

In The Matter Of:
*BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL*

December 18, 2018

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

DECEMBER 18, 2018
8:30 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. MIKE HERNANDEZ	Acting Chairperson ADE State Superintendent
MR. MIKE WILSON	Attorney & Education Advocate
MS. TOYCE NEWTON	Past State Board of Ed. Member
DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS	Past State Board of Ed. Member
MR. GREG ROGERS	ADE Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal and Admin. Services
DR. ANGELA KREMERS	Deputy Director - Career & Technical Education/ Ark. Dept. of Career Ed.

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT	ADE Specialist
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ALSO APPEARING:

DR. ALEXANDRA BOYD	Asst. to Director - Public School Accountability
MR. REGINALD BALLARD	Public School Program Coordinator
MS. KELLY McLAUGHLIN	Public School Program Advisor
MS. VIRGINIA PERRY	Public School Program Advisor

LOCATION:

Arkansas Department of Education
- Auditorium
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas

I N D E X

	Page
Preliminary Matters.	3
Consent Agenda	
Minutes of November Meeting	5
2019 CAP Meeting Calendar	6
A-1: Covenant Keepers Charter School	7, 167
A-2: Exalt Academy of SW Little Rock	13
A-3: Pine Bluff Lighthouse Academy	45
A-4: SIATech	115
A-5: Amendments: Standards for Accreditation.	152
A-6: Amendments: Class Size/Teaching Load	152
A-7: KIPP Delta Public Schools	157
Adjournment	182
Court Reporter's Certificate	185

E X H I B I T S

A-3: PINE BLUFF LIGHTHOUSE ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)
Letters of Support

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. The December 19 [sic], 2018 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the ADE Auditorium. Please silence all your devices.

First, we'd like to introduce the Charter Authorizing Panel. The Authorizing Panel oversees authorization, renewal, revision, and revocation of charters. Recently passed Act 462 of 2017 allows for individuals outside the Department to serve on the Panel. In accordance with Act 462, and in an effort to increase representation from multiple stakeholders, Commissioner Key has named seven members to the Charter Authorizing Panel:

Dr. Ivy Pfeffer, ADE Deputy Commissioner, which is unable to be with us today;

Greg Rogers, ADE Assistant Commissioner for Fiscal and Administrative Services;

Dr. Mike Hernandez, State Superintendent for Office of Coordinated Support and Service;

Dr. Angela Kremers, Deputy Director for Career and Technical Education at the Arkansas Department of Career Education;

Mike Wilson, education advocate and attorney in

1 Jacksonville;

2 Dr. Naccaman Williams, former State Board of
3 Education member from August 11, 2004 to June 30,
4 2011;

5 Toyce Newton, former State Board of Education
6 member from August 18, 2009 to June 30, 2016.

7 As Acting Chair today my goal is to facilitate a
8 fair and responsible hearing. I will request that
9 each person speaking please state your name and title
10 for the record. I will ask that you continue to
11 speak clearly into the microphone for the benefit of
12 the Panel, the audience, and the viewing audience.
13 The entire meeting is being livestreamed and
14 recorded. Ms. Sharon Hill, the court reporter, will
15 be providing a transcript of the meeting and it will
16 be posted to the ADE website.

17 Okay. So it looks like we will go straight into
18 our Action agenda, if Ms. Mary Claire -- is she in
19 the room? Ms. Boyd, we might need you to stand in
20 and tell us -- or, Reggie, tell us -- go over the
21 process for today.

22 MS. BOYD: Good morning. Alexandra Boyd, Public
23 School Accountability. This morning in the beginning
24 you will hear renewal applications. The process for
25 that is the applicants have 20 minutes to state their

1 case, there's 20 minutes for anyone in opposition
2 total, and then the applicant has 5 minutes to rebut;
3 and then you'll go into question-and-answer and then
4 you can vote after that. You can approve the
5 renewal, deny the renewal, you can table it until you
6 get more information to a later date, and you can
7 amend the charter as well. That's the options that
8 you have. Do you have any questions?

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: No.

10 I got the date wrong. It's December 18th, not
11 19th. I apologize for that.

12 CONSENT AGENDA

13 MINUTES

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So the first item it looks
15 like on our agenda is the Consent Agenda. So I will
16 entertain a motion on the Consent Agenda, which
17 includes the Minutes of the November 13th meeting.

18 MS. NEWTON: Move to approve.

19 MR. WILSON: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. We have a
21 motion and a second.

22 Any discussion on the minutes?

23 All those in favor say "aye."

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

1 Motion passes.

2 2019 PROPOSED MEETING CALENDAR

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Second item on the agenda
4 appears to be the Department of Education Charter
5 Unit calendar for 2019. If you've had a chance to
6 review that, does anybody have any questions? If
7 not, I'll --

8 I think I do have a question, if somebody else
9 doesn't. Does anybody know -- there's a date on
10 there for March, it says March 19th, and I know
11 that's during the state spring break date. Is that
12 problematic to have a meeting on that date or --

13 MR. BALLARD: That date was selected -- we
14 typically try to have the meetings after the State
15 Board has their meetings, and so that date was
16 selected for that. If we need to make any
17 arrangements, especially for the Charter Authorizing
18 Panel, then we would -- we can do that.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Right. And I didn't
20 necessarily worry so much about the Panel; it was
21 just that school people may be out and so I didn't
22 know what typically would happen during the March
23 meeting -- that that might be an issue for people
24 coming to the actual meeting. Is that an amendment
25 time or is that -- is there anything specific that

1 normally gets heard or is that just a date where if
2 there's something needed --

3 MR. BALLARD: If needed, yes.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: If needed, okay.

5 Okay. All right. I'll accept a motion on the
6 calendar for 2019.

7 MR. WILSON: Move its approval.

8 DR. WILLIAMS: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
10 a second.

11 All those in favor say "aye."

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

14 Motion passes.

15 ACTION AGENDA

16 A-1: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL:
17 COVENANT KEEPERS CHARTER SCHOOL

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. We'll now move
19 on over to our Action Agenda item. And I see the
20 first item on our list is the Request for Open
21 Enrollment Charter Renewal for Covenant Keepers
22 Charter School. And so with that, I'll turn it over
23 to you, sir -- Mr. Ballard.

24 MR. BALLARD: All right. Thank you. Reginald
25 Ballard, ADE.

1 On January 15, 2008, the State Board of
2 Education approved the application for Covenant
3 Keepers Charter School. The charter is approved to
4 serve students in grades 6-8 with a maximum
5 enrollment of 380. Representatives of Covenant
6 Keepers Charter School are appearing before the
7 Charter Authorizing Panel to request renewal of the
8 current charter, which includes an amendment request
9 to change the sponsoring entity and school name.

10 Will the representatives for Covenant Keepers
11 please stand?

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes. If those members
13 speaking for or against the open enrollment charter
14 application, renewal application, if you would please
15 your right -- raise your right hand. Do you swear to
16 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
17 truth?

18 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. You may be
20 seated.

21 All right. Representatives of the Charter -- or
22 -- representatives of the Charter, if you will go
23 ahead, you have 20 minutes to do your presentation.

24 MR. HARRIS: Good morning. My name is Joe
25 Harris. I'm here on behalf of Friendship Aspire

1 Academy. We've submitted our charter renewal
2 application on behalf of Covenant Keeper Public --
3 Preparatory College -- public -- College Preparatory
4 Charter School. We are seeking a --

5 MR. WALTER: I apologize. Tripp Walter, staff
6 attorney, Arkansas Public School Resource Center.

7 I apologize for the interruption. I just wanted
8 to let the Panel know one thing at the outset, that
9 there is one remaining issue in this matter between
10 Friendship and Covenant Keepers concerning school
11 debt. And so I just wanted to make the Panel aware
12 of that going forward.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

14 MR. SMITH: Mr. Chair, Members of the Panel,
15 excuse my informality. I didn't plan on speaking
16 today, so I apologize for not having my time. The
17 parties have worked very hard to try to come up with
18 a transfer agreement, assignment agreement, and I
19 think virtually all aspects of that have been reached
20 up to this point. There's a remaining debt issue
21 that we need some additional clarity on. The issue
22 specifically is what is possible private debt versus
23 what is actual public debt of the school, and we have
24 some questions about where that may be and what
25 school fund balances could be used to pay off those

1 debts. So I think that still needs to be worked out.
2 And I don't know if the Panel wants to hear this
3 later and give us a chance to visit with your counsel
4 to some degree on those issues or go ahead and hear
5 the presentation now. But we didn't want to put you
6 in a position of taking a vote on this matter until
7 we have some clarity on those issues, both -- for
8 both sides and for the state's side.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any questions? Or maybe,
10 Ms. Mary Claire, if you can come up and give us a
11 little guidance on this?

12 MS. HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt, Arkansas
13 Department of Education. Guidance on whether or not
14 you can move the agenda item or --

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah. So what I'm
16 understanding is we're hearing the renewal
17 application and transfer request. But in light of
18 the things that were brought up in terms of debt and
19 not necessarily having an agreement on the transfer
20 request, we're just trying to see what the
21 appropriate action would be for us to do at this
22 point.

23 MS. HYATT: So as you are hearing it right now
24 and as the renewal was submitted, it is an
25 application for renewal including the transfer to

1 Friendship -- and Friendship being the sponsoring
2 entity. As Mr. Smith just said, I think the
3 agreement isn't finalized, due to some issues about
4 some outstanding debt that may or may not be public
5 debt or private debt from Covenant Keepers. In the
6 hall, Mr. Smith did ask if we could have a minute to
7 talk to see where that might -- where we might stand
8 in that situation. We could hear this later this
9 afternoon. If it's something that the Board -- the
10 Panel isn't willing to hear later, you can go ahead
11 and hear it now. Otherwise, you could table it until
12 this afternoon.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You've heard the various
14 options there. Is there any discussion or
15 willingness to make a motion on what to do in this
16 scenario?

17 MS. NEWTON: I don't know. It seems to be
18 advantageous for both entities to have a discussion
19 and bring back some type of agreement or conclusion,
20 as opposed to us having to decide based on some
21 information that might not be consistent with both
22 sides agreeing together. So that would be -- either
23 way is fine with me. We can hear it now but it may
24 be a disadvantage for both parties actually, and the
25 debtors -- not the people that have the debt; it

1 might be to their disadvantage for us to move forward

2 --

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

4 MS. NEWTON: -- without complete information.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: I agree with you. You know,
6 whenever someone brings me a problem and they have a
7 solution to go with it, I'm all for that. So I think
8 tabling this till later on today would be a good next
9 step.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So do we need a motion to
11 table?

12 MS. HYATT: Yes. The proper motion would be to
13 table it until the end of -- or actually you could
14 move to move it to the end of the agenda, rather than
15 table it and have to pick it back up.

16 MS. NEWTON: That's my motion.

17 DR. WILLIAMS: Second.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we have a motion
19 and a second to move it to the end of the agenda.

20 Any discussion?

21 All those in favor say "aye."

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

24 All right. So we'll move that to the end of the
25 agenda.

1 A-2: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL: EXALT
2 ACADEMY OF SOUTHWEST LITTLE ROCK

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. So moving to
4 the next application, it looks like we have a request
5 for renewal for Exalt Academy of Southwest Little
6 Rock. Mr. Ballard, you are recognized.

7 MR. BALLARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On
8 November 13, 2013, the Authorizing -- the Charter
9 Authorizing Panel approved the application for Exalt
10 Academy of Southwest Little Rock. The charter is
11 approved to serve students in grades K-8 with a
12 maximum enrollment of 540. Representatives of Exalt
13 Academy of Southwest Little Rock are appearing before
14 the Charter Authorizing Panel to request renewal of
15 the current charter.

16 Will those representatives please step forward?

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We've got several
18 shuffling in the room, so I will pause a minute to
19 let them -- everybody get in here.

20 Okay. All those that will be speaking before --
21 for or against the -- in opposition for the renewal
22 of this charter, would you please stand and raise
23 your right hand?

24 Okay. Is that everybody, Ms. Long?

25 MS. LONG: Yes, sir.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Do you
2 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
3 but the truth?

4 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You may be seated. Thank
6 you.

7 Ms. Long, you have 20 minutes if you want to
8 start your presentation.

9 SUPT. LONG: Good morning. Thank you for giving
10 me the time to speak today. I feel truly honored.
11 My name is Tina Long. I have the privilege of
12 serving as the superintendent of Exalt Academy. We
13 are currently in our fifth year of a five-year
14 charter and we, over the last few years, have really
15 laid the foundation for future success at our school
16 and our community. This presentation today, we're
17 going to talk a little bit about how we serve and who
18 we serve and our plan for continuous improvement.

19 So up above you can see is our mission
20 statement. Some key defining factors in our mission
21 statement is mastery. All of our students are placed
22 in groups according to their level and they don't
23 move forward until they've mastered the skills that
24 they need. We also teach key behaviors; you'll see
25 that throughout our entire presentation.

1 Additionally, who we serve is important to us, and so
2 you see that in our mission statement. We also have
3 goals aligned in our charter that you've all received
4 and we've added goals, making sure that we continue
5 to serve the students that we want to serve in the
6 community we want to serve.

7 We have a very high-functioning board of
8 directors, many who have been with us since the
9 inception actually of the charter. Our board is
10 mission-aligned and work very hard to make sure that
11 there's strict oversight of our finances, as well as
12 all areas of academics and governance.

13 If you are here with the board of directors,
14 please stand and be acknowledged. Thank you.

15 So who we serve is very important to us. We
16 currently have around 335 students. 96.6% of our
17 students qualify for free lunch; however, 100% of our
18 students receive lunch and breakfast and snack
19 throughout the day at no charge to them. We have
20 part of the community eligibility program. 100% of
21 our students are minority and 55% of our students
22 qualify for English Language support services. This
23 is higher, of course, than the Little Rock School
24 District, but actually very representative of the
25 community that we live in.

1 Over the course of the last few years we've also
2 worked very hard to make sure that our staffing
3 represents our school; so 77.5% of our team members
4 are also minority.

5 This is a map showing where we are located. So
6 we're on 83rd and Geyer Springs. That star on the
7 map indicates our school -- we're right next to
8 Cloverdale -- and all of our students actually come
9 from our community.

10 So just a quick reminder of some key factors of
11 our school. We have a longer school day, a longer
12 school year. We have an RTI model that is built out
13 throughout the entire day. It's the backbone of what
14 we do, our scaffold approach. There are two teachers
15 in every classroom and we teach key behaviors in
16 every lesson infused throughout the day -- so
17 responsibility, respect, trustworthy, hardworking,
18 caring, and citizenship.

19 So this chart shows just some academic data. We
20 didn't have testing our first year because we didn't
21 have testing grades. So we were serving K2 and then
22 we grew each year. So the first year that we tested
23 was in '16; so that was our benchmark year, so that's
24 why you don't see a growth score there. Every year
25 since the inception of the charter we have grown

1 academically. You can see our score moving in an
2 upward trend for our overall ESSA score, and you can
3 also see our value-added growth score getting larger.
4 We are also really excited that we were awarded the
5 Beating the Odds ELA growth for middle school in the
6 central region, by the University of Arkansas
7 Fayetteville.

8 So we did request an independent analysis from
9 Dr. Sarah McKenzie from the University of Arkansas
10 Fayetteville just recently, earlier this month, and
11 she gave us back some of these statistics. Our 4th
12 grade math last year, their growth score for students
13 of a similar free and reduced and minority population
14 was actually in the 91st percentile. And our 5th
15 grade reading growth was in the 70th percentile. Our
16 5th grade math was in the 80th -- 84th percentile.
17 She also examined our ACT Aspire growth compared to
18 similar schools serving a similar free and reduced
19 lunch population, and our growth was above average
20 overall. They don't have a breakdown by grade level,
21 however, for the ACT Aspire on this. Similarly, in
22 the previous year our 4th and 5th graders, their
23 growth score was -- for reading was in the 91st and
24 84th percentile, and the 5th grade was in the 70th
25 for math.

1 So we mentioned that we have a large English
2 Language Learner population, so that's really
3 important to us that we're serving them really well.
4 It's continued to grow over the years. Our families
5 report that they're very satisfied with all the
6 bilingual communication. All of our materials are in
7 both Spanish and English. We have two office
8 managers who both speak Spanish, as well as other
9 support personnel. We have translators available for
10 all conferences and we really embrace our Hispanic
11 culture and heritage through celebrations and then
12 curriculum. We've also had cultural sensitivity
13 training through the Department of Education.

14 We know that when we're working with students
15 that come from a low income background that there are
16 environmental challenges that many of our students
17 can face. There's a lot of research -- oops --
18 there's a lot of research on trauma affected
19 students. I know that the Department of Education,
20 the ADE Board, as well as ADE staff members have done
21 a lot of training on the adverse impact that these
22 types of experiences can do to children. So
23 statistically children from poverty experience more
24 of these types of events than maybe their affluent
25 peers would. So because we know it's such a big

1 problem for our students we hit it very directly in
2 our school programming. We have a positive behavior
3 model, insuring a very safe environment where
4 children are rewarded and recognized for their good
5 behavior. Children enjoy coming to school. We have
6 extra top tier supports and behavior interventionists
7 and specialists to work with children who need more
8 support or more structure and more positive
9 reinforcement. We've partnered with mental health
10 institutes making sure that those services were
11 available to families, as well as our students.
12 We've also partnered with Dr. McGraw. Dr. McGraw is
13 the executive director of the Women and Children
14 First Center against family and domestic violence.
15 She has delivered professional development to our
16 teachers on how to work with children who've come
17 from that type of environment, how to experience it,
18 how to identify it, and how to offer support for our
19 families.

20 If you've seen me present before, you've seen
21 this slide. This is my favorite slide because it's
22 like the backbone of our entire academic model. This
23 is Milo's Hierarchy of Needs. Our entire framework
24 for our school is built upon this. We intentionally
25 make sure that we hit every level of the pyramid,

1 making sure our students can move all the way up to
2 reach their greatest potential. So extensive food
3 programs, mental health services, co-teacher model,
4 longer day, longer year, school safety program that's
5 very intense, positive behavior supports, mastery
6 learning, and then our values and co-leadership.

7 So we had originally planned that the principal,
8 Mr. Felton, would deliver from here, but he did not
9 swear in because of the change in agenda. Would you
10 like me to continue or have him go?

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We can swear him in, if
12 he's ready to -- okay. If you would just stand and
13 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the
14 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

15 MR. FELTON: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You may -- you're
17 recognized.

18 MR. FELTON: So, good morning.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: If you would, just please
20 identify yourself.

21 MR. FELTON: Yes. Will Felton, principal of
22 Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock.

23 When I came aboard we started looking at all the
24 data that they had collected over the years with
25 direct instruction, the ACT Aspire, NWEA. And one of

1 the things that we started looking at is basically we
2 needed more support. So we put in place to help
3 support teachers in analyzing and gathering data,
4 make sure that our formative assessments are aligned
5 to state standards. We also added more support in
6 behavior with Deans of Students on both floors to
7 allow coaching sessions with kids and Responsive
8 Education.

9 I'm sorry, I'm a little sick.

10 Our PLCs are -- we meet twice a month. We look
11 at data every day. The DI is constant, data
12 retrieval, looking at -- moving kids to the right
13 groups they need to be at. This has also helped us
14 in restructuring -- rescheduling our day, looking at
15 our intervention courses, moving kids to the correct
16 area where they're at. So if a child is succeeding
17 and moving forward, he goes there; if another child
18 is struggling, then they'll be with groups in their
19 same area. So they're receiving individualized
20 instruction.

21 We made sure that all of our scope and sequences
22 were aligned to the Arkansas state standards and that
23 direct instruction does compliment the Science of
24 Reading.

25 We have structured interventions, not just for

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RTI but also ELL and dyslexia services too.

So one of the things we know that brings students is that we have to have great teachers. So we spent two weeks at the beginning of the year for paid summer training for our newly hired teachers, and then one week for returning teachers to make sure they need what they -- they have what they need. We try to do weekly professional development centers every week, two hours on Wednesdays -- three hours on Wednesdays -- excuse me. These are focused on what we're seeing in the classrooms through classroom observations or what the data is telling us. We have found many things that have popped up and said, you know, we really need to work on this through these PLCs, and the teachers have worked with the leadership in order to make this happen.

We do have full PD sessions throughout the year. Yesterday was a PD session for our teachers. And then all of our teachers were placed on Track 1 for observations, PGPs and continuous feedback -- not that they all need it, we just felt like it was just good to have it in place.

We are committed to the RISE initiative and the Science of Reading. We have mentoring programs on different avenues. We have what the state provides;

1 we have within our own building, and support, and
2 then weekly check-ins. We're constantly in the
3 classrooms. We do five-minute observations,
4 engagement observations, full observations, and those
5 kinds of things. Everything is designed not as a
6 gotcha moment, but to support our teachers. One of
7 the things that we didn't want was a high turnover
8 rate. So we've met with teachers to talk about, you
9 know, what do you need to be successful, what do you
10 need to be happy, and the teachers gave us some
11 really good feedback that we've acted on.

12 Part of our population is that, you know, we
13 constantly have this need to improve student
14 achievement. And then this idea that, you know, all
15 the things that we've working on to make sure they
16 work, we surely -- it was hard for teachers to meet
17 every individual need, so we added five
18 interventionists that were -- that had degrees that
19 could work with kids in the area of reading and math.
20 This basically increased our capacity to do RTI,
21 allowing us more movement with groups of kids and
22 smaller groups, which we know works. This is
23 actually for reading proficiency in using those
24 services.

25 Then three administrative support teams allows

1 two directors of curriculum to work with the teachers
2 as a coaching session and then I come in and help on
3 a more leadership observation, academic leadership
4 position.

5 Now financially speaking, we carried a balance
6 this year of \$760,000 into the new school year, which
7 is very good. We were very happy to -- and we make
8 sure that all -- any or all funds that we spend is
9 strictly toward -- targeted toward improving student
10 achievement. We have a director of Finance and
11 Compliance who's full-time and our Chief Operating
12 Officer is full-time, and then we're under contract
13 with the APSRC to back-check us. So the fund balance
14 left over shows that we are prepared for any
15 unforeseen expenses or any changes and gives us the
16 flexibility we need in order to perform for student
17 achievement.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: There's about six minutes.

19 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

20 MR. JUARTA: Good morning. My name is Leavardo
21 Juarta [ps]. I have been to school for four years,
22 and I want to talk to you about a full immersion
23 program. Kids that need help with language skills
24 get help by an interventionist. English language and
25 math are taught in small groups. Kids who may not be

1 learning or struggling for Spanish to English
2 translation. When I first came to the school, I was
3 nervous. Now I'm not, thanks to my teachers and
4 friends. It turns out there are more children like
5 me. Now we are confident. This school is our home.
6 Keep it open for the next generation.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

8 MR. JUARTA: I'd like to welcome by friend Edna.

9 EDNA: Good morning. My name is Edna. I am in
10 the 5th grade. I have been at Exalt Academy for
11 three years now. I really love my school because of
12 the long hours. During that time we have one-on-one
13 instruction time, like writing practice. This year
14 we have been cooking in other classes. We really
15 appreciate these classes because we work hard in
16 reading, writing, and math.

17 Now I would like to introduce you to my friend
18 Michelle Anjule [ps].

19 MS. ANJULE: Hello. My name is Michelle and I
20 have been at Exalt Academy for two years. I like my
21 school because we have nice teachers and students
22 from different cultures and we celebrate those.
23 Those are Hispanic Heritage Night, African American
24 Night, and Fall Fest. The school is important to our
25 community. We all take responsibility. We care for

1 our school and each other. Our school scored a 94%.
2 We feel safe at school. This is why I hope it
3 continues to grow.

4 MR. GARRIDO: Hello. My name is Santiago. I'm
5 in the 1st grade. I read at 2nd grade level. I read
6 better than my cousins. I read like a 3rd grader. I
7 read chapter books; I read both at home and school.
8 My teachers encourage me to read more and more.

9 Now I'd like to introduce my friend Taylor.

10 MS. TAYLOR: Hello. My name is Crishella [ps]
11 Taylor. I've been in -- at Exalt Academy for two
12 years. I love math and drawing and art class. When
13 I came to this school I was scared. Now I'm not. I
14 made a friend. She is very nice. Making new friends
15 used to be hard for me. Our teachers teach us how to
16 make friends. Now I have fun and learn; that's why I
17 love going to school. Now, my friend Joel.

18 MR. ROBINSON: Good morning. My name is Joel
19 and I'm in 1st grade. I take 3rd and 2nd grade
20 classes, and I like being at Exalt. We would
21 definitely request that you approve our school
22 charter so that kids like us can keep moving forward.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Long, do y'all have any
24 more?

25 SUPT. LONG: No.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I just want to say thank
2 you to the students. That was very brave of you. I
3 know it's hard to come up here and talk to a bunch of
4 adults, but y'all did a great job. Thank y'all.

5 SUPT. LONG: Thank you, sir.

6 [APPLAUSE]

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we'll now -- is
8 there anybody here to speak in opposition to renewal
9 of the charter?

10 Not seeing any, you do have an additional 5
11 minutes to close, Ms. Long, if you need that time.

12 SUPT. LONG: No, sir. Just wanted to thank you
13 all for hearing us today.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. So
15 you've heard the presentation, Panel Members. We'll
16 now open it up to questions from panel members, and
17 we can start over with Mr. Wilson.

18 MR. WILSON: Could you characterize for me
19 retention of students from year-to-year and retention
20 of teachers from year-to-year? How does that look?

21 SUPT. LONG: Yes, sir. Retention of students is
22 interesting because we have a very transient
23 population, and so students come and go, depending on
24 relocation. We've had many students leave and then
25 many students come back, same students. We also have

1 a lot of moving back and forth between Mexico and
2 here, so that is a challenge for us. However,
3 because our school program reaches kids exactly where
4 they're at, even if they go to another school and
5 then return back, we still placement test them and
6 teach them at their level and then grow them. We
7 have a core group of children who've been with us,
8 but that is something that we're continually
9 struggling with and working with and making sure that
10 no matter where they go and come that they're always
11 welcomed back and taught at their level.

12 For teachers, it's been a challenge -- a
13 challenge for our population. Our work is really
14 hard. As I mentioned, we have a nine-and-a-half-hour
15 school day and the teachers work exceptionally hard.
16 We put two teachers in a classroom to share the case
17 -- the workload, but this year because staff
18 retention has been a problem for us we added the five
19 extra interventionist positions. That's because
20 we've been in a really strong financial position and
21 because our student population has grown we have the
22 resources coming in to be able to do that now and
23 still have a nice -- maintain our budget and we're
24 able to do it now. So those five extra positions I
25 believe have helped this year. There has been a 30

1 -- we compared last year's staff retention to this
2 year's staff retention, from August to December, and
3 we've actually had a 30% decrease in staff retention
4 loss than we did last year. So we're hoping that
5 that will continue because of the extra support that
6 we're putting into the school.

7 MR. WILSON: The loss in retention has
8 decreased?

9 SUPT. LONG: That's right.

10 MR. WILSON: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.

12 MS. NEWTON: I'm impressed that you are working
13 with students and families over different areas and
14 wanted to know how you felt, as a segway to Mr.
15 Wilson's question, about the progress and how you
16 measure. So if you had to grade your progress around
17 retention, if you had to grade it around academics
18 and social development of students, how would you
19 look at those three areas in terms of the gains that
20 you've made within the years that you've been a
21 charter school?

22 SUPT. LONG: I really appreciate that question.
23 Thank you. It's really difficult because we are a
24 school and we know that academics is a priority and
25 we take very seriously the ESSA reporting and

1 academic growth for our students. But we know that
2 there are many other areas, right, that aren't
3 measured for us. Behavior and student engagement is
4 a huge focus of ours and making sure that students
5 have a love for learning. If we look at where the
6 school was the first few years with behavior -- I
7 have a zero expel -- we've never expelled a child
8 from our school, and we never will. Children come to
9 us with significant behavior problems and we work
10 with them and we teach them appropriate ways to
11 behave, regardless of their behavior, and it has had
12 a tremendous impact on our school. We've had many
13 Department members, as well as Panel members come in
14 and tour the school. We have very, very high levels
15 -- it's around 97% -- engagement levels at all times;
16 significant progress from the first few years where
17 we were like "just stay in the classroom," like, "we
18 just need you to stay in the classroom right now."
19 Our behavior infractions have declined by 60% the
20 previous year, another 60% last year, and we're
21 seeing a huge decline again this year. We're
22 trending that way. We have only had two out-of-
23 school suspensions this -- two students -- this year,
24 so -- and we've had a few in-school suspensions, but
25 very minimal. So our goal is having students love

1 school, having students learn how to be a student and
2 how to be successful. So I would grade that we're
3 doing very, very well in all of the other areas, and
4 we're hoping to see that translate into strong
5 academic performance in the very near future.

6 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

7 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Rogers.

9 MR. ROGERS: I don't have any questions. I am
10 one of the panel members that did go to the school in
11 the past couple of weeks, and when I went there I was
12 impressed by the school. It was quiet in the halls,
13 but when you go in there, into the classrooms, the
14 teachers were engaging the students -- and more
15 encouraging was the students were engaging with the
16 teachers. You could tell that the teachers enjoyed
17 being there as much as the kids did. And I went
18 through -- and I even talked about when I walk into
19 some of the schools you go to you feel a heavy
20 atmosphere; you just feel that it's just heavy, but
21 you don't -- I didn't feel that when I came in there.
22 In fact, it felt light in there and it felt good in
23 there, even for me for my first time being in there.

24 So I didn't have any questions, but I do know
25 that over the past few years there had been some

1 behavior problems that they had been struggling with,
2 but this past year when I went in there a couple of
3 weeks ago I can tell you that they've done a great
4 job in trying to take care of those.

5 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Williams.

7 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I would like for someone
8 from the Department -- I want to talk about the
9 letter grade. I was looking at the school report
10 here and I'm trying to reconcile the academic piece
11 with what I'm hearing here. Uh-huh. You know, I was
12 looking at the -- what report is this -- the My
13 School Info report and I see that the school has a
14 letter grade -- I believe it was a D and -- for this
15 year. What was the previous letter grades and -- I'm
16 -- as I watched and listened to the kids and hear the
17 testimony and so-forth, it doesn't sound like a D
18 school. So I'm just trying to make sure I'm not
19 missing anything in this process.

20 DR. BOYD: Just one moment.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. No problem.

22 DR. BOYD: So I'm looking at the reports and I'm
23 looking at the overall scores and I'm looking at the
24 growth for the last three years -- or two years. So
25 I think you're right, Dr. Williams; the letter grades

1 are not reflective of the work that you see presented
2 before you. One thing that I'm looking at is showing
3 that the -- I mean, they are improving from year to
4 year. Well, it seems to be slow improvement in terms
5 of academic assessment, but seems to be fast
6 improvement in terms of school culture and students'
7 attitudes towards learning. So a couple of things
8 that you probably want to look at is the value-added
9 growth and then the school quality and student
10 success indicators. Those -- the school quality and
11 student success indicators kind of give you a preview
12 for what should be expected in the coming year. One
13 thing of note is that the school has increased
14 achievement with one of the struggling student
15 subpopulations, which is not common across the state.

16 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

17 DR. BOYD: So the students with disabilities,
18 they show about a 10-point improvement there with
19 student quality -- I mean, school quality and student
20 success, with growth. They're showing improvement
21 with their growth score overall.

22 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

23 DR. BOYD: So those are a couple of indicators
24 that you could look at to get a little bit more
25 detail for how well the school is doing overall. I

1 think the good news is that the school is moving in
2 the right direction.

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

4 DR. BOYD: Do you have more detailed questions I
5 could answer?

6 DR. WILLIAMS: No. I was also looking at the
7 scatterplots.

8 DR. BOYD: Right.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: And the scatterplots was just
10 really showing -- let me find one here -- there was a
11 couple of them I was looking at -- was falling in
12 that fourth quartile.

13 DR. BOYD: Right.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. On the two that I was
15 looking at. And I just wanted to kind of reconcile.
16 And that fourth quartile is just basically lower
17 achievement, lower growth quartile on the
18 scatterplot.

19 DR. BOYD: Uh-huh. If you -- are you on My
20 School Info or are you looking -- are you looking at
21 the paper report?

22 DR. WILLIAMS: I'm looking at the My School Info
23 that was presented in the agenda.

24 DR. BOYD: In the agenda. Okay.

25 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. Uh-huh.

1 DR. BOYD: So if you look -- okay.

2 DR. WILLIAMS: And one of them was on the -- it
3 has page 8 on it.

4 DR. BOYD: Hold on one second. Sorry. I
5 apologize for not being more prepared for this.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: No. No, that's all right. I
7 understand. So I think that -- I guess, if I'm
8 hearing correctly, that the key takeaway -- because
9 this kind of sets the bar for us going forward on
10 looking at some other schools and trying to reconcile
11 the letter grades, because the letter grades can be a
12 red flag for us.

13 DR. BOYD: Right. I mean -- I mean, there's a
14 lot to take into account here.

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

16 DR. BOYD: For me, looking at the chart on the
17 bottom of the first page that has those bar graphs --

18 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

19 DR. BOYD: -- that's showing pretty steady
20 improvement from the previous year to this year.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

22 DR. BOYD: And then, again, I'm just going to
23 harp on the students with disabilities category.
24 That is not something that we've been seeing --

25 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

1 DR. BOYD: -- across the state. We haven't been
2 seeing improvements in that subgroup. So --

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

4 DR. BOYD: -- that's just something to keep in
5 mind.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: So they're tracking positive, is
7 kind of like the bottom line?

8 DR. BOYD: Yeah --

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

10 DR. BOYD: -- that's what I'm saying.

11 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Good deal. Thank you.

12 DR. BOYD: Uh-huh.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. I just have a few
14 questions. I know that it may be for Mr. Felton or
15 for you. The discussion around curriculum and the
16 RISE initiative specifically, I know when I did my
17 site visit there was a lot of discussion about that.
18 But I know in subsequent visits there's been some
19 question about implementation. So can you talk
20 about, you know, what you see as far as the training
21 that's been done versus what you guys are doing to
22 insure good implementation as far as the RISE
23 initiative?

24 SUPT. LONG: Absolutely. So we have a
25 curriculum that is a phonics-based phonemic awareness

1 curriculum where regardless of the students' grade
2 level or age they're placed according to what sub-
3 skills they need. It's very important that children
4 receive previous skills before they can -- to build a
5 foundation to move forward. So our school does that.
6 We use all of the different phonemic awareness, sound
7 recognition, everything that we need to for the RISE
8 initiative. We have selected two teachers who are in
9 the RISE initiative who go to all the RISE trainings
10 and have had the observations, and we've had people
11 come into the school as well. Our curriculum is a
12 little different than a traditional school
13 curriculum. It is a mastery-based curriculum, but it
14 is fully aligned. I know there was a couple of
15 questions about it and we sent the scope and sequence
16 and the alignment documents to the RISE trainer as
17 well so that she could have that information for our
18 students. But we don't move forward until they have
19 those skills. Those teachers also lead PLCs with
20 their grade levels to make sure that that RISE
21 information that they're receiving is disseminated.
22 So one of the things that they were doing that they
23 received from the RISE initiative that's not in our
24 curriculum is the word walls. So we have the word
25 and sound walls up in all of our primary grade

1 classes now. And our RISE teachers are teaching all
2 of our teachers on how to put those sounds up after
3 the students have mastered that sound, to build upon
4 it.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So are you guys going in
6 and just making sure that implementation is
7 happening, that y'all are seeing that evidence in the
8 classroom?

9 SUPT. LONG: Yes, sir. Mr. Felton, go ahead,
10 you do that.

11 MR. FELTON: You know, they've released the RISE
12 on the ArkansasIDEAS. So we're going through that
13 over the Christmas break to look at that, see -- give
14 options for our teachers to take. I'm going to do it
15 over the break so I can see what's involved and then
16 add that as a component too. We've also brought in a
17 couple from Lucy Calkins, which is aligned to it as
18 well.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. And I think some of
20 my -- I don't know if it's really a question -- more
21 of an observation. So I kind of understand where Dr.
22 Williams is coming from is, you know, when you look
23 at kind of the history of the school you see these
24 multiple years of letter grades that aren't where
25 they need to be. But at the same time, you know, I

1 know when I was there one of the things that stuck
2 out to me, much like Mr. Rogers had talked about, was
3 kind of how the building functioned. So when I --
4 you had shared about the new behavior matrix and
5 things that have been implemented, and when I look at
6 your behavior data I see that it was -- you know,
7 there was multiple infractions, all the way down to
8 almost none in the last year. I do you see some of
9 those -- even though it's not where we want it to be,
10 you know, I do see some positives in terms of your
11 reading scores on the upward trend, reading at grade
12 level I think went from 7% up to 17%. And then
13 looking at your overall literacy trend, it's going
14 upward. And so that kind of in my mind puts me in a
15 kind of -- you know, is it growth fast enough? Is
16 it, you know, where we want it to be? And, you know,
17 what comfort, I guess, would you give to tell us
18 that, hey, we are moving in the right direction or,
19 you know, this is just an upward blip and, you know,
20 we're going to level off or --

21 SUPT. LONG: So, Dr. Hernandez, the answer is
22 no, it's not fast enough. We focused on school
23 culture and behavior first. That was where most of
24 our training was, most of our professional
25 development, because we felt that was really

1 important. Our focus now is 100% on academics
2 because behavior is no longer a concern for us. Our
3 teachers are trained and our teachers handle the
4 behavior; our Deans of Students handle the behavior.
5 That's no longer a concern. All of our professional
6 development -- we've hired a SIOP trainer come in, a
7 Sheltered Instruction trainer come in, working on
8 building reading and language and writing into all of
9 our subjects. We have brought in an explicit
10 instruction trainer who's done side-by-side coaching.
11 We are investing a significant amount of money into
12 academics. Culture we got; now, so we expect a huge
13 upward trend in academics for our school now that
14 we've laid that foundation. And we appreciate you
15 asking that question because that's exactly where we
16 need to be focusing.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Other questions? I
18 know Ms. Kremers had to step out for a minute; you're
19 back. Were there anything, questions you may have
20 had about the application?

21 DR. KREMERS: No. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Any others down
23 on the Panel?

24 Okay. Not hearing any other questions, I would
25 entertain a motion. Our options are -- Ms. Hyatt,

1 make sure we have all our options here.

2 MS. HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt, Arkansas
3 Department of Education.

4 So if you don't have any more questions, you can
5 move to renew the charter, you can move to non-renew
6 the charter, you can move to delay the vote on the
7 renewal in order for any remaining issues that you
8 have to be cleared up. It doesn't sound like there
9 are any, but that is an option.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Just to make
11 sure and clarify -- in reading the notes there
12 doesn't seem to be any remaining concerns from a
13 legal aspect or application standpoint. Is that
14 correct?

15 MS. HYATT: There are none from Legal. Let me
16 just check -- I don't think there are any from the
17 Internal Review Committee, but there are no legal
18 concerns remaining.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And they're asking for a
20 three-year renewal?

21 MS. HYATT: I believe that's correct.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And that's something we can
23 modify if we want to? I mean, we have options of
24 doing anything on that?

25 MS. HYATT: You can grant a renewal up to 10

1 years, I believe. But I do think their application
2 specified three years.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right.

4 SUPT. LONG: Dr. Hernandez, we respectfully
5 asked for three years because of our report card
6 grade. We understand that we're not performing where
7 we need to and we're confident when we come before
8 you that won't be the case again.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: I appreciate the comments because
10 I was getting ready to make a recommendation -- a
11 motion for three years based on the grade and so that
12 we can see the continued improvement and go forward
13 from there.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So is that a motion?

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, it is a motion for Exalt
16 Academy of Southwest Little Rock for a three-year
17 charter renewal.

18 MR. ROGERS: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion for
20 renewal and a second.

21 Any discussion?

22 Okay. All those in favor say "aye."

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

25 Motion passes. Congratulations.

1 If you will, let's take a --

2 [APPLAUSE]

3 SUPT. LONG: Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You do have a voting sheet,
5 if you'll take a little bit to make sure we fill that
6 out. Ms. McLaughlin, were you able to get that link
7 working?

8 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

10 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll go ahead. It
12 looks like we've got some reasons in there. We'll go
13 ahead and go through, if you would read your reasons.
14 We'll start with Dr. Kremers.

15 DR. KREMERS: I voted for the motion. There is
16 definitely evidence of improvement in academic
17 performance and a strong commitment to -- from the
18 leadership I can see in the school for improvement
19 and student success.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Ms. Newton.

21 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the approval. And my
22 justification as being the positive advancements made
23 in both the social aspects of education, but also the
24 educational pieces of it and the progress they're
25 making.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Rogers.

2 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion. I
3 understand that they still have work to do. There is
4 positive growth in the right direction.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Williams.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted for approval. I have
7 concerns about the D letter grade for Exalt, but the
8 school has shown continued improvement in several
9 areas.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. And Mr. Wilson.

11 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion. My
12 impression is the same as the other panel members.
13 The progress -- good progress has been made recently
14 and the expectation is that academics will be
15 emphasized and focused.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Long.
17 Thank you.

18 SUPT. LONG: I appreciate it. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank y'all.

20 Okay. Ready to move on or does anybody need a
21 break? Good?

22 Okay. We'll give a few minutes to let people
23 transition. We're going to take a five-minute break
24 to let everybody transition.

25 (BREAK: 9:28 - 9:34 A.M.)

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll resume.

2 A-3: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL: PINE
3 BLUFF LIGHTHOUSE ACADEMY

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Next on our list is Request
5 for Open Enrollment Charter School Renewal: Pine
6 Bluff Lighthouse Academy. Mr. Ballard, you are
7 recognized. But before recognizing you, I want to
8 make sure I know -- the first time, your first
9 charter meeting was kind of an on-the-phone thing.
10 So we -- I just want to make sure we recognize our
11 new charter director, Mr. Reginald Ballard, so -- for
12 our viewing audience at home as well. So, welcome.

13 [APPLAUSE]

14 MR. BALLARD: Thank you, Dr. Hernandez. I
15 appreciate that.

16 So we're on item number three from the action
17 agenda, which is a request for enrollment -- open
18 enrollment charter school for Pine Bluff Lighthouse
19 Academy.

20 On November 8, 2010, the State Board of
21 Education approved the application for Pine Bluff
22 Lighthouse Academy. The charter is approved to serve
23 students in grades K-8 with a maximum enrollment of
24 650. Representatives of Pine Bluff Lighthouse
25 Academy are appearing before you, the Charter

1 Authorizing Panel, to request renewal of their
2 current charter. They have also -- would like to
3 request to provide you guys with a pamphlet before
4 that presentation. Is that all right, Dr. Hernandez?

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Uh-huh.

6 (WHEREUPON, A-3 Exhibit One (1) was marked for
7 identification and appended.)

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. While he's passing
9 that out, if members of the Lighthouse charter
10 applicants, those speaking in favor of the
11 application and those speaking in opposition, if you
12 would please rise, raise your right hand. Okay. Do
13 you affirm that the testimony you're about to give
14 will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
15 the truth?

16 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

18 Okay. Will representatives of the charter -- if
19 you would, you have 20 minutes to start your
20 presentation.

21 MS. ROBERTS: Good morning. I'm Lenisha
22 Roberts, the executive director for Lighthouse
23 Academy in Pine Bluff.

24 So we're going to start with who we are. We are
25 a national nonprofit charter network that is

1 dedicated to insuring a college education for a
2 population of students who would otherwise face a
3 future with limited opportunity. Lighthouse sets out
4 to distinguish itself by forming a family of schools
5 that use an arts-infused K-12 college prep program to
6 generate results while using all of the state and
7 federal funding provided.

8 Pine Bluff Lighthouse opened in 2011 to 165
9 scholars in grades K-4. Each year the school added a
10 grade level. Currently, in 18-19, Pine Bluff has 270
11 scholars in grades K-8. Throughout the years the
12 school has always enjoyed the support of parents and
13 the community.

14 Pine Bluff's school mission is we are committed
15 to serving our school community by name and need
16 through an engaging, challenging, and positive
17 learning experience.

18 I do want to recognize our board of directors.
19 We do have two here today, Ms. Goodwin and Ms.
20 Aldridge. Won't you please stand?

21 The community we serve -- Pine Bluff Lighthouse
22 charter school is located in the heart of Pine Bluff.
23 As reported by the U.S. Census, the population of
24 Pine Bluff has declined 12.4% in the last seven
25 years, and only 17.6% of the residents have a

1 bachelor's degree or higher.

2 Pine Bluff Lighthouse charter school currently
3 has 270 scholars in grades kindergarten through 8th.
4 Our school serves 74 families with two or more
5 children enrolled. Pine Bluff Lower and College Prep
6 Academies both have a Title 1 school-wide
7 designation. All of our students currently eat free.

8 A little bit about our educational model -- our
9 current math curriculum in kindergarten through 8th
10 grade is Eureka Math. Eureka Math is aligned to
11 common core state standards, has a heavy emphasis on
12 real world problem-solving, conceptual understanding,
13 mathematical justification, and mathematical fluency.
14 It also has embedded formative assessments. For
15 grades 3-8 in our literacy we utilize Expeditionary
16 Learning, along with supplemental resources to
17 implement the 3-6 grade word study components of
18 Arkansas RISE. Expeditionary Learning has a balanced
19 literacy approach which emphasizes close reading of
20 complex informational texts and guided reading. The
21 K-2 literacy curriculum includes core knowledge and
22 Heggerty. It emphasizes foundational skills, read-
23 alouds, shared reading instruction, independent and
24 guided reading, phonics, and phonological awareness.
25 As part of our standards-driven planning and

1 instructional resources, our teachers develop
2 curriculum pacing guides, bi-weekly assessments, and
3 re-teach methods based on formative assessment data
4 with guidance from our math and our literacy
5 specialists.

6 Arts infusion is a big part of our model. We do
7 have art teachers that co-teach with content area
8 teachers. Our school partners with the UAPB art
9 department and Arts and Science Center of Southeast
10 Arkansas and we expose our students to different
11 artists throughout the year.

12 The social development is something we hold near
13 and dear to our hearts. It's a strong component of
14 our educational model and we believe that the
15 building of relationships in the classroom is a key
16 component. We do have Morning Meetings, as well as
17 Closing Circle daily. At the beginning of each day,
18 students participate in Morning Meetings, which is a
19 component of responsive classroom. And as a part of
20 the Morning Meeting students greet each other, they
21 have a share-out, an activity, and it ends with a
22 morning message to set the tone of the day for each
23 classroom. Our Closing Circle is a manageable way to
24 peacefully wrap up the day and send students off
25 feeling a sense of accomplishment and belonging. We

1 do have Town Hall meetings every two weeks where
2 students participate in the Town Halls in which
3 guests visit to share information on careers and/or
4 colleges. Celebrations are also held for our
5 students and teachers, as well as it is a time for
6 students to showcase their talents.

7 Restorative Approach -- we are currently in our
8 third year of implementation. And with this practice
9 we seek to do five things: build healthy
10 relationships; reduce, prevent and improve harmful
11 behaviors; repair harm and restore relationships;
12 resolve conflict and hold groups and individuals
13 accountable for their actions; and we address and
14 discuss the needs of the school community.

15 We also attribute our success with the
16 restorative approach to the partnership with the PAT
17 Center, which provides onsite therapeutic supports to
18 our scholars and families, as well as our culture
19 coordinator who has an extensive background in social
20 work and experience with working as a case manager.
21 This approach has allowed us to be an environment
22 that supports a culture of learning, which has led to
23 only one out-of-school suspension within the last two
24 years. Our goal is to keep our scholars in school.

25 We also were awarded the 21st Century Grant in

1 2017, and this grant provides opportunities for our
2 school to serve 150 students before and after school
3 for remediation and arts infusion. We have also been
4 fortunate the 2018-19 school year to establish a
5 strong partnership with the Pine Bluff Boys and Girls
6 Club to provide facility space and supports in our
7 work to remediate our scholars in the afterschool
8 program.

9 As a school and district we have analyzed the
10 2017-18 ESSA School Index, as well as compared it to
11 our 2016-17 ESSA report. Pine Bluff Lower Academy,
12 which is comprised of grades K-6, had a drop in all
13 three of the major reporting categories. The most
14 significant was in the weighted achievement and the
15 school quality and student success. In looking at
16 the SQSS we have determined the decreased to be
17 attributed to a significant increase in chronic
18 absences. The drop in weighted achievement is
19 attributed to the drop in math proficiency,
20 especially in the 4th grade, and in ELA overall
21 achievement.

22 Pine Bluff Lighthouse College Prep, which is
23 comprised of grades 7 and 8, had a significant drop
24 in all three reporting categories. The drop in
25 weighted achievement is due to 7th grade math scores,

1 as well as a drop in ELA achievement. As we look at
2 the school quality and student success, we had --
3 also had a significant increase in chronic
4 absenteeism. We do know that the ELA cut-scores had
5 changed in this school -- I mean, in '18. The Lower
6 Academy weighted score would have been 42.57 if they
7 had not changed, which would have shown an increase
8 in weighted achievement. We would've had 31 more
9 scholars in the Lower Academy to have met benchmark
10 proficiency if the ELA cut-score had not changed,
11 which would have changed the outcome of our grade of
12 an F.

13 This graph here illustrates the percent of
14 students that met benchmark in each reporting
15 category of ACT Aspire for 2016, 2017 and 2018. As
16 we look at the reading over the last three years, we
17 have had an overall increase of 6% of students
18 reading on grade level. The English scores have
19 fluctuated between the years with an overall increase
20 of 6%. In math we had an increase of 2% in 2017.
21 The drop in math was attributed to 4th and 7th grade
22 classes. The 4th grade class had 31 scholars, in
23 which 16 of the students were brand-new to LHA and to
24 the Eureka Math curriculum. The 7th grade class had
25 18 scholars, which 27% of the testing group in 7th

1 grade were special education students. The science
2 test scores dropped 1% from 2016 to 2018, and the
3 most significant decrease is in the ELA scores. As
4 you know, the ACT Aspire ELA cut-score changed in
5 2017-18 and this accounts for the significant
6 decrease of over 12%. An analysis of the students'
7 ELA scores using the cut-scores from 2017 show a 4%
8 increase.

9 This next chart represents the 109 scholars that
10 have attended Pine Bluff Lighthouse charter school
11 for three or more years. This graph illustrates the
12 reading ACT Aspire scale scores for those scholars.
13 On average, a student that is with LHA growing -- is
14 growing over the three-year period in reading. The
15 most significant increase is for our 7th grade
16 students. When students are in 5th grade their
17 average scale score was a little over 409; at the end
18 of their 7th grade year their reading scale score on
19 average increased to 414.6.

20 Again, this next graph illustrates the ACT
21 Aspire English scale scores for scholars who have
22 been at Pine Bluff Lighthouse for three or more
23 years. Again, on average over the three-year period
24 in English shows growth. The most significant
25 increase is with our 4th through 6th grade scholars

1 with an average increase of 4 points in their scale
2 score over a three-year period. In grades 7 and 8 we
3 had an increase from 2016 to 2017 in each grade
4 level; however, in 2018, we had a drop of a little
5 over 1 point average.

6 This next graph illustrates the ACT Aspire scale
7 ELA scores for students who have been with Pine Bluff
8 Lighthouse three or more years. On average, again,
9 when they're with LHA over this three-year period
10 they are growing. And as noted in the weighted
11 achievement score, we had a significant decrease from
12 2017 to 2018 in students who met benchmark. But as
13 noted in the graph, all grades, except 7th grade, had
14 an increase in ELL -- ELA scale scores.

15 This graph illustrates the ACT Aspire scale math
16 scores for scholars who have been with Pine Bluff for
17 three or more years. As you can see, all grade
18 levels had an increase from 2016 to 2017, except for
19 8th grade. From '17 to '18 the average scale score
20 in grades 4th through 6th grade increased over the
21 three-year period. The fluctuation in 7th and 8th
22 grade scale scores is attributed to teacher capacity
23 and retention. The students have had three different
24 math teachers from 2016 to 2018. The good news is
25 that we just completed the MAP NWEA testing for all

1 grade levels in math and reading. For the winter
2 growth we have over 82% of the 7th grade students
3 meeting their growth goal, with over 125% of the
4 projected growth met. This is a significant increase
5 for our students.

6 So some of the variables responsible for our
7 challenges: as we were analyzing the data and
8 determining the goals for the school, Pine Bluff
9 Lighthouse identified several variables that provide
10 challenges to the school that we must overcome. The
11 number one challenge is the reading level of the
12 scholars.

13 This first table, the spring 2018 table
14 illustrates the average reading levels of the Pine
15 Bluff Lighthouse scholars in the spring of 2018 when
16 they took the ACT Aspire test. For example, a
17 student in 5th grade in the spring of 2018 during the
18 time of testing had an average lexile level of 579,
19 which is equivalent to 3rd grade second month of
20 school. In order for a 5th grade student to be on
21 grade level the reading should be a lexile of 800 or
22 above. In the fall of 2018 all of our students'
23 lexile levels were measured. Currently, we are
24 facing some of the same challenges as we did in
25 spring of 2018. And as we look at an incoming 5th

1 grade student in the fall, the average lexile level
2 is 510, which is equivalent to 2nd grade 7-month
3 level.

4 Also in your packet we included the winter
5 results that we just took and you will see some
6 significant increases in the reading lexile levels.

7 So in order to address our reading levels, these
8 are things that we have put in place. We did hire a
9 district literacy coach that is Arkansas RISE
10 trained. Ms. Elizabeth Shock works with all literacy
11 teachers to develop lesson plans, conduct one-on-one
12 coaching sessions, planning meetings; she co-teaches
13 and provides model teaching lessons, conducts data
14 analysis meetings, and provides professional
15 development. Two of the four current K-2 teachers
16 are RISE trained. Two that -- the two that are not
17 were hired a couple of days before school started, so
18 they have not received the training -- but they are
19 receiving ongoing professional development from Ms.
20 Shock to get them caught-up with RISE. All 3rd
21 through 6th grade ELA teachers are in the current
22 RISE cohort. We did revamp our Response to
23 Intervention. All of our 3rd through 8th grade
24 students were screened with the phonics screeners.
25 Students were placed by phonics deficit skills, not

1 by current grade, in groups. Teachers receive
2 biweekly professional development on skills to be
3 taught in our Response to Intervention. And
4 administrators are monitoring the RTI program weekly
5 with teachers as well as diagnostic data at six weeks
6 to adjust the students' content. We have double-
7 blocked our ELA classes. Weekly observations are
8 being conducted, small group instruction is embedded
9 in the content classes, and follow-up professional
10 development provided by our literacy coach and
11 principals. We do have Data Days now embedded into
12 the school calendar after every interim assessment,
13 and we have a Title 1 literacy interventionist who
14 works with our Tier 2 identified scholars through
15 pull-out and push-in methods. We've initiated a
16 school-wide reading incentive. Again, we have the
17 21st Century Grant. And we do provide professional
18 learning opportunities for our teachers through peer
19 observations.

20 Another variable for our challenges is
21 attendance. We had 56 students with chronic
22 absences. As we noted earlier, it is a major issue
23 at both of our LEA's in Pine Bluff. We had 56
24 students that were chronically absent. The two
25 factors that attribute the most to the chronic

1 attendance is student illnesses, as well as students
2 being caregivers of their parents or siblings due to
3 illness. Also the highly mobile population requires
4 the school to locate parents to determine if students
5 -- if they're withdrawing or to change transportation
6 routes. Many times we cannot locate families and
7 must wait the required 10 days before dropping. A
8 special note to note is that 26 of the 56 students
9 were bus-riders out of the 56 and the remaining were
10 car-riders. Out of the 56 students, 10 of them were
11 families. The 10 families represented 37 scholars at
12 our campus.

13 Some of the things we're doing to address the
14 chronic absenteeism: at the beginning of the 2018-19
15 school year the principals met individually with
16 every parent to discuss the attendance policy,
17 protocol, and expectations. Our school follows the
18 following protocol for student absences. As you can
19 see, it goes up into the 10th chart -- 10th absence.
20 We do all of these steps.

21 The school also provides incentives for
22 attendance to all students, as well as recognizing
23 parents for the hard work in making sure scholars are
24 at school. Other proactive measures the school has
25 taken: the school administrators monitor attendance

1 via Cognos reports weekly with the office staff to
2 insure that they are knowledgeable of who is absent
3 and who is a priority. The principals report the
4 school attendance to the school board monthly and the
5 office calculates the daily attendance rate by grade
6 every day and calls every scholar that is absent.

7 Another variable responsible for the challenge
8 is math, and we have to overcome the percentage of
9 students who are meeting benchmark in math. The
10 table illustrates the overall percentage of scholars
11 who are meeting benchmark in math from 2016 to 2018.
12 As noted, the most significant decrease is in 4th and
13 7th grade. The overall percentage of students who
14 met readiness benchmark from '17 to '18 decreased 2%.

15 Things that we're doing to address the math
16 deficiencies: we have hired a district math coach and
17 he provides the one-on-one coaching, the modeling,
18 the professional development, the protocols for data
19 analysis, and support for our Response to
20 Intervention. Some math program changes we have: we
21 have a more -- we're more focused on target
22 instruction; we revamped the Response to Intervention
23 with a heavy focus on word problems; small group
24 instruction has been embedded into the content
25 classes to address those deficiencies; more time

1 added to our math block; IXL is heavily utilized and
2 targeted and more of a focus of technology. We also
3 have a math consultant from Above and Beyond the
4 Core, through APSRC, that provides additional support
5 to all of our math teachers.

6 Our last variable responsible for the challenges
7 is teacher retention, which is affecting our ability
8 to develop quality instruction. Some of the
9 challenges are: personal illnesses from teachers;
10 under-performance and lack of rapport with parents,
11 staff and students; and unable to handle the
12 workload, meaning our longer day and longer school
13 year. The commute -- most do not want to live in the
14 city of Pine Bluff, so they start off commuting and
15 then realize that drive is not what they want to do.
16 They relocate out of the city or the state. And then
17 the last thing is competitive salaries.

18 So some of the things we're doing to address the
19 teacher retention is building the staff capacity. We
20 have began pure observations where teachers are
21 learning and growing from each other, not just in the
22 Pine Bluff school but in our other Lighthouse
23 schools. Individualized coaching, the literacy and
24 math coach; the weekly feedback, the one-on-ones with
25 teachers; and we also are providing leadership

1 opportunities for our teachers. Our teachers are
2 also a part of the new teacher mentor program through
3 APSRC. Other things we have done to address our
4 teacher retentions: in hiring is like our hiring
5 process. We have a panel interview; we do transcript
6 reviews, especially for math to "can I understand the
7 content level, how high their content level is for
8 math" -- because we know math is an area that we
9 can't just put anyone in to teach the math classes.
10 Teacher fairs. We also have an associate director of
11 talent management from our Lighthouse corporate team
12 that is just for Arkansas. We're establishing
13 partnerships with local colleges. Staff intent
14 conversations are happening, surveys are being
15 conducted, and also retention activities throughout
16 the year.

17 Some of the things that are working is: our
18 school leadership -- both our principals have been in
19 the role of a principal for the past three years; our
20 21st Century program; Arkansas RISE -- through the
21 data analysis it has been shown that the teachers
22 that have had the training have had scholars to grow
23 significantly, especially in 3rd grade; community
24 partnerships through Southeast Arkansas Science
25 Center, the library, Boys and Girls Club. And I also

1 had a preliminary meeting with Mr. -- with Dr. Owoh
2 to work together with the Pine Bluff School District
3 to combat our educational issues that we have in our
4 community. Transportation is provided daily, as well
5 as in our before- and after-school program. We do
6 continue to do home visits. Our Response to
7 Intervention program is strong; universal feeding for
8 all of our students; our social and emotional
9 development program, which has changed an entire
10 school culture; and our charter management
11 organization, as well as our board who has been a
12 sound board since our existence.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Roberts, I'm going to
14 pause you right there. That's your 20 minutes. But
15 I will give you your additional 5 here in a second.

16 To just make sure, is there anybody here to
17 speak in opposition to the charter?

18 Okay. Not seeing any, you may go ahead and
19 continue. You have 5 additional minutes.

20 MS. ROBERTS: I am going to allow our CEO to
21 come and speak.

22 MR. WHITTAKER: Charter Panel, good morning. My
23 name is Khori Whittaker, the president and CEO of
24 Lighthouse Academies. And we -- I bring you
25 greetings. And thank you to the Pine Bluff community

1 who is here with us as well.

2 So we are -- one of the things I want to
3 communicate to you is that we are 100% committed to
4 making sure that Pine Bluff Lighthouse Academy is a
5 strategic asset to the Pine Bluff community.

6 A little over four years ago, a new management
7 team started at Lighthouse Academies with the
8 intention of strengthening the academic performance
9 across the network. Ms. Roberts recently talked --
10 just talked about some of the things that we've done.
11 One of the key things that we did was implement
12 restorative practices across the network. You know,
13 it's my position that the best place for our children
14 is with our teachers in our schools; so any efforts
15 to decrease suspensions and expulsions and keep
16 students with us will yield results. Another one of
17 the structures that we've implemented is separating
18 instructional versus operational leadership so that
19 our instructional leaders can have more time and more
20 mind space to focus on leading the academic program.
21 Then our operations team focuses on the non-academic
22 tasks at the school.

23 In helping Pine Bluff improve and get where it
24 needs to be and become a strategic asset to the Pine
25 Bluff community, it's going to take commitment and

1 it's going to take a little bit of time. But I know
2 that we can make this happen because we've done it
3 over the last three years at our other sites. And I
4 just have a couple of examples for you. In Gary,
5 Indiana, a couple of years ago our school there was
6 an F-rated school. Three years later, that school is
7 now a C-rated school. So we've gone from F to D to
8 C. In Indianapolis Lighthouse, that school was a D-
9 rated school three years ago, and we've moved from D
10 to C to a very high B, almost an A rating. And last
11 week -- two weeks ago we received a seven-year
12 renewal from the mayor's office in Indianapolis.
13 We've had similar evidences of growth from some of
14 our other schools and we are implementing some of
15 those same programs, policies, interventions here at
16 Pine Bluff.

17 Ms. Roberts mentioned our Chief Academic
18 Officer, Sarah Gallagher, who is here with us. We've
19 also hired a VP of Academics to further support
20 instructional leadership here. We have a pretty
21 robust regional team. And regional team members,
22 please stand -- regional team -- regional team, go
23 ahead. And then also we have national team members
24 here as well. Please stand.

25 So to reiterate, we are 100% committed to making

1 sure that Pine Bluff is a great school for our
2 scholars, that we deliver on the promise that we made
3 to our families and our parents.

4 And one more data-point for you: as we continue
5 to grow our schools, we're able to produce tremendous
6 results on the back-end as our students leave high
7 school and go into college. We have consistently had
8 over 90, 95 percent high school graduation rates, and
9 near 99% college acceptance rates with tons of
10 scholarship dollars for our students. And we further
11 invest in supporting our scholars after they leave
12 our college preparatory academies and we provide
13 coaches for them, to work with them, no matter what
14 college they're attending during their freshman and
15 sophomore year. So we have a commitment to the
16 community during the time we have scholars -- during
17 the time they are at our schools, and we have a
18 commitment after they leave Lighthouse Academies.

19 So the one word I'm going to leave you with
20 today is commitment and our dedication to turning
21 this around and making it work.

22 How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You have about two minutes.

24 MR. WHITTAKER: Two minutes. All right. Thank
25 you very much.

1 So with that, I want to bring up one of our
2 parents, Ms. Velasquez, who has a few words for the
3 Panel.

4 MS. VELASQUEZ: Hi, my name is (inaudible)
5 Valesquez. And I have been with Lighthouse Academy
6 for seven years. My son, he is currently in 6th
7 grade. He has been there since kindergarten. I have
8 another child too that is also attending Lighthouse.
9 They have grown so much. And like I was telling my
10 principal, I do not understand this letter because my
11 kids have learned -- they blossom at the school; they
12 -- you can see it, how they (inaudible). And I know
13 this because I also work in the Department of
14 Education and I can see how they've been growing in
15 it, because -- and then I have also been in other
16 schools helping out and I can see how other kids have
17 been -- that have gotten out of the school and been
18 put in a different school, they'll need more help.
19 And my kids are a little bit more advanced that they
20 are. That's one of the things that I was going to
21 tell you about it.

22 I'm so nervous.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: It's okay.

24 MS. VALESQUEZ: And I also wanted to say that
25 the school is like so blessed with -- well, the

1 school is a blessing to me and my family because they
2 -- the hours, the commute, everything, and especially
3 the teachers; they pay so much attention to the kids
4 -- the small classes. You can tell how they pay and
5 then -- how they pay close attention to each and
6 every single one of the kids and they make sure that
7 they be on the level that they need to be doing. And
8 that's one of the reasons that I really do not want
9 to take my kids out of Lighthouse and why I always
10 keep them there. And my little one, he's two but
11 he's going to be there as soon as he gets there.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you.

14 [APPLAUSE]

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll now move over
16 into panel questions. So we'll start on the other
17 side this time. Dr. Kremers, do you have questions
18 for the applicant?

19 DR. KREMERS: In the presentation, going over
20 some of the ACT Aspire scores there was -- it was
21 mentioned that there was just a 1% decrease from 15-
22 16 to 17-18. Really in those numbers, when you look
23 at it, it really didn't mention that there was an
24 increase followed by another decrease. So even
25 though it was presented as a 1% decrease, I'd kind of

1 like for you to talk for just a second about -- there
2 was some good strides and then there was a drop. So
3 just kind of a little bit more discussion about how
4 the numbers were presented. You kind of glossed over
5 the year of the increase to then talk about the
6 decrease.

7 MS. CROWDER: Good morning. My name is Amanda
8 Crowder; I'm the regional academic director. Are you
9 speaking specifically to the math?

10 DR. KREMERS: Yes.

11 MS. CROWDER: Okay. So from 2015 or '16 to
12 2016-17 we did have a 2% increase in math overall.
13 We had some stronger math teachers in the building at
14 that time and we -- so, unfortunately, we had one
15 math teacher that showed tremendous growth and she
16 actually -- her husband worked at UAPB and he got
17 transferred. So we lost that math teacher. So
18 replacing math teachers in the Pine Bluff area, as
19 well as across the state, is very hard. So that's
20 why we hired the math -- we have a math/literacy
21 specialist that comes in and we also have an ABC
22 consultant; Ashley McDonald with ABC is actually
23 working more intensely with our math.

24 DR. KREMERS: And the same was for -- I'm trying
25 to get to the presentation page. It was also the

1 overall ACT Aspire scores on the presentation, and it
2 was the science scores as well, and it was an
3 increase. But it was mentioned that there was only a
4 1% decrease, but it didn't mention the increase.

5 MS. CROWDER: Yeah. So we did have an increase
6 from 14% to 16%. There was a decrease from 16% to
7 13%. So looking at the data it was -- it seemed to
8 be cohorts changing, so the changing from what a
9 student would score in 3rd grade to 4th grade. If we
10 -- unfortunately, we lost -- high mobility, we lost
11 some students; we gained some students in. We have
12 implemented the FOSS Science curriculum at the school
13 from 16-17 to 17-18 to help address some of that.
14 Again, it goes back to some of the reading levels;
15 you look at the change in reading levels from our
16 students. We did analyze our NWEA scores for over
17 the past three years in looking at the incoming
18 reading levels and significant decreases in reading
19 levels throughout the years from new incoming
20 scholars. So our new scholars that are coming to us
21 are coming to us at a lower level, so it's taking us
22 longer to build -- to get their reading capacity to
23 grade level.

24 DR. KREMERS: So I notice there's a waiver
25 request for professional development for the

1 teachers, if I saw that correctly.

2 MS. CROWDER: Our teachers receive 160 hours of
3 professional development a year, so I'm not sure.

4 MS. HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt, Arkansas
5 Department of Education. There was a waiver request
6 for professional development. They did not request a
7 waiver of the Right to Read professional development,
8 so they're receiving that instruction in scientific
9 reading instruction. However, they did ask for a
10 waiver -- and it's actually number nine on the legal
11 review -- for all other professional development,
12 including the waiver from the law and the standard.

13 MR. WALTER: Mr. Chair, may I address the Panel?

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, sir.

15 MR. WALTER: I look -- Tripp Walter, APSRC. I
16 look to Ms. Roberts for clarification here. But I
17 believe that was just an attempt to maintain what
18 they had, not ask for any additional waivers, and
19 certainly shouldn't be read as to indicate any
20 lessening of committee to professional development.
21 I think being part of a national organization they
22 have programs in place that may be in addition to,
23 but perhaps a little bit different than the
24 traditional professional development. So I think
25 it's -- I would suggest it be viewed as a flexibility

1 piece and just providing it another way, rather than
2 an attempt to abandon or not provide their teachers
3 with appropriate PD.

4 DR. KREMERS: And I see that you have biweekly
5 professional development, if you could talk about
6 that for just a moment.

7 MS. SMITH: Good morning.

8 DR. KREMERS: Good morning.

9 MS. SMITH: I'm Renea Smith, one of the
10 principals, grade 4 through 8.

11 MS. BRYANT: Quawana Bryant, kindergarten
12 through 3rd grade.

13 MS. SMITH: So we provide our teachers weekly
14 with professional development through our grade level
15 meetings -- what you would call Professional Learning
16 Community. And so they receive professional
17 development during their planning period. We also
18 provide professional development weekly in our
19 afterschool staff meetings.

20 MR. ROGERS: Talk in the mic.

21 MS. SMITH: Oh, sorry.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions, Dr.
23 Kremers?

24 DR. KREMERS: I think just a comment that if the
25 PD is during the planning period then there's also a

1 waiver request for duty-free lunches. So I'm just
2 kind of trying to think about the teachers' day.

3 MS. SMITH: So they do not provide duty during
4 their lunch period. They have their lunch period.

5 MS. ROBERTS: Hello again. We did request that
6 waiver a few -- three years ago just to have it, just
7 in case of any emergencies if we have teachers out
8 and we -- because we have a hard time sometimes with
9 substitutes. But we have not had to use that waiver,
10 so it's just there. So, again, they have a planning
11 period every day. They may have grade level meetings
12 up to one or two times a week. So they do have a
13 duty-free lunch.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Dr. Williams.

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I just need some help
16 understanding that, you know, you received the
17 charter in 2010, and we are at an F grade now. So
18 that's seven years of opportunity to get better. I'm
19 a former math teacher too. And I was looking at the
20 math percentage here and for 27 -- 2017 to 2018 the
21 overall was 22% on the benchmark. I'm looking right
22 off your presentation here. That tells me that 78%
23 of the students did not reach it. Help me with -- I
24 want someone to address that. And also I used to be
25 a reading teacher too, and I look at the reading

1 scores. And if we can't get math and we can't get
2 reading right, we've got a problem. Okay.

3 MR. OSBORNE: Good morning. My name is John
4 Osborne. I was hired in the summer of 2018 as the
5 regional math curriculum specialist. So to speak to
6 the math scores, as Ms. Roberts mentioned earlier in
7 the presentation, we have sort of shifted our target
8 to more targeted skills. So as you mentioned, 78% of
9 our scholars school-wide are below grade level. So
10 that means our focus needs to be differentiated
11 instruction, where we focus on their deficit skills.
12 We've been able to do that with a variety of ACT
13 Aspire, the formative assessments that are embedded
14 in the Eureka curriculum, as well as the NWEA MAP.
15 So at the beginning of the year we took -- they took
16 the fall NWEA MAP and teachers were able to group
17 students and we were able to place them in RTIs. So
18 now our focus is very, very much those deficit
19 skills. One of the instructional strategies that's
20 taking place in the classrooms is now small group.
21 We are still using the grade level rigorous Eureka
22 curriculum, but we are very intentional now about
23 small groups. We've been using the program IXL for
24 math, which allows students to focus on targeted
25 skills. So an example, if the students are currently

1 working on area but the teacher notices they have a
2 deficit skill in perimeter, during small group time
3 the students are able to work on that skill on IXL,
4 and then they're ready for the grade level work of
5 area. We have been able to get about 10 to 15 more
6 minutes of math instructional time, so that does help
7 a little bit. The RTI groups as well, as they
8 mentioned, are now focused on the student's current
9 grade level. They're not -- I'm sorry -- they're --
10 yeah, their current grade level based on testing. So
11 if an 8th grader is performing on a 4th grade level,
12 their RTI group is focused on 4th grade work, that
13 they are able to -- it's still a challenge for them,
14 but it's something they are able to accomplish.

15 So as a result of these strategies our big push
16 is now growth, moving students from needs support to
17 close, or from close to ready. Because as was
18 mentioned, we have a large deficit of those who need
19 support, so our focus is much more on targeted skills
20 and their deficits.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. That's a good answer
22 there.

23 Here's my overall concern though: it's been
24 seven years and, you know -- and for me, I'm just
25 going to be as upfront as I can -- how long is long

1 enough. Okay. We've had seven years. And great
2 answer. But why 2018 that we're just now making this
3 -- bringing someone on to address the math issue? So
4 I'll just leave it at that. You had some good
5 answers, good overview on the reading aspect during
6 the presentation, and it looks like you're moving in
7 the right direction for math. But, you know, the
8 length of time is still a struggle for me.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Rogers?

10 MR. ROGERS: None.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.

12 MS. NEWTON: I think more of a comment for me is
13 I was on the State Board when this charter was
14 initially granted. And I thought that the strength
15 of it would be the regional and national connection
16 as it relates to strengthening the school. I know we
17 know the history of Pine Bluff and the challenges
18 that the community has faced; so I'm disappointed in
19 the overall achievement or growth -- or lack of
20 growth, based on the fact that this is a very
21 sensitive situation as it relates to the students --
22 but was encouraged by the Lighthouse. So my -- the
23 CEO mentioned the growth in Gary and another
24 community, and I don't know why this community has
25 not been the beneficiary of similar growth. And a

1 problem that's not minimal but as basic as
2 attendance, or chronic absenteeism and the failure to
3 be able to address and turn the percentages are I
4 think outside of reasonable as it relates to student
5 attendance. So there's some basic things that bother
6 me. I'm not an educator, so I don't understand in
7 terms of numbers and the percentages, like Dr.
8 Williams and some others on the Board. But from the
9 social aspect of it and just the overall lack of
10 growth for the period of time really concerns me.
11 And, again, that's more of a statement than a
12 question. But our intent with the charter --
13 initiating charters is to give an alternative and I'm
14 not seeing the clear difference between what is
15 public and what is charter and the difference that it
16 makes.

17 MS. ROBERTS: Hi, Ms. Newton and Panel. I just
18 want to address -- I know there are some major
19 concerns, as well as the growth. I mean, we do take
20 full accountability, you know, for the performance of
21 our students. But, again, I do want to just
22 recognize that the community of Pine Bluff is a huge
23 challenge as it relates to mobility. You know, we
24 have the evidence that when we can keep kids there at
25 the school we see the growth. Out of 177 scholars

1 that were tested in '18, 75 of those students were
2 brand-new to us, meaning culturally trying to get
3 them acclimated to the school, dealing with those
4 behaviors, trying to get them restored to where they
5 can stay in the classroom -- as well as when we do
6 get the kids -- that that's why we provided you with
7 those lexile levels, to let you know 3rd through 8th
8 grade currently 40% of those students are reading at
9 a 3rd grade level. Are we making growth in moving
10 them in their lexiles? We are. But is it at the
11 rate where they're going to be at their grade level
12 by April? We can get them closer and we can get them
13 reading more, and to read and feel more confident
14 about it, but it is affecting all areas. As we know
15 on the ACT Aspire, the math is word problems. So,
16 again, there's a level of defeat to a lot of our
17 students when they get that reading portion in front
18 of them. It's affecting science because it's just
19 not numbers and equations; it's reading on the
20 science. So are we doing a lot to make up that
21 ground in reading? Yes, ma'am. Yes, sir. We are.
22 We're trying our best. This year we really focused
23 on just identifying what is going to give us the most
24 bang for our buck to get them to where they need to
25 be, and that was really attacking the phonics. You

1 come there during our Response to Intervention you're
2 going to see kids in 8th grade working on CVC, like
3 they're working on sounds because they didn't know
4 their sounds. That's why we did the screen on all of
5 our students this year, because it wasn't just
6 happening at the lower grades; it's happening all the
7 way up. So we are addressing those issues. We have
8 had, you know, a good year. We've had some good
9 years at Lighthouse. Unfortunately, the year we go
10 before the Panel we have an F. We did have a C and a
11 D where we made a lot of ground. That scale score
12 changed; it totally like threw us. We had kids --
13 like I said, 31 would have been proficient or met
14 ready if it had not changed. They missed it by two
15 or three points. So if we had've based it -- if it
16 was based on SDL, they would've made it and we would
17 not have been an F.

18 So, you know, we have been supporting that
19 community, not only academically or, you know, really
20 trying to push and have those high expectations for
21 our kids; we've also done it culturally. Because
22 seven years ago, the behaviors and the culture you
23 see was not there. Kids were being suspended on a
24 continuous basis. So our goal was to make sure that
25 we could keep those kids in place, in the school, in

1 the classroom. Because we did the data analysis
2 those years; those were the kids that were not
3 performing on the tests. So now, you know, we have
4 them in the classroom, we're getting -- and they're
5 ready to learn. They're not embarrassed in their
6 groups when they're doing sounds, no matter whether
7 it's 7th or 8th grade, because they do want to be
8 successful and we want them to be successful. Is it
9 hard? Yes. I think the surrounding schools in Pine
10 Bluff -- we're all performing at the same level.
11 When I met with Dr. Owoh that was one of the things
12 we talked about: what can we do in order to raise
13 this grade? One, I think the parents are not
14 informed; they're not encouraged. A lot of them are
15 not encouraged to bring their kids to school. Their
16 job is they need to take care of the house when
17 parents are not there. So really trying to motivate
18 and educate our parents about the importance of their
19 child's education and about they have to come to
20 school, we have to get them reading. So, you know,
21 we're also thinking about how we can better serve our
22 parents so that they will make sure that they're
23 supporting their child's education in all aspects.
24 So it's just a lot of things that come into play in
25 Pine Bluff. We love the city. We love the scholars.

1 I mean, as you can see, you know, families that come,
2 they stay, those that are staying in the community.
3 But we do have families three or four times now that
4 have moved from Pine Bluff -- they move -- we had a
5 family to move three times last year back and forth,
6 because it's just so highly mobile. So the influx of
7 the new students, when we get them -- and we're
8 getting those low reading levels, we are making up
9 some ground. But, unfortunately, all of them are not
10 at reading level by the time testing comes. So RISE
11 has been a huge, tremendous asset to us in our
12 schools and the training with our teachers, and our
13 kids are getting it. But it is taking time.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Wilson.

15 MR. WILSON: Well --

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Microphone.

17 MR. WILSON: I should say that I'm very familiar
18 with Lighthouse and the work they have done in my own
19 community, in Jacksonville, and in the state in
20 general. And I am perfectly satisfied to hear the
21 national and the area leaders say that they are
22 committed to Pine Bluff. As all of you all with
23 experience have pointed out, seven years is a long
24 time. But I do believe that with the focus and
25 commitment from your -- from the Lighthouse state and

1 national leaders I believe there is an opportunity to
2 provide that growth for those kids within a
3 reasonable time. And what the reasonable time is I
4 guess the \$64,000 question. But it doesn't happen
5 overnight, I've learned, and it takes, you know, a
6 concerted effort that I believe that you all are
7 capable -- I know that you're capable of it and I
8 believe you're committed to it.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So I guess I have
10 to, you know, definitely agree with the question that
11 Dr. Williams said about how long is enough time. So
12 I did have the opportunity to go visit the school and
13 saw a lot of good things there; you know, had the
14 principals -- which I won't put them on the spot
15 today to make them sing, but they did sing to me
16 while I was there and I thought they did a good job.
17 But I did see a lot of things -- I saw some things
18 that were positive, but I also saw, you know, at
19 least one thing that sticks out in my mind that's
20 concerning. On the positive side, I did see a lot of
21 the people, regional staff that were there working
22 with teachers and those types of things. In
23 reference to the math, you know, I saw things where,
24 you know, the regional person was there to help, but
25 at the same time it was the kind of people that

1 you're getting in staffing-wise. It's, you know,
2 trying to bring people over that, you know, have very
3 little experience or still in college and working
4 towards those things. And so I guess just the
5 concern that, you know, are those people going to be
6 enough to move the needle and what we're talking
7 about. We can put things in place and be hopeful
8 that these things are going to work, but if we don't
9 have the -- I guess it's kind of like, to speak in
10 coach-speak, sometimes it's not about the X's and the
11 O's, it's about the Jimmy's and the Joe's -- and so
12 getting the right people in front of those students
13 at the right time -- and I know that's been a
14 struggle for you guys. So can you talk a little bit
15 about, you know, plans or, you know, do you expect to
16 see the kind of growth in these scores or will we
17 kind of see a similar pattern?

18 MS. HERRERA: Good morning. I'm short. My name
19 is Vanessa Herrera. So I actually came -- this is my
20 first full year for Arkansas on the regional team.
21 And really my focus full-time is on bringing
22 certified teachers and making sure that we have
23 qualified teachers. That's why it's been a little
24 bit difficult to find a math teacher or a science
25 teacher is because, again, we don't just want to put

1 anyone in the classroom; we want to make sure we have
2 a qualified person.

3 So some of the things that I've done coming in
4 is I've been really working with the universities and
5 really trying to get some of our first-year teachers
6 to come in, because these are teachers that have the
7 ability to become strong teachers, that we can grow
8 -- but they are coming with that knowledge that we
9 can grow. So my focus has been working with the
10 universities, some of the transition to teaching
11 programs. So I've reached out to the teacher of
12 Arkansas Corp and they're looking to work with us.
13 Just really focusing on where we can get those top-
14 quality teachers. Because we were bringing in people
15 from the community that understood the community, but
16 those are the teachers that we have now and we really
17 understand that we need to get the teachers that are
18 coming in qualified for the content area. And,
19 again, that's been our focus this year and that's
20 been my focus overall.

21 We've actually seen people come from out-of-
22 state. We've had some internal things that we've
23 done; like we've actually focused on having our fairs
24 at the school. So we want teachers to come and see
25 where we are and who we are. And we get our teachers

1 involved and we get our principals involved; we give
2 a tour of the school. We really want people to know
3 who Pine Bluff is as they come here and how it's
4 different, because that's the big understatement that
5 sometimes people don't understand.

6 So those are some of the focuses. And just out-
7 of-state we have had last year some people that have
8 really seen us from the Mississippi area and the
9 Louisiana area, which, you know, to us is really big
10 because we want them to know that we're here. We
11 actually had our internal fair in March and we had
12 people that drove from Mississippi and Louisiana;
13 they said they heard about us and they wanted to
14 learn about the community. So we're trying to get
15 some of those universities as well to kind of work
16 with us to make sure we're getting teachers from
17 teaching programs.

18 MS. NICHOLSON: Hi, everyone. I'm Alyse
19 Nicholson. I work on the national team. I run the
20 Talent Department. So as Ms. Herrera stated, this is
21 a focus area of ours to find really strong talent
22 specifically for the Pine Bluff school -- and not
23 just strong talent, but qualified talent. So we are
24 having Vanessa focus full-time on Arkansas. So this
25 is the first year that we will have someone full-time

1 on Arkansas, and we realize that that is a need. We
2 want to make sure that we have the right people in
3 place, so Vanessa will be working on all of those
4 different strategies. We've been following these
5 strategies on a national level. So going back to
6 what our CEO stated when he gave examples about Gary,
7 Indiana, and Indianapolis, we're going to be using
8 those same strategies to find and develop and retain
9 our talent. Because I think not only the quality
10 concern, but also the retention concern -- so those
11 are focus areas of ours, and Vanessa will be here on
12 a regular basis; she'll be going to colleges, going
13 to events, forming college partnerships, making sure
14 that we have that strong teacher capacity so that we
15 can follow the strategies that the rest of the team
16 has talked about. So we are excited to have her here
17 full-time.

18 MS. NEWTON: I have a question. I can't
19 remember your name -- no, no, not for you. But you
20 mentioned the difficulty of hiring and retaining
21 staff. And based on your theory of getting that
22 person and not being able to offer a competitive
23 salary, isn't that counter -- doesn't that cancel
24 one, cancel the other out, that you make this effort
25 to find qualified and recruit, but at the same time

1 one of your challenges is salary?

2 MS. ROBERTS: So that was in the past. I mean,
3 what we found out -- we did lose two teachers at the
4 beginning of the year that were our stronger teachers
5 to a local school that starting salaries were a lot
6 more. So that's something that we are addressing as
7 we go into '18 -- as we go into '19-20, is looking at
8 our salary schedule to make sure that we can pay that
9 top talent. So we are going to address that issue.

10 MS. NEWTON: Ms. Roberts -- your name slipped
11 me.

12 MS. ROBERTS: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

14 MS. ROBERTS: Uh-huh.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Other questions?

16 Dr. Kremers.

17 DR. KREMERS: Just a comment. The presentation
18 really was clear on that you've identified a lot of
19 your gaps and challenges. But I think where I am
20 having a challenge is the school improvement plan.
21 Because only half the equation is identifying what
22 the issues are, but having a strong and solid school
23 improvement plan is how you remedy that. And I just
24 don't have full confidence that there is a solid
25 school improvement plan that addresses all of these

1 issues adequately.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So, Dr. Kremers, I'm going
3 to kind of piggyback off yours, if you don't mind.
4 But I think the concern is in one of your waiver
5 requests you do ask to waive 3-B.1, which is the
6 waiver of the school improvement plan. And so, you
7 know, in hearing a lot of the conversation about, you
8 know, this is what -- these are what the issues are,
9 what are we going to do about them, it kind of sends
10 a message, I feel like at least to me -- and I think
11 I'm hearing Dr. Kremers -- that, you know, we have
12 these issues but we want a waiver from the overall
13 planning, when it takes into account all the various
14 systems from the human resources standpoint, from the
15 academic standpoint; this is how we are going to
16 systematically plan to address all of our
17 deficiencies. And so when we see that, you know,
18 that sends a signal, I feel like, to us that, you
19 know, we don't want to -- we don't want to be able to
20 plan those things.

21 And so if you could just kind of explain the
22 reason for that waiver and what you -- what -- how
23 that works in your model?

24 MR. WALTER: Dr. Hernandez, Tripp Walter, APSRC.
25 I believe -- and Ms. Hyatt can verify -- the intent

1 there was not to waive the requirements of the school
2 improvement plan, just to keep the current waiver as
3 to time of posting. It had nothing to do with the
4 content. And I'll let Ms. Roberts speak more to the
5 academic piece. But it was not in any way intended
6 to be a diminution of any of the requirements that
7 are there under that.

8 MS. NEWTON: So let me -- Mr. Walter, while
9 you're standing there, how does your organization
10 support this school, Lighthouse Academy of Pine
11 Bluff? Do you have a role with them in terms of
12 support or what are you offering or how do you
13 increase their ability to be able to address some of
14 the deficits?

15 MR. WALTER: They are a member of ours. And I
16 think Ms. Roberts has spoken of a couple of different
17 ways that we are involved and have provided services
18 on the teaching and learning end. I can see if
19 there's any other -- if there was additional
20 responses. I think that -- I think they were covered
21 in the presentation, the teaching and learning
22 efforts. We have all our other services available to
23 them as well.

24 MS. NEWTON: I think my question, the deeper
25 side of it, is if this charter is allowed to continue

1 what do you see as your ability to strengthen -- you
2 know, because clearly it's not painting a picture now
3 that gives me confidence. I can't speak for the
4 other members at this point. So what will be the
5 difference between what's going on presently and what
6 could possibly be an opportunity to make something
7 that's obviously struggling? You know, I think you
8 look -- if you look at a F, a high F is not a good F
9 but an F -- you know -- or maybe sometimes a low D.
10 I don't know whether that could convince someone
11 looking at the overall performance of the school in
12 terms of an increase in performance. So what does --
13 what do you see -- or maybe that's not a fair
14 question.

15 MR. WALTER: Well, unfortunately, I don't know
16 if I can give a complete response to that question.
17 I would just say, again, all our continuing services,
18 probably most especially in the areas of teaching and
19 learning, and continue to strengthen -- to continue
20 to work with them concerning their teachers, the
21 administrators.

22 MS. NEWTON: What does that mean, teaching and
23 learning?

24 MR. WALTER: I can -- if I can have Dr. Lisa
25 Todd --

1 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

2 MR. WALTER: -- our director of Teaching and
3 Learning come forward.

4 DR. TODD: Good morning. Lisa Todd, director of
5 Education at APSRC. Lighthouse does have support
6 from our ABC coaches. They go in weekly to help with
7 different areas of deficiencies. They provide
8 professional development. We have coaches that -- I
9 think she mentioned Ashley McDonald, who has a math
10 background, who has been going in, helping teachers
11 with math strategies and those kind of things. We
12 also have a literacy specialist that goes in to help
13 provide support for the teachers. So, yes, they have
14 had an increase in support starting this school year.
15 So we are certainly hoping that -- it is our
16 expectation that it will show some benefit by the end
17 of the year on their ACT Aspire.

18 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

20 MS. GALLAGHER: Good morning, everyone. My name
21 is Sarah Gallagher; I'm the Chief Academic Officer
22 for Lighthouse Academies. I just wanted to speak
23 briefly to the school improvement plan. Although
24 there may be a waiver on file, school improvement
25 plans are just best practice. Right? And so we do

1 internally work with the schools to make sure that
2 they have a strong operational school improvement
3 plan. At Lighthouse Academies in Pine Bluff that
4 improvement plan included over the last couple of
5 years increasing the quality of instruction in
6 general education through the adoption of the
7 curricula you saw mentioned. Those who do research
8 on education know that when you do a shift to a new
9 curriculum model it takes some time for teachers and
10 schools to get very comfortable with that. Those
11 changes occurred approximately three years ago. The
12 literature will tell you that it typically takes
13 about five years for those things to take real root
14 and to make significant impact. So we are on the
15 road there. You've seen that some of the reading
16 scores are starting to increase. You all also
17 mentioned that as a network we have other schools
18 that have quickly changed the direction, the needle
19 on our school improvement grades. Those schools got
20 a little bit of a jumpstart on the implementation of
21 those curricula, and so they are enjoying some of
22 those benefits now.

23 At the school, in terms of the school
24 improvement plan, you've also heard reference to
25 increasing instructional minutes in the core content

1 areas. And you've also heard us address in various
2 forms our commitment to teacher capacity. In
3 addition to having additional grade level meetings
4 and things of that nature, we also as a network
5 employ individual coaching for teachers following the
6 model that you'll find described in the Bambrick-
7 Santoyo "Leverage Leadership" model so that we see
8 each of our teachers getting better quickly over
9 time.

10 You all know that we have teacher capacity
11 issues, and so you've heard us talk in pieces about
12 what we're doing about those things. Those are also
13 included in the school improvement plan. So our plan
14 is to increase the capacity of the teachers that we
15 currently have and then to make sure that we are
16 recruiting high quality talent from outside as well.

17 One of the major levers that we have in the
18 school improvement plan is the RTI program, which you
19 also saw referenced as SWAG, which internally they
20 call Scholars With Awesome Grades. It is not a
21 program that is about homework or anything
22 specifically related to grades; it is about building
23 foundational skills for kids. So you heard them talk
24 about 8th grade students who may be working on CVCs
25 and things like that. That is because at the

1 beginning of this school year the school improvement
2 plan dictated that we really dig into phonics as a
3 whole school initiative. That is a big piece at play
4 for us in the RTI program. Additionally, for
5 mathematics we're going back to basics there as well,
6 focusing on fluency and making sure kids understand
7 the basic math facts in the concept of conceptual
8 knowledge as well. That is what is happening in the
9 RTI program and for math.

10 Part of the school improvement plan also
11 includes working on scholar retention. As you all
12 heard, there are many mobile families in the
13 community of Pine Bluff. So we are thinking on a
14 larger level about how to make sure that our kids are
15 staying with us over time and removing any sort of
16 barriers to that for our kids. We've been committing
17 to the community for sometime; we're continuing to
18 have conversations that allow us to think big-
19 picture. Why do families need to move from Pine
20 Bluff? How can we help them with some of those
21 factors? What can we do to partner with other
22 organizations who focus on things like employment for
23 families? So the school improvement plan, there are
24 -- it does exist; it's something that we do have
25 internally and I want you to be confident in that.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So just a follow-up -- and,
3 Mary Claire, from what I'm understanding the waiver
4 is for just the time of posting. Is that accurate?

5 MS. HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt, Arkansas
6 Department of Education. Yes. And that was the only
7 remaining legal concern is that because there are
8 requirements in our ESSA plan and other public school
9 accountability pieces that require the school
10 improvement plan, even though we can grant a waiver
11 of the state Standards for Accreditation related to
12 the school improvement plan, essentially all that the
13 waiver does is grant a waiver from the requirement
14 that it be posted on the website by August 1st. And
15 I just wanted them to confirm that they understood
16 that and that they would be meeting the requirement
17 -- the federal requirement. And also to let you know
18 that they actually do have the school improvement
19 plan on their website for people to see.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

21 MS. HYATT: So if I could just get confirmation
22 from someone, then I'd be good.

23 MR. WALTER: I will so confirm, Dr. Hernandez,
24 on behalf of Lighthouse. Again, to reiterate what
25 Ms. Hyatt said, it was strictly a matter of when it

1 would be posted, not an attempt to avoid the posting
2 or the plan requirements themselves.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So just a question: when do
4 y'all typically try to post that plan on your
5 website?

6 MS. ROBERTS: We did post it in August, so --

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

8 MS. ROBERTS: We just wanted to make sure like
9 once we got the actual Response to Intervention in
10 place we had it detailed enough to post. So August
11 is enough time. August 1st was a stretch because
12 teachers are just getting back and we're just getting
13 to dig into the data with the teachers, so -- but we
14 did have it posted and we will comply with making
15 sure that we have a school improvement plan. We do
16 know that's our roadmap to success, so we do
17 understand that.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right.

19 Any other questions from panel members?

20 Not seeing any -- Ms. Hyatt, do we have any
21 other legal concerns or applicant concerns --
22 application concerns?

23 MS. HYATT: There are no remaining legal
24 concerns and it doesn't seem that there are any
25 Internal Review Committee concerns remaining.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we don't have any
2 other questions, no other concerns. So with that
3 discussion or -- we'll accept a motion.

4 Mr. Wilson.

5 MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I would move the
6 approval of the application for a period of three
7 years, rather than five. I'm not sure three years is
8 long enough, but the concern is great among all of
9 us, I believe. So my motion is to approve the
10 renewal application for a period of three years
11 rather than five.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. You've heard the
13 motion. Is there a second?

14 MR. ROGERS: I'll second.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
16 a second.

17 All those in favor of the -- or, actually any
18 discussion before we take a vote?

19 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. You know, we might need to
20 do a roll-call vote on this one.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

22 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. Okay.

23 MR. ROGERS: I have concerns about the school
24 also, but during the testimony they said that they
25 were able to take one that was an F school in Gary,

1 Indiana, and have it to a C school in three years.
2 So being that a charter school can be called back
3 before the Charter Panel at any time, if within that
4 three-year time period we're not seeing any
5 improvement and it's staying the F school, and it's
6 not tracking, I feel confident that we can call them
7 back in at that time. But it also gives them the
8 flexibility -- the three years allows them to make
9 that change that they know -- I know previously from
10 when I was on the Charter Panel before any time less
11 than that it hurts with the recruitment of students
12 there. So that's -- I just wanted you to know where
13 I was coming from --

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

15 MR. ROGERS: -- that I share your concerns with
16 where -- how the school is trending. But there was
17 testimony they did it in three years; so I'm willing
18 to at least peak in every now and then and make sure
19 it's going on, but give them that three years.

20 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I appreciate that. You
21 know, I'm still at the point of how long is long
22 enough. You know, we've had a chance for seven years
23 to kind of track what's happening. So I'm still
24 struggling. Do we wait and -- I don't see the trend
25 changing, but maybe it will. It hasn't changed over

1 the -- drastically over seven years. Will we find
2 ourselves having the same discussion in another year
3 or year or two or so-forth? So I'm still struggling
4 with that. Uh-huh. But just, okay, it's part of the
5 process.

6 DR. KREMERS: Dr. Williams, I think I agree with
7 your sentiment. I think the timing of it -- and even
8 though there are strategies mentioned in the school
9 improvement plan, I still have concerns for the
10 commitment for those strategies to the timing of the
11 focus and now the stronger emphasis at this time,
12 right before renewal. So I still have significant
13 concerns.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Any other
15 discussion?

16 All right. I'll call for the vote and we'll do
17 roll-call.

18 So I'll start with Dr. Kremers.

19 DR. KREMERS: I vote against the motion to renew
20 the application for renewal.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.

22 MS. NEWTON: I vote against the motion.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Rogers.

24 MR. ROGERS: I vote for.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Williams.

1 DR. WILLIAMS: I vote against the motion to
2 renew.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. And Mr. Wilson.

4 MR. WILSON: I vote for it.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So question --
6 process question, I guess, is that I, being the
7 Chair, do I vote, not vote? Right now I wouldn't
8 want it to be --

9 MS. HYATT: The Chair may vote at the Chair's
10 discretion.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah. Is 3-2 enough to
12 defeat the motion, I guess, with that -- with the
13 number of people that are here and all that?

14 MS. HYATT: Yes.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right.

16 So I will not vote and that will leave that
17 motion as failing 3 to 2.

18 And so I guess we will wait for any alternate
19 motions. Is that correct?

20 MS. HYATT: That's correct.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do we need to read out all
22 the reasons for this motion first?

23 MS. HYATT: Let me check with Ms. Boyd.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

25 MS. HYATT: No, sir.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right.

2 So we'll entertain an alternative motion.

3 MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I move that the
4 renewal application be granted for a period of one
5 year.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So we have heard the motion
7 for a renewal of one year. Any -- do we have any
8 seconds on that?

9 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Not hearing any
11 seconds, motion dies for lack of a second.

12 Are we messing up here?

13 MS. HYATT: No, you're doing fantastic.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

15 MS. HYATT: I just thought I would just let you
16 know an additional option that you do have would be
17 to approve the renewal and place the charter on
18 probation. I just wanted to make sure that you're
19 aware of that option as an alternative to denying the
20 renewal in whole.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Define "probation" for us. What
22 does that mean?

23 MS. HYATT: Sure.

24 DR. BOYD: Alexandra Boyd, Public School
25 Accountability.

1 The terms of the probation would be whatever you
2 said. There's not a clear detailed outline of what
3 probation means in the law or the rules. One
4 consequence would be that if -- once the charter goes
5 on probation they'll no longer be eligible for
6 facility funding.

7 So some things that probation has included in
8 the past would be monthly reporting to the Charter
9 Unit office and maybe quarterly or annual reporting
10 to you guys, to the Charter Authorizing Panel. But
11 there could be other stipulations in probations. But
12 usually when a charter goes on probation there is
13 some kind of reporting aspect that goes along with
14 it.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions about
16 our options before --

17 If not, I'll entertain another motion.

18 Mr. Wilson.

19 MR. WILSON: Maybe Ms. Boyd mentioned it but a
20 probationary period, how long would that last?

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Good question.

22 MR. WILSON: Or can it be indefinite?

23 DR. BOYD: That's up to your discretion. In the
24 past we've had them for one year. That's -- the only
25 one I can remember was for one year.

1 DR. WILLIAMS: If -- Dr. Boyd, if the -- I guess
2 one of my concerns would be -- are there any options
3 for the school? You know, if we don't renew what are
4 -- are there any other options? Can they change the
5 charter management company or something? I'm just
6 looking -- you know, we've got a school, we're
7 looking at not renewing it -- I shouldn't say "we" --
8 I'm looking at voting not to renew.

9 DR. BOYD: Right.

10 DR. WILLIAMS: And I'm just kind of looking at
11 --

12 DR. BOYD: Yeah, I understand your question. So
13 if you vote to not renew the charter and it becomes
14 final, the State Board chooses not to review your
15 decision, or they review and they have the same
16 decision, then the contract will expire on June 30,
17 2019. At this point, I mean, we've already gone
18 through open enrollment applications, so new entity
19 could apply to, say, occupy this space where the
20 school currently is. The only option would be -- to
21 my knowledge would be for an existing charter holder
22 to seek a license or an expansion to occupy the
23 physical space.

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. Okay.

25 MS. HYATT: In terms of your comment about

1 whether they can change the management organization,
2 they would have to do that through an amendment
3 request of the current charter. So if you non-
4 renewed, having the same school operating but under a
5 different management organization wouldn't be an
6 option. It would have to be as Ms. Boyd said.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So maybe a question to
8 help. I think maybe what Dr. Williams is asking is
9 -- so would it be possible to have a motion to
10 conditionally approve the charter for, say, up to one
11 year and give them the directive to come back with a
12 plan to change governance or change charter
13 management organizations? Is that what your question
14 is?

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. I'm looking for something
16 that will allow them to address the various
17 challenges that they have and try to be respectful of
18 students and parents to -- that they would -- you
19 know, the school would still be there, things would
20 be put in place to improve it. I think seven years
21 has been long enough for what we've been -- what
22 we're currently doing. And I don't really have an
23 answer, I guess. But maybe a year of probation with
24 the governance of the school -- for the school board
25 of the school or something, a group to kind of decide

1 where do we want to go from here. You know, I want
2 to be respectful of the parents in the sense that,
3 you know, we're here; this is our school. It's not
4 working. You know, what we will -- what you will
5 leave here from this Panel, at least from one panel
6 member, is that what we have done in the past is not
7 working; can you come up with a plan to come back and
8 go from there. Uh-huh.

9 DR. BOYD: So I believe that you could do a
10 renewal for one year under probation. I think that
11 you could request for the school board to look into
12 finding a new management company.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

14 DR. BOYD: I think that's something that the
15 school board would have to be agreeable to.

16 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

17 DR. BOYD: So potentially I could see it as an
18 approval for one year with a request for the school
19 board to look into finding new management and
20 reporting back to you at some point on whether they
21 decide to do that or to non-renew at the end of that
22 one-year renewal.

23 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. Yeah.

24 MS. NEWTON: I'm a little bit -- kind of on the
25 other side. I think it's a little far-reaching.

1 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

2 MS. NEWTON: I think we could look at -- from my
3 standpoint, look at the probation and look at how we
4 would view another application.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

6 MS. NEWTON: Certainly, that would be something
7 that would be a little bit -- if you come back next
8 year, you're still in the same shape with the same
9 company; you could say, "Well, you know, you had an
10 opportunity to evaluate that." And their board is,
11 you know, independently operating and will decide
12 whether or not they want to make the changes. But --

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. Okay.

14 MS. NEWTON: -- I think we should certainly look
15 at putting some things -- some expectations in place
16 as it relates to academics, increasing the scores,
17 reducing the number of absenteeism, and those things
18 that factor into. But whether or not they, you know,
19 change management companies -- like I said, I think
20 personally it's a little far-reaching for me --

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

22 MS. NEWTON: -- to say you shop at one store as
23 opposed to another store, and when the results might
24 be the same.

25 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

1 MS. NEWTON: So I think it's an overall decision

2 --

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

4 MS. NEWTON: -- for their board to make
5 contingent upon the -- if -- and if I made a motion,
6 it would be for probation for a year contingent upon
7 us being in this situation, what do we need to do and
8 -- as parents and the community to make that decision
9 as opposed to us imposing that on them.

10 DR. WILLIAMS: That makes sense. You know, we
11 wouldn't tell them what management company to --

12 MS. NEWTON: Or even to change.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

14 MS. NEWTON: But, you know --

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Well, I tell you what I'm
16 struggling with on that part. I think seven years
17 with the one we have now --

18 MS. NEWTON: I think you're absolutely right.
19 But at the same time --

20 DR. WILLIAMS: I'm saying --

21 MS. NEWTON: -- there may be some tweaks. You
22 know, I don't -- I just think that's over-reaching in
23 terms of control --

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Control. Yeah.

25 MS. NEWTON: -- in a sense.

1 DR. WILLIAMS: That's a good point.

2 MS. NEWTON: And I might be a little bit
3 uncomfortable with that because, you know, they may
4 just say "we'll do this or nothing."

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

6 MS. NEWTON: And so --

7 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. That's a good point. I
8 respect that.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I would -- if I may, before
10 any motions take place, I just want to make this one
11 comment about probation in general and just kind of
12 -- just something for us to consider, and definitely
13 in the future, is that, you know, when we're doing
14 these charters and approving and renewing is that
15 when we have one, the purpose is to improve upon
16 what's going on.

17 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And so every time that we
19 put one of these charters on probation, you know,
20 that takes definitely more emphasis that we're having
21 to utilize resources, which isn't a problem; we
22 always have used resources. But is that the purpose
23 of this, is to always limp these things along in such
24 a way --

25 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

1 MS. NEWTON: I don't think it is. I think --
2 and ultimately our authority is to make our decisions
3 and then it goes to the State Board of Education
4 members to make the final decision. So at the time
5 -- you know, at the same time I don't think we do it
6 to help a handicap situation continue. But then
7 realizing too the ramifications of ending something
8 and what happens then. Is it more negative to do
9 that than to maybe give another lens to look at it
10 through? So I look at, you know, where the damage is
11 more on one end or the other, because, you know, we
12 can have a board to say, "Well, we didn't realize,
13 you know, and if we'd had an option we would've done
14 things differently." And so to upset 270 students
15 when there's possibly another way, that's my opinion
16 about it.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I understand. Okay.

18 All right.

19 DR. KREMERS: I continue to have concerns. I
20 think the probation option is only going to
21 perpetuate what the issue is. It's been seven years
22 of lack of improvement. So even though things are
23 being put in place, I still have significant
24 concerns. So I think we're going to be sitting back
25 in the same place a year from now making the decision

1 that we probably could make today.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Unless there's
3 any other discussion, I would -- we need a motion.

4 DR. KREMERS: I move that we deny the request
5 for renewal.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Second.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
8 a second to deny the renewal of the application.

9 Any discussion?

10 All right. We'll take a vote. Do we need to
11 roll-call or are we --

12 DR. WILLIAMS: Probably so.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll go ahead and
14 roll-call this vote again.

15 MR. ROGERS: I have a question. So deny the
16 renewal; so that means the charter would end June
17 30th. Right?

18 DR. KREMERS: (nodding head up and down.)

19 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. So we
21 have -- we'll start out -- Dr. Kremers.

22 DR. KREMERS: I vote for the motion to deny
23 approval -- renewal and approval.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.

25 MS. NEWTON: I vote for the motion to deny.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Rogers.

2 MR. ROGERS: Against.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Williams.

4 DR. WILLIAMS: I vote the motion to deny.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And Mr. Wilson.

6 MR. WILSON: Against.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have three voting
8 for, to two. So motion passes to deny the renewal.

9 MS. HYATT: We do have a request from a board
10 member of the applicant to make a statement if the
11 board would allow it -- the Panel would allow it.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And that's an allowable
13 thing at this --

14 MS. HYATT: As the Chair you have the
15 flexibility to allow them to speak. If the statement
16 were to change, you could always take another vote if
17 you wanted to.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So what would the procedure
19 look like? So we voted and it's done; so what would
20 we have to do to --

21 MS. HYATT: Vote to rescind your previous action
22 and then make a new motion and vote again.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So is that -- do we
24 have to take any vote to allow the public comment?

25 MS. HYATT: No.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So, Panel Members,
2 are we agreeable to that?

3 MS. NEWTON: I don't have a problem.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll hear the
5 public comment.

6 MS. ALDRIDGE: Hello. My name is Niesha [ps]
7 Aldridge. I am the CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of
8 Jefferson County, and I have been a part of the Boys
9 and Girls Club movement for four years now. And I
10 can tell you that this is our first year for the
11 partnership -- the afterschool partnership with
12 Lighthouse. We typically partner only in the
13 summertime and we did see, in summer 2017, that our
14 math and reading scores did increase. And I can tell
15 you Boys and Girls Club is a national organization
16 and we strive on a few goals. After safety is
17 academic success. So every day after school students
18 are coming over to our site and they are -- we are
19 focusing on math and literacy skills. So we are
20 working closely with Lighthouse school to increase
21 these numbers. We do have one site that is for
22 Lighthouse students only, and we set goals our-self.
23 I work with all school districts in Pine Bluff and I
24 have the same challenges with every school in Pine
25 Bluff. We -- I have issues hiring people who are

1 already qualified to make these changes. So what I'm
2 saying to you is, if you would allow it, let us
3 assist Lighthouse; let us work together to make these
4 changes. We have done it before during a short
5 period of time, during the summer. Now that we are
6 focused with afterschool and summertime, that's year-
7 round. I guarantee you, you will see some changes in
8 growth.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

10 MS. ALDRIDGE: Thank you.

11 MS. HYATT: I do believe that we have another
12 person that is wishing to make a public comment. I
13 misspoke earlier; I was under the impression that the
14 person that was going to speak was a member of the
15 applicant organization. If you want to hear
16 additional public comments from people, I would ask
17 that you vote to do that, and it would be limited to
18 three minutes, unless you allow additional time.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So do we have a
20 motion to hear additional comments or do we want to
21 move on?

22 MR. WILSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I move we hear
23 any additional comments people want to make. They
24 have a right to be heard. And even though I can't
25 stay for all of it, at least we can let them say

1 their piece.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion to
3 hear public comment. Is there a second?

4 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So if we don't have
6 the second, does that mean we are not hearing public
7 comments?

8 MS. HYATT: That's correct.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. So we will move
10 on. Do we need to read our list of reasons, all that
11 stuff?

12 MS. HYATT: Yes, please.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. So if you
14 would, Dr. Kremers --

15 DR. KREMERS: I voted for the motion to deny
16 approval for renewal. I have significant concerns
17 for the math and science scores, the SQSS status, and
18 the ample time for improvement over the past seven
19 years with no significant change.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.

21 MS. NEWTON: I vote in favor of the motion to
22 deny based on the lack of academic growth.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Rogers.

24 MR. ROGERS: I voted against the motion. I
25 think that overall Jefferson County has seen

1 struggles all over. This is not unique to just
2 Lighthouse. I would've liked to put them on notice
3 to have three years to show the improvement that
4 they've shown in other school districts, that same
5 opportunity.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Williams.

7 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted for the motion to deny
8 the renewal given that the charter school has been
9 operating for seven years and has an F grade. Also,
10 I have concerns for the math and reading scores.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. And Mr. Wilson.

12 MR. WILSON: I voted against the motion. I
13 would've preferred or would've voted for a period of
14 probation.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. So
16 you've heard the reasons for the motion and the
17 approval of the non-renewal.

18 Anything else we need to do on that?

19 No, we're good.

20 Okay. We will now take a 10-minute break before
21 we hear our next agenda item.

22 (BREAK: 11:04 - 11:18 A.M.)

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll go ahead and
24 resume the meeting. We're going to try to get
25 through the next item before we break for lunch.

1 A-4: RENEWAL FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL:
2 SCHOOL FOR INTEGRATED ACADEMIES AND TECHNOLOGIES (SIATech)

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So the next item on the
4 agenda that I see is a request for renewal on
5 SIATech. Mr. Ballard, you are recognized.

6 MR. BALLARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Reginald
7 Ballard, Arkansas Department of Education.

8 On January 10, 2011, the State Board of
9 Education approved the application for School for
10 Integrated Academies and Technologies (SIATech). The
11 charter is approved to serve students in grades 9-12
12 with a maximum enrollment of 275. Representatives
13 from SIATech are appearing before the Charter
14 Authorizing Panel to request renewal of their current
15 charter.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Thank you.

17 Those speaking for the application and those
18 speaking in opposition, would you please stand, raise
19 your right hand. A bunch of people. Do you affirm
20 that the testimony you're about to give will be the
21 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

22 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You may be seated.

24 The applicant has 20 minutes. You may begin.

25 MS. HATLEY: Good morning, Dr. Hernandez and the

1 rest of the Charter Panel. I am Katie Hatley, the
2 director at SIATech charter, Little Rock.

3 And, first, what I would like to do is introduce
4 my staff members that came. I have seven of nine
5 staff here with me, and we have one that's due today
6 to have a baby -- Lisa Romero, please stand. She's
7 one of our math instructors. Lameria Triplett is our
8 ELA; Ida McIntyre is our other fabulous math teacher;
9 we have Tanita Taylor, who's our registrar and
10 superpower; and we also have our certified child
11 nutrition director, Naomia. Don't worry, the kids
12 are getting fed. We have two teachers left behind
13 to, you know, manage -- two staff members to manage
14 the campus. Oh, my social studies teacher is here --
15 Dionne Mitchell. All right.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Forgot one.

17 I just want to clarify: did you say she was due
18 today?

19 MS. HATLEY: Uh-huh. We'll get through it.
20 Have we got any doctors in here?

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We're right across from the
22 hospital; right?

23 MS. HATLEY: Okay.

24 MS. ROMERO: I don't think it's going to be
25 today.

1 MS. HATLEY: Yeah, they won't take her.

2 Okay. So, who are we? And we have a staff
3 picture. We had one staff member missing; that was
4 Ida. And I wanted, you know, the board to -- the
5 Panel to know that I've just been blessed; I haven't
6 had a problem hiring credentialed or experienced
7 staff, and to have, you know, someone on our staff --
8 a total combined of 71 years in education. That
9 speaks volumes to, you know, how we're able to manage
10 our students.

11 Our mission has never changed, to provide a
12 dropout recovery program that focuses -- you know,
13 their curriculum is digitally delivered, but we focus
14 on real learning for real life and this is our main
15 focus. You know, I always hear schools say they
16 enroll everybody. We enroll everybody -- all
17 students who have been expelled or pending expulsion,
18 our adjudicated youth -- you know, they go to DYS.
19 Because of our average age of 19, they've been in
20 adult jail; they come back, they need a diploma, we
21 go and enroll them. We enroll, because of our
22 flexible school scheduling, a lot of single parents
23 who work full-time jobs and have two kids at home.
24 Overage and under-credit -- 17 years old with only
25 six credits; those high-schoolers' counselors know

1 those students will not graduate and would just be
2 out there. And, of course, economically
3 disadvantaged. I should've said highly mobile;
4 getting mail to our students, they all come back. I
5 mean, I've never seen them to be so transient, to
6 move like that.

7 Okay. We believe -- and, you know, I was
8 listening to the presentation from Lighthouse and
9 that whole entire school is what people refer to as
10 at-risk. And we don't use that word on our campus;
11 all of our students are at-promise, because at-risk
12 students have at-risk adults in their lives. We have
13 not met a child that woke up and intensely wanted to
14 be just bad. They're full of pain. People mistake
15 it for anger. That's another PD; we won't have time
16 because I'm on a tight schedule. But we just want
17 all of our students to become productive members of
18 society. We want tax-payers, not tax-takers.

19 You know, staff members -- my staff, we're
20 always going to trainings and trying to see what we
21 can do to help move these kids and help them
22 visualize their dreams. Everyone deserves a second
23 chance, especially a child, regardless of age.

24 Okay. Our impact -- you know, you look at this
25 enrollment and just when -- a year after we moved off

1 the campus. But I put this in here so that everyone
2 would know we get students from Bauxite, Beebe,
3 Benton -- you know, school districts that we've
4 served -- of course, Little Rock School District and
5 at one point North Little Rock both had a lot of
6 children in there. A student from Beebe -- we still
7 have an MOU with the Little Rock Job Corp Center and
8 they were sending some students over. But that young
9 man's grandfather, who was 88, drove him every day to
10 that campus so his child could get a diploma. You
11 know, next year Bryant, Cabot, Conway -- those are
12 all driving distance; Forrest City, Little Rock,
13 North Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Pulaski County, and
14 Sheridan.

15 And the form changed, in case somebody wanted to
16 know why the form looked different. The state --
17 that's the state form right there.

18 But once again -- you know, Blytheville -- just
19 areas that we service these children.

20 Enrollment for last year -- you know, Hot
21 Springs -- and when I say about "served," they
22 enrolled, they were in eSchool, we got them a
23 schedule, and for whatever reason they didn't stay or
24 got in trouble. Two years ago we lost seven students
25 who were murdered, who were killed. So there's just

1 a lot of extenuating factors.

2 So summer credits -- this is just our credit
3 sheet broken down yearly by how many credits students
4 have earned, who earned the credits. And in the last
5 three years 936 credits were granted.

6 So this is just a snapshot. We always hold our
7 graduations in Geyer Springs United Methodist Church.
8 It's personal, it's -- the building is beautiful. A
9 lot of times it's standing room only. And every time
10 I want to change it -- it's just something about that
11 area right there, because we're in the community,
12 we're in southwest Little Rock right off 65th Street,
13 and that church is off Geyer Springs. Moving our
14 facility for graduation, we'd run into transportation
15 problems for our kids.

16 There's a couple of other snapshots.

17 So our graduates today -- we actually have
18 three. These two -- of course, that's Lameria
19 Triplett up there. We always do a graduate shout-
20 out. We always recognize -- they get to walk through
21 the classrooms with a gown on and everything. And
22 that may not mean anything to somebody, but to us
23 that means a lot -- because we can graduate students
24 every day because of the competency model. And it's
25 just -- it just shares the light that they're ready

1 to go out and do great things.

2 So some ways we connect -- of course, the AMI
3 days -- on the first snow day. You know, our kids --
4 you know, on the average day we can put a message on
5 our Schoology homepage to tell them to "get online,
6 teachers will be online, they've posted your
7 schedule." And they were just like, "Oh, I ain't
8 getting online."

9 And this is just our analytics, this screen,
10 that shows -- you know, we start out in August,
11 September -- the engagement. Of course, it drops off
12 right there in December. We were out a week in
13 November, two in December; picked back up. You see
14 February; they're like, "Okay, I can graduate now."
15 March, we got in spring break. And it's still high
16 in April and May -- you know, it's graduation. And
17 in June we offer a mini summer session, which
18 sometimes they come and, you know, sometimes they
19 don't.

20 This is just ways that students connect. It's
21 just a screenshot from the analytics page. You know,
22 it shows you guys that they were somewhere on a
23 phone, a Chromebook, just on a desktop -- but it also
24 shows the IP address. So we know when they're not at
25 school and we pull this up they're online, working at

1 home or at a library or somewhere.

2 So, next, I was talking about our AMI days --
3 20-something visits the first time then the second
4 time 60-something visits who were online all day
5 connecting with our teachers, doing work.

6 Another thing that is big with us -- this is
7 Tyler Harris -- he's here today -- a math brain. And
8 our kids -- research tells us that students learn
9 best from their own. You know, sometimes you can be
10 embarrassed to ask the teacher, you know, "I don't
11 understand, I don't know," because you don't want
12 your peers to know that you do not understand it.
13 And this picture was taken by Ms. Mack, our math
14 teacher, who was sitting upfront while the police had
15 to go out the door and do something. But she pulled
16 them up-front. You know, the young man on the left
17 graduated and was in the military. Tyler is getting
18 ready to graduate; he's here today. We're looking
19 forward to completing him.

20 So some other things we do is focus on life
21 skills. I wasn't aware of Ambetter Insurance until
22 she came to the school, spoke to my students who were
23 18 or 19 to 21, and ended up enrolling 13 kids with
24 insurance. And so -- and our nurse is fabulous. She
25 always brings all these people in and provides things

1 that will help them -- you know, life skills, soft
2 skills, things that are needed.

3 The next program is Stamp Out Smoking -- came
4 and spoke to the students on, you know, smoking and
5 your lungs and all this, and they entered about six
6 of our students into a contest. They were able to do
7 a video, a poster. And I'm just -- I was impressed
8 because these kids are talented. All kids have some
9 raw talent. And we were kind of upset that they
10 didn't win a place -- and, of course, we were just
11 like, "But you did it; you know, you did it."

12 This HIV and Aids presentation -- this is just
13 some examples to help, related services. We have an
14 expectant mothers' group who meet twice monthly on
15 our campus with our students, because we have so many
16 mothers.

17 Human trafficking and cyber safety -- well, two
18 years ago I didn't think human trafficking was that
19 important, until we had two female students get
20 caught up in the human trafficking. So IDEAS has an
21 excellent PD on human trafficking -- because we just
22 missed all the warning signs, I did, my staff did; so
23 they came and educated the students and the staff on
24 this.

25 On the opioids and the narcotics -- of course,

1 that's just -- not just affecting kids. That's
2 affecting everyone.

3 And the hidden sources of sugar -- and when the
4 lady from the Department of Health -- I think it was
5 Ms. Detrick -- showed that, I was sitting in the back
6 going, "I eat all that. I eat that; you know, I eat
7 that." So it made me realize that I have to kind of
8 change my eating habits because that wasn't healthy.

9 So on this screen, that's a Walgreens manager
10 who came on campus to, you know, talk to students
11 about interviewing. He actually ended up hiring
12 about three of our students. He talked to them about
13 skills needed to make their-self employable --
14 employability skills -- just real hands-on, and let
15 students see, you know, what it takes to be
16 successful. My staff has done mock interviews. Ms.
17 Triplett is always in the English room helping them
18 update resumes and college applications, job
19 applications, quizzing them on jobs and trying to
20 just get their social skills up to where they can
21 understand and be able to relate.

22 I put this video -- this picture in here --
23 Santa Larry. It was so funny when I said, "Santa
24 Larry is coming to the school." So when I'm telling
25 some 19- and 20-year olds, they were just like,

1 "Really, Ms. T?" And I said, "No, he's an
2 entrepreneur. You guys want to" -- we're always
3 talking about dreams, and I said, "You need to see
4 this." So they didn't think it was so cool until he
5 started showing his presentation and all these clips
6 and giving away free stuff, and they were like, "That
7 man is rich." And I said, "Well, he was an Army
8 officer who retired as a Captain or Major" -- I don't
9 remember -- "and worked for the state, in Texas, and
10 retired from there." And he said one day he said,
11 "I'm going to be a Santa Claus." And even when he
12 told me, I was like, "What?" And I didn't know that
13 was an actual school that you have to go to -- and I
14 think it was for three months or four months, and I
15 just couldn't believe it. So he's still in touch
16 with students. He's not been able to come back
17 because this is his busy season, but he'll come back
18 in the spring, sign autographs, take pictures. But
19 anyway --

20 So voter education -- this is key for us too.
21 We had a speaker to come and speak on that and
22 especially just talked to our 18 to 21 year olds on
23 the significance and importance of voting, letting
24 your voice be heard. They were able to log on, get
25 online and print a live ballot and, you know, and

1 just ask questions, ask amendment questions -- and
2 that was a wonderful. And my social studies teacher,
3 Ms. Mitchell, set that up. But, of course, these are
4 two of my older students who -- when I told them "let
5 me get a picture of Ms. Mitchell and the speaker,"
6 they were like, "Well, we're 19." I said, "Well, you
7 can get in the picture too."

8 So the next slide is on student voice. This
9 student wrote Representative French Hill regarding
10 some questions and some insurance questions, and I
11 was shocked that he responded right back -- because
12 I'm thinking he's busy, that man is not going to
13 write back, but he did. And so after that, we ended
14 up getting a couple more to different people who
15 submitted letters and they wrote back.

16 And these are just other ways that we connect --
17 radio interviews. Ms. Triplett and Ms. Mack was on
18 air, they were live, and this brought in a lot of
19 publicity to the school. We got a lot of enrollment.
20 You know, I said "a lot," but 15 students is a lot to
21 me. We have -- we speak with -- we enroll students
22 who graduated from the Youth Challenge program at
23 Camp Robinson. Of course, I'm out there speaking; I
24 go out there twice a year -- and I'm thankful for
25 that relationship.

1 Right here I was at Hall High School on a
2 recruitment event. One of the counselors set this up
3 for all military, dropout recovery, and I was there
4 -- the Job Corp Center -- and I was thankful for
5 that. And at the Age of Agility Conference I was
6 able to speak with Superintendent Poore and, you
7 know, just kind of told him that we need to get
8 together this spring and just have some conversations
9 and collaboration. You know, he's always focusing on
10 attendance; we focus on attendance. But also we feel
11 that we can graduate these kids.

12 This next picture -- two years ago we
13 incorporated yoga therapy in our school. One of my
14 former teachers got a grant through Blue Cross and
15 You that funded this. And the teachers that came
16 over fell in love with our students and just cut the
17 price. And we haven't started back yet for them to
18 still come into the school. We were trying to find
19 out ways to decrease some student referrals, because
20 some of them -- they would become combative; you
21 know, they wasn't listening to us. And so once we
22 did this -- and they had to sign a little release.
23 When we incorporated yoga therapy, at first the boys
24 were just kind of standing around. So I said, "Okay,
25 I'll just have a session for all boys." And after,

1 then it was more boys in the program and I think like
2 three girls. Yeah, boys just like took over all the
3 yoga mats, so we had to order some more. But our
4 discipline referrals went away. You know, they were
5 able to think, you know, what will I do in this
6 situation.

7 And this last slide, you know, we're always
8 doing quality professional development. And this is
9 just another way that we try to stay connected with
10 the state. We invite, you know, people in, to come
11 in and see what we're doing. Because just looking at
12 it and looking at our scores -- from the very time
13 that we opened I've always said that we're an
14 anomaly. We don't focus on test scores, because my
15 average tester is 19. So they were not successful at
16 15, why am I testing them at 19 -- because the state
17 said I have to. And what they will do is, they just
18 don't show up.

19 And the man in that picture, middle, Dr. Jesse
20 Jackson -- we believe in his PD and trainings, how to
21 address negative classroom behaviors. I bought
22 another book that we love, "Don't Kick Them Out, Why
23 Black Boys and Latino Boys Frequently Get Suspended."
24 And it's just broken down from research-based
25 principles that just kind of make sense.

1 I had to put this slide in here because,
2 finally, this is something we can hang our hat on.
3 Somebody realized that we're doing good things. It
4 may not look good or show up, but when we received
5 both of these awards for Beating the Odds -- we tell
6 our students every day, "When you show up on campus
7 you have beat the odds, or one of your peers, because
8 somebody didn't make it; they didn't make it here."
9 And they have the best growth math scores in the
10 state. That was just awesome. I mean, you know, the
11 staff was like, finally, we got recognized for
12 something nice.

13 So these are just other things we do. Tyler,
14 you made it in the video twice. Christmas program,
15 you know, putting a tree together; you know, Ms. Lee,
16 our administrative assistant; they had their ugliest
17 sweaters on that day. And the students at the bottom
18 all received monetary donations -- I mean, monetary
19 gifts from donors who said, you know, "Here's some
20 money. We want you to bless these kids for
21 Christmas." And we were like, "Okay, thank you." So
22 those were the students, along with one of our police
23 officers.

24 And, you know, life after high school -- I don't
25 know how many of you peruse my SIATech Facebook page,

1 but several of our students are doing well. And
2 these two students -- this slide just says a lot to
3 me. And I don't want to get into it too deep, but
4 when somebody has told you that you're never going to
5 be anything and you can't and you won't amount to
6 anything and you'll just be locked up like your
7 friends -- yeah, this is what this slide means to me:
8 they proved them wrong. One graduated from us, went
9 to truck driving school in Texas; he drives cross-
10 country. Of course, my Air Force guy, he was just on
11 campus last week; he came back after graduating basic
12 training and now he's in Japan. But -- and, you
13 know, that's the only one on Facebook. But many of
14 our students are, you know, CNA, military; we have a
15 young lady who's a sheriff deputy; we have two
16 students who are going into the LRPD police academy
17 in the spring; you know, students at college; and we
18 also have a student who works for the Arkansas
19 Department of Education.

20 Ms. Perry, how do I play the video? Oh, you're
21 doing it. Okay.

22 We'll watch the video and I'll come back up.

23 So while we're trying to -- how much time have I
24 got, Dr. Hernandez?

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You've got one minute. But

1 you'll have the additional five minutes, so --

2 MS. HATLEY: One minute? Okay. Well, and the
3 video shows students and graduates and current
4 students, the older students, and it just kind of
5 tells -- you know, it tells why they're there and the
6 benefit from the school.

7 And one thing I want to end with is, you know,
8 all of our --

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: The video is -- I hear
10 sound, but we don't see a picture.

11 (WHEREUPON, a video was shown, which is
12 available for viewing on the ADE website.)

13 MS. HATLEY: And, Dr. Hernandez, I have a parent
14 that wanted to speak. Will you ask some questions or
15 does he come up now?

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah. We'll give you five
17 additional minutes. We'll give you time to have the
18 parent come up.

19 MS. HATLEY: Okay. Mr. Cleveland.

20 MR. CLEVELAND: Good afternoon, Board Members.
21 My name is Matt Cleveland. My son attends SIATech.
22 And I just want to commend the program that you have
23 for these kids who -- of a second chance, because
24 it's greatly needed, and to provide the resources for
25 these type of schools, in particular SIATech --

1 because this -- I've seen the change, the difference
2 in my son. He went to Youth Challenge. He went
3 through -- he had behavior issues. The traditional
4 school setup was not beneficial for him, and/or the
5 environment. And SIATech -- these charter schools
6 help provide that, especially for the minorities.

7 I have to commend the staffing because these
8 ladies -- or the people that work in these schools --
9 until you guys have worked in those schools and those
10 communities, having to deal with kids like my son
11 once was -- okay -- he was not able to function. He
12 could not be -- he was not -- the system in place in
13 traditional schools could not meet the needs that he
14 had. But SIATech has provided that for him and he's
15 now able to go on to get a diploma, go to the
16 military, even though he may have been late to
17 develop. But he had an opportunity to continue to
18 develop. And to close doors like that with schools
19 that are -- with the lack of resources in these
20 communities where the wrong people don't want to move
21 to, man, it's a tragedy. It's a real tragedy.

22 I understand that this is a new program, even
23 though it's only 10 years old. I mean, I know it
24 took you a little longer -- it took you more than
25 seven years to get your Ph.D. And a lifetime is a

1 learning process; you know, we re-learn throughout
2 our life. And guess what, these kids who we are
3 turning our backs on, these outsource schools, these
4 charter schools -- when y'all close those doors -- my
5 son, he wasn't going to have a second chance. But
6 like Hillary said -- there may not be any Hillary
7 fans in here -- "It takes a village." And it starts
8 not just looking at those numbers from, you know,
9 what, seven years ago; it takes three years to even
10 get a program processed, to even look at the right
11 data. And to not fund them or give them a second
12 chance, that's a tragedy. You guys have not been
13 there, you haven't lived there. I don't know if you
14 have or not; I'm just -- I might be pre-speaking.

15 Okay. All right. I'm going -- I'm about to sit
16 down. But I appreciate this opportunity because we
17 need it. Thank you.

18 [APPLAUSE]

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Mr. Cleveland.
20 Is there anything else you had in closing?

21 MS. HATLEY: No.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll go ahead and
23 move over to questions for panel members.

24 Ms. Newton, do you have questions?

25 [A MOMENT OF SILENCE]

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Is that a no -- no
2 questions, Ms. Newton? Or, did you have questions?
3 You might've said no.

4 MS. NEWTON: No, I didn't. No. I'm sorry.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Rogers?

6 MR. ROGERS: I don't have any questions. I do
7 want to say that I did visit the school. And when I
8 got there Katie told me that I was the first Charter
9 Panel or State Board member that's ever visited her
10 school, and I thought that was just telling right
11 there. But it is unique, if you sit and listen to
12 Katie just on the challenges that her school has to
13 do. I'm not going to put her on the -- I took some
14 notes when we were there and -- because when you
15 talked about AMI days -- AMI days to her school means
16 something completely different than to a traditional
17 public school. I don't know if she wants to share
18 any of those stories.

19 MS. HATLEY: You can.

20 MR. ROGERS: No, I was just going to let you
21 tell it.

22 MS. HATLEY: Okay.

23 MR. ROGERS: Because it was just some of the
24 stuff that was just impressed to me as to how her
25 school has to operate is so much different than how a

1 traditional public school or even charter school has
2 to go. And I was just -- well, I'll just let her
3 explain that, her AMI days -- and the app thing that
4 you have too. I just thought that was something that
5 was really cool, so --

6 MS. HATLEY: Yes, sir. Thank you. I want to
7 publicly thank you again for coming. I know you saw
8 that big man with the metal detector at the front
9 door, but we're going to be safe there.

10 One AMI day was used when a young man was shot
11 by police in North Little Rock. And there were a lot
12 of relatives on our campus and there was some
13 hostility between two groups of people. I can't
14 remember all the details, but the staff and I
15 decided, hey, lets just work from home, kind of let
16 things cool down. We have ways to connect and get
17 online, you know, and get them engaged. And that was
18 actually the second day. The first day was a snow
19 day that we used an AMI day.

20 So, you know, that's why I'm thankful for AMI
21 days. You know, there have been days we've had to
22 close early because there's been a shooting on 65th
23 Street -- and, of course, the school is right off
24 65th -- and, you know, our students were involved in
25 that, two rival students. But when they're on

1 campus, I'm just amazed because they don't disrespect
2 the building. I've said before that, you know, we've
3 been open seven years -- five years in the location
4 right there on the corner -- and they will fight at
5 night, shoot each other, and come to school and --
6 and I'm just blown away. We've not -- you know, I
7 think we -- I keep saying six fights, but they said a
8 skirmish doesn't count, so -- and that's in seven
9 years, you know, and I appreciate that. And it may
10 be because they look at us as mother figures.

11 We finally have one male again, but they just
12 protect us.

13 You know, and I told Mr. Rogers about an
14 incident, a shooting at Park Plaza. It was a
15 shooting and an incident happened and the kids were
16 asking for my keys -- and, of course, I was thinking
17 I'm not giving you my keys. But they went and got my
18 vehicle and told me to go that way because a large
19 fight had broken out.

20 But there are a lot of different challenges -- I
21 mean, totally different from a traditional school.
22 And when our kids see us out there they go into
23 protect mode; you know, they will tell us, "You need
24 to go ahead and leave" or "don't come over there" or,
25 you know, they will say, you know, somebody got shot,

1 you know. And last year -- this year, in May, when
2 we lost those two females who were seniors, you know,
3 that was tough. But that year that we lost seven
4 students, you just have to -- you have to come back
5 and fill up your love tank and you just have to love
6 what you do. And I think that's why a lot of people
7 say that's God's work that we do. It's dangerous,
8 very dangerous; I'm not going to downplay the danger
9 of that. But, I mean, we've had to leave school
10 early because of different things, when the police
11 say, "Y'all go ahead and leave," and we're like
12 locked up. You know, we call the Charter Office in
13 case somebody calls to say, "You know they closed the
14 school?" But there's usually a reason, a very
15 serious reason.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Williams.

17 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I want to call you Ms.
18 Hatley. Is it still Ms. Hatley?

19 MS. HATLEY: It went back to Hatley.

20 DR. WILLIAMS: It went back to Hatley, okay.

21 MS. HATLEY: I'll always be a Hatley.

22 DR. WILLIAMS: And you're from Briar; right?

23 MS. HATLEY: Right.

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Sorry to hear about your
25 dad.

1 MS. HATLEY: Uh-huh, yeah. Thank you. Thank
2 you.

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. When I was in elementary
4 school at Gurdon he was my bus driver.

5 MS. HATLEY: Yes, he was.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

7 MS. HATLEY: And your brother.

8 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah, absolutely.

9 Tell me a little bit about some of your
10 graduates. You know, how are they doing? You know,
11 the work you all are doing, you're creating an
12 opportunity for kids, but there's -- no one else is
13 doing this. But can you talk to me a little bit
14 about when they graduate, you know, where are they
15 going? I saw the young man, the Air Force, and the
16 other man -- but just kind of a general overview of
17 your graduates. Are they going on to stay out of
18 trouble, be good citizens, get jobs, and so-forth?

19 MS. HATLEY: Yes. Excellent question. Well,
20 you know we use the waiver, ACT waiver. So we ACT
21 test all our kids. You know, if they say "I don't
22 want to go to college," "Well, you're taking the ACT.
23 We need to see what you can do." And so we have
24 several students in colleges -- Henderson State,
25 which, you know, is my alma mater; Pulaski Tech; UCA.

1 We have a young student who graduated early. She was
2 16 when she came to us but graduated at 17, got
3 accepted to UCA. She couldn't get off from work
4 today. But a lot of our kids join the military.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

6 MS. HATLEY: And my mindset with that is if I
7 can get them off that street corner and from under
8 that tree and just get them out and let them see the
9 world and get free medical, health and dental, you
10 know, and -- because I'm always telling our kids,
11 "You're going to have to come back and take care of
12 your mother; you're going to have to take care of
13 your father." But just get them out of Little Rock.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

15 MS. HATLEY: That's just -- I'm just like, "Get
16 out of Little Rock." We have our first female
17 African American student who's in the Marines. She's
18 doing well. I mean, we knew she was going to be a
19 proven leader. One of my PD speakers was there; he
20 asked her a question and she just took over, and he
21 was just like, "Come up front." "I want to speak."
22 You know, but, I mean, I'm just trying to think off
23 the top of my head. Where else? College, military,
24 work -- yeah, good jobs; we try to get meaningful
25 jobs, not just like --

1 DR. WILLIAMS: I'm good with the military.
2 Actually, Larry Jefferson and I served together.

3 MS. HATLEY: Yeah, I know.

4 DR. WILLIAMS: Absolutely. So this is good.
5 Thank you.

6 MS. HATLEY: Thank you, Dr. Williams.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Kremers.

8 DR. KREMERS: For the students that are from the
9 smaller rural communities, do they come in to Little
10 Rock to the schools?

11 MS. HATLEY: They do.

12 DR. KREMERS: They drive in every day for that
13 commitment? And then would you say the majority of
14 the students, are they -- have they already dropped
15 out of school or they've been incarcerated?

16 MS. HATLEY: Well, you know, we enroll new
17 students every day; so it's open entry, open exit.
18 So right now, when we come back in January we'll get
19 a lot of students from Pulaski County who failed to
20 graduate; they know they're not going to graduate in
21 May. But the population changes; it just constantly
22 changes. Right now we have a lot of young kids --
23 well, really not a lot but more than we desire,
24 because they're just too immature to be around a 21-
25 year old boy. And those girls put on all that

1 lipstick and that's challenging. But it just
2 fluctuates, it really does, each different day. You
3 know, we enroll new students every day. We have
4 orientation. Ms. Triplett does a fabulous job with
5 that. So it just kind of fluctuates.

6 DR. KREMERS: Uh-huh. It reminds me a lot of
7 the Goodwill program charter, similar. You're
8 working --

9 MS. HATLEY: Well, we've been working with them
10 on some, you know, some things. Ms. Taylor provided
11 them with our ILP. We have an individualized
12 learning plan that just mapped it out for every
13 student. They see what credits they've earned, what
14 they need. Our teachers set goals, really intense
15 goals, and revisit those if they didn't make them; so
16 they can take ownership of their learning.

17 DR. KREMERS: You're working in a space that's
18 extremely challenging, so --

19 MS. HATLEY: Yes, ma'am. But rewarding.

20 DR. KREMERS: Yes. Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So my questions are, I
22 guess, a little bit around the goals. And I just
23 wonder -- you know, you guys have set goals in the
24 past, you set goals now. And I just -- I wonder
25 about the -- in some cases, I see that you didn't

1 meet your goals that you had in the past, and so --
2 and even some of the goals that you're setting now.
3 I guess I'm kind of torn by saying on one side you
4 obviously want to set lofty goals, and at the same
5 time, you know, are those realistic goals for the
6 type of school that you're operating?

7 MS. HATLEY: I knew that was going to be a
8 question. So the goals were already set. The
9 charter was approved before I was hired. So the
10 management company set the first goals and I had to
11 live -- well, actually die by those goals. So now,
12 moving forward, the current goals, we feel like
13 they're obtainable -- attainable and that's something
14 we can meet. That's why we said "partially met
15 them," you know, because of the wording of the old
16 goals. And those were set -- I came onboard in July
17 2011, so the charter was already in existence. I
18 never modified those goals. I'm just really wrapped
19 -- getting a chance to really wrap my head around
20 charterdom, to be honest. So I knew that at the
21 renewal, you know, I've got to get those goals. And
22 what we did was set goals that align with the ESSA
23 and our new school improvement plan. That's only an
24 overview on my website, but we have the entire plan.
25 And that way, what we're doing and the way we're

1 going will align with the state.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. And my second
3 question goes back to kind of the ESSA part. And so
4 when I, you know, look at specifically SQSS and see
5 that 1-point -- it's a 1.21, and then I look a little
6 bit further into that to the attendance part and I
7 see a 0.6 -- and this isn't -- may be a question for
8 Ms. Coffman, because we need to get her up here
9 during Charter Panel. But, you know, given the type
10 of school that you're running and the way that
11 attendance may be captured I just -- I wonder how --
12 if it's legitimately a 0.6 student engagement score
13 or if there's some process or the way that you're
14 capturing that information and it may not be
15 translated over. Because I assume you have kids that
16 are attending maybe offsite, or not -- or is it just
17 the majority of your kids are chronically absent and
18 then that's just -- it is what it is? So I guess --

19 MS. HATLEY: Well, one of the things with that
20 score is we don't have any 9th graders that start
21 with us. We've not had any since 2013. So when
22 you're looking at cohort that's why our graduates
23 doesn't reflect -- because if they're 20 and 21 those
24 graduates -- the school didn't get credit for them; I
25 don't get -- so we've graduated almost 300 kids and I

1 think we've gotten credit for -- I mean, it was a
2 minimal number, because we track that; it's just the
3 way it's set-up. So even with that, none of the ESSA
4 -- when I was in the training in the summer, I said,
5 "Well, those four indicators don't even apply to me."

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And that's kind of my --

7 MS. HATLEY: It's just hard.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah.

9 MS. HATLEY: It's tough. But I know it's
10 federal regulation, but it's just really hard. So
11 that will always look bad.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Coffman, any
13 comment on that? It's just -- it sticks out to me as
14 kind of the numbers and knowing the type of school.
15 And if the answer is it just is what it is, that's
16 fine.

17 MS. COFFMAN: So the numbers are what they are
18 --

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

20 MS. COFFMAN: -- first of all. But in looking
21 at any school that is outside of what we consider the
22 traditional model -- that's something that we
23 internally have been looking at is does there need to
24 be an alternative accountability plan. A couple of
25 states did get an alternative plan approved. There

1 have been problems implementing it, so we are
2 watching that carefully. I believe that Dr. Boyd has
3 met with Ms. Hatley and others, and will continue to
4 do that, have that conversation about the possibility
5 of applying for an alternative accountability plan.
6 Right now, we do offer alternative accountability at
7 the state level. The school district is exempt from
8 letter grades, which is a part of our accountability,
9 but not exempt from ESSA. So we have looked at that.
10 We're looking at their data carefully.

11 One of the things that we had contacted the
12 school about was graduation rate -- is it
13 recordkeeping, is it students moving in and out.
14 There are guidelines for when a student can be
15 excluded, and if a student is leaving SIATech and
16 going to prison that is not exclusionary; and so if
17 the student is dropping out that's not exclusionary.
18 So that's -- with the clientele that they're working
19 with, often that's where students may be going when
20 they leave. But she's very aware of it. Our office
21 has been in touch with her, and so it's a topic that
22 we keep at the top of our list.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you for that.

24 And it kind of takes me back to the goal part.

25 Is it because of the number of kids and then your

1 population? It just seems hard to set a goal. And
2 one of the goals I saw there was to increase
3 attendance by 1%. And so you seem to be always at
4 the mercy of the kids that you get in that year and,
5 you know, the kids that you're able to get out. And
6 so I don't know if there's anything to be done about
7 it. But that's just -- the goals probably seem to be
8 a lot more manageable, but they still may be hard to
9 attain. So it just may be in the next iteration of
10 thinking about, you know, what are reasonable goals
11 for this type of charter school. So --

12 MS. HATLEY: And we're branching out with some
13 partnerships that we're hoping -- you know, we
14 continue to work with recruiters, local recruiters
15 who bring in students. And, of course, they graduate
16 quick and they leave. But I just want those kids --
17 and I just wish, since so many of my students go to
18 jail, that we could some kind of way implement our
19 curriculum in there. At least they can earn credits
20 and then come to us and can graduate. I attended
21 that Age of Agility conference looking for business
22 leaders who would hire my students with prior felony
23 convictions. And so when I would bring that up, they
24 were like no; so it's really tough, you know. But,
25 you know, one thing with our school is generation

1 after generation; you know, they look at "well, my
2 son's, you know, cousin was there; I've got to bring
3 him there." So once parents are starting to see that
4 -- I just don't understand how -- Dr. Hernandez, how
5 parents let their children stay in schools with six
6 credits and you're 17. I don't understand that
7 mindset. But we are working with some counselors,
8 and teachers are going out speaking with counselors,
9 saying, "Let us have these kids before they drop
10 out."

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You mentioned continuing to
12 work while they're in -- and when they go to jail
13 continue to work on their programs. What kind of
14 partnership do you have now with like the Little Rock
15 School District? I noticed a lot of your students
16 come from that area.

17 MS. HATLEY: We do have -- I think it's at
18 Central, one of the assistant principals will refer
19 students -- or he will even have the parent and
20 student meet us at the school and say, you know,
21 "This is a school that can help your child graduate."
22 He brought a young man there who had taken a gun to
23 school. I mean, he graduated, he's in college, he's
24 working for Dillard's. So all the principals and
25 counselors are aware of SIATech but -- and another

1 thing I need to let the Panel know is that we don't
2 want to steal kids or whatever, because a lot of our
3 students transfer back to their home district once
4 they get caught up or get back on track. We want
5 every child to have a traditional school experience,
6 like I did. But if it's not working, then you need a
7 smaller setting; you need someone who can put their
8 hands on you every day and, you know, give you
9 individualized instruction. So, you know, I just
10 want to make that -- make this panel aware of that.
11 You know, there's just so many --

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: The main reason I asked --
13 I don't know if it's completed or in the process --
14 is that Little Rock becoming responsible for the
15 juvenile educational program. And so when they're in
16 juvenile detention, if there was a partnership that
17 if you -- if it was one of your kids that there
18 wasn't this -- they could continue on their academic
19 plan with whatever they're working on at the time and
20 not have to transfer to this other academic plan and
21 then be off-course of what they're doing. So that
22 was maybe just a suggestion to visit --

23 MS. HATLEY: You're following --

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- about that.

25 MS. HATLEY: That would be perfect, because

1 students -- most schools are either on block
2 scheduling, nine-week semesters. You know, we can
3 graduate a child every day with that competency
4 model. So if they're locked up -- even if they're
5 locked up for a couple of months, they can at least
6 earn a couple of credits right there at DYS or at the
7 juvenile center down on Roosevelt.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Any other questions
9 by Panel members?

10 Okay. Looking at the application -- I don't see
11 any other concerns with the application, other than
12 one waiver. There seems to be a question about web
13 data requirements. Ms. Hyatt, if you could --

14 MS. HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt, Arkansas
15 Department of Education. There is a remaining
16 concern, but it's my understanding that the applicant
17 was just to rescind that waiver. And if that's true,
18 then we're all good; if not, we'll just need to have
19 a little bit of conversation about it.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

21 MS. HATLEY: That's true.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Just make sure you say it
23 in the mic.

24 MS. HATLEY: That is correct, sir.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So you're rescinding that

1 waiver for web data requirements?

2 MS. HATLEY: Yes.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right.

4 So I'm not seeing any other issues. So we'll
5 accept a motion or further discussion.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: I move that the charter be
7 renewed for seven years, per the application.

8 MS. NEWTON: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
10 a second to approve the charter renewal for seven
11 years.

12 Any discussion?

13 Okay. I'll call for the vote.

14 All those in favor say "aye."

15 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

17 Motion carries, 4-0.

18 If you would, go ahead and write your reasons in
19 your chart.

20 And if you would, just give us a minute, Ms.
21 Hatley, for us to give you our feedback.

22 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

23 MS. NEWTON: I voted in favor of the motion
24 because I feel that SIATech is meeting the needs of a
25 specific population that otherwise would more than

1 I came up.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I'm sorry. All right.

3 MS. HATLEY: So, but thank you, all. Thank you.
4 Come visit the school.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

6 All right. We will take a break for lunch and
7 come back at --

8 DR. WILLIAMS: Oh, what time -- it's 12:05 now.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah. I know our lunch --

10 DR. WILLIAMS: 12:45?

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll come back at
12 12:45.

13 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:06 - 12:51 P.M.)

14 A-5: REQUEST FOR CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENTS: STANDARDS FOR
15 ACCREDITATION

16 A-6: REQUEST FOR CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENTS: CLASS SIZE AND
17 TEACHING LOAD

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. We'll come back
19 from lunch. I see the next item on our agenda is
20 item number 5, Request for Charter School Amendments:
21 Standards for Accreditation. Ms. Boyd, you are
22 recognized.

23 DR. BOYD: Thank you, Dr. Hernandez. Alexandra
24 Boyd, Public School Accountability.

25 So number 5 and number 6, the items are pretty

1 much -- they're very similar. So this is taking a
2 step back. You know, we've been doing the transition
3 from the previous standards to the current standards.
4 And number 5 is really just clean-up from that. So
5 we've been going through the Standards for
6 Accreditation, running the system, talking with
7 districts, and we noticed that there were some things
8 that we left out and some things that we mapped over
9 incorrectly. So that's what's on your agenda for
10 number 5.

11 And then for number 6, it's the Class Size and
12 Teaching Load rule. So when we revised the standards
13 we also decided to put Class Size and Teaching Load
14 in its own rule. So the school that previously had
15 all the components for the Class Size and Teaching
16 Load waiver, once those rules became effective, on
17 October 29th, they need those rules to complete that
18 package which they previously had. So I'm requesting
19 that on behalf of two charters that have communicated
20 to me that they do need a waiver of those rules.

21 So I just explained all of that to you as one,
22 but I think you should vote on them separately.

23 Do you have any questions?

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Just how to make the motion. Do
25 we make it for each one of these, like each one under

1 section 5, on action item 5?

2 DR. BOYD: I think you can do one motion for 5
3 and then one motion for 6.

4 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. Okay.

5 DR. BOYD: So to approve or deny the requested
6 changes.

7 MS. HYATT: On number 6, if you could do it
8 individually, I think, since we just have two. And I
9 did want to just add to what she said -- typically,
10 when we pass on a new rule or there's an amendment to
11 a law we wouldn't do them as a group. This is kind
12 of a special situation because it was in the
13 standards and we've been doing this entire standards
14 mapping-over process that was necessitated by the
15 change in the standards. And so even though the
16 Class Size rule is an independent rule and it's new,
17 it came out of the standards; so we're going to do
18 them together like that. But since we just have two
19 schools, if you could do number 6 in two different
20 motions that would be my preference.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So 5 in one motion and 6
22 in one motion is what I'm hearing.

23 DR. BOYD: 5 in one motion, and then 6 in two
24 motions.

25 DR. WILLIAMS: 6 in two motions.

1 DR. BOYD: So three motions.

2 DR. WILLIAMS: Okey-dokey.

3 Do you want to check with them first, Dr.
4 Hernandez, before I get started or -- go for it.

5 MOTION AND VOTE FOR A-5

6 Okay. We're on action item number 5. I move
7 that we approve the transition and waivers from the
8 previous Standards of Accreditation, ADE Standards
9 for Accreditation eStem amendment request form and
10 the KIPP Delta amendment request form. All of these
11 are under action item 5.

12 MS. NEWTON: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
14 a second.

15 All those in -- any discussion?

16 All those in favor say "aye."

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

19 Motion carries.

20 MOTION AND VOTE FOR A-6: eStem

21 DR. BOYD: Now we're ready for item 6, I
22 believe. Is eStem first?

23 Okay.

24 DR. WILLIAMS: I move that we approve the -- let
25 me stop here just for a second.

1 So how am I -- eStem is a separate motion and
2 then the Class Size in KIPP Delta are one motion?

3 DR. BOYD: Yes. So a Class -- approve the
4 waiver of Class Size and Teaching Load rules for
5 eStem. And then in a separate motion approve the
6 waiver for KIPP -- the waiver of Class Size and
7 Teaching rules -- Class Size and Teaching Load for
8 KIPP.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I'm seeing three items
10 under the action item number 6.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Right. So the one -- it's
12 just the actual rules that we're waiving. So she's
13 saying the motion to waive Class Size and Teaching
14 Load rules for eStem and then the same for KIPP.

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Got it.

16 I move that we approve the amendment to the
17 waivers for Class Size and Teaching Load rules for
18 eStem amendment request form.

19 MR. ROGERS: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
21 a second.

22 Any discussion?

23 All those in favor say "aye."

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

1 Motion carries.

2 MOTION AND VOTE FOR A-6: KIPP DELTA

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I move that we approve the
4 waiver for Standards for Accreditation for Class Size
5 and Teaching Load rules for KIPP Delta amendment
6 request form.

7 MR. ROGERS: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
9 a second.

10 Any discussion?

11 Not seeing any, all those in favor say "aye."

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

14 Motion passes.

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

16 DR. BOYD: Thank you very much.

17 A-7: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT:

18 KIPP DELTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Ballard, I see
20 the next item on the agenda is open enrollment
21 charter amendment for KIPP Delta Public Schools.

22 MR. BALLARD: Reginald Ballard, Arkansas
23 Department of Education.

24 On March 11, 2002, the State Board of Education
25 approved the application for KIPP Delta Public

1 Schools. The charter is approved to serve students
2 in grades K-12 with a maximum enrollment of 2,600.
3 Representatives from KIPP Delta Public Schools are
4 appearing before the Charter Authorizing Panel to
5 request an amendment on their current charter.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So I just want to
7 make sure, is there a different process here? Do
8 they have the same 20 minutes to present and
9 everybody has to be sworn in, all that kind of stuff?

10 MR. BALLARD: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. So those
12 speaking for or in opposition to the amendment
13 request would you please stand and raise your right
14 hand. Okay. Do you affirm that the testimony you're
15 about to give will be the truth, the whole truth and
16 nothing but the truth?

17 MR. SHIREY: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Thank you.
19 You are recognized to start your presentation.

20 MR. SHIREY: Thank you.

21 Good afternoon, Members of the Board. Thank you
22 for hearing me. I know you're about sick of me, but
23 that's all right -- I'm about sick of myself.

24 So I'm not going to take 20 minutes, but here's
25 the highlight. Over the last few years, of course,

1 you know, we've seen some decline in performance.
2 And just being honest, we've stretched ourselves and
3 our resources thin across three communities across
4 the Delta. And we want to get back to a place where
5 we can be -- get back to running great schools and
6 being incredibly focused. So to this end, we are
7 seeking to consolidate our Forrest City school campus
8 with our Helena schools.

9 Just quick math -- we had 97 students in Forrest
10 City, we're running close to a \$300,000 deficit this
11 year, and we're serving 17% of area students which is
12 really just the Forrest City School District. So
13 when you think about getting to a place of financial
14 sustainability and the percentage you have to start
15 to pull from a school district that's on decline,
16 it's probably a pretty big uphill battle.

17 In Helena, of course we've been there since
18 2002. So we have a lot more capacity to weather
19 storms. We're currently serving 941 students, pre-K
20 through 12. We're 23% of the area students.
21 Overall, high school is a little down -- but overall,
22 just in the Helena community we're incredibly
23 sustainable. And I mentioned the declining
24 populations. Up and down the Delta there's
25 population decline. Most school districts have lost

1 a significant portion of their students. Forrest
2 City, for example, is down 40% from 2005; Blytheville
3 is down; Barton-Lexa is down. Wheatley-Palestine is
4 an exception. Armorel is not on here; it's probably
5 an exception. But by and large, a lot of traditional
6 school districts are losing population. So what we
7 don't want to do is over-extend infrastructure when
8 we know the reality of the Delta.

9 And then really these are just some pictures
10 from an infrastructure standpoint. It's pretty
11 simple. In Forrest City, we lease space from a
12 Catholic church and then we have eight modular
13 classrooms. So if we were to try to make a go of
14 Forrest City, we'd be investing millions of dollars
15 to get all those things in place to even be prepared
16 to expand or grow out. And, again, that doesn't seem
17 responsible when we only have 97 students.

18 Meanwhile, in Helena we have a new \$6 million
19 renovated campus that's got 500 kids on it, pre-K
20 through 5. We've got our existing team and family.
21 This is our middle school campus. Our high school,
22 we have labs at our high school. We've got a full
23 gymnasium, you can see, and these are just -- we just
24 don't have that in Forrest City. And then we -- with
25 transportation, the nice part about this

1 consolidation is Forrest City is a little less than
2 50 miles from Helena. Right now, we currently have
3 over 50 students from Forrest City who transport to
4 come to our Helena schools on a daily basis.
5 Transportation is something we've become good at.
6 And so we're actually not leaving any families
7 without a choice, which I think is incredibly
8 important. They may not all choose to take the
9 longer bus ride, but they do have a choice. And so
10 we will continue to serve the Forrest City community,
11 just albeit with a little longer bus ride. But
12 again, we think that better access to facility, the
13 more infrastructure. Just being smart about our
14 leadership is tantamount.

15 And then the leaders, I have really competent
16 leadership in -- oh, I didn't see you when you first
17 walked in. In Helena, we have really competent
18 leadership. Our central office is based there, so we
19 have a little better oversight. And we've had some
20 challenges in Forrest City, just to be transparent.

21 So that's it. Those are all the reasons. Our
22 request is simply that at the end of this school year
23 we're committed to rolling out and finishing. We had
24 some founding 5th graders who are now 8th graders.
25 We want to serve them through the end of the year.

1 At that point they will be considered KIPP alum;
2 they'll have access to all of our college counseling
3 services. And then we'll give them a choice to come
4 to our high school or find another path; same thing
5 with the 5th through 7th graders. And we want to do
6 this the right way. We've notified staff of our
7 intent. They are aware of the process, but we wanted
8 to do this in a way that gave people a seven-month
9 timeline, opposed to a one-month timeline, and just
10 try to do the consolidation properly. Any time
11 you're closing a campus it's difficult because it
12 impacts lives. But we're trying to do this the right
13 way for the right reasons and get back to being
14 focused and running good schools.

15 So with that, I'm happy to entertain any
16 questions.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Anybody here to
18 speak in opposition?

19 No, okay.

20 You have an additional five minutes, if there's
21 anything else you want to cover.

22 MR. SHIREY: (Shaking head from side to side.)

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: No? Good?

24 All right. We'll turn to questions.

25 Dr. Kremers.

1 DR. KREMERS: Is there a distinction between
2 consolidation and closing? Is it the campus is
3 closing or it's --

4 MR. SHIREY: We are closing the campus and we
5 are hoping that we will be able to consolidate the
6 resources. So I think that's where there may be a
7 technical --

8 DR. KREMERS: Okay.

9 MR. SHIREY: -- a technical difference. We want
10 to do our best to keep staff, families, resources
11 within the KIPP Delta team and family, opposed to
12 just a total closure.

13 DR. KREMERS: And the debt consolidates as well?

14 MR. SHIREY: Yes. I mean, at the end of this
15 year -- it's really an operating cash issue at the
16 end of this year. The modulars is where we have debt
17 in Forrest City. We're leasing from a church and our
18 modulars will be paid off at the end of this year, so
19 we won't actually be carrying forward any Forrest
20 City debt.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think it may help to
22 clarify too -- this isn't -- somebody may have to
23 help me with this from Charter Office. This isn't a
24 standalone charter application by itself; it's
25 basically a license off of your main charter. Is

1 that --

2 MR. SHIREY: Right. Again, a technical -- but
3 it's not a -- we're all under one board.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Right.

5 MR. SHIREY: One charter. Blytheville and
6 Forrest City were either a license or amendments.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Right. So it's a little
8 bit different than some of the others.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: That's why it's called a --

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: It's an amendment.

11 DR. WILLIAMS: -- amendment versus --

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: That's right.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah, this is good.

14 Well, I just have a question and a comment.

15 The question I think you clarified, but all
16 students will have the option to be transported to
17 the school in Helena?

18 MR. SHIREY: Yes, sir.

19 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. And my comment is is that
20 I just like the idea of having a plan before things
21 -- before Forrest City reaches a point where we would
22 have to take action, looking at what we looked at
23 earlier today. So, I'm good.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Rogers?

25 MR. ROGERS: I'm good.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Newton?

2 Okay. Mr. Wilson, any questions?

3 MR. WILSON: No.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So I don't think I
5 have any other questions. Any other questions by the
6 Panel members?

7 Okay. So you've heard the presentation and the
8 questions and answers. And so with that, I will
9 entertain a motion.

10 MS. NEWTON: I have a motion. I move to approve
11 the amendment of KIPP Delta to close their school in
12 Forrest City and move the student population to
13 Helena.

14 MR. WILSON: Second.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
16 a second.

17 Any discussion?

18 Not seeing any, I will take a vote.

19 All those in favor say "aye."

20 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

22 Motion passes.

23 MR. SHIREY: Thank y'all. So we'll get back to
24 work.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Ballard, do we need to

1 fill out the little sheet on this?

2 MR. BALLARD: Yes.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So, Mr. Shirey, if
4 you would hang on a second, we've got to give you
5 some reasons why we voted this way. So --

6 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. We'll go ahead
8 and start.

9 Mr. Wilson.

10 MS. NEWTON: Can I go?

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Oh, go ahead.

12 MS. NEWTON: I moved to approve it because of
13 the academic and financial feasibility of the move.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

15 MR. WILSON: I moved to approve it also for the
16 same reasons, for the extra reason that it
17 accommodates the kids that are in Forrest City now.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Rogers.

19 MR. ROGERS: I voted for it, understanding the
20 need to be financially responsible. To serve their
21 weeks, this makes the best option.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Williams.

23 DR. WILLIAMS: I support the motion based on the
24 financial and academic aspects of the request.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. And Dr.

1 Kremers.

2 DR. KREMERS: I voted to approve the motion.
3 And KIPP is taking a proactive approach and they're
4 trying to address financial and academic issues. So
5 I vote to approve that.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Thank you.

7 MR. SHIREY: Thank you all. Good to see you
8 all. I hope not to see you --

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: For awhile.

10 MR. SHIREY: -- again next month or next year.
11 Have a wonderful holiday.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. You too.

13 A-1: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL:
14 COVENANT KEEPERS CHARTER SCHOOL

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Moving on, it looks
16 like we're at the end of the agenda. We now have
17 moved -- we need to move back up to item 2 -- I
18 believe it was 2, the Covenant Keepers item. Mr.
19 Ballard, you're recognized.

20 MR. BALLARD: All right. Item 2 is a request
21 for open enrollment charter school renewal for Exalt
22 Academy of Southwest Little Rock. On November 13,
23 2013, the Charter Authorizing Panel approved the
24 application for Exalt Academy of --

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Ballard --

1 MR. BALLARD: I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- we're on Covenant
3 Keepers.

4 MR. BALLARD: Yeah. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: That's all right.

6 MR. BALLARD: I started reading it and I kind of
7 caught myself there. So I apologize.

8 This is a request for open enrollment school
9 renewal for Covenant Keepers Charter School.

10 On January 15, 2008, the State Board of
11 Education approved the application for Covenant
12 Keepers Charter School. The charter is approved to
13 serve students in the grades of 6-8 with a maximum
14 enrollment of 380. Representatives of Covenant
15 Keepers Charter School are appearing before the
16 Charter Authorizing Panel to request renewal of the
17 current charter, which includes an amendment request
18 to change the sponsoring entity and school name.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Now I assume we were able
20 to get to a place where we resolved our issues from
21 earlier today?

22 MR. BALLARD: I believe the representatives do
23 have comments on that for you. So they would like to
24 update the Panel on --

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So do we need to

1 hear that update first or do we just proceed on with
2 their 20 minutes?

3 DR. BOYD: (Nodding head up and down.) Twenty
4 minutes.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Let's go ahead and
6 hear the update first.

7 MR. BALLARD: Okay.

8 MR. HARRIS: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Oh, sorry; apologize. Yes,
10 we do need to swear those in.

11 Those speaking on behalf of the charter or in
12 opposition to the charter, all parties, please stand
13 to be sworn in; raise your right hand. Okay. Do you
14 affirm that the testimony you're about to give will
15 be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
16 truth?

17 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

19 All right. We'll proceed. I wasn't
20 understanding Ms. Mary Claire's hand signals back
21 there.

22 MR. HARRIS: Again, my name is Joe Harris. I
23 have next to me Lauren Chapman; she's the new school
24 leader at Covenant Keeper. And we have Dr. Valerie
25 Tatum, who is the founder and the former school

1 leader of Covenant Keeper.

2 This body was asked earlier to allow us time to
3 discuss a matter that was lingering related to the
4 clarification around the debt that would be assumed
5 related to the charter. We have not reached an
6 agreement, but we're confident that we can reach
7 agreement within the next 15 to 30 days or less. We
8 would like to ask this body for a contingency or an
9 extension to present this matter at the next board
10 meeting. Prior to that board meeting we will meet
11 with ADE to assure them that we've come to an
12 agreement, and we'd like to present our case for
13 renewal, charter transfer, and name change at the
14 next board meeting.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So, Mary Claire, I
16 may need your help on this -- Ms. Hyatt.

17 So I just want to make sure I'm clear -- what
18 you're asking for is for us to postpone this hearing
19 for renewal and transfer to a later date?

20 MR. HARRIS: (Nodding head up and down.)

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Is that -- tell us
22 what the rules are on that.

23 MS. HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt, Arkansas
24 Department of Education. So charter school rule
25 number 6.23.7 says that the authorizer may defer the

1 vote to approve or disapprove a charter application
2 renewal or request in order to allow a public charter
3 school or applicant to make modifications or receive
4 technical assistance to correct deficiencies in the
5 application, renewal, or request.

6 I believe that that's what they're asking you to
7 do is to defer a vote on the matter until I guess the
8 next board meeting -- Charter Panel authorizer
9 meeting.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So do we have to hear the
11 presentations and all that before we defer a vote or
12 can we just do that?

13 MS. HYATT: So the way that it is written in the
14 procedure is it does go through the 20 minutes, 20
15 minutes, 5 minutes for rebuttal, and then following
16 the presentation the questions, and then following
17 that it allows you the opportunity to issue a final
18 decision to take the matter under advisement or to
19 defer the vote.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So my understanding of that
21 is that we do have to proceed with the hearing and
22 then make that decision?

23 MS. HYATT: So I'll defer to Alexandra Boyd.
24 But the way that it is written in the procedure is
25 that your ability to defer the vote or to -- or take

1 it under advisement comes after the presentation of
2 the renewal.

3 DR. BOYD: So the way I understand it is that
4 the hearing procedures do need to be followed. But
5 just as your previous item you heard, the charter
6 decided not to avail the full 20 minutes of the
7 process for the hearing procedures. So the way I
8 understand it is I think we're obligated to give them
9 the option to adhere to the hearing procedures, but
10 perhaps they could forfeit that time and discussion,
11 and if you were to -- in hopes that you would decide
12 to table any decision on this until January.

13 I don't know if that was helpful or harmful.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think it was. I think
15 just a question before we proceed with the Panel is,
16 you know, I know in granting them a -- being able to
17 continue and forfeit their time and not go into the
18 proper hearing -- we may have panel members that may
19 not be so inclined to actually renew and transfer at
20 this time. So it may be one of those things that I
21 want to make sure they're afforded the opportunity
22 for everybody to hear, if they want to go through the
23 regular hearing before they make a decision on
24 whether they would want to not move forward. So I
25 guess I would defer to the Panel to, you know, how --

1 just have some discussion about how you'd like to
2 proceed.

3 MS. NEWTON: I think I would like -- you know, I
4 know time is important, but at the same time I don't
5 know whether some questions could be answered today
6 that justify this move or -- if we can be given --
7 certainly, not necessarily the 20 minutes, but give
8 an overarching -- hear an overarching conversation
9 about why the request is being made and the strong
10 points. Because it may at the end of the day, or
11 another day, it might determine that it didn't happen
12 for a variety of reasons -- you know, the
13 considerations. The obstacle is the debt and the
14 considerations that are under -- or the facts that
15 are under consideration, and it may or may not make a
16 difference in either one of y'all's -- but it may
17 impact the charter at a later date and their ability
18 to move forward, if they were granted a renewal or
19 not, to take care of business. And I don't know what
20 the time table is there. Alexandra can tell us
21 whether or not delaying this would put them into
22 another situation as relates to, you know, time.

23 DR. BOYD: Right. So thinking about the
24 timeline, I -- so, okay. So if you hear this -- if
25 you table it and hear it in January, it will go

1 before the State Board in February to decide to
2 review or not review. If they decide to review, then
3 that review would happen in March, which is close to
4 the timeline for when most of the lotteries are held,
5 are in March. So if this charter was not renewed and
6 the students and families needed to seek other places
7 to attend -- what I'm saying is I think hearing it in
8 January is cutting it close. I don't think that --
9 but I think it could be okay, that families could
10 still enter lotteries in March. I think any time
11 past January we would get into trouble of, if this
12 charter was not renewed, putting those families in a
13 place where they may not have signed up for lotteries
14 or knew that they needed to seek further
15 opportunities before then. So that's one thing to
16 keep in mind.

17 Another thing to keep in mind is I think that
18 the discussion that the two entities need to have and
19 hash out could determine the nature of the
20 presentation and the request. So that's something
21 for you to keep in mind as well.

22 DR. WILLIAMS: I -- just a comment -- I think we
23 need to probably get an overview to understand how we
24 got to this point and what are the expectations
25 moving forward, that if you all work this agreement

1 out what are we looking at. If by chance the
2 agreement is not worked out, then what are we looking
3 at as a board -- so to understand how we got to -- to
4 understand where we are at this point. All I can
5 surmise at this point is that Covenant Keepers needs
6 to do something differently. Okay. And that
7 Friendship is an option to allow you to do something
8 different.

9 MS. TATUM: True.

10 DR. WILLIAMS: But we basically would be on hold
11 to see whether you all worked out whatever you all
12 need to work out. And if you work it out, then that
13 means that we may have a path to go forward. If you
14 don't work it out -- I hear you saying you will, but
15 we haven't worked it out thus far -- then we may have
16 to make a different decision when you come back.

17 So I, myself personally, I would like to just
18 kind of get an overview of where is Covenant Keepers
19 at now and what's a possible solution, which it
20 sounds like Friendship is a possible solution, and
21 then understanding what is in -- what's the barrier
22 that you-all are currently working on. We've kind of
23 got a little tidbit of something about debt, but we
24 don't really have an in-depth understanding of what's
25 what. So just a -- uh-huh.

1 MR. HARRIS: Excuse me. The first couple of
2 pages kind of gives -- of our presentation gives a
3 little background.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So can I pause us real
5 quick just for a process part.

6 Do we need to -- if we're going to get this
7 overview, can we get an overview or do we need to
8 start the 20-minute presentation part?

9 DR. BOYD: Okay. So as you noticed, the rules
10 don't really account for this particular situation.
11 Right. The rules account for a presentation being
12 given. Then if you see that that presentation has
13 deficiencies you can table it into a future meeting
14 so you can gather more information between this
15 meeting and that meeting to make your decision.

16 With that being said, I would like to request a
17 five-minute break so we can talk about what these
18 procedures should look like and then come back. Is
19 that okay?

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

21 Okay. So we'll take a five --

22 MR. WILSON: I'd like to know -- I'm sorry -- in
23 connection with your informal discussion, if there is
24 a method for suspension of the rules applying to this
25 Panel and what vote that takes, while you're at it.

1 DR. BOYD: I understand what you're saying.
2 We'll discuss it.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we'll take a
4 five-minute break and we'll come back.

5 (BREAK: 1:22 - 1:27 p.m.)

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We're going to come
7 back from break.

8 Ms. Hyatt, I understand there may be a request
9 from the applicant.

10 MS. HYATT: Yes. So, thank you for the five-
11 minute break to kind of figure out where we were.

12 So I think rather than hear the presentation --
13 I guess there are two kinds of options, and I'll let
14 the applicant get up and say what they need to say.
15 But there's a difference between asking you to table
16 the agenda item in whole, which would be to take it
17 off the agenda today and to pick it back up at the
18 next meeting -- and then the other option is to hear
19 the presentation and then to exercise your option to
20 defer your vote for 30 days or until your next
21 meeting. So there are two different things, and I
22 don't think I was clear on that when I was explaining
23 it before.

24 So I'll let the applicant come up. But I just
25 wanted to differentiate between the two.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, may I ask her one
3 further question?

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, sir.

5 MR. WILSON: Mary Claire, did y'all consider
6 whether this Panel may suspend its own rules and the
7 vote necessary to do that?

8 MS. HYATT: So, Mr. Wilson, you actually don't
9 have rules. You don't have operating procedures
10 specific to this panel.

11 MR. WILSON: Ms. Newton makes me operate --

12 MS. NEWTON: That's right.

13 MS. HYATT: So typically we use the State Board
14 rules as a guide for how this panel operates and
15 Roberts Rules of Order. But there wouldn't be any
16 need to suspend the rules, as there are none.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Learn something new
18 every day; right?

19 Okay. So we'll hear the request from the
20 applicant.

21 MR. SMITH: Mr. Chair, Members of the Panel --
22 Scott Smith with APSRC. We've been trying to provide
23 some assistance to them as they looked at this issue.
24 What the parties would like to do, and they're in
25 agreement with, is you do have control of your

1 agenda. Obviously, if someone showed up sick and
2 they couldn't go forward you could table the matter
3 and move forward. So they are requesting that you
4 table this issue to a future date that is agreeable
5 to the Panel, with the time constraints that the
6 Department staff mentioned to you in mind. And the
7 parties would agree that they have no objection to
8 that and would like to make a full presentation at
9 that future date based on where they stand. Part of
10 the reason they're asking to not make a presentation
11 now, if they cannot reach an agreement on these
12 issues then the nature of that presentation may be
13 different than what would be presented today -- and
14 so you would have to do a future presentation anyway;
15 so just not to waste your time and to make sure that
16 we're presenting all the issues.

17 Just to give you a quick overview as to how
18 things have gotten to where they are, as I understand
19 it -- the Charter Panel specifically recommended to
20 Covenant Keepers that they consider a change in
21 leadership and a change in governance going forward.
22 They have been actively attempting to do that. With
23 regards to the change in leadership, they have
24 already entered into an MOU agreement with Friendship
25 to manage the school through the remainder of this

1 school year. So whether this issue is reached or
2 resolved in January or not, Friendship is in an MOU
3 agreement with Covenant Keepers to manage the school
4 for this school year. During the course of that,
5 they began conversations about looking at shifting
6 governance authority with regards to the future
7 renewal of this charter from City of Fire to a (c)(3)
8 under Friendship. And so that was the issue that was
9 hopefully going to be presented today in full detail.

10 The specific issue that is not resolved yet was
11 City of Fire, among other debts, incurred some debts
12 for the operation of the school. And we're trying to
13 determine whether or not those debts are actual
14 obligations of the school or whether those are
15 private obligations of City of Fire. It matters, as
16 it relates to Friendship, as to whether they can use
17 public funds of the school to cover those debts going
18 forward or whether that would be an audit issue or
19 something of that nature. And so we're simply trying
20 to get to the bottom of what those particular debts
21 may -- or how they would be classified and how --
22 whether they would be considered actual public debt
23 of the school or debt of some third-party out there.

24 And so that's the issue that's trying to be
25 looked at. They can't go into much more detail

1 because they don't have more answers about those
2 points at this point in time. That's the issue that
3 they're trying to resolve. And hopefully before the
4 January meeting, or whenever you set this, they will
5 have either resolved that issue and be able to show
6 their willingness to move forward with the transfer
7 or clearly communicate to the Department that they
8 cannot resolve the issue and then the nature of that
9 hearing would turn a different direction, either
10 Covenant Keepers moving forward for renewal or
11 whatever else would be appropriate before this Panel.

12 So that's the nature of the request.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Thank
14 you.

15 Just a question for Mr. Ballard. The next
16 meeting is in January. So is that -- do we have a
17 meeting scheduled for that? I just want to make
18 sure, if we do make a motion to table, that we're
19 specific about when we would bring that back. And is
20 that sufficient time to make sure everybody has
21 proper notification?

22 MR. BALLARD: January 15th. Yes, that would be
23 sufficient time.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So, questions or
25 discussion by panel members?

1 Okay. You've heard the request about tabling.
2 So I will accept a motion.

3 MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I move that the item
4 before us be tabled until the next meeting on January
5 the -- what -- 15th.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Second.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
8 a second.

9 Any discussion?

10 Okay. All those in favor say "aye."

11 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

13 All right. Motion carries. So this matter will
14 be tabled till January 15th.

15 MR. SMITH: We appreciate the Panel's
16 indulgence. Thank you.

17 ADJOURNMENT

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Mr. Ballard, I
19 don't see anything else on our agenda, so I think
20 we'll -- I'll look for a motion to adjourn until
21 tomorrow.

22 DR. KREMERS: I move that we adjourn.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion to
24 adjourn.

25 DR. WILLIAMS: Second.

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CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Second.
All those in favor say "aye."
(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)
CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?
Motion carries.
We are adjourned. Thank you.

(The meeting was concluded at 1:34 p.m.)

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A-3: PINE BLUFF LIGHTHOUSE ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

	20:23	according (2) 14:22;37:2	82:19;83:21,23;	advancements (1) 43:22
\$	above (4) 14:19;17:19;55:22; 60:3	account (4) 35:14;87:13; 176:10,11	84:11;94:18;96:17;	advantageous (1) 11:18
\$300,000 (1) 159:10	absence (1) 58:19	Accountability (9) 4:23;76:20;94:9; 100:25;144:24; 145:5,6,8;152:24	120:17;124:11;	adverse (1) 18:21
\$6 (1) 160:18	absences (3) 51:18;57:22;58:18	accountable (1) 50:13	135:18;140:2;	advisement (2) 171:18;172:1
\$64,000 (1) 81:4	absent (4) 57:24;59:2,6; 143:17	accounts (1) 53:5	142:11;161:6;	advocate (1) 3:25
\$760,000 (1) 24:6	absenteeism (4) 52:4;58:14;76:2; 105:17	Accreditation (7) 94:11;152:15,21; 153:6;155:8,9;157:4	163:19;172:19;178:8	affected (1) 18:18
[Absolutely (4) 36:24;106:18; 138:8;140:4	accurate (1) 94:4	add (2) 38:16;154:9	affecting (5) 60:7;77:14,18; 124:1,2
[A (4) 43:10;133:25; 150:22;166:6	academic (22) 16:19;19:22;24:3; 30:1;31:5;32:10; 33:5;43:16;63:8,20; 64:17;68:8;87:15; 88:5;90:21;111:17; 113:22;148:18,20; 166:13,24;167:4	achievement (13) 23:14;24:10,17; 33:14;34:17;51:14, 18,21,25;52:1,8; 54:11;75:19	added (6) 15:4;21:5;23:17; 28:18;47:9;60:1	affirm (6) 14:2;20:13;46:13; 115:19;158:14; 169:14
[APPLAUSE] (6) 27:6;43:2;45:13; 67:14;133:18;151:17	academically (2) 17:1;78:19	acknowledge (1) 151:22	addition (2) 70:22;92:3	AFFIRMATIVELY (5) 8:18;14:4;46:16; 115:22;169:17
[MOMENT (2) 100:9;113:4	academics (9) 15:12;29:17,24; 40:1,12,13;44:14; 64:19;105:16	acknowledged (1) 15:14	Additional (2) 15:1;93:4	affluent (1) 18:24
[ps] (4) 24:21;25:18;26:10; 111:6	Academies (9) 48:6;62:24;63:7; 65:12,18;90:22;91:3; 115:2,10	across (8) 33:15;36:1;63:9, 12;68:19;116:21; 159:3,3	address (21) 50:13;56:7;58:13; 59:15,25;60:18;61:3; 69:13;70:13;72:24; 75:3;76:3,18;86:9; 87:16;88:13;92:1; 103:16;121:24; 128:21;167:4	afforded (1) 172:21
[sic] (1) 3:3	Academy (27) 9:1;13:2,5,10,13; 14:12;20:22;25:10, 20;26:11;42:16;45:3, 6,19,22,25;46:23; 51:11;52:6,9;63:4; 66:5;88:10;130:16; 167:22,24;184:24	Act (20) 3:10,12;17:17,21; 20:25;52:15;53:4,12, 20;54:6,15;55:16; 67:20;69:1;73:12; 77:15;90:17;138:20, 20,22	addresses (1) 86:25	African (2) 25:23;139:17
A	accept (4) 7:5;96:3;150:5; 182:2	acted (1) 23:11	addressing (2) 78:7;86:6	afternoon (4) 11:9,12;131:20; 158:21
A-1 (2) 7:16;167:13	acceptance (1) 65:9	Acting (1) 4:7	ADE (10) 3:5,16,18;4:16; 7:25;18:20,20; 131:12;155:8;170:11	after-school (1) 62:5
A-2 (1) 13:1	accepted (1) 139:3	Action (11) 4:18;7:15,19; 10:21;45:16;110:21; 154:1;155:6,11; 156:10;164:22	adequately (1) 87:1	again (27) 30:21;35:22;42:8; 53:20,23;54:8;57:16; 69:14;72:5,10;76:11, 21;77:16;82:25; 83:19;89:17;94:24; 109:14;110:22; 119:18;135:7; 136:11;160:16; 161:12;164:2; 167:10;169:22
A-3 (3) 45:2;46:6;184:24	access (3) 151:8;161:12; 162:2	actions (1) 50:13	adhere (1) 172:9	against (10) 8:13;13:21;19:14; 98:19,22;99:1;110:2, 6;113:24;114:12
A-4 (1) 115:1	acclimated (1) 77:3	activities (1) 61:15	ADJOURNMENT (1) 182:17	age (5) 37:2;117:19; 118:23;127:5;146:21
A-5 (2) 152:14;155:5	accommodates (1) 166:17	activity (1) 49:21	adjoined (1) 183:6	agenda (26) 4:18;5:12,15,15, 16;6:3;7:15,19; 10:14;12:14,19,25; 20:9;34:23,24;45:17; 114:21;115:4; 152:19;153:9; 157:20;167:16; 177:16,17;179:1;
A-6 (3) 152:16;155:20; 157:2	accomplish (1) 74:14	actual (7) 6:24;9:23;95:9; 125:13;156:12; 180:13,22	adjourning (1) 182:20,22,24	
A-7 (1) 157:17	accomplishment (1) 49:25	actually (26) 11:24;12:13;15:9, 24;16:8;17:14;23:23; 29:3;68:16,22;70:10;	adjudicated (1) 117:18	
abandon (1) 71:2	accordance (1) 3:12		adult (1) 117:20	
ABC (3) 68:21,22;90:6			adults (2) 27:4;118:12	
ability (6) 60:7;83:7;88:13; 89:1;171:25;173:17			advanced (1) 66:19	
able (30) 28:22,24;43:6; 65:5;73:12,16,17; 74:3,5,13,14;76:3; 85:22;87:19;88:13; 96:25;117:9;123:6; 124:21;125:16,24; 127:6;128:5;132:11, 15;146:5;163:5; 168:19;172:16;181:5				
aboard (1)				

182:19 Agility (2) 127:5;146:21 ago (12) 32:3;63:6;64:5,9, 11;72:6;78:22;91:11; 119:24;123:18; 127:12;133:9 agree (4) 12:5;81:10;98:6; 179:7 agreeable (3) 104:15;111:2; 179:4 agreeing (1) 11:22 agreement (14) 9:18,18;10:19; 11:3,19;170:6,7,12; 174:25;175:2; 178:25;179:11,24; 180:3 ahead (17) 8:23;10:4;11:10; 38:9;43:11,13;62:18; 64:23;109:13; 114:23;133:22; 136:24;137:11; 150:18;166:7,11; 169:5 Aids (1) 123:12 ain't (1) 121:7 air (3) 126:18;130:10; 138:15 albeit (1) 161:11 Aldridge (4) 47:20;111:6,7; 112:10 Alexandra (5) 4:22;100:24; 152:23;171:23; 173:20 align (2) 142:22;143:1 aligned (6) 15:3;21:4,22; 37:14;38:17;48:10 alignment (1) 37:16 allow (13) 21:7;62:20;93:18; 103:16;110:11,11,15, 24;112:2,18;170:2; 171:2;175:7 allowable (1) 110:12 allowed (2) 50:21;88:25 allowing (1)	23:21 allows (5) 3:10;23:25;73:24; 97:8;171:17 alma (1) 138:25 almost (3) 39:8;64:10;143:25 along (4) 48:16;101:13; 107:23;129:22 alouds (1) 48:23 alternate (1) 99:18 alternative (7) 76:13;100:2,19; 144:24,25;145:5,6 Although (1) 90:23 alum (1) 162:1 always (21) 28:10;47:12;67:9; 107:22,23;110:16; 117:15;118:20; 120:6,19,20;122:25; 124:17;125:2;127:9; 128:7,13;137:21; 139:10;144:11;146:3 Alyse (1) 84:18 Amanda (1) 68:7 amazed (1) 136:1 Ambetter (1) 122:21 amend (1) 5:7 amendment (18) 6:24;8:8;103:2; 126:1;154:10;155:9, 10;156:16,18;157:5, 17,21;158:5,12; 164:10,11;165:11; 168:17 AMENDMENTS (4) 152:14,16,20; 164:6 American (2) 25:23;139:17 AMI (8) 121:2;122:2; 134:15,15;135:3,10, 19,20 among (2) 96:8;180:11 amount (2) 40:11;130:5 ample (1) 113:18 analysis (6)	17:8;53:6;56:14; 59:19;61:21;79:1 analytics (2) 121:9,21 analyze (1) 69:16 analyzed (1) 51:9 analyzing (2) 21:3;55:7 and/or (2) 50:3;132:4 Angela (1) 3:22 anger (1) 118:15 Anjule (2) 25:18,19 annual (1) 101:9 anomaly (1) 128:14 ANSWERED (6) 8:18;14:4;46:16; 115:22;169:17;173:5 apologize (7) 5:11;9:5,7,16;35:5; 168:7;169:9 app (1) 135:3 appearing (6) 8:6;13:13;45:25; 115:13;158:4;168:15 appears (1) 6:4 appended (1) 46:7 applicant (12) 5:2;67:18;95:21; 110:10;112:15; 115:24;149:16; 171:3;177:9,14,24; 178:20 applicants (2) 4:25;46:10 application (31) 8:2,14,14;9:2; 10:17,25;13:4,9; 40:20;41:13;42:1; 45:21;46:11;95:22; 96:6,10;98:20;100:4; 105:4;109:8;115:9, 17;149:10,11;150:7; 157:25;163:24; 167:24;168:11; 171:1,5 applications (4) 4:24;102:18; 124:18,19 apply (2) 102:19;144:5 applying (2) 145:5;176:24	appreciate (10) 25:15;29:22;40:14; 42:9;44:18;45:15; 97:20;133:16;136:9; 182:15 approach (6) 16:14;48:19;50:7, 16,21;167:3 appropriate (4) 10:21;30:10;71:3; 181:11 approval (9) 7:7;43:21;44:6; 96:6;104:18;109:23, 23;113:16;114:17 approve (20) 5:4,18;26:21;96:9; 100:17;103:10; 150:10;154:5;155:7, 24;156:3,5,16;157:3; 165:10;166:12,15; 167:2,5;171:1 approved (15) 8:2,3;13:9,11; 45:21,22;115:9,11; 142:9;144:25; 157:25;158:1; 167:23;168:11,12 approving (1) 107:14 approximately (1) 91:11 April (2) 77:12;121:16 APSRC (7) 24:13;60:4;61:3; 70:15;87:24;90:5; 178:22 area (17) 21:16,19;23:19; 49:7;61:8;68:18; 74:1,5;80:21;83:18; 84:8,9,21;120:11; 147:16;159:11,20 areas (12) 15:12;29:13,19; 30:2;31:3;44:9; 77:14;85:11;89:18; 90:7;92:1;119:19 Arkansas (24) 3:23;9:6;10:12; 17:6,9;21:22;41:2; 48:18;49:10;56:9; 61:12,20,24;70:4; 82:20;83:12;84:24; 85:1;94:5;115:7; 130:18;149:14; 157:22;170:23 ArkansasIDEAS (1) 38:12 Armored (1) 160:4 Army (1)	125:7 around (11) 15:16;29:16,17; 30:15;36:15;65:21; 127:24;140:24; 141:22;142:19;170:4 arrangements (1) 6:17 art (3) 26:12;49:7,8 artists (1) 49:11 Arts (3) 49:6,9;51:3 arts-infused (1) 47:5 Ashley (2) 68:22;90:9 aspect (4) 41:13;75:5;76:9; 101:13 aspects (4) 9:19;43:23;79:23; 166:24 Aspire (16) 8:25;17:17,21; 20:25;52:15;53:4,12, 21;54:6,15;55:16; 67:20;69:1;73:13; 77:15;90:17 assessment (3) 33:5;49:3;57:12 assessments (4) 21:4;48:14;49:2; 73:13 asset (3) 63:5,24;80:11 assignment (1) 9:18 assist (1) 112:3 assistance (2) 171:4;178:23 Assistant (3) 3:18;129:16; 147:18 associate (1) 61:10 assume (2) 143:15;168:19 assumed (1) 170:4 assure (1) 170:11 atmosphere (1) 31:20 at-promise (1) 118:11 at-risk (3) 118:10,11,12 attacking (1) 77:25 attain (1)
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146:9 attainable (1) 142:13 attempt (3) 70:17;71:2;95:1 attempting (1) 179:22 attend (1) 174:7 attendance (14) 57:21;58:1,16,22, 25;59:4,5;76:2,5; 127:10,10;143:6,11; 146:3 attended (2) 53:10;146:20 attending (3) 65:14;66:8;143:16 attends (1) 131:21 attention (2) 67:3,5 attitudes (1) 33:7 attorney (2) 3:25;9:6 attribute (2) 50:15;57:25 attributed (4) 51:17,19;52:21; 54:22 audience (3) 4:12,12;45:12 audit (1) 180:18 Auditorium (1) 3:5 August (8) 4:3,6;29:2;94:14; 95:6,10,11;121:10 authority (2) 108:2;180:6 authorization (1) 3:9 authorizer (2) 170:25;171:8 Authorizing (15) 3:4,8,8,15;6:17; 8:7;13:8,9,14;46:1; 101:10;115:14; 158:4;167:23;168:16 autographs (1) 125:18 avail (1) 172:6 available (4) 18:9;19:11;88:22; 131:12 avenues (1) 22:25 average (15) 17:19;53:13,17,19, 23;54:1,5,8,19;55:14,	18;56:1;117:19; 121:4;128:15 avoid (1) 95:1 awarded (2) 17:4;50:25 awards (1) 129:5 aware (7) 9:11;100:19; 122:21;145:20; 147:25;148:10;162:7 awareness (3) 36:25;37:6;48:24 away (3) 125:6;128:4;136:6 Awesome (2) 92:20;129:10 awhile (1) 167:9 aye (11) 5:23;7:11;12:21; 42:22;150:14; 155:16;156:23; 157:11;165:19; 182:10;183:2 AYES (11) 5:24;7:12;12:22; 42:23;150:15; 155:17;156:24; 157:12;165:20; 182:11;183:3	back-end (1) 65:6 background (4) 18:15;50:19;90:10; 176:3 backs (1) 133:3 bad (2) 118:14;144:11 balance (2) 24:5,13 balanced (1) 48:18 balances (1) 9:25 Baldree (1) 151:24 BALLARD (30) 6:13;7:3,23,24,25; 13:6,7;45:6,11,14; 115:5,6,7;157:19,22, 22;158:10;165:25; 166:2;167:19,20,25; 168:1,4,6,22;169:7; 181:15,22;182:18 ballot (1) 125:25 Bambrick- (1) 92:6 bang (1) 77:24 bar (2) 35:9,17 barrier (1) 175:21 barriers (1) 93:16 Barton-Lexa (1) 160:3 based (12) 11:20;42:11;49:3; 74:10;75:20;78:15, 16;85:21;113:22; 161:18;166:23;179:9 basic (4) 76:1,5;93:7;130:11 basically (5) 21:1;23:20;34:16; 163:25;175:10 basics (1) 93:5 basis (3) 78:24;85:12;161:4 battle (1) 159:16 Bauxite (1) 119:2 beat (1) 129:7 Beating (2) 17:5;129:5 beautiful (1) 120:8	became (1) 153:16 become (5) 63:24;83:7;118:17; 127:20;161:5 becomes (1) 102:13 becoming (1) 148:14 Beebe (2) 119:2,6 before- (1) 62:5 began (2) 60:20;180:5 begin (1) 115:24 beginning (7) 4:23;22:4;49:17; 58:14;73:15;86:4; 93:1 behalf (5) 8:25;9:2;94:24; 153:19;169:11 behave (1) 30:11 behavior (18) 19:2,5,6;20:5;21:6; 30:3,6,9,11,19;32:1; 39:4,6,23;40:2,4,4; 132:3 behaviors (6) 14:24;16:15;50:11; 77:4;78:22;128:21 behind (1) 116:12 belonging (1) 49:25 below (1) 73:9 benchmark (8) 16:23;52:9,14; 54:12;59:9,11,14; 72:21 beneficial (1) 132:4 beneficiary (1) 75:25 benefit (3) 4:11;90:16;131:6 benefits (1) 91:22 Benton (1) 119:3 best (7) 63:13;77:22;90:25; 122:9;129:9;163:10; 166:21 better (6) 26:6;72:18;79:21; 92:8;161:12,19 Beyond (1) 60:3	big (9) 18:25;49:6;74:15; 84:4,9;93:3;122:6; 135:8;159:16 big- (1) 93:18 bilingual (1) 18:6 bit (21) 14:17;33:24;43:5; 48:8;64:1;66:19; 68:3;70:23;74:7; 82:14,24;91:20; 104:24;105:7;107:2; 138:9,13;141:22; 143:6;149:19;164:8 biweekly (2) 57:2;71:4 bi-weekly (1) 49:2 Black (1) 128:23 bles (1) 129:20 blessed (2) 66:25;117:5 blessing (1) 67:1 blip (1) 39:19 block (2) 60:1;149:1 blocked (1) 57:7 blossom (1) 66:11 blown (1) 136:6 Blue (1) 127:14 BLUFF (50) 45:3,6,18,21,24; 46:23;47:8,10,21,22, 24;48:2,5;51:5,11,22; 53:10,22;54:7,16; 55:8,15;57:23;60:14, 22;62:2,25;63:4,5,23, 25;64:16;65:1;68:18; 75:17;76:22;79:10, 25;80:4,22;84:3,22; 88:11;91:3;93:13,20; 111:23,25;119:13; 184:24 Bluff's (1) 47:14 Blytheville (3) 119:18;160:2; 164:5 Board (42) 4:2,5;6:15;8:1; 11:9;15:7,9,13; 18:20;45:20;47:18; 59:4;62:11,12;75:13;
	B			

76:8;102:14;103:24; 104:11,15,19;105:10; 106:4;108:3,12; 110:9,11;115:8; 117:4;131:20;134:9; 157:24;158:21; 164:3;168:10;170:9, 10,14;171:8;174:1; 175:3;178:13 body (2) 170:2,8 book (1) 128:22 books (1) 26:7 borrowed (1) 151:6 both (15) 10:7,8;11:18,21, 24;18:7,8;21:6;26:7; 43:23;48:6;57:23; 61:18;119:5;129:5 bother (1) 76:5 bottom (4) 35:17;36:7;129:17; 180:20 bought (1) 128:21 boy (1) 140:25 Boyd (52) 4:19,22,22;32:20, 22;33:17,23;34:4,8, 13,19,24;35:1,4,13, 16,19,22;36:1,4,8,10, 12;99:23;100:24,24; 101:19,23;102:1,9, 12;103:6;104:9,14, 17;145:2;152:21,23, 24;154:2,5,23;155:1, 21;156:3;157:16; 169:3;171:23;172:3; 173:23;176:9;177:1 Boys (11) 51:5;61:25;111:7, 8,15;127:23,25; 128:1,2,23,23 brain (1) 122:7 branching (1) 146:12 brand-new (2) 52:23;77:2 brave (1) 27:2 break (17) 6:11;38:13,15; 44:21,23,25;114:20, 22,25;121:15;152:6, 13;176:17;177:4,5,7, 11 breakdown (1)	17:20 breakfast (1) 15:18 Briar (1) 137:22 briefly (1) 90:23 bring (9) 11:19;62:24;66:1; 79:15;82:2;146:15, 23;147:2;181:19 bringing (3) 75:3;82:21;83:14 brings (3) 12:6;22:2;122:25 broken (3) 120:3;128:24; 136:19 brother (1) 138:7 brought (5) 10:18;38:16;40:9; 126:18;147:22 BRYANT (3) 71:11,11;119:11 buck (1) 77:24 budget (1) 28:23 build (4) 37:4;38:3;50:9; 69:22 building (9) 23:1;39:3;40:8; 49:15;60:19;68:13; 92:22;120:8;136:2 built (2) 16:12;19:24 bunch (2) 27:3;115:19 bus (3) 138:4;161:9,11 business (2) 146:21;173:19 bus-riders (1) 58:9 busy (2) 125:17;126:12	98:16;137:12,17; 150:13 called (3) 3:4;97:2;164:9 calls (2) 59:6;137:13 came (16) 20:23;25:2;26:13; 31:21;82:19;116:4; 122:22;123:3,23; 124:10;127:15; 130:11;139:2; 142:16;152:1;154:17 Camp (1) 126:23 campus (17) 58:12;116:14; 118:10;119:1,10; 123:15;124:10; 129:6;130:11; 135:12;136:1;159:7; 160:19,21;162:11; 163:2,4 can (111) 5:4,4,5,6;6:18; 10:10,14;11:10,23; 14:19;17:1,2;18:17, 22;20:1,11;26:22; 27:17;32:3;35:11; 36:19;37:4;38:15; 41:4,5,6,22,25;42:12; 43:18;54:17;58:18; 61:6;63:19;64:2; 66:12,14,16;67:4; 74:25;76:24;77:5,12, 12;79:12,21;80:1; 82:7,14;83:7,9,13; 85:15;86:8;87:25; 88:18;89:16,24,24; 93:20,21;94:10;97:2, 6;101:22,25;102:4; 103:1;104:7;108:12; 111:10,14;112:25; 118:21;120:23; 121:4,14;122:9; 124:20;126:7; 127:11;129:2; 134:19;138:13,23; 139:7;141:16; 142:14;145:14; 146:19,20;147:21; 148:7;149:2,5; 151:20;154:2;159:5; 160:23;166:10; 170:6;171:12;173:6, 20;175:4;176:4,7,13, 14,17;180:16 cancel (2) 85:23,24 capable (2) 81:7,7 capacity (9) 23:20;54:22;60:19;	69:22;85:14;92:2,10, 14;159:18 Captain (1) 125:8 captured (1) 143:11 capturing (1) 143:14 card (1) 42:5 care (6) 25:25;32:4;79:16; 139:11,12;173:19 Career (2) 3:22,24 careers (1) 50:3 carefully (2) 145:2,10 caregivers (1) 58:2 caring (1) 16:18 car-riders (1) 58:10 carried (1) 24:5 carries (5) 150:17;155:19; 157:1;182:13;183:5 carrying (1) 163:19 case (8) 5:1;28:16;42:8; 50:20;72:7;119:15; 137:13;170:12 cases (1) 141:25 cash (1) 163:15 categories (2) 51:13,24 category (2) 35:23;52:15 Catholic (1) 160:12 caught (3) 123:20;148:4; 168:7 caught-up (1) 56:20 celebrate (1) 25:22 celebrations (2) 18:11;50:4 Census (1) 47:23 Center (8) 9:6;19:14;49:9; 50:17;61:25;119:7; 127:4;149:7 centers (1) 22:8	central (3) 17:6;147:18; 161:18 Century (3) 50:25;57:17;61:20 CEO (5) 62:20,23;75:23; 85:6;111:7 certainly (5) 70:19;90:15;105:6, 14;173:7 certified (2) 82:22;116:10 Chair (8) 4:7;9:14;65:22; 70:13;99:7,9;110:14; 178:21 CHAIRMAN (243) 3:2;5:9,14,20,25; 6:3,19;7:4,9,13,18; 8:12,19;9:13;10:9, 15;11:13;12:10,18, 23;13:3,7,17;14:1,5,5; 20:11,16,19;24:18; 25:7;26:23;27:1,7, 14;29:11;31:8;32:6; 36:13;38:5,19;40:17, 22;41:10,19,22;42:3, 14,19,24;43:4,9,11, 20;44:1,5,10,16,19; 45:1,4;46:5,8,17; 62:13;65:23;66:23; 67:13,15;70:14; 71:22;72:14;75:9,11; 80:14,16;81:9;86:15; 87:2;90:19;94:2,20; 95:3,7,18;96:1,5,12, 15,21;98:14,21,23, 25;99:3,5,11,15,21, 24;100:1,3,6,10,14; 101:15;103:7;107:9, 18;108:17;109:2,7, 13,20,24;110:1,3,5,7, 12,18,23;111:1,4; 112:9,19,22;113:2,5, 9,13,20,23;114:6,11, 15,23;115:3,6,16,23; 116:16,21;130:25; 131:9,16;133:19,22; 134:1,5;137:16; 140:7;141:21;143:2; 144:6,8,12,19; 145:23;147:11; 148:12,24;149:8,20, 22,25;150:3,9,16; 151:5,10,15,18,21; 152:2,5,9,11,18; 155:13,18;156:11,20, 25;157:8,13,19; 158:6,11,18;162:17, 23;163:21;164:4,7, 10,12,24;165:1,4,15, 21,25;166:3,7,11,14,
	C			
	c3 (1) 180:7 Cabot (1) 119:11 calculates (1) 59:5 CALENDAR (4) 6:2,5;7:6;57:12 Calkins (1) 38:17 call (7) 71:15;92:20;97:6;			

<p>18,22,25;167:6,9,12, 15,25;168:2,5,19,25; 169:5,9,18;170:15, 21;171:10,20; 172:14;176:4,20; 177:3,6;178:1,2,4,17; 181:13,24;182:3,7, 12,18,23;183:1,4</p> <p>Chair's (1) 99:9</p> <p>challenge (10) 28:2,12,13,55:11; 59:7;74:13;76:23; 86:20;126:22;132:2</p> <p>challenges (15) 18:16;55:7,10,24; 57:20;60:6,9;75:17; 86:1,19;103:17; 111:24;134:12; 136:20;161:20</p> <p>challenging (3) 47:16;141:1,18</p> <p>chance (10) 6:5;10:3;97:22; 118:23;131:23; 133:5,12;142:19; 151:13;175:1</p> <p>change (22) 8:9;20:9;58:5; 69:15;97:9;102:4; 103:1,12,12;105:19; 106:12;110:16; 113:19;120:10; 124:8;132:1;154:15; 168:18;170:13; 179:20,21,23</p> <p>changed (12) 52:5,7,10,11;53:4; 62:9;78:12,14,91;18; 97:25;117:11;119:15</p> <p>changes (10) 24:15;59:20;91:11; 105:12;112:1,4,7; 140:21,22;154:6</p> <p>changing (3) 69:8,8;97:25</p> <p>Chapman (1) 169:23</p> <p>chapter (1) 26:7</p> <p>characterize (1) 27:18</p> <p>charge (1) 15:19</p> <p>chart (5) 16:19;35:16;53:9; 58:19;150:19</p> <p>Charter (128) 3:4,7,15;5:7;6:4, 17;7:16,17,21,22;8:3, 3,6,7,8,13,21,22;9:1, 4;13:1,8,10,14,15,22; 14:14;15:3,9;16:25;</p>	<p>26:22;27:9;29:21; 41:5,6;42:17;45:2,5, 9,11,18,22,25;46:2,9, 18,25;47:22;48:2; 53:10;62:10,17,22; 72:17;75:13;76:12, 15;88:25;97:2,3,10; 100:17;101:4,8,10, 12;102:5,13,21; 103:3,10,12;109:16; 114:8;115:1,11,13, 15;116:1,2;132:5; 133:4;134:8;135:1; 137:12;141:7;142:9, 17;143:9;146:11; 150:6,10;152:14,16, 20;157:17,21;158:1, 4,5;163:23,24,25; 164:5;167:13,14,21, 23;168:9,12,12,15, 16,17;169:11,12; 170:5,13,24;171:1,2, 8;172:5;173:17; 174:5,12;179:19; 180:7</p> <p>charterdom (1) 142:20</p> <p>charters (5) 3:10;76:13;107:14, 19;153:19</p> <p>check (3) 41:16;99:23;155:3</p> <p>check-ins (1) 23:2</p> <p>Chief (3) 24:11;64:17;90:21</p> <p>child (11) 21:16,17;30:7; 66:8;116:10;118:13, 23;119:10;147:21; 148:5;149:3</p> <p>children (16) 18:22,23;19:4,5,7, 13,16;25:4;28:7; 30:8;37:3;48:5; 63:13;119:6,19; 147:5</p> <p>child's (2) 79:19,23</p> <p>choice (3) 161:7,9;162:3</p> <p>choose (1) 161:8</p> <p>chooses (1) 102:14</p> <p>CHORUS (11) 5:24;7:12;12:22; 42:23;150:15; 155:17;156:24; 157:12;165:20; 182:11;183:3</p> <p>Christmas (3) 38:13;129:14,21</p>	<p>Chromebook (1) 121:23</p> <p>chronic (6) 51:17;52:3;57:21, 25;58:14;76:2</p> <p>chronically (2) 57:24;143:17</p> <p>Church (4) 120:7,13;160:12; 163:17</p> <p>Circle (2) 49:17,23</p> <p>citizens (1) 138:18</p> <p>citizenship (1) 16:18</p> <p>city (24) 60:14,16;79:25; 119:12;159:7,10,12; 160:2,11,14,24; 161:1,3,10,20; 163:17,20;164:6,21; 165:12;166:17; 180:7,11,15</p> <p>Claire (11) 4:18;10:10,12; 41:2;70:4;94:3,5; 149:14;170:15,23; 178:5</p> <p>Claire's (1) 169:20</p> <p>clarification (2) 70:16;170:4</p> <p>clarified (1) 164:15</p> <p>clarify (3) 41:11;116:17; 163:22</p> <p>clarity (2) 9:21;10:7</p> <p>class (16) 26:12;52:22,24; 152:16;153:11,13,15; 154:16;156:2,3,4,6,7, 13,17;157:4</p> <p>classes (10) 25:14,15;26:20; 38:1;52:22;57:7,9; 59:25;61:9;67:4</p> <p>classified (1) 180:21</p> <p>classroom (14) 16:15;22:11;28:16; 30:17,18;38:8;49:15, 19,23;77:5;79:1,4; 83:1;128:21</p> <p>classrooms (6) 22:11;23:3;31:13; 73:20;120:21;160:13</p> <p>Claus (1) 125:11</p> <p>clean-up (1) 153:4</p>	<p>clear (5) 76:14;86:18;101:2; 170:17;177:22</p> <p>cleared (1) 41:8</p> <p>clearly (3) 4:11;89:2;181:7</p> <p>Cleveland (4) 131:19,20,21; 133:19</p> <p>cliente (1) 145:18</p> <p>clips (1) 125:5</p> <p>close (12) 27:11;48:19;67:5; 74:17,17;132:18; 133:4;135:22; 159:10;165:11; 174:3,8</p> <p>closed (1) 137:13</p> <p>closely (1) 111:20</p> <p>closer (1) 77:12</p> <p>Closing (7) 49:17,23;133:20; 162:11;163:2,3,4</p> <p>closure (1) 163:12</p> <p>Cloverdale (1) 16:8</p> <p>Club (5) 51:6;61:25;111:7, 9,15</p> <p>CNA (1) 130:14</p> <p>coach (4) 56:9;57:10;59:16; 60:24</p> <p>coaches (3) 65:13;90:6,8</p> <p>coaching (7) 21:7;24:2;40:10; 56:12;59:17;60:23; 92:5</p> <p>coach-speak (1) 82:10</p> <p>Coffman (4) 143:8;144:12,17, 20</p> <p>Cognos (1) 59:1</p> <p>cohort (2) 56:22;143:22</p> <p>cohorts (1) 69:8</p> <p>co-leadership (1) 20:6</p> <p>collaboration (1) 127:9</p> <p>collected (1)</p>	<p>20:24</p> <p>College (18) 9:3,3;47:1,5;48:5; 51:22;65:7,9,12,14; 82:3;85:13;124:18; 130:17;138:22; 139:23;147:23;162:2</p> <p>colleges (4) 50:4;61:13;85:12; 138:24</p> <p>combat (1) 62:3</p> <p>combative (1) 127:20</p> <p>combined (1) 117:8</p> <p>comfort (1) 39:17</p> <p>comfortable (1) 91:10</p> <p>coming (14) 6:24;19:5;28:22; 33:12;38:22;69:20, 21;83:3,8,18;97:13; 111:18;124:24;135:7</p> <p>commend (2) 131:22;132:7</p> <p>comment (13) 71:24;75:12;86:17; 102:25;107:11; 110:24;111:5; 112:12;113:3; 144:13;164:14,19; 174:22</p> <p>comments (6) 42:9;112:16,20,23; 113:7;168:23</p> <p>Commissioner (3) 3:14,16,18</p> <p>commitment (9) 43:17;63:25;65:15, 18,20;80:25;92:2; 98:10;140:13</p> <p>committed (7) 22:23;47:14;63:3; 64:25;80:22;81:8; 161:23</p> <p>Committee (3) 41:17;70:20;95:25</p> <p>committing (1) 93:16</p> <p>common (2) 33:15;48:11</p> <p>communicate (2) 63:3;181:7</p> <p>communicated (1) 153:19</p> <p>communication (1) 18:6</p> <p>communities (4) 132:10,20;140:9; 159:3</p> <p>community (33)</p>
---	--	---	---	--

<p>14:16;15:6,20,25; 16:9;25:25;47:13,15, 21;50:14;61:23;62:4, 25;63:5,25;65:16; 71:16;75:18,24,24; 76:22;78:19;80:2,19; 83:15,15;84:14; 93:13,17;106:8; 120:11;159:22; 161:10 commute (2) 60:13;67:2 commuting (1) 60:14 companies (1) 105:19 company (6) 102:5;104:12; 105:9;106:11; 142:10;151:24 compared (3) 17:17;29:1;51:10 competency (2) 120:24;149:3 competent (2) 161:15,17 competitive (2) 60:17;85:22 complete (3) 12:4;89:16;153:17 completed (2) 54:25;148:13 completely (1) 134:16 completing (1) 122:19 complex (1) 48:20 Compliance (1) 24:11 complement (1) 21:23 comply (1) 95:14 component (4) 38:16;49:13,16,19 components (2) 48:17;153:15 comprised (2) 51:12,23 concept (1) 93:7 conceptual (2) 48:12;93:7 concern (10) 40:2,5;74:23;82:5; 85:10,10;87:4;94:7; 96:8;149:16 concerning (3) 9:10;81:20;89:20 concerns (22) 41:12,18;44:7; 76:10,19;95:21,21,</p>	<p>22,24,25;96:2,23; 97:15;98:9,13;102:2; 108:19,24;113:16; 114:10;149:11;151:4 concerted (1) 81:6 concluded (1) 183:10 conclusion (1) 11:19 conditionally (1) 103:10 conduct (1) 56:11 conducted (2) 57:8;61:15 conducts (1) 56:13 Conference (2) 127:5;146:21 conferences (1) 18:10 confidence (2) 86:24;89:3 confident (6) 25:5;42:7;77:13; 93:25;97:6;170:6 confirm (2) 94:15,23 confirmation (1) 94:21 conflict (1) 50:12 Congratulations (2) 42:25;151:15 connect (4) 121:2,20;126:16; 135:16 connected (1) 128:9 connecting (1) 122:5 connection (2) 75:15;176:23 CONSENT (3) 5:12,15,16 consequence (1) 101:4 consider (4) 107:12;144:21; 178:5;179:20 consideration (1) 173:15 considerations (2) 173:13,14 considered (2) 162:1;180:22 consistent (1) 11:21 consistently (1) 65:7 consolidate (2) 159:7;163:5</p>	<p>consolidates (1) 163:13 consolidation (3) 161:1;162:10; 163:2 constant (1) 21:11 constantly (3) 23:2,13;140:21 constraints (1) 179:5 consultant (2) 60:3;68:22 contacted (1) 145:11 content (9) 49:7;57:6,9;59:24; 61:7,7;83:18;88:4; 91:25 contest (1) 123:6 contingency (1) 170:8 contingent (2) 106:5,6 continually (1) 28:8 continue (19) 4:10;15:4;20:10; 29:5;62:6,19;65:4; 88:25;89:19,19; 108:6,19;132:17; 145:3;146:14; 147:13;148:18; 161:10;172:17 continued (3) 18:4;42:12;44:8 continues (1) 26:3 continuing (3) 89:17;93:17; 147:11 continuous (3) 14:18;22:20;78:24 contract (2) 24:12;102:16 control (3) 106:23,24;178:25 conversation (4) 87:7;145:4;149:19; 173:8 conversations (4) 61:14;93:18;127:8; 180:5 convictions (1) 146:23 convince (1) 89:10 Conway (1) 119:11 cooking (1) 25:14 cool (3)</p>	<p>125:4;135:5,16 Coordinated (1) 3:21 coordinator (1) 50:19 core (5) 28:7;48:11,21; 60:4;91:25 corner (2) 136:4;139:7 Corp (3) 83:12;119:7;127:4 corporate (1) 61:11 correctly (2) 35:8;70:1 co-teach (1) 49:7 co-teacher (1) 20:3 co-teaches (1) 56:12 counsel (1) 10:3 counseling (1) 162:2 counselors (5) 117:25;127:2; 147:7,8,25 count (1) 136:8 counter (1) 85:23 country (1) 130:10 County (4) 111:8;113:25; 119:13;140:19 couple (18) 31:11;32:2;33:7, 23;34:11;37:14; 38:17;56:17;64:4,5; 88:16;91:4;120:16; 126:14;144:24; 149:5,6;176:1 course (18) 15:23;16:1;118:2; 119:4;120:18;121:2, 11;123:10,25;126:3, 23;130:10;135:23; 136:16;146:15; 158:25;159:17;180:4 courses (1) 21:15 court (1) 4:14 cousin (1) 147:2 cousins (1) 26:6 COVENANT (21) 7:17,21;8:2,5,10; 9:2,10;11:5;167:14,</p>	<p>18;168:2,9,11,14; 169:24;170:1;175:5, 18;179:20;180:3; 181:10 cover (2) 162:21;180:17 covered (1) 88:20 C-rated (1) 64:7 creating (2) 138:11;151:8 credentialed (1) 117:6 credit (3) 120:2;143:24; 144:1 credits (9) 117:25;120:2,3,4, 5;141:13;146:19; 147:6;149:6 Crishella (1) 26:10 Cross (1) 127:14 cross- (1) 130:9 CROWDER (5) 68:7,8,11;69:5; 70:2 cultural (1) 18:12 culturally (2) 77:2;78:21 culture (8) 18:11;33:6;39:23; 40:12;50:18,22; 62:10;78:22 cultures (1) 25:22 current (17) 8:8;13:15;46:2; 48:9;56:15,21;57:1; 74:8,10;88:2;103:3; 115:14;131:3; 142:12;153:3;158:5; 168:17 currently (16) 14:13;15:16;47:10; 48:2,7;50:7;55:23; 66:6;73:25;77:8; 92:15;102:20; 103:22;159:19; 161:2;175:22 curricula (2) 91:7,21 curriculum (20) 18:12;24:1;36:15, 25;37:1,11,13,13,24; 48:9,21;49:2;52:24; 69:12;73:5,14,22; 91:9;117:13;146:19 cut (1)</p>
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127:16 cut-score (2) 52:10;53:4 cut-scores (2) 52:4;53:7 cutting (1) 174:8 CVC (1) 78:2 CVCs (1) 92:24 cyber (1) 123:17	77:3 Deans (2) 21:6;40:4 dear (1) 49:13 debt (17) 9:11,20,22,23; 10:18;11:4,5,5,25; 163:13,16,20;170:4; 173:13;175:23; 180:22,23 debtors (1) 11:25 debts (6) 10:1;180:11,11,13, 17,20 December (5) 3:3;5:10;29:2; 121:12,13 decide (7) 11:20;103:25; 104:21;105:11; 172:11;174:1,2 decided (3) 135:15;153:13; 172:6 decision (12) 102:15,16;106:1,8; 108:4,25;171:18,22; 172:12,23;175:16; 176:15 decisions (1) 108:2 decline (4) 30:21;159:1,15,25 declined (2) 30:19;47:24 declining (1) 159:23 decrease (13) 29:3;53:3,6;54:11; 59:12;63:15;67:21, 24,25;68:6;69:4,6; 127:19 decreased (3) 29:8;51:16;59:14 decreases (1) 69:18 dedicated (1) 47:1 dedication (1) 65:20 deep (1) 130:3 deeper (1) 88:24 defeat (2) 77:16;99:12 defer (8) 170:25;171:7,11, 19,23,25;172:25; 177:20 deficiencies (6)	59:16,25;87:17; 90:7;171:4;176:13 deficit (6) 56:25;73:11,18; 74:2,18;159:10 deficits (2) 74:20;88:14 Define (1) 100:21 defining (1) 14:20 definitely (5) 26:21;43:16;81:10; 107:12,20 degree (2) 10:4;48:1 degrees (1) 23:18 delay (1) 41:6 delaying (1) 173:21 deliver (2) 20:8;65:2 delivered (2) 19:15;117:13 Delta (13) 155:10;156:2; 157:2,5,18,21,25; 158:3;159:4,24; 160:8;163:11;165:11 dental (1) 139:9 deny (12) 5:5;109:4,8,15,22, 25;110:4,8;113:15, 22;114:7;154:5 denying (1) 100:19 Department (22) 3:11,23;6:4;10:13; 18:13,19;30:13;32:8; 41:3;49:9;66:13; 70:5;84:20;94:6; 115:7;124:4;130:19; 149:15;157:23; 170:24;179:6;181:7 depending (1) 27:23 Deputy (3) 3:16,22;130:15 described (1) 92:6 deserves (1) 118:22 designation (1) 48:7 designed (1) 23:5 desire (1) 140:23 desktop (1) 121:23	detail (3) 33:25;180:9,25 detailed (3) 34:4;95:10;101:2 details (1) 135:14 detector (1) 135:8 detention (1) 148:16 determine (4) 58:4;173:11; 174:19;180:13 determined (1) 51:16 determining (1) 55:8 Detrick (1) 124:5 develop (6) 49:1;56:11;60:8; 85:8;132:17,18 development (25) 19:15;22:8;29:18; 39:25;40:6;49:12; 56:15,19;57:2,10; 59:18;62:9;69:25; 70:3,6,7,11,20,24; 71:5,14,17,18;90:8; 128:8 devices (1) 3:6 DI (1) 21:11 diagnostic (1) 57:5 dictated (1) 93:2 die (1) 142:11 dies (1) 100:11 difference (7) 76:14,15;89:5; 132:1;163:9;173:16; 177:15 different (30) 22:25;25:22;29:13; 37:6,12;49:10;54:23; 66:18;70:23;84:4; 85:4;88:16;90:7; 103:5;119:16; 126:14;134:16,25; 136:20,21;137:10; 141:2;154:19;158:7; 164:8;175:8,16; 177:21;179:13;181:9 differentiate (1) 177:25 differentiated (1) 73:10 differently (2) 108:14;175:6	difficult (3) 29:23;82:24; 162:11 difficulty (1) 85:20 dig (2) 93:2;95:13 digitally (1) 117:13 Dillard's (1) 147:24 diminution (1) 88:6 Dionne (1) 116:15 diploma (3) 117:20;119:10; 132:15 direct (2) 20:25;21:23 direction (6) 34:2;39:18;44:4; 75:7;91:18;181:9 directive (1) 103:11 directly (1) 19:1 Director (12) 3:22;19:13;24:10; 45:11;46:22;61:10; 68:8;90:2,4;116:2, 11;151:23 directors (4) 15:8,13;24:1;47:18 disabilities (2) 33:17;35:23 disadvantage (2) 11:24;12:1 disadvantaged (1) 118:3 disappointed (1) 75:18 disapprove (1) 171:1 discipline (1) 128:4 discretion (2) 99:10;101:23 discuss (4) 50:14;58:16;170:3; 177:2 discussion (26) 5:22;11:14,18; 12:20;36:15,17; 42:21;68:3;96:3,18; 98:2,15;109:3,9; 150:5,12;155:15; 156:22;157:10; 165:17;172:10; 173:1;174:18; 176:23;181:25;182:9 disrespect (1) 136:1
D				
D- (1) 64:8 dad (1) 137:25 daily (4) 49:17;59:5;62:4; 161:4 damage (1) 108:10 danger (1) 137:8 dangerous (2) 137:7,8 data (21) 16:19;20:24;21:3, 11,11;22:12;39:6; 49:3;55:7;56:13; 57:5,11;59:18;61:21; 69:7;79:1;95:13; 133:11;145:10; 149:13;150:1 data-point (1) 65:4 date (12) 5:6,10;6:9,11,12, 13,15;7:1;170:19; 173:17;179:4,9 day (38) 15:19;16:11,13,16; 20:4;21:11,14;28:15; 49:17,22,24;59:6; 60:12;72:2,11; 111:17;119:9; 120:24;121:3,4; 122:4;125:10;129:6, 17;135:10,18,18,19, 19;140:12,17;141:2, 3;148:8;149:3; 173:10,11;178:18 days (12) 56:17;57:11;58:7; 121:3;122:2;134:15, 15;135:3,21,21; 170:7;177:20 deal (2) 36:11;132:10 dealing (1)				

<p>disseminated (1) 37:21</p> <p>distance (1) 119:12</p> <p>distinction (1) 163:1</p> <p>distinguish (1) 47:4</p> <p>District (11) 15:24;51:9;56:9; 59:16;62:2;119:4; 145:7;147:15;148:3; 159:12,15</p> <p>districts (6) 111:23;114:4; 119:3;153:7;159:25; 160:6</p> <p>doctors (1) 116:20</p> <p>documents (1) 37:16</p> <p>dollars (2) 65:10;160:14</p> <p>domestic (1) 19:14</p> <p>donations (1) 129:18</p> <p>done (17) 18:20;32:3;36:21; 40:10;61:3;63:10; 64:2;78:21;80:18; 83:3,23;104:6; 108:13;110:19; 112:4;124:16;146:6</p> <p>donors (1) 129:19</p> <p>door (2) 122:15;135:9</p> <p>doors (2) 132:18;133:4</p> <p>double- (1) 57:6</p> <p>down (15) 39:7;40:22;109:18; 120:3;128:24; 133:16;135:16; 149:7;159:21,24; 160:2,3,3;169:3; 170:20</p> <p>downplay (1) 137:8</p> <p>Dr (222) 3:16,20,22;4:2;7:8; 12:3,5,17;17:9;19:12, 12;32:6,7,20,21,22, 25;33:16,17,22,23; 34:3,4,6,8,9,13,14,19, 22,24,25;35:1,2,4,6, 13,15,16,18,19,21,22, 25;36:1,3,4,6,8,9,10, 11,12;38:21;39:21; 40:21;42:4,9,15;43:8, 14,15;44:5,6;45:14;</p>	<p>46:4;62:1;67:17,19; 68:10,24;69:24;71:4, 8,22,24;72:14,15; 74:21;76:7;79:11; 81:11;86:16,17;87:2, 11,24;89:24;90:4; 94:23;96:19,22; 97:14,20;98:6,6,18, 19,25;99:1;100:21, 24;101:21,23;102:1, 1,9,10,12,24;103:8, 15;104:9,13,14,16, 17,23;105:1,5,13,21, 25;106:3,10,13,15, 20,24;107:1,5,7,17, 25;108:19;109:4,6, 12,18,21,22;110:3,4; 113:14,15;114:6,7; 115:25;128:19; 130:24;131:13; 137:16,17,20,22,24; 138:3,6,8;139:5,14; 140:1,4,6,7,8,12; 141:6,17,20;145:2; 147:4;150:6;151:5,6, 10,11;152:8,10,23, 23;153:24;154:2,4,5, 21,23,25;155:1,2,3, 21,24;156:3,9,15; 157:3,15,16;162:25; 163:1,8,13;164:9,11, 13,19;166:22,23,25; 167:2;169:3,24; 172:3;173:23; 174:22;175:10; 176:9;177:1;182:6, 22,25</p> <p>drastically (1) 98:1</p> <p>drawing (1) 26:12</p> <p>dreams (2) 118:22;125:3</p> <p>drive (2) 60:15;140:12</p> <p>driver (1) 138:4</p> <p>drives (1) 130:9</p> <p>driving (2) 119:12;130:9</p> <p>drop (10) 51:12,18,19,23,24; 52:1,21;54:4;68:2; 147:9</p> <p>dropout (2) 117:12;127:3</p> <p>dropped (2) 53:2;140:14</p> <p>dropping (2) 58:7;145:17</p> <p>drops (1) 121:11</p>	<p>drove (2) 84:12;119:9</p> <p>due (5) 11:3;51:25;58:2; 116:5,17</p> <p>during (18) 6:11,22;25:12; 55:17;65:14,16,16; 71:17,25;72:3;74:2; 75:5;78:1;96:24; 112:4,5;143:9;180:4</p> <p>duty (1) 72:3</p> <p>duty-free (2) 72:1,13</p> <p>DYS (2) 117:18;149:6</p> <p>dyslexia (1) 22:1</p>	<p>effective (1) 153:16</p> <p>effort (3) 3:12;81:6;85:24</p> <p>efforts (2) 63:14;88:22</p> <p>eight (1) 160:12</p> <p>either (6) 11:22;149:1;164:6; 173:16;181:5,9</p> <p>ELA (13) 17:5;51:20;52:1,4, 10;53:3,4,7;54:7,14; 56:21;57:7;116:8</p> <p>elementary (1) 138:3</p> <p>eligibility (1) 15:20</p> <p>eligible (1) 101:5</p> <p>Elizabeth (1) 56:10</p> <p>ELL (2) 22:1;54:14</p> <p>else (8) 6:8;114:18;133:20; 138:12;139:23; 162:21;181:11; 182:19</p> <p>embarrassed (2) 79:5;122:10</p> <p>embedded (5) 48:14;57:8,11; 59:24;73:13</p> <p>embrace (1) 18:10</p> <p>emergencies (1) 72:7</p> <p>emotional (1) 62:8</p> <p>emphasis (3) 48:11;98:11; 107:20</p> <p>emphasized (1) 44:15</p> <p>emphasizes (2) 48:19,22</p> <p>employ (1) 92:5</p> <p>employability (1) 124:14</p> <p>employable (1) 124:13</p> <p>employment (1) 93:22</p> <p>encourage (1) 26:8</p> <p>encouraged (3) 75:22;79:14,15</p> <p>encouraging (1) 31:15</p> <p>end (19)</p>	<p>12:13,14,19,24; 53:17;88:18;90:16; 104:21;108:11; 109:16;131:7;159:6; 161:22,25;163:14,16, 18;167:16;173:10</p> <p>ended (3) 122:23;124:11; 126:13</p> <p>ending (1) 108:7</p> <p>ends (1) 49:21</p> <p>engaged (1) 135:17</p> <p>engagement (5) 23:4;30:3,15; 121:11;143:12</p> <p>engaging (3) 31:14,15;47:16</p> <p>English (9) 15:22;18:1,7; 24:24;25:1;52:18; 53:21,24;124:17</p> <p>enjoy (1) 19:5</p> <p>enjoyed (2) 31:16;47:12</p> <p>enjoying (1) 91:21</p> <p>enough (11) 39:15,22;75:1; 81:11;82:6;95:10,11; 96:8;97:22;99:11; 103:21</p> <p>enroll (7) 117:16,16,21,21; 126:21;140:16;141:3</p> <p>enrolled (2) 48:5;119:22</p> <p>enrolling (1) 122:23</p> <p>ENROLLMENT (24) 7:16,21;8:5,13; 13:1,12;45:2,5,17,18, 23;102:18;115:1,12; 118:25;119:20; 126:19;157:17,20; 158:2;167:13,21; 168:8,14</p> <p>enter (1) 174:10</p> <p>entered (2) 123:5;179:24</p> <p>entertain (6) 5:16;40:25;100:2; 101:17;162:15;165:9</p> <p>entire (9) 4:13;14:25;16:13; 19:22,23;62:9;118:9; 142:24;154:13</p> <p>entities (2) 11:18;174:18</p>
		E		
		<p>earlier (7) 17:10;57:22;73:6; 112:13;164:23; 168:21;170:2</p> <p>early (3) 135:22;137:10; 139:1</p> <p>earn (2) 146:19;149:6</p> <p>earned (3) 120:4,4;141:13</p> <p>eat (4) 48:7;124:6,6,6</p> <p>eating (1) 124:8</p> <p>economically (1) 118:2</p> <p>Ed (2) 151:24,24</p> <p>Edna (3) 25:8,9,9</p> <p>educate (1) 79:18</p> <p>educated (1) 123:23</p> <p>Education (35) 3:23,24,25;4:3,5; 6:4;8:2;10:13;18:13, 19;21:8;41:3;43:23; 45:21;47:1;53:1; 66:14;70:5;79:19,23; 90:5;91:6,8;94:6; 108:3;115:7,9;117:8; 125:20;130:19; 149:15;157:23,24; 168:11;170:24</p> <p>educational (6) 43:24;48:8;49:14; 62:3;148:15;151:1</p> <p>educator (1) 76:6</p>		

<p>entity (4) 8:9;11:2;102:18; 168:18</p> <p>entrepreneur (1) 125:2</p> <p>entry (1) 140:17</p> <p>environment (4) 19:3,17;50:21; 132:5</p> <p>environmental (1) 18:16</p> <p>equation (1) 86:21</p> <p>equations (1) 77:19</p> <p>equivalent (2) 55:19;56:2</p> <p>eSchool (1) 119:22</p> <p>especially (9) 6:17;51:20;61:6, 23;67:2;89:18; 118:23;125:22;132:6</p> <p>ESSA (9) 17:2;29:25;51:10, 11;94:8;142:22; 143:3;144:3;145:9</p> <p>essentially (1) 94:12</p> <p>establish (1) 51:4</p> <p>establishing (1) 61:12</p> <p>eStem (7) 155:9,20,22;156:1, 5,14,18</p> <p>Eureka (5) 48:10,10;52:24; 73:14,21</p> <p>evaluate (1) 105:10</p> <p>even (23) 28:4;31:18,23; 39:9;67:24;94:10; 98:7;106:12;108:22; 112:24;125:11; 132:16,22;133:9,10; 135:1;142:2;144:3,5; 147:19;149:4; 154:15;160:15</p> <p>event (1) 127:2</p> <p>events (2) 18:24;85:13</p> <p>everybody (8) 13:19,24;44:24; 117:16,16;158:9; 172:22;181:20</p> <p>everyone (6) 3:5;84:18;90:20; 118:22;119:1;124:2</p> <p>evidence (3)</p>	<p>38:7;43:16;76:24</p> <p>evidences (1) 64:13</p> <p>exactly (2) 28:3;40:15</p> <p>EXALT (14) 13:1,5,9,12;14:12; 20:22;25:10,20; 26:11,20;42:15;44:7; 167:21,24</p> <p>examined (1) 17:17</p> <p>example (3) 55:16;73:25;160:2</p> <p>examples (3) 64:4;85:6;123:13</p> <p>excellent (2) 123:21;138:19</p> <p>except (2) 54:13,18</p> <p>exception (2) 160:4,5</p> <p>exceptionally (1) 28:15</p> <p>excited (2) 17:4;85:16</p> <p>excluded (1) 145:15</p> <p>exclusionary (2) 145:16,17</p> <p>excuse (3) 9:15;22:10;176:1</p> <p>executive (3) 19:13;46:22; 151:23</p> <p>exempt (2) 145:7,9</p> <p>exercise (1) 177:19</p> <p>Exhibit (2) 46:6;184:25</p> <p>exist (1) 93:24</p> <p>existence (2) 62:12;142:17</p> <p>existing (2) 102:21;160:20</p> <p>exit (1) 140:17</p> <p>expand (1) 160:16</p> <p>expansion (1) 102:22</p> <p>expect (2) 40:12;82:15</p> <p>expectant (1) 123:14</p> <p>expectation (2) 44:14;90:16</p> <p>expectations (4) 58:17;78:20; 105:15;174:24</p> <p>expected (1)</p>	<p>33:12</p> <p>Expeditionary (2) 48:15,18</p> <p>expel (1) 30:7</p> <p>expelled (2) 30:7;117:17</p> <p>expenses (1) 24:15</p> <p>experience (7) 18:23;19:17;47:17; 50:20;80:23;82:3; 148:5</p> <p>experienced (1) 117:6</p> <p>experiences (1) 18:22</p> <p>expire (1) 102:16</p> <p>explain (2) 87:21;135:3</p> <p>explained (1) 153:21</p> <p>explaining (1) 177:22</p> <p>explicit (1) 40:9</p> <p>expose (1) 49:10</p> <p>expulsion (1) 117:17</p> <p>expulsions (1) 63:15</p> <p>extension (1) 170:9</p> <p>extensive (2) 20:2;50:19</p> <p>extenuating (1) 120:1</p> <p>extra (5) 19:6;28:19,24; 29:5;166:16</p> <p>extremely (1) 141:18</p>	<p>fact (2) 31:22;75:20</p> <p>factor (1) 105:18</p> <p>factors (5) 14:20;16:10;57:25; 93:21;120:1</p> <p>facts (2) 93:7;173:14</p> <p>failed (1) 140:19</p> <p>failing (1) 99:17</p> <p>failure (1) 76:2</p> <p>fair (3) 4:8;84:11;89:13</p> <p>fairs (2) 61:10;83:23</p> <p>Fall (4) 25:24;55:22;56:1; 73:16</p> <p>falling (1) 34:11</p> <p>familiar (1) 80:17</p> <p>families (20) 18:4;19:11,19; 29:13;48:4;50:18; 58:6,11,11;65:3;80:1, 3;93:12,19,23;161:6; 163:10;174:6,9,12</p> <p>family (6) 19:14;47:4;67:1; 80:5;160:20;163:11</p> <p>fans (1) 133:7</p> <p>fantastic (1) 100:13</p> <p>far (3) 36:20,22;175:15</p> <p>far-reaching (2) 104:25;105:20</p> <p>fast (3) 33:5;39:15,22</p> <p>father (1) 139:13</p> <p>favor (15) 5:23;7:11;12:21; 42:22;46:10;96:17; 113:21;150:14,23; 155:16;156:23; 157:11;165:19; 182:10;183:2</p> <p>favorite (1) 19:21</p> <p>Fayetteville (2) 17:7,10</p> <p>feasibility (1) 166:13</p> <p>February (2) 121:14;174:1</p> <p>fed (1)</p>	<p>116:12</p> <p>federal (3) 47:7;94:17;144:10</p> <p>feedback (4) 22:20;23:11;60:24; 150:21</p> <p>feeding (1) 62:7</p> <p>feel (12) 14:10;26:2;31:19, 20,21;77:13;87:10, 18;97:6;127:10; 142:12;150:24</p> <p>feeling (1) 49:25</p> <p>fell (1) 127:16</p> <p>felony (1) 146:22</p> <p>felt (5) 22:21;29:14;31:22, 22;39:25</p> <p>Felton (8) 20:8,15,18,21,21; 36:14;38:9,11</p> <p>female (2) 123:19;139:16</p> <p>females (1) 137:2</p> <p>Fest (1) 25:24</p> <p>few (15) 14:14;16:1;30:6, 16,24;31:25;36:13; 43:10;44:22;66:2; 72:6;111:16;150:22; 158:25;166:6</p> <p>fifth (1) 14:13</p> <p>fight (2) 136:4,19</p> <p>fight (1) 136:7</p> <p>figure (1) 177:11</p> <p>figures (1) 136:10</p> <p>file (1) 90:24</p> <p>fill (3) 43:5;137:5;166:1</p> <p>filling (1) 151:12</p> <p>final (3) 102:14;108:4; 171:17</p> <p>finalized (1) 11:3</p> <p>finally (3) 129:2,11;136:11</p> <p>Finance (1) 24:10</p> <p>finances (1)</p>
		F		
		<p>fabulous (3) 116:8;122:24; 141:4</p> <p>face (2) 18:17;47:2</p> <p>Facebook (2) 129:25;130:13</p> <p>faced (1) 75:18</p> <p>facilitate (1) 4:7</p> <p>facility (4) 51:6;101:6;120:14; 161:12</p> <p>facing (1) 55:24</p>		

<p>15:11 financial (5) 28:20;159:13; 166:13,24;167:4 financially (2) 24:5;166:20 find (9) 34:10;82:24;84:21; 85:8,25;92:6;98:1; 127:18;162:4 finding (2) 104:12,19 fine (2) 11:23;144:16 finishing (1) 161:23 Fire (3) 180:7,11,15 First (34) 3:7;5:14;7:20; 16:20,22;19:14;25:2; 30:6,16;31:23;35:17; 39:23;45:8,8;55:13; 82:20;84:25;99:22; 111:10;116:3;121:3; 122:3;127:23;134:8; 135:18;139:16; 142:10;144:20; 155:3,22;161:16; 169:1,6;176:1 first-year (1) 83:5 Fiscal (1) 3:19 five (12) 23:17;28:18,24; 50:9;91:13;96:7,11; 131:1,16;136:3; 162:20;176:21 five- (1) 177:10 five-minute (4) 23:3;44:23;176:17; 177:4 five-year (1) 14:13 flag (1) 35:12 flexibility (4) 24:16;70:25;97:8; 110:15 flexible (1) 117:22 floors (1) 21:6 fluctuated (1) 52:19 fluctuates (2) 141:2,5 fluctuation (1) 54:21 fluency (2) 48:13;93:6</p>	<p>focus (25) 30:4;40:1;59:23; 60:2;63:20;73:10,11, 18,24;74:19;80:24; 82:21;83:9,19,20; 84:21,24;85:11; 93:22;98:11;117:13, 15;122:20;127:10; 128:14 focused (11) 22:10;39:22;44:15; 59:21;74:8,12;77:22; 83:23;112:6;159:6; 162:14 focuses (3) 63:21;84:6;117:12 focusing (5) 40:16;83:13;93:6; 111:19;127:9 follow (1) 85:15 followed (2) 67:24;172:4 following (6) 58:18;85:4;92:5; 148:23;171:15,16 follows (1) 58:17 follow-up (2) 57:9;94:2 food (1) 20:2 Force (2) 130:10;138:15 forfeit (2) 172:10,17 Forgot (1) 116:16 form (7) 119:15,16,17; 155:9,10;156:18; 157:6 formative (4) 21:4;48:14;49:3; 73:13 former (5) 4:2,5;72:19; 127:14;169:25 forming (2) 47:4;85:13 forms (1) 92:2 Forrest (18) 119:12;159:7,9,12; 160:1,11,14,24; 161:1,3,10,20; 163:17,19;164:6,21; 165:12;166:17 forth (2) 28:1;80:5 fortunate (1) 51:4 forward (24)</p>	<p>9:12;12:1;13:16; 14:23;21:17;26:22; 35:9;37:5,18;42:12; 90:3;122:19;142:12; 163:19;172:24; 173:18;174:25; 175:13;179:2,3,21; 180:18;181:6,10 FOSS (1) 69:12 found (2) 22:13;86:3 foundation (3) 14:15;37:5;40:14 foundational (2) 48:22;92:23 founder (1) 169:25 founding (1) 161:24 four (7) 24:21;56:15;63:6; 80:3;111:9;125:14; 144:5 fourth (2) 34:12,16 framework (1) 19:23 F-rated (1) 64:6 free (6) 15:17;17:13,18; 48:7;125:6;139:9 French (1) 126:9 Frequently (1) 128:23 freshman (1) 65:14 friend (5) 25:8,17;26:9,14,17 friends (4) 25:4;26:14,16; 130:7 Friendship (10) 8:25;9:10;11:1,1; 175:7,20;179:24; 180:2,8,16 front (4) 77:17;82:12;135:8; 139:21 full (11) 22:17;23:4;24:22; 76:20;82:20;86:24; 118:14;160:22; 172:6;179:8;180:9 full-time (7) 24:11,12;82:21; 84:24,25;85:17; 117:23 fully (1) 37:14 fun (1)</p>	<p>26:16 function (1) 132:11 functioned (1) 39:3 fund (3) 9:25;24:13;133:11 funded (1) 127:15 funding (2) 47:7;101:6 funds (2) 24:8;180:17 funny (1) 124:23 further (6) 64:19;65:10;143:6; 150:5;174:14;178:3 future (9) 14:15;31:5;47:3; 107:13;176:13; 179:4,9,14;180:6</p>	<p>given (4) 114:8;143:9;173:6; 176:12 gives (5) 24:15;89:3;97:7; 176:2,2 giving (3) 14:9;125:6;136:17 glad (1) 151:13 glossed (1) 68:4 goal (7) 4:7;30:25;50:24; 55:3;78:24;145:24; 146:1 goals (25) 15:3,4;55:8; 111:16,22;141:14,15, 22,23,24;142:1,2,4,5, 8,10,11,12,16,18,21, 22;146:2,7,10 God's (1) 137:7 goes (9) 21:17;58:19;69:14; 90:12;101:4,12,13; 108:3;143:3 Good (61) 3:2;4:22;8:24; 12:8;14:9;19:4; 20:18;22:22;23:11; 24:7,20;25:9;26:18; 31:22;34:1;36:11,22; 44:13,21;46:21; 54:24;62:22;68:2,7; 71:7,8;73:3;74:21; 75:4,5;78:8,8;81:13, 16;82:18;89:8;90:4, 20;94:22;101:21; 107:1,7;114:19; 115:25;129:3,4; 131:20;138:18; 139:24;140:1,4; 149:18;151:19; 158:21;161:5; 162:14,23;164:13,23, 25;167:7 Goodwill (1) 141:7 Goodwin (1) 47:19 gotcha (1) 23:6 governance (5) 15:12;103:12,24; 179:21;180:6 gown (1) 120:21 grade (82) 17:12,15,16,20,24; 25:10;26:5,5,19,19; 29:16,17;31:2;32:9,</p>
G				
			<p>gained (1) 69:11 gains (1) 29:19 Gallagher (3) 64:18;90:20,21 gaps (1) 86:19 GARRIDO (1) 26:4 Gary (4) 64:4;75:23;85:6; 96:25 gather (1) 176:14 gathering (1) 21:3 gave (4) 17:11;23:10;85:6; 162:8 general (4) 80:20;91:6;107:11; 138:16 generate (1) 47:6 generation (3) 25:6;146:25;147:1 Gentlemen (1) 3:3 gets (2) 7:1;67:11 Geyer (3) 16:6;120:7,13 gifts (1) 129:19 Girls (7) 51:5;61:25;111:7, 9,15;128:2;140:25</p>	

<p>14:37;1,20,25;39:11; 42:6,11;44:7;47:10; 48:10,17;51:20,25; 52:11,18,21,22,24; 53:1,15,16,18,25; 54:3,13,17,19,20,22; 55:1,2,17,19,20,21; 56:1,2,21,23;57:1; 59:5,13;61:23;66:7; 69:9,9,23;71:10,12, 14;72:11,17;73:9,21; 74:4,9,10,11,12;77:8, 9,11;78:2;79:7,13; 92:3,24;114:9</p> <p>grader (2) 26:6;74:11</p> <p>graders (5) 17:22;143:20; 161:24,24;162:5</p> <p>grades (26) 8:4;13:11;16:21; 32:15,25;35:11,11; 38:24;45:23;47:9,11; 48:3,15;51:12,23; 54:2,13,20;78:6; 91:19;92:20,22; 115:11;145:8;158:2; 168:13</p> <p>graduate (13) 118:1;120:19,23; 121:14;122:18; 127:11;138:14; 140:20,20;146:15,20; 147:21;149:3</p> <p>graduated (7) 122:17;126:22; 130:8;139:1,2; 143:25;147:23</p> <p>graduates (6) 120:17;131:3; 138:10,17;143:22,24</p> <p>graduating (1) 130:11</p> <p>graduation (4) 65:8;120:14; 121:16;145:12</p> <p>graduations (1) 120:7</p> <p>grandfather (1) 119:9</p> <p>grant (7) 41:25;50:25;51:1; 57:17;94:10,13; 127:14</p> <p>granted (4) 75:14;100:4;120:5; 173:18</p> <p>granting (1) 172:16</p> <p>graph (6) 52:13;53:11,20; 54:6,13,15</p> <p>graphs (1)</p>	<p>35:17</p> <p>great (8) 22:3;27:4;32:3; 65:1;75:1;96:8; 121:1;159:5</p> <p>greatest (1) 20:2</p> <p>greatly (1) 131:24</p> <p>greet (1) 49:20</p> <p>greetings (1) 62:25</p> <p>Greg (1) 3:18</p> <p>grew (1) 16:22</p> <p>ground (3) 77:21;78:11;80:9</p> <p>group (11) 28:7;52:25;57:8; 59:23;73:16,20;74:2, 12;103:25;123:14; 154:11</p> <p>groups (12) 14:22;21:13,18; 23:21,22;24:25; 50:12;57:1;73:23; 74:7;79:6;135:13</p> <p>grow (8) 18:4;26:3;28:6; 61:22;65:5;83:7,9; 160:16</p> <p>growing (5) 53:13,14;54:10; 60:21;66:14</p> <p>grown (3) 16:25;28:21;66:9</p> <p>growth (36) 16:24;17:3,5,12,15, 17,19,23;30:1;32:24; 33:9,20,21;34:17; 39:15;44:4;53:24; 55:2,3,4;64:13; 68:15;74:16;75:19, 20,23,25;76:10,19, 25;77:9;81:2;82:16; 112:8;113:22;129:9</p> <p>guarantee (1) 112:7</p> <p>guess (18) 35:7;39:17;81:4,9; 82:4,9;99:6,12,18; 102:1;103:23;133:2; 141:22;142:3; 143:18;171:7; 172:25;177:13</p> <p>guests (1) 50:3</p> <p>guidance (3) 10:11,13;49:4</p> <p>guide (1) 178:14</p>	<p>guided (2) 48:20,24</p> <p>guidelines (1) 145:14</p> <p>guides (1) 49:2</p> <p>gun (1) 147:22</p> <p>Gurdon (1) 138:4</p> <p>guy (1) 130:10</p> <p>guys (10) 36:21;38:5;46:3; 82:14;101:10; 121:22;125:2;132:9; 133:12;141:23</p> <p>gymnasium (1) 160:23</p>	<p>144:7,10;146:1,8</p> <p>hardworking (1) 16:17</p> <p>harm (1) 50:11</p> <p>harmful (2) 50:10;172:13</p> <p>harp (1) 35:23</p> <p>HARRIS (8) 8:24,25;122:7; 169:8,22,22;170:20; 176:1</p> <p>hash (1) 174:19</p> <p>hat (1) 129:2</p> <p>HATLEY (49) 115:25;116:1,19, 23;117:1;131:2,13, 19;133:21;134:19, 22;135:6;137:18,18, 19,19,20,21,21,23; 138:1,5,7,19;139:6, 15;140:3,6,11,16; 141:9,19;142:7; 143:19;144:7,9; 145:3;146:12; 147:17;148:23,25; 149:21,24;150:2,21; 151:16,20,22;152:3</p> <p>head (6) 109:18;139:23; 142:19;162:22; 169:3;170:20</p> <p>health (4) 19:9;20:3;124:4; 139:9</p> <p>healthy (2) 50:9;124:8</p> <p>hear (29) 4:24;10:2,4;11:8, 10,11,23;32:16; 80:20;111:4;112:15, 20,22;113:3;114:21; 117:15;131:9; 137:24;169:1,6; 171:10;172:22; 173:8,24,25;175:14; 177:12,18;178:19</p> <p>heard (17) 7:1;11:13;27:15; 84:13;91:24;92:1,11, 23;93:12;96:12; 100:6;112:24; 114:16;125:24; 165:7;172:5;182:1</p> <p>hearing (22) 4:8;10:16,23; 27:13;32:11;35:8; 40:24;87:7,11; 100:10;113:6; 154:22;158:22;</p>	<p>170:18;171:21; 172:4,7,9,18,23; 174:7;181:9</p> <p>heart (1) 47:22</p> <p>hearts (1) 49:13</p> <p>heavily (1) 60:1</p> <p>heavy (4) 31:19,20;48:11; 59:23</p> <p>Heggerty (1) 48:22</p> <p>held (2) 50:4;174:4</p> <p>Helena (9) 159:8,17,22; 160:18;161:2,4,17; 164:17;165:13</p> <p>Hello (5) 25:19;26:4,10; 72:5;111:6</p> <p>help (24) 21:2;24:2,23,24; 66:18;69:13;72:15, 23;74:6;81:24;90:6, 12;93:20;103:8; 108:6;118:21,21; 123:1,13;132:6; 147:21;163:21,23; 170:16</p> <p>helped (2) 21:13;28:25</p> <p>helpful (1) 172:13</p> <p>helping (4) 63:23;66:16;90:10; 124:17</p> <p>Henderson (1) 138:24</p> <p>Here's (3) 74:23;129:19; 158:24</p> <p>heritage (2) 18:11;25:23</p> <p>HERNANDEZ (249) 3:2,20;5:9,14,20, 25;6:3,19;7:4,9,13, 18;8:12,19;9:13; 10:9,15;11:13;12:10, 18,23;13:3,17;14:1,5, 20;11,16,19;24:18; 25:7;26:23;27:1,7, 14;29:11;31:8;32:6; 36:13;38:5,19;39:21; 40:17,22;41:10,19, 22;42:3,4,14,19,24; 43:4,9,11,20;44:1,5, 10,16,19;45:1,4,14; 46:4,5,8,17;62:13; 65:23;66:23;67:13, 15;70:14;71:22;</p>
		H		
		<p>habits (1) 124:8</p> <p>had've (1) 78:15</p> <p>half (1) 86:21</p> <p>hall (3) 11:6;50:1;127:1</p> <p>halls (2) 31:12;50:2</p> <p>hand (8) 8:15;13:23;20:13; 46:12;115:19; 158:14;169:13,20</p> <p>handicap (1) 108:6</p> <p>handle (3) 40:3,4;60:11</p> <p>hands (1) 148:8</p> <p>hands-on (1) 124:14</p> <p>hang (2) 129:2;166:4</p> <p>happen (6) 6:22;22:16;64:2; 81:4;173:11;174:3</p> <p>happened (1) 136:15</p> <p>happening (6) 38:7;61:14;78:6,6; 93:8;97:23</p> <p>happens (1) 108:8</p> <p>happy (3) 23:10;24:7;162:15</p> <p>hard (17) 9:17;15:10;16:2; 23:16;25:15;26:15; 27:3;28:14,15;58:23; 68:19;72:8;79:9;</p>		

72:14;75:9,11;80:14, 16;81:9;86:15;87:2, 24;90:19;94:2,20,23; 95:3,7,18;96:1,12,15, 21;98:14,21,23,25; 99:3,5,11,15,21,24; 100:1,6,10,14; 101:15;103:7;107:9, 18;108:17;109:2,7, 13,20,24;110:1,3,5,7, 12,18,23;111:1,4; 112:9,19;113:2,5,9, 13,20,23;114:6,11, 15,23;115:3,16,23, 25;116:16,21;130:24, 25;131:9,13,16; 133:19,22;134:1,5; 137:16;140:7; 141:21;143:2;144:6, 8,12,19;145:23; 147:4,11;148:12,24; 149:8,20,22,25; 150:3,9,16;151:5,10, 15,18,21;152:2,5,9, 11,18,23;155:4,13, 18;156:11,20,25; 157:8,13,19;158:6, 11,18;162:17,23; 163:21;164:4,7,10, 12,24;165:1,4,15,21, 25;166:3,7,11,14,18, 22,25;167:6,9,12,15, 25;168:2,5,19,25; 169:5,9,18;170:15, 21;171:10,20; 172:14;176:4,20; 177:3,6;178:1,4,17; 181:13,24;182:7,12, 18,23;183:1,4	58:3;80:6;118:3 high-schoolers' (1) 117:25 Hill (2) 4:14;126:9 Hillary (2) 133:6,6 hire (2) 56:8;146:22 hired (8) 22:5;40:6;56:17; 59:16;64:19;68:20; 73:4;142:9 hiring (6) 61:4,4;85:20; 111:25;117:6;124:11 Hispanic (2) 18:10;25:23 history (2) 38:23;75:17 hit (2) 19:1,25 HIV (1) 123:12 Hold (5) 35:4;49:12;50:12; 120:6;175:10 holder (1) 102:21 holiday (1) 167:11 home (8) 25:5;26:7;45:12; 62:6;117:23;122:1; 135:15;148:3 homepage (1) 121:5 homework (1) 92:21 honest (2) 142:20;159:2 honored (1) 14:10 hope (2) 26:2;167:8 hopeful (1) 82:7 hopefully (2) 180:9;181:3 hopes (1) 172:11 hoping (5) 29:4;31:4;90:15; 146:13;163:5 hospital (1) 116:22 hostility (1) 135:13 Hot (1) 119:20 hours (5) 22:9,9;25:12;67:2; 70:2	house (1) 79:16 huge (5) 30:4,21;40:12; 76:22;80:11 human (5) 87:14;123:17,18, 20,21 hurts (1) 97:11 husband (1) 68:16 Hyatt (48) 10:12,12,23;12:12; 40:25;41:2,2,15,21, 25;70:4,4;87:25; 94:5,5,21,25;95:20, 23;99:9,14,20,23,25; 100:13,15,23;102:25; 110:9,14,21,25; 112:11;113:8,12; 149:13,14,14;154:7; 170:16,23,23;171:13, 23;177:8,10;178:8,13	36:19,22;38:6; 50:8;91:20 implemented (3) 39:5;63:17;69:12 implementing (2) 64:14;145:1 importance (2) 79:18;125:23 important (9) 15:1,15;18:3; 25:24;37:3;40:1; 123:19;161:8;173:4 imposing (1) 106:9 impressed (4) 29:12;31:12;123:7; 134:24 impression (2) 44:12;112:13 improve (5) 23:13;50:10;63:23; 103:20;107:15 improvement (36) 14:18;33:4,6,18, 20;35:20;42:12; 43:16,18;44:8;86:20, 23,25;87:6;88:2; 90:23,24;91:2,4,19, 24;92:13,18;93:1,10, 23;94:10,12,18; 95:15;97:5;98:9; 108:22;113:18; 114:3;142:23 improvements (1) 36:2 improving (2) 24:9;33:3 inaudible (2) 66:4,12 incarcerated (1) 140:15 incentive (1) 57:16 incentives (1) 58:21 inception (2) 15:9;16:25 incident (2) 136:14,15 inclined (1) 172:19 included (4) 56:4;91:4;92:13; 101:7 includes (5) 5:17;8:8;48:21; 93:11;168:17 including (2) 10:25;70:12 income (1) 18:15 incoming (3) 55:25;69:17,19	incorporated (2) 127:13,23 incorrectly (1) 153:9 increase (29) 3:13;51:17;52:3,7, 17,19,20;53:8,15,25; 54:1,3,14,18;55:4; 67:24;68:5,12;69:3,4, 5;88:13;89:12;90:14; 91:16;92:14;111:14, 20;146:2 increased (4) 23:20;33:13;53:19; 54:20 increases (1) 56:6 increasing (3) 91:5,25;105:16 incredibly (3) 159:6,22;161:7 incurred (1) 180:11 indefinite (1) 101:22 independent (3) 17:8;48:23;154:16 independently (1) 105:11 in-depth (1) 175:24 Index (1) 51:10 Indiana (3) 64:5;85:7;97:1 Indianapolis (3) 64:8,12;85:7 indicate (1) 70:19 indicates (1) 16:7 indicators (4) 33:10,11,23;144:5 individual (2) 23:17;92:5 individualized (4) 21:19;60:23; 141:11;148:9 individually (2) 58:15;154:8 individuals (2) 3:11;50:12 indulgence (1) 182:16 influx (1) 80:6 Info (3) 32:13;34:20,22 informal (1) 176:23 informality (1) 9:15 information (8)
		I		
		Ida (2) 116:8;117:4 idea (2) 23:14;164:20 IDEAS (1) 123:20 identification (1) 46:7 identified (3) 55:9;57:14;86:18 identify (2) 19:18;20:20 identifying (2) 77:23;86:21 illness (1) 58:3 illnesses (2) 58:1;60:9 illustrates (7) 52:13;53:11,20; 54:6,15;55:14;59:10 ILP (1) 141:11 immature (1) 140:24 immersion (1) 24:22 impact (5) 18:21;30:12;91:14; 118:24;173:17 impacts (1) 162:12 implement (3) 48:17;63:11; 146:18 implementation (5)		

5:6;11:21;12:4; 37:17,21;50:3; 143:14;176:14 informational (1) 48:20 informed (1) 79:14 infractions (2) 30:19;39:7 infrastructure (3) 160:7,10;161:13 infused (1) 16:16 infusion (2) 49:6;51:3 initially (1) 75:14 initiated (1) 57:15 initiating (1) 76:13 initiative (7) 22:23;36:16,23; 37:8,9,23;93:3 in-school (1) 30:24 institutes (1) 19:10 institution (1) 151:2 instruction (16) 20:25;21:20,23; 25:13;40:7,10;48:23; 57:8;59:22,24;60:8; 70:8,9;73:11;91:5; 148:9 instructional (7) 49:1;63:18,19; 64:20;73:19;74:6; 91:25 instructors (1) 116:7 Insurance (3) 122:21,24;126:10 insure (2) 36:22;59:2 insuring (2) 19:3;47:1 INTEGRATED (2) 115:2,10 intended (1) 88:5 intense (2) 20:5;141:14 intensely (2) 68:23;118:13 intent (4) 61:13;76:12;87:25; 162:7 intention (1) 63:8 intentional (1) 73:22	intentionally (1) 19:24 interesting (1) 27:22 interim (1) 57:12 Internal (4) 41:17;83:22;84:11; 95:25 internally (4) 91:1;92:19;93:25; 144:23 interruption (1) 9:7 intervention (8) 21:15;56:23;57:3; 59:20,22;62:7;78:1; 95:9 interventionist (3) 24:24;28:19;57:13 interventionists (2) 19:6;23:18 interventions (2) 21:25;64:15 interview (1) 61:5 interviewing (1) 124:11 interviews (2) 124:16;126:17 into (39) 4:11,17;5:3;24:6; 29:6;31:4,13,18; 35:14;37:11;40:8,11; 57:11;58:19;59:24; 65:7;67:16;79:24; 86:7,7;87:13;93:2; 95:13;104:11,19; 105:18;120:14; 123:6;127:18;130:3, 16;136:22;143:6; 172:17;173:21; 174:11;176:13; 179:24;180:25 introduce (4) 3:7;25:17;26:9; 116:3 invest (1) 65:11 investing (2) 40:11;160:14 invite (1) 128:10 involved (5) 38:15;84:1,1; 88:17;135:24 IP (1) 121:24 issue (20) 6:23;9:9,20,21; 57:22;75:3;86:9; 108:21;163:15; 171:17;178:23;	179:4;180:1,8,10,18, 24;181:2,5,8 issues (18) 10:4,7;11:3;41:7; 62:3;78:7;86:22; 87:1,8,12;92:11; 111:25;132:3;150:4; 167:4;168:20; 179:12,16 item (23) 5:14;6:3;7:19,20; 10:14;45:16;114:21, 25;115:3;152:19,20; 154:1;155:6,11,21; 156:10;157:20; 167:17,18,20;172:5; 177:16;182:3 items (2) 152:25;156:9 iteration (1) 146:9 Ivy (1) 3:16 IXL (3) 60:1;73:23;74:3	John (1) 73:3 join (1) 139:4 Joy (1) 151:24 JUARTA (2) 24:20;25:8 Juarta (1) 24:21 July (1) 142:16 jumpstart (1) 91:20 June (5) 4:3,6;102:16; 109:16;121:17 justification (2) 43:22;48:13 justify (1) 173:6 juvenile (3) 148:15,16;149:7	Kick (1) 128:22 kids (66) 21:7,12,15;23:19, 21;24:23,25;26:22; 28:3;31:17;32:16; 66:11,16,19;67:3,6,9; 76:24;77:6;78:2,12, 21,23,25;79:2,15; 80:13;81:2;92:23; 93:6,14,16;116:11; 117:23;118:21; 120:15;121:3;122:8, 23;123:8,8;124:1; 127:11;129:20; 131:23;132:10; 133:2;136:15,22; 138:12,21;139:4,10; 140:22;143:15,17,25; 145:25;146:4,5,16; 147:9;148:2,17; 160:19;166:17 killed (1) 119:25 kind (54) 33:11;34:15;35:9; 36:7;38:21,23;39:3, 14,15;45:9;67:25; 68:3,4;72:2;81:25; 82:9,16,17;84:15; 87:3,9,21;90:11; 97:23;101:13; 102:10;103:25; 104:24;107:11; 123:9;124:7;127:7, 24;128:25;131:4; 135:15;138:16; 141:5;142:3;143:3; 144:6,14;145:24; 146:18;147:13; 151:6,25;154:11; 158:9;168:6;175:18, 22;176:2;177:11 kindergarten (4) 48:3,9;66:7;71:11 kinds (2) 23:5;177:13 KIPP (15) 155:10;156:2,6,8, 14;157:2,5,18,21,25; 158:3;162:1;163:11; 165:11;167:3 knew (4) 139:18;142:7,20; 174:14 knowing (1) 144:14 knowledge (4) 48:21;83:8;93:8; 102:21 knowledgeable (1) 59:2 Kremers (43)
			K	
		J	K-12 (2) 47:5;158:2 K2 (1) 16:21 K-2 (2) 48:21;56:15 K-4 (1) 47:9 K-6 (1) 51:12 K-8 (3) 13:11;45:23;47:11 Katie (3) 116:1;134:8,12 Keep (16) 25:6;26:22;36:4; 50:24;63:15;67:10; 76:24;78:25;88:2; 136:7;145:22; 151:18;163:10; 174:16,17,21 Keeper (3) 9:2;169:24;170:1 KEEPERS (18) 7:17,21;8:3,6,10; 9:10;11:5;167:14,18; 168:3,9,12,15;175:5, 18;179:20;180:3; 181:10 Key (9) 3:14;14:20,24; 16:10,15;35:8;49:15; 63:11;125:20 keys (2) 136:16,17 Khori (1) 62:23	
		Jackson (1) 128:20 Jacksonville (2) 4:1;80:19 jail (3) 117:20;146:18; 147:12 January (14) 8:1;115:8;140:18; 168:10;172:12; 173:25;174:8,11; 180:2;181:4,16,22; 182:4,14 Japan (1) 130:12 Jefferson (3) 111:8;113:25; 140:2 Jesse (1) 128:19 Jimmy's (1) 82:11 job (8) 27:4;32:4;79:16; 81:16;119:7;124:18; 127:4;141:4 jobs (5) 117:23;124:19; 138:18;139:24,25 Joe (2) 8:24;169:22 Joel (2) 26:17,18 Joe's (1) 82:11		

3:22;40:18,21; 43:14,15;67:17,19; 68:10,24;69:24;71:4, 8,23,24;86:16,17; 87:2,11;98:6,18,19; 108:19;109:4,18,21, 22;113:14,15;140:7, 8,12;141:6,17,20; 151:10,11;162:25; 163:1,8,13;167:1,2; 182:22	139:19;169:24; 170:1 leaders (5) 63:19;80:21;81:1; 146:22;161:15 leadership (14) 22:16;24:3,3; 43:18;60:25;61:18; 63:18;64:20;92:7; 161:14,16,18;179:21, 23 leading (1) 63:20 learn (6) 26:16;31:1;79:5; 84:14;122:8;178:17 learned (2) 66:11;81:5 Learner (1) 18:2 learning (20) 20:6;25:1;30:5; 33:7;47:17;48:16,18; 50:22;57:18;60:21; 71:15;88:18,21; 89:19,23;90:3; 117:14;133:1; 141:12,16 LEA's (1) 57:23 lease (1) 160:11 leasing (1) 163:17 least (7) 81:19;87:10;97:18; 104:5;112:25; 146:19;149:5 Leavardo (1) 24:20 leave (13) 27:24;65:6,11,18, 19;75:4;99:16;104:5; 136:24;137:9,11; 145:20;146:16 leaving (2) 145:15;161:6 led (1) 50:22 Lee (1) 129:15 left (4) 24:14;116:12; 122:16;153:8 legal (7) 41:13,15,17;70:10; 94:7;95:21,23 legitimately (1) 143:12 length (1) 75:8 Lenisha (1) 46:21	lens (1) 108:9 less (3) 97:10;161:1;170:7 lessening (1) 70:20 lesson (2) 16:16;56:11 lessons (1) 56:13 lets (1) 135:15 letter (10) 32:9,14,15,25; 35:11,11;38:24;44:7; 66:10;145:8 letters (1) 126:15 letting (1) 125:23 level (39) 14:22;17:20;19:25; 26:5;28:6,11;37:2; 39:12,20;47:10; 52:18;54:4;55:11,18, 21;56:1,3;61:7,7; 67:7;69:21,23;71:14; 72:11;73:9,21;74:4,9, 10,11;77:9,11,16; 79:10;80:10;85:5; 92:3;93:14;145:7 levels (15) 30:14,15;37:20; 54:18;55:1,14,23; 56:6,7;69:14,15,18, 19;77:7;80:8 Leverage (1) 92:7 levers (1) 92:17 lexile (6) 55:18,21,23;56:1, 6;77:7 lexiles (1) 77:10 LHA (3) 52:23;53:13;54:9 library (2) 61:25;122:1 license (3) 102:22;163:25; 164:6 life (5) 117:14;122:20; 123:1;129:24;133:2 lifetime (1) 132:25 light (3) 10:17;31:22; 120:25 LIGHTHOUSE (43) 45:3,6,18,22,24; 46:9,22;47:3,8,21;	48:2;51:22;53:10,22; 54:8;55:9,15;60:22; 61:11;62:24;63:4,7; 64:8;65:18;66:5,8; 67:9;75:22;78:9; 80:18,25;88:10;90:5, 22;91:3;94:24; 111:12,20,22;112:3; 114:2;118:8;184:24 liked (1) 114:2 likely (1) 151:1 limited (2) 47:3;112:17 limp (1) 107:23 line (1) 36:7 lingering (1) 170:3 link (1) 43:6 lipstick (1) 141:1 Lisa (3) 89:24;90:4;116:6 list (4) 7:20;45:4;113:10; 145:22 listen (1) 134:11 listened (1) 32:16 listening (2) 118:8;127:21 literacy (12) 39:13;48:15,19,21; 49:4;56:9,10;57:10, 13;60:23;90:12; 111:19 literature (1) 91:12 little (61) 10:11;13:2,5,10, 13;14:17;15:23; 20:22;21:9;33:24; 37:12;42:16;43:5; 48:8;53:17;54:4; 63:6;64:1;66:19; 67:10;68:3;70:23; 74:7;82:3,14,23; 91:20;104:24,25; 105:7,20;107:2; 116:2;119:4,5,7,12, 13;120:12;127:22; 132:24;135:11; 138:9,13;139:13,16; 140:9;141:22;143:5; 147:14;148:14; 149:19;159:21; 161:1,11,19;164:7; 166:1;167:22;	175:23;176:3 live (5) 15:25;60:13; 125:25;126:18; 142:11 lived (1) 133:13 lives (2) 118:12;162:12 livestreamed (1) 4:13 LOAD (9) 152:17;153:12,13, 16;156:4,7,14,17; 157:5 local (3) 61:13;86:5;146:14 locate (2) 58:4,6 located (2) 16:5;47:22 location (1) 136:3 locked (4) 130:6;137:12; 149:4,5 lofty (1) 142:4 log (1) 125:24 Long (33) 13:24,25;14:7,9, 11;24:19;25:12; 26:23,25;27:5,11,12, 21;29:9,22;31:7; 32:5;36:24;38:9; 39:21;42:4;43:3; 44:16,18;74:25,25; 80:23;81:11;96:8; 97:21,21;101:20; 103:21 longer (13) 16:11,11;20:4,4; 40:2,5;60:12,12; 69:22;101:5;132:24; 161:9,11 look (39) 21:10;27:20;29:19; 30:5;33:8,24;35:1; 38:13,22;39:5;52:1, 16;55:25;67:22; 69:15;70:15,16; 72:25;89:8,8;104:11, 19;105:2,3,3,14; 108:9,10;110:19; 118:24;129:4; 133:10;136:10; 143:4,5;144:11; 147:1;176:18;182:20 looked (5) 119:16;145:9; 164:22;178:23; 180:25
L				
labs (1) 160:22 lack (7) 60:10;75:19;76:9; 100:11;108:22; 113:22;132:19 Ladies (2) 3:2;132:8 lady (2) 124:4;130:15 laid (2) 14:15;40:14 Lameria (2) 116:7;120:18 Language (5) 15:22;18:2;24:23, 24;40:8 large (4) 18:1;74:18;136:18; 160:5 larger (2) 17:3;93:14 Larry (3) 124:23,24;140:2 last (26) 14:14;16:1;17:12; 29:1,4;30:20;32:24; 39:8;47:24;50:23; 52:16;60:6,17;64:3, 10;80:5;84:7;91:4; 101:20;119:20; 120:4;128:7;130:11; 137:1;151:12;158:25 late (1) 132:16 later (8) 5:6;10:3;11:8,10; 12:8;64:6;170:19; 173:17 Latino (1) 128:23 Lauren (1) 169:23 law (3) 70:12;101:3; 154:11 lead (1) 37:19 leader (3)				

<p>looking (46) 20:23;21:1,12,14; 32:9,12,22,23,23; 33:2;34:6,11,15,20, 20,22;35:10,16; 39:13;51:15;69:7,17; 72:19,21;83:12;86:7; 89:11;102:6,7,8,10; 103:15;122:18; 128:11,12;133:8; 143:22;144:20,23; 145:10;146:21; 149:10;164:22; 175:1,2;180:5</p> <p>looks (6) 4:17;5:14;13:4; 43:12;75:6;167:15</p> <p>lose (1) 86:3</p> <p>losing (1) 160:6</p> <p>loss (2) 29:4,7</p> <p>lost (7) 68:17;69:10,10; 119:24;137:2,3; 159:25</p> <p>lot (40) 18:17,18,21;28:1; 35:14;36:17;77:16, 20;78:11;79:14,24; 81:13,17,20;86:5,18; 87:7;117:22;119:5; 120:1,9,23;126:18, 19,20,20;130:2; 135:11;136:20; 137:6;139:4;140:19, 22,23;141:6;146:8; 147:15;148:2; 159:18;160:5</p> <p>lotteries (3) 174:4,10,13</p> <p>Louisiana (2) 84:9,12</p> <p>love (11) 25:11;26:12,17; 30:5,25;79:25,25; 127:16;128:22; 137:5,5</p> <p>low (3) 18:15;80:8;89:9</p> <p>lower (8) 34:16,17;48:5; 51:11;52:5,9;69:21; 78:6</p> <p>LRPD (1) 130:16</p> <p>Lucy (1) 38:17</p> <p>lunch (11) 15:17,18;17:19; 72:4,4,13;114:25; 152:6,9,13,19</p>	<p>lunches (1) 72:1</p> <p>lungs (1) 123:5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">M</p> <p>ma'am (4) 77:21;86:12; 141:19;151:21</p> <p>Mack (2) 122:13;126:17</p> <p>mail (1) 118:4</p> <p>main (3) 117:14;148:12; 163:25</p> <p>maintain (2) 28:23;70:17</p> <p>major (5) 51:13;57:22;76:18; 92:17;125:8</p> <p>majority (2) 140:13;143:17</p> <p>makes (4) 76:16;106:10; 166:21;178:11</p> <p>making (20) 15:4;19:10;20:1; 26:14;28:9;30:4; 38:6;43:25;58:23; 63:4;64:25;65:21; 75:2;77:9;80:8; 82:22;85:13;93:6; 95:14;108:25</p> <p>male (1) 136:11</p> <p>man (10) 122:16;125:7; 126:12;128:19; 132:21;135:8,10; 138:15,16;147:22</p> <p>manage (5) 116:13,13;117:9; 179:25;180:3</p> <p>manageable (2) 49:23;146:8</p> <p>management (13) 61:11;62:10;63:6; 102:5;103:1,5,13; 104:12,19;105:19; 106:11;142:10; 151:23</p> <p>manager (2) 50:20;124:9</p> <p>managers (1) 18:8</p> <p>man's (1) 119:9</p> <p>many (15) 15:8;18:16;22:13; 27:24,25;30:2,12; 58:6;93:12;120:3;</p>	<p>123:15;129:25; 130:13;146:17; 148:11</p> <p>map (5) 16:5,7;54:25; 73:14,16</p> <p>mapped (2) 141:12;153:8</p> <p>mapping-over (1) 154:14</p> <p>March (9) 6:10,10,22;84:11; 121:15;157:24; 174:3,5,10</p> <p>Marines (1) 139:17</p> <p>marked (1) 46:6</p> <p>Mary (12) 4:18;10:10,12; 41:2;70:4;94:3,5; 149:14;169:20; 170:15,23;178:5</p> <p>mastered (2) 14:23;38:3</p> <p>mastery (2) 14:21;20:5</p> <p>mastery-based (1) 37:13</p> <p>mater (1) 138:25</p> <p>materials (1) 18:6</p> <p>math (67) 17:12,16,25;23:19; 24:25;25:16;26:12; 48:9,10,10;49:4; 51:19,25;52:20,21, 24;54:15,24;55:1; 59:8,9,11,15,16,20; 60:1,3,5,24;61:6,8,8, 9;68:9,12,13,15,17, 18,20,23;72:19,20; 73:1,5,6,24;74:6; 75:3,7;77:15;81:23; 82:24;90:9,11;93:7, 9;111:14,19;113:17; 114:10;116:7,8; 122:7,13;129:9; 159:9</p> <p>math/literacy (1) 68:20</p> <p>mathematical (2) 48:13,13</p> <p>mathematics (1) 93:5</p> <p>matrix (1) 39:4</p> <p>mats (1) 128:3</p> <p>Matt (1) 131:21</p> <p>matter (12)</p>	<p>9:9;10:6;28:10; 65:13;79:6;94:25; 170:3,9;171:7,18; 179:2;182:13</p> <p>matters (1) 180:15</p> <p>maximum (6) 8:4;13:12;45:23; 115:12;158:2;168:13</p> <p>may (58) 6:21;8:19;9:24; 11:4,4,23;14:5; 20:16;24:25;36:14; 40:19;62:18;70:13, 22;72:11;90:24; 92:24;99:9;106:21; 107:3,9;115:23,24; 120:22;121:16; 129:4;132:16;133:6; 136:9;137:1;140:21; 143:7,11,14;145:19; 146:8,9;161:8;163:6, 21,22;170:16,25; 172:18,18,20;173:10, 15,15,16;174:13; 175:13,15;177:8; 178:2,6;179:12; 180:21</p> <p>maybe (13) 10:9;18:24;89:9, 13;97:25;101:9,19; 103:7,8,23;108:9; 143:16;148:22</p> <p>mayor's (1) 64:12</p> <p>McDonald (2) 68:22;90:9</p> <p>McGraw (2) 19:12,12</p> <p>McIntyre (1) 116:8</p> <p>McKenzie (1) 17:9</p> <p>McLaughlin (1) 43:6</p> <p>mean (25) 33:3,19;35:13,13; 41:23;52:5;76:19; 80:1;86:2;89:22; 100:22;102:17; 113:6;118:5;120:22; 129:10,18;132:23; 136:21;137:9; 139:18,22;144:1; 147:23;163:14</p> <p>meaning (2) 60:12;77:2</p> <p>meaningful (1) 139:24</p> <p>means (7) 73:10;101:3; 109:16;120:23; 130:7;134:15;175:13</p>	<p>Meanwhile (1) 160:18</p> <p>measure (1) 29:16</p> <p>measured (2) 30:3;55:23</p> <p>measures (1) 58:24</p> <p>medical (1) 139:9</p> <p>meet (8) 21:10;23:16; 123:14;132:13; 142:1,14;147:20; 170:10</p> <p>meeting (32) 3:3;4:13,15,5;17; 6:2,12,23,24;45:9; 49:20;55:3;59:9,11; 62:1;94:16;114:24; 150:24;170:10,10,14; 171:8,9;176:13,15, 15;177:18,21;181:4, 16,17;182:4;183:10</p> <p>meetings (11) 6:14,15;49:16,18; 50:1;56:12,14;71:15, 19;72:11;92:3</p> <p>member (8) 4:3,6;88:15;104:6; 110:10;112:14; 117:3;134:9</p> <p>members (30) 3:15;8:12;9:14; 16:3;18:20;27:15,16; 30:13,13;31:10; 44:12;46:9;64:21,23; 89:4;95:19;108:4; 111:1;116:4,13; 118:17,19;131:20; 133:23;149:9; 158:21;165:6; 172:18;178:21; 181:25</p> <p>mental (2) 19:9;20:3</p> <p>mention (2) 67:23;69:4</p> <p>mentioned (19) 18:1;28:14;64:17; 67:21;69:3;73:6,8; 74:8,18;75:23;85:20; 90:9;91:7,17;98:8; 101:19;147:11; 159:23;179:6</p> <p>mentor (1) 61:2</p> <p>mentoring (1) 22:24</p> <p>mercy (1) 146:4</p> <p>message (3) 49:22;87:10;121:4</p>
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<p>messing (1) 100:12 met (12) 23:8;52:9,14; 54:12;55:4;58:15; 59:14;78:13;79:11; 118:13;142:14;145:3 metal (1) 135:8 method (1) 176:24 Methodist (1) 120:7 methods (2) 49:3;57:15 Mexico (1) 28:1 mic (2) 71:20;149:23 Michelle (2) 25:18,19 microphone (2) 4:11;80:16 middle (3) 17:5;128:19; 160:21 might (11) 4:19;6:23;11:7,7, 21;12:1;96:19; 105:23;107:2; 133:14;173:11 might've (1) 134:3 Mike (2) 3:20,25 miles (1) 161:2 military (7) 122:17;127:3; 130:14;132:16; 139:4,23;140:1 million (1) 160:18 millions (1) 160:14 Milo's (1) 19:23 mind (9) 36:5;39:14;63:20; 81:19;87:3;174:16, 17,21;179:6 mindset (2) 139:6;147:7 mini (1) 121:17 minimal (3) 30:25;76:1;144:2 minorities (1) 132:6 minority (3) 15:21;16:4;17:13 minute (7) 11:6;13:18;40:18;</p>	<p>130:25;131:2; 150:20;177:11 minutes (32) 4:25;5:1,2,13,17, 22;8:23;14:7;24:18; 27:11;44:22;46:19; 62:14,19;65:23,24; 74:6;91:25;112:18; 115:24;131:1,17; 158:8,24;162:20; 169:2,4;171:14,15, 15;172:6;173:7 missed (2) 78:14;123:22 missing (2) 32:19;117:3 mission (5) 14:19,20;15:2; 47:14;117:11 mission-aligned (1) 15:10 Mississippi (2) 84:8,12 misspoke (1) 112:13 mistake (1) 118:14 Mitchell (3) 116:15;126:3,5 mobile (4) 58:3;80:6;93:12; 118:3 mobility (2) 69:10;76:23 mock (1) 124:16 mode (1) 136:23 model (15) 16:12;19:3,22; 20:3;48:8;49:6,14; 56:13;87:23;91:9; 92:6,7;120:24; 144:22;149:4 modeling (1) 59:17 modifications (1) 171:3 modified (1) 142:18 modify (1) 41:23 modular (1) 160:12 modulars (2) 163:16,18 moment (4) 23:6;32:20;71:6; 133:25 MOMENTS (3) 43:10;150:22; 166:6 monetary (2)</p>	<p>129:18,18 money (2) 40:11;129:20 monitor (1) 58:25 monitoring (1) 57:4 month (4) 17:10;21:10;55:19; 167:10 monthly (3) 59:4;101:8;123:14 months (3) 125:14,14;149:5 more (60) 5:6;18:23;19:7,8,8; 21:2,5;23:21;24:3; 25:4;26:8,8,24; 31:14;33:24;34:4; 35:5;38:20;41:4; 48:4;52:8;53:11,22; 54:8,17;59:21,21,25; 60:2;63:19,19;65:4; 66:18,19;68:3,23; 73:8;74:5,19;75:12; 76:11;77:13,13;86:6; 88:4;107:20;108:8, 11;126:14;128:1,3; 132:24;140:23; 146:8;150:25; 159:18;161:13; 176:14;180:25;181:1 morning (23) 3:2;4:22,23;8:24; 14:9;20:18;24:20; 25:9;26:18;46:21; 49:16,18,20,22; 62:22;68:7;71:7,8; 73:3;82:18;90:4,20; 115:25 most (14) 39:23,24;51:13; 53:3,15,24;57:25; 59:12;60:13;77:23; 89:18;149:1;159:25; 174:4 mother (2) 136:10;139:12 mothers (1) 123:16 mothers' (1) 123:14 motion (89) 5:16,21;6:1;7:5,9, 14;11:15;12:10,12, 16,18;40:25;42:11, 14,15,19,25;43:15; 44:2,11;96:3,9,13,15; 98:19,22;99:1,12,17, 22;100:2,6,11; 101:17;103:9;106:5; 109:3,7,22,25;110:4, 8,22;112:20;113:2,</p>	<p>15,21,24;114:7,12, 16;150:5,9,17,23; 151:7,11;153:24; 154:2,3,21,22,23; 155:5,13,19,20; 156:1,2,5,13,20; 157:1,2,8,14;165:9, 10,15,22;166:23; 167:2;181:18;182:2, 7,13,20,23;183:5 motions (6) 99:19;107:10; 154:20,24,25;155:1 motivate (1) 79:17 MOU (3) 119:7;179:24; 180:2 Move (48) 5:18;7:7,18;10:14; 12:1,14,14,19,24; 14:23;20:1;37:5,18; 41:5,5,6;44:20; 67:15;80:4,5;82:6; 93:19;96:5;100:3; 109:4;112:21,22; 113:9;118:6,21; 132:20;133:23; 150:6;155:6,24; 156:16;157:3; 165:10,12;166:13; 167:17;172:24; 173:6,18;179:3; 181:6;182:3,22 moved (6) 64:9;80:4;118:25; 166:12,15;167:17 movement (2) 23:21;111:9 moving (18) 13:3;17:1;21:12, 15,17;26:22;28:1; 34:1;39:18;74:16; 75:6;77:9;120:13; 142:12;145:13; 167:15;174:25; 181:10 much (15) 6:20;31:17;39:2; 43:3;65:22,25;66:9; 67:3;73:18;74:19; 130:23;134:25; 153:1;157:16;180:25 multiple (3) 3:13;38:24;39:7 murdered (1) 119:25 must (2) 55:10;58:7 myself (3) 158:23;168:7; 175:17</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p>Naccaman (1) 4:2 name (24) 4:9;8:9,24;14:11; 24:20;25:9,19;26:4, 10,18;47:15;62:23; 66:4;68:7;73:3; 82:18;85:19;86:10; 90:20;111:6;131:21; 168:18;169:22; 170:13 named (1) 3:14 Naomia (1) 116:11 narcotics (1) 123:25 national (9) 46:25;64:23;70:21; 75:15;80:21;81:1; 84:19;85:5;111:15 nature (6) 92:4;174:19; 179:12;180:19; 181:8,12 near (3) 31:5;49:12;65:9 necessarily (3) 6:20;10:19;173:7 necessary (1) 178:7 necessitated (1) 154:14 need (73) 4:19;6:16;9:21; 12:10;14:24;19:7; 21:13;22:7,7,14,21; 23:9,10,13,17;24:16, 23;27:11;30:18;37:3, 7;38:25;40:16;42:7; 44:20;47:15;66:18; 67:7;72:15;74:18; 77:24;79:16;83:17; 85:1;93:19;96:19; 99:21;106:7;109:3, 10;113:10;114:18; 117:20;125:3;127:7; 133:17;136:23; 138:23;141:14; 143:8;144:23;148:1, 6,7;149:18;151:12, 22;153:17,20; 165:25;166:20; 167:17;168:25; 169:10;170:16; 172:4;174:18,23; 175:12;176:6,7; 177:14;178:16 needed (9) 7:2,3,4;21:2;123:2;</p>
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124:13;131:24; 174:6,14 needle (2) 82:6;91:18 needs (9) 10:1;19:23;50:14; 63:24;73:10;74:16; 132:13;150:24;175:5 negative (2) 108:8;128:21 nervous (3) 25:3;66:22;151:25 network (5) 46:25;63:9,12; 91:17;92:4 new (23) 24:6;26:14;39:4; 45:11;61:2;63:6; 69:19,20;80:7;91:8; 102:18;104:12,19; 110:22;132:22; 140:16;141:3; 142:23;154:10,16; 160:18;169:23; 178:17 newly (1) 22:5 news (2) 34:1;54:24 Newton (56) 4:5;5:18;11:17; 12:4,16;29:11,12; 31:6;43:20,21;75:11, 12;76:17;85:18; 86:10,13;88:8,24; 89:22;90:1,18;98:21, 22;104:24;105:2,6, 14,22;106:1,4,12,14, 18,21,25;107:2,6; 108:1;109:24,25; 111:3;113:20,21; 133:24;134:2,4; 150:8,23;155:12; 165:1,10;166:10,12; 173:3;178:11,12 Newton's (1) 151:7 next (31) 12:8;13:4;16:7; 25:6;45:4;53:9,20; 54:6;105:7;114:21, 25;115:3;119:11; 122:2;123:3;126:8; 127:12;146:9; 152:19;157:20; 167:10,10;169:23; 170:7,9,14;171:8; 177:18,20;181:15; 182:4 nice (5) 25:21;26:14;28:23; 129:12;160:25 NICHOLSON (2)	84:18,19 Nicole (1) 151:22 Niesha (1) 111:6 Night (3) 25:23,24;136:5 nine (2) 70:10;116:4 nine-and-a-half-hour (1) 28:14 nine-week (1) 149:2 nodding (3) 109:18;169:3; 170:20 non- (1) 103:3 non-academic (1) 63:21 none (5) 39:8;41:15;75:10; 144:3;178:16 nonprofit (1) 46:25 non-renew (2) 41:5;104:21 non-renewal (1) 114:17 normally (1) 7:1 North (3) 119:5,13;135:11 note (3) 33:13;58:8,8 noted (4) 54:10,13;57:22; 59:12 notes (2) 41:11;134:14 notice (2) 69:24;114:2 noticed (3) 147:15;153:7; 176:9 notices (1) 74:1 notification (1) 181:21 notified (1) 162:6 November (5) 5:17;13:8;45:20; 121:13;167:22 number (18) 45:16;55:11;70:10; 99:13;105:17;144:2; 145:25;152:20,25,25; 153:4,10,11;154:7, 19;155:6;156:10; 170:25 numbers (8) 67:22;68:4;76:7;	77:19;111:21;133:8; 144:14,17 nurse (1) 122:24 nutrition (1) 116:11 NWEA (5) 20:25;54:25;69:16; 73:14,16 O objection (1) 179:7 obligated (1) 172:8 obligations (2) 180:14,15 observation (2) 24:3;38:21 observations (9) 22:12,20;23:3,4,4; 37:10;57:7,19;60:20 obstacle (1) 173:13 obtainable (1) 142:13 obviously (3) 89:7;142:4;179:1 occupy (2) 102:19,22 occurred (1) 91:11 October (1) 153:17 Odds (3) 17:5;129:5,7 off (17) 9:25;39:20;49:24; 60:14;72:22;87:3; 118:25;120:12,13; 121:11;135:23; 139:3,7,22;163:18, 25;177:17 off-course (1) 148:21 offer (4) 19:18;85:22; 121:17;145:6 offering (1) 88:12 Office (10) 3:21;18:7;59:1,5; 64:12;101:9;137:12; 145:20;161:18; 163:23 Officer (4) 24:12;64:18;90:21; 125:8 officers (1) 129:23 offsite (1) 143:16	of-state (1) 84:7 often (1) 145:19 Okey-dokey (1) 155:2 old (4) 117:24;132:23; 140:25;142:15 older (2) 126:4;131:4 olds (2) 124:25;125:22 onboard (1) 142:16 once (8) 95:9;101:4;119:18; 127:21;132:11; 147:3;148:3;153:16 one (105) 9:8,9;20:25;22:2,6; 23:6;31:10;32:20; 33:2,12,14;34:10; 35:2,4;37:22;39:1; 46:6;50:23;55:11; 63:2,11,16;65:4,19; 66:1,20;67:6,8,10; 68:14;71:9;72:12; 73:19;79:11,13; 81:19;85:24;86:1; 87:4;92:17;96:20,25; 100:4,7;101:3,24,25, 25;102:2;103:10; 104:5,10,18;105:22; 106:17;107:10,15,19; 108:11;111:21; 116:5,7,16;117:3; 119:5;125:10;127:2, 13;129:7,22;130:8, 13,25;131:2,7; 135:10;136:11; 138:12;139:19; 142:3;143:19; 145:11;146:2,25; 147:18;148:17; 149:12;151:20; 153:21,25,25;154:2, 3,21,22,23;156:2,11; 164:3,5;172:20; 173:16;174:15; 178:2;184:25 one-month (1) 162:9 one-on-one (3) 25:12;56:11;59:17 one-on-ones (1) 60:24 one-year (1) 104:22 ongoing (1) 56:19 online (7) 121:5,6,8,25;	122:4;125:25;135:17 only (19) 30:22;47:25;50:23; 69:3;78:19;85:9; 86:21;94:6;101:24; 102:20;108:20; 111:12,22;117:24; 120:9;130:13; 132:23;142:23; 160:17 onsite (1) 50:17 on-the-phone (1) 45:9 oops (1) 18:17 OPEN (19) 7:16,20;8:13;13:1; 25:6;27:16;45:2,5, 17;102:18;115:1; 136:3;140:17,17; 157:17,20;167:13,21; 168:8 opened (2) 47:8;128:13 operate (2) 134:25;178:11 operates (1) 178:14 Operating (7) 24:11;103:4; 105:11;114:9;142:6; 163:15;178:9 operation (1) 180:12 operational (2) 63:18;91:2 operations (1) 63:21 opinion (1) 108:15 opioids (1) 123:25 opportunities (4) 51:1;57:18;61:1; 174:15 opportunity (13) 47:3;72:18;81:1, 12;89:6;105:10; 114:5;132:17; 133:16;138:12; 151:8;171:17;172:21 opposed (16) 5:25;7:13;11:20; 12:23;42:24;105:23; 106:9;150:16; 155:18;156:25; 157:13;162:9; 163:11;165:21; 182:12;183:4 opposition (9) 5:1;13:21;27:8; 46:11;62:17;115:18;
---	---	---	--	---

<p>158:12;162:18; 169:12 option (13) 41:9;100:16,19; 102:20;103:6; 108:13,20;164:16; 166:21;172:9;175:7; 177:18,19 options (10) 5:7;11:14;38:14; 40:25;41:1,23; 101:16;102:2,4; 177:13 order (10) 3:4;22:16;24:16; 41:7;55:20;56:7; 79:12;128:3;171:2; 178:15 organization (7) 62:11;70:21;88:9; 103:1,5;111:15; 112:15 organizations (2) 93:22;103:13 orientation (1) 141:4 originally (1) 20:7 O's (1) 82:11 OSBORNE (2) 73:3,4 others (4) 40:22;76:8;145:3; 164:8 Otherwise (3) 11:11;47:2;150:25 ours (4) 30:4;84:21;85:11; 88:15 our-self (1) 111:22 ourselves (2) 98:2;159:2 out (65) 6:21;10:1;16:12; 25:4;39:2;40:18; 43:6;46:9;47:3;58:9; 10;60:16;66:16,17; 67:9;72:7;76:25; 80:23;81:19;83:11; 85:24;86:3;99:21; 109:21;118:2; 120:20;121:1,10,12; 122:15;123:3; 126:23,24;127:19; 128:22;136:19,22; 138:17;139:8,13,16; 140:15;141:12; 144:13;145:13,17; 146:5,12;147:8,10; 153:8;154:17; 160:16;161:23;</p>	<p>166:1;174:19;175:1, 2,11,12,12,14,15; 177:11;180:23 out- (1) 84:6 outcome (1) 52:11 outline (1) 101:2 out-of- (2) 30:22;83:21 out-of-school (1) 50:23 outset (1) 9:8 outside (4) 3:11;76:4;92:16; 144:21 outsource (1) 133:3 outstanding (1) 11:4 over (50) 4:20;7:19,22; 14:14;16:1;18:4; 20:24;24:14;27:17; 29:13;31:25;38:13, 15;52:16;53:6,14,17, 23;54:2,5,9,20;55:2, 3;63:6;64:3;65:8; 67:15,19;68:4;69:16; 82:2;91:4;92:8; 93:15;97:25;98:1; 111:18;113:18; 114:1;119:8;127:16; 128:2;133:23; 136:24;139:20; 143:15;153:8; 158:25;161:3 Overage (1) 117:24 overall (24) 17:2,20;32:23; 33:21,25;39:13; 51:20;52:17,19; 59:10,13;68:12;69:1; 72:21;74:23;75:19; 76:9;83:20;87:12; 89:11;106:1;113:25; 159:21,21 overarching (2) 173:8,8 overcome (2) 55:10;59:8 over-extend (1) 160:7 overnight (1) 81:5 over-reaching (1) 106:22 oversees (1) 3:8 oversight (2)</p>	<p>15:11;161:19 overview (8) 75:5;138:16; 142:24;174:23; 175:18;176:7,7; 179:17 own (5) 23:1;80:18;122:9; 153:14;178:6 ownership (1) 141:16 Owoh (2) 62:1;79:11</p>	<p>47:12;58:2,4,23; 60:10;65:3;66:2; 79:13,17,18,22; 103:18;104:2;106:8; 117:22;147:3,5 Park (1) 136:14 part (19) 15:20;23:12;48:25; 49:6,19;61:2;70:21; 93:10;98:4;106:16; 111:8;143:3,6;145:8, 24;160:25;176:5,8; 179:9 partially (1) 142:14 participate (2) 49:18;50:2 particular (3) 131:25;176:10; 180:20 parties (5) 9:17;11:24;169:12; 178:24;179:7 partner (2) 93:21;111:12 partnered (2) 19:9,12 partners (1) 49:8 partnership (6) 50:16;51:5;111:11, 11;147:14;148:16 partnerships (4) 61:13,24;85:13; 146:13 pass (1) 154:10 passed (1) 3:10 passes (6) 6:1;7:14;42:25; 110:8;157:14;165:22 passing (1) 46:8 past (13) 31:11,25;32:2; 61:19;69:17;86:2; 101:8,24;104:6; 113:18;141:24; 142:1;174:11 PAT (1) 50:16 path (2) 162:4;175:13 pattern (1) 82:17 pause (3) 13:18;62:14;176:4 pay (5) 9:25;67:3,4,5;86:8 PD (8) 22:17,18;71:3,25;</p>	<p>118:15;123:21; 128:20;139:19 peacefully (1) 49:24 peak (1) 97:18 peer (1) 57:18 peers (3) 18:25;122:12; 129:7 pending (1) 117:17 people (33) 6:21,23;11:25; 37:10;44:22;81:21, 25;82:2,5,12;83:14, 21;84:2,5,7,12;85:2; 94:19;99:13;111:25; 112:16,23;115:19; 118:9,14;122:25; 126:14;128:10; 132:8,20;135:13; 137:6;162:8 per (1) 150:7 percent (2) 52:13;65:8 percentage (5) 59:8,10,13;72:20; 159:14 percentages (2) 76:3,7 percentile (4) 17:14,15,16,24 perfect (1) 148:25 perfectly (1) 80:20 perform (1) 24:16 performance (7) 31:5;43:17;63:8; 76:20;89:11,12; 159:1 performing (4) 42:6;74:11;79:3,10 perhaps (2) 70:23;172:10 perimeter (1) 74:2 period (18) 53:14,23;54:2,9, 21;71:17,25;72:4,4, 11;76:10;96:6,10; 97:4;100:4;101:20; 112:5;114:13 perpetuate (1) 108:21 Perry (1) 130:20 person (6) 4:9;81:24;83:2;</p>
---	--	---	--	--

<p>85:22;112:12,14 personal (2) 60:9;120:8 personally (2) 105:20;175:17 personnel (1) 18:9 peruse (1) 129:25 Pfeffer (1) 3:16 PGPs (1) 22:20 PhD (1) 132:25 phone (1) 121:23 phonemic (2) 36:25;37:6 phonics (5) 48:24;56:24,25; 77:25;93:2 phonics-based (1) 36:25 phonological (1) 48:24 physical (1) 102:23 pick (2) 12:15;177:17 picked (1) 121:13 picture (10) 89:2;93:19;117:3; 122:13;124:22; 126:5,7;127:12; 128:19;131:10 pictures (2) 125:18;160:9 piece (5) 32:10;71:1;88:5; 93:3;113:1 pieces (3) 43:24;92:11;94:9 piggyback (1) 87:3 PINE (51) 45:2,5,18,21,24; 46:23;47:8,10,14,21, 22,24;48:2,5;51:5,11, 22;53:10,22;54:7,16; 55:8,14;57:23;60:14, 22;62:2,25;63:4,5,23, 24;64:16;65:1;68:18; 75:17;76:22;79:9,25; 80:4,22;84:3,22; 88:10;91:3;93:13,19; 111:23,24;119:13; 184:24 place (24) 21:2;22:22;56:8; 63:13;70:22;73:17, 20;78:25;82:7;85:3;</p>	<p>95:10;100:17; 103:20;105:15; 107:10;108:23,25; 123:10;132:12; 159:4,13;160:15; 168:20;174:13 placed (4) 14:21;22:19;37:2; 56:25 placement (1) 28:5 places (1) 174:6 plan (38) 9:15;14:18;86:20, 23,25;87:6,16,20; 88:2;90:23;91:3,4, 24;92:13,13,18;93:2, 10,23;94:8,10,12,19; 95:2,4,15;98:9; 103:12;104:7; 141:12;142:23,24; 144:24,25;145:5; 148:19,20;164:20 planned (1) 20:7 planning (6) 48:25;56:12;71:17, 25;72:10;87:13 plans (3) 56:11;82:15;90:25 play (3) 79:24;93:3;130:20 Plaza (1) 136:14 PLCs (3) 21:10;22:15;37:19 Please (17) 3:6;4:9;8:11,14; 13:16,22;15:14; 20:19;46:12;47:20; 64:22,24;113:12; 115:18;116:6; 158:13;169:12 PM (3) 152:13;177:5; 183:10 point (16) 9:20;10:22;54:5; 89:4;97:21;102:17; 104:20;107:1,7; 119:5;162:1;164:21; 174:24;175:4,5; 181:2 pointed (1) 80:23 points (4) 54:1;78:15;173:10; 181:2 police (5) 122:14;129:22; 130:16;135:11; 137:10</p>	<p>policies (1) 64:15 policy (1) 58:16 Poore (1) 127:6 popped (1) 22:13 population (17) 17:13,19;18:2; 23:12;27:23;28:13, 21;47:2,23;58:3; 140:21;146:1; 150:25;151:9; 159:25;160:6;165:12 populations (1) 159:24 portion (2) 77:17;160:1 position (4) 10:6;24:4;28:20; 63:13 positions (2) 28:19,24 positive (9) 19:2,8;20:5;36:6; 43:22;44:4;47:16; 81:18,20 positives (1) 39:10 possibility (1) 145:4 possible (4) 9:22;103:9;175:19, 20 possibly (2) 89:6;108:15 post (3) 95:4,6,10 posted (5) 4:16;94:14;95:1, 14;121:6 poster (1) 123:7 posting (3) 88:3;94:4;95:1 postpone (1) 170:18 potential (1) 20:2 potentially (1) 104:17 poverty (1) 18:23 practice (3) 25:13;50:8;90:25 practices (1) 63:12 preference (1) 154:20 preferred (1) 114:13 pre-K (2)</p>	<p>159:19;160:19 preliminary (1) 62:1 prep (3) 47:5;48:5;51:22 Preparatory (3) 9:3,3;65:12 prepared (3) 24:14;35:5;160:15 present (4) 19:20;158:8;170:9, 12 presentation (34) 8:23;10:5;14:8,16, 25;27:15;46:4,20; 67:19;68:25;69:1; 72:22;73:7;75:6; 86:17;88:21;118:8; 123:12;125:5; 158:19;165:7; 171:16;172:1; 174:20;176:2,8,11, 12;177:12,19;179:8, 10,12,14 presentations (1) 171:11 presented (6) 33:1;34:23;67:25; 68:4;179:13;180:9 presenting (1) 179:16 presently (1) 89:5 president (1) 62:23 pre-speaking (1) 133:14 pretty (5) 35:19;64:20; 152:25;159:16; 160:10 prevent (1) 50:10 preview (1) 33:11 previous (9) 17:22;30:20;32:15; 35:20;37:4;110:21; 153:3;155:8;172:5 previously (3) 97:9;153:14,18 price (1) 127:17 primary (1) 37:25 principal (4) 20:7,21;61:19; 66:10 principals (9) 57:11;58:15;59:3; 61:18;71:10;81:14; 84:1;147:18,24 principles (1)</p>	<p>128:25 print (1) 125:25 prior (2) 146:22;170:10 priority (2) 29:24;59:3 prison (1) 145:16 private (3) 9:22;11:5;180:15 privilege (1) 14:11 proactive (2) 58:24;167:3 probably (8) 33:8;89:18;109:1, 12;146:7;159:16; 160:4;174:23 probation (15) 100:18,21;101:1,3, 5,7,12;103:23; 104:10;105:3;106:6; 107:11,19;108:20; 114:14 probationary (1) 101:20 probations (1) 101:11 problem (9) 12:6;19:1;28:18; 32:21;73:2;76:1; 107:21;111:3;117:6 problematic (1) 6:12 problems (6) 30:9;32:1;59:23; 77:15;120:15;145:1 problem-solving (1) 48:12 procedure (3) 110:18;171:14,24 procedures (5) 172:4,7,9;176:18; 178:9 proceed (5) 169:1,19;171:21; 172:15;173:2 process (14) 4:21,24;32:19; 61:5;98:5;99:6; 133:1;143:13; 148:13;154:14; 158:7;162:7;172:7; 176:5 processed (1) 133:10 produce (1) 65:5 productive (1) 118:17 professional (24) 19:15;22:8;39:24;</p>
---	--	--	---	--

<p>40:5;56:14,19;57:2,9, 17;59:18;69:25;70:3, 6,7,11,20,24;71:5,14, 15,16,18;90:8;128:8 proficiency (3) 23:23;51:19;52:10 proficient (1) 78:13 program (29) 15:20;20:4;24:23; 28:3;47:5;51:8;57:4; 59:20;61:2,20;62:5,7, 9;63:20;73:23;92:18, 21;93:4,9;117:12; 123:3;126:22;128:1; 129:14;131:22; 132:22;133:10; 141:7;148:15 programming (1) 19:2 programs (7) 20:3;22:24;64:15; 70:22;83:11;84:17; 147:13 progress (6) 29:15,16;30:16; 43:24;44:13,13 projected (1) 55:4 promise (1) 65:2 proper (3) 12:12;172:18; 181:21 properly (1) 162:10 PROPOSED (1) 6:2 protect (2) 136:12,23 protocol (2) 58:17,18 protocols (1) 59:18 proved (1) 130:8 proven (1) 139:19 provide (16) 46:3;51:6;55:9; 57:17;65:12;71:2,13, 18;72:3;81:2;90:7, 13;117:11;131:24; 132:6;178:22 provided (7) 47:7;57:10;62:4; 77:6;88:17;132:14; 141:10 provider (1) 151:25 provides (9) 22:25;50:17;51:1; 56:13,14;58:21;</p>	<p>59:17;60:4;122:25 providing (3) 4:15;60:25;71:1 Public (25) 4:22;9:2,3,6,23; 11:4;76:15;94:8; 100:24;110:24; 111:5;112:12,16; 113:3,6;134:17; 135:1;152:24; 157:18,21,25;158:3; 171:2;180:17,22 publicity (1) 126:19 publicly (1) 135:7 Pulaski (3) 119:13;138:25; 140:19 pull (2) 121:25;159:15 pulled (1) 122:15 pull-out (1) 57:15 pure (1) 60:20 purpose (2) 107:15,22 push (2) 74:15;78:20 push-in (1) 57:15 put (23) 10:5;21:2;28:16; 38:2;56:8;61:9; 66:18;81:14;82:7,25; 103:20;107:19; 108:23;114:2;119:1; 121:4;124:22;129:1; 134:13;140:25; 148:7;153:13;173:21 puts (1) 39:14 putting (4) 29:6;105:15; 129:15;174:12 pyramid (1) 19:25</p>	<p>101:9 quartile (3) 34:12,16,17 Quawana (1) 71:11 question-and-answer (1) 5:3 quick (5) 16:10;146:16; 159:9;176:5;179:17 quickly (2) 91:18;92:8 quiet (1) 31:12 quizzing (1) 124:19</p>	<p>41:11;48:19,20,23, 24;52:16,18;53:12, 14,18;55:1,11,14,21; 56:6,7;57:16;69:14, 15,18,18,22;70:9; 72:25,25;73:2;75:5; 77:8,13,17,19,21; 79:20;80:8,10;91:15; 111:14;114:10;168:6 ready (10) 20:12;42:10;44:20; 74:4,17;78:14;79:5; 120:25;122:18; 155:21 real (7) 48:12;91:13; 117:14,14;124:14; 132:21;176:4 realistic (1) 142:5 reality (1) 160:8 realize (4) 60:15;85:1;108:12; 124:7 realized (1) 129:3 realizing (1) 108:7 really (53) 14:14;17:4;18:2,3, 10;22:14;23:11; 25:11,14;28:13,20; 29:22,23;34:10; 38:20;39:25;67:8,22, 23;76:10;77:22,25; 78:19;79:17;82:21; 83:4,5,13,16;84:2,8, 9,21;86:18;93:2; 103:22;125:1;135:5; 140:23;141:2,14; 142:18,19;144:10; 146:24;153:4; 159:12;160:9; 161:15,17;163:15; 175:24;176:10 reason (7) 87:22;119:23; 137:14,15;148:12; 166:16;179:10 reasonable (4) 76:4;81:3,3;146:10 reasons (12) 43:12,13;67:8; 99:22;113:10; 114:16;150:18; 161:21;162:13; 166:5,16;173:12 rebut (1) 5:2 rebuttal (1) 171:15 receive (6)</p>	<p>15:18;37:4;57:1; 70:2;71:16;171:3 received (7) 15:3;37:23;56:18; 64:11;72:16;129:4, 18 receiving (4) 21:19;37:21;56:19; 70:8 Recently (4) 3:10;17:10;44:13; 63:9 recognition (1) 37:7 recognize (4) 45:10;47:18;76:22; 120:20 recognized (9) 13:6;19:4;20:17; 45:7;115:5;129:11; 152:22;158:19; 167:19 recognizing (2) 45:7;58:22 recommendation (1) 42:10 recommended (1) 179:19 reconcile (3) 32:10;34:15;35:10 record (1) 4:10 recorded (1) 4:14 recordkeeping (1) 145:13 recovery (2) 117:12;127:3 recruit (1) 85:25 recruiters (2) 146:14,14 recruiting (1) 92:16 recruitment (2) 97:11;127:2 red (1) 35:12 reduce (1) 50:10 reduced (2) 17:13,18 reducing (1) 105:17 refer (2) 118:9;147:18 reference (2) 81:23;91:24 referenced (1) 92:19 referrals (2) 127:19;128:4 reflect (1)</p>
		R		
			Q	
	<p>qualified (6) 82:23;83:2,18; 84:23;85:25;112:1 qualify (2) 15:17,22 quality (12) 33:9,10,19,19; 51:15;52:2;60:8; 83:14;85:9;91:5; 92:16;128:8 quarterly (1)</p>	<p>radio (1) 126:17 raise (8) 8:15;13:22;20:13; 46:12;79:12;115:18; 158:13;169:13 ramifications (1) 108:7 rapport (1) 60:10 rate (4) 23:8;59:5;77:11; 145:12 rated (1) 64:9 rates (2) 65:8,9 rather (5) 12:14;71:1;96:7, 11;177:12 rating (1) 64:10 raw (1) 123:9 reach (4) 20:2;72:23;170:6; 179:11 reached (4) 9:19;83:11;170:5; 180:1 reaches (2) 28:3;164:21 read (12) 26:5,5,6,7,7,8; 43:13;70:7,19;77:13; 99:21;113:10 read- (1) 48:22 readiness (1) 59:14 reading (49) 17:15,23;21:24; 22:24;23:19,23; 25:16;39:11,11;40:8;</p>		

143:23 reflective (1) 33:1 regarding (1) 126:9 regardless (3) 30:11;37:1;118:23 regards (2) 179:23;180:6 Reggie (1) 4:20 Reginald (4) 7:24;45:11;115:6; 157:22 region (1) 17:6 regional (10) 64:21,21,22,22; 68:8;73:5;75:15; 81:21,24;82:20 registrar (1) 116:9 regular (2) 85:12;172:23 regulation (1) 144:10 reinforcement (1) 19:9 reiterate (2) 64:25;94:24 relate (1) 124:21 related (5) 92:22;94:11; 123:13;170:3,5 relates (7) 75:16,21;76:4,23; 105:16;173:22; 180:16 relationship (1) 126:25 relationships (3) 49:15;50:10,11 relatives (1) 135:12 re-learn (1) 133:1 release (1) 127:22 released (1) 38:11 relocate (1) 60:16 relocation (1) 27:24 remainder (1) 179:25 remaining (10) 9:9,20;41:7,12,18; 58:9;94:7;95:23,25; 149:15 mediate (1) 51:7	remediation (1) 51:3 remedy (1) 86:23 remember (4) 85:19;101:25; 125:9;135:14 reminder (1) 16:10 reminds (1) 141:6 removing (1) 93:15 Renea (1) 71:9 renew (7) 41:5;98:19;99:2; 102:3,8,13;172:19 renewal (61) 3:9;4:24;5:5,5; 7:16,21;8:7,14;9:1; 10:16,24,25;13:1,5, 14,21;27:8;41:7,20, 25;42:17,20;45:2,5; 46:1;64:12;96:10; 98:12,20;100:4,7,17, 20;104:10,22;109:5, 8,16,23;110:8; 113:16;114:8;115:1, 1,4,14;142:21; 150:10;151:16; 167:13,21;168:9,16; 170:13,19;171:2,5; 172:2;173:18;180:7; 181:10 renewed (4) 103:4;150:7;174:5, 12 renewing (2) 102:7;107:14 renovated (1) 160:19 repair (1) 50:11 replacing (1) 68:18 report (8) 18:5;32:9,12,13; 34:21;42:5;51:11; 59:3 reported (1) 47:23 reporter (1) 4:14 reporting (8) 29:25;51:13,24; 52:14;101:8,9,13; 104:20 reports (2) 32:22;59:1 representation (1) 3:13 representative (2)	15:24;126:9 Representatives (12) 8:5,10,21,22;13:12, 16;45:24;46:18; 115:12;158:3; 168:14,22 represented (1) 58:11 represents (2) 16:3;53:9 request (55) 4:8;7:16,20;8:7,8; 10:17,20;13:1,4,14; 17:8;26:21;45:2,4, 17;46:1,3;69:25; 70:5,6;72:1,5;103:3; 104:11,18;109:4; 110:9;115:4,14; 152:14,16,20;155:9, 10;156:18;157:6,17; 158:5,13;161:22; 166:24;167:13,20; 168:8,16,17;171:2,5; 173:9;174:20; 176:16;177:8; 178:19;181:12;182:1 requested (1) 154:5 requesting (2) 153:18;179:3 requests (1) 87:5 require (1) 94:9 required (1) 58:7 requirement (3) 94:13,16,17 requirements (6) 88:1,6;94:8;95:2; 149:13;150:1 requires (1) 58:3 rescheduling (1) 21:14 rescind (2) 110:21;149:17 rescinding (1) 149:25 research (4) 18:17,18;91:7; 122:8 research-based (1) 128:24 residents (1) 47:25 resolve (3) 50:12;181:3,8 resolved (4) 168:20;180:2,10; 181:5 Resource (1) 9:6	resources (11) 28:22;48:16;49:1; 87:14;107:21,22; 131:24;132:19; 159:3;163:6,10 respect (2) 16:17;107:8 respectful (2) 103:17;104:2 respectfully (1) 42:4 responded (1) 126:11 Response (8) 56:22;57:3;59:19, 22;62:6;78:1;89:16; 95:9 responses (1) 88:20 responsibility (2) 16:17;25:25 responsible (7) 4:8;55:6;59:7; 60:6;148:14;160:17; 166:20 Responsive (2) 21:7;49:19 rest (2) 85:15;116:1 Restorative (3) 50:7,16;63:12 restore (1) 50:11 restored (1) 77:4 restructuring (1) 21:14 result (1) 74:15 results (5) 47:6;56:5;63:16; 65:6;105:23 resume (2) 45:1;114:24 resumes (1) 124:18 retain (1) 85:8 retaining (1) 85:20 re-teach (1) 49:3 retention (15) 27:19,19,21;28:18; 29:1,2,3,7,17;54:23; 60:7,19;61:15;85:10; 93:11 retentions (1) 61:4 retired (2) 125:8,10 retrieval (1) 21:12	return (1) 28:5 returning (1) 22:6 revamp (1) 56:22 revamped (1) 59:22 review (10) 6:6;41:17;70:11; 95:25;102:14,15; 174:2,2,2,3 reviews (1) 61:6 revised (1) 153:12 revision (1) 3:9 revisit (1) 141:15 revocation (1) 3:9 rewarded (1) 19:4 rewarding (1) 141:19 rich (1) 125:7 ride (2) 161:9,11 right (116) 5:20;6:19;7:5,18, 24;8:15,15,21;10:23; 12:24;13:3,23;14:1; 16:7;20:13;21:12; 27:14;29:9;30:2,18; 32:25;34:2,8,13;35:6, 13;39:18;40:22; 41:10;42:3;43:20; 44:4;46:4,12;62:14; 65:24;70:7;72:14,21; 73:2;75:7;82:12,13; 85:2;90:25;95:18; 98:12,16;99:7,15; 100:1;102:9;106:18; 108:18;109:2,10,17, 20;112:24;113:9,13; 114:15;115:16,19; 116:15,21,22;119:17; 120:11,12;121:12; 126:11;127:1; 133:10,15;134:10; 135:23;136:4; 137:22,23;140:18,22; 145:6;149:6;150:3; 152:2,6,18;156:11; 158:11,13,18,23; 161:2;162:6,12,13, 24;164:2,4,7,12; 166:7,25;167:6,20; 168:5;169:13,19; 173:23;176:11; 178:12,18;181:13;
---	--	---	---	--

<p>182:13,18 rigorous (1) 73:21 RISE (19) 22:23;36:16,22; 37:7,9,9,16,20,23; 38:1,11;46:12;48:18; 56:9,16,20,22;61:20; 80:10 rival (1) 135:25 road (1) 91:15 roadmap (1) 95:16 ROBERTS (19) 46:21,22;62:13,20; 63:9;64:17;70:16; 72:5;73:6;76:17; 86:2,10,12,14;88:4, 16;95:6,8;178:15 ROBINSON (2) 26:18;126:23 robust (1) 64:21 ROCK (21) 13:2,6,10,13; 15:23;20:22;42:16; 116:2;119:4,5,7,12, 13;120:12;135:11; 139:13,16;140:10; 147:14;148:14; 167:22 Rogers (33) 3:18;31:8,9;39:2; 42:18;44:1,2;71:20; 75:9,10;96:14,23; 97:15;98:23,24; 109:15,19;110:1,2; 113:23,24;134:5,6, 20,23;136:13;151:3; 156:19;157:7; 164:24,25;166:18,19 role (2) 61:19;88:11 roll-call (4) 96:20;98:17; 109:11,14 rolling (1) 161:23 Romero (2) 116:6,24 room (4) 4:19;13:18;120:9; 124:17 Roosevelt (1) 149:7 root (1) 91:13 round (1) 112:7 routes (1) 58:6</p>	<p>RTI (9) 16:12;22:1;23:20; 57:4;74:7,12;92:18; 93:4,9 RTIs (1) 73:17 rule (6) 153:12,14;154:10, 16,16;170:24 rules (19) 101:3;153:16,17, 20;156:4,7,12,14,17; 157:5;170:22;176:9, 11,24;178:6,9,14,15, 16 run (2) 84:19;120:14 running (5) 143:10;153:6; 159:5,10;162:14 rural (1) 140:9</p>	<p>scaffold (1) 16:14 scale (11) 53:12,17,18,21; 54:1,6,14,15,19,22; 78:11 scared (1) 26:13 scatterplot (1) 34:18 scatterplots (2) 34:7,9 scenario (1) 11:16 schedule (4) 86:8;118:16; 119:23;121:7 scheduled (1) 181:17 scheduling (2) 117:22;149:2 scholar (2) 59:6;93:11 scholars (30) 47:9,11;48:3; 50:18,24;51:7;52:9, 22,25;53:9,12,21,25; 54:16;55:12,15; 57:14;58:11,23; 59:10;61:22;65:2,11, 16;69:20,20;73:9; 76:25;79:25;92:20 scholarship (1) 65:10 School (284) 4:23;6:21;7:16,17, 22;8:3,6,9;9:4,6,10, 23,25;13:1,14,15; 15:23;16:3,7,11,11, 12;17:5;19:2,5,24; 20:4;24:6,21;25:2,5, 11,21,24;26:1,1,2,7, 13,17,21;28:3,4,15; 29:6,21,24;30:6,8,12, 14,23;31:1,10,12; 32:9,13,13,18;33:6,9, 10,13,19,25;34:1,20, 22;37:5,11,12;38:23; 39:22;40:13;43:18; 44:8;45:2,5,18;47:9, 12,14,15,22;48:2,4; 49:8;50:14,24;51:2,2, 4,9,10,15;52:2,5; 53:10;55:8,10,20; 56:17;57:12;58:4,15, 17,21,24,24,25;59:4, 4;60:12,22;61:18; 62:2,10;63:22;64:5,6, 6,7,8,9;65:1,7,8; 66:11,17,18,25;67:1; 69:12;75:16;76:25; 77:3;78:25;79:15,20; 81:12;83:24;84:2,22;</p>	<p>86:5,20,22,25;87:6; 88:1,10;89:11;90:14, 23,24;91:2,19,23,23; 92:13,18;93:1,1,3,10, 23;94:8,9,12,18; 95:15;96:23,25;97:1, 2,5,16;98:8;100:24; 102:3,6,20;103:4,19, 24,24,25;104:3,11, 15,18;111:17,20,23, 24;114:4,8;115:1,2,9; 117:22;118:9;119:3, 4;121:25;122:22; 124:24;125:13; 126:19;127:1,13,18; 129:24;130:9;131:6; 132:4;134:7,10,12, 15,17,25;135:1,1,23; 136:5,21;137:9,14; 138:4;140:15;142:6, 23;143:10,24;144:14, 21;145:7,12;146:11, 25;147:15,20,21,23; 148:5;152:4,14,16, 20,24;153:14; 157:17;159:7,12,15, 21,25;160:6,21,21, 22;161:22;162:4; 164:17;165:11; 167:13,14,21;168:8, 9,12,15,18;169:23, 25;170:24;171:3; 179:25;180:1,3,4,12, 14,17,23 Schoology (1) 121:5 schools (37) 17:18;31:19;35:10; 47:4;60:23;63:14; 64:14;65:5,17;66:16; 79:9;80:12;91:1,10, 17,19;117:15; 131:25;132:5,8,9,13, 18;133:3,4;140:10; 147:5;149:1;154:19; 157:18,21;158:1,3; 159:5,8;161:4; 162:14 school-wide (3) 48:6;57:16;73:9 Science (11) 21:23;22:24;49:9; 53:1;61:24;69:2,12; 77:18,20;82:24; 113:17 scientific (1) 70:8 scope (2) 21:21;37:15 score (17) 16:24;17:1,2,3,12, 23;33:21;52:6;53:17, 18;54:2,11,19;69:9;</p>	<p>78:11;143:12,20 scored (1) 26:1 scores (28) 32:23;39:11;51:25; 52:18;53:2,3,7,12,21; 54:7,14,16,22;67:20; 69:1,2,16;73:1,6; 82:16;91:16;105:16; 111:14;113:17; 114:10;128:12,14; 129:9 Scott (1) 178:22 screen (3) 78:4;121:9;124:9 screened (1) 56:24 screeners (1) 56:24 screenshot (1) 121:21 SDL (1) 78:16 season (1) 125:17 seated (3) 8:20;14:5;115:23 Second (44) 5:19,21;6:3;7:8,10; 12:17,19;35:4;42:18, 20;55:19;62:15;68:1; 96:13,14,16;100:11; 109:6,8;113:3,6; 118:22;122:3; 131:23;133:5,11; 135:18;143:2;150:8, 10;155:12,14,25; 156:19,21;157:7,9; 165:14,16;166:4; 182:6,8,25;183:1 seconds (2) 100:8,11 section (1) 154:1 seeing (14) 22:11;27:10;30:21; 35:24;36:2;38:7; 62:18;76:14;95:20; 97:4;150:4;156:9; 157:11;165:18 seek (4) 50:9;102:22;174:6, 14 seeking (2) 9:4;159:7 seem (5) 41:12;95:24;146:3, 7;160:16 seemed (1) 69:7 seems (5) 11:17;33:4,5;</p>
	S			
	<p>safe (3) 19:3;26:2;135:9 safety (3) 20:4;111:16; 123:17 salaries (2) 60:17;86:5 salary (3) 85:23;86:1,8 same (28) 21:19;27:25;38:25; 44:12;55:24;64:15; 68:24;79:10;81:25; 85:8,25;98:2;102:15; 103:4;105:8,8,24; 106:19;108:5,25; 111:24;114:4;142:4; 156:14;158:8;162:4; 166:16;173:4 Santa (3) 124:23,23;125:11 Santiago (1) 26:4 Santoyo (1) 92:7 Sarah (3) 17:9;64:18;90:21 satisfied (2) 18:5;80:20 saw (10) 70:1;81:13,17,18, 23;91:7;92:19;135:7; 138:15;146:2 saying (10) 36:10;106:20; 112:2;136:7;142:3; 147:9;156:13;174:7; 175:14;177:1</p>			

146:1;149:12 segway (1) 29:14 selected (3) 6:13,16;37:8 semesters (1) 149:2 send (1) 49:24 sending (1) 119:8 sends (2) 87:9,18 seniors (1) 137:2 sense (5) 49:25;104:2; 106:10,25;128:25 sensitive (1) 75:21 sensitivity (1) 18:12 sent (1) 37:15 sentiment (1) 98:7 separate (2) 156:1,5 separately (1) 153:22 separating (1) 63:17 September (1) 121:11 sequence (1) 37:15 sequences (1) 21:21 serious (1) 137:15 seriously (1) 29:25 serve (20) 3:11;8:4;13:11; 14:17,18;15:1,5,5,6, 15;45:22;47:21;51:2; 79:21;115:11;158:1; 161:10,25;166:20; 168:13 served (4) 119:4,21;140:2; 151:1 serves (1) 48:4 Service (3) 3:21;119:19; 151:25 Services (11) 3:19;15:22;19:10; 20:3;22:1;23:24; 88:17,22;89:17; 123:13;162:3 servicing (7)	14:12;16:21;17:18; 18:3;47:15;159:11, 19 session (4) 22:18;24:2;121:17; 127:25 sessions (3) 21:7;22:17;56:12 set (14) 49:22;111:22; 126:3;127:2;141:14, 23,24;142:4,8,10,16, 22;146:1;181:4 sets (2) 35:9;47:3 setting (2) 142:2;148:7 setup (1) 132:4 set-up (1) 144:3 seven (24) 3:14;47:24;66:6; 72:18;74:24;75:1; 78:22;80:23;97:22; 98:1;103:20;106:16; 108:21;113:18; 114:9;116:4;119:24; 132:25;133:9;136:3, 8;137:3;150:7,10 seven-month (1) 162:8 seven-year (1) 64:11 several (5) 13:17;44:8;55:9; 130:1;138:24 Shaking (1) 162:22 shape (1) 105:8 share (4) 28:16;50:3;97:15; 134:17 shared (2) 39:4;48:23 share-out (1) 49:21 shares (1) 120:25 Sharon (1) 4:14 sheet (3) 43:4;120:3;166:1 Sheltered (1) 40:7 Sheridan (1) 119:14 sheriff (1) 130:15 shift (1) 91:8 shifted (1)	73:7 shifting (1) 180:5 SHIREY (13) 158:17,20;162:22; 163:4,9,14;164:2,5, 18;165:23;166:3; 167:7,10 Shock (2) 56:10,20 shocked (1) 126:11 shoot (1) 136:5 shooting (3) 135:22;136:14,15 shop (1) 105:22 short (2) 82:18;112:4 shot (2) 135:10;136:25 shout- (1) 120:19 show (8) 33:18;53:7;90:16; 114:3;128:18;129:4, 6;181:5 showcase (1) 50:6 showed (3) 68:15;124:5;179:1 showing (6) 16:5;33:2,20; 34:10;35:19;125:5 shown (5) 44:8;52:7;61:21; 114:4;131:11 shows (7) 16:19;24:14;53:24; 121:10,22,24;131:3 shuffling (1) 13:18 SIATech (13) 115:2,5,10,13; 116:2;129:25; 131:21,25;132:5,14; 145:15;147:25; 150:24 siblings (1) 58:2 sick (4) 21:9;158:22,23; 179:1 side (8) 10:8;67:17;81:20; 88:25;104:25;142:3; 162:22,22 side-by-side (1) 40:10 sides (2) 10:8;11:22 sign (2)	125:18;127:22 signal (1) 87:18 signals (1) 169:20 signed (1) 174:13 significance (1) 125:23 significant (22) 30:9,16;40:11; 51:14,17,23;52:3; 53:3,5,15,24;54:11; 55:4;56:6;59:12; 69:18;91:14;98:12; 108:23;113:16,19; 160:1 significantly (1) 61:23 signs (1) 123:22 silence (1) 3:6 SILENCE] (6) 43:10;100:9;113:4; 133:25;150:22;166:6 similar (8) 17:13,18,18;64:13; 75:25;82:17;141:7; 153:1 Similarly (1) 17:21 simple (1) 160:11 simply (2) 161:22;180:19 sing (2) 81:15,15 single (2) 67:6;117:22 SIOP (1) 40:6 sit (2) 133:15;134:11 site (3) 36:17;111:18,21 sites (1) 64:3 sitting (3) 108:24;122:14; 124:5 situation (8) 11:8;75:21;106:7; 108:6;128:6;154:12; 173:22;176:10 six (6) 24:18;57:5;117:25; 123:5;136:7;147:5 SIZE (12) 152:16;153:11,13, 15;154:16;156:2,4,6, 7,13,17;157:4 skill (2)	74:2,3 skills (21) 14:23;24:23;37:3, 4,19;48:22;56:25; 57:2;73:8,11,19,25; 74:19;92:23;111:19; 122:21;123:1,2; 124:13,14,20 skirmish (1) 136:8 slide (7) 19:21,21;126:8; 128:7;129:1;130:2,7 slipped (1) 86:10 slow (1) 33:4 small (7) 24:25;57:8;59:23; 67:4;73:20,23;74:2 smaller (3) 23:22;140:9;148:7 smart (1) 161:13 SMITH (12) 9:14;11:2,6;71:7,9, 9,13,21;72:3;178:21, 22;182:15 Smoking (2) 123:3,4 snack (1) 15:18 snapshot (1) 120:6 snapshots (1) 120:16 snow (2) 121:3;135:18 social (9) 29:18;43:23;49:12; 50:19;62:8;76:9; 116:14;124:20;126:2 society (1) 118:18 so-forth (3) 32:17;98:3;138:18 soft (1) 123:1 solid (2) 86:22,24 solution (3) 12:7;175:19,20 somebody (9) 6:8;119:15;120:22; 129:3,8;130:4; 136:25;137:13; 163:22 someone (10) 12:6;32:7;72:24; 75:3;84:25;89:10; 94:22;117:7;148:7; 179:1 sometime (1)
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93:17 sometimes (7) 72:8;82:10;84:5; 89:9;121:18,18; 122:9 somewhere (2) 121:22;122:1 son (5) 66:6;131:21;132:2, 10;133:5 son's (1) 147:2 soon (1) 67:11 sophomore (1) 65:15 sorry (13) 21:9;35:4;71:21; 74:9;134:4;137:24; 152:2;168:1,1,4,4; 169:9;176:22 sort (2) 73:7;93:15 sound (7) 32:17;37:6,25; 38:3;41:8;62:12; 131:10 sounds (5) 38:2;78:3,4;79:6; 175:20 sources (1) 124:3 Southeast (2) 49:9;61:24 SOUTHWEST (8) 13:2,5,10,13; 20:22;42:16;120:12; 167:22 space (7) 51:6;63:20;102:19, 23;141:17;151:13; 160:11 Spanish (3) 18:7,8;25:1 speak (19) 4:11;14:10;18:8; 27:8;62:17,21;73:5; 82:9;88:4;89:3; 90:22;110:15; 112:14;125:21; 126:21;127:6; 131:14;139:21; 162:18 speaker (2) 125:21;126:5 SPEAKERS (6) 8:18;14:4;46:16; 115:22;139:19; 169:17 speaking (14) 4:9;8:13;9:15; 13:20;24:5;46:10,11; 68:9;115:17,18;	126:23;147:8; 158:12;169:11 speaks (1) 117:9 special (4) 53:1;58:8;151:24; 154:12 specialist (3) 68:21;73:5;90:12 specialists (2) 19:7;49:5 specific (7) 6:25;150:25;151:8, 12;178:10;180:10; 181:19 specifically (7) 9:22;36:16;68:9; 84:22;92:22;143:4; 179:19 specified (1) 42:2 spend (1) 24:8 spent (1) 22:4 spoke (2) 122:22;123:4 spoken (1) 88:16 sponsoring (3) 8:9;11:1;168:18 spot (1) 81:14 spring (9) 6:11;55:13,15,17, 25;121:15;125:18; 127:8;130:17 Springs (4) 16:6;119:21;120:7, 13 SQSS (3) 51:16;113:17; 143:4 staff (30) 9:5;18:20;28:17; 29:1,2,3;59:1;60:11, 19;61:13;71:19; 81:21;85:21;116:4,5, 13;117:2,3,7,7; 118:19,19;123:22,23; 124:16;129:11; 135:14;162:6; 163:10;179:6 staffing (2) 16:2;132:7 staffing-wise (1) 82:1 stakeholders (1) 3:14 Stamp (1) 123:3 stand (14) 4:19;8:11;11:7;	13:22;15:14;20:12; 47:20;64:22,24; 115:18;116:6; 158:13;169:12;179:9 standalone (1) 163:24 standard (1) 70:12 standards (17) 21:5,22;48:11; 94:11;152:14,21; 153:3,3,5,12;154:13, 13,15,17;155:8,8; 157:4 standards-driven (1) 48:25 standing (3) 88:9;120:9;127:24 standpoint (5) 41:13;87:14,15; 105:3;160:10 star (1) 16:6 start (15) 14:8;27:17;43:14; 46:19,24;60:14; 67:16;98:18;109:21; 121:10;143:20; 158:19;159:14; 166:8;176:8 started (8) 20:23;21:1;56:17; 63:7;125:5;127:17; 155:4;168:6 starting (4) 86:5;90:14;91:16; 147:3 starts (1) 133:7 State (40) 3:20;4:2,5,9,25; 6:11,14;8:1;21:5,22; 22:25;33:15;36:1; 45:20;47:6;48:11; 60:16;68:19;75:13; 80:19,25;83:22; 94:11;102:14;108:3; 115:8;119:16,17; 125:9;128:10,16; 129:10;134:9; 138:24;143:1;145:7; 157:24;168:10; 174:1;178:13 stated (2) 84:20;85:6 statement (6) 14:20,21;15:2; 76:11;110:10,15 states (1) 144:25 state's (1) 10:8 statistically (1)	18:23 statistics (1) 17:11 status (1) 113:17 stay (9) 30:17,18;77:5; 80:2;112:25;119:23; 128:9;138:17;147:5 staying (3) 80:2;93:15;97:5 steady (1) 35:19 steal (1) 148:2 step (4) 12:9;13:16;40:18; 153:2 steps (1) 58:20 sticks (2) 81:19;144:13 still (23) 10:1;28:5,23;44:3; 73:21;74:13;75:8; 82:3;97:21,23;98:3,9, 12;103:19;105:8; 108:23;119:6; 121:15;125:15; 127:18;137:18; 146:8;174:10 stipulations (1) 101:11 stop (1) 155:25 store (2) 105:22,23 stories (1) 134:18 storms (1) 159:19 straight (1) 4:17 strategic (2) 63:5,24 strategies (9) 73:19;74:15;85:4, 5,8,15;90:11;98:8,10 Street (3) 120:12;135:23; 139:7 strength (1) 75:14 strengthen (2) 89:1,19 strengthening (2) 63:8;75:16 stretch (1) 95:11 stretched (1) 159:2 strict (1) 15:11	strictly (2) 24:9;94:25 strides (1) 68:2 strive (1) 111:16 strong (13) 28:20;31:4;43:17; 49:13;51:5;62:7; 83:7;84:21,23;85:14; 86:22;91:2;173:9 stronger (3) 68:13;86:4;98:11 structure (1) 19:8 structured (1) 21:25 structures (1) 63:17 struggle (2) 75:8;82:14 struggles (1) 114:1 struggling (9) 21:18;25:1;28:9; 32:1;33:14;89:7; 97:24;98:3;106:16 stuck (1) 39:1 student (36) 23:13;24:9,16; 28:21;30:3;31:1; 33:9,11,14,19,19; 43:19;51:15;52:2; 53:13;55:17,20;56:1; 58:1,18;69:9;76:4; 119:6;126:8,9; 127:19;130:18; 139:1,17;141:13; 143:12;145:14,15,17; 147:20;165:12 students (172) 8:4;13:11;14:21; 15:5,16,17,18,21,21; 16:8;17:12;18:14,16, 19;19:1,11;20:1; 21:6;22:3;25:21; 27:2,19,21,23,24,25, 25;29:13,18;30:1,4, 23,25;31:1,14,15; 33:17;35:23;37:18; 38:3;40:4;45:23; 47:2;48:7;49:10,18, 20,24;50:2,5,6;51:2; 52:14,17,23;53:1,16, 16;54:7,12,23;55:2,5; 56:24,25;57:21,24; 58:1,4,8,10,22;59:9, 13;60:11;62:8;63:16; 65:6,10;69:11,11,16; 72:23;73:17,24,25; 74:3,16;75:21;76:21; 77:1,8,17;78:5;80:7;
---	---	--	---	---

82:12;92:24;97:11; 103:18;108:14; 111:17,22;115:11; 117:10,17;118:1,4, 11,12,17;119:2,8,24; 120:3,23;121:20; 122:8,22;123:4,6,15, 19,23;124:10,12,15; 125:16;126:4,20,21; 127:16;129:6,17,22; 130:1,2,14,16,17; 131:3,4,4;135:24,25; 137:4;138:24;140:8, 14,17,19;141:3; 145:13,19;146:15,17, 22;147:15,19;148:3; 149:1;151:9;158:1; 159:9,11,19,20; 160:1,17;161:3; 164:16;168:13;174:6	summer (7) 22:5;73:4;111:13; 112:5;120:2;121:17; 144:4 summertime (2) 111:13;112:6 Superintendent (3) 3:20;14:12;127:6 superpower (1) 116:10 supplemental (1) 48:16 Support (26) 3:21;15:22;18:9; 19:8,18;21:2,3,5; 23:1,6,25;29:5; 47:12;59:19;60:4; 64:19;74:16,19; 88:10,12;90:5,13,14; 151:7,11;166:23 supporting (3) 65:11;78:18;79:23 supports (5) 19:6;20:5;50:17, 22;51:6 SUPT (16) 14:9;24:19;26:25; 27:5,12,21;29:9,22; 31:7;32:5;36:24; 38:9;39:21;42:4; 43:3;44:18 sure (52) 15:4,10;16:2; 19:10,25;20:1;21:4, 21;22:6;23:15;24:8; 28:9;30:4;32:18; 37:20;38:6;41:1,11; 43:5;45:8,10;58:23; 62:16;63:4;65:1; 67:6;70:3;78:24; 79:22;82:22;83:1; 84:16;85:2,13;86:8; 91:1;92:15;93:6,14; 95:8,15;96:7;97:18; 100:18,23;149:22; 158:7;170:17; 172:21;179:15; 181:18,20 surely (1) 23:16 surmise (1) 175:5 surrounding (1) 79:9 surveys (1) 61:14 suspend (2) 178:6,16 suspended (2) 78:23;128:23 suspension (2) 50:23;176:24 suspensions (3)	30:23,24;63:15 sustainability (1) 159:14 sustainable (1) 159:23 SWAG (1) 92:19 swear (4) 8:15;20:9,11; 169:10 sweaters (1) 129:17 sworn (2) 158:9;169:13 system (2) 132:12;153:6 systematically (1) 87:16 systems (1) 87:14	tantamount (1) 161:14 target (2) 59:21;73:7 targeted (5) 24:9;60:2;73:8,24; 74:19 tasks (1) 63:22 Tatum (2) 169:25;175:9 taught (3) 24:25;28:11;57:3 tax-payers (1) 118:18 tax-takers (1) 118:18 Taylor (6) 26:9,10,11;116:9; 141:10;151:23 teach (6) 14:24;16:15;26:15; 28:6;30:10;61:9 teacher (22) 54:22;60:7,19; 61:2,4,10;68:15,17; 72:19,25;74:1;82:24, 25;83:11;85:14;92:2, 10;116:8,14;122:10, 14;126:2 teachers (91) 16:14;19:16;21:3; 22:3,5,6,15,18,19; 23:6,8,10,16;24:1; 25:3,21;26:8,15; 27:20;28:12,15,16; 31:14,16,16;37:8,19; 38:1,2,14;40:3,3; 49:1,7,8;50:5;54:24; 56:11,15,21;57:1,5, 18;60:5,9,20,25;61:1, 1,21;63:14;67:3; 68:13,18;70:1,2;71:2, 13;72:7;73:16;80:12; 81:22;82:22,23;83:5, 6,7,14,16,17,24,25; 84:16;86:3,4;89:20; 90:10,13;91:9;92:5,8, 14;95:12,13;116:12; 121:6;122:5;127:14, 15;141:14;147:8 teachers' (1) 72:2 teaching (19) 38:1;56:13;83:10; 84:17;88:18,21; 89:18,22;90:2; 152:17;153:12,13,15; 156:4,7,7,13,17; 157:5 team (14) 16:3;61:11;63:7, 21;64:21,21,22,22,	23;82:20;84:19; 85:15;160:20;163:11 teams (1) 23:25 Tech (1) 138:25 Technical (5) 3:23;163:7,9; 164:2;171:4 TECHNOLOGIES (2) 115:2,10 technology (1) 60:2 telling (5) 22:12;66:9;124:24; 134:10;139:10 tells (4) 72:22;122:8;131:5, 5 terms (12) 10:18;29:19;33:4, 6;39:10;76:7;88:11; 89:12;91:23;101:1; 102:25;106:23 test (5) 28:5;53:2;55:16; 128:14;138:21 tested (2) 16:22;77:1 tester (1) 128:15 testimony (7) 32:17;46:13;96:24; 97:17;115:20; 158:14;169:14 testing (8) 16:20,21;52:25; 54:25;55:18;74:10; 80:10;128:16 tests (1) 79:3 Texas (2) 125:9;130:9 texts (1) 48:20 thankful (3) 126:24;127:4; 135:20 thanks (1) 25:3 their-self (1) 124:13 theory (1) 85:21 therapeutic (1) 50:17 therapy (2) 127:13,23 thin (1) 159:3 thinking (6) 79:21;93:13; 126:12;136:16;
			T	
		table (16) 5:5;11:11;12:11, 13,15;55:13,13; 59:10;172:12; 173:20,25;176:13; 177:15;179:2,4, 181:18 tabled (2) 182:4,14 tabling (2) 12:8;182:1 takeaway (1) 35:8 talent (9) 61:11;84:20,21,23, 23;85:9;86:9;92:16; 123:9 talented (1) 123:8 talents (1) 50:6 talk (17) 11:7;14:17;23:8; 24:22;27:3;32:8; 36:19;68:1,5;71:5, 20;82:14;92:11,23; 124:10;138:13; 176:17 talked (9) 31:18;39:2;63:9, 10;79:12;85:16; 124:12;125:22; 134:15 talking (4) 82:6;122:2;125:3; 153:6 Tanita (1) 116:9 tank (1) 137:5		

<p>146:10;173:23 third (1) 50:8 third-party (1) 180:23 though (10) 39:9;67:25;74:23; 94:10;98:8;108:22; 112:24;132:16,23; 154:15 thought (5) 75:14;81:16; 100:15;134:10;135:4 three (46) 22:9;23:25;25:11; 29:19;32:24;42:2,5, 11;45:16;51:13,24; 52:16;53:11,22;54:8, 17,23;61:19;64:3,6,9; 69:17;72:6;78:15; 80:3,5;91:11;96:6,7, 10;97:1,8,17,19; 110:7;112:18;114:3; 120:5,18;124:12; 125:14;128:2;133:9; 155:1;156:9;159:3 three-year (8) 41:20;42:16;53:14, 23;54:2,9,21;97:4 threw (1) 78:12 throughout (10) 14:25;15:19;16:13, 16;22:17;47:11; 49:11;61:15;69:19; 133:1 thus (1) 175:15 tidbit (1) 175:23 tier (2) 19:6;57:14 tight (1) 118:16 till (2) 12:8;182:14 timeline (4) 162:9,9;173:24; 174:4 times (6) 30:15;58:6;72:12; 80:3,5;120:9 timing (2) 98:7,10 Tina (1) 14:11 title (3) 4:9;48:6;57:13 today (25) 3:17;4:7,21;9:16; 12:8;14:10,16;27:13; 47:19;65:20;81:15; 109:1;116:5,18,25;</p>	<p>120:17;122:7,18; 139:4;164:23; 168:21;173:5; 177:17;179:13;180:9 Todd (3) 89:25;90:4,4 together (7) 11:22;62:2;112:3; 127:8;129:15;140:2; 154:18 told (7) 125:12;126:4; 127:7;130:4;134:8; 136:13,18 tomorrow (1) 182:21 tone (1) 49:22 tons (1) 65:9 took (9) 55:16;56:5;73:15, 15;128:2;132:24,24; 134:13;139:20 top (4) 19:6;86:9;139:23; 145:22 top- (1) 83:13 topic (1) 145:21 torn (1) 142:3 total (3) 5:2;117:8;163:12 totally (2) 78:12;136:21 touch (2) 125:15;145:21 tough (3) 137:3;144:9; 146:24 tour (2) 30:14;84:2 toward (2) 24:9,9 towards (2) 33:7;82:4 Town (2) 50:1,2 Toyce (1) 4:5 Track (4) 22:19;97:23;144:2; 148:4 tracking (2) 36:6;97:6 traditional (10) 37:12;70:24;132:3, 13;134:16;135:1; 136:21;144:22; 148:5;160:5 trafficking (4)</p>	<p>123:17,18,20,21 tragedy (3) 132:21,21;133:12 trained (3) 40:3;56:10,16 trainer (4) 37:16;40:6,7,10 training (10) 18:13,21;22:5; 36:22;39:24;56:18; 61:22;80:12;130:12; 144:4 trainings (3) 37:9;118:20; 128:20 transcript (2) 4:15;61:5 transfer (10) 9:18;10:17,19,25; 148:3,20;170:13,19; 172:19;181:6 transferred (1) 68:17 transient (2) 27:22;118:5 transition (5) 44:23,24;83:10; 153:2;155:7 translate (1) 31:4 translated (1) 143:15 translation (1) 25:2 translators (1) 18:9 transparent (1) 161:20 transport (1) 161:3 transportation (5) 58:5;62:4;120:14; 160:25;161:5 transported (1) 164:16 trauma (1) 18:18 tree (2) 129:15;139:8 tremendous (4) 30:12;65:5;68:15; 80:11 trend (5) 17:2;39:11,13; 40:13;97:24 trending (2) 30:22;97:16 Triplett (5) 116:7;120:19; 124:17;126:17;141:4 Tripp (3) 9:5;70:15;87:24 trouble (3)</p>	<p>119:24;138:18; 174:11 truck (1) 130:9 true (3) 149:17,21;175:9 truly (1) 14:10 trustworthy (1) 16:17 truth (21) 8:16,16,17;14:2,2, 3;20:14,14,14;46:14, 14,15;115:21,21,21; 158:15,15,16;169:15, 15,16 try (10) 6:14;9:17;22:8; 95:4;103:17;114:24; 128:9;139:24; 160:13;162:10 trying (27) 10:20;32:4,10,18; 35:10;68:24;72:2; 77:2,4,22;78:20; 79:17;82:2;83:5; 84:14;118:20; 124:19;127:18; 130:23;139:22; 162:12;167:4; 178:22;180:12,19,24; 181:3 turn (4) 7:22;76:3;162:24; 181:9 turning (2) 65:20;133:3 turnover (1) 23:7 turns (1) 25:4 tweaks (1) 106:21 Twenty (1) 169:3 twice (4) 21:10;123:14; 126:24;129:14 two (55) 16:14;18:7;22:4,9; 24:1;25:20;26:11; 28:16;30:22,23; 32:24;34:14;37:8; 47:19;48:4;50:1,2,3; 56:15,16,16;57:24; 64:11;65:23,24; 67:10;72:12;78:14; 86:3;98:3;110:8; 116:12,13;117:23; 119:24;120:18; 121:13;123:17,19; 126:4;127:12;130:2, 15;135:13,25;137:2;</p>	<p>153:19;154:8,18,19, 23,25;174:18;177:13, 21,25 Tyler (3) 122:7,17;129:13 type (7) 11:19;19:17; 131:25;142:6;143:9; 144:14;146:11 types (3) 18:22,24;81:22 typically (7) 6:14,22;91:12; 95:4;111:12;154:9; 178:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">U</p> <hr/> <p>UAPB (2) 49:8;68:16 UCA (2) 138:25;139:3 ugliest (1) 129:16 ultimately (1) 108:2 unable (2) 3:17;60:11 UNANIMOUS (11) 5:24;7:12;12:22; 42:23;150:15; 155:17;156:24; 157:12;165:20; 182:11;183:3 uncomfortable (1) 107:3 under (15) 24:12;88:7;103:4; 104:10;112:13; 139:7;153:25; 155:11;156:10; 164:3;171:18;172:1; 173:14,15;180:8 under-credit (1) 117:24 under-performance (1) 60:10 understatement (1) 84:4 understood (2) 83:15;94:15 unforeseen (1) 24:15 unfortunately (5) 68:14;69:10;78:9; 80:9;89:15 unique (2) 114:1;134:11 Unit (2) 6:5;101:9 United (1) 120:7 universal (1)</p>
---	---	--	--	--

<p>62:7 universities (3) 83:4,10;84:15 University (2) 17:6,9 Unless (2) 109:2;112:18 up (63) 9:17,20;10:10,18; 12:15;14:19;20:1; 22:13;27:3,16;37:25; 38:2;39:12;41:8,25; 49:24;58:19;66:1; 72:12;77:20;78:7; 80:8;100:12;101:23; 103:10;104:7; 109:18;118:13; 120:19;121:13,25; 122:23;123:20; 124:11,20;126:3,14; 127:2;128:18;129:4, 6;130:6,22;131:15, 18;137:5,12;139:21; 143:8;146:23;148:4; 149:4,5;152:1; 159:24;167:17; 169:3;170:20; 174:13;177:14,17,24; 179:1 update (4) 124:18;168:24; 169:1,6 upfront (2) 74:25;122:14 up-front (1) 122:16 uphill (1) 159:16 upon (5) 19:24;38:3;106:5, 6;107:15 upset (2) 108:14;123:9 upward (5) 17:2;39:11,14,19; 40:13 use (7) 37:6;47:5;72:9; 118:10;138:20; 178:13;180:16 used (6) 9:25;26:15;72:24; 107:22;135:10,19 using (6) 23:23;47:6;53:7; 73:21,23;85:7 usually (2) 101:12;137:14 utilize (2) 48:15;107:21 utilized (1) 60:1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <p>Valerie (1) 169:24 Valesquez (2) 66:5,24 value-added (2) 17:3;33:8 values (1) 20:6 Vanessa (4) 82:19;84:24;85:3, 11 variable (3) 57:20;59:7;60:6 variables (2) 55:6,9 variety (2) 73:12;173:12 various (4) 11:13;87:13;92:1; 103:16 vehicle (1) 136:18 Velasquez (2) 66:2,4 verify (1) 87:25 versus (4) 9:22;36:21;63:18; 164:11 via (1) 59:1 video (8) 123:7;124:22; 129:14;130:20,22; 131:3,9,11 view (1) 105:4 viewed (1) 70:25 viewing (3) 4:12;45:12;131:12 village (1) 133:7 violence (1) 19:14 virtually (1) 9:19 visit (7) 10:3;36:17;50:3; 81:12;134:7;148:22; 152:4 visited (1) 134:9 visits (4) 36:18;62:6;122:3,4 visualize (1) 118:22 voice (2) 125:24;126:8 volumes (1)</p>	<p>117:9 vote (42) 5:4;10:6;41:6; 96:18,20;98:16,19, 22,24;99:1,4,7,7,9, 16;102:13;109:10,14, 22,25;110:4,16,21, 22,24;112:17; 113:21;150:13; 153:22;155:5,20; 157:2;165:18;167:5; 171:1,7,11,19,25; 176:25;177:20;178:7 voted (17) 43:15,21;44:2,6, 11;110:19;113:15, 24;114:7,12,13; 150:23;151:3,11; 166:5,19;167:2 voter (1) 125:20 voting (4) 43:4;102:8;110:7; 125:23 VP (1) 64:19</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <p>wait (3) 58:7;97:24;99:18 waive (3) 87:5;88:1;156:13 waiver (29) 69:24;70:5,7,10, 12;72:1,6,9;87:4,6, 12,22;88:2;90:24; 94:3,10,13,13; 138:20,20;149:12,17; 150:1;153:16,20; 156:4,6,6;157:4 waivers (3) 70:18;155:7; 156:17 waiving (1) 156:12 Walgreens (1) 124:9 walk (2) 31:18;120:20 walked (1) 161:17 walls (2) 37:24,25 Walter (13) 9:5,5;70:13,15,15; 87:24,24;88:8,15; 89:15,24;90:2;94:23 wants (2) 10:2;134:17 warning (1) 123:22 waste (1)</p>	<p>179:15 watch (1) 130:22 watched (1) 32:16 watching (1) 145:2 way (26) 11:23;20:1;30:22; 39:7;49:23;71:1; 78:7;88:5;107:24; 108:15;128:9; 136:18;142:25,25; 143:10,13;144:3; 146:18;162:6,8,13; 166:5;171:13,24; 172:3,7 ways (7) 30:10;88:17;121:2, 20;126:16;127:19; 135:16 weather (1) 159:18 web (2) 149:12;150:1 website (6) 4:16;94:14,19; 95:5;131:12;142:24 Wednesdays (2) 22:9,10 week (6) 22:6,9;64:11; 72:12;121:12;130:11 weekly (9) 22:8;23:2;57:4,7; 59:1;60:24;71:13,18; 90:6 weeks (7) 22:4;31:11;32:3; 50:1;57:5;64:11; 166:21 weighted (6) 51:14,18,25;52:6, 8;54:10 welcome (3) 3:5;25:8;45:12 welcomed (1) 28:11 what's (8) 38:15;89:5;97:23; 107:16;153:9; 175:19,21,24 Wheatley-Palestine (1) 160:3 whenever (2) 12:6;181:4 WHEREUPON (2) 46:6;131:11 WHITTAKER (3) 62:22,23;65:24 whole (11) 8:16;14:2;20:14; 46:14;93:3;100:20;</p>	<p>115:21;118:9; 158:15;169:15; 177:16 who's (5) 24:11;40:10;116:9; 130:15;139:17 who've (2) 19:16;28:7 Williams (114) 4:2;7:8;12:3,5,17; 32:6,7,21,25;33:16, 22;34:3,6,9,14,22,25; 35:2,6,15,18,21,25; 36:3,6,9,11;38:22; 42:9,15;43:8;44:5,6; 72:14,15;74:21;76:8; 81:11;96:19,22; 97:14,20;98:6,25; 99:1;101:21;102:1, 10,24;103:8,15; 104:13,16,23;105:1, 5,13,21,25;106:3,10, 13,15,20,24;107:1,5, 7,17,25;109:6,12; 110:3,4;114:6,7; 137:16,17,20,22,24; 138:3,6,8;139:5,14; 140:1,4,6;150:6; 151:5,6;152:8,10; 153:24;154:4,21,25; 155:2,24;156:9,15; 157:3,15;164:9,11, 13,19;166:22,23; 174:22;175:10; 182:6,25 WILLIAMS (1) 100:21 willing (2) 11:10;97:17 willingness (2) 11:15;181:6 Wilson (36) 3:25;5:19;7:7; 27:17,18;29:7,10; 44:10,11;80:14,15, 17;96:4,5;99:3,4; 100:3;101:18,19,22; 110:5,6;112:22; 114:11,12;165:2,3, 14;166:9,15;176:22; 178:2,5,8,11;182:3 Wilson's (1) 29:15 win (1) 123:10 winter (2) 55:1;56:4 wish (1) 146:17 wishing (1) 112:12 withdrawing (1) 58:5</p>
--	---	--	--	--

<p>within (7) 23:1;29:20;50:23; 81:2;97:3;163:11; 170:7</p> <p>without (2) 12:4;161:7</p> <p>woke (1) 118:13</p> <p>Women (1) 19:13</p> <p>wonder (3) 141:23,24;143:11</p> <p>wonderful (2) 126:2;167:11</p> <p>word (7) 37:24,24;48:17; 59:23;65:19;77:15; 118:10</p> <p>wording (2) 142:15;151:7</p> <p>words (1) 66:2</p> <p>work (49) 15:10;19:7,16; 22:14;23:16,19;24:1; 25:15;28:13,15;30:9; 33:1;44:3;50:20; 51:7;58:23;62:2; 65:13,21;66:13;74:3, 4,12;80:18;82:8; 83:12;84:15,19; 89:20;91:1;111:23; 112:3;117:23;122:5; 132:8;135:15;137:7; 138:11;139:3,24; 146:14;147:12,13; 151:19;165:24; 174:25;175:12,12,14</p> <p>worked (10) 9:17;10:1;16:2; 22:15;68:16;125:9; 132:9;175:2,11,15</p> <p>working (32) 18:14;23:15;28:9; 29:12;40:7;43:7; 50:20;61:17;68:23; 74:1;78:2,3;81:21; 82:3;83:4,9;85:3; 92:24;93:11;104:4,7; 111:20;121:25; 141:8,9,17;145:18; 147:7,24;148:6,19; 175:22</p> <p>workload (2) 28:17;60:12</p> <p>works (5) 23:22;56:10;57:14; 87:23;130:18</p> <p>world (2) 48:12;139:9</p> <p>worry (2) 6:20;116:11</p> <p>wrap (2)</p>	<p>49:24;142:19</p> <p>wrapped (1) 142:18</p> <p>write (2) 126:13;150:18</p> <p>writing (3) 25:13,16;40:8</p> <p>written (2) 171:13,24</p> <p>wrong (3) 5:10;130:8;132:20</p> <p>wrote (2) 126:9,15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <hr/> <p>X's (1) 82:10</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <hr/> <p>y'all (11) 26:23;27:4,4;38:7; 44:19;95:4;133:4; 137:11;151:25; 165:23;178:5</p> <p>y'all's (1) 173:16</p> <p>year (88) 14:13;16:12,20,22, 22,23,24;17:12,22; 20:4;22:4,17;24:6,6; 25:13;28:17,25;29:4; 30:20,20,21,23;32:2, 15;33:3,4,12;35:20, 20;39:8;47:9;49:11; 50:8;51:4;53:18; 58:15;60:13;61:16; 65:15;68:5;70:3; 73:15;77:22;78:5,8, 9;80:5;82:20;83:19; 84:7,25;86:4;90:14, 17;93:1;98:2,3; 100:5,7;101:24,25; 103:11,23;104:10,18; 105:8;106:6;108:25; 111:10;118:25; 119:11,20;125:22; 126:24;137:1,1,3; 140:25;146:4; 159:11;161:22,25; 163:15,16,18;167:10; 180:1,4</p> <p>year- (1) 112:6</p> <p>yearly (1) 120:3</p> <p>years (80) 14:14;16:1;18:4; 20:24;24:21;25:11, 20;26:12;29:20;30:6, 16;31:25;32:24,24; 38:24;42:1,2,5,11;</p>	<p>47:11,25;50:24; 52:16,19;53:11,23; 54:8,17;61:19;63:6; 64:3,5,6,9;66:6; 69:17,19;72:6,18; 74:24;75:1;78:9,22; 79:2;80:23;91:5,11, 13;96:7,7,10;97:1,8, 17,19,22;98:1; 103:20;106:16; 108:21;111:9; 113:19;114:3,9; 117:8,24;119:24; 120:5;123:18; 127:12;132:23,25; 133:9,9;136:3,3,9; 150:7,11;158:25</p> <p>year's (2) 29:1,2</p> <p>year-to-year (2) 27:19,20</p> <p>Yesterday (1) 22:18</p> <p>yield (1) 63:16</p> <p>yoga (3) 127:13,23;128:3</p> <p>you-all (1) 175:22</p> <p>young (8) 119:8;122:16; 130:15;135:10; 138:15;139:1; 140:22;147:22</p> <p>youth (3) 117:18;126:22; 132:2</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Z</p> <hr/> <p>zero (1) 30:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">0</p> <hr/> <p>0.6 (2) 143:7,12</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <hr/> <p>1 (6) 22:19;46:6;48:6; 54:5;57:13;184:25</p> <p>1% (5) 53:2;67:21,25; 69:4;146:3</p> <p>1.21 (1) 143:5</p> <p>1:22 (1) 177:5</p> <p>1:27 (1) 177:5</p> <p>1:34 (1)</p>	<p>183:10</p> <p>10 (7) 41:25;58:7,10,11; 74:5;115:8;132:23</p> <p>100% (5) 15:17,20;40:1; 63:3;64:25</p> <p>109 (1) 53:9</p> <p>10-minute (1) 114:20</p> <p>10-point (1) 33:18</p> <p>10th (2) 58:19,19</p> <p>11 (2) 4:3;157:24</p> <p>11:04 (1) 114:22</p> <p>11:18 (1) 114:22</p> <p>12 (1) 159:20</p> <p>12% (1) 53:6</p> <p>12.4% (1) 47:24</p> <p>12:05 (1) 152:8</p> <p>12:06 (1) 152:13</p> <p>12:45 (2) 152:10,12</p> <p>12:51 (1) 152:13</p> <p>125% (1) 55:3</p> <p>13 (3) 13:8;122:23; 167:22</p> <p>13% (1) 69:7</p> <p>13th (1) 5:17</p> <p>14% (1) 69:6</p> <p>15 (6) 8:1;74:5;126:20; 128:16;168:10;170:7</p> <p>15- (1) 67:21</p> <p>150 (1) 51:2</p> <p>15th (3) 181:22;182:5,14</p> <p>16 (5) 16:23;52:23;67:22; 68:11;139:2</p> <p>16% (2) 69:6,6</p> <p>160 (1) 70:2</p> <p>16-17 (1)</p>	<p>69:13</p> <p>165 (1) 47:8</p> <p>17 (5) 54:19;59:14; 117:24;139:2;147:6</p> <p>17% (2) 39:12;159:11</p> <p>17.6% (1) 47:25</p> <p>17-18 (2) 67:22;69:13</p> <p>177 (1) 76:25</p> <p>18 (9) 4:6;52:5,25;54:19; 59:14;77:1;86:7; 122:23;125:22</p> <p>18-19 (1) 47:10</p> <p>18th (1) 5:10</p> <p>19 (6) 3:3;117:19;122:23; 126:6;128:15,16</p> <p>19- (1) 124:25</p> <p>19-20 (1) 86:7</p> <p>19th (2) 5:11;6:10</p> <p>1-point (1) 143:5</p> <p>1st (4) 26:5,19;94:14; 95:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <hr/> <p>2 (5) 57:14;99:17; 167:17,18,20</p> <p>2% (3) 52:20;59:14;68:12</p> <p>2,600 (1) 158:2</p> <p>20 (15) 4:25;5:1;8:23; 14:7;46:19;62:14; 115:24;143:23; 158:8,24;169:2; 171:14,14;172:6; 173:7</p> <p>2002 (2) 157:24;159:18</p> <p>2004 (1) 4:3</p> <p>2005 (1) 160:2</p> <p>2008 (2) 8:1;168:10</p> <p>2009 (1) 4:6</p>
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<p>2010 (2) 45:20;72:17 2011 (4) 4:4;47:8;115:8; 142:17 2013 (3) 13:8;143:21; 167:23 2015 (1) 68:11 2016 (7) 4:6;52:15;53:2; 54:3,18,24;59:11 2016-17 (2) 51:11;68:12 2017 (10) 3:10;51:1;52:15, 20;53:7;54:3,12,18; 72:20;111:13 2017-18 (2) 51:10;53:5 2018 (15) 3:3;52:15;53:2; 54:4,12,24;55:13,15, 17,22,25;59:11; 72:20;73:4;75:2 2018-19 (2) 51:4;58:14 2019 (4) 6:2,5;7:6;102:17 20-minute (1) 176:8 20-something (1) 122:3 20-year (1) 124:25 21 (3) 122:23;125:22; 143:23 21- (1) 140:24 21st (3) 50:25;57:17;61:20 22% (1) 72:21 23% (1) 159:20 26 (1) 58:8 27 (1) 72:20 27% (1) 52:25 270 (3) 47:10;48:3;108:14 275 (1) 115:12 29th (1) 153:17 2nd (3) 26:5,19;56:2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>3 (1) 99:17 30 (6) 4:3,6;28:25; 102:16;170:7;177:20 30% (1) 29:3 300 (1) 143:25 30th (1) 109:17 31 (3) 52:8,22;78:13 3-2 (1) 99:11 335 (1) 15:16 3-6 (1) 48:17 37 (1) 58:11 3-8 (1) 48:15 380 (2) 8:5;168:14 3-B1 (1) 87:5 3rd (10) 26:6,19;55:19; 56:20,23;61:23;69:9; 71:12;77:7,9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>4 (2) 54:1;71:10 4% (1) 53:7 4-0 (1) 150:17 40% (2) 77:8;160:2 409 (1) 53:17 414.6 (1) 53:19 42.57 (1) 52:6 462 (2) 3:10,12 4th (11) 17:11,22;51:20; 52:21,22;53:25; 54:20;59:12;69:9; 74:11,12</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>5 (17) 5:2;27:10;62:15,</p>	<p>19;152:20,25;153:4, 10;154:1,1,2,21,23; 155:6,11;160:20; 171:15 50 (2) 161:2,3 500 (1) 160:19 510 (1) 56:2 540 (1) 13:12 55% (1) 15:21 56 (5) 57:21,23;58:8,9,10 579 (1) 55:18 5th (11) 17:14,16,22,24; 25:10;53:16;55:17, 20,25;161:24;162:5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>6 (10) 152:25;153:11; 154:3,7,19,21,23,25; 155:21;156:10 6% (2) 52:17,20 6.23.7 (1) 170:25 60% (2) 30:19,20 60-something (1) 122:4 650 (1) 45:24 65th (3) 120:12;135:22,24 6-8 (2) 8:4;168:13 6th (4) 53:25;54:20;56:21; 66:6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>7 (2) 51:23;54:2 7% (1) 39:12 70th (2) 17:15,24 71 (1) 117:8 74 (1) 48:4 75 (1) 77:1 77.5% (1) 16:3</p>	<p>78% (2) 72:22;73:8 7-month (1) 56:2 7th (12) 51:25;52:21,24,25; 53:15,18;54:13,21; 55:2;59:13;79:7; 162:5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p>8 (5) 35:3;45:20;51:23; 54:2;71:10 800 (1) 55:21 80th (1) 17:16 82% (1) 55:2 83rd (1) 16:6 84th (2) 17:16,24 88 (1) 119:9 8th (11) 48:3,9;54:19,21; 56:23;74:11;77:7; 78:2;79:7;92:24; 161:24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9</p> <p>9:28 (1) 44:25 9:34 (1) 44:25 90 (1) 65:8 9-12 (1) 115:11 91st (2) 17:14,23 936 (1) 120:5 94% (1) 26:1 941 (1) 159:19 95 (1) 65:8 96.6% (1) 15:16 97 (2) 159:9;160:17 97% (1) 30:15 99% (1) 65:9 9th (1) 143:20</p>
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