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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

March 14, 2018
10:30 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. IVY PFEFFER	Chairperson/Deputy Commissioner
DR. MIKE HERNANDEZ	State Supt./Office of Coordinated Support and Service
MR. MIKE WILSON	Attorney & Education Advocate
MS. TOYCE NEWTON	Past State Board of Ed. Member
DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS	Past State Board of Ed. Member

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. JENNIFER DAVIS	ADE Staff Attorney
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ALSO APPEARING:

MS. ALEXANDRA BOYD	Public School Program Coordinator
MR. WILLIAM FELTON	Superintendent Rockbridge Montessori School
MR. TRIPP WALTER	Attorney, APSRC
MS. SALIHA QAZI	Fiscal and Administrative Services
MS. KRISTIN HUGHES	ADE
MS. LISA TYLER	Special Education Unit
MR. FREDDIE SCOTT	Learning Services Operations Mgr.
MS. MELISSA JACKS	Office of Educator Licensure Coord.
ROY CAUSBIE	Standards for Accreditation, ADE
KEN RICH	Director of Finance Services, APSRC

LOCATION:

Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality
- Auditorium
5301 Northshore Drive
North Little Rock, Arkansas 72118

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P R O C E E D I N G S

DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Good morning everyone.

PANEL MEMBERS: Morning.

DR. PFEFFER: At this time we'll call to order the March 14, 2018, meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel.

I would like to welcome everyone to the ADEQ auditorium and, as always, we do appreciate our friends here at ADEQ for allowing us to use this facility while we're awaiting for our renovations to be completed at the Department.

At this time please silence all electronic devices.

And we have with us this morning -- we've got a couple of our panel members who are not here, but with us we do have Mr. Mike Wilson, and we also have Ms. Toyce Newton, Dr. Mike Hernandez, and Dr. Naccaman Williams, and I am Ivy Pfeffer, Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Education.

As Chair it's my goal to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing, and I will request that each person speaking, please, state your

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1 name and title for the record. I will ask that
2 you continue to speak clearly into the
3 microphone for the benefit of the panel, the
4 audience, and the viewing audience. The entire
5 meeting is being live streamed and recorded.
6 Ms. Sharon Hill [sic], our court reporter, will
7 be providing a transcript of the meeting and it
8 will be posted on the ADE website.

9 And so at this time we will look at our
10 consent agenda. We have minutes from the
11 previous meeting on the consent agenda.

12 Is -- does anyone need to discuss those
13 minutes?

14 If not, I'll accept a motion on the
15 consent agenda.

16 DR. WILLIAMS: So moved.

17 MS. NEWTON: Second.

18 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion and a
19 second. All those in favor?

20 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

21 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. The consent agenda
22 has been accepted; so we will move on to our
23 action agenda.

24 And at this time we have the action agenda
25 item for Rockbridge Montessori. And our

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1 attorney, Ms. Davis, is going to explain the
2 hearing process, voting process, and what the
3 panel needs to do to review the report to make
4 a recommendation on the -- on the charter this
5 morning.

6 MS. DAVIS: Hi. Good morning. Jennifer
7 Davis, Staff Attorney for the Department.

8 The procedures that you're going to follow
9 today will be that the Charter will have 20
10 minutes to make its presentation to you. After
11 that the only opposition will be if there is
12 any public comment. There is no official
13 opposition time, so they will have 20 minutes
14 and you may ask any questions of the Charter,
15 you can ask any questions of the Department or
16 anyone you feel may have answers to the
17 questions to help you make your decision today.

18 And I think that Alexandra will cover it
19 but, you know, because they are on probation at
20 this point, you can either choose to release
21 them from probation, extend probation, revoke
22 the Charter, amend the Charter in other ways,
23 or take other action; and we will get to that a
24 little bit further after your presentation when
25 you're ready for that.

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1 But those persons that will be providing
2 any information to you today, including
3 Department staff, outside of the attorneys,
4 will need to be sworn in. So if you want to do
5 that before and get kind of everybody
6 collectively, that will probably be easier.

7 Oh, yes, also you do have your Google Docs
8 to make your notes for why you voted the way
9 that you do when it comes up for that, so that
10 way the Charter will have it as well as the
11 State Board.

12 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. We'll go ahead and
13 move to Ms. Boyd to introduce us to this agenda
14 item and then we will swear everyone in.

15 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair.

16 Alexandra Boyd, Director of Charter
17 Schools.

18 Today for your consideration you have the
19 probationary status of Rockbridge Montessori
20 School. On Wednesday, April 19, 2017, the
21 Charter Authorizing Panel met and voted to
22 place Rockbridge Montessori School on probation
23 for one year. Today you will consider that
24 probationary status and decide to take action
25 upon it.

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1 From the Charter we have the
2 Superintendent, Will Felton, who will start us
3 off.

4 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So at this time let's
5 go ahead and swear in anyone who would be
6 providing testimony today.

7 Ms. Davis, that would also include our ADE
8 folks?

9 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

10 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So let's go ahead and
11 do this. All representatives from Rockbridge
12 Montessori School, from the Department, and
13 anyone who would be speaking in opposition,
14 please stand until you receive the oath. Okay.

15 (WHEREUPON, the witnesses were sworn by
16 the chair.)

17 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

18 And, Mr. Felton, at this time, if you will
19 come forward and identify yourself for the
20 record, we will have -- you have up to 20
21 minutes for your presentation.

22 MR. FELTON: Okay. William Felton,
23 Superintendent of Rockbridge Montessori.

24 I did supply some papers for you guys
25 that -- over the questions that you asked to

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1 address. I know Dr. Owoh was talking about the
2 reading instruction, and so we kind of
3 highlighted that if you wanted to look at that.

4 You know, there was a lot so I kind of
5 just went through what we have covered, the
6 steps that we've taken. This was a literacy
7 plan drawn by the teachers and myself of the
8 changes that we've made from Montessori. There
9 was some confusion on how I presented the Whole
10 Language. Montessori is mostly Whole Language,
11 so there was some confusion about, you know,
12 what does that look like and then the Science
13 of Reading and then what we made changes on,
14 and you can see on it that there was -- there
15 have been a lot of changes; like more phonics,
16 phonetic awareness, how we dealt with the
17 spelling and the writing portion; reading
18 comprehension has been in place, and other
19 things, small group instruction. If you need a
20 few minutes to look over that we can.

21 So one of the things that --

22 MS. BOYD: Panel members, the document
23 he's referring to is entitled "Literacy Update"
24 on the agenda, so that's what we're looking at
25 right now.

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1 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. FELTON: There were some things that
3 we kind of -- we looked for and what the
4 research said would give us our biggest impact,
5 so some things we put -- minor changes were
6 made, but then the biggest -- PD and those
7 changes will be done over the summer, and then
8 those will be implemented in next year for
9 those changes, because we knew we couldn't do
10 everything in one year and we didn't want to
11 rush it, we wanted to make sure that the
12 changes had impact and were going to be long
13 lasting.

14 Again, to remind you, our sixth grade --
15 fifth and sixth grade literacy teacher is
16 acting as our literacy coach too. She has a
17 master's in reading, she is, you know -- also
18 we have been accepted -- two of our teachers in
19 the Read Program so they are going to do
20 training over the summer too and they are
21 working with that. We also have a literacy
22 consultant coming from APSRC to observe
23 classrooms and give feedback on that.

24 We're very excited about the changes. The
25 teachers are very excited about the new

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1 transition, about what's happening. The
2 Montessori merge has been very successful
3 because Montessori has a three-hour block of
4 what they call sustained uninterrupted, and in
5 that three-hour block there is a task they have
6 to do, certain tasks that they have to
7 accomplish and there is choice time. And so
8 what we've done is within that task time,
9 that's where the word source and the phonetic
10 practice and the small group instruction is
11 happening, so that's where we tied in the
12 Science of Reading skills and replaced the
13 Whole Language with that, so it was a natural
14 fit just to replace that there. And so they
15 still have that three-hour block, which the
16 parents were -- you know, were happy with that
17 change, so they still have the ability to focus
18 and concentrate during that time, which is a
19 component of Montessori.

20 Montessori has the handwriting component
21 with the spelling. They had the component
22 where they focused on words that had the same
23 rhymes and onsets, but they didn't do any
24 direct instruction on that so we just entered
25 that in there. Matter of fact, there was very

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1 little direct instruction so we've trained the
2 teachers on how to do that component for
3 Science of Reading.

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: Can I ask a question?

5 MR. FELTON: I didn't know if y'all had
6 questions or not. I could talk forever, I
7 don't want to do that for you all guys.

8 DR. PFEFFER: Well, so you have 20 minutes
9 in order to go through your presentation.

10 MR. FELTON: Okay.

11 DR. PFEFFER: It might be good if you go
12 ahead and present anything that you want to
13 present --

14 MR. FELTON: Okay.

15 DR. PFEFFER: -- and then we can stop and
16 do the questions if we have then, and that will
17 make it easier and in fairness for you.

18 MR. FELTON: Okay. No problem.

19 So one of the other things we changed was
20 vocabulary, there was really not any vocabulary
21 instruction, unless the student during choice
22 time wanted to do a project about, let's say,
23 whales, and then vocabulary naturally came up
24 in that. So we, basically, kind of worked with
25 teachers on how to build vocabulary skills.

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1 And then for reading in that area, we looked at
2 Greek and Latin roots, we felt like that was
3 the -- the easiest way to get vocabulary
4 introduced for that time, and then working with
5 teachers on context clues, which is a reading
6 strategy, so we did focus on the biggest
7 reading strategy for reading comprehension. So
8 instead of them asking questions at the end of
9 each book or the end of each chapter, we
10 focused on reading strategies when they were
11 reading.

12 They were doing whole group reading, so
13 they would read a chapter book to the kids and
14 ask questions, so we went through and we got a
15 whole lot of books donated, we got chapter
16 books and everything, so we talked to them
17 about small group reading and how to work with
18 them, literacy circles, how to have
19 discussions, journal entries, and that turned
20 more into small group and the discussions
21 became richer, and then we have more time on
22 task at that too.

23 We did introduce a Daily Five Component,
24 which is read to self and read to a partner,
25 this is also during the three-hour block. And

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1 for kids that are struggling, this is their
2 intervention time where they will read with an
3 interventionist where we do fluency scores and
4 DRAs for biweekly assessments; and then also
5 our SPED is using this too and another program
6 to monitor growth.

7 On special education, we have complied
8 with all components. Some of the things at the
9 last time I spoke with you, there were a few
10 things that we were waiting for the ADE to
11 finish, they worked with us, we have completed
12 all of those. We will continue to work with
13 them to make sure that we stay in compliance.
14 They been a great help for us and we will
15 continue working with Jeryca with the State who
16 will be working with us, you know, on an
17 ongoing basis.

18 There was some issues where -- what we
19 were going to keep once the support is removed.
20 Of course we're going to continue working with
21 APSRC.

22 I think once all those procedures were in
23 place -- when I got there there really
24 wasn't -- not any procedures or protocols, but
25 now they are in place, that a lot of that will

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1 kind of settle in itself. But having the
2 curriculum components from the APSRC, the
3 special education liaison in place, that's
4 going to help us keep that on time. Our school
5 board members being there for a year and they
6 are -- they have gotten their professional
7 development, I've gotten my professional
8 development that's going to help in that area,
9 and then having -- I can't see the Department
10 of Ed not -- like, every time I've called they
11 have always -- I can't see them, like, not
12 being a help if I call for a question, so I
13 don't see that going away either.

14 We've -- and there were -- there were a
15 lot of things that were missing that are now
16 there that will prevent any other further
17 actions. We just finished the ELPA21, which
18 they didn't finish last year and it was
19 finished successfully, so that was another area
20 that they -- they were worried about.

21 So as far as support goes, I think we have
22 in place a lot of things that will prevent
23 these things from happening again. And we have
24 a support from the APSRC and from the ADE
25 that's going to kind of help us if we need.

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1 For finance, I still meet weekly with the
2 accounting team, we go over everything weekly,
3 our projected budget, our ending budget, what
4 we spent, journal entries, projections, all --
5 everything that needs to go over so that we
6 know that we're not overspending. We're ending
7 each month with more money brought in than we
8 spend, just about. We're looking at where we
9 are going to be come October of next year,
10 September of next year, do we have enough cash
11 revenue in order to continue before money comes
12 back in. We're actually very excited that we
13 will.

14 You know, I think one of the best parts is
15 that, you know, we're looking at a \$102,000
16 carryover, our beginning balance, which is more
17 than it was at the end of last year with 146,
18 we're very excited about that; our actual
19 budget is going to be more than we started out
20 with this year. So we worked very hard to
21 watch what we're spending and we even have
22 identified other areas that we can cut for next
23 year's budget to help us save, and all those
24 cuts will not even touch student achievements
25 or what the students need to be successful.

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1 We're looking at things like, you know, we can
2 mow our own yard, that's not a big deal.

3 So I think finances is doing really well.
4 The teachers work really hard to make sure
5 that, without impacting student achievement,
6 that we make sure that we focused on the
7 teaching at hand. And we don't spend a lot of
8 money on the curriculum because the --
9 everything we need is kind of, like, right
10 there in the Science of Reading, we're using
11 the engagement support, it's all there for us
12 to access online.

13 I'm sorry. My mouth is a little dry,
14 sorry about that.

15 We've done all the reporting on time,
16 we're complying with the ADE reporting. And
17 then our projections with the finances are
18 good, as I just shared with you.

19 And then for recruitment we had a -- the
20 River Valley just closed so we have a
21 recruitment night with those parents; about
22 seven families showed up last night. We had an
23 option with them, two or three parents signed
24 up. We have about 20 kindergarteners signed up
25 online, we have about 20 families that want to

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1 go next year, 91 percent of the our kids are
2 coming back; all of our teachers are coming
3 back; all the board members are coming back.
4 And we really haven't started any heavy
5 recruitment. Of course, I'm a little leery
6 doing that with our status kind of in the air,
7 I don't want to promise parents a lot of things
8 and then having to; so --

9 But overall, I mean, to be honest with
10 you, I'm really excited about the work we've
11 done. I mean, I really am. I'm kind of
12 passionate about this school, I'm really happy
13 with the kids, they are really working hard. I
14 have an amazing staff, I have amazing parents.

15 I think, you know, if we get to the point
16 where at some point we come off probation, I
17 think that that would raise some -- raise kind
18 of a cloud over us right now that a lot of
19 people are worried, that was brought up last
20 time by some parents about the probationary
21 status. And I don't think it's like a -- it's
22 keeping us from doing what we need to do to be
23 successful, but it is like a -- you know, like
24 a cloud.

25 And I know our numbers, as far as us goes,

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1 you know, but I think it's very important for
2 us now not to have large numbers in our school,
3 I think the quality is important right now
4 versus quantity. I mean we are a small school
5 and I think right now that's okay. We have a
6 huge number of students that need our
7 one-on-one attention to get them caught up,
8 things like that.

9 So, I mean, I think that helps address
10 some of the questions you had. If I have not
11 covered anything, just ask me a question, I'll
12 be happy to do that. I don't want to ramble on
13 because I'm really good at that. It's like
14 that's one of my specialties; so -- and my
15 mother said I talked too much last time I was
16 up here; so --

17 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So if -- so that
18 concludes your presentation then?

19 MR. FELTON: Yes, ma'am.

20 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. And do we have anyone
21 here to speak in opposition?

22 MS. BOYD: No.

23 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So at this time we
24 can begin with questions.

25 And, panel, we have -- the Department of

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1 Education staff has prepared some information
2 as well, so depending on your questions you,
3 you know, may need to be specific as to whether
4 or not they are questions for Mr. Felton or
5 questions for the Department staff.

6 Why don't we start, though, we'll just
7 start with Dr. Williams, and -- and go around.
8 Do you have anything specific for Mr. Felton
9 based on maybe what he's presented or something
10 that you didn't hear that you would have a
11 question about, and then we can maybe move to
12 some of the department things.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

14 DR. PFEFFER: So, Mr. Williams?

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I was, during the --
16 I was reading the visit by APSRC as it relates
17 to the math, and I understand -- I could see --
18 I'm a former math teacher.

19 MR. FELTON: Oh, cool.

20 DR. WILLIAMS: So I can see where that
21 would be a challenge; and my kids attended
22 Montessori when they were young too, so I can
23 kind of see where there would be a challenge
24 for the older kids with the Montessori
25 method --

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1 MR. FELTON: Yes.

2 DR. WILLIAMS: -- as it relates to math.

3 Can you all just talk to me a little bit
4 about where you're going with that and what do
5 the -- what do the math scores look like now
6 and where do you hope for them to be?

7 MR. FELTON: Okay. Good question.

8 I -- actually, I teach the sixth and
9 seventh grade math classes --

10 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

11 MR. FELTON: -- and then I assist in
12 teaching the fourth and fifth, so this is --
13 this is a really good, and I'm going to get a
14 little bit excited because I'm a math teacher.

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Yeah.

16 MR. FELTON: When I got there I realized
17 the first issue is for K, 1, and 2, they do a
18 lot -- you know, they go really deep, you know,
19 they have the kids can count to 1,000 and all
20 that stuff, but for the common core there is --
21 there is a kind of a deep connection with ten
22 and then 100 and 1,000 and they were supposed
23 to do all of these things and they -- they were
24 going broad but not deep.

25 Even though they were doing manipulatives

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1 and doing all these things and were
2 understanding on a concrete level, conceptually
3 they weren't getting there; so what we did is
4 we continued to let them expand with chains and
5 tubes and beads and all those things, but then
6 we helped the teachers find the standards and
7 understand the standards of what a
8 kindergartener is supposed to know at the end
9 of that year, so that they know all the ways to
10 make ten, all the ways to make 100.

11 The other thing is, is by the time they
12 get -- we help the teacher understand that by
13 the third grade that we need to start looking
14 at things like we're going to introduce CGI,
15 and we're going to introduce the standards in a
16 more kind of specific manner, and that's where
17 Engage New York comes in, because we need to
18 kind of pull away from the tools. But also we
19 introduced the tools to the ACT Language so,
20 like, what is this tool, how does it tie into
21 the ACT. So this board is actually a hundred
22 chart in this question.

23 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

24 MR. FELTON: And for some, the light went
25 off with some of the kids, like, oh, that's

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1 what -- that's what this tool is to this. And
2 when that happened, when the vocabulary and the
3 tools started connecting, that helped some of
4 them.

5 In sixth and seventh grade and eighth
6 grade, you really kind of push the Montessori
7 away and then you focus on those things; so --
8 oh, thank you very much. Thank you.

9 So, like, right now my kids are -- we're
10 working on ratio tables, plotting them on the
11 coordinate grid, if they are given two points
12 can they find the other two points for a
13 square, those kind of things; so that's not
14 really Montessori at all but it is a standard.

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

16 MR. FELTON: And so by the time they reach
17 those upper grades they really have to focus on
18 common core; and I think in the beginning that
19 was not happening when I -- before I got there.

20 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

21 MR. FELTON: But now it is so we had to
22 play a lot of catch up.

23 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. That makes sense to
24 me because I was having trouble marrying the
25 two together for the upper kind of --

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1 MR. FELTON: I did too, exactly.

2 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

3 MR. FELTON: And that's why when -- when
4 you talk to our teachers and me now and when
5 the parents come, we had to explain to them,
6 like, it's actually not pure Montessori
7 anymore, it's kind of an amalgamation of the
8 two, both in literary, reading, science,
9 especially science now because it's not
10 exploratory anymore, but with the generation of
11 science standards, it's very explicit, very
12 direct, and that's why it's different.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

14 DR. HERNANDEZ: I did have one question,
15 and I'm going to change it based on what you
16 said. Is that -- so what I'm understanding is
17 you're just kind of having a -- maybe not a
18 full break, but a real modification on what the
19 traditional Montessori is to kind of what
20 you're doing? I read that in your literacy
21 notes --

22 MR. FELTON: Uh-huh.

23 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- is that you have --
24 there is one way of doing it but now you're
25 doing it, you know, a little bit different way

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1 with the Science of Reading and those kind of
2 things?

3 MR. FELTON: Yes, sir. We've -- I've
4 actually talked to the Ozark Montessori and
5 other Montessoris around the United States that
6 had to do the same thing. I figured there were
7 other schools, public Montessoris that had to
8 do the same thing, so I reached out to them,
9 they had some ideas and then the teachers and I
10 worked together. It really came down to
11 that --

12 DR. PFEFFER: Mr. Felton, will you speak
13 into the microphone, please?

14 MR. FELTON: Yeah.

15 It really came down to the fact that my
16 teachers were really smart. You know, they had
17 to take three years of training in Montessori,
18 but they were never -- like, the standards were
19 never introduced to them. So once they started
20 seeing the standards it was, like, we don't
21 even cover this, like, this is not even in
22 there. So once we started doing that, they
23 were, like, well, it was -- they really started
24 saying, well, then we have to put this away,
25 why are we even covering fractions in the first

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1 grade, like, that's not even appropriate, so
2 together we started moving things around.

3 But they wanted to hold true to her ideas
4 about brain development and what students can
5 do and can't do on the exploratory side, and so
6 they wanted to hold true to those pieces, and
7 that's where holding to that three-hour work
8 block or respect, focus, those kind of ideas,
9 the cosmic truth and those things, they wanted
10 to keep those pieces in there. So they eat
11 lunch together, they serve each other, those
12 kind of things they wanted to hold true to, and
13 I was, like, we can work with that.

14 DR. HERNANDEZ: So my real question,
15 Dr. Pfeffer, is that, you know, I know we
16 recently got our -- our cycle reports in where
17 we can see kind of the average daily membership
18 in the second quarter and that, you know, there
19 has been a drop from first quarter to second
20 quarter of about 20 kids.

21 MR. FELTON: Uh-huh.

22 DR. HERNANDEZ: And so we know we're in
23 the second semester, so what is that looking
24 like for you guys in terms of enrollment right
25 now?

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1 MR. FELTON: Did you have 117, is that
2 what you have?

3 DR. HERNANDEZ: 117 was what the second
4 quarter was.

5 MR. FELTON: Yeah. There was some --
6 this -- this falls on me. Being a new
7 Superintendent I didn't know to look for kids
8 that were not assigned to classes, so there
9 were some kids not assigned to classes and I
10 didn't find them until the double entry report.
11 So there were kids hidden I didn't know about
12 and that's where a lot of them fell. We didn't
13 lose them, they were just out there. And so
14 when I dropped them, that's how we lost a lot
15 of them. We have not really lost a lot of kids
16 since the 1st. We are up to 121 now and we
17 just added a new student today.

18 I feel like we're adding -- we are going
19 to be adding a new kindergarten class next
20 year, and we're adding eighth grade next year.
21 All of our eighth graders are coming back and
22 we're adding two new ones that have signed up.

23 I feel positive about that. Again, I
24 don't want a huge -- a whole lot of kids coming
25 next year, but we will take anyone that comes

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1 in the building, because I really feel like we
2 still need to focus on the quality of it and
3 fixing some things that need to be fixed, that
4 if we had 325, might take longer to fix. Does
5 that make sense?

6 DR. HERNANDEZ: (Nodding head up and
7 down.)

8 MR. FELTON: So, but if we have 325, we'll
9 do it with 325. Does that -- did I answer your
10 question?

11 DR. HERNANDEZ: Uh-huh.

12 DR. PFEFFER: Ms. Newton?

13 MS. NEWTON: I don't have a question
14 specifically, but I would like to wait until
15 the staff responds.

16 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Go ahead.

17 MR. WILSON: Mr. Felton, you mentioned
18 that the Board situation and the administration
19 situation had more or less stabilized. Do I
20 understand that correctly?

21 MR. FELTON: Yes. This year we've had --
22 we've had a new board beginning this year and
23 myself and we've kept them. They have done
24 their professional development. We've added
25 new board members this year; most of the Board

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1 were parents so we've added a community member;
2 there is a church member that we -- we lease
3 from the church across the street, they are
4 wanting to add a board member; and we've
5 rotated two out and two in due to moving.
6 Not -- not because they wanted to quit but
7 because they -- jobs moved them. You know,
8 life choices.

9 MR. WILSON: Have those changes or
10 evolutions occurred since the first of this
11 year?

12 MR. FELTON: Yes.

13 MR. WILSON: So they are -- they are
14 fairly new --

15 MR. FELTON: Yes.

16 MR. WILSON: -- at this point?

17 Do you anticipate any further governance
18 or board changes in the short run?

19 MR. FELTON: They haven't spoke of any.
20 You know, life happens. You know, it's a
21 voluntary position so, you know, you never
22 know, death in the family, job changes,
23 military deployment. As you know you just --
24 you don't know, but I don't anticipate any.

25 The president has stuck the whole entire

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1 time, the core members have been there. I feel
2 confident the mission has always been the same,
3 the vision has been the same for the Board
4 since I've been there, since they have hired
5 me, that vision and mission has been the same
6 that they have set.

7 The Board president is here, if you would
8 like to talk to him.

9 MR. WILSON: You mentioned that
10 90-some-odd percent of the -- of the
11 students --

12 MR. FELTON: 91 percent.

13 MR. WILSON: -- have reapplied or will be
14 there?

15 MR. FELTON: That are coming back, yes.

16 MR. WILSON: That's as of?

17 MR. FELTON: Today.

18 MR. WILSON: Okay. Well, they have
19 reapplied for the next school year starting
20 September, I guess?

21 MR. FELTON: Well, July. We're actually
22 starting in July.

23 MR. WILSON: Okay. That's all. Thank
24 you.

25 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

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1 MR. WALTER: Madam Chairman, I -- if, with
2 Mr. Wilson's permission, can add a little bit
3 more on the governance piece.

4 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Will you state your
5 name for the record and you're recognized.

6 MR. WALTER: Yes, Madam Chair. My name is
7 Tripp Walter, I am a staff attorney with the
8 Arkansas Public School Resource Center.

9 Mr. Wilson, I just wanted to add on, I
10 look at it in kind of two pieces. The
11 administration, of course, is primarily
12 represented by Mr. Felton; I think he has
13 brought a stabilizing force to that situation,
14 as well as the accomplishment that he's --
15 accomplishments that he's done and the programs
16 and plans that he has that he's already
17 detailed and continues to detail to this panel.

18 As to the Board situation, I would just
19 add to that, I attend every meeting of the
20 Rockbridge Board, and Mr. -- pardon me,
21 Mr. Freddie Scott from the ADE is regularly in
22 attendance as well, so both of us have been
23 appearing on a regular basis to assist the
24 Board and Mr. Felton as to the conduct of the
25 meetings and both the ADE and the APSRC have

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1 been providing training for the board and will
2 continue to do so.

3 MR. WILSON: And the administration?

4 MR. WALTER: And the administration. Yes,
5 sir.

6 DR. PFEFFER: All right. Mr. Felton, I
7 did have a question.

8 So you have -- this year you were through
9 grade seven; correct?

10 MR. FELTON: Yes, ma'am.

11 DR. PFEFFER: And you are planning to add
12 grade eight next year?

13 MR. FELTON: Yes, ma'am.

14 DR. PFEFFER: How many seventh graders are
15 coming back?

16 MR. FELTON: Eleven.

17 DR. PFEFFER: Eleven seventh graders will
18 be -- okay.

19 MR. FELTON: And we will add two
20 additional eighth graders next year so that
21 will be 13 eighth graders.

22 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Have you considered,
23 with -- have you considered not adding the
24 eighth grade to kind of try to continue to get
25 everything fleshed out or do you -- do you feel

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1 the capacity is there to go ahead and add the
2 eighth grade with --

3 MR. FELTON: Yes.

4 DR. PFEFFER: -- you know, additional
5 staffing and additional curriculum requirements
6 and --

7 MR. FELTON: Yes, ma'am. I feel -- well,
8 to be honest with you, the teacher that
9 teaches, that would teach that is actually
10 teaching the sixth and seventh grade now. So
11 in Montessori seventh and eighth grade is
12 considered what they call the young adolescent
13 community and they are supposed to be together.
14 The -- the biggest number I have right now is
15 fourth, fifth, and sixth, so we had to break
16 the sixth grade off and put them in the seventh
17 grade. So next year the seventh and eighth
18 grade will actually be a full class, so she
19 will teach that class and then that will
20 balance out the third, fourth, and fifth; so
21 actually it will balance it all out.

22 And then I have two first, second, and
23 third grade classes, so that will actually stay
24 the same. And if our numbers -- if we get
25 another 15 kindergarteners I'll have to have a

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1 second kindergarten class for that.

2 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So walk me back
3 through, then again the grouping, because the
4 grouping is another thing that kind of goes
5 back to the Montessori model; correct?

6 MR. FELTON: Yeah, they are multilevel.
7 They have -- the kindergarten class is by
8 itself. There is traditionally a third -- a
9 three and four year old program, which we have
10 not added yet. Then there's kindergarten,
11 first, second, and third is a group; fourth,
12 fifth, and sixth is a group; and then seventh
13 and eighth. And then they have a high school
14 alternative but I haven't studied all that yet.
15 I don't know what that's about all.

16 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

17 MS. NEWTON: Ms. Pfeffer, I did have a
18 question.

19 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

20 MS. NEWTON: I -- and it's a general
21 question in a sense that the adjustment that --
22 not that -- the adjustments that you've made
23 based on the -- your status with the Arkansas
24 Department of Ed, in deviating some from the
25 Montessori model, how does that impact the

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1 fidelity of the model, number one; and how does
2 that place you with the Montessori philosophy
3 or institutional accreditation?

4 You know, it's one thing for the State
5 accreditation to be concerned about some
6 things --

7 MR. FELTON: Right.

8 MS. NEWTON: -- but to make an adjustment
9 that ultimately might impact the fidelity of
10 the model, so where does that place your school
11 as it relates to the national Montessori?

12 MR. FELTON: Right. So that was a big
13 concern of mine so I read through the Charter.
14 There -- there was nothing in the Charter that
15 we had to be accredited. We originally, when I
16 got there, they wanted to be accredited so we
17 were in the process of that. However, the --
18 and just to be honest with you, my primary
19 concern is for the kids of Arkansas and for
20 those students to be prepared for whatever they
21 want to do in the future, college, military,
22 whatever, and to have them ready for that. And
23 if we stop at eighth grade, with good
24 conscience, they need to be ready for ninth
25 grade where ever they go, and the only way they

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1 can be ready to go is if they have mastered the
2 standards by the end of the eighth grade.
3 Montessori does not cover those standards
4 completely, so there has to be some deviation.

5 Now, unfortunately, that requires some
6 changes. When I met with the staff and we
7 talked about what is true to Montessori,
8 what -- what is -- when Maria Montessori
9 start -- Dr. Maria Montessori envisioned this,
10 what did she envision, and they laid out what
11 was true, and it was about choice, exploration,
12 community, cosmic -- a cosmic belief that you
13 know you have a place in the world, that you
14 are bigger than just one person, that you are
15 destined to do something, that -- that it's
16 more of a constructive approach of teaching
17 where it's not a teacher just lecturing in the
18 front of the room, and there are a few pieces
19 of community in there. And I think if we hold
20 true to those basic concepts, then we're
21 holding true to Montessori.

22 Now, there was -- the original leadership
23 wanted all teachers to become AMI certified.
24 There is no requirement for that, but we are
25 continuing our Montessori training, even I

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1 myself, to make sure that we hold true to those
2 concepts.

3 But in all -- with all fidelity, I have to
4 make sure that they're meeting the standards,
5 and the only way we can do that is there has to
6 be changes and that's going to cut into some
7 things that -- that doesn't work, the data
8 shows it, and that just going to have to -- if
9 down the line -- I don't see anywhere, I've
10 researched it, I don't see anywhere where that
11 would take Montessori out of our name. Ozark,
12 the Montessori school in Ozark has done very
13 similar things and they are still considered a
14 Montessori school and they are public; so --
15 and what I gather from the River Valley parents
16 last night, they have done some things in a
17 private setting. So does that help?

18 MS. NEWTON: Yes, sir. It does.

19 DR. PFEFFER: If there are no other
20 questions for Mr. Felton at this time, we will
21 go through and hear from different members from
22 the Department of Ed.

23 My document is not loading. I wanted to
24 kind of go through and cover those topics that
25 had been of concern and -- and just get -- just

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1 get the staff maybe to update that and we can
2 ask them some specific questions, if that
3 works.

4 So one of the -- one of the big issues
5 initially was --

6 Oh, okay. There we go.

7 All right. So we have finance, special
8 education, the governance, and compliance with
9 ADE reporting. And I think the compliance with
10 ADE reporting might be blended in with some of
11 those others, so do we want to start with the
12 finance? And if -- if we can get somebody to
13 come and maybe just go over with us -- if there
14 are any documents that we need to look at, if
15 you can point us to those, and we'll be looking
16 at those while you just give us an update and
17 we can ask some questions.

18 MS. QAZI: Saliha Qazi, Program Fiscal
19 Manager and Fiscal Services and Support.

20 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Wait. We're having
21 trouble hearing you so get right up in that
22 microphone, please.

23 MS. QAZI: Saliha Qazi, Program Fiscal
24 Manager and Fiscal Services and Support.

25 So I have been working with the Rockbridge

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1 finances. Two of the -- two of the documents
2 that I always -- always requested each charter
3 is to send their cash flows and with their
4 projections for the upcoming months and the
5 bank reconciliation. So if you will look at
6 the last two items on the addenda, it shows you
7 the budget summary page, which is the one
8 that's purple highlights. And then the cash
9 flow projection is right underneath it. Might
10 have to zoom in to see the fine print.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. We are still having
12 trouble hearing you, you're going to have to --

13 MS. QAZI: I'll try.

14 DR. PFEFFER: Yes. Yes.

15 MS. QAZI: Were you able to locate the
16 documents?

17 Okay. So the first page, which is
18 something that I run for all Charter schools;
19 schools tell us how the school is progressing.
20 This report is presenting numbers up until
21 December 31, 2017, and it shows -- the first
22 line is showing you the current and actuals,
23 and the second line shows you what was actually
24 projected.

25 So as of December their ending cash

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1 balance looks really good in line with what
2 their projections are.

3 Do you have any questions?

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: I have a question.

5 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez, I
6 think, has a question.

7 DR. HERNANDEZ: So as I move through
8 the -- the worksheet here that has -- you know,
9 continues to project out, there is that
10 trending actual column that says 43,800. So
11 what are you -- what are you meaning by that?
12 Is that meaning that you're anticipating if
13 they continue on that their ending balance is
14 going to be --

15 MS. QAZI: 43,000 on books. It's not what
16 they are going to have in the bank. This 43
17 includes their child nutrition, their federal
18 funds, their state funds; and as you know,
19 federal funds are reimbursed, so whatever
20 expenses they are going to have, they are going
21 to be reimbursed in the next month.

22 So we have been in communication with the
23 Superintendent and FREC staff to monitor their
24 expenditures. Since their revenue stream is
25 going to drop, they will have to -- they might

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1 have to send some money back because of the
2 student enrollment issue that they had, and
3 it's cycle two and cycle four that you had
4 already addressed and asked.

5 And then I went ahead in my own worksheet
6 I wanted to make sure that their ending cash
7 balance going into the next three months with
8 all funds look stable as well, and they have
9 projected a lower expenditure going in July
10 because the salaries are going to be less in
11 that month. One of my concerns, which in
12 general I want to ask is, if everything in
13 their finance is current, there are no bills
14 that are being withheld, then I think that they
15 will have a good cash balance going in and they
16 will be able to recover, if they keep
17 monitoring aggressively their expenditures, so
18 they will have a stable ending cash balance.

19 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. And you talked a
20 minute ago about the -- and Mr. Felton alluded
21 to on the number of students.

22 MS. QAZI: Uh-huh.

23 DR. PFEFFER: So how -- do you have with
24 you how many students they were funded on for
25 this year?

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1 MS. QAZI: I don't have that with me.

2 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

3 MS. QAZI: But I know in communication
4 with the APSRC finance staff they have
5 addressed that, so they are aggressively
6 monitoring those students.

7 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. All right.

8 MS. BOYD: Dr. Pfeffer, I would just like
9 to add that since they are in the process of
10 adding grades, that they are funded on current
11 year funding, so it's that -- the 117 number is
12 the number that the State Finance Office is
13 using to distribute revenue.

14 DR. PFEFFER: To do that?

15 MS. BOYD: Uh-huh.

16 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Do you have another
17 question?

18 DR. HERNANDEZ: Not on finance.

19 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. A finance question
20 for Ms. Saliha?

21 All right. And so going back to, also
22 they are talking about reporting. Do you feel
23 comfortable with then that -- their reporting
24 processes now and the -- I think that you
25 mentioned a minute ago that there is more

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1 aggressive oversight? Is that --

2 MS. QAZI: Yes.

3 DR. PFEFFER: -- would that be accurate?

4 MS. QAZI: Yes. And the most important
5 thing that plays a major role is that the
6 communication is very streamlined. Whenever
7 ADE staff addresses a question, it's been
8 answered in a very timely manner. So if there
9 is a finance related question I get immediate
10 feedback, the reports are on time, so yeah.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. All right. That
12 seems to be all right now, so thank you very
13 much.

14 So let's move on to special education if
15 we can have someone from our special education
16 team kind of walk us through any documents we
17 have or provide us just with an overview of
18 what we need to -- what we need to know.

19 MS. HUGHES: Kristin Hughes with the
20 Special Education Unit.

21 MS. TYLER: Lisa Tyler, Special Education
22 Unit.

23 MS. HUGHES: Hi.

24 The Special Education Report can be found
25 on the probationary reporting chart, there is a

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1 special education section in there.

2 After a couple of site visits, they
3 started out with eight corrective action plans;
4 seven of those have been cleared. The one
5 that's not cleared is the compensatory
6 education, only because that's ongoing
7 throughout the end of the school year, so
8 that's still being monitored, it is being
9 provided.

10 They are developing clear, written,
11 district-specific special education procedures
12 to ensure ongoing compliant procedures and
13 practices.

14 We will continue funding a consultant, a
15 Special Education Consultant to those charters
16 that are the highest needs areas, so -- and
17 then I will make quarterly visits next year
18 just to kind of follow up on the special
19 education practices and make sure that the
20 policies are being followed.

21 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

22 MS. TYLER: I think I want to add that
23 they have a new teacher. Was that of January?

24 MS. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

25 MS. TYLER: And from all reports she's

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1 doing an excellent job. Ms. Einhart --
2 Einhorn, from APSRC, the consultant that we
3 have provided support to those charters who are
4 most in need, has a literacy background. We
5 talked on the way over here about what's going
6 on in those special education classrooms in
7 terms of literacy and the Science of Reading,
8 and that some of those children have been moved
9 back into the regular classroom based on their
10 analysis and some kids have been pulled out
11 that they determined that had more need, so we
12 feel good about that.

13 DR. PFEFFER: Do we have questions?

14 DR. WILLIAMS: No.

15 DR. PFEFFER: Specific questions related
16 to that?

17 I think that there were some concerns, and
18 you may have addressed this, about the
19 compensatory education and whether or not
20 it's -- it's going to be made up or, you know,
21 is there -- it looks like that there is a plan
22 to have compensatory -- compensatory education
23 going on through the year?

24 MS. HUGHES: They are currently -- they
25 are currently providing compensatory services.

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1 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Okay. So do you --
2 from a special education standpoint, you said
3 you would continue with the monitoring, support
4 would continue with a consultant.

5 MS. HUGHES: (Nodding head up and down.)

6 DR. PFEFFER: Do you have any concerns
7 right now that you feel aren't being met,
8 something that kind of even might go outside
9 the realm of what the department could address?

10 MS. HUGHES: I -- I don't.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

12 MS. TYLER: And, Dr. Pfeffer, I just
13 wanted to add, in our report we said that we
14 would continue funding a consultant to provide
15 support to those highest need charters and
16 districts that don't belong to a cooperative,
17 and if Rockbridge continues to be one of those
18 highest need charters we will provide that
19 support, but that's yet to be determined.

20 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you for that
21 clarification.

22 Okay. Any other questions?

23 All right. Thank you.

24 Okay. The next area was in relation to
25 the governance, and I know Mr. Wilson asked a

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1 question about that a minute ago. Looks like
2 we have an expert coming up here to provide us
3 with a little information on that.

4 MR. SCOTT: Good morning. Freddie Scott,
5 Operations Manager, Charter Schools Office.

6 DR. PFEFFER: Thank you.

7 MR. SCOTT: In regards to the governance,
8 it's very important that there is ongoing
9 professional development, and already discussed
10 was the level of churn that has occurred with
11 this board.

12 I would have to say that during the time
13 that myself and Tripp Walter with the APSRC
14 have been engaged, that the core members of the
15 Board have been diligent about attending those
16 sessions. And one of the things that we're
17 really interested in doing is ensuring that
18 they had a keen understanding of oversight
19 skills, holding the Superintendent accountable
20 in the areas of academics, facilities, and
21 operations, and also be in the position to ask
22 the right questions, how well are they doing in
23 every board meeting in those areas, how well
24 are we performing in academics, how well are we
25 performing in finances, how well are we

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1 performing in operations. And then finally
2 just more recently, because Rockbridge governs
3 round tables, we have an opportunity to engage
4 in evaluations. So there is a superintendent
5 evaluation process, there is also a board
6 evaluation, how well is the Board doing, and
7 then finally how well are we doing individually
8 as a board member.

9 There has been two board members that
10 recently joined within the last few months,
11 they are excited about participating in those
12 professional development sessions, so it's --
13 they are tracking well because of that. They
14 obviously, whenever you have churn, there is
15 reason to have some level of concern in that
16 regards. We want to keep them in the area of
17 governance and policy in discussions, and not
18 putting their hands in the area of operations.
19 I welcome any questions.

20 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. All right.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Just a question: What is
22 the process of -- of electing their board
23 members? Are they elected or are they just
24 volunteering? What is the process?

25 And this may be a question for -- for

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1 them, if --

2 MR. SCOTT: So it's going to vary by
3 bylaws, by school.

4 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, sir.

5 MR. SCOTT: In this particular case they
6 are appointed versus elected.

7 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

8 MR. SCOTT: So one of the things that, in
9 discussion, is the importance of looking at
10 skill sets and having diversity in skill sets.
11 And they have been true to form to having
12 someone on the Board, because some are parents,
13 in understanding the academic model. They
14 recently lost someone who had a financial
15 background so as they look to onboard, they
16 look at any gaps and they take that into
17 consideration when they are looking to onboard.

18 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

19 MR. SCOTT: So the process, to answer your
20 question on today, at that school is by
21 appointment.

22 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. And is it a
23 self-perpetuating board? In other words, does
24 the Board make appointments of other board
25 members?

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1 MR. SCOTT: The Board takes the lead, I
2 think they are open to that. For example, one
3 thing was -- was suggested that the school --
4 I'm sorry, the church that is their landlord
5 for the facility --

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

7 MR. SCOTT: -- actually has advertised
8 openly for quality members; so community and
9 parents, etc. When we look at the diversity of
10 skill sets you're looking at even to the
11 community at large in that regards.

12 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So who has the final
13 say of who gets on the Board?

14 I guess I'm -- I'm looking for the
15 governing authority that actually makes the
16 appointment.

17 DR. PFEFFER: So, yes, is there somebody
18 who can kind of walk us through, because we've
19 not gone -- you know, gone back and looked at
20 that Charter closely to see how the board --
21 the board process works, so is there someone
22 that can kind of describe that process for us?

23 Mr. Walter?

24 MR. WALTER: Thank you, Dr. Pfeffer.

25 Dr. Williams, yes, it is, it is a

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1 self-perpetuating appointed board.

2 There are -- and I think Mr. Scott has
3 already covered this, but just -- just to make
4 sure, there are a couple of positions as I
5 understand it that are specifically tied to
6 various characteristics, such as parent member,
7 etc.

8 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

9 MR. WALTER: But that's how it works, they
10 are -- they are appointed for certain lengths
11 of terms as a school district board would be.

12 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. That -- that answers
13 it. All right. Thank you.

14 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Panel members, do we
15 have additional questions?

16 No?

17 Okay. Thank you, Mr. Scott.

18 All right. So ADE team members, I know,
19 if I can, at this time, ask Ms. -- Ms. Melissa
20 Jacks -- Ms. Jacks had worked closely with the
21 Special Education Office in making sure that we
22 had people who were appropriately licensed,
23 but -- so I think we've -- we've addressed the
24 special education teacher issue --

25 MS. JACKS: (Nodding head up and down.)

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1 DR. PFEFFER: But can you walk us through
2 if there are any other personnel concerns?

3 MS. JACKS: Melissa Jacks, Office of
4 Educator Licensure Coordinator. And --

5 DR. PFEFFER: You may need to pull the
6 microphone a little bit closer.

7 MS. JACKS: Thank you. Thank you.

8 I do have concerns regarding compliance
9 with current law regarding the requirement to
10 have a current background check upon initial
11 employment of all employees. And in comparing
12 the Rockbridge website staff employee list with
13 the licensure system on the public view, it
14 appears as many as half of the staff need to
15 follow up with our office for more information
16 regarding current background checks, and that's
17 in 6-17-414 of the law and 6-17-411 of the law,
18 that you must have a current background check
19 upon initial employment.

20 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

21 Okay. Thank you, Ms. Jacks.

22 Board members, do you have some questions?

23 DR. WILLIAMS: Just a point of
24 clarification for -- for me.

25 So what you're saying is that they have

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1 some staff -- now, upon hiring they get a
2 background check?

3 MS. JACKS: They are required to get a
4 background check.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: They are required?

6 Do we have to do one every year after
7 that?

8 MS. JACKS: Not every year.

9 If you're a licensed employee you have to
10 do one upon renewal of your license.

11 DR. WILLIAMS: License. Okay. So,
12 basically, what you're --

13 MS. JACKS: Anyone else it would be upon
14 initial employment.

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So they have some
16 employees that have not gotten a background
17 check?

18 MS. JACKS: That I have concerns that
19 there was not one done on initial employment --

20 DR. WILLIAMS: Initial employment?

21 MS. JACKS: -- since they began in 2016.

22 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I just wanted to
23 make sure I was good --

24 MS. JACKS: Just concerns that I need
25 follow up on.

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1 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Got it. Okay.

2 DR. PFEFFER: So, Mr. Felton, can you talk
3 us through the process when -- when hiring?

4 And I realize that you, being newer in the
5 position, there were probably people who were
6 hired before you were in the position you're in
7 now, but can you talk us through processes that
8 are in place in the -- the recruitment and
9 hiring process to ensure that -- that everyone
10 is in compliance with these -- with this law
11 for non-licensed or licensed employees?

12 MR. FELTON: Yes, ma'am. I'm writing down
13 the give people that I've hired.

14 I've walked them through the process,
15 helped them out, told them where to go, came to
16 the ADE with two of them. I know that they
17 were done, we walked through the process
18 together. So I'm writing down the people that
19 are staff with me and I'm going to immediately
20 check them when I get back to the building to
21 see what's going on. I know the ones I did did
22 it.

23 DR. PFEFFER: So -- so as the people are
24 hired, is there a process to follow through to
25 check that --

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1 MS. NEWTON: Yes, I check them. Yes.

2 DR. PFEFFER: You check it?

3 MR. FELTON: And I stay on top of it with
4 the AELS system until I see it.

5 DR. PFEFFER: That was my question, if you
6 were familiar with the AELS system to see?

7 MR. FELTON: Yes. Yes, ma'am.

8 DR. PFEFFER: So, Ms. Jacks, it probably
9 would be good, you know, as that follow up --

10 MR. FELTON: Yeah.

11 DR. PFEFFER: -- and there may be some ADE
12 support that can be provided to go on site,
13 work with any employee.

14 MR. FELTON: Yes, ma'am.

15 DR. PFEFFER: And again, you know, those
16 are confidential matters with employees, but
17 the district does or the school does have the
18 duty to ensure --

19 MR. FELTON: Yes.

20 DR. PFEFFER: -- that that is made aware.
21 And so also maybe you said the Board president
22 is here?

23 MR. FELTON: Yes, ma'am.

24 DR. PFEFFER: I think that's probably -- I
25 would think a protocol from a board standpoint

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1 also --

2 MR. FELTON: Okay.

3 DR. PFEFFER: -- in terms of as hiring is
4 completed, that could just be a final step in
5 the process to ensure, before that employee
6 begins work, that all of that has been done.

7 Sometimes those background checks can take
8 a little bit of time and -- and we definitely
9 need to check right now to see if there are
10 people that --

11 MR. FELTON: Yeah. My --

12 DR. PFEFFER: -- that are in issue.

13 MR. FELTON: Yeah. So, cool. All right.
14 I'll take care of it.

15 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Walter, do you
16 need to add anything?

17 MR. WALTER: If I may, briefly. Tripp
18 Walter, Staff Attorney, APSRC.

19 Obviously, we will do whatever we can on
20 our end to assist Mr. Felton in the process.

21 I just wanted to bring to the panel's
22 attention, though, that, apparently, this is
23 something that Mr. Felton was just made aware
24 of earlier this morning, so to make sure
25 that -- that you're aware of that, obviously,

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1 he will -- he will take whatever steps with the
2 Department to rectify the situation and,
3 hopefully, this won't be a matter of -- of
4 great -- not -- I mean, I'm not down playing
5 the seriousness of the matter, but this, as far
6 as the notice issue of what he was prepared for
7 today, won't be considered unduly against him
8 in your decision.

9 Thank you.

10 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

11 DR. HERNANDEZ: I did have another
12 question about that.

13 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez.

14 DR. HERNANDEZ: So -- so that that was
15 going to be one of my questions is, you know,
16 obviously you were writing things down so it
17 made it seem like you just heard this for the
18 first time, and so, you know, obviously there
19 is a responsibility on the district to do those
20 things.

21 MR. FELTON: (Nodding head up and down.)

22 DR. HERNANDEZ: But, you know, as a matter
23 of practice with our charters, how do we -- do
24 we normally wait until now or -- to do those
25 kinds of things or is there some active

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1 approach of, hey, we might have concerns, you
2 need to know ultimately about this, that way
3 it's not more timely than it is, you know,
4 doing it at a panel meeting.

5 MS. BOYD: Right. So it's our practice,
6 when we do annual site visits with charter
7 schools, to review, to compare their staff list
8 to AELS and let them -- we kind of do a spot
9 check and let them know if we find any -- any
10 employees on there that appear to be
11 unemployable, so to speak, so we do that when
12 we do our annual site visits.

13 Because Rockbridge is on probation, we've
14 been going out there quite frequently, and we
15 haven't scheduled an annual site visit, so I
16 think that was overlooked by my office for this
17 current year.

18 DR. PFEFFER: And if I may, Dr. Hernandez,
19 that the -- I think that this is one of those
20 situations where where is the balance, and I --
21 I cannot say enough about Ms. Boyd and her team
22 in terms of the support that they attempt to
23 give to schools, and it's obvious that there
24 has been a tremendous amount of support poured
25 towards Rockbridge, so this is one issue that,

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1 you know, maybe did not get looked at, but I
2 think we also have to go -- and -- and APSRC
3 has acknowledged, they have spent a lot of
4 amount of time. I think, though, where part of
5 this goes to, though, there have to be
6 processes in place in a school, and we know
7 that the teacher is the number one in-school
8 factor that influences student achievement, and
9 if we don't put personnel as number one
10 priority, whether it's in a traditional sense,
11 any type of other avenue -- and I think that
12 just goes to, you know, there are just some
13 things that we have to put as a priority, that
14 that -- that will be checked and that will be
15 done. So I think, yes, there wasn't a good
16 opportunity to probably have much advance
17 notice, but this is not something that we could
18 not also bring to the attention because the law
19 does require that there is a clear background
20 check for all employees before they begin
21 employment.

22 So I think this is a tremendously
23 important conversation to have right now, but
24 also being aware that the school is dealing
25 with a lot of issues, and so the decision

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1 today -- I think it speaks to our decision
2 today, we have a school that's on probation;
3 there have been a lot progress made since that
4 probationary time; there are some -- some
5 things that we're not going to know and be able
6 to determine progress until some additional
7 student achievement data come in, but I think
8 until we are completely aware of all the issues
9 surrounding the -- the school, and the --
10 that's also going to help us in making the
11 decision of what is the ongoing support that's
12 going to be needed or how much future support
13 can be provided.

14 So do we have any other questions from
15 panel members?

16 Okay. Do we have anything else from ADE
17 staff that we did not get to address?

18 Okay. Sorry. Mr. Causbie?

19 I had you on the list and I just
20 overlooked it.

21 MR. CAUSBIE: Okay.

22 DR. PFEFFER: If you will introduce
23 yourself for the record you will be recognized.

24 MR. CAUSBIE: Yes. Yes, Roy Causbie,
25 Standards for Accreditation, I guess School

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1 Improvement now, just happened recently, so
2 we'll have a new unit team name soon.

3 I just want to say a couple of things. We
4 also work with Ms. Boyd and her team when the
5 Charter schools come through of renewal, so
6 they get that background from Standards for
7 Accreditation.

8 I just wanted to say that we are currently
9 working on our Standards for Accreditation
10 Reports, and I just looked at Rockbridge's.
11 And since they have so many waivers, everything
12 looks great. My only concern is the report
13 looked like it had a lot errors in it, and if
14 the information would have been entered
15 correctly during the cycle two report, then
16 that wouldn't have been as much work for them
17 and for us also. So when that cycle comes
18 through again, we've done a -- done a little
19 rearranging with the specialist for Rockbridge
20 to work with them before the cycle two
21 reporting, getting information correct so there
22 will not be any errors, so we know we won't
23 have any more issues with that.

24 DR. PFEFFER: So, Mr. Causbie, are there
25 any specific types of data that kind of jumped

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1 out as having more issues than others or is
2 it -- are these -- are there some specific
3 things that they can kind of be watching for or
4 is it maybe a general overall look?

5 MR. CAUSBIE: Really a general overall
6 look.

7 Just to give you an example, since they do
8 have teacher license waivers, there is a place
9 for them to mark and it will take all of those
10 teachers listed on the report off, and that
11 will tear those things; as far as curriculum
12 would be the same thing. So it will really be
13 more of a general review of that so it will
14 make it much more easier for them in the spring
15 when we are about to do the reports, we are
16 going to put a memo out in fact this Friday,
17 and it will be much cleaner and it will be less
18 of a chance to be a problem.

19 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So, Mr. Felton, can
20 you -- can you come up and talk to us a little
21 bit about your thoughts on who -- who does a
22 lot of your data entry that would be included
23 in that cycle report and maybe some thoughts
24 you might have as to what support you would
25 need or a way that we might be able to mitigate

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1 some of this?

2 MR. CAUSBIE: And before he says anything,
3 I might say, right now Nate Tumlison is his
4 specialist, I think that's going to change for
5 the next year who he would work with for this
6 cycle, so he can obviously contact him at any
7 time.

8 DR. PFEFFER: Thank you.

9 MR. FELTON: Yeah. Nate and I are best
10 friends now; so --

11 First I want to say this, I'm not -- I was
12 a principal for three years, so doing
13 background checks, that's on me. Like, I --
14 that's my fault, nobody else's fault. I don't
15 want to give the misconception that I didn't
16 know what to do, so that's my fault. I just
17 checked the ones I hired. I should have --
18 knowing everything that went wrong, I should
19 have checked everybody, so that's on me. I
20 don't want anybody else to take responsibility
21 for that.

22 So when cycle two came out, I just --
23 honestly, like, that was my first cycle two,
24 errors were made. I now understand how to do
25 cycle two so that's going to be a lot better

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1 and, like I said, Nate and I are really best
2 friends; so --

3 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Do you maybe go
4 through some processes or procedures set up
5 for, you know, long term sustainability; are
6 there others that you could also have trained
7 or are very familiar with the kinds of issues
8 that can come up when there are issues with
9 cycle data? Is that something you can look at?

10 MR. FELTON: Yeah. One of the issues was
11 they entered -- they did -- they preregistered
12 every kid so if the kid filled out an
13 application whether they preregistered or not,
14 they put the kid in the E school as
15 preregistered, so that gave us, like, 180 kids
16 so that had -- that's a bad mistake. Second of
17 all, I went through all the APSRC E trainings
18 for E school to make sure that I can
19 double-check the person to make sure everything
20 is put in the system right, that's going to
21 help. Second of all, I know all the processes
22 to check to make sure the numbers are correct
23 before we do all that, direct certification,
24 those things. So I've seen what the mistakes
25 were and now I know what I need to check to

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1 make sure they are not made again.

2 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

3 All right. Any other questions of the
4 panel?

5 Any discussion?

6 Okay. Ms. Newton?

7 MS. NEWTON: I -- I have to yield to the
8 experts on the panel, that would be you and
9 Dr. Hernandez, in my -- in my view, about
10 whether or not -- I understand Mr. Felton's
11 concern about the cloud that the probationary
12 status has and presents for them in terms of a
13 challenge.

14 On the other hand, I've heard a lot of
15 conversations and a lot of work was done, that
16 has been done, but it seems like more work in
17 terms of that needs to be done. So are there
18 material -- I -- you know, I'm comfortable if
19 you guys are comfortable that the material
20 deficiencies are addressed adequate --
21 adequately. That would be my concern before we
22 go into -- so I would follow your lead on that.

23 I've heard the staff, and while I know
24 that they are diligent in following up, is
25 there -- does it balance would be my concern at

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1 the end of the -- this discussion, and the --
2 and the voting, to ensure that the students and
3 the processes are in place to ensure that the
4 things get done, not perfectly, but leaning
5 toward the benefit of the student as opposed to
6 the work that needs to be done by the
7 administration, if that makes sense.

8 DR. PFEFFER: Question?

9 DR. HERNANDEZ: Comment.

10 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

11 DR. HERNANDEZ: So -- and I'm -- I'm kind
12 of struggling, probably, the same -- I don't
13 know about expert, you're more of an expert
14 than probably I am on a lot of things. So, you
15 know, I wasn't here when Rockbridge was put on
16 probation, but what I gather from looking at
17 some of the things, you know, there were some
18 areas that were specified; when we look at
19 finance, special education, governance and
20 required reporting, and hearing our ADE staff,
21 it seems like my -- my understanding of it is
22 we've got a lot of those things that are under
23 control. Although, on the other side of that,
24 I look at things from an academic standpoint
25 and I see that, you know, looking at as the

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1 school index and those kinds of things, it's
2 just not in a good place. I look at where
3 enrollment is and, you know, maybe problematic
4 if you don't -- if you continue to be on
5 probation it may be also problematic. And so
6 those are things that all the things that
7 you've done this year we're not able to see
8 where that academic -- if there has been any
9 changes, and we won't know that until, you
10 know, probably the November or December
11 timeline when we kind of get all of those
12 things fleshed out. We won't know from a
13 budget aspect where you're at until, you know,
14 the start of school, September-ish. So those
15 are things that are in the future, and so it's
16 hard to say, you know, if those were the
17 reasons you were on probation, but we have
18 concerns, is it one of those things that -- you
19 know, this is kind of for you guys, is it
20 something that we say, okay, well, we want to
21 continue probation based on some new added
22 factors, one of them maybe being some things
23 around accreditation and those things. But
24 I -- I'm rambling, probably, like you are --
25 not that you rambled but, you know, it's just

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1 it's kind of a weird -- you know, what is --
2 what is the right appropriate action to where
3 we can continue to follow up and be engaged.
4 And then when I sit back and think about it is,
5 you know, the purpose is, in working with
6 Charter schools, is that should we have to do
7 so much stuff, you know, when you have a
8 Charter school that's supposed to be, you know,
9 trying to do things that are better for kids.
10 And so that's kind of where I -- where I
11 grapple with is, like, how much is enough to
12 where we say, you know, well, maybe this isn't
13 working but also want to give benefit of the
14 doubt to let changes that have been made be
15 fleshed out before decisions are made.

16 And so I'll get to a question. And so my
17 question is, you know, when I look at obviously
18 their -- their Charter expires in 2020, and so
19 that renewal timeline, is that -- does that
20 mean they will come for renewal next year or
21 will it be the following year?

22 MS. BOYD: So I'll send out their renewal
23 application in August of 2019. The hearing
24 will be in December of 2019.

25 DR. HERNANDEZ: All right. So it will be

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1 a while.

2 MS. BOYD: Uh-huh.

3 MR. WILSON: I have a question.

4 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Wilson?

5 MR. WILSON: I'm not sure who the question
6 should be directed to, Madam Chairman, but I'm
7 concerned to know whether there are personnel
8 at Rockbridge today who do not have background
9 checks completed? Can anybody answer that?

10 And if there are, how long does it take to
11 get the background checks done?

12 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Jacks?

13 MS. JACKS: There are three background
14 checks that are required: The Arkansas State
15 Police, the FBI, and the Child Maltreatment.
16 Those things are highly confidential and we can
17 really only discuss them with the individual.
18 But if you will go to our public website, it
19 will show you when they are approved on a
20 person, so Mr. Felton could go in and he could
21 see when all three are approved but we cannot
22 break them down individual where you could see
23 each one.

24 The Arkansas and FBI we can do digitally
25 down at ADE and they can be back in 24 hours.

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1 The Child Maltreatment is through DHS and that
2 may take -- that may take two to four weeks.
3 We -- you know, we can't tell. So when I say
4 I've had concerns, I have concerns about
5 current background checks on file, and that's
6 really all I feel comfortable saying.

7 MR. WILSON: I don't want I get up in the
8 morning and read the paper and see where we
9 approved a charter school without knowing
10 whether background checks have been done or are
11 in process of being done.

12 DR. PFEFFER: And Mr. -- an action that
13 Mr. Felton can take is to ensure that when --
14 when he returns and goes in and checks on
15 employees, any employee where there would be a
16 question, Mr. Felton can then take steps as far
17 as what would need to be done regarding that
18 employee and whether, you know, there might
19 need to be a substitute to come in and fill in
20 if there are -- are any issues with anyone;
21 so -- so those are some things that can be
22 done.

23 MR. FELTON: When I get to the school,
24 we're going find these people and they are
25 going to go get their background checks done

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1 immediately.

2 MR. WILSON: Now what?

3 MR. FELTON: They are going to -- I'm
4 going to look them up and then I'm going to
5 have them get their background checks
6 immediately.

7 MR. WILSON: Forthwith. Immediately.
8 Yeah, that's pretty good too.

9 MR. FELTON: Forthwith. Yes. Yes.

10 MR. WILSON: Thank you.

11 DR. PFEFFER: And, Ms. Newton, I think to
12 go back to the question that you were asking,
13 and Dr. Hernandez did a great job of, I think,
14 articulating everything. The -- since
15 Mr. Felton has come and when -- when initially
16 they were on probation, Mr. Felton was not the
17 Superintendent at that time, so I do think
18 that -- that the issues where the probationary
19 status came from have been addressed, as far as
20 bringing -- bringing into -- I guess what word
21 you can use, under control, kind of bringing it
22 under control. I think the ongoing concern is
23 many of these things go back to, though, not
24 just addressing them but having a process to
25 ensure that they don't reoccur or that

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1 something doesn't change and we slip again and
2 aren't addressing that, which is why I think
3 we're -- we're concerned about just the
4 sustainability.

5 And it is, it's a balance between how --
6 how much support should have to be provided
7 versus giving a -- a charter that is addressing
8 issues a chance to keep moving forward. And as
9 far as the accountability issues, it will be a
10 time before we can see whether or not the
11 results for increased student achievement,
12 academic growth, and progress are being made.
13 So, you know, that is something that it will
14 take a little more time before we can realize
15 whether or not those efforts are playing out,
16 whether or not having a stable board is having
17 an impact in the overall sustained leadership
18 in that school. So it really is a dilemma.

19 DR. HERNANDEZ: Could I ask another
20 question?

21 DR. PFEFFER: Uh-huh.

22 DR. HERNANDEZ: I have another question
23 maybe for Jennifer, Ms. Davis.

24 So my question is around probation. So
25 the way that -- the way it's set up right now,

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1 Rockbridge is currently on probation for a
2 year, which it expires next month?

3 MS. DAVIS: Uh-huh.

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: And so if we do nothing
5 then it expires and goes away?

6 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

7 DR. HERNANDEZ: Is that -- we don't have
8 to vote to take away the probation or anything
9 like that?

10 MS. DAVIS: That is correct.

11 DR. HERNANDEZ: So my second question is
12 what -- what is the -- what is the effect of
13 being on probation for a Charter school? Does
14 it really have any meaning in terms of --

15 MS. DAVIS: Well, I think it does in some
16 form. Now, I do think that there is some
17 facilities -- some facilities dollars that they
18 are not available for; but, additionally, if a
19 Charter is on probation, you know, at any point
20 in time a Charter can be called back in before
21 you guys and are at risk of losing a Charter.
22 When they are on probation there is, you know,
23 intense scrutiny in their operations, and so
24 they are more at risk for reasons to -- to come
25 before you; so there is that.

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1 Also, you know, there is just the
2 connotation that, you know, much like in a
3 traditional public school a distress level has
4 that if you're on probation then perhaps, you
5 know, the parents end up not sending their kids
6 there. So there is somewhat more of how they
7 are viewed, but if they are on probation, at
8 any point in time they are subject to more
9 involvement with him the Department, more --
10 not responsibility, but more that they are on
11 point to provide information to you and that at
12 any point in time they are aware that they can
13 lose their Charter.

14 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Rich, would
15 you -- you've been working with the Charter.
16 Would you like to add something?

17 MR. RICH: Okay. Ken Rich, APSRC Director
18 of Finance.

19 And, Dr. Hernandez, losing the facility
20 funding, approximately \$500 per student, in a
21 situation where a Charter, you know, is working
22 hard to make it financially, that can have a
23 pretty big impact. So, you know, I think they
24 have done a great job of making choices this
25 year. But the way I look at that facility

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1 funding is, that just opens up \$500 per student
2 for students, you know, because that's money
3 that can go into students if they are off
4 probation. So that is the one factor regarding
5 facilities funding when they are on probation;
6 that's been addressed from a finance
7 standpoint.

8 DR. PFEFFER: Any follow up?

9 DR. HERNANDEZ: Not unless you've got one,
10 I just have some thoughts, I guess.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Go ahead.

12 DR. HERNANDEZ: So, you know -- you know,
13 given that, I feel like we don't -- sometime
14 later on in next school year, you know, maybe
15 like a December/January time frame, knowing
16 that they are not going to be up for renewal
17 for yet another year after that, that it would
18 seem to be, you know, in lieu of potentially
19 doing probation or continuing probation, it
20 would be reasonable to have Rockbridge come
21 back. Because something you said earlier about
22 teaching math class, you know, I -- every time
23 we have a meeting it seems like Rockbridge is
24 here, and so that concerns me in that, you
25 know, that person is being pulled out of the

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1 classroom and not being in the school to try to
2 fix issues. And so, you know, potentially
3 coming back and looking at things like, okay,
4 where did they close their books, how did they
5 end up financially, what's their enrollment
6 looking like, what are the new academic
7 indicators that we're able to look at, that
8 that may be, you know, a potential thing to do.
9 Because I also think here pretty soon, next
10 month in April, you know, there will be some
11 letter grades that come out and that will also
12 be kind of a thing that, you know, your school
13 community may look at in lieu of probation that
14 says, well, you know, that's just another added
15 thing that you might have to deal with. And so
16 I feel like I would be, you know, comfortable
17 in, you know, having that kind of a scenario,
18 where we at least -- because I feel like if
19 they have done some things here that are good
20 and, you know, we have a new person that's been
21 in charge trying to work those things that, you
22 know, some acknowledgment of that work being
23 done, you know, would be a positive thing, but
24 still knowing that we do need you to come back
25 and there will be very specific things that we

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1 will be looking at, because we want to make
2 sure we're still being engaged and not lose the
3 support of what the Department and APSRC is
4 doing and being a focused effort. So I don't
5 know what all of that means, that's just kind
6 of what I was thinking.

7 DR. WILLIAMS: My -- my comment here, I
8 agree with you.

9 My only caveat, and I think this is the
10 case, that they would continue to -- if we go
11 that route, one, I want them to be able to
12 receive the resources, the funding, because we
13 know they need that; but also, would they
14 continue to receive the -- if they are not on
15 probation, would they continue to receive all
16 the support that ADE is providing and what
17 APSRC is providing also?

18 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Dr. Williams.

19 Yes. My experience with Mr. Felton is
20 that when he has a problem, he calls us. So
21 with that being the case and communication
22 being very open between himself and my program
23 adviser, Virginia Perry, I would say, yes, that
24 will be -- we'll continue to give them the
25 support they need because he is -- he calls us

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1 when he needs us.

2 DR. PFEFFER: And I think just to follow
3 up on -- on what you both were saying, so would
4 you -- if the -- if there wasn't a probationary
5 time period, would it be appropriate to go
6 ahead, though, and set a couple of reporting
7 times for them to come in when we know the end
8 of the year budget, maybe, or -- you know, I
9 would be particularly interested if -- in
10 September of next year looking at staffing,
11 especially if they are planning to add the
12 eighth grade in, and then maybe even in
13 December when you have the 2018 ESSA school
14 index information, which is really when you
15 would need to know that. I mean, would it be
16 appropriate, regardless of probation or not --

17 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

18 DR. PFEFFER: -- to set in two or three
19 benchmarks to come in and do reporting?

20 MS. BOYD: Yes, I think that would be
21 incredibly appropriate. Also I would remind
22 you, you could ask for that in one of two ways.
23 You could ask for that in terms of just a
24 report you see, and if you have a question you
25 have you could call the Charter in later, or if

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1 you would want the Charter to appear and --

2 DR. WILLIAMS: The report and the
3 Charter -- the report and the Charter to
4 appear, at least from my perspective.

5 DR. PFEFFER: To be able to address any
6 questions?

7 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: I also have a question
9 about that part. So when the Charter does do
10 their report and appear, because I know we're
11 always followed up by the State Board meeting,
12 and so does that mean that they will have to
13 come here to do the report and then in addition
14 to that they will have to show up at the State
15 Board and be out two days?

16 MS. BOYD: Well, if it's a report -- our
17 general procedure is that if it's a report, it
18 doesn't appear on the State Board addenda, only
19 items that you all take action will appear on
20 the State Board agenda; however, the State
21 Board has taken an interest Rockbridge and
22 requested that the reports also appear on their
23 agendas; so it could be that they will continue
24 to request that and it could be that they will
25 be out twice.

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1 DR. HERNANDEZ: That's -- that's just a --
2 you know, my only concern is that, you know,
3 several staff members usually will come with
4 them and that, you know, how many -- how much
5 is too much in pulling them, especially when
6 they are saying they are teaching classes --

7 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- as well. So that's the
9 only -- I do -- I do agree having the
10 benchmarks in place but, you know, maybe just
11 the difference between two and three is the
12 difference between four and six, if that makes
13 sense.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. I hear you.

15 I'm -- I'm willing to -- to -- to agree
16 with you. It's just that I learn so much about
17 what they are doing and what needs to be done
18 in -- in their presentation today; but, you
19 know, teachers can't teach if they are not in
20 the classroom, so I'm -- I'm with you on that.
21 Uh-huh.

22 DR. PFEFFER: So I think we've -- we've
23 had several discussions here. Mr. Walter, is
24 there something you want to ask -- add before
25 we --

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1 MR. WALTER: Yes.

2 DR. PFEFFER: -- take this under
3 consideration?

4 MR. WALTER: Yes. Thank you.

5 I just want to make sure I address from
6 the APSRC standpoint Dr. Williams' question on
7 support, and that would be yes.

8 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

9 MR. WALTER: We would continue to provide
10 a high level of support to Rockbridge.

11 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

12 MR. WALTER: Okay. Thank you.

13 DR. PFEFFER: So we've -- we've gone
14 through, we've had questions answered, we've
15 had some discussion. So if there is not
16 anything else at this time, I would -- we need
17 to go ahead and make the decision. Our
18 decision can be to modify the probation,
19 release from probation, modify the Charter, or
20 revoke the Charter. And if there are any --
21 any things to add in on those motions, we can
22 make sure we're in compliance with our legal if
23 we need assistance with the motion.

24 So if someone would like to make a motion
25 at this time, I'll accept one.

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1 MR. WILSON: I'll try it.

2 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. For a motion or
3 question?

4 MR. WILSON: You try it. No, no, I'm
5 going to defer to you.

6 DR. PFEFFER: If you have a question,
7 let's do the question before a motion.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. So -- so we do have
9 to take a formal action to release from
10 probation and not just let it expire?

11 MS. DAVIS: You don't have to. You could
12 technically take no action and allow that to
13 die next month, but, you know if you're
14 effort -- it does look like there is an effort
15 in working with the school if you affirmatively
16 release them.

17 So and one of the things I would suggest
18 is, I know you were discussing about reports
19 and if the concern about how often they can
20 come here, they can submit reports to the
21 Charter Office who can work with ADE staff, and
22 then if there are any issues that ADE staff
23 does not feel are being resolved, then they can
24 come to you and can bring that to your
25 attention and then you can decide if you want

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1 to actually call them in. So that way the ADE
2 is still getting those reports and assistance
3 and can kind of be working behind the scenes
4 without the Charter having to come before you.
5 So that is -- that is an option you can do so
6 that way, you know, ADE doesn't -- you know,
7 can help along the way and not be surprised by
8 any issues along with the Charter as well; so
9 that's an option.

10 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. At this time I will
11 accept a motion if there is a motion to be
12 made.

13 MR. WILSON: I'll make -- make it for the
14 sake of getting something on the floor, Madam
15 Chairman.

16 I move that we release Rockbridge from
17 probation on the condition that periodic
18 reports -- I'll say periodic means every 90
19 days or six months, whatever y'all want on
20 that, to AD -- to the Charter School Department
21 of -- Ms. Boyd's department, and the further
22 condition that the background checks will be
23 completed or done, accomplished right away.

24 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. We have a motion. Do
25 I have a second?

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1 DR. HERNANDEZ: I'll second.

2 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion and a
3 second.

4 All those in favor, say, "Aye."

5 DR. WILLIAMS: We have a question. Do you
6 have a call for questions?

7 DR. PFEFFER: A discussion? Sorry. Do
8 you have a discussion on the motion?

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Do we want to clean up the
10 reporting dates within the motion? That's just
11 a question, do you --

12 MR. WILSON: Please do.

13 DR. HERNANDEZ: Is it -- is it reasonable
14 to have, you know, report -- and I don't mind
15 if it's in person or whatever, but in September
16 and maybe either -- I don't know if it's better
17 to have one in December or January.

18 DR. WILLIAMS: Kind of deferring to the
19 staff on that.

20 MS. BOYD: So September for staffing, the
21 staffing report, and then December for, what is
22 it you want, the ESSA report?

23 DR. PFEFFER: Accountability.

24 MS. BOYD: The accountability?

25 DR. HERNANDEZ: I think we can look at, you

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1 know, staffing and finance in September and
2 then December would be kind of accountability,
3 academic progress.

4 MS. BOYD: Okay. I think that's an
5 appropriate timeline.

6 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So we have the motion
7 that they would be released from probation but
8 would submit reports to the Charter office in
9 September and December, and those are reports
10 to the Charter office; correct --

11 MR. WILSON: Yeah.

12 DR. PFEFFER: -- on the motion?

13 MR. WILSON: That would be --

14 DR. PFEFFER: That was the motion, I
15 believe, that they would submit the report to
16 the Charter office. Am I correct in that?

17 MR. WILSON: Yes, ma'am.

18 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. And so that motion
19 was seconded. Do we need any further
20 discussion?

21 MS. NEWTON: I have a question. Does that
22 cover all the -- the listed concerns?

23 I heard her say ESSA and one other thing.
24 What was it?

25 MS. DAVIS: The licensing.

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1 DR. PFEFFER: Yeah, staffing and finance
2 would be reported on in September and in
3 December it would be the accountability with
4 the ESSA school index.

5 MS. BOYD: So from my understanding,
6 Dr. Hernandez's friendly amendment to the
7 motion is that the motion would read: To
8 release Rockbridge from probation with required
9 reporting as follows, a report on finance and
10 staffing in September and a report on
11 accountability status in December; and
12 accountability would include accreditation, the
13 ESSA scores, all of that.

14 DR. PFEFFER: And can I clarify, is that
15 report a report to the Charter Office or is
16 that an in-person report to this committee --
17 or panel?

18 MR. WILSON: I say the Charter Office. I
19 say the Charter Office.

20 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. The Charter Office.

21 MR. WILSON: Ms. Boyd's department.

22 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So Mr. Wilson's
23 motion would be the report would be to the
24 Charter Office. Is that what you were
25 seconding?

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1 DR. HERNANDEZ: Just so when it gets
2 turned in, will we see those? Will those
3 reports come to us?

4 MS. BOYD: I'll put them on your consent
5 agenda.

6 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

7 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So the reports would
8 be put on our -- the panel's consent agenda.

9 Okay. So that motion has been made and
10 seconded. Any other questions or discussion?

11 All those in favor, say, "Aye."

12 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

13 DR. PFEFFER: Any opposed?

14 Okay. The motion has been accepted.

15 If you will go to your voting sheets and
16 please record your vote.

17 MS. BOYD: And I would just like to read
18 the motion again for the record. To release
19 Rockbridge from probation with required
20 reportings to the Charter Office, as follows:
21 A report on finance and staffing in September
22 and a report on accountability in December.

23 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez.

24 DR. HERNANDEZ: I voted for the motion, as
25 the motion acknowledges progress made in some

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1 areas but requires continued monitoring and
2 support.

3 DR. PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

4 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion, the
5 motion allows continued monitoring of -- sorry.

6 I voted for the motion. The motion allows
7 continued monitoring of progress being made by
8 the Charter, while at the same time
9 acknowledging the progress being made.

10 DR. PFEFFER: Dr. Williams?

11 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted for the motion.
12 Progress made warrants removal of probation yet
13 there is work to continue in a number of areas,
14 therefore the required reporting.

15 DR. PFEFFER: And Mr. Wilson?

16 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion. I
17 was very impressed with the work that
18 Rockbridge has done with the support of the --
19 excellent support from Ms. Boyd's staff, ADE,
20 and from APSRC, and that's a good example of
21 cooperation.

22 DR. PFEFFER: All right. Thank you very
23 much, and we will continue to -- to work with
24 you.

25 At this time I believe we're going to take

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1 a ten minute break to transition into our work
2 session; is that correct, Ms. Boyd?

3 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am.

4 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So we're going to
5 take a break and we will get a look at our work
6 session agenda.

7 (WHEREUPON, at 12:10 p.m., the
8 above-entitled proceedings were concluded.)

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