes sense, and then I will

1 also review them to make sure that all the required
2 contract language is in the -- whatever instrument
3 they're using to incur the debt. We have not done
4 that for ResponsiveEd yet. But we can't do it until
5 we have a copy of the proposed contract.

6 MR. BALDWIN: Let me ask a follow-up question
7 for the school system. You've got a piece of
8 property that has come to you with a good offer -- I
9 guess a good price offer. Would it be possible for
10 y'all to bring this request back next month and still
11 have -- you know, without losing the deal, I guess is
12 the question?

13 SUPT. GAST: Yeah. At this point, no, sir, I
14 don't believe so. I believe that we have really
15 until the end of July to go ahead and move forward
16 with that. And also we have a -- our finance
17 director would also like to make a comment.

18 MS. STEPHENS: I would like to point out that
19 the debt that you're referring to would not be a debt
20 for this campus. This purchase would be made by
21 Responsive Education and the campus would be leasing
22 the building from them. The lease would also contain
23 the appropriate termination clauses where this
24 wouldn't be an extended lease that would qualify as
25 this debt, so --

1 MS. HYATT: Okay. This is Mary Claire.

2 Any lease that's over a year, even if it has a
3 cancellation clause, has to be approved. So you and
4 I might want to have a conversation about when it's
5 necessary to have your debt approved, after the
6 meeting.

7 SUPT. GAST: And, obviously, we're going to do
8 everything -- whatever we have to do, whatever takes
9 place to make sure that we're doing everything the
10 appropriate way and that everything is transparent as
11 far as what we're going to be doing with the purchase
12 of the property and following all the guidelines that
13 are required by the State to make sure we're doing
14 that.

15 And as we've said, as Mary Claire stated, this
16 is something that to go forward we would want to make
17 sure that we were okay going forward instead of doing
18 all the work, doing the contracts, and then not being
19 able to move forward because we didn't have the
20 approval of the Panel to do that.

21 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: So, Ms. Hyatt and Ms. Webb,
22 as far as the application itself and the request that
23 has been made, all of the steps up until this point
24 have been followed; is that correct?

25 MS. WEBB: Yes, ma'am.

1 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Hyatt, this would be a
2 typical request then is what I'm hearing?

3 MS. HYATT: Yes, ma'am.

4 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

5 Mr. Rogers, do you have additional questions?

6 MR. ROGERS: No.

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: No. Okay.

8 So, Panel, if we don't have any additional
9 questions I will entertain a motion -- or if we need
10 to have any additional discussion.

11 DR. WILLIAMS: No, I'd just like to make a
12 comment that this has been a good discussion. You
13 know, I'm just going to start from the basis of my
14 decision-making. One, I always start off with kids.
15 Kids are being educated. They have a wait-list of
16 100-some kids -- 800 -- was it 800 -- over 800 kids
17 on the wait-list. So they're going to have to do
18 something and I don't think there's much of an
19 option. I see a demand for the services from parents
20 and from students. So we're going to get a second
21 bite at the apple when they come back from the debt
22 standpoint, and if things are not in order then we
23 can make the necessary adjustments then.

24 So those are just my comments on kind of where
25 we are in the process. Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Thank you, Dr. Williams.

2 Okay. Would anyone like to bring a motion to
3 the table?

4 MR. BALDWIN: I'll a motion to approve the
5 increase in enrollment, increase the cap, and also to
6 approve the purchase of the land as requested.

7 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion by Mr.
8 Baldwin to approve the increase in the cap and also
9 the addition of the campus. Is that what was the
10 request, moving forward?

11 SUPT. GAST: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay.

13 DR. KREMERS: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: I have a second by Dr.
15 Kremers.

16 And I will call the roll just to be sure we get
17 everyone on record.

18 Mr. Rogers.

19 MR. ROGERS: No.

20 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Kremers.

21 DR. KREMERS: Aye.

22 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Williams.

23 DR. WILLIAMS: Aye.

24 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

25 MS. NEWTON: Aye.

1 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: And Mr. Baldwin.

2 MR. BALDWIN: Aye.

3 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. The motion passes.
4 Congratulations, your request has been approved. And
5 our office will follow-up then with you on the next
6 steps. Thank you all for being with us today.

7 SUPT. GAST: Thank you very much. We appreciate
8 the Panel's consideration.

9 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Thank you.

10 MS. PROVENZA: We appreciate it. Thank you.

11 A-5: CONSIDERATION OF DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOL

12 AMENDMENT REQUEST - CABOT ACADEMIC CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

13 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Panel, we have one
14 additional item remaining on the agenda. And this is
15 an amendment by the Academic Center for Excellence in
16 the Cabot School District. So we have, I believe,
17 Dr. Tony Thurman and also Aaron Randolph from the
18 District. Is that correct, Dr. Thurman?

19 SUPT. THURMAN: Yes. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay.

21 SUPT. THURMAN: First of all, thanks for hearing
22 our request this morning. And Mr. Randolph will be
23 joining me.

24 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. If I can go ahead and
25 swear you both in. Is there anyone else from the

1 District?

2 SUPT. THURMAN: That will be all.

3 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Do you swear or affirm
4 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the
5 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

6 DR. THURMAN: I do.

7 MR. RANDOLPH: I do.

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you. And you
9 may begin your presentation.

10 MR. RANDOLPH: Thank you very much, Panel. We
11 appreciate you hearing us out. As Dr. Thurman said,
12 we're very thankful to have this opportunity.

13 And as many of the other requests that have come
14 through today, really this is in response to Covid
15 and all the demands and requests from our
16 stakeholders to have more of a digital option for us
17 to work with our students. And we're grateful for
18 the blended learning and Ready for Learning
19 opportunity that DESE has put forward, and so we're
20 implementing a lot of those strategies and trying to
21 do what we can to provide the best educational
22 opportunity for our students. And one of the things
23 that we got back -- we actually sent a survey out,
24 similar to a number of other districts, to poll our
25 stakeholders. And so if you'd like to, I'd like to

1 share the results that we got from that.

2 This was an initial survey we sent out actually
3 in early June to talk to our parents and guardians
4 and figure out what exactly that they would like to
5 see and would they even be interested in looking at a
6 digital option for their students if that was
7 available. And we had been talking about, you know,
8 just options that we had. And we have -- so again we
9 have over 10,400 students in our district, and you
10 can see here that we had almost 4,700 responses to
11 the survey. Now this survey was not one-for-one --
12 that is, it was not survey results for every student;
13 this was just families. And so we felt like we had a
14 really good amount of feedback from our community on
15 this. And what we found was of that 4700 families
16 that we had 1,278 that said they would be interested
17 in a digital option for their student. And so, that
18 really pushed us down this path to figure out how we
19 can provide this opportunity for our students.

20 The Academic Center of Excellence has been
21 fantastic. We are up for our renewal I believe next
22 year. And so we knew that, you know, we were looking
23 at some different things there and felt like this was
24 an opportunity where we could help our secondary
25 students specifically. We recognize that the APEX

1 program that we've used curriculum-wise with those --
2 with students in ACE has been very successful and
3 we've been able to see student growth through that.
4 And we have a great campus and a great administration
5 team and faculty already in place that are
6 comfortable with digital learning, that have been
7 doing this distance learning for a number of years
8 and facilitating some onsite instruction. And so for
9 us from the district office, we felt like that the
10 perfect opportunity for our secondary students that
11 didn't want to pursue digital learning was to open up
12 more enrollment to add ACE. And so that's where the
13 request for the enrollment cap going from 500 to
14 1,000 students is reflective of the fact that we
15 wanted to allow a little bit more space for those
16 students.

17 And you can see here on this screen, when we
18 broke it down, we actually sent out -- two weeks ago
19 we sent out a follow-up survey and asked parents to
20 actually commit to being a part of this. And of
21 those responses we can see that we have in the
22 secondary (so 7th through 12th grade) we have 104
23 students in junior high; 55 in 9th grade; and right
24 now 190 students at the high school and currently at
25 our ACE daily campus.

1 And so between that we felt like the 500 student
2 mark is really best to add those students in,
3 continue to use ACE as it stands right now in a
4 traditional conversion charter program, but we would
5 just have another pathway for students that wanted a
6 completely digital option of learning. And that is
7 really what spurred us to come in and request this
8 amendment to the charter itself.

9 I'd be happy to entertain any questions on that
10 or whatever the Panel might decide.

11 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. If you don't mind,
12 let's go ahead and stop the screen sharing, unless
13 there's additional --

14 MR. RANDOLPH: Sure.

15 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: -- information you need to
16 see. And we can always come back to any of the data
17 that you shared. So thank you for that.

18 Okay. Well, I'll go ahead and we'll just start
19 with panel questions. And, Dr. Kremers, we'll start
20 with you.

21 DR. KREMERS: I just want to be clear I
22 understand the two pathways. Are these two pathway
23 options for students that are ALE students or this is
24 for any Cabot -- I just want to make sure I'm clear
25 on who the students would be within this new digital

1 pathway. Because ALE -- right now ACE is ALE, so I
2 just want to be clear with this portion who these
3 students will be.

4 MR. RANDOLPH: So this pathway, this digital
5 pass -- excuse me -- pathway would be for students
6 that opt in to enroll in this digital pathway through
7 ACE. This would not be the traditional student that
8 is a part of the ALE setting.

9 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Do you have follow-up?

10 DR. KREMERS: I want to think for a few minutes.

11 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. We'll come back to Dr.
12 Kremers.

13 Okay. Mr. Baldwin?

14 MR. BALDWIN: No questions.

15 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Williams?

16 DR. WILLIAMS: Question: what is Cabot's overall
17 enrollment?

18 SUPT. THURMAN: In the District, sir, we've been
19 running about 10,400. We were growing fast for a few
20 years, and we've stabilized. So with K-12 about
21 10,400, and about 300 pre-K students; so about 10,700
22 when you add in that pre-K group.

23 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. And this is the only
24 virtual option that the kids currently have in the
25 district?

1 SUPT. THURMAN: No, sir. We actually have --
2 we've provided a traditional setting with a blended
3 learning environment, we have the ACE option for
4 students as well, and we have a purely digital
5 environment that we're also offering for our students
6 during this situation; so, there's actually three
7 different options for students.

8 The ACE pathway is a little different. And we
9 really push that a lot because it does require that
10 the students meet with the teacher on a regular
11 basis, and we do feel like for many of our students
12 this is very advantageous, but it is still aligned
13 very much to the digital academy. The only
14 difference in the two programs are that we -- through
15 the ACE program there is a required seat time where
16 they actually meet with a teacher to monitor their
17 progress, take assessments, and those types of
18 situations. So, two different platforms.

19 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. So how do you envision
20 this working during Covid times? Is there anything
21 different that you need to be doing with the ACE now,
22 or is it just with increased enrollment just to --
23 I'm just trying to get clarity with the number of
24 options that you have.

25 SUPT. THURMAN: Yes, sir. The interesting thing

1 about ACE is the students are scheduled in, so they
2 can space the kids out and it's more one-on-one.
3 When we have a group of kids come in they can sit
4 down with a teacher, and if they're having certain
5 problems in an area -- of course, we've using a
6 platform like most everyone else would be; we're
7 using APEX. So as long as they're making progress on
8 their own they don't have to have that close contact.

9 So basically it gives us an option where if they
10 need more intense support they can still come in and
11 get that. But really it comes down -- it's pretty
12 neat because the kids can come in as much as they
13 need to to get that onsite support through certified
14 teachers, in whatever content area. So I really like
15 this option even more than the traditional option,
16 especially for those kids who struggle academically
17 in one subject or another.

18 DR. WILLIAMS: Outstanding. It sounds like a
19 great program.

20 SUPT. THURMAN: It is.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: I'm just trying to distinguish
22 between the different options and this almost would
23 be the ideal digital model for all districts to have
24 at least some face-time with students.

25 SUPT. THURMAN: And we're actually doing -- I'm

1 going to do a video this afternoon. And, you know,
2 parents -- a lot of parents are choosing the digital
3 option. But I'm trying to get them to understand
4 that this is really just what you said: it's a great
5 option, because as long as their kids are doing
6 great, they're fine. But we can set up a situation
7 -- even if they're concerned about the onsite issue,
8 we can make it one-on-one with a teacher; they just
9 come in and have an appointment and just get some
10 help on a tutorial or whatever they need to do.

11 So it really is the very best option and we're
12 very fortunate to have this set up already in our
13 district.

14 MR. RANDOLPH: And I would say also to that
15 point, Dr. Thurman -- and one thing that we've had to
16 work really hard on is to make sure that parents
17 understand this digital option; that it's not going
18 to be, you know, the AMI scenario that we had in the
19 spring where there was a lot of review and a lot of
20 things that we were just trying to keep things moving
21 forward. But in fact from day one there's going to
22 be, you know, good core instruction happening for our
23 students.

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: So I think -- Dr. Kremers, is

1 this helping to answer your question a little more
2 fully?

3 DR. KREMERS: It is. I guess the only thing
4 that's -- you know, one last follow-up would be: what
5 is it that makes it need to be within the district
6 conversion charter versus outside of the district
7 conversion charter?

8 MR. RANDOLPH: So I -- go ahead, Dr. Thurman.

9 DR. THURMAN: You can go ahead.
10 I'm trying -- Dr. Kremers, I'm trying to
11 understand your question. You were kind of hard to
12 understand, but -- you're very easy to understand;
13 you're just hard to hear today.

14 DR. KREMERS: My soft voice.

15 DR. THURMAN: So the -- I will go ahead and say
16 something to address your earlier question if ALE is
17 under the umbrella for ACE. You're exactly right. I
18 think that was the question you were asking. And if
19 you remember, a couple of years ago we actually
20 expanded the ACE program, because ACE is so flexible.
21 We had a group of kids that really needed to be
22 onsite all day; so we opened a satellite campus
23 that's actually on our high school, and that's listed
24 in the amendment request as one of our approvals from
25 a few years ago. So our ACE has the ACE program and

1 that has the ALE umbrella also.

2 We also have the ACE North program which is on
3 the high school campus. We had a lot of kids that
4 just did not do well with a flexible environment; we
5 needed to keep them under our thumb all day, and
6 parents liked the flexibility of the online learning
7 where they could do some things at home. So we have
8 the ACE North program under this umbrella as well,
9 where they're actually on campus all day, but when
10 they come to their core classes they're under the
11 APEX system with teacher support. But a lot of our
12 students really like this too because they can go out
13 immediately on our campus and go to choir, to agri,
14 they can go to broadcasting, to ROTC.

15 So those two programs work in concert with each
16 other. And a lot of our kids that start out in ACE
17 North on campus actually transition to ACE as they
18 get older because they don't need as many electives
19 and it provides more options for them. A lot of kids
20 have kids already or they have to have jobs to take
21 care of themselves.

22 So I hope that kind of understands the over-
23 arching picture of ACE and what we offer in this
24 school district, for those who didn't already know
25 that.

1 DR. KREMERS: Thank you. Much clarity for me.
2 Thank you.

3 MR. RANDOLPH: And, Dr. Kremers, I would say
4 that where this -- the conversion charter versus say
5 it was just a part of another campus, that we use
6 that -- you know, a digital platform. Again, it
7 comes back to us that we have a building and we have
8 a staff that is comfortable with this model that has
9 been using this, you know, on, you know, a minimum of
10 nine hours -- or weeks students have been on campus.
11 And so we feel like this was an opportunity for us to
12 really emphasize the skills that were already in
13 place as opposed to trying to get additional staff
14 and a whole 'nother principal and whole 'nother
15 building onboard; we can simply bring people into
16 that model and adapt it. And Mrs. Lair [ps] is our
17 principal there and she's fired up and ready to see
18 what we can do with this.

19 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, do you have
20 questions?

21 MS. NEWTON: No, I don't have a question; I have
22 a comment and would cliché that saying about thinking
23 out of the box. I think you guys have really done
24 that. This is a well thought-out comprehensive plan.
25 I think that it actually shows how much thought

1 you've given to serving all students, a variety of
2 diversity -- a diverse approach to serving students
3 that are in the midst of this pandemic and assuring
4 parents that their concerns and their anxieties
5 around their student learning will be addressed. So
6 I congratulate you and I think it's a great proposal.

7 SUPT. THURMAN: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. My only questions -- I
9 was just glancing through the proposal, and you've
10 got a couple of waivers that are here. And so I'm
11 wondering about are these new waivers that you're
12 seeking or are they just updates to waivers that are
13 already available through your ACE program? I just
14 wanted you to talk a little bit about the waivers
15 you're requesting.

16 MR. RANDOLPH: So the specific waivers that
17 we're requesting for the student load for classes and
18 then also just the overall student load, those are
19 new waivers. But, again, with us -- with this being
20 a purely digital class or digital option we wanted to
21 have the most flexibility that we could in staffing.
22 And I'll -- just as an example, Dr. Pfeffer, we have
23 two students that I have dealt with their parents
24 right now that are in an accelerated pathway, and
25 they would be taking algebra as 7th graders. And so

1 they would be doing this on-campus if they were at
2 the junior highs. Well, we have this opportunity, if
3 they choose to go digitally and we have a group of
4 accelerated algebra students -- that we may not have
5 enough students to fill -- you know, to justify
6 staffing a complete position for 25 seats in an
7 algebra class. But what we can do in this is that we
8 could have someone to have a section of algebra with
9 10 students, and then they can also take on a section
10 of geometry, algebra II, so-on and so-forth. And
11 that just gives us more flexibility with staffing and
12 scheduling, and that's where those requests come in
13 in that regard. Those are not things that we
14 currently have in place for the charter, but that
15 will be in place specifically for the digital
16 pathway.

17 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Have you had feedback from
18 your teachers or your board about these additional
19 waivers?

20 MR. RANDOLPH: In fact, we have -- we were
21 talking staffing this morning, Dr. Thurman and a
22 group of us. And we've got -- I've been amazed at
23 how many more -- how many secondary teachers want to
24 be a part of it. And, you know, their big question
25 honestly has been -- you know, when I say, "Okay, you

1 may have 200 students, you may be teaching six
2 different classes; are you okay with that," and
3 they're like, "Absolutely. If I'm doing this purely
4 digital, that I can organize things, I can work with
5 groups of students," they are not batting an eye.
6 And we've tried to be very open and transparent with
7 our staff in that, and it hasn't slowed them down at
8 all.

9 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Panel, do you have any
10 additional questions?

11 Okay. Ms. Hyatt, was there anything else that
12 we needed to consider?

13 MS. HYATT: I just want to clarify one thing on
14 their second waiver request, which is the rules
15 governing special needs funding. They've asked for
16 Sections 4.03.3 through 4.03.2.2.1. I think that
17 should be 4.03.2 through 4.03.2.2.1, which all has to
18 do -- and I'm sorry for all the numbers, but that all
19 has to do with student/teacher ratios. 4.03.3, which
20 they've cited in their request, has to do with
21 professional development and in-service training for
22 ALE personnel, which I don't think they're
23 requesting.

24 SUPT. THURMAN: No.

25 MS. HYATT: So if they could just clarify. I

1 think it was just a typo.

2 SUPT. THURMAN: It is.

3 MS. HYATT: Okay. So it should be 4.03.2
4 through 4.03.2.2.1, just for the record.

5 And then my second question is: will this waiver
6 only apply to your ALE program? It's not for any
7 students outside of your ALE program?

8 MR. RANDOLPH: So are we talking about the
9 specific ALE -- the special needs funding?

10 MS. HYATT: Well, so there are provisions that
11 have to do with PE class size in a different rule.
12 That would apply to any student who's not in your ALE
13 program. So what I'm asking is are you also going to
14 need this waiver for kids who are not in your ALE
15 program, or are you just asking for this waiver for
16 kids in your ALE program?

17 MR. RANDOLPH: This would be specific to this
18 program. And, again, the ALE -- and as Dr. Thurman
19 mentioned, our ALE is under that ACE umbrella. And
20 so we wanted to make sure that was included in there
21 in terms of that funding piece. But this waiver will
22 not be used at any other campus or any other spot.
23 It will only be specific to our conversion charter.

24 MS. HYATT: Does the conversion charter have
25 pieces that are not an ALE piece?

1 SUPT. THURMAN: Yes, ma'am. Yes, absolutely.

2 MS. HYATT: Then the charter will need to add
3 Section 7.01 and 7.11 -- sorry -- 7.10 and 7.11 in
4 the rules governing nutrition and physical activity
5 standards and body mass index for age assessment
6 protocols, which also contain that class size piece
7 for PE. And I apologize, I should've caught that on
8 the front-end when you submitted it. If you'll just
9 say that you would also like to request those pieces,
10 then that'll be fine for the record.

11 SUPT. THURMAN: Thank you for your guidance. We
12 would like to include that.

13 MS. HYATT: That fixes all my issues.

14 SUPT. THURMAN: Thank you.

15 MR. RANDOLPH: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. And I think that if
17 Panel Members have any questions -- that was just
18 about we have a couple of different sections where
19 class sizes are detailed and class sizes for physical
20 education are in a separate rule from the Class Size/
21 Teaching Load.

22 Okay. All right. If there are not any
23 questions or overall comments for -- by the Panel,
24 then I will entertain a motion to approve this
25 amendment request.

1 DR. KREMERS: I move to approve.

2 DR. WILLIAMS: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion by Dr.
4 Kremers and a second by Dr. Williams.

5 Is there any discussion?

6 Okay. We'll do a roll-call vote, if I can find
7 my sheet here so I can keep up with it.

8 All right. Mr. Rogers.

9 MR. ROGERS: Aye.

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Kremers.

11 DR. KREMERS: Aye.

12 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Dr. Williams.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Aye.

14 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

15 MS. NEWTON: Aye.

16 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: And Mr. Baldwin.

17 MR. BALDWIN: Aye.

18 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. The motion passes.

19 Congratulations, your amendment request is
20 approved.

21 Thank you for being with us and answering our
22 questions today.

23 SUPT. THURMAN: Thank you.

24 MR. RANDOLPH: Thank you, Dr. Pfeffer and the
25 Panel.

1 CLOSING COMMENTS

2 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Webb, is that the
3 last item on our agenda?

4 MS. WEBB: It is. Yes, ma'am.

5 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. Panel Members, is
6 there -- do you have anything that we need to
7 discuss?

8 Let's see. The next meeting of the Charter
9 Panel will be --

10 MS. WEBB: August 18th and 19th. It will
11 probably be at least a day-and-a-half due to open-
12 enrollment charter applications, and we have seven of
13 those.

14 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Okay. So, seven open-
15 enrollment applications.

16 And I think that the plan is for next month to
17 try to go ahead and move back to being onsite, if
18 possible. Ms. Webb will be working with the team
19 here to see if we can set-up the room so that we'll
20 have the maximum physical distancing that's needed.
21 We'll be working on looking to see, as far as anybody
22 -- any guests coming in or things like that, how we
23 would do that and be able to meet Health Department
24 guidelines. We may have -- there may be an issue
25 where some of you may not be able to join us, and we

1 could continue to do that by Zoom. But, if possible,
2 we're going to try to have folks back in the building
3 here as much as possible. So, any thoughts about
4 that or questions?

5 We appreciate everyone being patient with us on
6 sound issues today. I know it is harder -- it's a
7 lot harder to do by Zoom sometimes than it is when
8 we're able to be in a room and able to gauge
9 reactions or to take care of questions a little bit
10 easier.

11 **ADJOURNMENT**

12 **CHAIRMAN PFEFFER:** Okay. Well, if nobody has
13 anything further, then I will accept a motion to
14 adjourn.

15 **DR. WILLIAMS:** So moved.

16 **CHAIRMAN PFEFFER:** Okay. Got a motion.

17 **MR. ROGERS:** Aye.

18 **CHAIRMAN PFEFFER:** And already a vote from Mr.
19 Rogers. I will take that as a second and a vote --
20 affirmative vote.

21 Everyone in favor, "aye."

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 **CHAIRMAN PFEFFER:** Okay. Have a great rest of
24 the day. Thank you all.

25 (The meeting was concluded at 11:13 a.m.)

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DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

July 14, 2020

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