

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

May 16, 2018

*Sharon Hill Court Reporting
4021 Robinwood Cr.
Bryant, AR 72022
(501) 680-0888*

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
 CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

MAY 16, 2018
 8:30 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. MIKE HERNANDEZ Acting Chairperson
 State Supt./Office of Coordinated
 Support & Service

DR. JEREMY OWOH ADE Asst. Commissioner/
 Educator Effectiveness

MS. KATHI TURNER Deputy Director/Career & Technical
 Ed./Ark. Dept. of Career Ed.

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

ALSO APPEARING:

DR. ALEXANDRA BOYD Public School Program Coordinator

MS. KELLY McLAUGHLIN Public School Program Advisor

MS. VIRGINIA PERRY Public School Program Advisor

LOCATION:

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

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We'll now call the May 16, 2018 Charter Authorizing Panel meeting to order. I'd like to definitely again welcome everybody to the new remodeled auditorium. We are probably working out some bugs, so hopefully everything works today. So we're excited about that.

I would like to introduce the members of the Charter Authorizing Panel:

- Dr. Ivy Pfeffer, who is the Chair, she's out today and I'll be covering the Chair position today;

- Dr. Jeremy Owoh, the Assistant Commissioner for Educator Effectiveness;

- I'm Dr. Mike Hernandez, State Superintendent for Office of Coordinated Support and Service;

- Kathi Turner, Deputy Director for Career and Technical Education at the Arkansas Department of Career Education;

- Mr. Mike Wilson, the education advocate and attorney in Jacksonville;

- Dr. Naccaman Williams, former State Board of Education member from August 11, 2004 to June 30, 2011.

- Ms. Toyce Newton, former State Board of Education member from August 18, 2009 to June 30,

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E X H I B I T S

A-1: OSCEOLA STEM ACADEMY

Exhibit One (1)
 PowerPoint Presentation

A-5: ROCKBRIDGE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Exhibit One (1)
 PowerPoint Presentation

Exhibit Two (2)
 2017-18 Financial Projection

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2016.

As Chair, my goal is to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing. I will request that each person speaking please state your name and title for the record. I will ask that you continue to speak clearly into the microphone for the benefit of the Panel, the audience, and the viewing audience. The entire meeting is being live-streamed and recorded. Ms. Sharon Hill, the court reporter, will be providing a transcript of the meeting and it will be posted on the ADE website.

CONSENT AGENDA

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So we'll now -- I do see the Consent Agenda. So does anybody wish to discuss any items on the Consent Agenda?

If not, I will accept a motion to accept the Consent Agenda.

MR. WILSON: So moved.

DR. OWOH: Second.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say "aye."

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

Motion passes.

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1 HEARING PROCEDURES FOR A-1 THROUGH A-4
 2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We'll now move into the
 3 Action Agenda. And I will ask Ms. Jennifer Davis to
 4 come up and explain the hearing process and those --
 5 for the items on our Action Agenda.
 6 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Construction noises can
 7 be heard outside of the auditorium.)
 8 MS. DAVIS: It's a little loud. Hi, good
 9 morning. Jennifer Davis, Staff Attorney for the
 10 Department.
 11 Can y'all hear me? Is this on?
 12 Is it on now?
 13 So it was on before? Do I have to get that
 14 close?
 15 So the procedures you're going to follow this
 16 morning -- they will change this afternoon, but we'll
 17 go over them when we get there. The procedures for
 18 the first few items will be that any persons wishing
 19 to provide testimony to you today will need to be
 20 sworn in, with the exception of attorneys. The
 21 applicant will then have 20 minutes to present its
 22 amendment request to you. If there is any opposition
 23 they will have 20 minutes collectively to present
 24 that, followed by 5 minutes additional for the
 25 applicant. You can then ask any questions that you

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1 in opposition please stand to receive the oath? All
 2 right. If you would, raise your right hand. Do you
 3 swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to
 4 give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing
 5 but the truth?
 6 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)
 7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.
 8 All right. So we have some school presenters
 9 and I guess we're starting -- Ms. Davis, I lost you
 10 -- so we'll start with 20 minutes of presentation.
 11 DR. BOYD: Thank you, Dr. Hernandez. We'll
 12 start with Shantele Raper, who's the director of
 13 Federal Programs; she'll start us off for this item.
 14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you.
 15 MS. RAPER: Good morning. I'm Shantele Raper; I
 16 serve as Osceola School District Director of Federal
 17 Programs and Special Projects. We do have an
 18 additional handout. Would you be willing to accept
 19 those handouts at this time?
 20 DR. OWOH: We have a copy.
 21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Is this the one we already
 22 have or something different?
 23 MS. RAPER: Oh, is that it? Okay. Sorry.
 24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.
 25 MS. RAPER: Okay. So, good morning. We're here

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1 may have of the applicant, ADE staff, or anyone who
 2 thinks that -- that may have the answer that you
 3 need. After that, you can make your decision. You
 4 do have a Google doc that you will need to notate the
 5 reason for your decision in there for the applicant
 6 to have.
 7 Are there any questions?
 8 Okay.
 9 A-1: REQUEST FOR DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT:
 10 OSCEOLA STEM ACADEMY, OSCEOLA
 11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll take up the
 12 first item, Request for District Conversion Charter
 13 School Amendment with Osceola STEM Academy. Ms.
 14 McLaughlin, you are recognized.
 15 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Good morning. Kelly
 16 McLaughlin, ADE Charter School Office. On January 9,
 17 2012, the State Board of Education approved the
 18 district conversion charter application for Osceola
 19 STEM Academy, in Osceola. The charter is approved to
 20 serve students in grades 5-8 with a maximum
 21 enrollment of 450 students. Representatives of
 22 Osceola STEM Academy are appearing before the Panel
 23 to request amendments to their current charter.
 24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Would all
 25 representatives from the charter and anyone speaking

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1 this morning to request the Charter Authorizing Panel
 2 to approve the statute, standard and rules to add a
 3 waiver for Library Media Services. In all
 4 transparency, we felt like we already had this
 5 waiver. When the original charter was written in
 6 2011 that waiver was submitted. And we had been
 7 following what was posted on the ADE website, the
 8 waivers that were posted on the ADE website.
 9 Throughout all this time we have had a Library Media
 10 Specialist onboard. And Ms. Smith will come in just
 11 a moment and speak to you about our unique situation
 12 where we have a Discovery Zone tied to our library
 13 media, so it's a unique situation. Last year when we
 14 did lose our Library Media Specialist we did post the
 15 position, in April of 2017, but that position was not
 16 filled. Of course, those are tough positions to
 17 fill. But our services to our students have not
 18 changed.
 19 So throughout -- from 2011 to this point we
 20 thought we had the Library Media Specialist. We had
 21 one principal that was a part of writing the charter
 22 agreement, then we had another principal that came
 23 in, and then we have another one. So through that it
 24 sort of got lost in translation. So as we realized
 25 we did not have it, we had to do a little bit of

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1 searching and figure out why we did not have it.
 2 But at this point we do want to share with you
 3 some of the things that we're doing so that perhaps
 4 you will go ahead and request our asking for this
 5 waiver for this time.
 6 Okay. So I'm going to ask Ms. Smith -- I'm
 7 going to stay up here with her, but I'm going to ask
 8 her to come in and she's going to go over the handout
 9 and show you some of the services that we do provide
 10 for the students.
 11 MS. SMITH: Good morning. I'm --
 12 DR. WILLIAMS: Good morning.
 13 MS. SMITH: Good morning. I'm Christel Smith;
 14 I'm the principal of Osceola STEM Academy. This is
 15 my fourth year as the principal. As Ms. Raper stated
 16 earlier, we were under the understanding that we did
 17 have the waiver. I was just fortunate when I came in
 18 that I interviewed a teacher that had Library Media
 19 Specialist certification, as well as career. So she
 20 did both for us and she did a good job. But like Ms.
 21 Raper said before, we're still doing the same thing
 22 that we've been doing since I've been there the last
 23 four years, and I want to talk a little bit about it.
 24 If you look in the handbook [sic] on the first
 25 page, our library is not just a library setting,

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1 meaning books and a checkout. It also is a Discovery
 2 Zone. We have many books in there; we have a chess
 3 set; we have Wii's set up.
 4 And in this package there are several things I
 5 want to talk to you about. What we did was we looked
 6 at the data and we looked at our PARCC scores and we
 7 also looked at our ACT Aspire, and we found a trend
 8 among all our 5th through 8th grade students that
 9 were -- they were very weak in reading comprehension.
 10 So one of the things that we did, we pushed in more
 11 informational texts and nonfiction texts. I went to
 12 the superintendent because the library at this time
 13 -- because it had already transitioned to be a
 14 Discovery Zone, did not have as many texts or books
 15 in there. So he worked with me; we put \$5,000 worth
 16 of books back in there. Like I said, we was
 17 fortunate to have someone to come in that already had
 18 that.
 19 Also, how we set it up was -- because we -- I
 20 know that kids going into the library is very
 21 important; there's library standards that are very
 22 important that they need to know. Even though those
 23 library standards, a lot of them, are covered in our
 24 curriculum, also they're covered in -- we have tools
 25 for learning as well. But we feel like it was

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1 important that they be exposed and go through that.
 2 So we set up a plan or a system through our social
 3 studies classes. And in our social studies classes
 4 what we do is they are assigned a time and a day; so
 5 they go to the library every week. They go 55
 6 minutes and during this time they are able to check-
 7 out books, they take AR tests, they're able to return
 8 books. So they still get the same service as if
 9 there's a Library Media in there.
 10 Another thing that we do is we try to make sure
 11 that, because we feel like test complexity was an
 12 issue, that we hit some -- that we have some high
 13 interest texts in there as well. So they're on a
 14 rotation and they go into the library every week.
 15 Besides just that social studies -- because we teach
 16 literacy skills through the social study content --
 17 they also go in that setting as a Discovery Zone
 18 class, what I was talking about earlier, as a pull-
 19 out. So they get an opportunity twice a week to be
 20 able to go into this Discovery Zone-slash-library.
 21 Another thing that we wanted to look at was --
 22 like I said before, when I said they go to the
 23 Discovery Zone as well as the library, they're also
 24 in there with a certified teacher -- I needed to
 25 state that too -- certified and two paras also in

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1 there. So they have access with three adults that
 2 helps them with that.
 3 With our -- because we're a STEM school we
 4 really try to integrate science and math, and math
 5 and science. We also have those things also in there
 6 besides just literacy. So they're able to do -- like
 7 I'll give you an example: just last week I went in
 8 and observed the Discovery Zone and I watched a
 9 teacher -- the math teacher along with the Discovery
 10 Zone teacher collaborate and they were working on
 11 scatter plots. We did that right before testing. We
 12 were doing -- we feel like we were rushed and didn't
 13 get to cover probability, so we made sure that we
 14 pushed it in. So we're pushing standards in as well
 15 through that.
 16 Because we are a STEM school -- and one of the
 17 things that we try to really focus on is project
 18 based learning, a lot of hands-on things. They get
 19 an opportunity to do that. We have the Wii's in
 20 there for math. You know, the kids think it's fun
 21 but they realize they're learning as well with that.
 22 Another thing we have is -- that's really big in my
 23 school is chess. They love chess. We use chess for
 24 problem-solving, critical thinking skills, just
 25 logic. We use that as another way to build math

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1 conceptual thinking. So that's another thing they
2 get to do in there as well.
3 I'm trying to think what else we do.
4 We also have it set-up in there -- we have a
5 small lab in there. That's an area that they also
6 are allowed to take tests. And when you look at it
7 on there it'll look like -- let me see --
8 MS. RAPER: It's on the last page.
9 MS. SMITH: Oh, it's on the last page. Okay,
10 the last page. That small lab, we use that for AR
11 testing. Also, we implemented Read 180 this year; so
12 also we have a Read 180 intervention group that also
13 uses that lab as well.
14 Another thing we do in there is -- our library
15 is set up with books on one side and the other side
16 is set up kind of like a classroom. We have long
17 desks. That's whenever the teachers -- because we
18 have teachers that are able to utilize our Discovery
19 Zone outside of just the library period, outside of
20 just Discovery Zone. So they come in and they travel
21 their classes in and they also have access to the
22 material that's in there. So we try to integrate
23 that in our just core classes in general.
24 Like I said before, when I first come there was
25 not a lot of books. I was fortunate that the

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1 superintendent supported me and we bought some more
2 books so we could have more nonfiction and
3 informational texts, which was there this weekend.
4 But if you ever get an opportunity to visit us you'll
5 see that it's very adventurous, kids love it, they
6 love going in there. They get the same opportunity
7 as if we had a librarian. Like I said, I was
8 fortunate, not this year but the year before -- you
9 know, I thought I had the waiver -- but I hired this
10 lady because she had the certification as well as
11 career certification; so it worked for me in both
12 ways.
13 So that's all I have at this time. Do y'all
14 have any questions?
15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So you have about 11
16 minutes left of your -- do you want -- any other
17 things that you would like to present or would you
18 just want to go ahead and move to questions?
19 MS. RAPER: I think we can move to questions. I
20 think we've shared the information that we have. You
21 know, just one thing to note that when we started the
22 STEM charter we were looking for innovative ways to
23 get our students interested in science, math, and
24 reading. And anyone who has ever visited our
25 Discovery Zone understands that it is -- it's an

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1 environment that the students want to be in, and
2 we're fortunate enough to be able to have books there
3 to get them interested. I can tell you when we did
4 our first kickoff, and it was before school started,
5 we had students knocking on the door a week before
6 school started, wanting to come to school because
7 they had seen the Discovery Zone and wanted to be a
8 part of it. So I think that speaks for itself that
9 students want to be involved in that class.
10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right.
11 Before we move to questions, Ms. Boyd, is there
12 anybody here to speak in opposition?
13 DR. BOYD: No, sir.
14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. You do have an
15 additional five minutes if you would like to share
16 anything else or we can go right into questions.
17 MS. RAPER: Questions.
18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. So we'll
19 move on to questions. Are there any questions of any
20 Panel Members? We can start down here with Dr.
21 Williams.
22 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you. What are you-all
23 -- what are you doing differently now than previously
24 when you've had a librarian or media specialist?
25 MS. SMITH: Okay. We're not doing anything

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1 different --
2 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.
3 MS. SMITH: -- with the exception of we just
4 don't have a person there that has the certification.
5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So there are no services
6 that are not taking place with the kids or anything
7 like that now?
8 MS. RAPER: No, sir.
9 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.
10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Turner?
11 MS. TURNER: No questions.
12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Owoh?
13 DR. OWOH: You mentioned that the person who
14 would be assigned to the media center would take care
15 of AR testing and check-out books. But, of course,
16 we know that there's more to library education or
17 media center education than just those areas. So I'm
18 -- my question is: how will students obtain those
19 skills on how to really utilize the media center
20 effectively going forward if you're granted this
21 waiver?
22 MS. SMITH: Okay. When I was speaking earlier,
23 when I said they rotate in there with the social
24 studies teachers, social studies also teach literacy
25 standards as well. So a lot of those librarians -- I

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1 mean library/media specialist standards are a part of
 2 our literacy standards in our curriculum. So that's
 3 where we try to make sure that we address those
 4 standards for the library.
 5 MS. RAPER: And so we have aligned -- went
 6 through the library/media standards. And there is a
 7 handout in here where we just picked out just a few
 8 of the standards. We have a K-12 approach to
 9 curriculum with Engage New York. We're very
 10 fortunate in our district to have actually a pre-K to
 11 12th grade curriculum. And so our Engage New York
 12 curriculum covers or teaches those standards in-
 13 depth; for example, one of the standards, just
 14 looking at complex questions, key words, using the
 15 dictionaries, eBooks, those types of things. And so,
 16 Ms. Smith -- and we wanted to make sure and so the
 17 last few days we've looked at those standards to
 18 insure that we are indeed making sure that those
 19 students receive those standards in not just literacy
 20 but social studies as well.
 21 DR. OWOH: Okay. And my last question: you
 22 mentioned a Read 180 class. Who facilitates that
 23 intervention class?
 24 MS. SMITH: Okay. The one that's inside of
 25 there, my -- actually my counselor has a small group;

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1 we have a 6th grade literacy teacher that goes in
 2 there and does a small group; I have a 7th grade
 3 social studies teacher and an 8th grade literacy
 4 teacher that does a session of Read 180.
 5 MS. RAPER: And her counselor was a former
 6 literacy coach.
 7 MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, my counselor was, yeah, a
 8 literacy coach.
 9 DR. OWOH: Thank you.
 10 MS. RAPER: And it just makes for a good
 11 environment for that type of class because we have --
 12 we do have a small computer lab, a nice place for
 13 collaborative learning; it's just the perfect
 14 scenario, classroom environment for Read 180.
 15 MS. SMITH: Because the Read 180 is they rotate
 16 in stations, so --
 17 DR. OWOH: Right. And I'm familiar with it.
 18 And that's the reason why I asked who would be
 19 facilitating it. And so there are multiple people --
 20 MS. SMITH: Yes.
 21 DR. OWOH: -- facilitating it?
 22 MS. SMITH: What we did was we screened the kids
 23 and on our -- actually on my master schedule what I
 24 did, we had intervention there; so when we
 25 implemented that those teachers -- intervention

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1 became Read 180 small groups.
 2 MS. RAPER: And she chose the best of the best
 3 --
 4 MS. SMITH: Yes.
 5 MS. RAPER: -- to work with the Read 180.
 6 DR. OWOH: Thank you.
 7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Newton?
 8 MS. NEWTON: I think my question is follow-up to
 9 Dr. Owoh. And I understand the complexity of the
 10 system we have set up. My concern is quality
 11 assurance, you know, because one thing has to drop to
 12 throw the whole thing out of kilter. So in the event
 13 that your waiver is granted how do you assure or how
 14 do you monitor compliance? At every -- there are a
 15 lot of steps in this process, you know, to address
 16 the lack of a media specialist there. So what's the
 17 oversight and what's the assurance of quality that
 18 the board will have that things continue to meet the
 19 requirements?
 20 MS. SMITH: Okay. One of the things that I
 21 wanted to make sure -- like I said, we have a
 22 certified person that travels. And when I set it up,
 23 I set it up with time slots; so when a group do go in
 24 there, if you are going to give a lesson, whether
 25 it's on cataloging or whatever it may be, there's no

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1 one else in there; so they get the time just with
 2 those kids.
 3 Another thing we did was we put two
 4 paraprofessionals in there. So if they come in there
 5 and you have Discovery Zone going on, as well as
 6 activities, as well as checking out books or
 7 whatever, it could be stations and you have enough
 8 adults to insure that -- the quality of that as well.
 9 Is that what you're --
 10 MS. NEWTON: No. No.
 11 MS. RAPER: And one thing that we could do --
 12 MS. NEWTON: The quality -- meeting the
 13 standards --
 14 MS. SMITH: Okay. You're talking about --
 15 MS. NEWTON: -- absent the specialist, how do
 16 you assure that the system -- that nothing drops --
 17 MS. RAPER: One thing that --
 18 MS. NEWTON: -- in the process with the
 19 different individuals connecting with each other in
 20 terms of their requirements to see that things are
 21 done?
 22 MS. RAPER: One thing I think we could do would
 23 be to incorporate our integration -- when we do have
 24 integrated lesson plans, I think what we could do for
 25 that is to integrate and make sure that these

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1 standards are written to the lesson plans of that
2 certified teacher that's working with that. I think
3 that would be something that we could do.
4 MS. SMITH: And another thing too we could do is
5 -- because when I look at these standards and I think
6 about our literacy standards, I can make sure they
7 correlate and then have them document that as well;
8 make sure when they go in there that we are meeting
9 the standards.
10 MS. NEWTON: Does that answer my question, Dr.
11 Owoh? You nodded -- yeah, I saw you nodding. And
12 what I'm trying --
13 DR. OWOH: It does. If they're insuring that
14 it's embedded in the lesson plans --
15 MS. NEWTON: Okay.
16 DR. OWOH: -- and the teachers who are
17 overseeing that, I think it does.
18 MS. RAPER: I think what we would be willing to
19 do is to go through those standards and do a true
20 correlation with our curriculum --
21 MS. NEWTON: Yes.
22 MS. RAPER: -- and see which standards --
23 because there are standards, of course, like
24 cataloging and those type of things, that are a
25 little bit more specific to library media and not

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1 just literacy. And I believe --
2 MS. SMITH: We could do that.
3 MS. RAPER: I think that we could do that and
4 Ms. Smith would be willing to --
5 MS. SMITH: I'd be willing to do that.
6 MS. NEWTON: All right. Okay.
7 MS. RAPER: -- insure that we integrate that.
8 Because we do work with integrated lesson plans
9 often, and so we could make sure that we add those
10 in.
11 MS. SMITH: And right now we're in the process
12 of looking at our curriculum in our modules, so this
13 would be the perfect time to go in there and make
14 sure we correlate that.
15 MS. NEWTON: Okay. That answers my question.
16 Thank you.
17 MS. SMITH: Thank you. Sorry I didn't
18 understand that. Sorry.
19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I just want to remind
20 everybody to make sure that they get close to the
21 microphone, like me.
22 MS. SMITH: I'm sorry.
23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Because we have viewing
24 audience that's watching this also and they're having
25 some trouble hearing. So, all right.

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1 Mr. Wilson?
2 MR. WILSON: No questions. Thank you.
3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. I do have a couple
4 of questions. So I'm going to say a few things and
5 then I'll get to my question, I guess. So I think
6 one thing that gives me some -- well, I'll ask the
7 question first. How long has the system that you
8 have in place with the -- I forget the term you used
9 -- drop -- Discovery Zone -- I was going to say Drop
10 Zone; I don't know why -- but Discovery Zone -- how
11 long has that been in place?
12 MS. SMITH: Since 2011.
13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Okay. That's
14 helpful.
15 So in kind of reviewing some of the data, you
16 know, looking at the recently put out ESSA School
17 Index, you know, I see that reading levels -- there's
18 a little north of 15% of kids that are reading on
19 grade level in your school. Over the comparison from
20 last year to the previous year there's been a drop in
21 the ELA scores. And so my question is: is the optics
22 of us saying we're granting this waiver for Library
23 Media Specialist -- I have some concerns about the
24 plan as far as how do you -- you've been doing this
25 process; and so are we making it worse by granting a

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1 waiver or is there something that's solid in place
2 that's going to help us think through -- I guess what
3 I'm saying, how does this waiver help you raise those
4 scores?
5 MS. SMITH: Well, what I was saying earlier --
6 well, where I think it helps us at -- like I said,
7 I've added texts to it. But also I think it's going
8 to help us because it's something that the kids enjoy
9 doing, meaning we've got to stress the reading part
10 of it so they know that not only they're having fun
11 -- but I want to go back to address something. Can I
12 go back to where you were --
13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, ma'am.
14 MS. SMITH: -- talking about looking at my data?
15 We were a little nervous at the end of last year
16 because with our reading scores -- we didn't
17 anticipate them to be that low. But I had two
18 teachers that -- and then in the grades that those
19 two -- those grades I was worried about, that pretty
20 much reflected what -- the instruction I feel was not
21 where it needed to be. So I don't think the
22 Discovery Zone or the library was impacted in terms
23 -- or made it worse for us. Now considering this
24 year, I feel like -- I'm feeling really good about
25 our teachers, the instruction going on. We

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1 anticipate to see our reading scores go up
2 tremendously. So I wanted to address that.
3 But do I think that this setting will benefit
4 us? Absolutely. We do have students that don't have
5 a desire to read; you know, that's the reason I went
6 with high-interest texts. We do live in an area or a
7 community where reading is not stressed and that's a
8 barrier we can't do anything about; so we're trying
9 to build it up within our schools so the children
10 take on their own initiative to want to read more.
11 But I think this is the best setting for our kids,
12 because a lot of times you'll see when they get in
13 there and they really get involved with something,
14 whether it's reading and they're doing -- because,
15 see, we do reciprocal reading in small groups. So
16 they actually don't just sit there and read for 55
17 minutes; they actually have to have academic
18 discussions in relation to what they're reading. So,
19 but I think it benefits us tremendously.
20 MS. RAPER: One advantage is that our library is
21 not in isolation. We -- sometimes we talk about that
22 as silos. And so with social studies teachers going
23 in there with them and the Discovery Zone teacher
24 being in there it becomes a part of the student's day
25 and not just a class period. And that's what we try

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1 to work with our students to make that learning
2 process all day just a flow and not silos of math,
3 science, reading, library.
4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So this is kind of
5 probably an ancillary question but the -- so you guys
6 have gone through and looked at your data; you've
7 started to work through and think through school
8 level plans and what that's going to look like and
9 starting to get those to the district to think
10 through. And so does this -- this waiver and things
11 is how you're doing this, is this kind of
12 incorporated in the plan to -- and the reason why I
13 ask that, I think about things like Dr. Owoh asked
14 about Read 180 and how that -- all that stuff fits
15 together. And so is this just kind of we realized,
16 hey, we needed to get this waiver or is it one of
17 those things that's really part of a long-term plan
18 to address this?
19 MS. SMITH: Actually it's part of a long-term
20 plan. Like we said earlier, we thought we had the
21 waiver. So like I said, I was fortunate earlier to
22 have a person that was certified. But this is
23 actually -- this is part of my STEM school, so it's
24 part of what we did.
25 MS. RAPER: And so our school improvement plan

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1 is complete with the cycle that was sent out in the
2 Commissioner's Memo and it has already been submitted
3 to, you know, your direction already. We made sure
4 that that was created with our district; we took a
5 district approach to that. And so with elementary in
6 the building with us, with middle school, and middle
7 school in the building with high school -- so we took
8 a true pre-K-12 approach to writing that school
9 improvement plan with the Plan Do Check and Read 180,
10 and all of these -- those components were certainly
11 written into that plan. So this -- we're not being
12 -- we're not trying to be reactive; we're just --
13 we're just following along with what we've always
14 done and what we think is best for students.
15 DR. OWOH: Mr. Chairman, I have one follow-up
16 question. I noted that you're asking for waivers for
17 two different codes, one for the service program and
18 one for the specialist. I'm interested to know why
19 you're waiving the service program if -- some of your
20 responses this morning has -- have centered around
21 that you're providing the services. And I think
22 those services that are outlined in law are very
23 important to all of our students K-12. And so if you
24 could kind of share why you're waiving both
25 components, both codes?

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1 MS. RAPER: We may need Alexandra to help us on
2 that one. These were the statute, standard and rules
3 that we had originally asked for in our original
4 waiver. And so we just went ahead and -- our
5 original application, rather -- and so we just went
6 ahead and went through that. But at no time have we
7 completely just stopped any of those services. So
8 we're still going to do what's best for students, but
9 we did go ahead and ask for the original waivers that
10 we asked for in our original charter in 2011. But
11 this Discovery Zone process -- you know, when we
12 wrote that application we were looking at it as a
13 vision, and now this vision has progressed and we
14 were able to offer more services really than we
15 thought.
16 Do you have a better -- go ahead.
17 DR. BOYD: I don't have anything better; I just
18 have something additional. So the way that the
19 statute is written it entangles in the specialist
20 position within the services. So that's why we
21 advise for the schools to ask for both, because the
22 one about the services speaks about a media
23 specialist.
24 DR. OWOH: So, Dr. Boyd, is it possible for the
25 school to receive the waiver for the specialist and

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1 be waived that but still be required -- I guess, in
 2 short, can we separate the two codes and vote on each
 3 one separately? Because I think the services are
 4 still important for the students and that they're
 5 waived from a specialist, but then fill that position
 6 or divide the services among their teachers. That
 7 still shouldn't, you know, give them -- I mean, the
 8 services still would be able to be provided, I guess
 9 is my question or concern.

10 MS. DAVIS: Right. And what we have --
 11 traditionally have always done in the past and what
 12 has been assumed and accepted by the applicants for
 13 waivers is just because they waive maybe how they are
 14 doing it does not mean that they are waiving
 15 providing it. They still have to provide services.
 16 So the reason why these two laws are usually the ones
 17 that are given for this is in the first statute, in
 18 the 1.03 there is language about the one-third of the
 19 media specialist time and how it's spent; so it's
 20 more dictated to, you know, how that's spent. So if
 21 they -- if it's purely just a timing, then maybe they
 22 can limit it to just that particular subsection.

23 And then on the code ending 1.04 dealing with
 24 the media specialist, it deals with having the
 25 specific license and qualifications of the

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1 specialist.

2 But even waiving these, you know, because they
 3 have, you know, testified here today, which would be
 4 in the transcript, that they are providing services
 5 then they are providing services.

6 DR. OWOH: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Davis. So
 7 that's what I wanted to be sure that those services
 8 that are outlined in Code 1.03 that those services
 9 will still continue.

10 MS. DAVIS: Absolutely.

11 DR. OWOH: Okay.

12 MS. DAVIS: They will. And like I say, if you
 13 would feel better about it, you know, the applicant
 14 can just go ahead and confirm to you on the record
 15 that they will still be providing the services.

16 DR. OWOH: I would like that. Thank you.

17 MS. SMITH: So I will answer that question
 18 because I am the instructional leader at Osceola STEM
 19 Academy. We will be.

20 DR. OWOH: Okay.

21 MS. SMITH: We'll be providing those services
 22 because we do feel like it is very important.

23 DR. OWOH: All right. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Any other follow-up
 25 questions or --

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1 Okay. I'm not seeing any other questions. We
 2 can move to a decision. We can -- our decision can
 3 be to approve, deny, or take the matter under
 4 advisement for a future meeting.

5 So with that, I'll check with Ms. Davis: are
 6 there any outstanding issues with this application?

7 MS. DAVIS: (shaking head from side to side)

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I'm seeing a no.

9 And so we are -- I'm ready to accept a motion
 10 regarding the Osceola STEM Academy request.

11 MS. TURNER: I move to approve.

12 DR. OWOH: Second.

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

15 All those in favor say "aye."
 16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

18 Okay. Motion passes.

19 We'll take a few minutes to fill in your handy-
 20 dandy chart.

21 MS. RAPER: Thank you so much.

22 MS. SMITH: Thank you. Thank you very much.

23 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll go ahead and
 25 start. Mr. Williams.

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1 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted to approve the request
 2 given that the media services are being provided and
 3 will continue to be provided.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Turner.

5 MS. TURNER: I voted for the motion. Osceola
 6 STEM Academy has assured they will continue to
 7 provide services to the students after the approval
 8 of this waiver.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Owoh.

10 DR. OWOH: I voted to approve the request
 11 because the school has provided a plan to continue to
 12 address the standards as outlined.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Newton.

14 MS. NEWTON: I voted to -- for approval. My
 15 reason is the school has a clear plan as --
 16 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Ms. Newton pulls
 17 microphone closer.)

18 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion. And the
 19 reason is the school has a clear plan as to how they
 20 will meet the services required and provide adequate
 21 monitoring.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Wilson.

23 MR. WILSON: I voted for the waiver. I was
 24 satisfied that the discrepancy was inadvertent and
 25 they are following the original intention.

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1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you.
 2 A-2: REQUEST FOR DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT:
 3 POLK COUNTY VIRTUAL ACADEMY
 4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. We'll now move
 5 to our second item. It's a Request for District
 6 Conversion Charter School Amendment: Polk County
 7 Virtual Academy. Ms. McLaughlin, you are recognized.
 8 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. On October 19th the
 9 State Board of Education approved the district
 10 conversion charter application for Polk County
 11 Virtual Academy, in Mena. The charter is approved to
 12 serve students in grades K-12 with a maximum
 13 enrollment of 200 students. Representatives of Polk
 14 County Virtual Academy are appearing before the Panel
 15 to request amendments to the current charter.
 16 Actually, it's Superintendent Benny Weston that is
 17 here to speak.
 18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Would all
 19 representatives from the charter and anyone speaking
 20 in opposition please state to receive the oath? Do
 21 you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about
 22 to give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and
 23 nothing but the truth?
 24 SUPT. WESTON: Yes, I do.
 25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Mr. Weston, you

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1 are recognized for 20 minutes.
 2 SUPT. WESTON: Thank you very much. I'm Benny
 3 Weston; I'm the superintendent of the Mena Public
 4 Schools, as well as Polk County Virtual Academy. We
 5 come -- I come before you today to request basically
 6 a change of address for our academy. After visiting
 7 -- the team went and visited some other academies and
 8 we realized that our target population was our 139 --
 9 which is 142 now -- home-school folks in our
 10 community and our county. And so where we had
 11 originally planned on putting it was kind of in the
 12 center of the campus at our high school. And after
 13 interviewing and talking with the candidates that
 14 applied for the school we fastly realized that they
 15 really don't want to be in the center of a campus;
 16 that's one reason they're not with us any longer.
 17 And so realizing that -- we also fell into a lucky
 18 situation; our primary is being renovated, as well as
 19 14 classes added on to it. We have modular buildings
 20 that house our preschool behind our primary building.
 21 And the construction is a little bit ahead of time,
 22 and so we found out that those modular buildings were
 23 going to be available. As a matter of fact, we're
 24 moving those the 22nd of May. And so those are
 25 already set up for educational purposes, with

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1 restrooms, with computer access, with all of the
 2 things that we feel like that we need for the
 3 academy. And so we have decided -- or I should say I
 4 have decided that it would be great to be able to
 5 move those to a location -- and we have lots of
 6 property. We're going to move those to a location
 7 which we already have turned dirt on and kind of got
 8 it ready to serve as our academy, which will also
 9 allow for future expansion as the population
 10 increases. It's about 300 yards straight as the crow
 11 flies from where it was.
 12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Anything else you'd like to
 13 present?
 14 SUPT. WESTON: That's it.
 15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: That sounds short and
 16 sweet. Sounds good.
 17 SUPT. WESTON: Yes, sir.
 18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Is there anybody
 19 here that -- to speak in opposition?
 20 MS. McLAUGHLIN: No, sir.
 21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Not seeing any.
 22 Anything else you'd like to add?
 23 SUPT. WESTON: No, not unless you have questions
 24 that I can share with you.
 25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll turn to

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1 questions. Are there any questions of Panel Members?
 2 Okay. Don't see -- I don't have any questions,
 3 Mr. Weston. So with that, I will accept a motion
 4 regarding the Polk County Virtual Academy request.
 5 DR. OWOH: I move that we accept the amendment
 6 request.
 7 MR. WILSON: Second.
 8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a first and
 9 a second to approve the request.
 10 All those in favor?
 11 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)
 12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?
 13 Motion passes.
 14 If you would, fill out your charts.
 15 SUPT. WESTON: Thank you.
 16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.
 17 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]
 18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll go ahead. Mr.
 19 Wilson.
 20 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion. I felt
 21 that the change of address is minimal and could be
 22 helpful in the administration of the district.
 23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.
 24 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion. And the
 25 reason is the request for the move is logical to

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1 accommodate home-school students.
 2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Dr. Owoh.
 3 DR. OWOH: I voted for the amendment because it
 4 includes stakeholder input, as well as the student
 5 needs that have been stated.
 6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Turner.
 7 MS. TURNER: I voted for the amendment. It
 8 seems to be a logical move on behalf of the school
 9 district.
 10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Williams.
 11 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted to approve the request
 12 for the change of address. The change appears to
 13 meet the needs of the students and families and the
 14 district.
 15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Thank you.
 16 A-3: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT:
 17 ARKANSAS ARTS ACADEMY, ROGERS
 18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Next item on the agenda is
 19 a Request for Open-Enrollment Charter School
 20 Amendment: Arkansas Arts Academy, Rogers. Ms. Perry,
 21 you are recognized.
 22 MS. PERRY: Good morning. Virginia Perry, ADE
 23 Charter Unit Program Advisor. On November 13, 2000,
 24 the State Board of Education approved the application
 25 for Arkansas Arts Academy. The charter is approved

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1 to serve students in grades K through 12 with a
 2 maximum enrollment of 1,225. Representatives of
 3 Arkansas Arts Academy are appearing before the
 4 Charter Authorizing Panel to request an amendment to
 5 their current charter. And Superintendent Mary Ley
 6 should be on the phone.
 7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Do we have Ms. Ley
 8 on the phone?
 9 MR. BRADBURY: We're getting her.
 10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.
 11 DR. BOYD: Dr. Hernandez, while we're waiting on
 12 Ms. Ley, I just want to point out that I made a
 13 mistake on the agenda. So the request that's being
 14 made is the exact same as the request that was
 15 previously made by Osceola STEM Academy; so they're
 16 asking for the Library Media Specialist. We went
 17 back and forth and they did send us the correct
 18 request; I just inadvertently posted the original
 19 request. So that's a mistake.
 20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So it should be the same
 21 codes that -- same rules and codes that they're
 22 asking --
 23 DR. BOYD: Exactly.
 24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.
 25 DR. BOYD: And I'm looking for the corrected

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1 one, and when I get it I'll email it to you.
 2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.
 3 DR. BOYD: I apologize for that.
 4 MR. BRADBURY: Ms. Ley?
 5 SUPT. LEY: Yes.
 6 MR. BRADBURY: This is Doug at the Department of
 7 Education. You are on the call.
 8 SUPT. LEY: Okay. Thank you.
 9 MR. BRADBURY: All right, Dr. Hernandez.
 10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So all
 11 representatives from the charter or anyone speaking
 12 in opposition please stand to receive the oath. Do
 13 you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about
 14 to give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and
 15 nothing but the truth?
 16 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]
 17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Ley, were you able to
 18 hear that?
 19 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]
 20 SUPT. LEY: Yes.
 21 MR. BRADBURY: Did you hear the oath?
 22 SUPT. LEY: Yes.
 23 MR. BRADBURY: Are you confirming that oath?
 24 SUPT. LEY: Yes.
 25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. So we will now

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1 begin. Ms. Ley, you have 20 minutes to present your
 2 request.
 3 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]
 4 SUPT. LEY: Yes, sir. Yes.
 5 MR. BRADBURY: Ms. Ley, you have 20 minutes to
 6 present your request.
 7 SUPT. LEY: Okay. Thank you. Thank you for
 8 letting me not drive there and be able to do this on
 9 the phone.
 10 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]
 11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Ley, is there -- do you
 12 want to give us some --
 13 SUPT. LEY: Thank you.
 14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- detail about -- oh, go
 15 ahead.
 16 SUPT. LEY: So we had a wonderful reading
 17 specialist that was a 3rd grade teacher for a long
 18 time take over our media center at the K-8, that will
 19 be the K-6 next year. She's done a tremendous job.
 20 She's a great reading specialist. We also have a
 21 computer tech that works with her. And then when we
 22 went to get our -- once they go through our
 23 accountability every year, this year Lawrence Randall
 24 said that he didn't think that she --
 25 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]

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1 MR. BRADBURY: Ms. Ley, you're breaking up.
 2 SUPT. LEY: I'm here.
 3 MR. BRADBURY: Could you repeat that last
 4 statement?
 5 SUPT. LEY: Uh-huh. So anyway, he -- anyway,
 6 when we went to get our certification through Randall
 7 Lawrence this year, he didn't feel like that our
 8 waiver -- even though they had approved it the last
 9 two years -- needed to be more specific. So that's
 10 why this year we're asking for it to be waived, that
 11 a reading teacher could be -- also serve in the
 12 library position.
 13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So, generally,
 14 you're requesting that your reading teacher be
 15 allowed to also serve as the Library Media
 16 Specialist. Is that correct?
 17 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]
 18 MR. BRADBURY: Ms. Ley, can you hear us?
 19 SUPT. LEY: Yeah, now I can.
 20 MR. BRADBURY: So Dr. Hernandez wanted to know,
 21 so your request is to use your reading specialist as
 22 your Library Media Specialist?
 23 SUPT. LEY: That's correct.
 24 MR. BRADBURY: Thank you.
 25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Is there

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1 anybody here to speak in opposition?
 2 MS. PERRY: No.
 3 SUPT. LEY: That's correct. Yes.
 4 MR. BRADBURY: Okay. Thank you.
 5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Ley, before we
 6 move into questions is there anything else you would
 7 like to add?
 8 SUPT. LEY: No, sir.
 9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you. All
 10 right. We will now take Panel Member questions. Are
 11 there any questions?
 12 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.
 13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Williams.
 14 DR. WILLIAMS: I just want -- I'm not quite sure
 15 I'm tracking here. Did you lose your Media
 16 Specialist or is the Media Specialist still there and
 17 they need a different waiver for that? Is there a
 18 different person here? I'm -- okay.
 19 DR. BOYD: Dr. Williams, I think I can --
 20 SUPT. LEY: Well, I could have gone --
 21 MR. BRADBURY: Ms. Ley, let's go ahead and let
 22 Ms. Boyd try to address that point.
 23 SUPT. LEY: Yeah. Okay. Thank you.
 24 DR. BOYD: So just in general, for context for
 25 the entire panel, this might happen frequently in the

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1 meetings to come. Recently we have put all of the
 2 waivers in one place, and that's a new tremendous,
 3 wonderful thing for us. They're all on My School
 4 Info. So before where schools were piecing together
 5 different documents to show the Standards Assurance
 6 team that they were meeting the standards, now it's
 7 all in one place and it's -- this is what you have
 8 waivers of and this is how it affects your standards
 9 of accreditation. So in past, just like with Osceola
 10 STEM, and now with Arkansas Arts, they have been
 11 piecing together different doc -- pieces of
 12 documentation and showing to the Standards team, "Oh,
 13 I have a waiver of this because of this document and
 14 that document." And none of it was malicious or
 15 there was no ill intent; it's just that's what the
 16 understanding was -- but it wasn't correct. So now
 17 that we have all of the waivers in one place on My
 18 School Info it's helping the Standards Assurance team
 19 to be more efficient and more effective. And so,
 20 unfortunately, this may not be the last meeting where
 21 you see schools before you and say, "I thought that
 22 we were covered by this waiver, but we're not."
 23 Another point is that they're all in one place
 24 and they're all spelled out. So I believe in this
 25 case Arkansas Arts believed since they had a waiver

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1 from Teacher Licensure that that covered the Media
 2 Specialist. But as we know, earlier we looked at the
 3 law and the Media Specialist has their own specific
 4 law that's outside of the laws covered under Teacher
 5 Licensure waivers. So I think that might be helpful
 6 to you. Do you have any questions for me about that?
 7 DR. WILLIAMS: No. That's very helpful. I just
 8 wasn't tracking the way it was described, the fact
 9 that -- I understood they already had someone in
 10 place; now all of a sudden we need to have an
 11 amendment or a waiver for that. So they hadn't
 12 changed individuals per se; it's just that they
 13 thought they had the waiver and they do not have the
 14 waiver?
 15 DR. BOYD: Right.
 16 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Okay.
 17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Ms. Turner?
 18 MS. TURNER: Ms. Ley, will all the services that
 19 you've been offering students continue?
 20 MR. BRADBURY: Ms. Ley, Ms. Turner has a
 21 question. All the services that you've previously
 22 provided, will they continue?
 23 [MOMENT OF SILENCE]
 24 MR. BRADBURY: Ms. Ley, are you there? Hello?
 25 SUPT. LEY: Yes. Oh, of course.

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1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Owoh? Ms. Newton, do
2 you have any questions?
3 MS. NEWTON: No.
4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Wilson?
5 MR. WILSON: No.
6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. I do not
7 have any questions.
8 Okay. So we have the option here -- so I will
9 accept a motion -- or let me make sure -- Ms. Davis,
10 is there anything else we need to consider on this?
11 MS. DAVIS: (shaking head from side to side.)
12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Do we need to --
13 we're approving the waiver request, not as presented
14 in the -- okay. Well, Ms. Newton does have a
15 question.
16 MS. NEWTON: My question is: Dr. Boyd, since
17 we're not able to effectively communicate on the
18 phone, do you have any concerns about the approval of
19 this waiver or --
20 DR. BOYD: I don't have any concerns. In
21 looking at the school's performance in reading,
22 they've been steadily improving. So it's not a
23 concern for me.
24 MS. DAVIS: And just for clarification, what I
25 have as this waiver would be the exact waiver that

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1 Osceola just had, a waiver of 6-25-103 and 104 and
2 then the standard 16.02.3. So that's what I have
3 would be this waiver, if granted.
4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So that's what we
5 are approving if we --
6 MS. DAVIS: Yes.
7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. So with
8 that, I'll accept a motion.
9 DR. WILLIAMS: So moved.
10 MS. NEWTON: Second.
11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Is that a motion to
12 approve, Dr. Williams?
13 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, it is. Thank you.
14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. So we
15 have a motion to approve and a second.
16 I didn't say this earlier, but any discussion?
17 All right. Seeing no discussion, all those in
18 favor say "aye."
19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)
20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?
21 All right. Motion passes. We'll give you a
22 minute to fill out your Google document.
23 [SOUND OF CONFERENCE CALL BEING DISCONNECTED]
24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll start down
25 here with Dr. Williams.

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1 DR. WILLIAMS: I approved the request given that
2 the services were provided and will continue to be
3 provided. Also, there were no concerns raised by
4 ADE.
5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Turner.
6 MS. TURNER: I voted for the motion. The
7 amendment provides clarity on the issue of the Media
8 Specialist for the school and the services will be
9 continued.
10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Owoh.
11 DR. OWOH: I voted for the amendment request
12 because the services will be provided and it corrects
13 an oversight that was in place.
14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Newton.
15 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion with the
16 reason being the present structure will continue to
17 address student needs.
18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Wilson.
19 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion. I felt
20 that the discrepancy was inadvertent and the services
21 were being provided to the kids.
22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. It looks like we're
23 ready for the next item.
24 Need a break or anything? Are we good? Press
25 on? Okay. All right.

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1 A-4: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT:
2 FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE ACADEMY LITTLE ROCK
3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Next item I have on the
4 agenda is Request for Open-Enrollment Charter School,
5 Friendship Aspire Academy Little Rock. Ms. Perry,
6 you are recognized.
7 MS. PERRY: On August 17, 2017, the Charter
8 Authorizing Panel approved the application for
9 Friendship Aspire Academy Little Rock. The charter
10 is approved to serve students in grades K through 5
11 with a maximum enrollment of 480. Representatives of
12 Friendship Aspire Academy Little Rock are appearing
13 before the Charter Authorizing Panel to request an
14 amendment to the current charter. Present today for
15 Friendship Academy Little Rock -- or Friendship
16 Aspire Academy Little Rock are Joe Harris, Executive
17 Director; Phong Tran, School Leader of Arkansas; Dr.
18 Jeffrey Grant, National Head of Schools; and Lee
19 Chaffin, Facilities Manager.
20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Would all
21 representatives representing the charter and anyone
22 speaking in opposition please stand to receive the
23 oath? Do you swear or affirm that the testimony
24 you're about to give shall be the truth, the whole
25 truth, and nothing but the truth?

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1 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)
 2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. You are
 3 recognized. You have 20 minutes.
 4 MR. HARRIS: Thank you, and good morning, for
 5 seeing us. My name is Joe Harris; I'm representing
 6 the Friendship Aspire Academy Little Rock. We're
 7 here today to seek an amendment to our application
 8 that was approved in August 2017, to open up a K-5
 9 school in Little Rock. At the time of our original
 10 charter we sought the approval of two schools, to
 11 open two schools, the first being in Pine Bluff in
 12 the school year 2018-19 and the second charter was
 13 granted for us to open a second school in Little Rock
 14 in school year 19-20.
 15 We're here today because the opportunity has
 16 presented itself for us to open our school in Little
 17 Rock a year earlier. We are seeking an amendment to
 18 open that school here in Little Rock in the school
 19 year of 17 -- I'm sorry -- 18-19, as well as seek
 20 authorization to relocate our school that was
 21 originally cited in our application of the former
 22 Taekwondo facility to now the Garland Elementary
 23 School, which is located at 3615 East 25th Street.
 24 Both schools are in the same area.
 25 Before I get into the nuts and bolts of our

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1 presentation or request for amendment, I'd like to
 2 introduce you to my team. I have Phong Tran; Phong
 3 Tran is our Arkansas School Leader. I have Lee
 4 Chaffin, who is our Facilities Project Manager. And
 5 I have Dr. Jeffrey Grant, who will be representing
 6 all things related to our educational program.
 7 Our request to amend our charter and open our
 8 school in Little Rock earlier comes as a direct
 9 result as a -- what is widely known that the --
 10 another school that was approved during the same
 11 time, Einstein Public Charter School, made a decision
 12 not to open up its Garland school in 2018. It is our
 13 desire to step in and fill that gap and open up a
 14 charter school that would mirror it with respect to
 15 enrollment in the first year. Einstein's charter was
 16 approved to open a K-3 in year-one; ours is seeking
 17 to open a K-1 in this August. We believe we have the
 18 wherewithal, the capacity, the experience, and the
 19 community support to open our school a year earlier.
 20 We've -- as an example of our community support,
 21 we've gotten over 61 parents to sign a petition and
 22 they represent over 105 kids to support us opening up
 23 our school early.
 24 As you all know, we are already opening a school
 25 in Pine Bluff this fall and we have the mechanisms in

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1 place for a successful startup in Little Rock. We
 2 will essentially be duplicating our efforts in many
 3 regards to open our school in Little Rock. We have a
 4 team, an academic team in place. We've identified
 5 our school leader for Little Rock. We've begun our
 6 student recruitment, as well as our staff
 7 recruitment, and that's as a result of duplicating
 8 our efforts in Pine Bluff. So we believe that we
 9 have addressed the major concerns with respect to
 10 start-up.
 11 When we originally applied for our application
 12 to open our school in Little Rock we did so and we
 13 asked for a waiver to wait an additional year because
 14 we knew the largest issue for us would be the
 15 facility. At this time we've identified a facility
 16 and we believe that issue to open a school in Little
 17 Rock has been addressed with the Garland school. The
 18 Garland school, as many of you are aware, was cited
 19 as the location for the Einstein school. Renovation
 20 is underway; the school will be delivered June --
 21 July 16th, ready for a turnkey. And so we have
 22 entered into -- we'll finalize our lease agreement
 23 with the Walton Family Foundation to assume the lease
 24 agreement under the terms that were accepted by this
 25 body for the Einstein school that will now be shared

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1 or presented -- allowed to Friendship from Walton.
 2 So we have our facility in place. It's going to be
 3 ready to open this August. And we believe that it
 4 would be a travesty if that school went vacant for
 5 another year and that kids did not have an
 6 opportunity to start their education early. We're
 7 talking about an impact of over 160 kids who, if we
 8 do not open the school year, open this school year,
 9 would go without a K-1 education.
 10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. You still have
 11 almost 15 minutes left. Is there anything else you
 12 would like to present?
 13 MR. HARRIS: Well, I'd like Dr. Grant to really
 14 kind of talk about the impact and the surrounding
 15 school options for our kids.
 16 DR. GRANT: Good morning, everyone. Dr. Jeffrey
 17 Grant; I'm National Head of Schools for Friendship
 18 Educational Foundation. We are bringing a program
 19 that has proven successful for over 5,000 children in
 20 Washington, D.C., Louisiana, Baltimore. We are in
 21 the toughest, roughest neighborhoods. That's where
 22 we choose to be. In looking at the demographics of
 23 the neighborhood that we're serving, right now those
 24 students are being served by Stephens Elementary
 25 School, which is ranked 459th out of 484 elementary

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1 schools in Arkansas. It's -- again, it's a travesty
 2 that less than five miles away you have Forest Park
 3 Elementary School, where those students are -- that
 4 school has a number 10 ranking. So we feel that we
 5 bring our program, which is very strong -- we're
 6 looking at dramatic planning, teaching across the
 7 curriculum, strong academic support in an extended
 8 school day setting, as well as extended school year.
 9 But it's not just limited to the students of that
 10 neighborhood. Because it's a charter school we are
 11 going to provide transportation for children and
 12 families who desire to get a strong program that is
 13 academically supported with a strong textbook series
 14 of Great Minds, Eureka, Wit and Wisdom, False
 15 Science, as well as Guided Reading under Fountas and
 16 Pinnell, things that have proven successful. I've
 17 led a school that was the lowest performing school in
 18 the Friendship network when I took it over five years
 19 ago, and it's now the top-ranked Friendship school.
 20 It has a number-one tier ranking in the DC public --
 21 well, DC charter school system. I've turned around
 22 four schools and I'm going to insure that the
 23 leadership and staff turnaround a school and
 24 implement an academic program that exposes children
 25 relentlessly, gives them strong writing skills --

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1 because, number one, writing is very important and we
 2 see that as one of the standards in the Arkansas
 3 system, bringing in the Collins writing program. And
 4 we're going to teach them across the curriculum,
 5 incorporate field experiences so that they can be
 6 strong advocates for the community. What we don't
 7 want to do is actually repeat what I've noticed is
 8 that -- especially with the Stephens, they say the
 9 students in that community come in below grade level
 10 when they enter those doors. Now they said under
 11 Stephens' academic program, when I was looking at
 12 some of the reviews, that the students are making
 13 yearly growth. But when you come in below grade
 14 level that means you're going to leave below grade
 15 level. You need a school that's going to guarantee
 16 1.5 to 2 years growth and that's something that
 17 Friendship's model has been designed to do. We use
 18 the NWEA MAP assessment and we're also going to make
 19 sure that we are very strong on ACT standardized
 20 assessment at the end of the year. We're going to
 21 make sure that we use that data to plan appropriately
 22 and accordingly, collaborate with families,
 23 collaborate with the community to see what is needed,
 24 because we're not just going to come in and bring a
 25 cookie-cutter program; we actually engage our

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1 families and parents and communities in designing a
 2 program where we deliver students who are going to
 3 contribute to the community in an ethical, moral way.
 4 MR. HARRIS: As a result of this opportunity and
 5 hearing that Einstein would not open its school this
 6 fall, Friendship and Einstein had a number of
 7 discussions about how we can insure that the kids in
 8 the community do not go without a quality education
 9 and charter choice. As a result of that, we've put
 10 in place a partnership which reflects the bridge
 11 between what was planned for Einstein and what
 12 Friendship had intended for its school.
 13 Many of you may have heard or know of Phan Trong
 14 -- I mean Phong Tran. Phong was hired as our
 15 Arkansas School Leader. Tran was the architect and
 16 the leader of the Einstein application here in
 17 Arkansas. Tran has assumed a role to help us insure
 18 that the school is opening. And if you will, Tran,
 19 if you want to add anything to --
 20 MR. TRAN: Good morning. Thank you for letting
 21 me speak. Pretty much -- you know, we have
 22 everything in place, so it's not --
 23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Tran, can you state
 24 your name for the record?
 25 MR. TRAN: I'm sorry. My name is Phong Tran.

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1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.
 2 MR. TRAN: School Leader for Friendship in
 3 Arkansas. Like I was saying, sir, everything that we
 4 have in place is still continuing. It's not like
 5 we've stopped and restarted. So in working with
 6 Friendship and in working with the Walton Foundation
 7 all the work that we've done in the last year is
 8 still progressing but now on the Friendship side. So
 9 like Mr. Harris said, it's not like we're beginning
 10 from the -- we're starting from the beginning again.
 11 We're actually continuing on from what I did the last
 12 year.
 13 MR. HARRIS: Okay. Thank you. And just -- I'd
 14 like you guys to hear from Lee Chaffin. Lee is
 15 overseeing and serving as a project manager,
 16 supporting the renovation and insuring that our
 17 school in Little Rock is ready for our kids on the
 18 first day of school. Part of our decision and our
 19 request when we were originally approved was that we
 20 -- at the time the facility that we had selected
 21 would require an extensive amount of renovation to
 22 convert it to a charter school. Since that time
 23 there has been a law that has allowed for any closed
 24 or unused schools to be -- for charters to have the
 25 first choice. That opportunity wasn't available to

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1 us at the time of our charter. Since then, the --
 2 our second choice at the time was the Garland
 3 facility. So we've done an assessment prior to
 4 submitting our application and we believe that the
 5 facility itself is more than adequate to support our
 6 educational model in our K-5.
 7 If you would, I'd like to just turn the mic to
 8 Mr. Chaffin to talk about where we are in the
 9 renovations.
 10 MR. CHAFFIN: My name is Lee Chaffin; I'm the
 11 Facility Project Manager for Friendship Education
 12 Foundation. We love the Garland school because it
 13 actually is a turnkey process. It fits in the same
 14 model as all of the Friendship schools in all the
 15 different catchment areas that we are currently
 16 within Washington, D.C., within Louisiana, as well,
 17 and Baltimore. Within Friendship we really focus on
 18 making sure that all of our facilities are state-of-
 19 the-art. We make sure that the facilities do not
 20 provide any disruption. We also -- which the Garland
 21 school presents -- is we love to give our instructors
 22 flexibility because we know each teacher has a
 23 different way in which they instruct. So when we
 24 design classrooms, instructional spaces, when we put
 25 in furniture and we put in technology we want to make

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1 sure that that teacher or that instructor is 100
 2 percent comfortable in the way that they need to
 3 deliver the message to the kids. And so the Garland
 4 facility -- there's a picture up there, right there
 5 -- it provides over about 20 instructional
 6 classrooms. We have dedicated science labs, computer
 7 labs, as well as a media library; we have a
 8 cafeteria. We have a lot of space.
 9 One of the things in the Friendship model is
 10 that all of our schools are immersed into community,
 11 and so we also provide what we call parents centers
 12 where parents and guardians, they can come in the
 13 school and they can have one-on-one meetings with
 14 instructions and leaders; they can utilize some of
 15 our internet service if they need to apply for
 16 applications for jobs, because some in our community
 17 does not have that at home. So that's one of the
 18 things that we do is that we look at this facility as
 19 a great opportunity, because it is turnkey and all
 20 the stuff that Tran has done for Einstein fits into
 21 the model as far as everything that Friendship does
 22 nationwide.
 23 MR. HARRIS: Just to kind of wrap-up our
 24 presentation here today, we had talked about -- or at
 25 least I'd indicated that we have experience in doing

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1 start-up schools across the country. In Arkansas, we
 2 are currently underway with opening our school in
 3 Pine Bluff. So it won't be a real heavy-lift for
 4 open -- for us to open up a school here in Little
 5 Rock. We will essentially be duplicating our efforts
 6 that we have underway in Pine Bluff that include the
 7 identifying and hiring staff, recruiting students,
 8 facilities and renovations, and also conducting all
 9 of the activities necessary to open up a successful
 10 school in August.
 11 That concludes our presentation.
 12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you.
 13 Y'all have 5 additional minutes. Before that,
 14 do we have anybody here to speak in opposition?
 15 MS. BOYD: (nodding head up and down.)
 16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Poore, I know you
 17 weren't here when we did the oath, but if you'll
 18 stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear or
 19 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
 20 be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
 21 truth?
 22 SUPT. POORE: I do.
 23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. You are
 24 recognized. You have 20 minutes.
 25 SUPT. POORE: Gentlemen, if you guys want to,

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1 you can sit down. Or if you'd like to join me, we
 2 could get a little closer, but it seems a little
 3 awkward to have you around behind me.
 4 The Friendship group -- and, you know, we were
 5 aware that obviously the charter was going to come
 6 into play next year, and so I want to focus my
 7 remarks just a little bit on the change.
 8 I think, you know, you've got to first look at
 9 the fact that one of the things that has been set-up
 10 historically is that there's a timing piece to
 11 charter expansion and charter applications. And I
 12 know that the Commissioner has already waived that,
 13 and that may be a moot point but I'm still going to
 14 make it. And the reason is that when you start to
 15 think about these things there is a timing piece to
 16 this. And that's why it was established a long time
 17 ago to have the review take place in February and
 18 October in terms of the typical way that business is
 19 done, and that's for a couple of key reasons -- and
 20 then fix then this current application. One is in
 21 staffing. And I know that they're making a claim
 22 right now to say we're already under, way under
 23 staffed in Pine Bluff, and now we just can go roll
 24 that out right into Little Rock. Obviously, we have
 25 a teacher shortage within the state and the number of

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1 folks that are available that are high-quality for
 2 any of our schools is a challenge, and I appreciate
 3 what the Department of Ed. is doing to try to tackle
 4 that.
 5 The second piece is in recruiting. And I know
 6 that they mentioned that they have a number of folks
 7 that have signed up to say that they want to be a
 8 part of it. But, you know, if you think back to when
 9 we went through this whole process in the fall one of
 10 the things that -- there were public meetings that
 11 were held for citizens to say that they -- you know,
 12 to learn about what the model is going to be.
 13 Obviously, they did the public model before but it
 14 was geared towards the southwest community.
 15 And then the final thing in terms of the
 16 sequence and pacing of things is that, you know, when
 17 you have the charter expansion, if it does -- if it
 18 is going to happen, it allows LRSD to also respond
 19 kind of in an appropriate way when we know that
 20 things are going to take place. So this last minute,
 21 if you will, in May becomes in my mind a little bit
 22 more problematic for districts such as Little Rock to
 23 handle.
 24 If you go back into the fall when Friendship's
 25 application was brought forward, there were several

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1 things that I want to bring up that were things that
 2 were identified. One was their passion to go serve
 3 the students of southwest Little Rock. That was said
 4 in front of all of you, and then said in front of the
 5 State Board that that was their intent. And in that
 6 particular setting they talked about the need to go
 7 help Watson Elementary and said that that was where
 8 they wanted to go. The second thing that I believe
 9 was stated in those proceedings was that they wanted
 10 to first establish their program, their approach in
 11 Pine Bluff and have that one year underway, then come
 12 to Little Rock the second year. Now that's changed,
 13 and I think the main driver is the facility, and I
 14 think they stated that. But the reality was that
 15 they themselves as a management group said that they
 16 would like to have a start in Pine Bluff and then
 17 make the logical progression towards Little Rock.
 18 We should learn something from the failed
 19 approach of Einstein. The failed approach of
 20 Einstein was that they did not have the financial
 21 backing and support, and so deep reviews related to
 22 charter applications should be done. And in this
 23 case, the intent to have even a 35-day review hasn't
 24 even occurred, and there was an attempt to try to
 25 have all of you review this on April 26th. So, you

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1 know, the push and aggressiveness, it doesn't lend
 2 itself to, one, your own thorough review; second, a
 3 thorough review or community involvement to take
 4 place.
 5 Several things that they mentioned in their
 6 presentation -- I will tell you, directly to you is
 7 that I take offense that saying 160 students will not
 8 be served in the Little Rock community. Now I say
 9 that in a couple of different ways and I can provide
 10 the data for you again if necessary. But remember
 11 that this section of the city has lost students. So
 12 the first fact is demographically from 2000 until
 13 2016, when we did our study, that particular area of
 14 the city has lost 45% of its school-age children.
 15 When you say school-age children we're talking about
 16 students that could go to a charter school, students
 17 that could go to a private school, students that
 18 could be home-schooled, and students that could
 19 choose the Little Rock School District as its option.
 20 There are 45% less students in that region. That
 21 started in 2000. A lot of people say that that's all
 22 because of charters; that's really not true. That's
 23 because people have made choices and options to move
 24 away from the city. But we have 45% less students to
 25 serve in that region.

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1 The other thing with 160 students and saying
 2 they're not going to be served is I think it
 3 discounts a little bit of, you know, what is going on
 4 at Stephens Elementary, and I want to come back to
 5 that in just a second.
 6 When you choose to serve the toughest kids I
 7 admire that, and that was their passion to bring
 8 forward about serving the southwest community. And
 9 now I want to go choose the toughest students, and
 10 that's what Einstein had said in their -- so I
 11 appreciate that that's what they want to do; that's
 12 their intent.
 13 One other thing that I wanted to throw out is
 14 the fact that -- I believe it was asked by your own
 15 group "have you tried to collaborate with the
 16 district." That was asked in the hearings in the
 17 fall; it was asked by the State Board. And the
 18 reality is that there has been no collaboration
 19 extended towards us. And I will share that the
 20 Little Rock School District has worked on our own
 21 efforts to collaborate with charter and private
 22 schools. For example, Bright Futures is a program
 23 that helps and supports the neediest kids in terms of
 24 helping any individual, any young person that has a
 25 need that's kind of developed away from the school

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1 and out in the community; maybe it's a child that
 2 doesn't have a bed, maybe it's a student that doesn't
 3 have appropriate clothing. We have worked with all
 4 stakeholders to say that anyone can access Bright
 5 Futures. That's a partnership between Goodwill and
 6 the City of Little Rock and the Little Rock School
 7 District. Valerie Tatum, a charter person from
 8 Covenant Keepers, serves on that board. So our
 9 interest and intent on partnering with anyone we're
 10 willing to do that, but that has not happened with
 11 this particular group.

12 I also would like to remind everyone that the
 13 law on charters in terms of charters having access to
 14 buildings that are unused, that actually shouldn't be
 15 a valid argument within this particular group because
 16 that law was passed last year when everything was
 17 coming into play in terms of their application. So
 18 that law was passed last spring; any unused property
 19 that our district had, or any district in the state,
 20 everyone knew that that was coming and would be able
 21 to be potentially used as a vehicle to find land. It
 22 had nothing to do with their application impacting in
 23 terms of decisions in the fall. It simply was that
 24 there wasn't unused property in Little Rock at the
 25 time.

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1 Next, I would ask you to look a little bit at
 2 their application in terms of the 20 classrooms. If
 3 you have 20 classrooms, which is what I just heard --
 4 and I could not find that in the application this
 5 time. And if you look at the board packet, as I did
 6 -- and you obviously have spent time -- that
 7 application is not nearly as complete as what the
 8 application was in the fall for all the charters that
 9 applied. So, you know, there was a greater detail
 10 about the approach and everything, and I think that
 11 should be something that should have happened in this
 12 case. But go back to the 20 classrooms -- just do
 13 simple math on that, and maybe they're going to
 14 request waivers for the class size. But if you take
 15 the Arkansas standard of delivery for pre-K -- excuse
 16 me -- kindergarten, 1st grade classrooms, 4th grade
 17 classrooms, then all of a sudden you run into a space
 18 issue at that school. But then that comes to my
 19 point: they could be getting a waiver, but that's not
 20 in front of you, those things that they may be
 21 seeking as a waiver. Yet, it would've been as a part
 22 of the application that occurred in the fall. So in
 23 some ways it seems like we're pushing quickly to
 24 engineer a solution to fit the Grayson [sic] building
 25 which, you know, could happen in the fall of next

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1 year if someone is applying for that. But it seems
 2 like we're trying to very aggressively move forward
 3 this year on, in my eyes, a little bit of an
 4 incomplete application.

5 Next, I want to talk about us, the Little Rock
 6 School District. So, you know, one of the things
 7 that I most admire about the new ESSA system is the
 8 ability to look at growth, because I think that that
 9 is a key thing. And I appreciate them bringing up
 10 the fact that, you know, really what you need is to
 11 have more than a year's worth of growth at a school.
 12 So you look at the metrics for Stephens and the
 13 metrics that are now part of the ESSA system, Little
 14 Rock School District, with Stephens Elementary, does
 15 not come out as favorably on that particular metric.
 16 Our highest growth pattern was for the white cohorts
 17 of students. And then the next group that had the
 18 best scores was within African American and Hispanic
 19 students, but their numbers, just being real with all
 20 of you, was less than a year's worth of growth.

21 So when I talk to you about Little Rock I don't
 22 want to pull any wool over your eyes because there is
 23 work yet to be done. But let me give you one other
 24 statistic that's also relevant. When the results
 25 came out in August of last year one of the things

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1 that I asked for the district was to have a study
 2 done by the University of Arkansas in the Office of
 3 OEP. So the Office of OEP did a study and what it
 4 was was just a little bit different way to look at
 5 growth, which in some ways you could argue might even
 6 be a better model for looking at growth because it
 7 looked at free and reduced lunch population. And it
 8 said that within a free and reduced lunch population
 9 did -- it creates kind of an even playing field for
 10 all schools to say did they meet or exceed their
 11 expected growth based on free and reduced lunch. Now
 12 in that particular delivery Stephens Elementary came
 13 out in a much better situation in terms of overall
 14 scores. There are 456 elementary schools that were a
 15 part of that study. And if you look at that,
 16 Stephens had 3rd grade reading scores at 120 out of
 17 456 elementary schools in terms of meeting or
 18 exceeding its expected growth. You go to their math
 19 and writing, they're basically right around the 200th
 20 mark on that. You go into the 4th and 5th grade
 21 group, their expected growth fell in the 200 to 400
 22 range. But it does not go into the number that was
 23 shared earlier that was statistically correct that
 24 they provided in terms of the new ESSA standard of
 25 saying we were at 450, whatever the number was that

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1 they provided. Their number is correct. But I just
 2 want you to understand that there's multiple ways
 3 that you can look at data, and one of the ways to
 4 look at it is say did we meet or exceed expected
 5 growth. Overall, the district was one of only three
 6 school districts in the state -- one of three in the
 7 entire state that met or exceeded its expected
 8 growth. So, you know, some of the painting of Little
 9 Rock School District and Stephens High should be
 10 looked at with a different lens, using these
 11 different metrics that I can certainly provide you if
 12 that would be of help. And I don't know if it's --
 13 oh, one more last thing for us in terms of
 14 collaboration. I hope that someday you get to come
 15 visit Stephens. I think several of you have.
 16 Stephens Elementary is one of the most collaborative
 17 school environments that we have in terms of an
 18 elementary school. The students run their own bank
 19 in conjunction with First Security Bank. They run
 20 the bank. Now how do they get the bank, so-to-speak?
 21 How do they get the coin, the dollar bills? By doing
 22 the right things within the school environment. So
 23 it's everything from getting the homework done to
 24 helping another person in the classroom with their
 25 study to being a good citizen to doing things that

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1 are positive towards the teacher -- a variety of
 2 different ways. They actually get dollars, fake
 3 dollars, fake coins that they then get to go deposit
 4 it in the bank. The bank then produces a credit card
 5 for them and they actually get to kind of load up on
 6 that credit card. The credit card then gets to go
 7 get used in the school to do haircuts, get your nails
 8 done. Guess who's doing that? Business partners and
 9 community members coming in to support the school.
 10 They get to go to a game room, they get to go do
 11 extra physical activity, they get to go do movies,
 12 and those are all things that are being engineered
 13 within the Stephens community. The faith-based
 14 community is heavily involved in this school. And
 15 so, you know, when Stephens takes a punch I want to
 16 make sure that I'm able to provide some other
 17 information for you to consider as you look at it in
 18 that region of what's going on in terms of operation.
 19 So my request is, one, I hope that you do ask
 20 some follow-up questions of the Friendship group on
 21 some of the points that I made related to waivers, as
 22 well as the number of students that will be served
 23 within the confines of that building. Obviously,
 24 starting at 160 doesn't create the initial problem,
 25 but it does ultimately unless waivers are a part of

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1 the solution.
 2 And I don't know if it's -- whether -- I have
 3 forgot what the mechanism is, whether I answer
 4 questions or just go sit down.
 5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So when will -- we'll have
 6 5 minutes for them to answer back, and then we'll get
 7 into questions.
 8 SUPT. POORE: Okay. Thank you.
 9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.
 10 All right. Representatives of Friendship, you
 11 have 5 minutes to close your presentation.
 12 MR. HARRIS: All right. I'd like to thank
 13 Superintendent Poore for providing us with a vision
 14 of what the Little Rock School District plans are for
 15 the southwest neighborhood. A lot of what he
 16 indicated today was our first time hearing that there
 17 are actual plans.
 18 It is our belief that when there's a fire you
 19 don't say to that person that's in the window trying
 20 to get out that "we'll come back and help you next
 21 year." It is incumbent upon this body, the
 22 residents, and the community to really support
 23 education in that neighborhood. Superintendent Poore
 24 talked about the surrounding schools. Well, the
 25 Stephens school that he referenced is an F-ranked

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1 school, Baseline is a D-ranked school, and Bale
 2 school is an F school. These are all schools that
 3 are in the Little Rock School District within the
 4 immediate catchment area. So there is an obvious
 5 need for quality education and quality -- for choice
 6 for parents. There has been an obvious decline in
 7 the number of students but it's not due to the fact
 8 that there are -- it's due to the fact of limited
 9 choices of quality schools in the neighborhood, and
 10 we're offering that opportunity and that choice.
 11 We said before that, you know, we have the
 12 capacity, we have the wherewithal, and we have the
 13 resources to make this happen. We put in place all
 14 of the mechanisms as best we can to insure success.
 15 And as we talk about, you know, building a
 16 partnership with the Little Rock School District we
 17 still stand true to what we originally said in our
 18 application is that we would reach out to the Little
 19 Rock School District, and we have. We notified them
 20 of our intent to seek this amendment. We got a one-
 21 word response back from Superintendent Poore that
 22 said "thanks," not "how can we work together," not
 23 "how can we fill those kindergarten slots that are so
 24 widely needed in the city." So we've taken it upon
 25 our-self to really be not just a partner to the

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1 Little Rock School District but also a partner to the
 2 community where we hold our truest and best evidence
 3 of support.
 4 So we'd like to, as we wrap up our kind of
 5 rebuttal, just give this body some things to really
 6 think about. The expectations of the -- for the
 7 schools in those neighborhoods are not high, and
 8 growth does not mean proficiency; so when we hear
 9 numbers and we talk about reading growth in the 3rd
 10 grade that does not speak to proficiency. And we
 11 have evidence of a school education system that is
 12 failing the kids in the neighborhood where we intend
 13 to serve. So we would like as our -- not just for
 14 this body to consider our amendment request to start
 15 early and move into the Garland school, but to also
 16 consider the impact and what it will mean for the
 17 parents and the kids in the southwest community.
 18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Is that -- are you
 19 closed for yours?
 20 MR. HARRIS: Yes.
 21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. We will
 22 now move over to panel questions. And we'll start
 23 over here with Mr. Wilson.
 24 MR. WILSON: What's the single most important
 25 thing you can think of that would help Friendship

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1 collaborate with the Little Rock School District?
 2 MR. HARRIS: Sure. And it's not just a
 3 collaboration in partnering with the Little Rock
 4 School District for Friendship; it's also with all of
 5 the charter schools that are there.
 6 MR. WILSON: Correct.
 7 MR. HARRIS: There are some examples. We've had
 8 conversations with Covenant Keeper about their
 9 partnership. But in most cases it really appears to
 10 be very competitive. At the end of the day this is
 11 about our kids. We all have a singular mission, and
 12 that is to educate our kids, whether they're district
 13 schools or they are open-enrollment public charter
 14 schools -- which, by the way, both of us use the
 15 explanation or the definition of our kids or our
 16 schools as public schools. We have the same mission.
 17 We are open to all. And a true partnership is about
 18 sitting down at the table and really talking about
 19 how we can improve education for our kids across the
 20 board.
 21 MR. WILSON: You can be staunch competitors but
 22 a friendly competition if the kids are kept in mind.
 23 I appreciate that, as to your school and as to what
 24 Mr. Poore had to say.
 25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.

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1 MS. NEWTON: I think certainly that you can --
 2 your plans for opening this school in another year
 3 can't go unnoticed. So given that that was your plan
 4 and your strategy, I'd like for you to discuss
 5 directly with us what you anticipate your challenges
 6 to be. So clearly there are some major challenges
 7 and hurdles. So I'd like to at least have it as a
 8 part of the record and a part of the conversation
 9 what is inevitably things that will come up that will
 10 give us pause for consideration of this request, but
 11 also to be a way to realistically or honestly
 12 communicate with the board and the citizens and the
 13 students and families what could possibly happen as a
 14 result of pushing this forward. You know, that's --
 15 you asked for a year, and clearly that was something
 16 that fit your plan. So what -- I get your rationale
 17 about the needing the school, because that had been
 18 planned. But at the same time I want you to talk
 19 with us honestly --
 20 MR. HARRIS: Sure.
 21 MS. NEWTON: -- and clearly about what you
 22 anticipate, based on your experience and based on
 23 just the -- what could happen, what likely will
 24 happen, so it will not be a surprise if this is
 25 approved. And, you know, it could be headlines or it

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1 could be something even proactively discussed.
 2 MR. HARRIS: Sure. Well, if I could just
 3 broadly say it's being -- in education, you know,
 4 it's not a simple thing of opening up a school.
 5 There are many challenges that face an organization
 6 trying to do a new start-up school. Friendship comes
 7 -- has over 21 years experience in starting and
 8 operating schools across the country. We've built
 9 schools from the ground up, we've renovated a former
 10 Safeway, we've taken over and occupied closed or
 11 abandoned charter schools. So the facility itself,
 12 having the wherewithal and the experience to get a
 13 school building up and running is part of something
 14 that we have experience doing. We have a number of
 15 significant partners that are supporting our efforts,
 16 not just around facility but also addressing many of
 17 the challenges, one of which is the Walton Family
 18 Foundation, as well as APSRC helping us with some of
 19 our financial operations and planning of our schools.
 20 Without a doubt some of the obvious challenges
 21 are some of the challenges that we would normally
 22 face in opening a school, but we also see evidence of
 23 it in opening our school in Pine Bluff, one of which
 24 is staffing. We have addressed those challenges by
 25 hiring the school leader as one of our top positions.

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1 We've identified a school leader in Pine Bluff, as
 2 well as we've identified and hired a school leader in
 3 Little Rock.
 4 The second has to do with staffing itself. We
 5 already have our student -- I'm sorry -- our staff,
 6 both instructional and non-instructional staff
 7 recruiting underway. We have interviewed -- done the
 8 initial screening of over 25 instructional staff;
 9 we've interviewed 10, and we've made a decision to
 10 hire eight instructional staff. So we believe we
 11 have the staff, highly qualified staff that would
 12 support the start-up of the school, both in --
 13 schools, both in Pine Bluff and Little Rock.
 14 And, again, the largest challenge that we
 15 thought we would be facing when we originally
 16 submitted our application was around facilities. And
 17 having the Garland school available to us will
 18 address that immediate concern. The facility itself
 19 is going to be a great facility, state-of-the-art.
 20 Einstein, which -- whose application was approved and
 21 that facility was approved for them, there's not been
 22 a disruption in the renovation and planning in
 23 opening of that school. So we're very confident that
 24 the challenge of facilities will be addressed.
 25 There is an intangible challenge, which is

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1 starting a school in the community and garnering
 2 community support. In our original application --
 3 and we believe that one of the reasons why this body
 4 approved a Friendship school coming was because of
 5 the evidence and the description of our community
 6 school model and our program. We're not just
 7 creating a school building; we're creating a
 8 community center that will be open and offer before
 9 and after school services, as well as Saturday
 10 activities. All of our school buildings are a
 11 community resource, and the Garland school will be
 12 nothing less than that, where we have opportunities
 13 for seniors, the community to have activities there,
 14 as well as it will be open to high school students
 15 for SAT prep, as well as a whole host of community
 16 stakeholder events. We see ourselves as a real
 17 partnership. And I think many of you know what the
 18 southwest neighborhood, where we plan to open our
 19 school, what it looks like. There is urban blight,
 20 there's a lot of really pullout of homes. We spoke
 21 yesterday with a woman from HUD and she talked about
 22 the new safe housing initiative she has planned for
 23 that particular neighborhood, where we're locating at
 24 Garland to do an initiative to create safe housing.
 25 That's an example of how we see ourselves as a

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1 community partner. A school is not just a school; it
 2 is also an anchor in the community. Waiting another
 3 year means that there's continued urban blight; it
 4 means a school facility will go unused. And again, I
 5 say this again, it means that our kids will go
 6 without a quality education for another 12 months.
 7 These are kids that already when they come to school
 8 on the first day of school, for example, come to us
 9 with on average a 500-word vocabulary, where on the
 10 other side individuals that -- kids that come from
 11 more affluent neighborhoods come with a vocabulary of
 12 anywhere from 1200 to 1500 hundreds. That already
 13 puts our kids behind the 8-ball. So the longer we
 14 wait the further our kids get behind.
 15 MS. NEWTON: Generally, I understand that
 16 answer. But going back to the worst case scenario
 17 for your plan of implementing the school, getting
 18 started, what do you -- is it staff, is it -- you
 19 know, the facility? What is --
 20 MR. HARRIS: Sure.
 21 MS. NEWTON: -- the worst case scenario that
 22 could develop? And I see this as a process of
 23 getting started, you know, things like who will make
 24 financial decisions about things that need to be
 25 decided on the spot. So will that come from the

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1 corporate office, will that be done locally? How --
 2 since you're not here yet, how will that be handled
 3 in this rush to get started?
 4 MR. HARRIS: Okay. Well, our biggest fear is
 5 that we don't have the 160 kids on the first day of
 6 school. We're addressing that by putting a full-
 7 force -- what we're calling a gorilla team, student
 8 recruitment gorilla team in place that's going to go
 9 door-to-door, knock on doors in our immediate
 10 catchment area, talk to parents, meet parents where
 11 they are, both in the community and in their homes,
 12 to really kind of do a solid recruitment effort.
 13 That for us is our biggest nightmare. We have
 14 experienced in doing all of the logistic stuff proper
 15 financial management of our school and insuring that
 16 we have the quality school and the education in
 17 place. So our biggest fear is not on our ability to
 18 open a school, but it really is about insuring that
 19 parents have the confidence to enroll our kids -- to
 20 enroll their kids in our school. And as I indicated,
 21 we have evidence of the community support and wishes
 22 to have a school open this year.
 23 MS. NEWTON: So the fiscal and financial
 24 management will be local?
 25 MR. HARRIS: Yes. And we've -- Friendship

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1 Education Foundation, the CMO, has put in place a
2 local team that is here and responsive to the needs
3 of the local community, both in Pine Bluff and in
4 Little Rock.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I'm going to jump in front
6 of you, Dr. Owoh, if that's okay. Just a follow-up
7 question, kind of a similar question but probably to
8 a different person. I know that we have Mr. Tran
9 listed as the leader for Arkansas, so I'd just kind
10 of like to hear from Mr. Tran.

11 MR. TRAN: Sure.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You're going to be the guy
13 here in Arkansas. So, you know, kind of same
14 question: what keeps you up at night? And what are
15 some of the things that you see as challenges?

16 MR. TRAN: Sure. You know, everything keeps me
17 up at night because at the end of the day it's trying
18 to get a quality education to kids, you know. You're
19 looking at kids in underserved communities, right;
20 kids who don't have the opportunity to go to a great
21 school; kids sometimes don't even have the
22 opportunity to go and eat and enjoy activities. So
23 everything that's happening in that community is
24 keeping me up at night because -- like I said, I've
25 been doing this, like getting this school ready for

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1 the last year. And it wasn't because of any
2 financial issues that my former organization pulled
3 out. Okay. It was so political -- and, again, I'm
4 not going to mention that here. But, you know, at
5 the end of the day, just like what Mr. Harris said,
6 it's getting those kids to come into the school. At
7 this moment in time if we don't allow -- if you all
8 don't allow us to open up or start now, then that
9 time shortens every day. Okay. And so that doesn't
10 give us the ability to do what we need to do to go
11 out there and enroll those kids, get those families
12 in. Because at the end of the day, like I said --
13 and, you know, I think everyone here agrees with
14 Friendship, that model -- and like what Dr. Grant
15 said, three Tier 1 schools in D.C. Okay. Another
16 three Tier 2 schools in D.C. Okay. And their
17 approach to curriculum, phonetic planning, Reger
18 model -- you know, everything that they're doing is
19 going to go and make that neighborhood a much better
20 neighborhood. Okay. And like I said, I don't think
21 there's one solid thing that I can say, you know,
22 it's -- as an educator, as a professional, I've been
23 doing this for the last 12 years; everything keeps me
24 up at night. You never know what could happen,
25 because at the end of the day -- you know, the

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1 morning is great, right, but then in that afternoon
2 something happens and that just turns your day
3 around.

4 But again, you know, to your question, the
5 nightmare -- and I'm not saying that's a nightmare;
6 it's more of a concern -- is getting the students in
7 the school. Because I can't go out there and my team
8 can't go out there and say, "We have a school here;
9 come and enroll in our school; we have a great
10 curriculum; we have great staff; we have great
11 principals; we have great teachers; we have great
12 paraprofessionals," you know, so-on and so-forth. We
13 can't do that until you-all say "hey, yes, go ahead
14 and do that." Because if we go out there and do that
15 now and make that promise to those families, and then
16 all of a sudden you guys say "no, you know, we're not
17 going to let you do that," how are we going to face
18 our parents, how are we going to face the community
19 in saying, "Hey, you know, the Panel said no; you're
20 going to have to wait for another year. That's 12
21 months of quality education that you could've had."
22 Okay. And that is my main concern. Okay.

23 And as the school leader of Arkansas, I will be
24 in Arkansas. So, you know, just a tidbit, you know,
25 I asked my wife, I said, "Hey, what you want to do?"

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1 She says, "Please move to Arkansas." I'm willing to
2 take my 11-month old boy, right, and my 7-year old
3 daughter from Louisiana and we're moving up here. I
4 found a house already, so I will be based here. I
5 will be at the school, okay, making sure and insuring
6 that everything that the Friendship model is and what
7 it does will be implemented with fidelity. And
8 that's the key: with fidelity. You know, at the end
9 of the day that's what we need to do. Okay. So
10 you'll be seeing a lot of me here, so it's not like
11 I'll be operating down in Louisiana, you know, or
12 anything like that. I'm actually moving here. And
13 that's the only way that it's going to work, having
14 that leader on the ground doing that hard work. And
15 my philosophy is if I don't do it, then I'm not going
16 to get my people to do it. That's it.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

18 MS. NEWTON: I hate to monopolize, but, Mr.
19 Tran, I just have to respond. I don't think you can
20 put the onus on us for you -- for Friendship not
21 getting started; that's first of all. So I think
22 that's something that's totally outside of our
23 control with our influence. So that -- whether we
24 make a decision in favor of what your request is or
25 not, we don't have the responsibility to hold up the

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1 fact that the deal didn't come through because of
2 what you mentioned as politics.
3 And just one other thing, I had a question to
4 put in context for us -- and Mr. Poore could answer
5 this also at his opportunity -- how does recruitment
6 happen in a sense? We have a community that clearly
7 is suffering from different negative factors as
8 relates to community possibly, as relates to
9 education, as relates to parent involvement. So give
10 me -- you know, I'm worried about the spiel that you
11 go in terms of recruitment. Would you paint the
12 terrible picture or, you know, is it that natural
13 competition between two department stores or two
14 sellers of potato chips to say "my product is better
15 than yours and you should not" -- how are these --
16 what is the tone that recruitment sets? Because I
17 think that's very important because you say you want
18 to collaborate, you say we're a partnership, you say
19 we're about the same thing. And I think it's equally
20 important if you have two entities -- you know, if
21 I'm a Baptist and Dr. Hernandez is a Methodist we
22 shouldn't paint each other as foes as much as
23 collaborating. So I think in an effort to reach that
24 number I don't want to be -- our communities to be
25 victimized by approaches. And that's my personal --

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1 it may have nothing to do with the Charter
2 Authorizing Panel's ability to be able to determine.
3 But at the same time when you look at neighborhoods
4 and how sensitive and how volatile and how vulnerable
5 communities are I think it's very, very important.
6 Because as much as your history reflects success,
7 then what if this fails and then -- or not reaching
8 the plateaus that you've set for yourself? Then you
9 have to come back to a community that's schools have
10 been painted as less than desirable.
11 DR. GRANT: Well, again, as the National Head of
12 Schools you'll see a lot of me as well.
13 Unfortunately, I won't be moving here but you'll see
14 a lot of me living out of hotels. I'm newly married
15 but my wife -- we have kids back in D.C. But what we
16 want to say is that it's a mindset. I'm not just --
17 and we're not just researchers; we're practitioners.
18 And what we've identified is that most, if not all,
19 people who are living in a particular socioeconomic
20 level don't want to be at that level. So you're
21 going to hear real conversations; you will sit down
22 in people's homes and you look in their eyes and you
23 come up with strategies and plans and you tell them
24 and you share with them best practices. I love to
25 collaborate. I was in a traditional public school

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1 system and we were willing to say, "No, let's look at
2 best practices." That's something that we want to do
3 with the Little Rock School District, the charter
4 schools, other charter schools, with parents, with
5 the school board, with politicians, with
6 universities. We have to identify how we're going to
7 get those people, the people, our babies who are
8 currently living in a particular environment --
9 nobody wants to be there. We have to identify the
10 strategies that we're going to implement to get them
11 to a place where they cannot just survive but thrive.
12 So when we walk the streets -- that's what we do; we
13 knock on doors. We have been in the toughest
14 neighborhoods. A part of our team has already
15 started to get these signatures. We know where we
16 are. I was raised in those communities. We were
17 raised in those communities. We're not afraid to go
18 in and have real conversations. People respect when
19 you come to their homes and sit and look at them in
20 the eyes and sit down in their living rooms or sit on
21 the porch and talk about their children. This is --
22 I mean we have a -- this is serious business. So we
23 can talk and be real about it. The hardest of the
24 hard dudes on the corner want to see their little
25 brothers or sisters, nieces and nephews do better

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1 than what they did. They're going to give you a pass
2 where you sit and tell them "you don't want to see
3 your siblings, your offspring die early." They say,
4 "We want to find a way out as well." I've had
5 thousands of those conversations. We've had
6 thousands of those conversations. So when you come
7 and you talk about best practices for educating our
8 children so that they can contribute to their
9 communities, so their communities are not steeped in
10 drugs, violence, crime, robbery, theft and burglary
11 -- we have to give them opportunities to improve
12 their communities. And we have to make sure we don't
13 forget the parents when we get the children inside
14 the building, because you can't send the children
15 back home to that same environment. So that's why
16 our doors stay open. We bring the parents in, we
17 show them resources. Remember, we work in the
18 communities where the parents have never been out of
19 the city, much less some have never gone out of the
20 neighborhood. They'll go shop at the regular corner
21 grocery store and get those items that are there or
22 the little carry-out. But we're trying to show them
23 that the opportunities are here that they may not
24 have been taught when they were in school. They may
25 not love education because they were not educated

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1 well. That's our mindset when we walk into your
 2 neighborhood. When we come in we become partners.
 3 We say, "Look at the world that's out there." See,
 4 again, I'm a realist. We're realists. There's a
 5 1.65 trillion dollar economy out here and we're all
 6 fighting over the same few crumbs. So they do not
 7 print money as more children are born day-to-day;
 8 they don't print new money because you have more
 9 children the next day. We have to now divide that
 10 and we have to teach our children and our families
 11 how to now be a part of that community. We have no
 12 arguments with the local school district, the Little
 13 Rock School District. We have to collaborate
 14 because, guess what, people are dying, people are
 15 being incarcerated, and we don't want to make money
 16 off the backs of our people in the incarcerated
 17 systems. We want to put them in jobs. There are
 18 many jobs out here that are left vacant because
 19 children have not been educated to the point where
 20 they can now take over those jobs. So now let's
 21 expose our children early and often to the people who
 22 run the different companies; let's give them
 23 opportunities through exposure; let's educate our
 24 parents who have the types of conversations around
 25 the breakfast and dinner tables that we in here, this

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1 room, have with our own children so that they can now
 2 go on to college and have those jobs. So when you --
 3 when we walk in the streets and knock on the doors,
 4 guess what, people come out. We've already begun
 5 doing it. We can't say we're doing it in trying to
 6 get the kids there, but we ask what do you need.
 7 We've rode in there and would get out of the cars and
 8 people come up and stand outside and talk to us
 9 because they say, "Are you coming? Guess what, if
 10 that's the way you think you're welcome into our
 11 neighborhood."
 12 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.
 13 Mr. Poore.
 14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah, I think Mr. Poore
 15 wants to respond.
 16 SUPT. POORE: Thank you very much. I just want
 17 to respond. I think your question -- I want to make
 18 sure I catch the heart of the question -- was, you
 19 know, will you do negative advertisement, and maybe
 20 he can come back and answer that. But the answer for
 21 the Little Rock School District is that since I've
 22 arrived -- and I hope this is played out over and
 23 over -- is that what we try to do is accentuate and
 24 share what we do, what we bring to the table, what --
 25 we don't go try to bad-mouth another entity, a

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1 charter or a private school. We try to share "here's
 2 what we do," and so I hope that that would be our
 3 calling card. Tie into that, I think that he's right
 4 that you've got to reach into these communities. And
 5 maybe many of you remember the community walks that I
 6 personally have done in the Stephens neighborhood
 7 with the principal, with Mr. Carlock. And so I think
 8 that is a critical component, and it ties into then
 9 trying to make your schoolhouse one that serves kids
 10 really not just in a, whatever you want to call it,
 11 8:00 to 4:00, but really an extended time. And I
 12 just want to point out that the Stephens Elementary
 13 School has a community center right next to it, right
 14 there that operates at that site. And so, you know,
 15 that building doesn't close down during the evening
 16 hours, as well, to serve the families. So there are
 17 things, again, that are happening right there at
 18 Stephens.
 19 And I think it kind of goes back into the
 20 recruiting end of what you're asking, to finish off
 21 on this question, is that, you know, the sequence of
 22 timing of things is that -- I think that's why
 23 initially things were set-up -- and, Ms. Newton, you
 24 may be more aware than anyone else of when the rules
 25 were passed of timing for approval. And it was a

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1 little bit based, I think, probably on that fact of,
 2 you know, how do you go out and address your
 3 communities to engage them in a thoughtful way, that
 4 it doesn't end up creating a haphazard -- and doesn't
 5 end up being rushed and not thoughtful.
 6 So I hope that answered your question.
 7 MS. NEWTON: It does. Thank you.
 8 SUPT. POORE: Thank you.
 9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Owoh.
 10 DR. OWOH: Yes. My first question is focused on
 11 your 160 count enrollment projections for this first
 12 year. Of that, will you please share your enrollment
 13 projections per grade level? How many are you --
 14 what will be your cap for kindergarten? What will be
 15 your cap for first grade?
 16 MR. HARRIS: Okay. Our cap is going to be 60
 17 per grade level, 60 K -- I'm sorry; let me -- 160 is
 18 in my head. It will be 80 per grade level in the
 19 first year, be four classrooms per grade.
 20 DR. OWOH: You said four classrooms per grade?
 21 MR. HARRIS: Four classrooms per grade.
 22 DR. OWOH: Okay. So in your floor plan I note
 23 that there are only three per grade. So is this --
 24 and I'm sure that -- and I know that plans change.
 25 And so I guess my question is how would you

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1 accommodate for your -- any fluctuation based on your
 2 current floor plan that you've submitted?
 3 MR. HARRIS: Sure.
 4 DR. OWOH: And then, how would you also
 5 accommodate for teacher and instructional aid
 6 distribution, considering the fluctuation of
 7 enrollment?
 8 MR. HARRIS: Okay. Well, the current capacity
 9 of the school is 10 -- 20 classrooms. Our plan is in
 10 year-one to year-two taking us up to grade two to
 11 occupy 100% of the first floor. And then moving to
 12 the second floor starting years -- part of year-two,
 13 three and four. The classrooms, if you're familiar
 14 with the Garland building, they are rather large
 15 built -- large classrooms. And so, it could easily
 16 accommodate anywhere from 18 to 25 students per grade
 17 level. It's not our educational approach to just
 18 push kids into a classroom. And now that we have the
 19 space and we have the facility it is our desire to
 20 change that classroom -- per-classroom student mix
 21 because we have the room to do so.
 22 DR. OWOH: Okay. Thank you.
 23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Turner?
 24 MS. TURNER: My questions have already been
 25 answered. Thank you.

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1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. -- Dr. Williams.
 2 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. It's always good to hear
 3 discussion around how we're going to serve kids. I
 4 almost feel like I'm at church or something. Two
 5 statements I'd like to make; one, I want to -- just
 6 for -- I feel like I need to do a disclosure. I work
 7 for Walton Family Foundation. I do not work in the
 8 area in which they are before us. We have four
 9 offices in four different states. So I'll give you
 10 another example of that. Oh, close to 20 years ago I
 11 started the Teacher of the Year program here as a
 12 grant and we still make that grant. That in no way
 13 means I agree with everything ADE does. So I just
 14 wanted to kind of lay that out there as complete
 15 disclosure as we move forward here.
 16 I think Ms. Newton and I, we tend to be on the
 17 same page on a lot of things; so a lot of my
 18 questions are around the same ones. Recruitment was
 19 an issue for me.
 20 MR. HARRIS: Sure.
 21 DR. WILLIAMS: Recruitment was a key issue for
 22 me, and you all addressed that. Also, whether there
 23 is enough time to effectively start a school. I just
 24 -- I want to ask that question to get a good clear
 25 answer from you from that perspective.

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1 MR. HARRIS: Sure. We're confident that we do
 2 have sufficient time, resources, and capacity to open
 3 this school in Little Rock on August 13th.
 4 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. Okay. You feel good
 5 about the teachers and the recruitment?
 6 MR. HARRIS: Yeah. The applications that we're
 7 seeing, we've really seen some very talented people
 8 step forward and express an interest in being a part
 9 of the Friendship family. One simple story, we had a
 10 gentleman that traveled four hours to come and
 11 interview with our school. He's a recent graduate of
 12 Philander Smith University. He's heard about our
 13 schools and he made -- traveled from his home four
 14 hours to interview. That's an example of how we've
 15 begun to garner support for -- among the
 16 instructional staff, not just in the individual
 17 communities but with respect to the local
 18 universities and colleges. We spoke at the
 19 graduation class for Philander Smith, had that
 20 opportunity. At that time we began to recruit and
 21 identify highly qualified teachers, some young
 22 teachers but also those that have a pure interest in
 23 educating our kids. So the issue of staffing is
 24 something that, you know, we really appreciate.
 25 When we -- part of the Friendship model is

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1 really about not just creating highly -- providing
 2 professional development and training for our staff,
 3 but it's also our school leaders. Our school leaders
 4 that are here in Little Rock have been enrolled in
 5 the Relay leadership training program that they will
 6 attend in July. That's an example of the investment
 7 that we intend to make, not just in our schools but
 8 also for the leadership school instructional staff
 9 here in Arkansas.
 10 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.
 11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. I do have a couple
 12 of questions. I've got three right now. So the
 13 first one -- so let's go the other way; let's say
 14 that you're worried about this 160, but let's say
 15 that your gorilla team is really successful and it's
 16 260.
 17 MR. HARRIS: Sure.
 18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So do you have kind of a
 19 thought process of like how the lottery or any of
 20 that stuff will be set up?
 21 MR. HARRIS: Sure. We do have, as we had
 22 indicated in our application that was approved, what
 23 is a fair and equitable lottery process that we
 24 intend to put in place. Dr. Grant, do you want to
 25 talk about the details of that lottery?

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1 DR. GRANT: Yes. So as you know they will apply
2 and we will give a three- to four-week window for all
3 applications to be received, and then we will have an
4 open lottery; people are invited to see names pulled
5 out of the hat or bucket. And we will, you know, get
6 that and then we'll create a waitlist based on that,
7 and we'll pull all names out that have been submitted
8 and create the waitlist based on the order in which a
9 name was pulled. So if someone does not show to
10 enroll, we have a number one, number two, number
11 three on the waitlist and we'll then go down the
12 list.
13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Another
14 question -- this may be -- probably more for our
15 finance folks, Ms. Smith, just a question. Knowing
16 that, you know, the original plan was to open two
17 different years do we -- is there any concerns from
18 our finance folks as far as them budgetarily being
19 able to handle this?
20 MS. SMITH: (shaking head from side to side)
21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I see nodding your heads
22 no. Okay. All right.
23 And then my third question is -- reading the
24 amendment request, the only thing that I see in the
25 amendment request is to open next year; I don't see a

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1 location change. And this may be more for our folks,
2 Ms. Boyd or Ms. Davis. Is it because they didn't
3 identify a location before is the reason why there's
4 not an amendment request? So they don't have to make
5 an amendment to identify their building, is that --
6 MS. BOYD: That's correct. And I believe in the
7 amendment request documents there is information
8 about the location. But because there was not a
9 previous location, then we're not following the
10 location change protocol.
11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.
12 MS. BOYD: And with a recently passed law
13 applying without a location --
14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: It's okay?
15 MS. BOYD: -- it's okay. Yes.
16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Other
17 questions? We can -- okay. Any questions down
18 there?
19 All right. I'm not seeing any other questions.
20 We have -- of course, our decisions are to approve
21 the request, deny the request, or take the matter
22 under advisement for future meetings. So with that,
23 Ms. Davis, is there anything else outstanding on this
24 application?
25 MS. DAVIS: No.

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1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. So I will
2 entertain a motion regarding Friendship's request.
3 MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I move approval of
4 the request.
5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion to
6 approve.
7 MS. TURNER: Second.
8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We have a motion and a
9 second.
10 Any discussion?
11 Okay. All those in favor say "aye."
12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)
13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?
14 All right. Motion passes.
15 If you would, take a few minutes to fill out
16 your sheet.
17 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]
18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We'll start with Dr. Owoh.
19 DR. OWOH: I voted for the motion. I believe
20 that the Academy's plans are well planned and
21 organized and the plans do include stakeholder input,
22 which is important. And transportation will be
23 provided for the students. I do have some concerns
24 about the recruitment process and the staffing
25 process for the educators.

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1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Turner.
2 MS. TURNER: I voted for the motion. This
3 school will provide other opportunities, educational
4 opportunities for students in the neighborhood.
5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Dr. Williams.
6 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted to approve the request.
7 Friendship has an excellent track record of serving
8 students. I listed as a concern is just the timing,
9 and I'll stop there.
10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Wilson.
11 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion. It's my
12 interest in seeing that youngsters in both of those
13 neighborhoods have that opportunity of choice. And
14 with the expectation and hope that Friendship Aspire
15 will open or strengthen communications with Little
16 Rock School District, I think that's critically
17 important in this whole community, as Mr. Poore has
18 properly pointed out. Thank you.
19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.
20 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion. The
21 applicant's plans seem complete to affect the start-
22 up of their school a year earlier than planned.
23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. And so that
24 concludes that item. Thank you.
25 Before we move on to Item Number 5, take a 10-

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1 minute break. All right. Let's take a little break
2 and we'll come back and take up the next item.
3 (BREAK: 10:39 - 10:54 a.m.)
4 A-5: CONSIDERATION OF ACTION: ROCKBRIDGE MONTESSORI SCHOOL,
5 LITTLE ROCK
6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll go ahead and
7 start back. We are on -- I lost my place -- Item 5,
8 yes, Consideration of Action: Rockbridge Montessori
9 School, Little Rock. Dr. Boyd, you are recognized.
10 DR. BOYD: Thank you, Dr. Hernandez. On
11 November 19, 2014, the State Board of Education
12 approved the application for Rockbridge Montessori
13 School. The charter is approved to serve students in
14 grades K through 8 with a maximum enrollment of 325.
15 On April 26, 2018, the Charter Authorizing Panel met
16 and voted to have Rockbridge Montessori School come
17 before the Panel for a full review with the focus on
18 financial viability. Representatives of Rockbridge
19 Montessori School, including their school board
20 members, are appearing before the Charter Authorizing
21 Panel for a full review of their charter. And to get
22 us started with Rockbridge we have William Felton,
23 who is their superintendent.
24 Oh, I'm sorry. I would -- this one is a little
25 bit different in terms of process. So before we get

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1 started I would like for Jennifer Davis to come
2 forward.
3 MS. DAVIS: So the procedures you'll follow for
4 this item are slightly different than the procedures
5 you've been following this morning. So the applicant
6 and anyone wishing to provide testimony -- and that
7 is included ADE staff -- will need to take the oath;
8 that is with, of course, the exception of attorneys.
9 After that the applicant has 20 minutes. And there
10 is no official opposition time. So after the 20
11 minutes you may ask questions of the applicant, you
12 can ask questions of ADE staff or anyone else. If
13 there is anyone in opposition, you may take that --
14 or, you know, in favor -- I'm not sure -- you may
15 take that after all discussion as a public comment.
16 And then you will take your vote and use the same
17 Google doc that you've been using to notate your
18 reasons for your vote. Any questions?
19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Will those speaking
20 on behalf of the charter school -- if you would,
21 please stand and raise your right hand. Okay. I'm
22 trying to find my notes here. Do you swear or affirm
23 the testimony you're about to give shall be the
24 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?
25 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

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1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We will start with
2 Mr. Felton.
3 SUPT. FELTON: Good morning, Board.
4 DR. WILLIAMS: Good morning.
5 SUPT. FELTON: How are y'all? I've kind of
6 missed y'all. I haven't been here in a couple of
7 weeks.
8 So today I'm going to attempt to address the
9 questions that were asked, how did we get to this
10 point, what have we done up to date. I am going to
11 share some current data because I think it's
12 important y'all know that we have good data. And
13 then we've done some scenario planning based on
14 whatever the board decides to do today.
15 I do want to state that Rockbridge, its
16 stakeholders, we know it's a hard position for you to
17 be in today. We respect your decision. We will do
18 everything in our power to help anybody through the
19 process, the students. We are teaching straight up
20 to the last day of school, which is May 31st. If we
21 are -- if our charter is revoked, we're more than
22 willing to work with the Department to make sure that
23 the kids get into the schools they need and make sure
24 the staff has what they need to move forward to new
25 jobs and that we do the closing checklist with

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1 fidelity.
2 So, how did we get here? When I took over in
3 July there was a lot of issues that had to be fixed
4 and a lot of things done. You know, we began looking
5 at how many kids that they were going to turn in to
6 the state and what we noticed was the number was kind
7 of way too high. So we cut it down to what we had in
8 the system of eSchool. When we did that I just
9 basically done what I've seen other schools do: I,
10 you know, ran class rosters. When the kids didn't
11 show up we dropped them; when I got requests for
12 transfers we followed the process. So sometime
13 midyear we would do a dual enrollment check. We
14 found two kids that were actually home-schooled but
15 they had moved back into the districts and it made me
16 wonder where they were at. And so what we found is
17 there were 18 kids basically not assigned to
18 teachers, and so we turned that in to the State. And
19 then when we got everything worked out, making sure
20 everything was correct it cut our funding, monthly
21 funding.
22 There were some other past financial issues that
23 popped up that we weren't aware were coming. There
24 were some unpaid bills, things that had to be taken
25 care of, legal fees and things like that. And then

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1 our enrollment numbers definitely hit us hard. So
 2 with those in case, what we've done so far to help
 3 fix it is, you know, the board and I, we started
 4 planning how we could make it to the end of the year
 5 and how -- if we would be able to start the new year.
 6 So we looked at budget trimming, but by April most of
 7 the budget was pretty set; we'd already trimmed it
 8 really close. And then when we saw the possibility
 9 for revocation we made sure the teachers and I made a
 10 promise that we would teach up until the last day, we
 11 would keep everything positive for the kids, because
 12 it's about the kids. We wanted to inform parents
 13 because we wanted them to know in full transparency.
 14 Even though some may leave in the process, we felt
 15 like it was just best. When I took over the parents
 16 had a deep mistrust; a lot of things were kept from
 17 them at the former leadership. We started -- we're
 18 still registrating -- registering kids; there's still
 19 parents wanting to attend, but we've kept a separate
 20 list of numbers and emails; so if we do decide today,
 21 then we'll be able to contact them and let them know
 22 immediately. We're continuing with business, turning
 23 in site reports, turning in bank statements, doing
 24 everything that we've always done, still running like
 25 it's a normal day. And we've already started

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1 planning for next year and with calendars and
 2 schedules and classes and all that stuff. And then
 3 the financial team and I have stayed in touch daily
 4 to make sure if anything came up where it's going to
 5 go. We've met with vendors to see if -- to let them
 6 know that something may happen, if they're willing
 7 to, you know, to let go of contracts, things like
 8 that. And then we also started looking at for next
 9 year because a lot of our contracts are up with
 10 vendors and finding -- preparing RFPs for next year
 11 to vendors. And we're going to look for less
 12 expensive vendors than they had and do some stuff in-
 13 house ourselves. So that's what we've done to here.
 14 Another one of the areas was special education;
 15 96% have had their educational planning conferences
 16 and there was one this morning and one at 11:00
 17 today, so that number is going to go up. 95%, we've
 18 had one transfer and one referral meeting left. And
 19 then all the evaluations are 95%. The two that are
 20 left are for OT and PT and we're waiting on them, and
 21 they were screened Tuesday.
 22 We've completed the dyslexia screening for the
 23 July deadline. We sent off our accommodation plans
 24 for those students and we've posted the information
 25 that's required on our website.

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1 Now I do want to share that our recent data --
 2 we had great numbers on the NWEA for our spring
 3 score. 95% of our SPED students did achieve or go
 4 above their goal, their yearly growth goal in
 5 reading, and 100% did in math. We have three more
 6 classes left to take the reading test, but overall I
 7 would say in our 7th and 8th grade -- 6th/7th class
 8 100% met their goal or achieved it, and above, in
 9 math and 85% in reading. We've also had good scores
 10 in those grades that we're looking at. They're
 11 currently -- with what we have is at 50% reaching
 12 their goal, but we haven't finished those grades. We
 13 moved our testing date up so that we -- in case
 14 something happens.
 15 So if we stay open -- in your packet you'll see
 16 three budgets based on student enrollment. If you'll
 17 notice the bottom of the budget it states what we
 18 would have to cut from our current budget in order to
 19 be viable based on the enrollment. I've met with two
 20 -- I spoke with Superintendent Poore and some other
 21 people about, you know, if we get revoked then we
 22 have 120 seats and would they like to present their
 23 material, come speak to the families and things like
 24 that. Our staffing, we would definitely have to cut
 25 staffing positions for these. And then we're keeping

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1 eSchool updated and all of our files ready to go.
 2 We're setting up stations where wherever the students
 3 decide to go they can have. But as you can see, we
 4 have enough money to finish May. June is the
 5 problem, and our teachers' last day is June 1st; so
 6 all of our bills will be paid in May.
 7 If it's revoked, we have already created our
 8 transition team. We've written our notification
 9 letter to be sent out, and these are based on the
 10 steps that the charter schools have to follow that
 11 was given to us by Dr. Boyd's office. We have our --
 12 all of our lists, students, vendors, the new student
 13 call log. We've contacted the bank to let them know
 14 what's coming or might be coming. We've gone and
 15 made sure all files and financial records are up-to-
 16 date. We've already started the inventory to make
 17 sure the serial numbers are correct and doing
 18 furniture inventory. We've -- some of the vendors
 19 have already sent their final billing statements.
 20 We'll be ready to report to the IRS, retirement,
 21 APSCN, ADE. And then we've set possible meeting
 22 dates for parents and other things for these meetings
 23 to help them find a school.
 24 At this time I'm going to let my -- one of the
 25 parents in the school wanted to speak and tell about

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1 her story. Our test scores do show that with
 2 modification in the reading area, which is definitely
 3 -- it was our lower score overall -- that Montessori
 4 is a good fit for certain children. I felt like as
 5 much dedication as she's tried that I would honor her
 6 request to speak. So Ms. Santiago, she works as our
 7 office person-slash-teacher-slash-parent liaison,
 8 everything.

9 MS. SANTIAGO: Good morning. My name is Celia
 10 Santiago and I am currently -- a current employee of
 11 Rockbridge. Like he said, I play many roles. But my
 12 first -- I started with Rockbridge about three years
 13 ago. My son Ty Garcia was enrolled in the Benton
 14 School District and at the time he was subjected to
 15 constant harassment due to the color of his skin. So
 16 I made the decision to place him in a school that was
 17 more diverse. I have to say I was afraid at the
 18 beginning when I enrolled him at Rockbridge because
 19 the school had just opened and I was not familiar
 20 with the Montessori methods. But to my surprise,
 21 things went well for him. My son was learning in an
 22 environment that allowed him to learn at his own pace
 23 and he was connecting with students and teachers, and
 24 for the first time in his young life he was happy
 25 about going to school. He always stated to me, and

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1 to this day he still tells me, "Mom, Rockbridge is
 2 not a school; it's a home." That is the same feeling
 3 I have towards it, not only as an employee but as a
 4 mother. Mr. Felton came into the school in 2017, and
 5 at the beginning I was a little skeptical because
 6 there were certain issues, but he kept me on.
 7 Parents told him, "Ms. Garcia has been there since
 8 the beginning; you have to keep her," and, you know,
 9 so he did. We open our doors at 7 a.m. every
 10 morning. We have Mr. Lewis standing out there to
 11 greet these children. We have Ms. Rodriguez who
 12 serves them breakfast. Every morning I get a hug
 13 from 120 kids; every afternoon I get the same hug.
 14 We are family. And me-myself and the staff, we are
 15 dedicated to these children. We have a team of
 16 teachers that are devoted to them. And we just ask
 17 you to give us an opportunity to prove that
 18 Rockbridge is here to stay and that we are devoted to
 19 our children and their future. These children are
 20 part of our life as well as we are part of theirs,
 21 their life. Please allow us to continue proving to
 22 you that Rockbridge deserves to be open. We deserve
 23 a chance.

24 SUPT. FELTON: Again, I mean, we -- I had --
 25 like I feel like it would be better if you have

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1 questions you can ask. I'm not really good at this
 2 part of it, but -- anticipating everything you might
 3 need is difficult. But I do want to end with saying
 4 that this is not a result of the teachers or the
 5 families or the students at the school. Those
 6 teachers work very hard. We would like to end, if
 7 y'all choose to revoke, in a positive manner. We
 8 really are concerned about the children and where
 9 they end up and that the families feel secure in
 10 that, knowing next year when school starts they know
 11 where they are. We have a lot of families that have,
 12 you know, the great-aunts or the sister or the
 13 grandmother raising the kids. Almost all of our kids
 14 have that. They have moved from school to school.
 15 On average some of them have even moved four or five
 16 times in two years. We've worked really hard with
 17 them and we know they can be successful. When they
 18 came out of the NWEA test they were high-fiving me
 19 because they know they've grown, they know they've
 20 put in the effort. But, again, I want to reiterate
 21 that the board -- I have some board members here if
 22 you have questions for them -- the board, myself, the
 23 staff, the students and families of Rockbridge will
 24 work with you in whatever decision is made. We
 25 respect your decision. We know it's hard when you're

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1 talking about children, but we also know you'll do
 2 what you feel is best for children and you have to
 3 uphold the law.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. You still have about
 5 18 minutes left -- oh, I'm sorry -- 8. Anything --

6 SUPT. FELTON: No, I didn't talk that fast.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: No. Anything else you want
 8 to add before we go into questions?

9 SUPT. FELTON: No, sir. No, sir.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we will start
 11 with questions. Ms. Davis, I assume that includes us
 12 if we have questions for ADE staff also around
 13 finances?

14 MS. DAVIS: (nodding head up and down.)

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Williams.

16 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. This is really for ADE
 17 staff. Just really from the financial perspective,
 18 from your perspective where are we with Rockbridge?
 19 I mean, are they financially viable? If there are
 20 issues which have been highlighted, are they
 21 correctible? Just generally where we are.

22 MS. QAZI: Saliha Qazi, Fiscal Services and
 23 Support. Our cash-flow is in line with what they
 24 have submitted to you, what you see. We have the
 25 same ending cash balance, negative \$30,000. And I

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1 have not done their projections for next year since I
2 do not know their enrollment numbers.
3 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So we have no idea, if
4 they were to stay open, whether they could be
5 financially viable going forward or not?
6 MS. QAZI: In the month of May they will run out
7 of money.
8 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.
9 MS. QAZI: So they need either a line of credit
10 or private donations to sustain. The June -- the
11 expenses that are in June are majority salaries, and
12 those salaries are to pay off the contracts. So they
13 need that money.
14 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Here's another question,
15 it's kind of a general question, so I'm not quite
16 sure who should -- who can answer it. Is the
17 Montessori model a financially viable model, okay,
18 from -- and this may be a Mr. Felton question also,
19 but whoever can provide us any insight into this.
20 DR. BOYD: Yeah, I think Mr. Felton will
21 probably have a more detailed response. But in
22 working with both of the Montessori schools that we
23 currently have the start-up for Montessori is a lot
24 more expensive than for other models because of the
25 materials that are required are quite pricy.

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1 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.
2 SUPT. FELTON: Looking at some of those
3 materials, we've gone through what provides the
4 benefits. One of the things that Montessori does
5 during the three-hour work cycle is the kids get to
6 explore with these tools and they're not necessarily
7 mastery at that age. But for Arkansas state
8 standards students have to reach mastery at the end
9 of each grade, so we've adopted some of -- there are
10 some tools that we don't need to buy. Again, we were
11 set to end the year in a positive balance, and like I
12 said, you know, just -- it was a little hard to
13 overcome everything from the previous years.
14 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. One last question here.
15 If you had to do it again on the start-up, what would
16 you do differently? I mean --
17 SUPT. FELTON: How many times I've asked this
18 question. One of the things is when I looked at the
19 staffing I knew I needed support personnel based on
20 the data I was seeing in their test scores. I
21 might've needed to cut one of those and add a
22 registrar to the beginning. I was taking eSchool
23 data from APSCN as the year progressed. If I had
24 known how not to check with just class rosters but
25 how to check other ways to get the information I

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1 probably would've caught it. If we had caught it,
2 then we would've had to adjust our budgets and to
3 make sure without hurting -- well, I mean,
4 instruction. But we could've been fine.
5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.
6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Saliha, I want to ask a
7 follow-up question to what you said. I just want to
8 make sure we're clear. So regardless of what we do
9 today, whether -- even if it were to revoke or close,
10 they still have to get a loan to pay their bills off
11 this year?
12 MS. QAZI: Yes. They have done a really good
13 job of monitoring their expenditures since they knew
14 that the revenue was not as steady. They have cut
15 down a lot of expenditures, so they were just paying
16 the bills that are very necessary and doing the
17 expenditures -- and cutting the expenditures that
18 were very necessary for education, for teachers, for
19 vendors, for anything that's related to the school.
20 They were not doing any extra expenditures. So I
21 really don't think they can cut back on all of those
22 expenditures; they are very necessary for the school
23 to stay open.
24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right.
25 MS. QAZI: So they do need money, extra money to

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1 sustain through this year.
2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So I guess -- so if
3 they don't exist next year, how does that work? How
4 do they get money? How do they borrow money to pay
5 off their bills if there's no way to repay them back?
6 MS. QAZI: So in communication with their
7 finance team, they're working with vendors; they're
8 making sure that they contact -- and if they can get
9 some extra funding some somewhere to pay off those
10 bills, that would be awesome.
11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So that would be basically
12 like donations to pay --
13 MS. QAZI: Yes. That would be basically
14 donations, if they don't apply for a line of credit
15 and are approved for it for them. And so -- and
16 that's not -- I have not heard them getting approved
17 for a line of credit.
18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Felton, did you
19 have something?
20 MR. FELTON: We do have donors. Some of the
21 vendors are willing to defer payments over the next
22 year, divided by the month -- and being a school that
23 might not open next year, that's a high risk. We've
24 asked for these things -- their biggest concern is
25 whether or not we're open. And if we do get a line

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1 of credit or loan, how can we pay that back if we're
 2 not open; that's been the main issue. Plus, our
 3 numbers -- so right now we're looking at 128 for next
 4 year. I've asked the parents like if they decide to
 5 go to a different school to let us know just so that
 6 we can keep our accounts as accurate as possible.
 7 And we've already had like about 30 kids' parents
 8 come and tell us that they're going to enroll in a
 9 different school, just in case. But they've also
 10 said they'd be willing to come back. And then we
 11 have about 25 new parents that have registered. So,
 12 I mean, I'm just -- in my experience, people that say
 13 they'll donate, it doesn't count unless, you know,
 14 you have the check, so --

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So best case scenario, if
 16 you're enrolled at the 130 mark the budget you
 17 presented you still have to cut 152. And the worst
 18 scenario you presented was about 320-some-odd
 19 thousand. So does that -- do you have identified
 20 cuts or is that still an unknown?

21 SUPT. FELTON: No, that's a known. We have --
 22 some of our contracts come up as the third year. We
 23 know we can get it at a better price and also we know
 24 what we can do in-house. For instance, lawn
 25 maintenance can be done in-house; sanitizing and

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1 making sure that the system works we can do in-house;
 2 things like that. There are a lot of things that we
 3 can look at and renegotiate -- some of those
 4 contracts were negotiated for a large number of
 5 students and some were priced by a number of students
 6 in the building. So those will adjust too.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. So you -- so
 8 when I -- just for example, the 120 students it has
 9 needs expenditure reduction of \$235,000; so you've
 10 specifically identified the \$230,000 that you're
 11 going to cut or --

12 SUPT. FELTON: In full transparency, that one
 13 would be hard to do. That one would probably -- that
 14 would be a super reduction in staff and I don't know
 15 if we could provide the education students need, just
 16 being honest with you.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Right. So you're hoping
 18 for the 130; that's more manageable?

19 SUPT. FELTON: I'm hoping for 200.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Right.

21 SUPT. FELTON: Yeah. But, no, we're shooting
 22 above that. Yeah. Now the first one is doable,
 23 definitely.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Turner, any
 25 questions?

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1 MS. TURNER: Not right now. Thank you.
 2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Owoh?
 3 DR. OWOH: I have two questions. One, the first
 4 one is about your three proposed budgets --
 5 SUPT. FELTON: Yes, sir.
 6 DR. OWOH: -- for 2018-19. But it's for the ADE
 7 staff.
 8 SUPT. FELTON: Okay.
 9 DR. OWOH: Question, have you-all been able to
 10 review these? And are they doable or viable moving
 11 forward?
 12 MS. QAZI: So I just received this document with
 13 you.
 14 DR. OWOH: Okay.
 15 MS. QAZI: I have not been able to review or
 16 make my own calculations based off of that.
 17 DR. OWOH: Okay. And so my second question is
 18 for possibly the Charter team or Charter Unit, if
 19 there are other educational concerns that we should
 20 review or revisit as we move forward. I know we've
 21 kind of discussed the financials, but I mean are
 22 there any other concerns that have been brought to
 23 your attention?
 24 DR. BOYD: I'm just thinking. I don't believe
 25 so. I believe most of those concerns were covered

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1 pretty thoroughly the last time we saw Rockbridge, in
 2 March.
 3 DR. OWOH: All right.
 4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Newton?
 5 MS. NEWTON: I don't have any questions.
 6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: No questions. So no other
 7 questions?
 8 I guess probably my last question would be for
 9 Mr. Felton. I mean, what's your -- you've been at
 10 this for about a year -- and just kind of your
 11 overall feeling. I know that, you know, obviously,
 12 you really are hoping this works. But, you know,
 13 what I see, in kind of summation, is that logically
 14 you probably at best will maintain enrollment, maybe
 15 a little bit more and maybe a little bit less. And
 16 so just, you know, what is -- what do you feel is the
 17 reality of being able to make it work and not having
 18 this constant, you know --

19 SUPT. FELTON: Yes, sir.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- issues that come up?

21 SUPT. FELTON: We're looking at the year, again,
 22 with no facility funding. So that also hurt us last
 23 year from the previous year when they went on
 24 probation. That will be hard. We'll definitely have
 25 to cut some staff back. It is doable. We'll have to

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1 rearrange some grades around to make sure there are
 2 not too many students per teacher. It will be very,
 3 very tight as far as office supplies and things like
 4 that; we can cut back on that. I really feel that
 5 the first year -- the first total 130 or 40 we can
 6 do. But if we don't increase our enrollment, just
 7 being honest with you, it would probably be really,
 8 really hard. I think we can do it though. I mean,
 9 it's work. This school is definitely one of those
 10 schools that don't fit the mold. At first, I was a
 11 little nervous about it because there seems to be
 12 freedom of choice a lot, which I know works. But
 13 with some guidance and some PD for the teachers it --
 14 some of these students were not successful in other
 15 schools and they're really doing great work now. So
 16 I would like to keep it going.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Any questions for
 18 any of their board members or anything?

19 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. I would like to hear from
 20 the chair of the board, just from a board oversight
 21 perspective. Where are you-all on this?

22 MR. BENNETT: Well, my name is Gary Bennett; I'm
 23 the school board president. We're going to do
 24 everything we can to support Mr. Felton and the
 25 staff. And as he says, it's going to be business-as-

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1 usual until the last day of school this year. We're
 2 going to keep looking for sources of funding, for
 3 donations to see if we can come up with this deficit,
 4 and we're just going to -- we're going to keep
 5 pushing and trying to see if we can solve this
 6 problem. The school has done -- Mr. Felton has done
 7 a fantastic job; he and the staff have done a great
 8 job this year. There are lots of children that are
 9 being served here that I think are thriving in this
 10 environment because of the Montessori method and the
 11 freedom within limits that Montessori offers that I
 12 think would definitely benefit through being able to
 13 receive this education long-term.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

15 MR. BENNETT: So, anything else, sir?

16 DR. WILLIAMS: No. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I have a follow-up question
 18 for you.

19 MR. BENNETT: Yes, sir.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So do you have students now
 21 in the school?

22 MR. BENNETT: Yes, sir. I have two sons, a 7th
 23 grader and a 4th grader.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So just given kind of the
 25 thoughts -- so let's say that it's, you know, a

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1 \$230,000 or \$300,000 reduction to expenditures. Do
 2 you have concerns about what that might do to the
 3 overall program or --

4 MR. BENNETT: It would -- yes and no. Part of
 5 the Montessori method is a higher student-teacher
 6 ratio. And as part of that is that the children are
 7 working together in small groups. The older students
 8 in the Montessori classrooms are grouped together in
 9 multiple grades. And one of -- part of the model is
 10 that the older students work with the younger
 11 students to introduce them, to help them with the
 12 materials. So the teacher is known as -- the
 13 Montessori method is called the Lead Guide. That
 14 person introduces the materials to the students for
 15 the first one or two times, and then after that, when
 16 they work with the materials, they can have an older
 17 child come over and assist them with it. So I think,
 18 you know, as the children get used to Montessori I
 19 think it could work. The hitch you've got is
 20 children can begin brand-new to the method. It does
 21 take a little bit of time for them to acclimate. I
 22 know when my children first started going to
 23 Montessori it did take them some time to get used to
 24 it, especially my older son. But once they kind of
 25 embraced the model and started doing -- and started

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1 working in it, they've been very successful. My
 2 youngest son is doing very well in his class. He's
 3 kind of become a little team leader in his group
 4 where he kind of helps the other kids get their work
 5 done and kind of coordinates the kids on projects and
 6 so-forth.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you.

8 MR. BENNETT: All right. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, sir, Mr. Felton.

10 MR. FELTON: I've been waiting for the
 11 preliminary data just to report to y'all. So in
 12 kindergarten, these are the students that met or
 13 exceeded their goal -- 91% in reading and math; the
 14 1st and 2nd grade class were low because we're still
 15 testing them in reading, but right now they're at 40%
 16 in reading, 60% in math, and 100% in math; for 3rd
 17 grade, reading at 50% -- that is our toughest grade
 18 -- and then for math 100%; 6th and 7th, reading 100%
 19 and math 57%; our SPED finals was reading 85% and
 20 math at 100%. Overall, 61% of the students have met
 21 their reading goal, or higher, and 76% in math.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. I may have one more
 23 question for Cindy or Saliha, one. So if we were to
 24 let this go on, basically we're kind of moving this
 25 negative balance to next year. And so if they

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1 definitely don't hit their marks or aren't able to
 2 hit their -- reduce their expenditures, numbers
 3 aren't where they need to be, what is the likelihood
 4 of having to close shop? And we've had to do this
 5 before, you know, close shop in the middle of the
 6 year or, you know, all that kind of stuff. Is that a
 7 pretty strong possibility? I think I probably know
 8 the answer to it, and I know I'm asking. But, I mean
 9 -- go ahead.

10 MS. SMITH: Cindy Smith, Fiscal Services and
 11 Support. That would be a concern with them, at May
 12 being in a negative, even if they get a donation and
 13 their vendors actually give them a reprieve and let
 14 them push some of those bills into the next year.
 15 It's just kind of like using a credit card. If
 16 you're just a regular person, "well, I'll just put
 17 this on the credit card," that just keeps building
 18 and you just -- your money is still coming in the
 19 same, but what you owe to your creditors keeps
 20 getting larger and there's just not a way to -- so
 21 the concern would be maybe at December that we would
 22 just have a large amount of bills to pay and still no
 23 money there to do that. So we're probably going to
 24 just have this same issue come up again, unless they
 25 had a large donation that would take care of

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1 everything and let them maybe start on a fresh slate.
 2 That would be the only probably option that you could
 3 have.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Thank
 5 you.

6 Any other questions?

7 All right. So, Ms. Davis, I want to make sure
 8 we've got the right ideas here of what we can do. I
 9 don't see it on here. So we basically have the
 10 decision we can place the school on probation, modify
 11 the open-enrollment charter, revoke the charter, or
 12 take the matter under advisement for a future
 13 meeting?

14 MS. DAVIS: Or you can take no action.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Or we can take no action.
 16 Okay.

17 All right. So those are our decision points.
 18 So I will entertain a --

19 MS. DAVIS: You might want to see if there's any
 20 public comment --

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Oh, sorry.

22 MS. DAVIS: -- just in case there's somebody
 23 that did sign in.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. As far as opposition
 25 -- oh, I forgot about that; I'm sorry. Any

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1 opposition or public comments or anything like that,
 2 of that nature?

3 [BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE]

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Nobody signed up for any?
 5 Okay.

6 All right. So we are now to decision time. So
 7 I will entertain a motion.

8 MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I will regretfully
 9 move that the charter be revoked. The arithmetic
 10 just doesn't allow any other choice, it seems to me.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion to
 12 revoke the charter. Do we have a second?

13 MS. NEWTON: Second.

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

16 Any discussion?
 17 Okay.

18 MS. DAVIS: Just for clarification purposes,
 19 would that be to revoke at the end of this current
 20 school year or say effective today?

21 MR. WILSON: I don't know the answer to that, so
 22 I'll have to depend on you to make the most sensible
 23 -- I mean, I don't think it ought to be revoked this
 24 afternoon. There needs to be some sort of orderly
 25 process.

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1 MS. DAVIS: Okay. So, you know, there is the
 2 law that says that, you know, if they revoke, like
 3 the receivership of the school district and stuff
 4 like that comes to the Department. Because it is --
 5 you know, what is today? May 16th. I mean, how many
 6 more weeks of school do you have?

7 MR. FELTON: Just 11 days.

8 MS. DAVIS: Okay. I mean, my suggestion would
 9 be is that -- you know, you don't want to pull those
 10 kids out of school these last 11 days. So it would
 11 be through the end of the students' school year,
 12 would be my suggestion.

13 MR. WILSON: That's my motion, Mr. Chairman.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. To clarify, we have
 15 a motion to revoke the charter effective the end of
 16 the school year, students' day.

17 DR. BOYD: Can you do the -- I think maybe you
 18 need to have discussion and decide. I mean, you
 19 could do the last student day or you could do the end
 20 of the fiscal year. From our finance team, it seems
 21 like the end of the fiscal year would allow us, once
 22 we go into receivership, to handle things better.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So that would be June 30,
 24 2018?

25 MR. WILSON: I'm hearing my colleagues tell me

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1 that June 30th fiscal year would be the more sensible
2 thing.
3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we've got --
4 MR. WILSON: So I would modify my motion.
5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we've got a
6 modified motion for revocation to take effect June
7 30, 2018, to coincide with end of the fiscal year.
8 MS. NEWTON: Second.
9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Second. Any other
10 discussion?
11 All those in favor say "aye."
12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)
13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?
14 Okay. If you would, please fill out your ballot
15 sheets.
16 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]
17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And we will start with Mr.
18 Wilson.
19 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion, reluctantly
20 and regretfully. I'm very sympathetic to the efforts
21 of Mr. Felton and the board, but the arithmetic cold-
22 bloodedly just does not give any other solution, it
23 seems to me.
24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Newton.
25 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion. And the

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1 board, to come back -- okay.
2 All right. Let's take a 10-minute break and
3 then we'll do lunch later, if that's okay.
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7 (The Action Agenda was concluded at 11:33 a.m.)
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1 school's financial instability seems insurmountable.
2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Owoh.
3 DR. OWOH: I voted for the motion. The
4 financial stability and viability of the school is a
5 major concern. And I really believe that all
6 stakeholders need to have a definitive answer on the
7 continuation of the schools.
8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Turner.
9 MS. TURNER: I voted for the motion. It's not
10 financially feasible to allow the school to continue
11 operations past June 30.
12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Williams.
13 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted for the motion, given the
14 school's financial instability.
15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So thank you, Mr.
16 Felton. If you need help from any of us, and
17 especially the Charter Office, trying to help get --
18 wind this down, we'll be more than happy to do that.
19 SUPT. FELTON: Thank you.
20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.
21 Ms. Boyd, I think we know we want to -- I guess
22 we have options of either breaking for lunch and
23 coming back and doing reports or taking a -- we
24 probably want to do that, because we know Ms. Hill
25 needs some time to go. So is that okay with the

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A-1: OSCEOLA STEM ACADEMY
EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-5: ROCKBRIDGE MONTESSORI
EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-5: ROCKBRIDGE MONTESSORI
EXHIBIT TWO (2)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas State Department of Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on May 16, 2018, that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I have no contract with any parties within this action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial agency, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties to the action.

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: May 22, 2018.

SHARON K. HILL, CCR
Certified Court Reporter
Certificate No. 670

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