

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

August 15, 2017

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

August 15, 2017
8:30 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. IVY PFEFFER	Chairperson/Deputy Commissioner
DR. JEREMY OWOH	ADE Asst. Commissioner/ Educator Effectiveness
DR. MIKE HERNANDEZ	State Supt./Office of Coordinated Support and Service
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

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. JENNIFER DAVIS	ADE Staff Attorney
MS. COURTNEY SALAS-FORD	ADE Deputy General Counsel

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. ALEXANDRA BOYD	Public School Program Coordinator
MS. KELLY McLAUGHLIN	Public School Program Advisor
MS. VIRGINIA PERRY	Public School Program Advisor
MR. FREDDIE SCOTT	Learning Services Operations Mgr.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
#4 CAPITOL MALL
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201

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Letter in Support from Jeff Yates to CAP (08/14/17)

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

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EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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Areas of Concern for CAP Consideration, Submitted
by Supt. Chris Ferrell, McGehee School District

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Good morning. I want to apologize for the delay; we had some technology difficulties, but I think we have everything going now. So we appreciate your patience with us.

And so at this time, Ladies and Gentlemen, the August 15, 2017 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. And I would like to welcome everyone here to the ADE auditorium. I would ask that you please silence your electrical devices.

And as we're getting started I want to introduce the new Charter Authorizing Panel. The Charter Authorizing Panel oversees the authorization, renewal, revision, and revocation of charters. Recently passed Act 462 of 2017 allows for individuals outside the Department to serve on the Panel. In accordance with Act 462 and in an effort to increase representation from multiple stakeholder groups, Commissioner Key named seven members to the Charter Authorizing Panel. These members are: Dr. Jeremy Owoh, ADE Assistant Commissioner for Educator Effectiveness; Dr. Mike Hernandez, State Superintendent for the Office of Coordinated Support and Service; Kathi Turner, Deputy Director for Career and Technical Education at the Arkansas Department of

1 Career Education; Mike Wilson, Education Advocate and
2 Attorney in Jacksonville; Dr. Naccaman Williams,
3 former State Board of Education member; and Toyce
4 Newton, former State Board of Education member.

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

14 Before we get started this morning with the
15 agenda I would like to recognize some special guests
16 that we have with us today. We have Lieutenant
17 Governor Tim Griffin with us. We have -- let me --
18 I've got to pull my list here. We have
19 Representative Bragg, we have Representative Wing,
20 and we also have City Director Lance Hines with us
21 today.

22 I believe that we have a couple of our guests
23 who would like to speak, and so at this time I would
24 like to recognize Lieutenant Governor Griffin, if he
25 would like to come to the podium.

1 Lieutenant Governor, you are recognized.

2 LT. GOVERNOR GRIFFIN: Thank you. Tim Griffin,
3 Lieutenant Governor and parent of two Little Rock
4 Public School students. I appreciate y'all just
5 giving me a few minutes. I have submitted a letter
6 just -- I know we are dealing with Einstein right
7 now, but I submitted a letter on behalf of the
8 Einstein school, the ScholarMade school, and
9 Friendship. But I will limit my remarks at this time
10 because of the schedule to the Einstein school.

11 First of all, I would say that I have a good
12 friend in New Orleans, a lot of good friends down
13 there. I went to law school at Tulane, lived there
14 for four years, and know New Orleans pretty well.
15 And I called Dr. Ron French this morning; Dr. Ron
16 French is a retired physician who's been very
17 involved in the community. He's lived there -- I
18 think he was born there, lived there all his life in
19 the city, not out in the suburbs -- he lives in New
20 Orleans and he's been a big advocate for the charter
21 school movement. He lived through Katrina, of
22 course, and he's been there and seen what has gone on
23 in the inner-city for years. I called him this
24 morning and I told him that we were blessed that
25 Einstein had decided to help us here and bring some

1 of their wonderful ideas here. And I said, "What do
2 you think?" He said, "I can say absolutely nothing
3 negative about Einstein. They are outstanding. They
4 are fabulous." He said, "What they have helped do in
5 New Orleans has transformed education." And I said,
6 "Dr. French, is it okay if I use your name?" He
7 said, "Absolutely." And I will tell you he's put his
8 money where his mouth is; he is part of an
9 organization, a nonprofit that raises money to help
10 fund Einstein and other charter schools in New
11 Orleans because they have seen the transformative
12 power of good ideas. They don't care where the good
13 ideas are from; if they're a good idea, they're a
14 good idea. And, you know, I was just saying to
15 someone earlier -- because I've heard some people
16 say, "Well, they're from -- this school is from here,
17 this school is from there" -- if we only had grocery
18 stores and other stores that were organic to our
19 state, we wouldn't have much choice in shopping. If
20 we only had doctors who had grown up here we wouldn't
21 have much choice. That's just a ridiculous way of
22 looking at the world. They've got great ideas, and,
23 you know, when there's someone hungry they don't ask
24 "where did this food come from." There's a need and
25 this Einstein school helps address it.

1 I want to real quickly address some of the
2 things I hear from opponents of this school, of
3 charter schools generally. First of all, in this
4 particular case you hear a lot about, "Well, they
5 take the best students, they take the upper income,
6 they take the" -- whatever. Completely untrue. The
7 focus of Einstein would be lower income folks who
8 can't afford a private school, who can't move to
9 somewhere else; they want more choice too. Now my
10 kids go to public school but I can -- I have been
11 blessed, I have some other options. Not everybody
12 has those options. I want everybody to have options.
13 What if there was only one store where you could shop
14 because you were in a district -- you had to shop
15 where you live, you couldn't drive out somewhere and
16 go to another store. That would be ridiculous. Same
17 thing applies to schools.

18 Einstein will bring an amazing capacity to
19 individualized instruction. And let me tell you
20 what's really great: they have an amazing focus on
21 STEM education. One of the things that we are really
22 suffering from in the country, but in this state in
23 particular, is a lack of STEM training and STEM
24 education. And, yeah, you can train folks my age but
25 it's a lot harder to train me. I'm about to turn 50

1 in a year or so. It's a lot harder to train me and
2 turn my battleship around than it is to inspire
3 through experience a young child to just explore the
4 world of STEM. They may decide to be an English
5 major, whatever. That's great, we need those too.
6 But we don't want them choosing to be an English
7 major because they never knew STEM. We want them to
8 make a decision from a point of knowledge, from a
9 position of knowledge, from a perspective of
10 knowledge. That is why it is critically important to
11 expose them to STEM at a young age. Also, STEM helps
12 develop the brain in thinking in a way different than
13 other disciplines. They're all complimentary,
14 they're problem-solving.

15 They have a record, a hundred-percent pass for
16 all the students in the Algebra I -- in Algebra I.
17 They have a focus on STEM that we need in this state.
18 So I welcome them with open arms and I say, "Please
19 come. Thank you for choosing our state, our city,
20 where I live just a few miles from here. Thank you
21 for choosing us over all the other cities who were
22 begging for you to come." We should be proud of
23 that.

24 And let me say one final thing. The
25 foundational problem with the anti-choice anti-

1 charter argument is this: it requires -- it asks of
2 parents that they set aside the best interests of
3 their child who's living today in the hopes that
4 decades down the road the system might get its act
5 together and provide for a child yet born -- the
6 education that parent would want for that child yet
7 born. Maybe the parents are yet born. But it's
8 basically saying to parents, "Hey, I know you've got
9 a kid now, I know your kid needs the best education
10 now. But if you give your kid the best education
11 now, in 20 years -- in 10 years, when we might get
12 our act together, you're putting that at risk."
13 Well, let me tell you, maybe it's -- I know it's not
14 just me. We all feel the way -- this sentiment I'm
15 going to express, and that is we're concerned about
16 our child today. That is my obligation before God,
17 that is my responsibility as a parent under the law,
18 and that is what the love in my heart, first and
19 foremost, would have me do -- take care of my parent
20 -- my child who lives today. Not some argument --
21 some opaque argument about if you take your child
22 away today from the education that may not be ideal
23 you will somehow put at risk the chance that we have
24 in 20 years to get our act together and provide the
25 education for somebody who's not yet born. That's a

1 ridiculous argument, but that argument underpins all
2 of the opposition to choice today. It hinges on the
3 future, with the recognition that things aren't where
4 they ought to be. Well, you know what, if I'm a
5 parent -- and I am -- the only thing I'm concerned
6 about is today. I'm not willing to sacrifice my
7 child's education for a child yet born in 20 years,
8 because my responsibility before God and the love in
9 my heart says my child is what I'm responsible for,
10 not someone else's child yet born. So that argument
11 completely fails. And it should be noted there's no
12 guarantee that in 10 years, 20 years, 30 years the
13 status quo will ever get their act together. There's
14 no guarantee of that.

15 It's a new world, it's a competitive world. We
16 ought to welcome these folks with open arms -- and if
17 we don't, shame on us. Thank y'all.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you very much for
19 being here.

20 And then at this time I would -- if
21 Representative Bragg or Representative Wing, would
22 you like to make --

23 Okay. And Mr. Hines, City Director, would you
24 like to make comments at this time?

25 You're recognized.

1 CITY DIRECTOR HINES: Yes, thank you. Board, I
2 appreciate y'all taking the time and your service to
3 the State and our kids in the state. I'm here to
4 speak on behalf of the ScholarMade application and
5 the Einstein.

6 Two weeks ago we approved the ScholarMade
7 application at the former Morris School right off of
8 Roosevelt, across the street from the State
9 Fairgrounds. The things that I see as a city
10 director who lives on the western edge of the city is
11 the ability of these charters to basically stabilize
12 neighborhoods. The Morris School and the Garland
13 School have both been shuttered for many years. Both
14 of these applicants are getting ready to make
15 millions of dollars of investment in the poorest
16 areas of the city and some of the most underserved
17 areas of the city. Myself as a father of a school-
18 age daughter who started out in the public school
19 system several years ago, but was forced to make a
20 choice between public schools and private, I come
21 from a standpoint that we didn't have choice at that
22 point and were forced to make a decision. Having
23 grown up in the Little Rock Public School system, my
24 wife and I both felt it was a tough choice for us to
25 make. The things that -- much like Lieutenant

1 Governor Griffin said, my family has the -- been
2 fortunate enough to be able to make those choices.
3 We see people make choices every day in this city
4 when they don't have choices. School choice is not
5 just happening in Little Rock. Many families choose
6 to move outside of Little Rock to the suburban areas
7 and voice that choice with their feet. I view in an
8 urban setting and what you've seen successful across
9 the U.S. and we're seeing it here is a healthy
10 ecosystem of our public school system, public charter
11 school system, and our private school system. We are
12 fortunate -- although my daughter's generation -- I
13 view school children in generations; every three
14 years you lose a generation. In the Little Rock area
15 we have two school districts, Little Rock School
16 District and Pulaski County School District. The
17 thing that we have seen is that we have great
18 elementary schools and we've been losing most of our
19 students in the jump from elementary to middle
20 school. And where my daughter was concerned, we had
21 to make a decision at middle school. We built a
22 house in an area where we knew we could go to an
23 elementary school and hopefully the middle school.
24 Here it is six years later and my daughter is a
25 junior, getting ready to graduate, and we're -- at

1 Pulaski County they're finally building a new middle
2 school. We've also got a new middle school in Little
3 Rock School District, Pinnacle View. But as you can
4 see it's taken six to seven years and some of the
5 impetus for that was some of the advent of the
6 charter schools.

7 I would look at this for both of these
8 applicants is they're coming in to some of the most
9 underserved areas of our city, making huge
10 investments that will stabilize these neighborhoods
11 and stabilize this community. I would appreciate
12 y'all's support for both of these applications.
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you very much. We
15 appreciate those of you being here.

16 REPORT-1: CHAIR'S REPORT

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And so at this time we
18 will go ahead and start with the items on the agenda.
19 The first item on the agenda is the Chair's Report.
20 And since this is the first meeting as Chair and a
21 newly reorganized board I don't have a report. But I
22 would just like to welcome the members of the Panel
23 and say thank-you for being here as well; thank you
24 for your willingness to serve on this Panel. I know
25 we have a lot of items ahead of us over these next

1 three days, so we will work through this and I would
2 encourage you if you do have questions please let us
3 know. Our staff is here to assist you. And I would
4 say to the staff, if I overlook anything as we start
5 through this agenda please don't hesitate to let me
6 know as well.

7 And, Ms. Davis, will you be the one keeping up
8 with public comment and --

9 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you very
11 much. So please make sure I don't overlook anything
12 as we go through here.

13 CONSENT AGENDA

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. So the next
15 item is the Consent Agenda. Does anyone wish to
16 discuss any items on the Consent Agenda? And if not,
17 I will accept a motion on the Consent Agenda.

18 DR. HERNANDEZ: So moved.

19 MS. NEWTON: Second.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion
21 from Dr. Hernandez and a second from Ms. Newton.

22 All those in favor say "aye."

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Any opposed?

25 [BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE]

1 HEARING PROCEDURES

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. We will move on to
3 our action agenda and we will have staff attorney --
4 Ms. Davis, will you please explain our hearing
5 process, the voting process, and the process of how
6 this panel will report to the State Board for
7 consideration of review or not to review decisions
8 made?

9 MS. DAVIS: Okay. Good morning. Jennifer
10 Davis, Staff Attorney for the Department. The
11 procedures that you will follow this morning will be
12 the same ones that you'll follow all day, but I can
13 refresh you at any point in time.

14 All persons that wish to provide any kind of
15 testimony to you today, outside of attorneys, will
16 need to be sworn in. The applicant will then have 20
17 minutes to make its presentation to you, followed by
18 20 minutes for opposition -- and that will be a
19 collective 20 minutes. Then the applicant will have
20 an additional 5 minutes rebuttal time. You can
21 extend at your discretion any of that time as you
22 feel it's necessary. At the conclusion of the
23 presentation you may ask questions of the applicant,
24 you may ask questions of myself or other Department
25 staff that you feel is necessary in order for you to

1 make your decision. Once you make your decision you
2 can either choose to make it today or you can defer
3 to the next meeting your decision. If you vote
4 today, there will be a Google document that you can
5 state your reasons for your vote, so that way the
6 applicant will understand the reasons why you voted
7 the way you did. Also, that will help the State
8 Board in understanding the decision that you made.

9 One thing to remember is that this is a contract
10 negotiation of sort. So anything that differs from
11 the written materials or the presentation that the
12 applicant agrees to here or modifies does become part
13 of any charter that you may grant.

14 And one last thing, and I know that we had
15 discussed this in the work session, but due to the
16 limited number of charters that are available this
17 year any application that you approve will be
18 approved provisionally until the conclusion of the
19 three days' hearing and all applications are heard.
20 If at that time the number of approved applicants is
21 less than the number available, then all those will
22 become approved and they will go to the State Board
23 as approved. If it's more than the number of
24 charters available, then we will have to go through
25 and you will each be tasked with ranking and then we

1 will have those decisions made of which ones we can
2 send to the State Board as approved and the other
3 ones will effectively be denied.

4 Do you have any questions?

5 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So, no questions
7 from the Panel. And, Ms. Davis, I'm sure we may have
8 more as we go through, so thank you for that.

9 A-1: HEARING OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
10 APPLICATION: EINSTEIN CHARTER SCHOOL AT LITTLE ROCK

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So let's begin with the
12 hearing for the open-enrollment public charter school
13 application, Einstein. So, Ms. Boyd, you're
14 recognized.

15 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Einstein
16 Charter School of Little Rock is a proposed open-
17 enrollment public charter school to be located within
18 the Little Rock School District. The sponsoring
19 entity is the Einstein Group, Incorporated. The
20 applicant is requesting to serve students in grades K
21 through 7 with a maximum enrollment of 600, beginning
22 in the 2018-19 school year. The applicant has
23 notified affected districts of this proposed public
24 charter school. ADE staff reviewed the application,
25 and concerns were shared with the applicant for

1 response. The application, the ADE evaluation, and
2 the applicant's response are included in the -- for
3 the Charter Authorizing Panel.

4 On behalf of the Einstein Charter School
5 application we have Shawn Toronto, the Chief
6 Executive Officer, and Daniel Davis, the Chief
7 Strategy Officer to speak.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I just -- we just
9 made a note that we had Representative Mark Lowery
10 join us. We want to welcome you. And realizing you
11 may have time constraints, would you like to address
12 the audience prior to us beginning the presentation
13 by the school?

14 You are recognized.

15 REPRESENTATIVE LOWERY: Thank you very much. I
16 appreciate you working with me on this. I have been
17 involved in testifying a number of times for charter
18 school applications and also involved in some of the
19 legislation that has enabled charter schools,
20 specifically the legislation that allows access to
21 unused or under-utilized buildings. The main reason
22 I bring that up is because the issue of enabling
23 charter schools, of allowing these applications is
24 for us to maximize resources for students. I know
25 sometimes it is maybe inconvenient to local school

1 districts, but the thing that we have to place at the
2 top is the need and the ability of the students, of
3 all students, to be able to have choice. And that is
4 one of the reasons why I'm coming here today to speak
5 in favor of this particular application -- actually
6 any charter school application -- because the
7 students are what we're supposed to be putting in our
8 foremost mindset. You know, we've had to address in
9 the legislature a number of issues related to
10 resources for students. We discovered that in doing
11 research that school districts are sitting on 790
12 million dollars in reserve funds and we had to pass
13 legislation to try and enable -- or actually mandate
14 the spending down of that. And yet in the case of
15 charter schools we're talking about schools that
16 really are kind of behind the eight-ball sometimes in
17 terms of resources. They don't have the same level
18 of resources available to them and yet, they have
19 great success. They also have students and parents
20 who are engaged and want the additional rigor.

21 I know that the argument sometimes is made that
22 this pulls from the local school districts, but the
23 truth is we've also passed legislation that if the
24 school district itself is affected by a charter
25 school application, even by one student, they can

1 apply for the same waivers that the charter school
2 has -- extended school day, extended school year, on
3 and on. And yet, in many of the cases of school
4 districts that oppose the new charter schools they
5 have not one time asked for those waivers. So we
6 have to give an opportunity to students to be able --
7 students and their parents, the decision-makers for
8 them, to be able to have choice.

9 And so I just ask that you would consider
10 favorably the applications that are before you today,
11 in favor of these charter schools, and I appreciate
12 very much the opportunity to come and speak.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you very much.

14 REPRESENTATIVE LOWERY: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. At this time would
16 the representatives from the Einstein Charter School
17 at Little Rock and anyone speaking in opposition
18 please stand to receive the oath. Okay. And raise
19 your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the
20 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
21 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

22 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

24 I think we have Shawn Toranto and Daniel Davis
25 from the school who will be presenting, and so you

1 will have 20 minutes.

2 MS. TORANTO: I would like to thank everybody
3 who spoke on behalf of charter schools and Einstein
4 Charter School this morning and for all the support
5 we have received. Good morning, everyone. I am
6 Shawn Toranto, Chief Executive Officer of Einstein
7 Charter Schools, located in New Orleans, Louisiana.
8 With me is my Chief Strategy Officer, Mr. Daniel
9 Davis. We are honored to be here this morning and
10 thank you very much. My Deputy CEO, Mr. Phong Tran,
11 is in New Orleans; he works very closely with me and
12 is overseeing the opening of all four of our charter
13 schools that opened to our students yesterday. It's
14 very important that I have someone that is aligned to
15 me that works on my level to insure sustainability of
16 our school if anything should happen to me, to have a
17 seamless transition. So thank you very much.

18 Who are we? Einstein -- I'm sorry; before I
19 start I'm going to ask if you all would be kind
20 enough to accept the letters from Mr. Yates and Mr.
21 Griffin and some information -- an informational
22 booklet about Einstein Charter School. Thank you.

23 While Mr. Davis is doing that I would like to
24 share with you that Einstein is a not-for-profit
25 charter school network. Einstein's replication is

1 endorsed and funded through the United States
2 Department of Education. Einstein achieved a 20-
3 point gain in my first year as administrator over
4 curriculum and instruction. This was due to setting
5 high expectations and providing the necessary
6 supports for our children to achieve. The schools
7 achievement goals are aligned to the state standards
8 instructional method which we designed, to data-
9 driven and differentiated, and we progress monitor
10 frequently. If we talk it, we walk it. Our parents
11 were skeptical at first with our high expectations;
12 however, that soon changed. We have children who are
13 meeting or exceeding those same expectations. In
14 addition, we created and implemented with fidelity a
15 safe, responsible, respectful, caring and clean
16 school environment. Those are part of my non-
17 negotiables.

18 The mission of Einstein Charter School is to
19 promote academic excellence in teaching and learning
20 through the integration of mathematics and science in
21 interdisciplinary curricula and to promote the ideals
22 and habits of lifelong learning among -- excuse me,
23 I'm going to ask Mr. Davis to take care of that.

24 Many missions -- many have missions that are not
25 clearly defined. At Einstein I make it a point to

1 clearly define our child-focused mission; to promote
2 academic excellence in teaching and learning, defined
3 all students must demonstrate significant increases
4 in academic achievement and to meet their growth goal
5 that I set for each individual child in our network
6 through the integration of mathematics and science,
7 as we know no subject is to be taught in isolation;
8 to promote the ideals and habits of lifelong learners
9 among all stakeholders.

10 We must always be fair and consistent and
11 respectful to all students and colleagues to show
12 that you care for each and every child and to build a
13 trusting relationship where children want to learn.
14 Our teachers are to be prepared to teach every day on
15 time and develop routines and expectations that are
16 to be implemented with fidelity. Our children will
17 not be punished because of the teachers or adults not
18 doing what they're supposed to be doing.

19 Give each student the support that they need, be
20 it academic intervention or acceleration, emotional,
21 social, physical and/or behavioral. It is our
22 responsibility to those students as individuals and
23 to know if they're experiencing short-term or long-
24 term issues, whether at school or at home, and to
25 address them immediately. At Einstein all children

1 are to be called by their given name. Einstein
2 students will not be demeaned, called out of their
3 name, yelled at, or disrespected in any manner at any
4 time. We are to provide that responsible,
5 respectful, clean and safe classroom and school
6 environment that welcomes each student.

7 Einstein curriculum -- we have up here that we
8 use data-driven instruction to create a learning
9 pathway for individual students. That's just the tip
10 of the iceberg. Our curriculum is strictly aligned
11 to Louisiana state standards. It is STEM focused.
12 We need to prepare our students for the future. We
13 have computer labs; we have technology, in addition
14 to engineering, robotics, and Algebra I -- and as
15 previously stated, Algebra I is provided to our
16 students in 8th grade. We have a 100% end-of-course
17 pass rate for seven consecutive years. When we come
18 to Arkansas, if we are privileged to do so, our
19 curriculum will be aligned to Arkansas state
20 standards.

21 Our capacity -- our teachers have an abundance
22 of support through professional development, their
23 school leader, instructional coaches, and the Chief
24 Academic Office. The focus is effective planning,
25 implementation of rigorous instruction aligned to

1 state standards, the use of exit tickets to adjust
2 lessons, to plan to re-teach or accelerate data
3 analysis and utilization. Increasing student
4 achievement in Einstein Charter Schools is a non-
5 negotiable.

6 We also employ a student directed culture.
7 Einstein allows our children to be children. We
8 provide our students with the rules and enforce them
9 in a positive manner. This provides our children
10 with the power to make decisions. When children are
11 treated with respect and in a positive manner there
12 are more times than not to comply. We also don't
13 overlook the needs of our children, and implement a
14 holistic approach and the professional staff to
15 address their individual needs, to communicate with
16 parents, and acquire outside resources when
17 necessary.

18 Mr. Davis, I'm going to -- okay.

19 Einstein leadership -- everyone at Einstein has
20 a sense of urgency because there is a sense of
21 urgency when children are not achieving, whether in a
22 charter school or in a district-run facility. Our
23 leadership consists of -- our CMO organization
24 consists of my-self, our deputy, our chief academic
25 officer, our chief financial officer, and chief

1 strategy officer; of course, that's me. I've served
2 as the school leader at Einstein Charter School since
3 2008. I have -- I'm being kind -- well over 20 years
4 of experience teaching in a district-run school pre-
5 Katrina. I have come to the conclusion a long time
6 ago that adults fail children. I share this with
7 Einstein to insure all students receive a competitive
8 education in a safe, caring, respectful, responsible
9 school environment, and that we comply with all laws,
10 policies and regulations. I will not allow our
11 children to be at risk because of adults with their
12 own personal agendas.

13 Our organizational structure, as you can see
14 from this chart, that it is not top-heavy. We
15 believe money belongs in the classroom. An
16 organization in New Orleans conducted an audit of
17 schools to identify where the majority of the money
18 of these schools go. Out of 30 schools Einstein came
19 in third to where our money goes, in the classroom to
20 support our children.

21 Our management agreement -- our key decision-
22 makers are principals, Head of School, local board,
23 CMO chiefs, and National Board. We also have a very
24 extensive decision matrix. The basic leadership
25 model is the CMO board hires the local board, hires

1 the CMO -- excuse me; the CMO board constitutes the
2 local board, and the Head of School reports to the
3 national charter board. I have to say that the CEO,
4 me, will personally evaluate the Head of School and
5 has the authority to terminate. The CEO will support
6 and work in collaboration with the local board and
7 will inform the board prior to any potential
8 termination or to the potential termination of the
9 head of school. The national board provides
10 oversight to the local board and has the authority to
11 terminate and/or appoint members to the local board.
12 The national board has the authority to terminate me.
13 Also I have the full responsibility for the decision-
14 making in the area of finance and purchasing. The
15 local board must be aligned to our mission. The
16 local board will provide oversight in financials,
17 operations, student achievement, parent concerns.
18 The Head of School and the CEO will report directly
19 to the local board regarding student achievement.
20 The board will not be involved in the day-to-day
21 operations of the school. The board advocates for
22 our students, parents, and school, in addition to the
23 community. They must maintain 100% compliance with
24 all laws, policies, and regulation. The board will
25 attend retreats twice a year to learn effective

1 governance practices, to be aware of their
2 responsibilities, and to remain up-to-date in any
3 changes. We keep in mind that one wrong decision
4 will have a negative impact on our children, and I
5 will not allow that to happen.

6 The plan for Arkansas governance -- our goal is
7 to have three pre-K to 8 schools in five to seven
8 years. We will transition from heavy central office
9 reliance to an independent Arkansas focused and
10 driven organization. The CMO will provide back-
11 office support and oversight to the school. Einstein
12 at Little Rock will have their own business manager
13 who will be provided support and oversight by our
14 Chief Financial Officer. The CMO will provide
15 support to the Head of School to insure Einstein's
16 model is implemented with the utmost fidelity and to
17 insure my non-negotiable of increasing student
18 achievement.

19 Einstein educators are excellent teachers,
20 reflected by their students' outstanding performance.
21 I want you to really take that in. Einstein teachers
22 are professional educators whose focus remains on the
23 children. We are privileged to serve. Their student
24 success is directly correlated to their success.
25 There are a team of individuals who have attended and

1 will continue to attend effective professional
2 developments on implementing the Einstein way with
3 fidelity. Certification is not a requirement to work
4 in a charter school, but as professional educators we
5 allow one year for noncertified teachers to receive
6 their certification. Einstein teachers are
7 motivated, knowledgeable, professional, child-
8 focused, and work hard to achieve our shared goals.

9 The school plans for Little Rock -- Einstein's
10 goal, first and foremost, is to open one pre-K to 8
11 school when fully built out and for that school to
12 meet and/or exceed state scores. We have done it in
13 the state of Louisiana. We intend to open two
14 additional pre-K to 8 schools, for a total of three.
15 Einstein's target community is for those students and
16 communities who have not had the opportunity given to
17 them to attend a high performing open-admission
18 charter school in their community. That is our
19 target community, under-served, the first of which is
20 Garland in southwest Little Rock. Einstein will
21 implement its STEM-focused individualized,
22 differentiated, data-driven, and personalized
23 learning program. We provide outstanding,
24 exceptional children's services and a highly
25 effective and recognized ELL program that uses the

1 push-in/push-out model. Einstein students are
2 grouped and tiered within their group, utilizing data
3 to support individualized and targeted instruction.
4 This model allows students to accelerate and/or to
5 receive targeted instruction. Einstein is
6 departmentalized in grades 1st through 10th grade;
7 this allows our teachers to specialize in their
8 content area.

9 There has been much innovation in the
10 educational field and I must say -- and I try not to
11 be sarcastic -- Einstein's innovation is not only in
12 the instructional model that is sound; it is because
13 what we talk we walk, and being in the public
14 schools, district-run schools that seldom happens.

15 The Head of School and principal are responsible
16 to hire the teachers and staff. Einstein's CMO will
17 provide guidance, support, advertising, job
18 descriptions for each position, and define the
19 characteristics of what it takes to be an educator at
20 Einstein Charter Schools.

21 Einstein Charter School at Little Rock will
22 become one of the bedrocks of this community.
23 Einstein has proven success. Poverty does not have
24 any bearing on intellectual capability. As I looked
25 at the data from the state, from the Little Rock

1 School Achievement District, and from two schools
2 located in the Garland area, the gap is significant.
3 For example, we used Watson Elementary and
4 Cloverdale. Cloverdale has a 9.8% proficiency rate
5 in math for 8th grade; only 9.8% received or achieved
6 proficiency. Watson Elementary, 3rd grade ELA, 15.9%
7 of those children achieved proficiency compared to
8 the state of 72.45. That is a significant gap. And
9 I must say at Einstein Charter School we were
10 nationally recognized by the Coalition of Schools
11 Educating Boys of Color for closing that achievement
12 gap between subgroups while increasing student
13 achievement overall. That's what we do.

14 But please take a look at this data. Compare
15 the data between the schools that are in the
16 undeserved -- underserved communities compared to the
17 state and Little Rock; 26% proficiency rate in 8th
18 grade, Cloverdale Middle, when the state has a 60.11%
19 proficiency rate. That is significant. Fourth grade
20 state math proficiency 62.05, Little Rock 46.9,
21 Watson Elementary 15.8. Tell me, why is this
22 allowed? These children should be afforded the right
23 to attend a school that provides for their needs and
24 to increase student achievement. As I said before,
25 poverty has no bearing on intellectual capability.

1 Our schools prove that fact.

2 This year our network goals in our city -- the
3 goals I set for our children that are in underserved
4 communities are high because we know our children can
5 achieve. 9.8 proficiency --

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Toronto, I'm sorry to
7 interrupt but your 20 minutes is up. You do have an
8 additional five minutes. Would you like to do that
9 now or would you like to wait?

10 MS. TORANTO: I'd like to wait. That would be
11 fine.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

13 MS. TORANTO: Thank you. And at this time I'll
14 ask Mr. Davis to join us -- join me in any questions
15 -- well, are we going to go ahead and have --

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes. I think at this time
17 we will afford the opportunity for anyone who's here
18 to speak in opposition.

19 MS. TORANTO: Absolutely.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Is that correct, Ms.
21 Davis?

22 MS. TORANTO: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And then you'll have an
24 opportunity to come back.

25 Okay. So, Ms. Davis, did we have some people

1 who wish to speak?

2 MS. DAVIS: I know that Superintendent Poore is
3 here to speak in opposition. There may be others
4 that didn't actually sign-up on the public comment
5 sheet. So if there are others, they can go ahead and
6 come at this time.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Let me ask a
8 clarifying question: for opposition, is that 20
9 minutes total for opposition?

10 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right. So
12 we'll begin with Superintendent Poore.

13 SUPT. POORE: Good morning. I am Mike Poore,
14 superintendent of Little Rock Public Schools. I do
15 have hopefully three documents to share with you this
16 morning that I will hand out near the end of my
17 presentation. One document is en route because I
18 found out that it wasn't printed off properly, but I
19 can give out the other two documents. But I'd prefer
20 that we wait on that just a little bit so you can
21 listen to what I'd like to share.

22 Just a few things -- thank you very much -- the
23 first that I'd like to start is one of the things I
24 think this committee ought to consider just in
25 general is the timing of this meeting. I cannot tell

1 you how challenging it is to be in the second day of
2 school, whether you're a superintendent or interested
3 community member, on trying to hold a meeting such as
4 this on the second day of school. I think we could
5 probably do better in terms of moving it, even if
6 it's the second week of school in Arkansas, so that
7 the participation is a little easier to pull off.

8 Everybody does have options and there are a lot
9 of options in our community. And one of the things
10 that we shared earlier and that I'll just probably
11 reiterate some things that are kind of commonsense in
12 this district, in this state we have home-school
13 options, we have private school options, we have
14 charter school options that have already previously
15 been approved, and then of course we have options
16 within the public schools. The public schools
17 include the old traditional school settings, we have
18 magnet school options, and then there are options for
19 parents to actually choose the ability to go from one
20 district to another district in terms of having their
21 students' needs met. The schools in our district,
22 specifically one of the things that I'm very proud of
23 is that we have had marked improvement in just one
24 year with me being the superintendent and working
25 with staff. I look at it in both the middle school

1 and the elementary. If you look at the middle school
2 there are things that are happening right now that
3 actually meet and match everything that charter
4 schools are preparing to present to you in terms of
5 project-based learning environments, personalized
6 learning environments, remodeling and improving the
7 schools in terms of their make-up and look, and then
8 test scores going up. And so one of the documents
9 that you will receive, specifically I printed off the
10 elementary because of Einstein having its start with
11 just using -- being with the elementary level. So I
12 printed that out and in particular if you go look at
13 the two schools that get mentioned in their report of
14 Stephens and Watson, Watson Elementary did have some
15 of the lowest scores prior to last year. I'm proud
16 to share that at Watson every single testing area
17 went up this past year, every single area, 3rd, 4th
18 and 5th, and that was as a result of an effort by the
19 district and actually the state to help partner with
20 us on something that's called the Achieve Team. I
21 probably don't have time to do justice to the Achieve
22 Team model, but the Achieve Team model is a method in
23 terms of wrapping around support from the district
24 and the state to go support those schools -- and as a
25 result testing areas went up. Cloverdale's testing

1 went up, because that got mentioned as well, in terms
2 of its overall numbers. Part of that was that
3 previously they had such decline we changed the
4 trajectory around where scores overall went up in
5 terms of the number of tested areas. Two of the
6 areas were flat in their testing, which again changes
7 the trajectory because they had been dropping. So
8 we're proud of what's going on there.

9 At the elementary our scores also have gone up
10 overall. Again, if you look at the elementary levels
11 just in terms of the district score or its site --
12 you'll have that in front of you and you'll have
13 hopefully an awareness of the things that we're doing
14 at the elementary level, whether it's with family-
15 based literature and literacy that's taking place
16 throughout all of our schools, as well as unique
17 features that are happening at some of those sites to
18 try to make it so that our students have the
19 opportunity for leadership.

20 The data that you are going to be provided
21 specifically you're going to get three different
22 things: academic information, facility planning, and
23 you'll also get a visual from the Arkansas Democrat
24 that shows the concentration of schools. If you look
25 at -- and if you wouldn't mind to go ahead and start

1 to pass those out, and I did print enough for the
2 members of the media as well -- on our facility
3 planning index we used this as a part of school
4 closures that were done last year. The school
5 closures, we actually ended up closing two
6 elementaries, we closed one preschool, and then
7 shifted some programs around. Those types of things
8 are never easy. And if you look at it just in terms
9 of just in generalities you'll be able to learn a lot
10 from this sheet about the population trends, the
11 census data that's occurred over a 15-year time span
12 on the facility planning document. Over that 15 year
13 time span using census data you're looking at the
14 number of kids that are within a school district
15 zone. The school district zone means that every
16 child is being counted; that means private school
17 students, home-school students, charter school
18 students, and Little Rock Public School students. So
19 you can see that there's really only two board zones
20 within the Little Rock School District that had
21 increases in population; those are both found to the
22 west and the northwest. There's dramatic population
23 decreases in board zone one, but then board zones
24 two, three and six are all right around the 14% to
25 16% less students served. So when you combine what

1 has already been approved for charters and you
2 combine what the district has, we have an
3 overabundance of elementary seats for this community.
4 So adding additional options into the Little Rock
5 school system right now is not a wise choice, in my
6 opinion, along with the fact -- so that's a factual
7 end of data in terms of just number of kids served.

8 And the other part of this is on what we're
9 doing as a school system to improve the academic
10 performance. You know, I appreciate my colleague
11 from Einstein sharing about her track record. I'm
12 pretty proud of the track record that I bring to the
13 table as the superintendent of Little Rock Public
14 Schools and would -- if you look at my career in
15 Colorado Springs or in Sheridan, which is a suburb in
16 Denver, Bentonville, which is obviously a
17 dramatically different population, and then now here
18 in Little Rock -- I think that the results that are
19 being engineered with the staff that we work with are
20 things that I'm extremely proud of in terms of moving
21 schools and getting them back into a higher level of
22 academic performance. We're doing that right now
23 with the schools in Little Rock.

24 I've had numerous people that are in front of
25 me, as well as folks that are behind me right now,

1 and those that are out in the community say to me
2 over the last 12 months, "Mike, tell us what we can
3 do. Tell us how we can help and support you as we go
4 through trying to make the Little Rock Public Schools
5 the school district that we really want it to be."
6 You as a chartering panel have the opportunity right
7 now, in my mind, to help us. If we add additional
8 seats into the mix right now you're creating a
9 situation that's going to create greater turmoil
10 within this community and you're going to create a
11 situation where it stops -- or maybe I shouldn't say
12 stops, but it makes it more challenging for us to
13 move forward with some of the efforts that we're
14 doing to turn around schools that have been highly
15 impacted.

16 So I appreciate the opportunity to be here
17 today. I'm hoping that I'm able to present for the
18 other charter that's coming up at Little Rock schools
19 today too, but I've got a presentation to MP-CATA
20 this afternoon which is actually working with several
21 of our schools, including Cloverdale, to turn it into
22 an aviation and aeronautics, for lunch. So I'm
23 trying to balance and juggle.

24 I do have some specifics that I would share
25 about each charter and I will finish with that in

1 terms of with Einstein. One of the things that I
2 think that you have to look at in terms of capacity
3 and building size at the Garland campus is the
4 capacity to hold 600-plus students. That will be
5 something that I think that should be addressed. I
6 also, you know, would ask how many families actually
7 came to their presentation -- that was not something
8 that I found at least in the packet -- to see what
9 the level of interest was when they presented. I
10 know they met all the guidelines but I don't know how
11 many parents actually ended up participating, and
12 maybe I missed that.

13 Next is that for the first time today -- at
14 least I was unaware that there was a plan to add
15 three pre-K through 7 campuses into the central
16 Arkansas community, and maybe I misinterpreted what
17 was stated. So that might be a question that you as
18 a panel would want to consider and look at.

19 I will finish with my final comment of just the
20 fact that it is an honor to be the Little Rock
21 superintendent. I'm enjoying my work; I'm enjoying
22 the work that I'm getting to do with a variety of
23 different people to turn our district around. I
24 think we're making real progress that can be seen,
25 whether it's within the teachers or the students,

1 which are the most important thing in terms of their
2 performance and also their attitudes about coming
3 into our school system. Numbers look good from what
4 I can tell so far in terms of our enrollment this
5 year. I'm proud of that. And we will continue to
6 become better each and every day, but we need some
7 help and ask your strong consideration not to add
8 greater density of students when we really don't need
9 that within this community. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you, Mr.
11 Poore.

12 And if Ms. Davis or someone can -- I know you've
13 expressed an interest to speak later on, and I know
14 with your schedule -- so if we -- however we need to
15 work that out, you know, later on. If he does return
16 I'd like to try to make that opportunity for him to
17 speak available --

18 SUPT. POORE: Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- as we do that.

20 Okay. And we still have time if there are some
21 additional opposition. Do we have others to speak in
22 opposition?

23 MS. DAVIS: I don't have anybody.

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

25 MS. DAVIS: And there's five minutes rebuttal.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Yes, you are
2 recognized.

3 MR. WALTER: Thank you. Madam Chair Dr.
4 Pfeffer, Tripp Walter, Staff Attorney, Arkansas
5 Public School Resource Center. Thank you, Dr.
6 Pfeffer and Panel, for allowing me to speak. I just
7 wanted to respond to some of Superintendent Poore's
8 comments before Einstein actually got into their
9 formal rebuttal.

10 We are concerned that this is becoming a
11 continuing pattern before the authorizer of
12 opposition coming in and presenting substantive
13 information which has not been made available to the
14 applicant and using it in their case against the
15 approval of the applicant's application. As you well
16 know, the situation the charter applicants work under
17 is they're under tight advanced timelines to get
18 information of substance in to the Department and
19 then subsequently this panel. So while I understand
20 obviously the ability to oppose, it's frustrating and
21 concerning and harmful to the fair presentation of
22 the case of applicants, such as Einstein, in our
23 opinion, that opposition is able to come in without
24 prior notice, without advance warning, and without
25 advance presentation of the materials and show up and

1 present substantive information to the authorizing
2 panel.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Davis, can you
4 assist us with that and how that -- what are
5 requirements or how things should be handled?

6 MS. DAVIS: Sure. One thing to remember is
7 that, you know, these hearings are open and announced
8 to the public. So that way anybody at any point in
9 time may walk in and lodge opposition, either during
10 opposition time or just lodge a public comment. And
11 while I am -- you know -- I understand what Mr.
12 Walter has said and I'm sympathetic to that, we don't
13 necessarily require opposition to be formalized and
14 lodged prior to. Because like I say, anybody could
15 come in, even at this moment right now, and make that
16 and we have no ability to control that because this
17 is an open and public hearing.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And to that -- and
19 I guess the question -- you know, I realize that we
20 did receive some information handed out to us, I
21 think also the press, but also the school district
22 provided us with some additional information today.
23 So I think if in the future there --

24 MS. DAVIS: Right.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- needs to be any

1 changes, then that's something probably that should
2 be discussed well in advance with all parties as far
3 as will we accept additional information or not. And
4 I guess that's a question for Legal as well, so --

5 MS. DAVIS: Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: To my knowledge we have
7 always accepted information --

8 MS. DAVIS: Right.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- on the day of the
10 hearing.

11 MS. DAVIS: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

13 MS. DAVIS: We do allow that. And, you know,
14 just like with anyone else on any other matter, if
15 they are going to lodge something we do ask that they
16 bring enough copies so that way everyone on the staff
17 may have one, in addition to the court reporter, and
18 opposition can have one as well.

19 MR. WALTER: If I may just have a brief follow-
20 up I think to go along with that comment --

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. You are recognized.

22 MR. WALTER: I'm sorry.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Hang on just a minute.

24 Ms. Davis, is there -- do we need time limits on
25 these? I guess I'm --

1 MS. DAVIS: Well, yes. This is technically the
2 five-minute rebuttal time. So if you can -- you can
3 extend time, as necessary, but I just want to remind
4 -- you know -- according to procedures we are
5 currently in five-minute rebuttal time. So I don't
6 want to take anything away from the applicant who
7 might actually want to address --

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Right.

9 MS. DAVIS: -- any final closing statements.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So I am going to
11 allow Mr. Walter to make a statement and then we are
12 going to use the five minutes for the school.

13 MR. WALTER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.
14 I have about 20 seconds of information, hopefully
15 less. I think that what we're talking about today
16 can be accomplished fairly easily by just a slight
17 tweak in the rules to tighten up the process, would
18 be my suggestion. Thank you for indulging me.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you.

20 Okay. So now we'll go ahead and have five
21 minutes for the school.

22 MS. TORANTO: First and foremost, I'd like to
23 thank Superintendent Poore. I appreciate you not
24 saying anything negative about Einstein Charter
25 School. I have much respect for that.

1 And to clarify, Einstein is looking forward in
2 the future to opening three schools in Arkansas, not
3 per se Little Rock. So I wanted to clarify that as
4 well.

5 I do want to say time is of the essence. That's
6 the urgency that Einstein Charter School has. How
7 long do we have to wait? I know our students in New
8 Orleans waited way too long and we've proven that
9 they were capable of achieving. So how long does
10 Little Rock, how long does Arkansas have to wait for
11 school improvement, our school students to increase
12 student achievement? How many -- how much time are
13 we going to waste of these children? One minute
14 wasted is a minute we never get back for our
15 students. So we're going to allow another generation
16 -- while everyone is trying to figure out what to do,
17 we're going to allow another generation to become
18 uneducated adults? How many generations -- and I'm
19 referring basically to our city; how many generations
20 do we have to have that aren't educated before we get
21 it right? How many? I take that seriously. And so,
22 yes, you're showing gains, but there's a sense of
23 urgency.

24 I also want to say that we started out with our
25 flagship school -- and if you don't mind, I'd like to

1 share some more information about us, if that's okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: You still have a little
3 over three minutes.

4 MS. TORANTO: Okay. I would like to say that we
5 started out with our flagship school -- the school
6 district closed because of its failing scores pre-
7 Katrina. We opened that school in 2006, a
8 predominantly failing school. The diversity there is
9 -- we educate 50% of the ELL population in our city
10 in our schools. I would have to say that that school
11 achieved a B school performance score because of the
12 implementation of our instructional program, plus our
13 support network that we provide our children. Our
14 first expansion -- we were the first school in the
15 state of Louisiana to expand into a second school and
16 still maintain our B school performance score with an
17 underserved population, educating 50% of the city's
18 ELL population. Our instructional model withstood
19 the expansion of over 1,000 additional students
20 coming from failing schools from throughout our city.
21 Our school performance -- and I want to be upfront --
22 our school performance score dropped from the B to a
23 C. Some people thought we were tanked, going to
24 tank, but when you take on that many children in such
25 a short timeframe -- I am very proud of the fact that

1 our children and our instructional model withstood
2 the influx of 1,000 additional underserved children
3 into our four schools. Our trajectory is up. Our
4 goal is an A. There's no reason why we cannot
5 achieve that. We have excellent staff, a child-
6 focused mission, and we relentless. Our name is on
7 it.

8 So at this time I do want to thank you for
9 giving us the opportunity to participate, and
10 everyone else that's in this room that is in
11 attendance. That just demonstrates the interest in
12 the schools in Little Rock. So thank you very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. At this time we
14 will move to Panel asking questions. So it looks
15 like Dr. Owoh is ready to start, so I'm going to let
16 Dr. Owoh begin asking questions.

17 DR. OWOH: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a
18 clarifying question -- this current application is
19 just for one pre-K/8 school or the three, just for
20 clarification?

21 MS. TORANTO: This is for one. Actually, we're
22 going to end up with our one pre-K --

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I'm sorry; if you can
24 speak in the microphone since we are live-streaming.
25 Thank you.

1 MS. TORANTO: The application -- when we're
2 fully built-out it will be one pre-K to 8 school.
3 That's what we're going for now. We're an
4 organization -- actually, we're going to start off
5 with building it up from K to 3. We don't believe in
6 having all children descend at one time; we believe
7 in doing it the correct way. So we will go ahead and
8 do K to 3 and add a school -- a grade every year
9 until we go to 8th grade.

10 The expansion -- when I refer to having three
11 schools total, I'm not going to go ahead and do that
12 until I prove that we can provide those results that
13 we all expect.

14 DR. OWOH: The next question is about your
15 waivers that you've requested --

16 MS. TORANTO: Yes.

17 DR. OWOH: -- or proposed. What levels of
18 support, considering that some of these, if the
19 waivers are granted, will be non-licensed educators
20 -- what levels of support will you provide your
21 counselors, teachers, administrators who have not had
22 those teacher prep or preparation or admin.
23 preparation programs?

24 MS. TORANTO: We provide our teachers -- our new
25 teachers who aren't certified return to us way before

1 school starts to start intensive professional
2 development and instruction. They're also usually in
3 a teacher program to obtain their certification, just
4 like they would be here -- an official teacher
5 program. We have teachNOLA at home. I understand
6 that's a novice program here for noncertified
7 personnel. So in addition to the training that they
8 will receive they will also obtain their
9 certification through a highly qualified teaching
10 program.

11 DR. OWOH: Okay.

12 MS. TORANTO: And they will have one year to get
13 their license.

14 DR. OWOH: Okay.

15 MR. WALTER: I'm sorry; may I add something real
16 quick to follow-up to --

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: You are recognized.

18 MR. WALTER: -- Dr. Owoh? Thank you. The APSRC
19 also runs a novice teacher's program which will
20 certainly be available to Einstein. And they will
21 participate in state programs as well in that area
22 too, to back what Dr. Toranto is saying.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Do you have any
24 additional --

25 DR. OWOH: I have one more.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

2 DR. OWOH: In reference to your special
3 education identification process, your application
4 did mention the referral process or team. Are there
5 any measures or initiatives before that referral team
6 receives those students to kind of alleviate any
7 over-identification of special education students?

8 MS. TORANTO: Absolutely.

9 DR. OWOH: If you can expound on that? Thank
10 you.

11 MS. TORANTO: What we do is, first of all, we
12 need to -- our non-negotiable is we need to know each
13 child as an individual. Our principals are supposed
14 to be at that door every morning greeting our
15 children. Documentation, documentation,
16 intervention, positive behavior intervention support,
17 strategies -- our whole team works very hard to
18 insure that we have provided everything in every way
19 that we possibly can to insure student success. And
20 I'm going to get straight to the point, if you don't
21 mind -- we're not into labeling children and we're
22 not into, "Oh, my goodness, that child, you know, is
23 this." No, we're not. We look to identify any kinds
24 of concerns that we may have with that child and
25 address them immediately with support so that

1 children can -- that child can flourish and thrive.
2 We believe that our children can succeed. And I'm
3 going to go back to our special education as well.
4 We also -- those that we have in SPED -- we also know
5 that every child has a gift, including those children
6 that are in special education, and it's our job to
7 find that gift. And I can say at this time we have
8 children that are identified for SPED that attend --
9 that are in special education receiving services that
10 are also children that are in talented and the arts,
11 theater, and music. Every child has that gift. And
12 regardless of what your classification is we're going
13 to find it and provide.

14 DR. OWOH: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez,
16 would you like to ask questions at this time or --

17 DR. HERNANDEZ: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

19 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. I've got just a couple of
20 questions. The first one just refers to -- in your
21 packet, according to finance, I know that you've
22 addressed just a couple of things I want to point out
23 in your budget just for -- maybe you can elaborate a
24 little bit further. But in your application you have
25 about 280 students that you're reflecting as

1 receiving NSLA funds, which is our poverty money, out
2 of the 300 in the initial year. Do you feel like
3 that is a good solid number?

4 MS. TORANTO: A good solid number to operate the
5 school with?

6 DR. HERNANDEZ: Well -- and why I'm asking that
7 is your overall budget has kind of, I would say, a
8 razor-thin margin as far as what you expect to have
9 in extra funds next year. And so one question is it
10 may be -- I know in Louisiana and Texas -- I was a
11 former teacher in Louisiana, in New Orleans
12 specifically, so I kind of understand their finances.
13 I was pre-Katrina, so --

14 MS. TORANTO: Okay.

15 DR. HERNANDEZ: I guess I just -- I have a
16 little bit of concern in seeing that as part of your
17 numbers you have almost -- you know -- over 90% of
18 the kids reflected as being NSLA kids, and sometimes
19 that's not proven to work out sometimes. So that's
20 just one cautionary thing I would state.

21 The other, we got yesterday the utilization
22 agreement for Garland and it reflected a 12% amount
23 of foundation funding, which is about \$244,000, but
24 in the budget it has about \$200,000. So there's a
25 couple of places there that cause me concern in your

1 first year. So it was just kind of how do you -- how
2 will you react to that, I guess?

3 MS. TORANTO: I want to say, as we all know,
4 budgets are living documents and as I stated before
5 that children are our priority and that, budgets
6 being living, we will adjust it as necessary to
7 insure that our programs -- that our children receive
8 what they deserve. I must say I have to thank the
9 Walton Foundation and Ms. Smith for the facility
10 utilization and I'm looking forward to working with
11 her as we start discussing the lease for Garland.
12 And so that will be a process that we will be
13 undertaking once we determine -- once you-all
14 determine if we're authorized or not. But I do want
15 to say thank you very much.

16 DR. HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Wilson.

18 MR. WILSON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'll
19 try to scoot a little closer to the mic. Really my
20 question may be directed most to Einstein officials
21 and Mr. Poore. Recently, I saw publicized a study by
22 elements or folks connected with the State Board of
23 Education who were appointed to make a study or
24 recommendations concerning Little Rock schools. One
25 of those -- one of their major points was to

1 encourage collaboration or cooperation or
2 communication at least between the charter schools
3 and traditional public schools. My question to you,
4 Ms. Einstein --

5 MS. TORANTO: Ms. Einstein, I wish I was
6 Einstein.

7 MR. WILSON: Is Einstein as an applicant
8 prepared to reach out or communicate with the
9 traditional public schools to the extent that that's
10 possible to do? It may or may not be in your model,
11 but the paper that I referred to made a lot of sense
12 in that it encouraged both charter schools and
13 traditional public schools to communicate at least
14 and, to the extent that they can, keep an eye on the
15 kids first. What's your thought about that?

16 MS. TORANTO: I'm glad you asked that question,
17 Mr. Wilson. No school can operate in isolation. We
18 tend to partner with our community. We intend to
19 work closely with Superintendent Poore. We intend to
20 work extremely closely with the Arkansas Department
21 of Education and acquire partners throughout this
22 community to make sure that true collaboration in the
23 best interest of the children is always first and
24 foremost. You know, we believe that. And also to
25 collaborate with other charter schools. And where we

1 are they have a charter school organization where
2 charter leaders do get together and collaborate about
3 best practices, keeping up with laws, regulations,
4 policies, and so-forth. So it is important to
5 collaborate in the educational field, no different
6 than attorneys and no different than doctors who
7 collaborate. So, absolutely. We're not
8 isolationists. We will not isolate ourselves from
9 community and those other entities that we've
10 mentioned.

11 MR. WILSON: I appreciate that. And I'd put the
12 same question to Mr. Poore, if you don't mind.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I think Mr. Wilson
14 would like for Mr. Poore to respond.

15 SUPT. POORE: Thank you, Mr. Wilson. Just a
16 couple of comments. One is that I do agree with the
17 report in saying that collaboration is essential.
18 And one of the things that I would share is what the
19 district is doing the form of collaboration. As an
20 example, our Bright Futures program is not limited to
21 supporting families who are from just the Little Rock
22 School District; it's opened up to all. That's a
23 collaborative partnership between Goodwill, the City
24 of Little Rock, and Little Rock School District to
25 take care of student needs that come up that could

1 impact learning that's happening away from the school
2 environment. And we've not limited that in any kind
3 of form or fashion.

4 The second type of collaboration that's already
5 existing between the school district, Mr. Bacon is a
6 professor that helps prepare students for being
7 educational leaders; that's tied to the University of
8 Arkansas. And we promote that, even though he's the
9 professor of that. You know, we don't have an ego
10 tied to that.

11 The other thing that I would share with my
12 second of time on this, Mr. Wilson, is that that
13 report also shares a lot of other things. One is
14 being strategic and being -- looking at exactly what
15 the numbers are of students that we have to serve
16 within this community. And I hope that my facility
17 planning document does help shed a little bit of
18 light in terms of the number of students that are
19 available within each board zone for the Little Rock
20 school system.

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And, Mr. Davis, go
22 ahead. Yes.

23 MR. DAVIS: Good morning. My name is Dan Davis;
24 I'm the Chief Strategy Officer. I don't know if you
25 can hear me. This mic is a little bit short.

1 I think Ms. Toranto might be understating the
2 amount of collaboration we do with the New Orleans
3 Parish school district. In the past five years we
4 have written massive federal grants that raised over
5 four million dollars. We have improved school
6 literacy across easily -- this is awkward -- we have
7 improved school literacy with projects that affect
8 upwards of several thousand students. We have worked
9 on school climate to reduce office disciplinary
10 referrals. I currently am very attuned to what Mr.
11 Poore was saying. I serve on the district-wide
12 planning committee for capacity decisions. Ms.
13 Toranto serves on the school accountability
14 committee. We are active participants.

15 I also wanted to point out that in terms of
16 community partnerships we currently partner with
17 Volunteers of America to provide three square meals a
18 day to our students, both breakfast, lunch and
19 dinner. We regularly conduct salary studies of area
20 charter schools to understand the compensation
21 structure. Our salary is consistently higher. And
22 there was one more point I wanted to make --

23 In addition, Einstein will provide
24 transportation. So any issues that are being raised
25 about lack of capacity in the immediate area will be

1 address. We intend to provide a high-quality option
2 to all families in Pulaski County. That being said,
3 we are targeting underserved communities and we've
4 implemented strategic marketing plans to grow the
5 thousand students that Ms. Toronto was speaking about
6 in a four-year period and maintain a demographic
7 balance of approximately 50% African American, 17%
8 Asian, about 27% Hispanic, and 1% Caucasian, and 90%
9 free and reduced lunch. That being said, at the same
10 time our population is still 50% of the ELL
11 population in New Orleans Parish. So when we say
12 that we are trying to work to improve the community
13 and provide an urban school, we have tremendous
14 experience at doing this. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you. Ms. Newton, do
16 you have questions?

17 MS. NEWTON: Dr. Hernandez' question about the
18 budget as related to the foundation and facilities
19 funding cleared up one question. I was -- noticed
20 through the application review, all the applications,
21 one of the things that stuck out was the parent
22 liaison position. And I'd like to ask you how you
23 think that contributes to the overall success of your
24 students' achievement? And what is that exactly?

25 MS. TORANTO: As I said before, all of our

1 parents love their children as much as we love our
2 children. We need to have them engaged and involved.
3 Our parent liaison not only supports our PTO in
4 arranging meetings, our parent liaison also works
5 with our school leaders to hold monthly meetings
6 called Muffins for Moms and Doughnuts for Dads so
7 they can have casual -- engaging casual --
8 discussions in a casual atmosphere at school. We're
9 also -- our parent liaison also works hand-in-hand
10 with our social worker to identify the needs of any
11 of our parents or children that may need uniforms,
12 supplies. And at times our parents are frantic
13 because they cannot pay their light bills, so our
14 team will go ahead and raise a few dollars amongst
15 each other and the staff -- it does not come out of
16 school funds whatsoever -- so we can support our
17 parents in that way. They trust us enough to share
18 that information with us. So that parent liaison
19 plays an important role.

20 In addition to that, we have nine translators on
21 staff, both -- that speak both Vietnamese and
22 Spanish. So all of our communications from the
23 parent liaison and our schools are translated in the
24 parent's native language, including our handbook, any
25 special education documents that parents have to

1 sign, or any document that parents have to sign. Our
2 translators are also in attendance at every single
3 meeting to provide oral translation, whether the
4 meeting is during regular school hours or held in the
5 evening or on weekends. So, effective communication
6 happens daily. We have an open-door policy at our
7 school where our parents can also come into our
8 school and speak with an administrator at any given
9 time, understanding that our parents who maybe work
10 in jobs that pay hourly wages and if we ask them to
11 come in when they're working it has an impact on
12 their income. So when they are available and they
13 just decide "let me go run to school and talk with
14 someone," even my door is open to our parents. They
15 have direct contact with me. If they want to email
16 me I am at our facilities every single day, except
17 for being here today with you.

18 And that will lead to another question that if I
19 am -- if we are selected to open a school in
20 Arkansas, you will see a lot of me here as well.

21 MS. NEWTON: My final question has to do with
22 the local board composition. Would you talk to us a
23 little bit about that?

24 MS. TORANTO: About the local board?

25 MS. NEWTON: Local board composition.

1 MS. TORANTO: The local board will be comprised
2 of citizens of Arkansas. We believe that's very
3 important. Our national board will have the
4 wherewithal and the authority to go ahead and seat
5 our local board. They will have authority over the
6 oversight of that board. They are to be mission
7 aligned, like I believe I said before, and follow all
8 laws and procedures. But they will be here; they
9 will be Arkansas residents, and specifically I would
10 like them to be, you know, Little Rock, Arkansas
11 residents. They will be providing the oversight in
12 finance. We will have, like I said, a business
13 manager at the school. They will be providing
14 oversight in the operations of school, but will not
15 be involved in the day-to-day operations. I will be
16 the one that will evaluate the Head-of-School, as I
17 said before, and report to the board. I have very
18 good relationships with our national board because
19 I'm very transparent and honest, as so is they. They
20 are, and it's very important to have that
21 relationship so we can discuss issues without
22 personal agendas as to what's best for the students
23 that we serve.

24 MR. DAVIS: And good morning. The bylaws in
25 Einstein for Little Rock will require that we have

1 someone with teaching -- a certified teacher, someone
2 with legal experience, and someone with finance
3 experience. In terms of our current board, it is --
4 they're all Louisiana residents. We believe in
5 having multicultural representation and community
6 representation, and to that extent it is 60% people
7 of color and 40% members of the community. By 40%
8 members of the community, they live in the
9 subdivision that we operate in.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Turner, do you
11 have any questions?

12 MS. TURNER: I don't have any questions. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: No questions? Okay.

15 MS. NEWTON: If she doesn't have questions, can
16 I have her questions?

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes, ma'am, you sure can.

18 MS. NEWTON: I have a question, and this is just
19 for information purposes. I'm just curious, how long
20 did it take for you to see significant or measurable
21 increase in students from the time they entered your
22 school? Was it evident in a year's time? Did you
23 see the progression toward improvement, significant
24 enough to note, or how long does it take to generally
25 see some improvement?

1 MS. TORANTO: Usually, on average it took us
2 about three years. However, I'm going to say to you
3 that -- and I did share this with you that when
4 you're starting off with a baseline in its first year
5 as a 60 SPS there's only one way to go and that's up.
6 And that's the year that we grew 20 points to achieve
7 a school performance score of an 80. Every year
8 thereafter we grew until we achieved a B school
9 performance score, and then, like I said, before we
10 dropped to a C. But let me say this too, we delve
11 into data. I monitor data. I progress monitor data.
12 So, you know, if you're talking individual student
13 achievement as opposed to the whole school, we can
14 see individual increases in scores on a daily basis.
15 As a school in its entirety we see that every time we
16 have our benchmark testing. And let me say the good
17 thing about what charter schools do is that if there
18 is a problem I can -- our team can fix it. So if we
19 have children that are having -- that are presenting
20 issues with learning something we can go ahead and
21 immediately say, "You know what, we need a smaller
22 group of instruction here. We need to get somebody
23 in here to teach these kids the basics that they did
24 not learn years ago," and that's what we've done.
25 I've had a class of 10 fourth graders before with a

1 teacher and a paraprofessional to get them up-to-
2 speed from schools that basically failed them. And
3 so those children were in intensive intervention with
4 a certified teacher and a para. And nobody can tell
5 me that's a waste of money, because it's not, because
6 our children's lives and future depends on it. So
7 there are all kinds of things that we do. But
8 usually it takes -- for us to move here, if we're
9 approved, you will see in approximately three years
10 -- you'll see increases in student achievement every
11 year, but you'll see real growth by the time of year-
12 three.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

14 MR. DAVIS: I just had one more comment I wanted
15 to make about Member Wilson's question. We are
16 deliberately stopping it at 8th grade. We look
17 forward to partnering with the Little Rock School
18 District as a feeder school for their high school.
19 We have lots of experience at this. We were K-8
20 operators until 2014, so almost nine years. And
21 we've regularly held discussions with principals to
22 figure out what our kids needed that they weren't
23 having in order to be prepared for 9th grade.

24 MS. TORANTO: Well, basically our children --
25 our parents wanted us to add a high school to keep

1 them in the community. So we went from two pre-K to
2 8s to now building our high school, so that's what
3 we've done.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

5 MS. TORANTO: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Hernandez.

7 DR. HERNANDEZ: I have a comment and then a
8 question. The comment is I really do appreciate
9 something you said earlier about having the very low
10 tolerance for adult problems getting in the way of
11 kids' education. I think that's an important thing
12 to vocalize.

13 The question is, I have a kindergartner and a
14 second grader and a fourth grader. And one of the
15 things -- I know it's in your presentation and you
16 weren't able to get to that. But can you kind of
17 tell me what would -- what would it look like as a
18 day in the life of a student in K-3 or however at
19 Einstein Schools, to help kind of bring that out of
20 the presentation?

21 MS. TORANTO: The moment they get dropped off at
22 school they will be supervised. We are to supervise
23 students at every minute of every day. Our parents
24 trust us with the loves of their lives, and we take
25 that very seriously. So as soon as your little

1 people get off the bus or out of your car, they're
2 going to be smiling, looking forward to coming back
3 to school. They'll be greeted by the school leader
4 or an administrator at the door, saying, "How are you
5 doing? You look very nice today," and pay them a
6 compliment and you're ready to learn. They will go
7 into the cafeteria and eat breakfast, and you will
8 have teachers that are actively supervising our
9 students and engaging in positive talk with our
10 students, looking forward to the day. The children
11 will then be supervised as they're dismissed to their
12 classroom and their teachers will be ready and
13 prepared to start the learning process. Instruction
14 starts on time. The instruction that they will be
15 delivered is individualized differentiated, the use
16 of technology, and to engage our students in the
17 learning process. Our students will be respected at
18 all times. Our adults will model positive behavior.
19 If I hear "that boy," "that girl," I'll have a
20 vacancy posted in no time. So it is a positive
21 environment. They will go through block scheduling,
22 90 minutes of each, because we believe we need to
23 give them time, our teachers time to allow for hands-
24 on projects to go with the lessons that are being
25 implemented. Then they will go to lunch. Currently,

1 as Dan stated, we partner with DOA. We are our own
2 school food authority, we manage that, because we
3 want to make sure that the food vendor we select is
4 of high quality. There are no cans that come into
5 our school, so your child will have a delicious
6 lunch, as they did a delicious breakfast. Then they
7 will go into exploratories. If they have any time
8 throughout the day as the schedule is made, they will
9 participate either in theater, art, music, P.E.,
10 Spanish, foreign language in 4th grade and on up.
11 And afterschool activities include debate, robotics,
12 all kinds of wonderful afterschool activities. By
13 the time your child gets home she's going to want to
14 come back the next day or not leave. We have
15 extended days where children are not forced to stay
16 but actually in our extended days we offer all kinds
17 of other programs, including sports. You know, we
18 not only are proud of our academics -- and our debate
19 team, this year our coach -- this past year he wanted
20 to go ahead and have a volleyball team and soccer
21 team. And my non-negotiable is my children don't go
22 out in rags and they are going to compete like
23 they've been playing all of their lives. So they
24 looked so cute in their brand-new uniforms in their
25 first year. They competed like they've played all of

1 their lives, and they won the championship both in
2 soccer and in volleyball their first time out. And
3 we participate in the Tulane debate series, if your
4 child so chooses to participate in debate. We have
5 won debates, including beating out selective
6 admission schools that are just the opposite of open
7 admission schools. If your child is interested in
8 spelling, on two occasions we've had 10 participate
9 in the Scripps spelling bee in Washington, DC, after
10 winning state. If your child is interested in art,
11 our students have won state art contests. If your
12 child is interested in dance, we have a diverse dance
13 troupe that has performed at national conventions
14 that have -- that are steeped in the Asian --
15 traditional Asian dances, African American dances,
16 and Spanish dances. And actually they've performed
17 at the National Charter Convention held in New
18 Orleans and they've also performed at other schools
19 and events throughout our city.

20 So there's a lot of opportunity for your child
21 to learn in a very positive environment, receive a
22 competitive education, and actually to be appreciated
23 for who he or she is while at school and respected.

24 Any -- well, because in addition to the three
25 meals they receive we provide two healthy snacks a

1 day as well.

2 DR. HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Do you want to --

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: I know we've got some things we
5 need to talk about with the --

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And I do have a couple of
7 questions.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: Yeah. Before --

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: I think we're on the same kind
11 of the waiver conversation till the end, so if
12 anybody has other questions --

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And I just had a
14 couple of questions that I wanted to get some
15 feedback on. One is -- let me get to the right page
16 here. On page 12 of your application is where you
17 discuss your goals, how you're going to be measuring
18 success regarding student achievement. So you've got
19 several different measures that you'll be looking at
20 in determining student success. But can you talk to
21 me a little bit about how those goals were arrived
22 at?

23 MS. TORANTO: Uh-huh.

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And as we're also thinking
25 about the state transitioning to a new accountability

1 plan how these align or may need to change over time?

2 So would you just talk to me briefly about that?

3 MS. TORANTO: I can address that easily first
4 because --

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

6 MS. TORANTO: -- the state of Louisiana is
7 working very hard, and we all appreciate everyone's
8 effort with all Departments of Education and
9 understand that things do change. We prepare for
10 that and when things do change -- I mean in
11 Louisiana, I believe, yeah, we received our science
12 standards during the year and so we just hunkered
13 down and created our curriculum map and do what we
14 need to do and unpack the standards for our teachers
15 -- with our teachers to insure that instruction is
16 with fidelity and it is aligned. So that's an easy,
17 easy thing.

18 We love data; okay? And so basically -- and Dan
19 can actually talk a little bit about this too. We
20 don't arbitrarily set goals for students. We use
21 this data -- number one, it's two-fold. Several data
22 points allow us to determine if all of it aligns;
23 correct? That's one of the things we look at. We
24 also look at how report card grades align with data.
25 If I have a child that has an A on their report card

1 and they're approaching basic or basic on data, I
2 have a problem in the classroom; it's not being
3 rigorous enough. If I have a child that exceeds the
4 12th grade on Achieve, but who's on the 8th grade
5 level and he's working beyond the 12th grade and he
6 has a C in reading in the classroom, then I have a
7 problem. So when you're looking at setting goals,
8 when you're looking at interventions, when you're
9 looking at questions that aren't consistent -- when
10 you're looking at data and it's not consistent,
11 that's how you identify problem areas within your
12 institution. However, to set our goals, when we come
13 to Arkansas, if we are privileged to serve your
14 children here, we will look at performance data from
15 all of your children from the previous years, every
16 bit of data that we can find on them that pertains to
17 their academic levels, and our goals will be set by
18 that. I will not set goals for students that I have
19 zero data on. If that answers your question?

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I think so. Because part
21 of it was driven by several of these goals were set
22 in comparison to Little Rock schools, not set in
23 relation to a standard. So I think that helps --

24 MS. TORANTO: Yeah.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- understand a little

1 more why they were. But I also realize too in the
2 time of transition to new assessments that there will
3 be, as far as the expected growth of students, the
4 expectation for long-term progress.

5 MS. TORANTO: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: According to a new
7 accountability system, you know, the school would
8 recognize there will still be those measures that
9 will be in place as part of the state --

10 MS. TORANTO: Oh, absolutely.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- accountability. So --

12 MS. TORANTO: Oh, absolutely.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- I just wanted to have
14 the chance to discuss that. And I do think I
15 remember reading that your grading scale, you will --
16 and maybe you need to -- what your grading scale --
17 you're going to have a higher grading scale than what
18 the current grading scale is here? Or are you
19 planning to do an alternate assessment for student
20 grades? Could you explain that?

21 MS. TORANTO: Go ahead, Dan.

22 MR. DAVIS: Could you clarify your question?
23 I'm sorry.

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Well, let me make sure
25 here. Okay. I think page 40 of the application --

1 let me go back and just make sure that -- okay. And
2 that's actually part of one of the waivers. Okay.
3 And I think this has to do with the Summit platform,
4 so --

5 MS. TORANTO: The Summit platform is totally
6 different than that. That is personalized
7 individualized learning and it is a national program.
8 So the grading for Summit, you will receive an A, B,
9 C that is falling within the parameters of what our
10 grading scale is basically. Currently, for students
11 who have not achieved that A, B, C, get an I, but
12 also there are percentages that are distributed for
13 that so we can also put that in our scale.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And that will be for
15 middle grades, is that correct?

16 MS. TORANTO: Ma'am?

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Middle grades, is that --

18 MR. DAVIS: It will be for middle grades. As
19 you know, Summit is competency based progression.
20 And we are currently working with our partners at the
21 Pasadena Independent School District to figure out
22 how do you align that to a regular grade over time.

23 MS. TORANTO: Texas, Pasadena.

24 MR. DAVIS: Because, for instance, a favorable
25 grade in Summit would be 25% in October because that

1 means you are 25% across the curriculum. And since
2 students can take assessments multiple times it means
3 that using the traditional grading system of A, B and
4 C based on percentage right really doesn't work. So
5 we don't have a definitive answer for you there, but
6 we are still -- I mean we are tackling that this
7 month. That's the best answer we can give you.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Do any panel
9 members have any questions about the Summit
10 personalized learning platform? No? Okay. All
11 right. Thank you.

12 And then my other question was related to your
13 child nutrition program and I noticed that in your
14 application you do plan to have a vendor -- or to
15 contract with -- to procure services for that. Also,
16 just checking to make sure that you will have someone
17 who's in charge of overseeing the local food services
18 program within the school?

19 MS. TORANTO: Yes, absolutely.

20 MR. DAVIS: That would be handled by our
21 business manager.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Business manager. Okay.
23 All right. I think that addresses my questions for
24 right now.

25 Okay. Did you have questions that you wanted to

1 go over with some waiver questions?

2 DR. HERNANDEZ: Yes. If we're ready, we can
3 start.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

5 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. We want to talk a little
6 bit about some waivers. I know we'll need our team,
7 probably Ms. Davis. I see Mr. Tripp already got up
8 and is ready to go. There are some outstanding
9 questions concerning some of the waivers and we'll
10 just go down the list. The first one is regarding
11 school boards. Ms. Davis, you may -- I know what
12 they're asking for in their waiver, what they're
13 trying to get, but basically what they've asked for
14 may not allow them to do exactly what they want to
15 do. So if you can help us clarify that?

16 MS. DAVIS: One, did everybody see the comments
17 concerning the waivers in their additional
18 documentation? Okay, I just wanted to make sure.

19 You know, I kind of take the approach that they
20 need to tell me what they need to do rather than me
21 addressing that. I know that they've said that they
22 wanted this exception. The only one that they must
23 have an exception from is 6-13-622, which contains a
24 constitutional amendment requirement. So if they
25 would like to modify that to include all of 6-13-601,

1 with the exception of 622, I'm okay with that because
2 that's kind of typically what most of our charter
3 applicants do.

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Walter, is that good
5 with the applicant?

6 MR. WALTER: Yes. Yes, we accept that. Thank
7 you.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. The next one
9 going down is the bidding. I know that there were
10 some -- there was a waiver sought for bidding, and
11 since then there was a -- there's been a law change
12 that raised the commodity threshold from \$10,000 to
13 \$20,000. So in their response they said that they
14 were willing to raise that to \$20,000. And so I'm --
15 if they're okay with the \$20,000 threshold I don't
16 see a need for a waiver. So I'm just trying to see
17 what -- if they're willing to just follow state law
18 when it comes to commodity purchasing or if there is
19 something they're trying to waive?

20 MR. WALTER: Thank you, Dr. Hernandez. There
21 was two things really contained in that response:
22 one, an acknowledgement that the law had changed and
23 to correct our original verbiage where we said
24 \$10,000 and make that \$20,000. Secondly, we do wish
25 to retain that waiver request. We understand that

1 the amount has been doubled, but the reason the
2 request was sought is for Einstein's business
3 practices in Louisiana. They've operated under a
4 system, a waiver system such as what they're
5 requesting here for bids and commodities, and wanted
6 to be able to have that same flexibility in Arkansas.
7 Obviously, they will continue to use best business
8 practices and always look at the best value for the
9 school and not try and circumvent anything as far as
10 getting the best possible value for the school.

11 DR. HERNANDEZ: So they are requesting that
12 waiver?

13 MR. WALTER: Yes, sir.

14 DR. HERNANDEZ: I guess the question is probably
15 -- and this may be for discussion with the panel
16 members; this hasn't been a waiver that's been granted
17 before. And just for clarification, Jennifer, if we
18 were to -- we can't -- in approving or not approving
19 this application we can't say we'll approve
20 everything but this specific waiver? Or can we do
21 that or do we have to have --

22 MS. DAVIS: You can do that.

23 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- ask them to modify the
24 waiver?

25 MS. DAVIS: You can do that or you can ask them

1 to go ahead and just withdraw it from their
2 application to begin with. But you can grant that
3 with the understanding that that waiver is not
4 included.

5 DR. HERNANDEZ: And so that may be just -- if
6 there's any discussion among panel members how they
7 feel about that particular waiver.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And I guess as a point of
9 clarification if the waiver is something that has
10 already been addressed by law for the -- because of
11 the amount, why are we still requesting the waiver?

12 DR. HERNANDEZ: Tripp, tell me if I'm wrong on
13 this, but in the request -- the request was asking to
14 waive the \$10,000. And since the law was changed to
15 \$20,000, you're just asking for a waiver of the
16 commodity bidding law, regardless of what the amount
17 is?

18 MR. WALTER: That's correct. And if I can just
19 briefly supplement what I said a minute ago, to
20 reiterate, I mean this is -- as you all know, there's
21 a CMO involved, Einstein CMO. So this is part of the
22 business model, again, in Louisiana. It's something
23 that's well entrenched during their time there, has
24 been very successful for them, and they wanted to
25 have the flexibility to carry that over too.

1 Secondly, I understand what ADE Legal has said as far
2 as this waiver not being held by any charter
3 currently, and that's correct. If memory serves
4 correctly though from when I was over at the
5 Department, I think the waiver has been granted in
6 the past, perhaps not recently but I think it has
7 been held several years ago.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And I think then our
9 concern -- or the discussion would need to be that
10 should this waiver be granted to the charter then the
11 waiver would also be available then for any school
12 district that would -- under Act 1240 would be
13 eligible for waivers. So in essence the commodity
14 bidding waiver would be pretty wide open, so it is
15 something to consider. Am I correct, Ms. Davis, in
16 that then?

17 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So Mr. Walter's
19 question about whether or not it has been granted in
20 the past, I mean is that something that's going to
21 need to be checked into?

22 MS. DAVIS: Currently -- any active current
23 charter that is open at this time does not have this
24 waiver. There have been several that have requested
25 it. Now, again, you know, I've only been with the

1 Department for three years, so I can't speak what,
2 you know, took place a long time ago. But any
3 charter that's current and open right now it does not
4 have this waiver. It has been requested, but it has
5 been denied. You know, if there were other ones that
6 had it that have since closed I can't speak to that.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: Ms. Davis, a question for you;
9 sorry. In reference to the Act 1240 waiver piece, if
10 we were to do this would it -- it wouldn't
11 automatically apply those; anybody that wanted to
12 take advantage would have to come before the State
13 Board to get that specific commodity part waived. Is
14 that accurate?

15 MS. DAVIS: That is correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Well, and it would have to
17 -- it would have to be within those -- that would be
18 eligible for that waiver --

19 MS. DAVIS: Right. It would have --

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- because of having
21 students --

22 MS. DAVIS: Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- from their district
24 attend this charter; so I mean it's not just anybody
25 and everybody. So I want to make sure that I'm not

1 misspeaking there.

2 MS. DAVIS: Right. It's anyone who has that --

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: But it would become a
4 waiver that, you know, could potentially become more
5 widespread. And since the Act in 2017 raised the
6 threshold to \$20,000, you know, it just -- there has
7 been some consideration there, but not completely
8 doing away with the threshold. So I just think we
9 need to keep that in mind, but again that's for the
10 Panel's consideration.

11 MR. WALTER: I'm sorry; may I just make one
12 final clarifying point, Dr. Pfeffer?

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: You're recognized.

14 MR. WALTER: Thank you. Just as the verbiage in
15 the request indicates, the effect of granting the
16 waiver would be to raise the threshold to \$50,000.
17 Okay. So it's not -- I didn't want to leave the
18 Panel with the impression that it was just a complete
19 removal of any cap or requirement. So the net effect
20 here with the passage of new legislation would be
21 asking for a waiver from the piece from \$20,000 to
22 \$50,000. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And thank you for that
24 clarification.

25 And, Ms. Davis -- and for the -- and the other

1 explanation here, using a state-approved vendor,
2 obtain a minimum of three quotes, would that apply
3 then --

4 MS. DAVIS: Yes, if that's what they've agreed
5 to.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- for any future
7 consideration?

8 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: I did have a question for the
11 applicant also. I noticed in their application they
12 talked about a local purchasing threshold of \$2,000.
13 Does that mean that they're able to locally approve
14 \$2,000 and then it has to go to your national board
15 if it's above that? Or how does that work?

16 MR. DAVIS: Can you tell me where you see that?

17 DR. HERNANDEZ: It was in your -- let me go back
18 and find it. There was a section about governance
19 and purchasing that talked about your local authority
20 being \$2,000.

21 MR. DAVIS: So the local authority for \$2,000 is
22 for school level purchases, like field trips, buses,
23 that kind of stuff. Anything over that is purchased
24 through the central office and we obtain three
25 quotes.

1 DR. HERNANDEZ: So what --

2 MR. DAVIS: Over time we were looking to change
3 that authority to Arkansas. But in the beginning we
4 wanted to start with small pieces and build capacity
5 over time.

6 MS. TORANTO: And with that \$2,000, that's basic
7 operating for day-to-day operations of the school
8 which will be fully accounted for with the protocols
9 that we do have currently in place that we will share
10 with, if we're so blessed to open a school in
11 Arkansas, with the administration, the business
12 manager, and the school leader in Arkansas, with
13 regard to the protocol for accounting for every
14 dollar that is spent in those schools.

15 MR. DAVIS: I would also point out that in
16 Louisiana we've been operating with audits with no
17 material findings since Shawn became the CEO. I
18 don't know if we had them before then. But that was
19 almost, what, 2008, so this would be our tenth school
20 year starting. This is not -- we regularly operate
21 at the margin, as you mentioned; 86% of our salary --
22 of our budget is in HR -- typically, 86% to 83%. So
23 we are really under a cost-efficiency. And,
24 accordingly, like the studies Shawn referenced or
25 mentioned about being number three in the city in

1 terms of where our money goes into the classrooms, we
2 don't have a lot of administrators. We're about -- a
3 comparable organization has about twice as much in
4 our town. And so the point for asking for this
5 waiver is that for efficiency -- because we do follow
6 all the best practices for businesses and for
7 purchasing, it's more to make sure that we have to be
8 able to make decisions after we've gone through the
9 steps relatively quickly.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: So I'm going to try to verbalize
11 what I think you're asking for and you tell me if I'm
12 wrong. So you're saying that -- you're asking for a
13 waiver of the commodity purchasing law to raise it
14 from \$20,000 to \$50,000?

15 MR. DAVIS: Correct.

16 DR. HERNANDEZ: But in between \$20,000 and
17 \$50,000 you're going to still seek three quotes, is
18 that --

19 MR. DAVIS: Yes.

20 DR. HERNANDEZ: Tripp, is that accurate? Is
21 that --

22 MR. DAVIS: I'm sorry; I don't --

23 MR. WALTER: I won't speak directly for them on
24 that point but I believe that was probably just an
25 example they provided, not perhaps a regular

1 practice. The whole idea, I think, is putting
2 together or implementing a purchasing program that
3 has the flexibility for them to seek various
4 different sources when necessary, again with the
5 whole idea to obtain the best value for the school.
6 And I'll let either Ms. Toranto or Mr. Davis correct
7 me if that's in error.

8 MS. TORANTO: For all of our purchases we shop
9 around to make sure we get the best price for the
10 product that we want.

11 MR. DAVIS: There are some services that we
12 purchase though that we shop around but finding three
13 quotes for is quite a challenge. We are a small
14 operation based in New Orleans and so we don't
15 necessarily get the same amount of hits. I can tell
16 you last year I ran three public bidding processes
17 for federal grant evaluation services and I got three
18 bids over a 10-month period. So what we are really
19 seeking to avoid is situations like that where we
20 have larger projects that are getting held up because
21 of not getting sufficient interest.

22 MS. TORANTO: And I also want to add, since he
23 did bring up the USDOE grant, we were one of many who
24 received the CSP funds, million dollar funds as a
25 designated high quality charter school for

1 replication. With those millions of dollars comes
2 also much welcome intense scrutiny as to how we spend
3 those funds and our whole operational procedures that
4 we fully welcome.

5 MR. DAVIS: And this is part of our business
6 plan that was wholeheartedly scored and adopted as
7 part of that grant. We scored the second highest in
8 the nation in the year we applied.

9 DR. HERNANDEZ: This is definitely discussion,
10 but I mean as far as waiving -- doing this particular
11 waiver, with it being -- going from a threshold from
12 \$20,000 to \$50,000, I don't have major heartburn as I
13 would if it was wide open. I know that that was a
14 thing during the legislative session that we really
15 worked hard as school superintendents trying to get
16 that threshold up as high as we could, because
17 nowadays it's more expensive to purchase things than
18 it was back when \$10,000 was set. So based on that
19 I'm not seeing any major issue there, but you may
20 have other ideas.

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Any thoughts or
22 comments from the Panel?

23 Okay. Do you want to go on down through the
24 waivers?

25 DR. HERNANDEZ: Jennifer, is there something --

1 MS. DAVIS: No, I just -- I needed some
2 clarification on this from the applicant. So they're
3 wanting to raise the threshold to \$50,000 and they
4 are going to obtain a minimum of three quotes, unless
5 it's from a sole provider, or use a state approved
6 vendor. But then they also say that they will obtain
7 bids for those purchase prices that meet or exceed
8 \$50,000 for construction contracts. So I just need
9 to know -- I mean I've heard what you've said, but
10 I'm still not clear. I just need to know at what
11 point are you going to be doing what, so if you can
12 just clarify that for me.

13 MR. DAVIS: That threshold that we seek would be
14 --

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Can you please
16 speak in the microphone?

17 MR. DAVIS: I'm sorry. That threshold we seek
18 would be \$50,000.

19 MS. DAVIS: And so there will be quotes on
20 everything afterwards, regardless --

21 MR. DAVIS: Regardless, yes.

22 MS. DAVIS: Thank you.

23 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. Moving on to the next one
24 --

25 MR. DAVIS: Sole source or --

1 MS. TORANTO: And that will be noted. So any
2 sole source over \$50,000 will be noted and
3 documentation will be provided.

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. The next item is in
5 regards to gifted and talented. It looks like there
6 was some -- there was a waiver sought there, but
7 there's some additional things that need to be
8 specific to ADE rules, in addition to the statutes
9 that were asked for waivers. I just want to confirm
10 that you're asking for everything you need to be
11 asking for.

12 MS. DAVIS: Yeah, it was included in their
13 additional documentation that they are requesting
14 that set of rules. And I'm okay with that.

15 DR. HERNANDEZ: So they are requesting that?

16 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

17 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. The last one is in
18 regards to curriculum. And I guess I just wasn't
19 clear on are they asking to be able to teach oral
20 communications in 8th grade and count it as a high
21 school class? Is that --

22 MS. DAVIS: That was the rationale that I
23 understood, in which point that they wouldn't need a
24 waiver because that's already allowed by law --

25 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

1 MS. DAVIS: -- with approval from the
2 Department.

3 DR. HERNANDEZ: So would they be rescinding
4 that, that waiver?

5 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

6 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

7 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

8 MR. WALTER: I'm sorry, Dr. Hernandez -- and,
9 again, as Ms. Davis has pointed out throughout, that
10 information should be in the additional information
11 that was submitted to you today.

12 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. Those were just some last
13 outstanding clarifications with the waivers, so I
14 think that's all we have right now for waivers,
15 unless there's other questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Panel Members, do
17 you have any additional questions or clarifications
18 needed?

19 Okay. All right. Ms. Davis, are there any
20 remaining issues regarding the application?

21 MS. DAVIS: I don't have any.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Has anyone signed
23 up for public comment that has not already had an
24 opportunity to speak?

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

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: No? All right. Well,
2 Panel, at this time we can make a decision to
3 approve, disapprove, or take the matter under
4 advisement regarding this charter. So if at this
5 time anyone has a motion we'll take a motion.

6 MS. NEWTON: I have a motion, but I wanted to --
7 a question.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

9 MS. NEWTON: Should the motion be a provisional
10 motion or --

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Davis, how do you want
12 us to handle that with regards to any motion and any
13 kind of approval or not?

14 MS. DAVIS: I think the motion would be as if
15 there was not an issue of provisional. But it would
16 end up being, if it was approved, a provisional
17 approval that we will decide at the end of the three
18 days. But the motion itself does not have to be
19 provisional.

20 MS. NEWTON: Okay. Madam Chair, then --

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Just a moment. Did
22 you have a question?

23 Okay. All right. Go ahead.

24 MS. NEWTON: With that explanation, then I make
25 a motion that the Einstein Charter School approval

1 for Little Rock be -- charter school application for
2 Little Rock be approved.

3 MR. WILSON: Second.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion
5 from Ms. Newton and a second from Mr. Williams [sic].

6 All those in favor say "aye."

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Any opposed?

9 Okay. Congratulations. Your charter has
10 conditional approval, pending -- Thursday we'll be
11 able to provide the final information. Okay.

12 MS. DAVIS: You'll need to state your reasons --

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes.

14 MS. DAVIS: -- and then we'll document that
15 you've been provided --

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes, I'm getting to that.

17 MS. DAVIS: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. You have all been
19 mailed a link and Mr. Wilson will be able to do that
20 as well. You've all been emailed a link to a
21 document. You'll need to record your vote and your
22 reason for your vote on that sheet and then we'll go
23 around and state our reasons for our votes.

24 MR. DAVIS: Thank you very much.

25 MS. TORANTO: Thank you very much. We muchly

1 appreciate it.

2 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And for those of you who
4 are wondering what we're doing, the purpose of this
5 document is for us to record the votes and to give
6 the Panel the opportunity to state reasons. This
7 provides good information if in the case there was a
8 review needed.

9 Okay. So we'll go around; if you could state
10 your reason. Dr. Hernandez.

11 DR. HERNANDEZ: I voted for the application
12 based on their history and reputation of providing
13 quality educational options. Also, I think they've
14 exhibited a good leadership model that will insure
15 high quality.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Newton.

17 MS. NEWTON: Excuse me?

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: If you'll just go ahead
19 and state the reason for your vote?

20 MS. NEWTON: My application -- my explanation is
21 the application was complete and identifies a
22 targeted group of students that will greatly benefit
23 from the program's elements.

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Owoh.

25 DR. OWOH: My decision for the approval was

1 because I really believe that parents should have the
2 option -- the opportunity to choose high quality
3 education for their individual students based on
4 those individual needs, their student needs.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Turner.

6 MS. TURNER: I voted for the application. The
7 application is complete and all concerns were
8 addressed.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And Mr. Wilson.

10 MR. WILSON: I just wrote "impressive track
11 record." That's mainly why I voted for it.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you. And,
13 again, congratulations.

14 And at this time we're going to take a 10-minute
15 break and then we'll come back for the next
16 application. So we'll come back at five after 11:00.

17 (BREAK: 10:54 - 11:05 A.M.)

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. We are ready
19 to resume the hearing. And I do want to remind my
20 fellow panel members to be sure that we're speaking
21 in the microphone as well. I think our audience is
22 having a tough time hearing us. So I'm just going to
23 remind you all of that.

24 A-2: HEARING OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

25 APPLICATION: FOCUS STEM ACADEMY, BENTONVILLE, AR

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So let's resume with Focus
2 STEM Academy for Bentonville, Arkansas. And, Ms.
3 Perry, you are recognized.

4 MS. PERRY: Good morning. Virginia Perry,
5 Program Advisor with the ADE Charter Unit. The
6 second application this morning comes from Focus STEM
7 Academy of Bentonville, Arkansas. Focus STEM Academy
8 is a proposed open-enrollment charter -- public
9 charter school to be located within Bentonville
10 School District. The sponsoring entity is Focus STEM
11 Academy of Benton County. The applicant is
12 requesting to serve students in grades 5 through 8
13 with a maximum enrollment of 352 beginning in the
14 2018-2019 school year. The applicant has notified
15 affected districts of this proposed public charter
16 school.

17 The primary presenter this morning will be Ms.
18 Micah Cummings. She will be joined, as needed, by
19 Jon Cummings, Dan Foshee, Sean Hoover, and Rhonda
20 Gentry.

21 Ms. Cummings.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And will all
23 representatives from Focus STEM Academy and anyone
24 speaking in opposition please stand to receive the
25 oath. Okay. Do you swear or affirm that the

1 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
2 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

3 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you very
5 much. And we are ready for you to begin and you have
6 20 minutes.

7 MS. CUMMINGS: Thank you very much to the Panel
8 for your time and consideration of our application.
9 I also want to take a moment to thank Alexandra Boyd
10 and Virginia Perry for their expert guidance through
11 this application process, and also to Lieutenant
12 Governor Griffin for his resounding endorsement for a
13 focus on STEM education. We agree with that and we
14 are thrilled to be able to share with you our mission
15 and our vision for the students of Benton County.

16 We believe that the foundation of any successful
17 organization, including schools, over the long-term
18 is a strong and active board. And I'm thrilled today
19 to be able to introduce to you much of our board:

20 The first person is Jonathan Cummings. He is
21 our chairman and he's a graduate of Arkansas State
22 University in Jonesboro, with 17 years of experience
23 auditing school districts and governmental records
24 and nonprofit. He also has eight years of nonprofit
25 service. He has the experience to know what it takes

1 for an organization to be fiscally sound, both in the
2 short-term and in the long-term.

3 Our next board member, who sadly is not able to
4 join us today, is Kelly Showalter. She's a teacher
5 at Arkansas School for Math and Science for 10 years
6 and also a teacher at NWACC and has two years of
7 board service in nonprofits.

8 Our next board member is Dan Foshee, our
9 treasurer, and he's a graduate of Arkansas -- Central
10 Arkansas University, with eight years of nonprofit
11 board service.

12 Next, Rhonda Gentry; 25 years of experience in
13 education, 11 of those teaching and 14 years in
14 administration and 3 years teaching in higher
15 education. As you see, she has nonprofit service as
16 well.

17 Sean Hoover is kind of our IT expert and has 20-
18 plus years in information technology and five years
19 in nonprofit service.

20 I myself am a graduate of Arkansas State
21 University with 14 years of experience teaching in
22 all disciplines at the middle level and two years of
23 nonprofit service.

24 So these are the foundation, the things that run
25 deep in our organization.

1 Our mission is to provide students a place to
2 explore academic learning concepts through
3 interdisciplinary projects that combine science,
4 technology, engineering, and mathematics. We will
5 support all students to succeed through increased
6 parental involvement, increased physical activity,
7 and incorporation of music education. Focus STEM
8 Academy values community involvement, seeking to
9 engender and model the philosophy of community
10 service at all levels, from our staff, including our
11 board, to our students.

12 We envision an environment that is a
13 collaborative family culture that works together on
14 the behalf of all students and that by the time
15 students are ready to enroll in high school they are
16 ready for advanced placement choices that will give
17 them the STEM career of their choice. We want them
18 to enroll at a university upon graduation in the
19 university that will best prepare them for that
20 career, and we want to give them the knowledge and
21 the tools to make that best decision as they go
22 forward. We also want to develop a strong sense of
23 community service and community involvement.

24 We also have a beginning conservative budget
25 that allows our organization to provide high quality

1 education while growing our resources to provide even
2 more opportunities for students. And as a side note,
3 in addition to these stated goals I hold a personal
4 awareness of the lack of women in STEM fields
5 currently. And it's my personal goal to encourage
6 girls to enroll and consider strongly training in a
7 STEM career. As a teacher I've identified girls with
8 strong math and science aptitude who may not
9 understand their full potential or have other
10 interests, so I've created mentoring groups to
11 encourage them along this path. But as an education
12 professional in a STEM role myself, teaching
13 primarily math and science, I want to do more.

14 I've seen a lot of change in education and one
15 of the challenges that we experienced in traditional
16 20th century middle schools, we did it for the best
17 of intentions; these conditions occurred for all the
18 right reasons. The emphasis was on students
19 obtaining a body of knowledge and developing personal
20 accountability for their own work. The back-to-
21 basics movement also emphasized the body of
22 knowledge, and at the end of the century we began to
23 focus on organizational accountability and this led
24 to high stakes testing for students. As we see the
25 21st century advancements in traditional public

1 middle schools, one of the great results of this
2 accountability movement was the focus on action
3 research and research-based teaching, and this led to
4 standards revision, to Common Core state standards.
5 It also marked a shift in philosophy to emphasize
6 literacy and critical thinking, and this permeated
7 the math standards as well with the introduction of
8 the eight mathematical practices. We introduced
9 cooperative learning to students and the thinking
10 began to be the focus of teaching and learning. This
11 fits well within the professional learning
12 communities model. We also began to track student
13 growth throughout the year to make sure they were
14 hitting their targets and achievement remained on a
15 positive upward trajectory.

16 As we're advancing a little more into the 21st
17 century we look at these characteristics of truly
18 innovative schools. As we solidified our Common Core
19 standards and the appropriate level of rigor using
20 data we also became more proficient in the
21 collaborative process of professional learning
22 communities. A new innovative picture began to
23 emerge and now we see innovative schools that do all
24 of these things listed while focusing on student
25 needs.

1 The model that we are proposing for our school
2 incorporates these characteristics with a specific
3 STEM focus. Now STEM by and of itself is not an
4 innovative model. I'm sure you've heard many
5 proposals for STEM-based schools; however, with the
6 supporting structures that we have in place we feel
7 the entire model supports the STEM growth in our
8 students and each component is important.

9 Our first component is parental involvement. We
10 seek to hold monthly parent-teacher conferences,
11 truly partnering with our parents to intercede and
12 intervene on the behalf of all students. We'll do
13 this using data notebooks where students are setting
14 their own goals and tracking their achievement on
15 assessments as we look toward their overall growth.
16 We'll also be sharing progress reports. We hope to
17 bring our parents in as guest speakers because we
18 know many of them will already work in STEM fields
19 and we want to take advantage of their expertise
20 within our culture. We also created a parental
21 advisory board where we have five parents' seats for
22 them to have direct input to our board of directors
23 on how best to operate the school and meet the needs
24 of all of the students. We also look forward to
25 participating with them in school events, with

1 project expositions, music recitals, and intramurals.
2 These are just a few of the opportunities that we
3 have already laid out to partner with our parents.

4 The next pillar is project-based learning. One
5 of the research-based models for this is student
6 choice. We know that giving students choices about
7 their education improves their attendance, it
8 improves their motivation, and their willingness to
9 engage and be active participants in their own
10 learning. So having students have an element of
11 choice in what projects they are going to pursue we
12 think is a critical part. The STEM focus naturally
13 incorporates the integration of standards across the
14 curriculum.

15 In completing these projects we look to
16 professionals to help support these students and
17 guide them. We look to our business partners who
18 want to partner with us and come into our schools and
19 help students in the areas of robotics, engineering,
20 becoming makers, computer coding, and statistics. We
21 want to purposely connect, extend and enhance the
22 conceptual understanding that students receive in
23 their core content classes by having a chance to take
24 that information and create something unique, create
25 something that has meaning to them. In order to

1 achieve this, we also have a dedicated time in our
2 schedule. We don't just say we're going to do it, we
3 have planned time for students to do this.

4 Our next pillar is physical and music education.
5 Walk through any group of middle-schoolers and ask
6 them, "What's your favorite classes;" you'll get some
7 math, you'll get some English, you'll get some
8 reading or some science, but mostly what you'll hear,
9 you'll hear P.E., orchestra, band, art, computer
10 science, and even a couple of those are going to say
11 lunch. So these are the reasons that students enjoy
12 coming to school and they feel like they're creating
13 something unique or they're part of a team and it
14 gives them value. And we have to remember that this
15 time is not wasted time in relation to academics;
16 these are the motivating reasons to come to school
17 and they develop the cognitive discipline to be
18 better learners. And the time they spend in these
19 areas benefits all content areas, not to mention that
20 the sheer enjoyment of creating something or being
21 part of a team is part of the human experience and
22 it's something that we want to share with students.

23 Our next pillar is core PLC content. The work
24 of the PLCs will be two-fold. The vertical PLCs work
25 to maintain curriculum rigor in a way that is aligned

1 in the best learning sequence that maintains the
2 rigor of the standard. Grade level teams work with
3 the behavior issues and partner with parents and
4 guardians to make sure that each individual student
5 is achieving at high levels. The grade level teams
6 also provide support for the quarterly STEM projects.
7 With a curriculum built on inquiry and cognitively
8 guided instruction it's necessary to build in time
9 for remediation of pre-requisite skills and also for
10 extension and enrichment. Using the tutorials time
11 in our schedule we can provide supplemental
12 instruction for remediation or enrichment. This time
13 lends itself to small flexible groupings. The
14 extension or enrichment can also be an additional
15 time to work on related projects. The whole idea is
16 to identify individual student needs and provide time
17 and resources to meet those needs. I was recently at
18 a conference where I heard Dr. Anthony Mohammad speak
19 and he gave one succinct quote that I think really
20 embodies how we feel about collaboration. And he
21 said, "Individually we are flawed, but collectively
22 we are nearly perfect." So by working together and
23 collaborating at the student level, at the teacher
24 level, at the school level, and at the community
25 level we want to work together to provide the best

1 opportunity for students.

2 Our next pillar is career education. In order
3 to generate new ideas for projects we want to start
4 career education early. By exploring many different
5 STEM careers we want to inspire students to branch
6 out and try projects in new areas or to learn more
7 about the areas that they are excited about. We also
8 want to join with our local STEM businesses in the
9 area and we want to partner with groups like Mi
10 Forturo [ps] to mentor first-generation college-bound
11 students.

12 Community service -- we feel this is an
13 important part of student education. Building
14 leadership in students through service to others is a
15 key part of our mission. This is a key component for
16 school staff as well. We're developing on-campus
17 opportunities to provide service to the school
18 community so that the students take a shared
19 responsibility for the school among the students.
20 After all, this is for them. The school is not for
21 us; the school is really for them.

22 Finally, we feel these components work together
23 to support our core purpose: providing STEM
24 education. We also feel they address the unique
25 needs of the early adolescent as they move from

1 concrete to formal operations, as defined by Piaget.
2 We want them to be curious; we want them to be
3 makers; we want them to explore, be active, to learn
4 how to research, and be part of something and to be
5 sociable. So what does that look like? Students
6 will have three days of core content classes with a
7 short time for lunch, P.E. and advisory time just to
8 check in. Two days a week they will have music and
9 art, their fine arts component, and P.E., as well as
10 lunch and advisory time on those days, followed by a
11 double block of tutorials and STEM explorations. The
12 tutorials block will be to provide remediation, both
13 computer based and flexible small group instruction
14 for students, as indicated by their progress
15 monitoring assessments. Independent work as assigned
16 is also encouraged during this time. That work would
17 be assigned through core classes or an additional
18 time for project work and research. It's also time
19 to gain additional support if you have special needs
20 as an ELL or special education student. This is also
21 time for students and teachers to conference using
22 Data Notebooking to track students' goal settings and
23 how well they are progressing toward meeting those
24 goals, some actual hard data and a conversation where
25 we can drill down and we can really meet students'

1 needs. The STEM exploration part which would adjoin
2 that for each student is a dedicated project time.
3 We would also embed required content for keyboarding,
4 coding and career education at each grade level as
5 appropriate. We basically want to use this time as a
6 flexible time for the students to explore and learn
7 those ancillary skills that help make them successful
8 high school students.

9 In closing, I recently visited with a young man
10 who was excited about attending a local well renowned
11 charter school in the area. I knew this student had
12 attended a high school in one of the big four, and I
13 asked him, "Why did you choose a charter school? Why
14 are you so excited about this?" And he says, "I want
15 to go to a charter school because I'll be surrounded
16 by students who share common goals." And what I
17 think he was trying to communicate was that he valued
18 the small environment and the fact that he and his
19 new classmates would share a common focus.

20 Thank you, Panel, for the opportunity to share
21 our vision and for your consideration.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you, Ms.
23 Cummings. There are just a few minutes left. Is
24 anybody else from your school wanting to speak?

25 MS. CUMMINGS: We would be happy to give the

1 additional time to the Panel for questions and
2 answers.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

4 Do we have anyone to speak in opposition?

5 MS. DAVIS: Nobody has signed up.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right. So you
7 actually have the additional five minutes -- or if
8 you're ready, we can go on into questions.

9 MS. CUMMINGS: Again, with no rebuttal we'd be
10 happy to give that time back to the Panel.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you very
12 much.

13 So we will start with questions, Panel, and I'll
14 start over here with Ms. Turner. Do you have any
15 questions?

16 MS. TURNER: I'm interested in how you plan to
17 infuse keyboarding or coding and career exploration
18 into your STEM explorations. Could you explain that
19 a little bit, please?

20 MS. CUMMINGS: Absolutely. Thank you very much
21 for that question. We are seeking to be one-to-one
22 with technology, so the research that is needed for
23 some of these projects includes vital keyboarding
24 skills. And we will embed that as specific time to
25 practice during that time and then give them a chance

1 to additionally practice those skills through their
2 research for their project.

3 MS. TURNER: Okay. And can you explain the
4 coding a little bit? Because keyboarding to me is
5 totally different than the coding or the career
6 exploration.

7 MS. CUMMINGS: The coding part, I'm very excited
8 about our coding initiative. I had the opportunity
9 to work with the Northwest Arkansas Co-op to help
10 form the middle school curriculum for grades 7 and 8
11 and develop those resources. I would like to
12 implement more of a key-coding where it's a blend of
13 keyboarding. And once they have syntaxed down they
14 get a chance to practice those keyboarding skills
15 within coding skills and actually meet the standards
16 of the coding block within that time as well.

17 MS. TURNER: Okay. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

19 MS. NEWTON: I have several things that I noted
20 and I think some of them will be addressed under the
21 waiver requests. But I noted that there were only
22 two attendees at the public meeting, and what does
23 that suggest to you?

24 MS. CUMMINGS: The public is not opposed to our
25 charter. I've had a lot of encouraging words from

1 business partners around the area and from parents.
2 We are new, we are a start-up, and we are excited
3 about getting out into the community and, if granted
4 this charter, beginning to form those partnerships
5 and relationships and begin advertising.

6 MS. NEWTON: I noticed there also was no
7 response to the comment by ADE about subpopulation
8 and services to subpopulations.

9 MS. CUMMINGS: Right. In the concerns you had
10 asked that we would write an additional goal. We
11 will be happy to do that. So as an additional goal
12 for our charter we would like to set a goal to reduce
13 the achievement gap for the subpopulations by a
14 minimum of 3% each year.

15 MS. NEWTON: Okay. Professional development for
16 GT students' needs is not noted in the application.

17 MS. CUMMINGS: Right. Okay. So we would
18 partner with the Northwest Arkansas Educational Co-op
19 to provide that professional development to our
20 teachers and also we will contract those services, if
21 necessary.

22 MS. NEWTON: Okay. And specifically I think the
23 last question has to do with the loan and that's
24 something I haven't seen within --

25 MS. CUMMINGS: Okay.

1 MS. NEWTON: But then there's a lot I haven't
2 seen too. But in the series of applications I've
3 heard people -- I heard in application responses to
4 different grants but I have not seen the loan piece
5 in an application.

6 MR. CUMMINGS: Well, as a start-up -- my name is
7 Jon Cummings; I am the chair of the board. But as a
8 start-up obviously the resources are a little bit
9 tight, so debt would become a potential needed item
10 in order to provide the one-to-one initiative and
11 other classroom furniture and materials, equipment,
12 et cetera in order to actually operate as a school.
13 And it's a common practice in business to do a lease
14 purchase where the equipment or items that are
15 purchased with the loan funds become the collateral
16 for the loan. And basically there's a payback period
17 that's suitable to all parties involved and interest
18 is paid on that and probably a five-year term is
19 pretty common on the equipment loans. And that would
20 allow us as an entity to have all of the right
21 resources to educate the students in as favorable
22 terms in the budget, so --

23 MS. NEWTON: And that was my next question about
24 the budget. So how does that project to your overall
25 budget in terms of the students and the operating

1 costs and ultimately to the bottom-line or any
2 carryover? Or how tight is that as it relates, you
3 know, with the additional responsibility of the loan
4 in addition to everything else that goes with opening
5 a charter?

6 MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Basically it allows us to
7 have a cleaner cash-flow, so it actually helps our
8 budget to structure the equipment purchase in this
9 way. And there's some things that we've not put in
10 the budget because we want to be as conservative as
11 we can be in projecting out what this would look
12 like. And as an accountant and an auditor, I feel
13 very strongly about being conservative in presenting
14 budgets. And so in creating this we didn't want to
15 paint too rosy of a picture and then get down the
16 road and find out, well, there's a problem here. And
17 so if a revenue did not seem like something that was
18 going to materialize it didn't go in as a resource.
19 And we're essentially starting it at zero balance, so
20 we have to operate and build balance starting at
21 zero. And there are some grants out there; the
22 Walton Foundation, we've applied or started the
23 initial application process on that but we can't
24 necessarily say definitively that those funds are
25 going to be there. If some of those funds were to

1 materialize then the loan could be paid back at a
2 higher rate of efficiency and pay less interest cost
3 and help the overall bottom-line. But even if those
4 monies don't materialize the structure of the loan
5 will be such that we could still cash-flow and build
6 balance appropriately each year in order to have
7 adequate reserves.

8 MS. NEWTON: What items are omitted from the
9 budget? And I ask that in light of the fact that
10 there are essentials as it relates to educational
11 equipment and things revolving around student needs
12 and curriculum and other, you know, things that have
13 to be taken care of. So what are some of the things
14 that you've eliminated from your budget?

15 MR. CUMMINGS: The only things that I held out
16 of the budget was actually on the revenue side.
17 Because if there was question marks as to whether or
18 not a revenue could materialize or we could
19 substantiate that was going to be there for us we
20 didn't put it in the budget. And so the budget has
21 been built off of hard numbers that we can actually
22 make happen. The other piece of our budget that we
23 did build in is that our building agreement, the
24 lease on that actually includes a sliding scale for
25 lease terms based on our enrollment. So if some of

1 our students didn't arrive like we expect them to
2 arrive, then our building rent would actually be less
3 than what we've projected. So it is tied to that on
4 the sliding scale, which also helps with building
5 resources.

6 MS. NEWTON: But that's also a concern. So if
7 you're anticipating a certain number of students and
8 you build your budget based on the number of students
9 -- and, you know, some things can't be adjusted and I
10 guess that would be a part of my budget question.

11 MR. CUMMINGS: I think what you're asking is on
12 the instructional side is everything there that's
13 going to need to be there and is the money going to
14 be there to actually --

15 MS. NEWTON: Maintenance and operation --
16 instructional, maintenance and operation and all
17 things in those fields.

18 MR. CUMMINGS: We have, as you know, an
19 enrollment cap requested of 352 students. We
20 projected the first year budget at 320 students, and
21 so if that 352 does not materialize we are still good
22 at 320. And if you notice in the budget there's
23 actually a fairly strong surplus there in year-one
24 and in year-two. The first year we've projected to
25 have a net revenue over expenditures of \$373,219, so

1 that provides us a fair amount of leeway as to
2 unexpected items occurring.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And I think Dr. Hernandez
4 has some questions to piggyback off of your budget
5 questions. Is that okay? Okay.

6 DR. HERNANDEZ: Since Ms. Newton started talking
7 a little bit about the budget I didn't want to keep
8 having you come up later, so I'll go ahead and get
9 mine out of the way. I've got a few questions. The
10 first one in regards to staffing, I understand y'all
11 are pulling from the -- make sure -- can people hear
12 me back there? Is that better? Okay, good.

13 You're pulling from the Bentonville School
14 District or be located in the Bentonville School
15 District. In looking at your staffing worksheet
16 there, you have an administrator/principal/
17 superintendent with a salary of around \$60,000. I
18 know that the starting salary in Bentonville School
19 District is around \$81,000. And so is there -- in
20 regards to teaching the starting salary there is
21 about \$44,000. That's what you have in your line
22 items. So is there -- I would see a concern as far
23 as trying to recruit good talent to come work at your
24 school, based on some of the numbers that you're
25 putting out there and maybe the affordability down

1 the road if you're -- trying to actually hire some
2 folks may be a problem. So if you could speak a
3 little bit to that?

4 MR. CUMMINGS: On the administrative side of
5 salaries, obviously the size of this school versus
6 Bentonville, there is a large disparity there. Now
7 some of the fixed efforts that have to go into
8 running and operating a school could be the same, but
9 the overall responsibility is to educate the children
10 and this salary range that we've included will
11 actually allow for that. And as you see, we're
12 building balances. As the programs grow balances
13 grow. Then I feel like there's enough budget there
14 to stay competitive in the marketplace on salaries
15 and also on benefits.

16 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. The other question is in
17 regard to NSLA funding. You reflect in your budget
18 as having 320 students in your first year, getting a
19 full amount of \$526 per student. I think there may
20 be just a misunderstanding on how the NSL calculation
21 works. If all 320 students were to be, quote, free
22 and reduced lunch students, you would get the full
23 \$1500 amount. And so, one, in a district that's
24 about 23% free and reduced lunch how do you expect to
25 -- basically what I'm saying is there's a problem

1 with that number, and so that may be something that
2 needs to be revisited as far as that goes.

3 The other thing was there was a gift referenced
4 in your revenue about \$110,000 gift. Can you talk a
5 little bit about that?

6 MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. The party that has been
7 working with us on building is very excited about the
8 prospect of us opening a charter school and feels
9 very supportive for charter schools and has offered a
10 donation. And it's actually based on another
11 donation that could come through and would probably
12 manifest itself in the form of reduction of rent on
13 the building is how I foresee that happening.

14 DR. HERNANDEZ: So you do have the \$110,000
15 already, is that -- and then you're anticipating
16 maybe some more in reduction of the rent?

17 MR. CUMMINGS: The party has verbally committed
18 to --

19 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

20 MR. CUMMINGS: -- the donation.

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Owoh, do you have any
22 questions? Oh, I'm sorry; we'll go back to Mr.
23 Wilson, but go ahead.

24 DR. OWOH: In reference to the progress
25 monitoring, in your packet, in your application you

1 stated you would use the ACT Aspire interim test. Is
2 that the only tool that you will use for progress
3 monitoring? How would you ascertain the Arkansas
4 learning standards being met or achieved?

5 MS. CUMMINGS: ACT Aspire is just one data-point
6 that we would be using; I made reference to Data
7 Notebooking. And so actually tracking students'
8 goals and performance on standards based assessments
9 would be another part of our data piece. And so
10 utilizing the Data Notebooking system where students
11 are setting their goals and then tracking their
12 progress toward those goals on each of the standards.
13 That's what we anticipate as being the daily day-to-
14 day making sure that students are achieving data-
15 point.

16 DR. OWOH: Okay. And if you would expound upon
17 the special education identification process that you
18 all will use to insure that you're not over-
19 identifying students?

20 MS. CUMMINGS: Sure. We want to use an RTI
21 model where we're looking at interventions in a
22 tiered system, both for academics and behavioral.
23 And so using our PLC process through teams and the
24 addition of our guidance counselor and our special
25 education teacher and the parents we would work

1 together to make sure that we have done everything we
2 could to intervene and provide support to that
3 student before beginning a special education referral
4 process. Our goal is to meet students' needs in the
5 most efficient and adaptive and responsive way
6 possible. One of my challenges as a public school
7 teacher -- I'm a huge proponent of public education
8 -- is that sometimes we've created systems of
9 bureaucracy to help identify and provide services to
10 students, and occasionally that gets in the way. One
11 of the things that I'm excited about in the charter
12 model is being more responsive and more flexible and
13 quickly adaptive to what the student needs and having
14 a small dedicated team of staff that is focused on
15 the success of all of the students.

16 DR. OWOH: Okay. What is your plan for
17 supporting your educators, licensed and non-licensed?
18 So if you could expound upon your educator support,
19 admin support and development plan?

20 MS. CUMMINGS: We are seeking to hire as many
21 certified teachers as possible, highly qualified.
22 But in our area we know we may require a little bit
23 of flexibility for either out-of-state licenses, and
24 that kind of merges into our waivers as well. But
25 our support would be both through the PLC process and

1 through teacher evaluations, through the TESS model,
2 and also quality professional development delivered
3 both from the co-op and in-house.

4 DR. OWOH: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Mr. Wilson, do you have
6 questions?

7 MR. WILSON: Mr. Cummings, you mentioned in
8 response to Ms. Newton's question the lease on the
9 building. Did I understand you to say or imply that
10 the lease could -- payments could be varied or
11 reduced in case a certain number of students did not
12 apply or did not come?

13 MR. CUMMINGS: That would be correct. There is
14 no lease agreement in place at the moment. But,
15 again, the person that we're working with on the
16 building is very excited about having the charter
17 there and has tried to make this as flexible for us
18 as possible as a start-up. And one of the things
19 that was offered was in fact a sliding scale of rent
20 based on the enrollment in the initial two-year
21 period. So if we did not hit our enrollment cap then
22 there would be a reduction in the cost of the
23 building.

24 MR. WILSON: Okay. I didn't see that in the
25 application. Maybe I just didn't find it -- or

1 reference to that special arrangement.

2 MS. CUMMINGS: Right. That is part of our
3 verbal agreement with the developer. The idea with
4 this building, this building is only one-quarter
5 built out currently. And so part of that sliding
6 scale is it's a two-story building and if our
7 enrollment numbers did not meet our projection and we
8 didn't need all the space then we would work on the
9 infill of the first floor and grow into the second
10 floor with a sliding scale in that way.

11 MR. WILSON: Now how is the \$100,000 donation
12 tied to the lease arrangement, if it is?

13 MS. CUMMINGS: It wasn't tied to the lease
14 agreement. That happened afterward. As I said, the
15 developer was very excited about our charter and
16 offered us a matching grant, half of whatever our
17 first grant was, and we anticipated that being Walton
18 Family Foundation. So after the fact he said, you
19 know, "Here's something else that I could do to help
20 support you in this endeavor."

21 MR. WILSON: Okay. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I'm going to go
23 ahead and go through a few questions that I have and
24 then we'll circle back around to the others.

25 One of my questions is related to

1 transportation. I noticed there is no transportation
2 provided, and I can't remember if you referenced
3 public transportation. So can you tell me what
4 public transportation is available, how wide of a
5 radius? And noting that there isn't anything
6 budgeted at all for transportation I just want to be
7 really clear on what that would look like.

8 MS. CUMMINGS: Right. One of the most desirable
9 characteristics of this particular location is the
10 fact that it is directly across from an Ozark
11 Regional Transit bus stop. So there is a bus stop
12 currently there. And we had noted in our application
13 that if parents required transport then the board
14 would reallocate money to provide that transport and
15 we would work with Ozark Regional Transit to develop
16 a system. Their range goes all the way from
17 Fayetteville up to Bella Vista.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. But you're
19 currently not budgeting anything to allow for that
20 potentially?

21 MS. CUMMINGS: Not currently. Not currently.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So depending on the
23 number of students that you may have who are
24 economically disadvantaged -- I know you budgeted in
25 money for having NSL students. But in thinking about

1 not budgeting in for them to possibly need
2 transportation how comfortable are you in not knowing
3 for sure about whether or not you're going to have a
4 sliding scale on the lease? I know you have a verbal
5 commitment. Are there concerns about where the
6 budget could ultimately wind up?

7 MS. CUMMINGS: We are happy to respond to that
8 and to -- we are looking at that budget surplus as
9 being a possible source for those funds as needed.
10 This building is also located within walking distance
11 of four different subdivisions and two apartment
12 complexes, so we anticipate having a large walking
13 population as well.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Another question
15 along the lines of insuring that all students have
16 services they might need -- I notice that you don't
17 have within your child nutrition program -- let me go
18 back here -- first of all, I just want to verify if
19 you're going to have someone who's going to oversee
20 your local child nutrition program and who are you
21 designating for that? Because you don't have
22 anything budgeted for a position in food services.

23 MS. CUMMINGS: That would be the executive
24 director currently, would be responsible for
25 overseeing that.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And you're
2 contracting for -- can you explain your -- how are
3 you going to run your child nutrition program --
4 maybe that would be better -- at your local school?

5 MR. CUMMINGS: Okay. So I am not a food service
6 professional, and so I feel like the best thing to do
7 is to contract it out. And so we'll be basically
8 building a bid spec that meets the child nutrition
9 program requirements and then putting that out for
10 bid with -- it would be companies like Sodexo, Opaa!,
11 Ameriserve, Aramark. And basically they would be
12 transporting in the food and feeding the kids, and so
13 that's how that would work.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And -- but you
15 still would have someone though that is overseeing --

16 MR. CUMMINGS: Correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- whether or not
18 regulations are being met?

19 MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Providing for students who
21 may need free and reduced lunch?

22 MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Annually, we would put
23 out applications to all parents and guardians of the
24 students of the school, requesting that they fill out
25 the application for free and reduced. And those that

1 are eligible for free and reduced would be granted
2 that and basically, based on the cost of the food,
3 those that aren't eligible for that would pay full
4 price or reduced price for their lunches.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And then another
6 question I had is with your financial accounting
7 plans you are referencing here you will use
8 PowerSchool software to record your financial
9 transactions. But you've also noted that you will be
10 utilizing APSCN and all the correct accounting
11 services with the ADE.

12 MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I'm just wanting to kind
14 of verify and make sure. From what you're doing
15 here, are you -- I guess part of it is that -- you
16 know -- kind of give us a reason for the financial
17 accounting plan that you've outlined here. And then
18 also how do you intend to assure then that all the
19 information is recorded within APSCN to make sure
20 that the reporting things are correct?

21 MR. CUMMINGS: Well, PowerSchool is a software
22 that I'm actually pretty familiar with and so that's
23 part of the reason I was comfortable with the
24 financial accounting. And it would allow us to get
25 the information from there into the state's reporting

1 packages. Since we actually did the proposal
2 PowerSchool has become SunGuard and so there's been
3 some changes even in the last couple of weeks, so
4 we're still working on that. But I don't see any
5 real problems with being able to get the information
6 that we'll need to report, both on student data and
7 on financial data, to the State. So the use of
8 PowerSchool is more for my personal comfort level
9 than probably anybody else's.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right. Do we
11 have any more questions from panel members?

12 Okay. Ms. Turner.

13 MS. TURNER: I noticed in your application you
14 said that you would draw students from a region and
15 you listed six schools. So if you're not providing
16 transportation are you looking at -- how do you plan
17 to serve those students?

18 MS. CUMMINGS: As I said, Ozark Regional Transit
19 offers services across the northwest Arkansas area,
20 all the way from Siloam down to Fayetteville, up to
21 Bella Vista, over to Pea Ridge, Rogers, Springdale.
22 It encompasses the entire area. And we would work
23 with parents to meet their needs and work with Ozark
24 Regional Transit to create the systems that they
25 need.

1 MS. TURNER: So it does serve the Gravette,
2 Gentry area as well?

3 MS. CUMMINGS: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. TURNER: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Any other questions
6 from the panel members before we start looking at the
7 waivers specifically?

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: I have a question.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: I know you referenced earlier
11 about working with the co-op, Northwest Co-op. Have
12 you done any consulting or working with actually the
13 Bentonville School District? And why I ask that, in
14 regards to your food service program I'm pretty sure
15 they still do some outsourcing, so it may be a
16 worthwhile conversation to figure out how to
17 piggyback on that contract. But just the question I
18 guess is: have y'all worked very much with
19 Bentonville?

20 MS. CUMMINGS: We've not. I worked for one
21 before but it isn't Bentonville. I am happy to
22 collaborate with and partner with all the area
23 schools, because Bentonville has some really
24 phenomenal schools and we want to definitely
25 piggyback on what they're doing and create this

1 culture of innovation where we all share ideas and
2 all students benefit.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes. Let's go ahead and
4 move to the waivers and look to see if there are any
5 specific waiver questions that anyone wants to
6 address. And we can also look to see if there are
7 any of those that have the -- any remaining legal
8 issues with waivers.

9 DR. HERNANDEZ: I know the ones that still had
10 some remaining legal issues were in regards to
11 administrator licensure that you're -- there was
12 still a waiver that may be needed for superintendent
13 mentoring. Is that --

14 MS. DAVIS: No, that's correct. I just need for
15 them to confirm that they would be requesting that as
16 well.

17 MS. CUMMINGS: Yes, we would. We would hire a
18 licensed administrator that might not yet have
19 district level licensure and the required mentoring
20 time for that. That would allow us to go ahead and
21 hire that individual and we would begin moving
22 through the mentoring process.

23 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. The second one is in
24 regards to Teacher Fair Dismissal Act and there was a
25 site there. Just making sure that -- confirming that

1 you are seeking a waiver from those codes referenced
2 there, Teacher Fair Dismissal Act and Public School
3 Employee Fair Hearing Act?

4 MS. CUMMINGS: What we would be requesting is a
5 waiver for Arkansas Code 6-17-1501 et seq.

6 DR. HERNANDEZ: What about -- in addition to
7 that -- so the rest of them still apply, the 1701 and
8 --

9 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- all those different ones?
11 Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And can I go back to the
13 administrator licensure request. Okay. Can you --
14 and I may have just not heard you correctly. So you
15 are seeking to waive administrator licensure and the
16 requirement for superintendent mentoring. Is that
17 right? But I thought I understood you to say you
18 were going to hire a licensed superintendent, so I
19 guess if you were going to do that my question would
20 be why waive the mentoring if the mentoring is going
21 to help support that person? So that's just -- if I
22 misunderstood, I apologize.

23 MS. CUMMINGS: Our intention is to hire someone
24 who might have superintendency -- but if not,
25 consider someone who has building level licensure who

1 would like the opportunity to expand on that and to
2 actually seek district level licensure and complete
3 the mentoring program. So it's really a time
4 constraint. It would allow us to go ahead and hire
5 that individual and then have them start the
6 superintendency district level licensure along with
7 the mentoring program.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And if you do hire
9 someone in that way they can work under an ALCP as
10 they're adding -- or it depends, but there is a
11 possibility that person could be working under an
12 ALCP to be able to do that.

13 MS. CUMMINGS: Our main concern was time on
14 there and I wasn't sure how many years the ALCP goes
15 for.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: You're basically wanting
17 to have the flexibility in case -- for the time --
18 okay.

19 MS. CUMMINGS: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, were you going
21 to ask a question?

22 MS. NEWTON: I was about the waiver for the
23 guidance counselor.

24 MS. CUMMINGS: We have a lot of licensed
25 behavioral therapists with a master's degree coming

1 out of the University of Arkansas who really
2 understand the students in the area. And so while we
3 intend to hire someone already with a guidance
4 counselor license we would also like to consider
5 those who may have an eye or a passion for education
6 and might like to pursue this line of work. And,
7 again, the same as the superintendent, they might not
8 yet can have that license but it would take away the
9 pressure of the time constraints on the ALP.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And there was one other
11 thing that I was going to ask about. I noticed in
12 your budget you weren't budgeting anything for
13 substitutes. Did I look at that correctly?

14 MR. CUMMINGS: I thought we'd budgeted for subs.
15 Hang on just a minute.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I'm going to let Dr.
17 Hernandez, because he noticed something in there.

18 DR. HERNANDEZ: I just want to clarify that
19 there -- in the purchase services it looks like you
20 may be using something like an outside consultant to
21 do -- to help with your substitutes. But I was
22 curious, the way that -- I hope this wouldn't be the
23 case with you guys, but I noticed that you have 300
24 absences at \$73 per day; in your staffing plan you
25 have around 15 teachers. So that equates to about 20

1 absences per teacher per year. And so is that --

2 MS. CUMMINGS: That estimate is a bit high. But
3 also one of the things that we want to do to model
4 our community service efforts is we want to offer
5 each teacher one day of paid substitute to actually
6 perform community service. So that does inflate the
7 number slightly, but I have a feeling that number is
8 still slightly in error. We don't anticipate quite
9 that much.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Are there any other
11 questions related to waivers from the Panel?

12 DR. OWOH: I have one.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Owoh.

14 DR. OWOH: Madam Chair, thank you. Will you
15 please share with us your reasoning for the gifted
16 and talented waiver? And I noticed -- I did read
17 your rationale, but I'm curious to know why you would
18 like that waived.

19 MS. CUMMINGS: Again, this is part of the
20 conservative budget that we created. In time, if
21 revenues grow, we would love to be able to hire that
22 gifted and talented coordinator for students. But in
23 the meantime we feel that we can meet the needs of
24 those students through STEM explorations and
25 propelling them to create these projects that are

1 standards-based and integrated across the curriculum.
2 And we feel like we can adequately challenge them
3 with the curriculum that we have, including 8th grade
4 being able to incorporate Algebra I and physical
5 science.

6 DR. OWOH: So is there a particular personnel
7 member who will oversee this, the GT instruction, or
8 will all teachers or personnel be trained? How will
9 you insure that the needs of those individual
10 students are being met?

11 MS. CUMMINGS: Thank you. I believe that the
12 executive director will have the final responsibility
13 for that. But guided through the PLC process and
14 working together to know our students, know how
15 they're being challenged, and providing adequate
16 professional development for all teachers is really
17 the goal; so our PLC process. And through the hiring
18 we would hope to hire someone who has a specialty in
19 gifted and talented education and they could be the
20 team member who really coordinates and drives that
21 professional development and that oversight for
22 projects, making sure that they are challenging
23 students at a high level of rigor.

24 DR. OWOH: I have a follow-up.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Go ahead.

1 DR. OWOH: Is there a particular PLC model that
2 you all have chosen to implement or --

3 MS. CUMMINGS: You heard me mention Dr. Anthony
4 Mohammad earlier. I'm a huge fan of Solutions Tree
5 and actually attended their conference in St. Charles
6 this past June. And with our model having just one
7 core teacher per grade level that lends itself to a
8 vertical PLC teaming process. And in that way we can
9 make sure we structure our standards in a seamless
10 growth pattern, so that when we take a kid in 5th
11 grade and we exit them out in 8th grade that our end-
12 goal is they will have all passed Algebra I end-of-
13 course exam and passed physical science exams as well
14 and earned that high school credit and be set to
15 undertake any advanced placement course of their
16 choosing in the high school area.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And Dr. Owoh actually
18 asked my next question, so --

19 Yes, Dr. Hernandez.

20 DR. HERNANDEZ: I didn't notice that there was a
21 lot of money in your budget that explicitly talked
22 about marketing. One of my concerns for you guys
23 would be that, you know, being in the market that
24 you're in is -- I think marketing is going to be
25 critical.

1 MS. CUMMINGS: Right.

2 DR. HERNANDEZ: And so can you talk a little bit
3 about how you plan to draw in these students?

4 MS. CUMMINGS: Yes. Our logo was designed by
5 Moody Images and he's a graphic designer and
6 marketing specialist. And at this point in time he
7 has volunteered his services to get us up and going
8 in our initial round of student recruitment efforts.
9 And so we're thrilled to have him on-board and
10 helping us in that effort.

11 DR. HERNANDEZ: Is there a particular amount
12 that y'all do or are planning to set aside for that?

13 MS. CUMMINGS: That's a budget question.

14 MR. CUMMINGS: Well, at the moment we have a
15 firm commitment of free from the marketing person.
16 But there's also some advertising costs and stuff I'm
17 sure that would be in there and I believe they're
18 factored into the budget under miscellaneous items
19 rather than directly as advertising.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Anything else?

21 Okay. Panel, do you have any other questions?

22 Okay. Ms. Davis, are there any remaining issues
23 regarding this application?

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

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: No. Okay.

1 And any additional public comment from someone
2 that has not had a chance to speak?

3 MS. DAVIS: No.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right.

5 So at this time I will entertain a motion
6 regarding the request for Focus STEM Academy in
7 Bentonville, Arkansas.

8 MS. NEWTON: Madam Chair, I move that the
9 application be denied.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion
11 from Ms. Newton that the application is denied.

12 DR. HERNANDEZ: Second.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And I have a second from
14 Dr. Hernandez.

15 All those in favor say "aye."

16 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Opposed?

18 MR. WILSON: No.

19 MS. TURNER: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

21 MS. DAVIS: Can you repeat your motion into the
22 microphone? Because we can't hear.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Well, I think what I'm
24 going to do is ask for a roll-call vote based on the
25 uncertainty here.

1 Okay. So the motion has been made and seconded
2 that the application be denied.

3 And let me -- if I can get to the voting --
4 okay. I'm just going to start with Ms. Turner.

5 MS. TURNER: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Newton.

7 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: Is she voting against the
9 motion?

10 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Dr. Hernandez was
11 indicating Ms. Turner.)

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes. The motion was to
13 deny.

14 MS. TURNER: I voted against that.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Against the motion?

16 MS. TURNER: Uh-huh.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And you vote in
18 favor of the motion?

19 MS. NEWTON: Right.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Wilson.

21 MR. WILSON: Against or no on the motion.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez.

23 DR. HERNANDEZ: I voted for the motion.

24 MR. OWOH: For the motion.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. The motion passes,

1 so your application has been denied.

2 Okay. So please go to your voting sheets and
3 record your votes and your reasoning for your votes.
4 And if you want to wait just a minute we'll be able
5 to verbally give you some feedback.

6 MS. CUMMINGS: Thank you.

7 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. We'll start with
9 Dr. Hernandez.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. I voted for the motion.
11 Reasons were I had some real concerns about the
12 funding and sustainability plans, specifically the
13 start-up loan and unrealistic revenue such as NSL and
14 then also a lack of a marketing budget.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Newton.

16 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion as I have
17 unresolved programmatic and financial issues.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Owoh.

19 DR. OWOH: I voted for the motion because I've
20 had some concerns on the clear levels of support for
21 the students and the educators.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Turner.

23 MS. TURNER: I voted against the motion. There
24 are strengths to the application; however, there's
25 some unresolved financial issues.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And Mr. Wilson.

2 MR. WILSON: I thought the proposal was
3 innovative, but I agree that there are serious
4 concerns about the financial situation as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. We appreciate you
6 being here and thank you very much.

7 Panel, at this time we're going to take a break
8 for lunch. You all kind of give me some guidance.
9 I'm thinking it may take a little bit of time to do
10 that. Do you want to come back at 1:00? Do we want
11 to make it a little earlier? It's about ten after
12 12:00. Any feedback?

13 MR. WILSON: The earlier the better.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Earlier the better. Okay.
15 Why don't we come back at 12:45 and we will reassume
16 [sic] with the third application for the day. Thank
17 you -- 12:45.

18 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:07 - 12:52 p.m.)

19 A-3: HEARING ON OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

20 APPLICATION: SCHOLARMADE ACHIEVEMENT PLACE, LITTLE ROCK, AR

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Welcome back, everyone.

22 We're going to resume our hearings for these charter
23 applications. So we are ready to hear the open-
24 enrollment public charter school application for
25 ScholarMade Achievement Place in Little Rock. Ms.

1 Perry, you are recognized.

2 MS. PERRY: Thank you, Madam Chair. ScholarMade
3 Achievement Place is a proposed open-enrollment
4 public charter school to be located within Little
5 Rock School District. The sponsoring entity is
6 ScholarMade Educational Services, Inc. The applicant
7 is requesting to serve students in grades K through 9
8 with a maximum enrollment of 520 beginning in the
9 2018-2019 school year. The applicant has notified
10 affected districts of this proposed public charter
11 school. The primary presenter will be Dr. Phillis
12 Anderson, executive director, and also available for
13 questions are Chad Young, Daron Hamilton, and Phil
14 Pryor.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Sorry about that. Can --
16 will the representatives from ScholarMade and anyone
17 speaking in opposition please stand to receive the
18 oath? Okay. If you'll raise your hand. Do you
19 swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to
20 give shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing
21 but the truth?

22 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you. And,
24 Dr. Anderson, you are recognized.

25 DR. ANDERSON: Good afternoon. ScholarMade is a

1 nonprofit educational management organization
2 committed to the development of brilliance in
3 children and youth. We believe that healthy schools
4 can change the quality of life of children and youth
5 living in poverty. We believe that creating
6 educational environments that will prepare children
7 for the rigors of high school and higher education
8 will strengthen communities while closing opportunity
9 and academic gaps.

10 One of the things I want to tell you is that the
11 handout you have, you have the presentation within
12 that handout that you can follow along with me, as
13 well as some additional documents. Our mission is to
14 prepare scholars through innovative leadership and
15 effective teaching to be self-confident,
16 intellectually inquisitive, emotionally intelligent,
17 and academically competent beings. Our scholars will
18 become leaders and problem-solvers who will improve
19 conditions wherever they choose to work and live.

20 The founding board represents a wide range of
21 experience in education, business, technology,
22 entrepreneurship, and community development. The
23 board will utilize the school governance council as a
24 key subcommittee and will partner with the Arkansas
25 Public Resource Center and Board on Track for

1 development and support. Our members are Jason
2 Crain, Chad Sanders, Claudia Steer, Gerald Harris,
3 Caslisha Williams, Cassandra Norman McGhee, Sericia
4 Cole, and Erma Peterson. I've also provided for you
5 the board of directors organizational chart of how we
6 will manage the school.

7 I want to tell you a little bit about me. I
8 have more than 25 years of experience in K-16 public
9 education. I hold Arkansas certification as a
10 district administrator, a secondary principal, and
11 ELA teacher. I have spent the bulk of my career at
12 high need schools, including Henderson Junior High,
13 Hall High School, J.A. Fair High School, HD Woodson
14 High School in Washington, D.C., and Gwynn Park High
15 School in Prince George's County, Maryland. I
16 established Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter School,
17 Flightline Upper Academy on the Little Rock Air Force
18 Base, Pine Bluff Lighthouse, and Capital City
19 Lighthouse. I have assisted in the development of
20 charter schools in Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin,
21 while managing schools in New York, Washington, D.C.,
22 and Oklahoma. I have managed multimillion dollar
23 school budgets and new school construction and
24 renovations and was directly responsible for adding
25 five charters and nine schools to Lighthouse

1 Academy's portfolio.

2 This is a snapshot of one school that I managed
3 their performance. In the first three years of the
4 charter the percentage of all scholars (combined
5 population) testing proficient or advanced in
6 literacy, math and science increased an average of 8%
7 from 2010 to 2013. The percentage of economically
8 disadvantaged scholars testing proficient or advanced
9 in the same subject areas increased an average of 7%.
10 Schools were awarded almost \$40,000 through 2015
11 Arkansas School Recognition Program for the top 5%
12 and top 10% growth in the state, and awarded top 10
13 middle schools in the state as well as the Beating
14 the Odds Awards in 2014 and 2015.

15 ScholarMade Achievement Place is being developed
16 to serve children who live in central Little Rock.
17 However, it will be an open-enrollment public charter
18 and children may enroll from any area. The analysis
19 of the educational need in this area is based on five
20 factors: lack of high performing school choices, lack
21 of high quality early childcare options, the
22 achievement gap, student performance, and a high need
23 area.

24 Lack of performing school choices --
25 approximately 80% of students attending a non-magnet

1 school in the area did not meet the readiness level
2 on the 2017 ACT Aspire in reading. The educational
3 pipeline for this area of the city is challenged.
4 Only 10 out of the 29 early childcare centers in the
5 area received a high-quality center designation. The
6 area of the city has a 30% poverty rate for children,
7 which is 5% higher than the city average. And only
8 14% of the adults in this area have a bachelors
9 degree or greater, less than half of the rate for the
10 city as a whole.

11 An average of 63% of students at schools in the
12 area with a free and reduced rate of 60% or more did
13 not meet the readiness level in math and nearly 80%
14 did not meet the readiness level in ELA.
15 Additionally, 66% of all middle schoolers in the
16 Little Rock School District did not meet the
17 readiness level in math and 62% did not meet it in
18 ELA.

19 The achievement gap -- the gap between White
20 students and African American students in the Little
21 Rock School District is significant. The 2016 ESEA
22 reports showed 75% of White students met the
23 readiness level in ELA while only 28% of African
24 American and low-income students performed at that
25 level. Math was similar with 69% of White students

1 meeting the readiness level compared to only 23% of
2 African Americans.

3 And while there have been modest gains too many
4 students still lag behind. Over half of the 3rd
5 graders in the schools near the proposed charter did
6 not meet the math readiness level in 2017. When the
7 magnet schools in the area are removed, the number
8 jumps to almost 60% not ready. Nearly 70% of 3rd
9 graders in the school near the -- in schools near the
10 proposed charter did not meet the ELA benchmark.
11 Without the magnets, the number jumps to 80% not
12 ready.

13 More than 90% of 9th graders did not meet the
14 math readiness level at schools that had a free and
15 reduced rate of 80% or more. And up to 87% of 9th
16 graders did not meet the ELA readiness level at those
17 same schools.

18 In the area of college readiness, the Little
19 Rock School District graduation rate was 80% in 2016,
20 with a remediation rate of 56%. So that means for
21 every 10 students entering high school eight of those
22 would graduate and 4.5 require remediation, leaving
23 only 3.5 students ready for college.

24 The social and emotional condition of the
25 students in the Little Rock School District --

1 according to the Little Rock School District
2 suspension data for the school year 16-17 there were
3 8,053 out-of-school suspensions. The disciplinary
4 infractions include 119 for drugs, 150 for student
5 assault, 82 for staff assault, 15 knife, 1,587 for
6 fighting, 2,241 for disorderly conduct, and 132
7 bullying.

8 The families deserve an opportunity to choose.
9 Parent choice remains the most important reason we
10 need ScholarMade Achievement Place. Area parents
11 should have a quality free option so the children can
12 participate in the educational environment that works
13 best for them. The Wright Avenue Neighborhood
14 Association -- city and state representatives of this
15 area support this school. The redevelopment of the
16 Historic Mitchell Building will support their efforts
17 to revitalize this area. And we must continue to
18 commit ourselves to provide families a dynamic,
19 diverse menu of school options to serve a diverse
20 student population.

21 ScholarMade Achievement Place will feature a
22 three-academy campus comprised of a K-2 primary
23 school, a 3-6 elementary school, and a 7-8 junior
24 high. Space for community learning, science labs,
25 fine arts labs and other programs will be provided.

1 ScholarMade will open with K-5 in its first year and
2 add a grade each year through 9th grade.

3 Key features of the model include more time on
4 instruction, personalized learning approach,
5 competency based professional development, social
6 emotional intelligence, professional learning
7 communities, academic parent teacher teams, and
8 collaborative learning academies. Students will
9 experience seven hours and 45 minutes of instruction
10 each day and a 185-day school year for more than 30
11 additional days of instruction. Real-time data will
12 allow teachers to address deficiencies quickly and
13 efficiently.

14 ScholarMade will transform the lives of children
15 and families through -- and realize the mission and
16 vision through seven achievement principles. In the
17 area of teaching and learning: talent development,
18 which will include competency based professional
19 development, content and pedagogy development, and
20 equitable classrooms to meet the needs of all
21 students; in the area of integrated curriculum, it
22 will insure collaboration, critical thinking
23 development, as well as cross-curricular teaching;
24 the personalized learning approach will provide
25 learner profiles with mastery-based pathways,

1 instructional differentiation, and data to drive
2 achievement.

3 The interlocking principle is the community
4 based learning component, which will allow the
5 scholars to participate in service learning,
6 cultivates problem-solvers, and students will make
7 tangible contributions to resolving local challenges
8 within the community.

9 In the area of student support services, social
10 and emotional intelligence will -- we will provide a
11 social emotional intelligence curriculum; it will
12 serve as a social emotional learning lever to
13 cultivate healthy relationships, and to give scholars
14 the capacity to make -- to apply consequential
15 thinking to their decisions; it will serve as a
16 student lever. In the area of strategic alliances,
17 our academic parent team, our school governance
18 council, and anchor organizations. And in our
19 signature programs are Scholar Honor, Scholar Voice,
20 and Scholar Lead.

21 The student experience will include: K-5
22 students will experience a 90-minute block of ELA and
23 math daily, 55 minutes of cross-curricular writing
24 workshops, literacy integrated social studies, and
25 investigative science, structured play, interventions

1 and enrichment as well as restorative practice
2 circles. Students will experience rigorous STEM and
3 additional exposure to career, technology, languages
4 and leadership.

5 The personalized learning aspect will combine
6 traditional instruction supported by a learning
7 management system. The curriculum will include math,
8 ELA, spelling, reading, and writing. In the area of
9 mastery we'll offer differentiated instructional
10 lessons, personalized diagnostic, targeted practices,
11 formative assessments, actionable insights,
12 interventions, IEP goals, as well as learning paths.
13 It also has an engagement component that will allow
14 for rewards, Leaderboards, behavior management,
15 classroom collaboration, as well as a parent portal.

16 The student experience will continue with
17 extended learning opportunities through our
18 afterschool innovation lab; our summer institute,
19 which will include rising kindergartners; healing
20 arts; foreign language; sports; and entrepreneurship.

21 In the area of our student services, Response to
22 Intervention, the school support team will use a
23 robust early warning system that will provide student
24 data and indicators of risk to identify students who
25 are at risk of performing poorly academically due to

1 a number of factors. This system will allow them to
2 be matched with appropriate supports and
3 interventions. The school counselor, Director of
4 Emotional Intelligence, Student Achievement
5 Specialist, Academy Directors, and Special Education
6 staff along with other support personnel will be a
7 part of the Crisis Management Team and will receive
8 the necessary training to address crisis situations
9 if a school counselor is not available.

10 ScholarVoice -- students will learn the
11 importance of cooperation and civic engagement early.
12 The student government will mirror a municipal
13 government with an elected Mayor and City Council
14 from the student body.

15 Students will be leaders both in the schools and
16 in their communities. Each scholar will receive
17 formal leadership training woven throughout their
18 academic experiences. All students will learn skills
19 in the areas of decision-making, problem-solving,
20 negotiation, and strategic planning. The training
21 will be tailored by each grade level.

22 And then ScholarMade scholars will be exposed to
23 an integrated honor system that promotes strong
24 character development, honesty, empathy, and
25 restorative justice.

1 The teaching experience -- teachers will enjoy a
2 90-minute block daily for professional learning
3 communities, collaborative planning, action research,
4 and to participate in competency-based PD.

5 Our Teaching Fellows Program is the intentional
6 development of teachers as learning leaders and
7 recognizes teachers for their achievements. The
8 Teaching Fellow is a skilled teacher who has
9 demonstrated the qualifications to serve in
10 leadership roles for the school through a combination
11 of teacher effectiveness, student growth, and the
12 completion of micro-credentials or content graduate
13 hours. The Teaching Fellow provides an immediate
14 resource to colleagues, and creates a community of
15 professional growth. Emerging and intermediate
16 teachers are exposed to a high-quality learning
17 environment where support and expertise are a part of
18 the school's culture through this pool of talented
19 educators.

20 Our anchor organizations are: Six Seconds
21 Emotional Intelligence, The Ruler Program out of Yale
22 University, West End for the -- our parent teams,
23 Playworks for the structured play, EdTrust for equity
24 in motion, Coaching for Equity Institute, Healing
25 Arts, the Foundation for Critical Thinking, Project

1 Lead the Way in the area of computer science,
2 Code.org, Teach for America, Arkansas Teacher Corps,
3 the Teaching Channel, Google Educator, and Digital
4 Promise powered by Bloomboard.

5 In the area of food services, ScholarMade will
6 issue an RFP for a vendor to provide on-site food
7 service. The current plan is to offer pre-plated
8 meals. The facility includes space for a kitchen
9 designed to support this program. The vendor will be
10 required to provide the necessary equipment as part
11 of the meal cost. ScholarMade has budgeted \$201,600
12 for the fiscal year '19 and \$241,200 in fiscal year
13 '20. Food services is planned to be a break-even.

14 ScholarMade plans to offer limited
15 transportation to students.

16 And in the area of finance, a conservative
17 approach has been made in the budget assuming only
18 70% free and reduced rates for the school, while non-
19 magnet schools in the area have a 100% free and
20 reduced rate. We will make adjustments as needed.

21 In the area of the facility, an extensive
22 facility search evaluating 10 potential sites was
23 conducted before selecting the proposed facility
24 located at 2410 South Battery, Little Rock. The
25 Historic Mitchell Elementary is a two-story brick

1 building with a basement and two small additional
2 buildings, for a total of 42,695 square feet. The
3 site is on 1.27 acres with a play area, parking, and
4 an ADA accessible drop-off point. The facility will
5 include 21 general classrooms with academy areas
6 designated for K-2, 3-6 and 7-9 grades; a health
7 suite, collaborative learning spaces, and a
8 multipurpose room and a good prep area, with ADA
9 accessible restrooms located on each floor.

10 Our goals -- in 2019, annually we have a growth
11 goal that students will grow 1.25 levels each year,
12 as measured by NWEA, in reading and in math. 100% of
13 our instructional staff will use a Learning
14 Management System to monitor student performance to
15 identify deficiencies in academic progress and
16 provide appropriate intervention. In 2020, we hope
17 to decrease student disciplinary referrals by 7% and
18 all TAGG students will meet or exceed all state
19 performance targets in math and reading. In 2021,
20 75% of students in testing grades who have attended
21 the school for three or more years will meet the
22 readiness benchmark on the ACT Aspire math, science,
23 writing, English, and reading. In 2023, 75% of the
24 9th graders who have attended the school for three or
25 more years will meet the readiness benchmark on state

1 assessments in math and reading. Annually, parents
2 will participate in academic parent teacher teams and
3 faculty will progress at least one level each year
4 measured by the ScholarMade Talent Development
5 Teaching Fellow program.

6 We believe that the model meets the legislative
7 intent. It is designed to improve student learning.
8 It is designed to increase learning opportunities for
9 all students, with special emphasis on expanded
10 learning experiences for students who are identified
11 as low-achieving. It encourages the use of different
12 and innovative teaching methods. It creates new
13 professional opportunities for teachers, including
14 the opportunity to be responsible for the learning
15 program at the school site. It provides parents and
16 pupils with expanded choices in types of educational
17 opportunities that are available within the public
18 school system -- that are not available within the
19 public school system. And the goals hold the charter
20 accountable for meeting measurable student
21 achievement standards.

22 And I will close with this, with our ScholarMade
23 affirmation. We look to the H.I.L.S. to remember our
24 responsibilities: Honor in every interaction,
25 Intelligence in every decision, Leadership in every

1 situation, and Service to every person.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you very
3 much. I was just looking at my -- stopping the clock
4 here; you were just almost perfect on your time. So,
5 thank you.

6 There is about a minute left. Is there anyone
7 else from the school that wanted to speak?

8 DR. ANDERSON: (shaking head from side to side)

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right. Thank
10 you.

11 At this time do we have anyone here to speak in
12 opposition?

13 Okay. Were you sworn in?

14 SUPT. POORE: I was not this afternoon, but this
15 morning I was.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Do we need to --
17 okay, let's go ahead. Let me get my -- okay, we'll
18 go ahead and swear you in just again to be sure. Mr.
19 Poore, do you swear or affirm that the testimony
20 you're about to give shall be the truth, the whole
21 truth, and nothing but the truth?

22 SUPT. POORE: I do.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you. We have
24 20 minutes for opposition.

25 SUPT. POORE: Thank you. And I won't take as

1 long because I know that you have other materials
2 that I provided earlier today that I think carries
3 over into this situation as well.

4 One of the things that I will share with you --
5 and I apologize that I did not get to hear the
6 presentation by Dr. Anderson. And I also would like
7 to share that Dr. Anderson did -- has already
8 proactively tried to reach out one other time. So
9 when people say that they want to partner, Dr.
10 Anderson -- that was a question that you brought up,
11 Mr. Wilson; she reached out to us once already. So I
12 do want you to be aware of that and try to be as
13 honest and forthcoming as I can in these kinds of
14 situations.

15 You know, I've outlined for all of you my
16 reasons for speaking out against the charter school
17 expansion at this point in time. And I just want to
18 kind of maybe use -- I'm going to -- I've had time
19 after my significant loss on the first charter to
20 maybe come up with just a couple of other points to
21 maybe make you think a little bit deeper. You know,
22 one of the things that's in the application process
23 that people have to respond to, the entities that are
24 asking for a charter, is they're asked to share the
25 impact that it has on the Little Rock School

1 District. Now if you go read that and then you go
2 read the one for ScholarMade or you go read the one
3 for any other applications that come in it basically
4 is a template that's getting inserted into the
5 documents that's one and the same, and it's basically
6 saying -- it's a valid thing to bring forward that
7 there are no legal implications that are going to
8 impact the district. But again my point that I tried
9 to present to you earlier is this will have a
10 significant impact on our district because of the
11 number of available seats that are available in
12 Little Rock right now with the existing charters,
13 with the existing public school entities.

14 The other thing that I would share specifically
15 about the application here is that I'm hoping that
16 you will follow-up with some questions when you have
17 the chance to ask the ScholarMade group, is that when
18 you look at the numbers of 40 to 50 students per
19 grade level, at least that's my math, and
20 specifically at the K-7, K-8 area, in terms then of
21 -- obviously you can do a fine job with that in terms
22 of work on things that are tied to social studies,
23 science, math and English class. What about -- what
24 are the other ways to try to accomplish then the
25 delivery of some of the things that do make the

1 learning unique and special for students?

2 The other one that I wanted to bring up is to
3 again highlight the fact that they shared numbers
4 about Stephens Elementary and it being low. Again,
5 if you look at the data that I presented to you all
6 on the last and most recent test scores, Stephens
7 moved up in 11 of its 15 tested categories. Stephens
8 is the home of a bank on campus; it does incentives
9 for students so that they actually are given bank, if
10 you will, money that they get to then go deposit into
11 a bank that's tied into First Security. The bank
12 gives them a credit card which then they get to go
13 use to be able to share -- get everything from hair
14 appointments, nails, movie theater, game room; so
15 innovation at Stephens. And sometimes we don't think
16 that's happening in the public school environment; it
17 absolutely most definitely is. So that form of
18 choice in terms of innovation, it's happening in
19 traditional schools; it's happening in the magnet
20 schools.

21 The other thought that I thought was something
22 that I hope you do pursue is just what -- and maybe
23 this happened in the presentation prior to me
24 arriving -- is how to support and handle
25 transportation. I can tell you that the families

1 that are underserved have challenges economically and
2 typically do need transportation services in order to
3 access the schools, and so I hope that you do follow-
4 up with them on that.

5 The last thing that I will share with you today
6 and then we'll -- I can remain here until 2:15; we
7 have a press announcement to tie into Rock Region and
8 Metro for all of our high school kids to be able to
9 have access into the transportation system with Rock
10 Region to get them through career development
11 programs.

12 Again, this is a district that's on the move.
13 We need to be given some opportunities to have
14 greater movement on that. As I was listening to the
15 discussion from the first charter earlier today, with
16 Einstein, I almost got to thinking that, you know,
17 there were several times where the folks that are
18 supporting the charter are saying, you know, "We want
19 to make sure you understand and that you get a clear
20 understanding of what we're doing as a charter." I'm
21 wondering how well you understand the dynamics of the
22 Little Rock School District right now. Because you
23 have to understand the Little Rock School District
24 and its service to the community and what it's doing
25 or not doing to help better understand whether or not

1 this is the right time, the right place for the
2 charter expansions that are being proposed over these
3 three days.

4 I am going to be able to stay till 2:15 and then
5 I've got a car picking me up to try to be as
6 efficient with my time as possible. And I appreciate
7 the opportunity to speak to you again this afternoon.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you, Mr. Poore.

9 Do we have anyone else to speak in opposition?

10 [BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE]

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. The school, you
12 have five minutes remaining if you would like to --

13 DR. ANDERSON: I just want to say that I did
14 enjoy meeting with Mr. Poore and Mr. Burton and we
15 did have a very good meeting around ways that we
16 could possibly collaborate. And when that time
17 comes, and if it's possible, we will continue to try
18 to push working with the Little Rock district. We do
19 commend them for the gains that they were able to
20 make. I do want to point out though that Stephens
21 actually dropped 7% in math and also dropped 5% in
22 English. So while they did have some gains in other
23 areas they did lose a little ground in that
24 particular area. And as far as the impact, I will
25 let Mr. Walter speak to the impact on the district.

1 But from my calculation, because we're trying to
2 build a school from the ground up, is I think we will
3 have 250 students impact on the school if all of the
4 children come from the Little Rock School District at
5 that point. We are pulling children who are not
6 enrolled yet. Any kindergartners who come are not
7 enrolled in the district at that time, so it's not a
8 negative impact on them. But there are also -- he
9 spoke earlier about choice and people are exercising
10 choice and they are. There are 10,000 students in
11 private schools; there are 644 students from the
12 Little Rock School District in home-schools. Those
13 students, those parents may decide to come back and
14 so there are other -- we think that those are things
15 that we cannot necessarily say that it will have a
16 negative impact on the school.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Please state your name for
18 the record.

19 MR. WALTER: Thank you. Good afternoon. Tripp
20 Walter, Staff Attorney, Arkansas Public School
21 Resource Center. I believe the way the application
22 is set up is there are two ways for an applicant to
23 indicate the impact it will have on the host school
24 district -- and any other school districts, for that
25 matter. The first is to give an approximation as to

1 how many students it would potentially pull from the
2 resident district and host districts, which obviously
3 Dr. Nichols Anderson has done and provided for you.
4 The other piece is the desegregation analysis. And
5 if -- and obviously under statute the applicant is
6 required to present a desegregation analysis and
7 carefully determine whether its opening will provide
8 a detriment to the resident district or any other
9 districts in the area. Obviously, with a school
10 located in Little Rock it is necessary at a minimum
11 to look at the Little Rock School District, the North
12 Little Rock School District, and the Pulaski County
13 Special School District. The desegregation analysis
14 that was submitted by the applicant carefully did
15 that and came to the conclusion that there would be
16 no segregative impact that would be caused by its
17 opening in Pulaski County, that there was no legal
18 hurdle so-to-speak that it would have to overcome in
19 front of the panel on segregative issues in order to
20 be opened. And then the follow-up analysis by the
21 Department's legal staff I believe reached the same
22 conclusion.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Anderson, is there
24 anything you wish to add? You've got just about a
25 minute left.

1 DR. ANDERSON: Oh, just that they also received
2 175 students as a result of school choice. So they
3 are benefitting as well from parents being able to
4 choose to come to the Little Rock School District
5 from other districts.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. At this time,
7 Panel, I think we're ready for questions. I will
8 start with Dr. Owoh.

9 DR. OWOH: Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr.
10 Anderson, if you would expound on the grade span, why
11 you chose K-9?

12 DR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I wanted to walk you
13 through that data in a way to show that we were
14 really concentrating on -- it's been my experience
15 that often we think about students being college
16 ready and there are a lot of points along the way
17 that we need to make sure that they're ready. Like
18 we need to make sure that they're kindergarten ready,
19 we need to make sure that they're ready for testing
20 grades, and we need to make sure that they're ready
21 for high school. And so when we were desegregating
22 the data we looked at the 9th grade data that I
23 pointed out to you and they were -- the students were
24 not performing. And as an educator, having been an
25 educator for many years, I felt like we have

1 struggled over the years with what to do with 9th
2 graders. We've had junior highs, we've had middle
3 schools, we've put the 9th graders in high school,
4 and then we tried to create 9th grade academies --
5 but the bottom line is they're not performing well.
6 So we felt like if we can keep the 9th grade -- and
7 that's part of our goal is to send the Little Rock
8 School District part of our strategic alliance
9 strategy, to send them proficient students to their
10 high schools and to give those 9th graders the skills
11 that they need in 9th grade. Ninth grade is the new
12 12th grade in this particular model.

13 DR. OWOH: Okay. Thank you. In reference to --
14 I noted that under your special education section in
15 your application you referenced the RTI process.
16 Would you expound upon that and how you all will
17 implement that? And also would you just utilize the
18 RTI process -- if you would clarify if you would just
19 use the RTI process for academic purposes or behavior
20 as well?

21 DR. ANDERSON: And so the RTI process will be
22 using -- and that is also within your manual I think
23 on page -- I'm not certain of the page; in mine it's
24 22. But, yeah, we would definitely use the Response
25 to Intervention and our early warning system to --

1 for a set of indicators that may indicate that the
2 child is on track not to be -- that has some
3 deficiency academically or behavior-wise or social
4 and emotional, and to put interventions in place to
5 strategically move that child to where we need for
6 them to be. And our goal is really to test children
7 out of special education, to provide them options and
8 such a rigor that -- and the modifications and the
9 accommodations where the students can start to excel
10 at a higher rate. So that's basically -- we will
11 have a full inclusion program where allowable,
12 according to the needs of the students.

13 DR. OWOH: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Hernandez, do you have
15 questions?

16 DR. HERNANDEZ: Yes, ma'am. My question is
17 about facilities. I like the pictures that you
18 showed in your presentation. My question is: looking
19 at the current facility I know there -- it seems to
20 be there could be some issues there. So just as far
21 as the planning and how to get that building -- do
22 you feel like that building is ready, in shape, and
23 how are you budgeting to get that building in shape?

24 DR. ANDERSON: So I'll let our architect, Chad
25 Young, come and respond to that.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And please state your name
2 for the record.

3 MR. YOUNG: Chad Young.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: You are recognized.

5 MR. YOUNG: Would you repeat that question? I
6 heard just a little back over here.

7 DR. HERNANDEZ: It was a question in regard to
8 the facility. I know in the picture, the renderings
9 that were there, it looked really nice. And so I
10 know that that's probably not reality right now in
11 looking at some other pictures that I've seen of the
12 building. And so having it ready for school, I don't
13 see things associated in the budget that talk about
14 renovation costs or anything like that. So I was
15 just curious about having that building ready for
16 day-one. What's the plan for that?

17 MR. YOUNG: It may not be in the budget you're
18 looking at, but on the construction side we're
19 working towards having that building complete by July
20 of next year. We work with Clark Construction, the
21 general contractor; they're currently demoing the
22 project. But it's been, you know, vacant for several
23 years and right now it's in the demolition phase.
24 We're, you know, working to get all the
25 subcontractors lined up and get all those executed.

1 So it's underway right now.

2 DR. HERNANDEZ: So is that part of just the
3 lease agreement, is the construction is not by the
4 school, it's by the owner, and then they're getting
5 it ready for you guys to lease?

6 MR. YOUNG: That is correct.

7 DR. HERNANDEZ: That helps. Thank you.

8 MR. YOUNG: Sure.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Anything additional now?

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: No.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Wilson, do you
12 have questions right now?

13 MR. WILSON: Dr. Anderson, you may have heard my
14 question to Mr. Poore and the Einstein applicants
15 this morning concerning cooperation, collaboration,
16 communication between the charter schools and the
17 public schools in the Little Rock area, which,
18 myself, I believe is critical. I'd like to know what
19 your commitment or intention might be to continue
20 that collaboration or that communication that you've
21 already had with Mr. Poore.

22 DR. ANDERSON: Well, we are certainly willing.
23 I've had an opportunity to work with several charters
24 in other states that enjoy great partnerships where
25 charters and district schools have co-located, have

1 shared the same building. I've had opportunities
2 where districts and charters have shared professional
3 development. And so they set aside differences to
4 work together on behalf of children. And so we
5 remain steadfast and committed to that and I think
6 that, you know, trying to talk to Mr. Poore and his
7 leaders over several months that shows my level of
8 commitment and hopefully, if the charter is approved,
9 we'll talk again. We are committed to working and
10 being a school that operates positively within the
11 district.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, questions?

13 MS. NEWTON: I have a comment and a question for
14 Dr. Anderson. The application is very complete and
15 it addressed all the areas that were of concern for
16 me. My question -- and especially I'm impressed with
17 the student support services. And, you know, I'm not
18 -- my background is not academic but it's social
19 services, and I think it's a critical piece in
20 student success for this to be a part of a
21 comprehensive plan. My question is: do you have
22 plans for accessing grants for innovation? Not to
23 suggest that you're not innovative in your approach,
24 but looking into the future do you have any ideas of
25 how you might look at ideas of innovation to further

1 move these students forward?

2 DR. ANDERSON: Absolutely. We plan to pursue
3 all grant opportunities that will help us meet the
4 needs of these students and to continue to implement
5 a model that will allow us to differentiate down to
6 the personalized level for students. And so we
7 definitely will be pursuing and researching those
8 opportunities.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Turner.

10 MS. TURNER: Thank you. So in looking at your
11 application I'm wondering beyond this and planning
12 for the future, since you do have the 9th grade in
13 there and you did mention career and technical
14 opportunities by mentioning journalism, can you tell
15 me what your plan is beyond that, beyond the 9th
16 grade? Are you looking at students -- are you
17 looking at offering those grade levels beyond the 9th
18 grade? And what are you thinking in terms of career
19 and technical education?

20 DR. ANDERSON: So at this point we are not going
21 to offer grades beyond the 9th grade at this time.

22 MS. TURNER: Okay.

23 DR. ANDERSON: We'll continue to research high
24 school. But at this time we're really focused on
25 trying to get students high school ready.

1 MS. TURNER: Okay. Thank you for that. And so
2 my follow-up question would be then because you did
3 mention the career and technical education at the 9th
4 grade with journalism, so do you have any other plans
5 for career preparation with 7th, 8th or 9th graders?
6 And what have you talked about along those lines?

7 DR. ANDERSON: So we plan to use Project Lead
8 the Way in the area of computer science. You will
9 also see on there Code.org as a resource anchor
10 organization that provides free resources to
11 teachers, lesson plans for under-represented
12 minorities and females in this particular area. I
13 did definitely mention journalism; I'm a former
14 journalism teacher, so that's probably why I
15 understand and know how important it is for students
16 to be able to write well, to be able to -- and to
17 give them student voice as well. But there's also a
18 very technical side of journalism with design,
19 graphic design, pulling together publications,
20 producing publications that I think will really give
21 them a set of hard skills that will be useful in high
22 school. We also plan -- through our ScholarVoice and
23 ScholarLead program plan to have career specialists
24 come through on a regular basis. We hope to have the
25 City Council people and the Mayor mentor. So those

1 are some areas that we feel like we can do.

2 MS. TURNER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I've got just a few
4 questions here, and my first one goes back to
5 something Dr. Owoh had mentioned in terms of having
6 the charter all the way through 9th grade. And just
7 thinking once you get to 9th grade you're really
8 having to start expanding your personnel to make sure
9 that you're offering all the classes to get the
10 students prepared for high school. And I did
11 appreciate your expectation -- or your explanation of
12 that expectation that preparing -- having prepared
13 students in certain key points along their education
14 career. But having looked at that, do you feel
15 confident that you're going to be able to really
16 adequately staff your school to meet all of those
17 different needs of students once they get to 9th
18 grade? And if so -- and I'd like to hear a little
19 bit more about your Teaching Fellowship program and
20 how does that play into it. Is that a pathway to
21 licensure or is that strictly the professional
22 development? So --

23 DR. ANDERSON: So I absolutely feel like we'll
24 be prepared to meet the needs of the 9th graders.
25 I've had experience with running charters that were

1 K-12, so I know the challenges of running a high
2 school program with a small group and having to offer
3 all of the high school courses. We definitely will
4 partner with the Arkansas Math and Science School for
5 the distance learning and those courses as well that
6 students may -- that are operating at different
7 levels may need or desire to take. But we definitely
8 feel like -- I've thought about -- we've thought
9 about the instructional program and we feel that it
10 is really going to accelerate the student achievement
11 of students at this level.

12 And as related to the Teaching Fellow program,
13 if you'll look in your manual, and it is behind the
14 professional development, there is a list of proposed
15 professional development plans that's included. And
16 behind that is more information about the Teaching
17 Fellow program. And so it really is a talent
18 development program to grow teachers to a pipeline to
19 leadership, and once they get to that point to give
20 them learner-leader opportunities for them to
21 participate.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you. I think that's
23 something I want to look at further. It looks like
24 it's very well thought out.

25 My next question, you mentioned recruiting

1 students and talking about there are a number of
2 students who are currently home-schooled or not
3 enrolled in a public school. What's your plan for
4 outreach and recruitment of students who maybe aren't
5 part of a public school system right now?

6 DR. ANDERSON: We definitely plan to do mass
7 mailing; we plan to have a number of meetings that
8 will, you know, share information about the model; we
9 plan to go into wherever we're invited, wherever
10 people would love to hear about the model. We
11 definitely are open to -- it is difficult to know who
12 those students are to target reaching them. But we
13 definitely plan to have a marketing plan that we can
14 reach as many students as possible within the
15 community, within the area where the school is, but
16 also, you know, via website and, like I said, mass
17 mailings to communities.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And then I have
19 just one final question for the moment. You
20 mentioned teachers having a 90-minute block for --
21 did I hear that right -- for basically planning or
22 professional learning community time?

23 DR. ANDERSON: (Nodding head up and down.)

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And is that daily?

25 DR. ANDERSON: It will be at least three days a

1 week.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: At least three days a
3 week?

4 DR. ANDERSON: Uh-huh.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Do you have a PLC model
6 already planned or is this something that -- do you
7 have someone that's going to lead teachers in this?
8 Because I know we talk a lot about professional
9 learning communities and there are models out there,
10 and I was just curious what you all had planned.

11 DR. ANDERSON: Yeah. We have not selected a
12 model per se, but we know that professional learning
13 communities is a process, not a program. And so what
14 -- we definitely know what we want teachers to do
15 during this time; we want them to have the option to
16 participate in webinars, we want them to have the
17 option to complete micro-credentialing, we want them
18 to have the option to plan together across grade
19 levels and across content, and to do data analysis,
20 so that they don't have to take as much work home in
21 the afternoon. We want them to be able to have that
22 collaboration.

23 We did not do -- we did not bring design, the
24 floor plan of the building, but there are
25 collaborative spaces throughout for teachers to be

1 able to sit and work together. That is the paradigm
2 that -- and we wanted to provide them time during the
3 day to do that work.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And I appreciate what you
5 said, it's not a program. Thank you.

6 Okay. We have additional questions. Ms.
7 Newton.

8 MS. NEWTON: Mr. Poore raised the question of
9 transportation. Would you talk to us about your
10 plans?

11 DR. ANDERSON: We do plan to offer
12 transportation.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez.

14 DR. HERNANDEZ: I know in our notes there was
15 still a question I don't think anybody asked about
16 goals on English.

17 DR. ANDERSON: We included it. As a matter of
18 fact --

19 DR. HERNANDEZ: Oh, is it in the new part of the
20 presentation?

21 DR. ANDERSON: Yeah, we did. We just missed
22 that. If you'll look within your -- within there,
23 the new goal does include English as well.

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And speaking of goals, if
25 I could -- I noticed you referenced in your goals

1 TAGG groups of students. And while I realize these
2 are goals, you know, for the success of your charters
3 and our new accountability plan --

4 DR. ANDERSON: Right.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- will be put into place,
6 the TAGG groups, each subgroup now of students or
7 each student group is looked at individually. So I
8 was just going to make a comment that I think as you
9 all look at that you're going to want to look at
10 every single student --

11 DR. ANDERSON: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- and whether or not
13 needs of groups are or are not being met. But --

14 DR. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes. But I did note that
16 you do have criteria established for those goals. So
17 I think if we have the English goal that clears that
18 up.

19 Okay. Are we ready to move to looking at the
20 remaining issues, the waivers?

21 DR. HERNANDEZ: Ms. Davis, I don't think there
22 was any -- unless there's other questions about
23 waivers, there weren't any outstanding issues with
24 any of their waivers that I recall seeing.

25 MS. DAVIS: (Shaking head from side to side.)

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Did any panel member wish
2 to discuss any of the waivers? Do you have any
3 questions about what they were requesting?

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: I did have a question, Dr.
5 Anderson. So is this the -- so is this ScholarMade,
6 is this a new Arkansas-based --

7 DR. ANDERSON: It is a new Arkansas-based since
8 2015.

9 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- charter management
10 organization?

11 DR. ANDERSON: Yes, since --

12 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

13 DR. ANDERSON: Yes. When I left Lighthouse we
14 launched it. And in the interim we've supported the
15 Mind Trust out of Indiana, Indianapolis; we've
16 supported Goodwill with their -- with the opening of
17 their adult charter school; Tussle [ps] Legacy -- and
18 so, yes.

19 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. Great. Thank you.

20 MR. WILSON: I'd like to make the motion when
21 you're ready.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So, Ms. Davis,
23 you've said there are no remaining issues?

24 MS. DAVIS: I had one issue; it wasn't on their
25 waiver sheet. But they did mention that they will

1 have a full inclusion program for special education
2 students, and I just need them to confirm that if
3 those students aren't successful in full inclusion
4 that they are prepared to and will offer the full
5 continuum of special education services.

6 DR. ANDERSON: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. If that takes care
8 of our issues, is there any remaining public comment?

9 Okay. So at this time I will accept a motion
10 for ScholarMade Achievement Place.

11 MR. WILSON: Madam Chairman, I move that the
12 application be approved.

13 DR. OWOH: Second.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion and
15 a second.

16 All those in favor say "aye."

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Any opposed?

19 Congratulations. Your application has been
20 approved today.

21 And I will note that, again, all the
22 applications today, it is approved but conditionally.
23 We'll have to look at everything on Thursday in terms
24 of numbers.

25 DR. ANDERSON: Thank you so much.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. If it's okay with
2 the Panel if we could take -- oh, I'm sorry. We've
3 got to -- okay. We need to go online and do our
4 voting and include our reasonings for the vote and
5 we'll go through those in a moment for feedback.

6 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. If we could go
8 through our votes and reasons, Dr. Hernandez, we'll
9 start with you.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. I voted for the
11 application. My reasons are it was a very thorough
12 application that addressed all areas. Dr. Anderson
13 has a long history in education and managing charter
14 programs that will promote stability.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

16 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion and noted
17 that it was a comprehensive and sound educational
18 plan.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And I'll go ahead
20 -- she voted for because it was a comprehensive and
21 sound educational plan. We're in trouble if we don't
22 talk in the microphone. Okay. Dr. Owoh.

23 DR. OWOH: I definitely agreed with Ms. Newton.
24 I voted because the presentation application provided
25 a very comprehensive educational plan that promotes

1 individualized student learning, so --

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Turner.

3 MS. TURNER: I voted for the application because
4 it was a complete application and presentation. I do
5 have concerns with 9th grade course offerings,
6 especially with career and technical education
7 programs.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Mr. Wilson.

9 MR. WILSON: I voted for the application based
10 on my personal knowledge of Ms. -- or Dr. Anderson's
11 previous experience and the work that she and her
12 team accomplished in the Lighthouse system,
13 particularly benefitting my kids, my own kids.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Did you all -- were
15 you all able to hear that?

16 Okay. They're going to ask you to repeat it.
17 So if you could pull your mic down right to your
18 mouth. I'm sorry.

19 MR. WILSON: I say I voted for the application
20 based primarily upon my extensive acquaintance with
21 Dr. Anderson and the work that she had performed at
22 the Lighthouse school system in Jacksonville and at
23 other places and to the great benefit of our kids in
24 our community. Besides that, she'd beat me up if I
25 didn't say that.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you. And best
2 wishes and we appreciate you being here today.

3 All right. Panel, if we could take a five-
4 minute break.

5 (BREAK: 1:46 - 1:56 P.M.)

6 A-4: HEARING OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

7 APPLICATION: P3 ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL, McGEHEE, AR

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. Thank you
9 everyone for being here. We are now going to have
10 the Hearing of Open-Enrollment Public Charter School
11 Application: P3 Academy Charter School in McGehee,
12 Arkansas. Ms. Perry, you are recognized.

13 MS. PERRY: Thank you, Madam Chair. P3 Academy
14 Charter School is a proposed open-enrollment public
15 charter school to be located within McGehee School
16 District. The sponsoring entity is McGehee Desha
17 Alumni Community Center. The applicant is requesting
18 to serve students in grades 1 through 8 with a
19 maximum enrollment of 200 beginning in the 2018-2019
20 school year. The applicant has notified affected
21 districts of this proposed charter school.

22 The primary presenter today is Ms. LaDanan
23 Emerson, who is the marketing and business director.
24 She'll be joined or assisted by Ms. Ruby Graham
25 Emerson and Ms. Faye Graham Everett.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Will all
2 representatives from P3 Academy and anyone speaking
3 in opposition please stand to receive the oath?
4 Okay. If you'll raise your right hand. Do you swear
5 or affirm that the testimony you're about to give
6 shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
7 the truth?

8 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.
10 Ms. Emerson --

11 MS. EMERSON: Good afternoon.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And as you speak, just go
13 ahead and state your name for the record.

14 MS. EMERSON: Okay. It's LaDanan Emerson. Good
15 afternoon, Madam Chair, Panel. Thank you for having
16 us this afternoon. I just wanted to basically go
17 over an introduction to the Academy and why we think
18 it's important in the McGehee School District.

19 The P3 Charter Academy will be equipping
20 students with the knowledge, skills and creative
21 character traits -- and creative traits needed for
22 success. What we have found in our research is that
23 the McGehee School District, although it has done its
24 best, numbers have significantly declined as far --
25 and just a correction: we're going to be doing 1st

1 through 4th grade and work our way up to 8th grade
2 over the coming years. But the elementary school
3 numbers have declined sufficiently in English and in
4 math, in science, and in history. Specifically when
5 we looked at the numbers for elementary school
6 children for their math skills they have gone down
7 from over the last -- from 2013 down to 2015.
8 They're now at about 17% at or above proficiency.
9 Their numbers in English and history are basically
10 the same at 21, 22 percent.

11 The McGehee area is a very small area. We were
12 hoping that we would be able to give the parents in
13 that area -- oh, okay; thank you, ma'am -- parents in
14 that area an opportunity for choice, McGehee Desha
15 Alumni Community Center being the sponsor. That's
16 the building on the right, or where you're looking on
17 the left, and how it looks now on the right. That
18 was done through grants through the McGehee Desha
19 Alumni Community Center, which will be P3's sponsor.

20 Currently, the McGehee Desha Alumni Community
21 Center participates in the Arkansas Department of
22 Health nutrition services' special nutrition. They
23 do afterschool and summer programs. So we are well-
24 versed as far as what the children need as far as
25 their nutritional program. The school will offer a

1 lunch program. The kitchen is completely installed;
2 it is already up and operating. Also, we work along
3 closely with the Arkansas Food Bank and the school
4 also has a garden. That will be a part of their
5 curriculum as well. We figure being out in a garden,
6 learning hands-on as part -- will work as part of
7 their math skills and along with their learning a
8 diversified curriculum.

9 The P3 stands for our pupils and purpose and
10 preparation. Like we said, we will be doing our
11 school for grades 1st through 4th. The purpose is to
12 create a positive educational and life skill
13 foundation, and the preparation is for advancement
14 placement classes that will lead to lifelong learning
15 and education experiences once the students progress
16 to that level. Ms. Everett, who is a 40-plus year
17 teacher, retired teacher from the McGehee School
18 District -- she taught 3rd grade -- will go over some
19 of the things that make the charter school special.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And please state your name
21 for the record.

22 MS. EVERETT: My name is Faye Everett.
23 Greetings to all present. It is with humble
24 submission that I appear before you. I have been
25 retired for four years now; I retired 2013 from the

1 McGehee School -- Public School System. Now I
2 substitute for the surrounding schools and volunteer
3 at McGehee Desha Alumni Community Center. My task
4 here today is to elaborate on NEST 529 college
5 savings plan which is a vivid and important segment
6 of the campus of -- in that and will also enhance P3
7 Academy. We have a chart that displays each enrolled
8 student and their accumulated amounts. We'll receive
9 quarterly reports which we eagerly share with the
10 students. We have 43 students that's enrolled in the
11 plan. The amounts will look -- plans range from
12 \$21.14 all the way up to \$571.41 per students. Age
13 is important. The younger, the better. My seven-
14 month old grandson McKinley is already enrolled. I
15 also have an 8-year old and a 7-year old enrolled,
16 one with \$532 already invested and the other one with
17 over \$300 invested. This plate also is a chart
18 showing ways a student can earn a 529 savings at the
19 Center. We also verbally tell the students how they
20 can earn savings rewards. A lot of the rewards are
21 given spontaneously. The students know -- don't know
22 anything about it until it's happened for something
23 that they do positively. Some of the earning
24 requirements include consistent attendance, positive
25 behavior and attitude, grades. We expect high

1 expectations, grades like As and Bs, and of course
2 growth in grades. If a student has an F and they
3 bring it up to a C, that's progress. Participation,
4 pride for work -- take pride in what you do; don't
5 just do anything; and being respectful, just a few,
6 and many other requirements. Rewards are received
7 from the staff, NEST, and special guests that we
8 invite to come to the Center to speak. They come and
9 talk about their profession or special talents that
10 they have, and some are sometimes very generous to
11 the students. Our students are always eager to share
12 about their 529 savings and how they achieve them.
13 That motivates the speaks to reward the students with
14 monetary gifts.

15 We encourage our students to dream big. MDACC
16 uses NEST 529 savings as encouragement to our
17 students to start saving early for that important day
18 slowly approaching. They understand that we have big
19 dreams for them and we believe in them and their
20 dreams, and it is a powerful tool in creating hope
21 for their future. As our children's wants and needs
22 grow we too must grow with them, recognizing that one
23 day our children's, grandchildren's most important
24 needs may be just a few years away: the financial
25 resources to pay for the tuition, housing, and books

1 associated with college. I encourage you to start
2 saving early.

3 MS. EMERSON: Thank you, Ms. Everett.

4 Ms. Everett's presentation demonstrates
5 something that we feel that we'll be bringing to P3
6 that will distinguish us from the community schools.
7 We've already started teaching our children about how
8 to save for college. That was what her presentation
9 was about, the NEST college plan. We use that also
10 as a way to introduce them to a higher math. So that
11 is one part of what makes P3 different; our
12 curriculum through hands-on experience, infusion in
13 our agriculture curriculum, differential --
14 differentiated based on our Smart data and our
15 student grade level skills.

16 Our teachers will use data analysis to inform
17 instruction, individualized instruction used to meet
18 the needs of grade level success. All our curriculum
19 will be based off of the Arkansas curriculum
20 framework and we'll use MAP implementation.

21 Our parental involvement we think will also have
22 our standout from the McGehee School area and the
23 district versus P3. P3 will operate under the
24 premise of its teachers, parents and the students
25 must work together as partners to provide an

1 environment necessary for quality education. Parents
2 are an integral part of this partnership.
3 Commitments from the parents' support include helping
4 with their homework each night, reading their
5 children -- reading to their children every night,
6 insuring that homework is completed each night,
7 assist their children in the work that they need.
8 They'll be able to contact the teacher in the
9 evening, day or night as needed. And even if they
10 need to come to the teacher we will have that
11 opportunity as well. So the teacher can go to the
12 home or if the parent feels like they need to contact
13 the teacher after hours that would be available.
14 Parents, like the teachers, must hold the high
15 expectation for their children. Our parents will be
16 encouraged to help with and participate in the
17 special activities at P3 ACS and the parents
18 association will help with the fundraising events as
19 needed.

20 The data that we base the need for P3 in the
21 McGehee School District is as follows: in 2015, the
22 3rd grade English Language Art for students at or
23 above proficiency was 17%; for the 3rd grade math was
24 26%; 4th grade English Language Arts 20%; and 4th
25 grade math was 19%. We feel that the district

1 attendance, their graduation ACT scores rank below
2 the state average, with dropout in college and
3 remediation rates well above state average. The need
4 for an innovative college preparatory school program
5 seems obvious to us.

6 What makes us different in our classroom
7 activities? The primary responsibility of the
8 teachers is to insure that all students are meeting
9 their academic goals. This can -- excuse me. This
10 can only be accomplished by focusing on the students'
11 achievement through their quality instruction.
12 Teachers are expected to maximize the learning in the
13 classroom through good lesson planning and
14 implementation along with the effective disciplines.
15 The students will have the opportunity to demonstrate
16 mastery of all Arkansas state standards of their
17 current grade level and show proficiency in many
18 concepts and skills in completing grade levels due to
19 the school's extended time. Our time will go from
20 7:30 in the morning till 5:00 in the afternoon during
21 the week, and then we'll have four hours on Saturdays
22 once a month for those students that require any
23 additional assistance. The school day will end, as I
24 said, at 5:00 p.m. Students will receive homework
25 from each core subject. Homework will be utilized as

1 a way to review coursework learning from the day,
2 practice specific skills, pre-requisites for lessons,
3 and have the students practice concepts for class
4 that they are experiencing difficulties with. The
5 assignments are prepared for their -- from the
6 teacher and the assignments will not take longer than
7 30 minutes per core subject.

8 Just as an -- just we wanted to show we've
9 already started our program as far as the
10 agriculture. We've got our children involved. We've
11 got a hoop house that grows vegetables, as well as
12 have chickens, so that they are able to get out there
13 and learn basic math, basic science, and a little
14 earth science on top of it. We also have a small
15 little vegetable stand where the students are
16 involved in that. They're able to invest that money
17 back into their 529 college savings plan. They're
18 learning how to do inventory and they're learning
19 also weights and measurements. That also contributes
20 to their math skills. We have students who also --
21 as we said, we have the older ones who are in our
22 summer and afterschool program, as the weather
23 permits, go with the younger ones who are out there
24 with our volunteer assistants to teach them different
25 ways of learning math and earth science. And, again,

1 that's just one of the pictures of one of our
2 children out in their pea garden.

3 We also, in conclusion, basically wanted to let
4 everyone know that according to the numbers that
5 we've retrieved from the Department of Education more
6 black students are being held back a grade than other
7 ethnicities. In the area that we're in 72% of the
8 elementary school students at current 1st through 4th
9 grade that we will be working with are already on the
10 free and reduced lunch plan. So we will continue to
11 work that program for them as their parents need be.

12 The dropout rates, we'll be addressing that as
13 we go further along, as we extend our classroom out
14 to those higher levels. But as far as the elementary
15 school students we wanted to get them the basic core
16 that they need; their foundation is lacking at
17 present. And we feel at P3 with the educators that
18 we already have working with the students that we
19 will be pulling from as well, working with a couple
20 of the -- I guess we can say this -- Dr. Gene
21 Gregory, we've spoken to him and they are willing --
22 they have a daycare center. They go up through K-4?

23 MS. RUBY EMERSON: Yes.

24 MS. EMERSON: K-4, through K -- well, at K-4.
25 They are willing to bring their children to talk to

1 their parents, give us an opportunity to come in and
2 speak so that their children and their parents will
3 have a diverse opportunity to start their students
4 when they're ready for 1st grade. We've already
5 talked with them and work collaboratively with them
6 in this area so that we wouldn't be taking students
7 out of the McGehee School District. These children
8 are already not a part of the McGehee School
9 District. They're in elementary school pre-K,
10 they're in daycare centers. So when they're ready to
11 go on to 1st grade they will have that choice. The
12 children that are already in 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th
13 grade, that will open up an opportunity for their
14 parents to have another place for their children to
15 be educated.

16 We don't fault anyone for anyone's numbers, but
17 we do feel like that the parents in our area deserve
18 an opportunity to give their students another place
19 to go in order to help with the numbers that we see
20 out of our area.

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. You still have some
22 remaining time. You have about four minutes, if
23 someone else from the school wants to --

24 MS. EMERSON: Okay. We'll let Ms. Everett take
25 the remaining few minutes.

1 MS. EVERETT: I want to elaborate on our
2 assessment that we're going to use. It comes from
3 the Northwest Evaluation Association; it's called
4 MAP, Measures of Academic Progress. It measures what
5 students know and it informs what they're ready to
6 learn next. MAP growth creates a personalized
7 assessment experience that accurately measures
8 performance, whether a child or student performs on,
9 above or below grade level. A timely, easy-to-use
10 report helps teachers teach, students learn, and
11 administrators lead. MAP growth reveals how much
12 growth has occurred between test and events, and when
13 combined with our Norms shows projected proficiency.
14 Educators cannot track growth -- can track, excuse me
15 -- educators can track growth through the school year
16 and over multiple years. MAP growth reports
17 transform raw data into insights that help educators
18 take action. Teachers use them to differentiate
19 instruction and pinpoint individual student needs.
20 Higher level reports give administrators the context
21 to drive improvement across the entire schools and
22 systems.

23 You already rely on the data from MAP growth to
24 support learning for every student. MAP skills is a
25 skills mastery and progress monitoring assessment

1 that helps teachers drill down to the specific skills
2 each student needs to learn. It's going to be used
3 between MAP growth administrators to see exactly what
4 struggling students are missing and advanced students
5 are ready to take on; then adjust instruction in the
6 moment and monitor student progress. MAP skills
7 build on MAP growth results by drilling down to
8 pinpoint, as I said, specific gaps. Because MAP
9 skills arranges the skills in logical learning
10 progression teachers can clearly see what a student
11 needs to learn next.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right. Ms.
13 Everett, I think that takes care of that initial 20
14 minutes. So at this time we have 20 minutes for
15 anyone here in opposition to speak, and it will be 20
16 minutes total for the opposition. And if you will
17 state your name for the record, you are recognized.

18 SUPT. FERRELL: Yes. I'm Chris Ferrell; I'm the
19 superintendent for the McGehee School District. And
20 I would like to say that my comments today are not
21 about the charter school movements as a whole, that
22 they're not personal in any way, and that simply
23 we're asked to act in the best interest of our
24 students for their safety and their education. So my
25 comments will be contained to specifically only this

1 charter initiative, as I'm trying to develop my own
2 conversion charter initiative down the road. So with
3 that said, these are comments made with the best
4 information and data that I have on-hand and I'm not
5 going to go through a lot of fluff because I've got a
6 lot to say and we're under a time constraint.

7 I have enclosed pictures for your consideration
8 that show the exact location of the P3 charter
9 school. I want you all to take notice of the close
10 proximity to a busy drive-through liquor store and
11 social club. Also, there are two other
12 establishments close by that used to be bars and
13 social clubs that could be renovated and reopened.
14 Also, I'd like you to take notice of the picture
15 you've been given for the charter school and know
16 that the front of that building is actually a barber
17 shop, I'm told a very good one. Please notice that a
18 small size of the area is to be used for agricultural
19 purposes. It is not big enough to sustain an
20 agricultural curriculum, nor does it allow any room
21 for a playground for 1st through 4th graders.

22 Letters of reference were turned in for the
23 Panel to consider. All of the letters, except for
24 one, are from individuals outside of the area that's
25 affected by the proposed charter school. Where are

1 the letters from elected officials, local business
2 owners, church pastors, school patrons, and concerned
3 citizens that you see with a lot of other charter
4 applications? Two letters are not references at all
5 but merely acknowledge knowing the individuals
6 requesting the charter school. Many of the letters
7 make claims that local school districts are lacking
8 and/or not meeting the needs of the students. They
9 make vague wide-reaching claims of success if a
10 charter school is allowed. Where is the concrete
11 data to substantiate these claims? Is there a
12 curriculum with a proven track record amongst charter
13 schools that they plan to use? Many of these people
14 do not know anything about our local school districts
15 but are making claims based on word-of-mouth as if
16 they know firsthand. One letter makes mention of
17 historically under-serviced public schools in the
18 region but mentions no concrete evidence or data to
19 substantiate the claim. I'm a proud product of the
20 Arkansas Delta. I take personal offense to such a
21 statement without evidence based on facts.

22 I have enclosed the data from My School Info for
23 you to make your conclusion. Data that you've seen
24 so far runs through 2015 when we were under a
25 completely different test, different parameters,

1 different situation. My School Info data for you
2 that you have to look at is compared to successful
3 and achieving school districts. I didn't put any in
4 there where we would look great. I wanted you to see
5 how we've stacked up. For one example, they talk
6 about our graduation rate -- but what's left out of
7 that is we're slightly below the state average but we
8 are ahead of the state average and among many
9 achieving schools and college going rates, which I
10 find very impressive. There are many comments about
11 districts in the area with no data to back things up
12 mentioned. Have these people visited the schools in
13 the area that they are writing letters about and
14 judging? Have they sat down with the administrators
15 and teachers in these districts to talk about helping
16 students? This is too important of a matter to
17 consider without evidence, data or concrete proof.

18 There is a mention of savings accounts for
19 students with high grades and attendance. How will
20 this be monitored? Where is it in the budget? How
21 much money does a student get for a B versus an A?
22 What about perfect attendance, is it valued and
23 weighted more than grades?

24 One letter states that students are advancing
25 without learning reading and math. I'm not sure how

1 that happens. Is that possible, and what does that
2 mean? I only ask because we may want to know the
3 strategy to share their success with our students on
4 our campus. Again, it is something mentioned with no
5 data to back up the claims. One letter mentions the
6 P3 charter school having a superior program. How is
7 that measured when it's not even up and running?
8 Where is the evidence that supports this? How can
9 the reference letters mention graduation rates when
10 the P3 charter school is asking for grades 1 through
11 4? We will have them for kindergarten, then get them
12 back in the 5th grade. This concerns me greatly. My
13 district will still be held accountable for them
14 graduating and finding success. How will they track
15 their students after they return to me? How will
16 they measure success any differently than we
17 currently do? We use MAPS, we use Classworks; we use
18 many other things to track success of our students.
19 They make no mention of doing anything any
20 differently than we do. We already do all the things
21 they mentioned in our school district. One letter
22 states that the McGehee community as a whole is
23 endorsing this; this is not true. How does this
24 person making this statement come to believe that?
25 What is their evidence? Where are their surveys?

1 Where are their letters?

2 On the P3 Charter Academy open-enrollment form,
3 McGehee is misspelled throughout the document.
4 Normally this might be an oversight, but if you're a
5 resident of McGehee and a long-time member of the
6 McGehee community, which I'm not and had to learn the
7 hard way, you know the "e" goes in there and the
8 local folks take this very serious.

9 Asking for permission to hire uncertified
10 teachers but making claims that the teachers they
11 employ will raise the standards, add rigor, utilize
12 project-based teaching, and be able to utilize and
13 desegregate data doesn't make rational sense to me.
14 How are they going to locate and train the
15 individuals to do a better job than my teachers are
16 doing? We offer a very competitive salary for
17 southeast Arkansas and still have trouble locating
18 and hiring teachers. How will uncertified teachers
19 grow their students? We have the right to ask
20 because they are coming back to us as 5th graders.
21 Approving the charter school would greatly affect the
22 balanced diversity which we currently have in my
23 school district. It is a perfect balance, working in
24 harmony each and every day, and I invite you to come
25 look at how awesome it is.

1 They mentioned plans to utilize consultants and
2 specialists to align data and curriculum. We already
3 do this in all the local school districts. How much
4 will they pay for this and where is it in the budget?
5 What is the charter school offering that we currently
6 are not offering? We have not found anything in the
7 paperwork that targets a specific area in need of
8 improvement. What is the plan or strategy for
9 involving the area need or specific long-range
10 academic plans of success? How will they service my
11 ELL, ALE or SPED students that require service? Will
12 they try to exclude them through the application
13 process? Where is the data or strategy for
14 accomplishing the things they are saying? It states
15 that teachers will be responsible for recruiting
16 their 25 students. How does that look? How will it
17 be implemented? Will teachers be held accountable
18 for not recruiting their 25 students? What happens
19 if one teacher or grade only gets to 20 students? Do
20 they lose their job? Will 7.5% be enough in the
21 budget for fringe benefits? We currently need a
22 minimum -- a minimum of 25% to make a budget. I'm
23 concerned that they're going to be way over budget
24 utilizing 7.5%. \$32,000 for an on-call nurse -- does
25 he or she get paid if they rarely show up? How does

1 that work? Total administration salaries are 70% of
2 total salaries of teachers. Will one person be able
3 to hold many of the administration positions for more
4 salary? The funding matrix allows for 1st through
5 3rd grades to operate on a 23-to-1 ratio. How is
6 allowing a 25-to-1 ratio going to allow for student
7 success, not to mention 25-to-1 ratio with an
8 uncertified teacher?

9 We currently have a school choice and incredible
10 relationship with neighboring school districts. I'm
11 with the superintendent from Dermott today, who's
12 done an incredible job with their academics. We also
13 have a local private school that we work with as
14 needed. Districts in Arkansas have been using
15 Understanding by Design for sometime now. This
16 strategy mentioned by the proposed charter school is
17 nothing new to Arkansas educators. Am I to believe
18 that an uncertified and untrained educator can
19 implement this better than an Arkansas teacher does?
20 As a district we already utilize Khan Academy as
21 needed; again, this is not new or different. There
22 are many areas in which the proposed charter school
23 mentions using outside resources; however, I do not
24 see these listed in the budget. I don't see the
25 budget plans to purchase or utilize any programs that

1 have shown a track record of success. We haven't
2 seen any money budgeted for student transportation.
3 How are you going to service these students in an
4 area where their very own reference letters refer to
5 us as a poverty area and socioeconomically depressed?
6 How will these students get to school and get home on
7 a 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule? The local Boys and
8 Girls Club in McGehee runs an excellent, excellent
9 afterschool program. This could have an impact on
10 them as well with a 5 p.m. dismissal. We have 100%
11 free breakfast and lunch in our school district, even
12 though we're only reimbursed at 86.6%.

13 Please refer to the pictures I've enclosed for
14 your consideration. It will take a large amount of
15 money to bring the proposed facilities up to code to
16 be safe for student use. It is a very old facility
17 which used to be a tire shop. We're definitely
18 concerned about the safety of our students in this
19 regard. We're also concerned about no space for a
20 playground. If there is a playground, I worry about
21 our students being that close to a liquor store in
22 which an accident has a much greater possibility. I
23 see nothing in the budget for facilities or plans
24 should the Walton Foundation grant not be awarded.

25 The proposed charter school states that we have

1 a disturbingly small percentage of students
2 successful; however, our schools have not been
3 designated as priority or focus. Again, I've given
4 you concrete My School Info documentation that
5 compares us to some of the better school districts in
6 the state. Our graduation rate is mentioned many
7 times; however, our college going rate is not
8 mentioned and is very good for an Arkansas public
9 school. We have a college going rate higher than
10 many of the achieving schools in the state.

11 The comments about our attendance rates are just
12 absolutely not accurate. Our attendance rate is on
13 the very ESEA report that the charter proposers have
14 provided you, and it is 96.19%. I know a whole lot
15 of districts that would love to have a percentage of
16 attendance at 96.19%. I'm not sure who would even
17 call that low. Also, our test taking percentage rate
18 is 99.59%, which means we test all of our kids and
19 have the most accurate and reliable data you're going
20 to find.

21 Only 25 names signed the public meeting list as
22 in attendance. Is that anywhere close to a positive
23 indicator that local McGehee residents want this for
24 our students? And I'm saying this, again, out of the
25 best interest and safety and academics for my 1st

1 through 4th graders who will leave me as
2 kindergartners and return as 5th graders.

3 SUPT. RIDGELL: Good afternoon. My name is
4 Kristi Ridgell; I'm the superintendent of Dermott
5 School District. Thanks to the Panel and the staff
6 members for allowing me this opportunity to express
7 my position regarding the possible establishment for
8 another charter school in McGehee that could affect
9 the Dermott School District. Though I'm compelled to
10 taking this opposing position to the charter school,
11 my true position is my support of the education
12 delivery and development for all students in my
13 district. I'm already aware of the challenge my
14 district has in recruiting instructional staff. I
15 feel certain that this charter school will be
16 seriously challenged in recruiting and retaining --
17 maintaining skills, staff to provide the instruction
18 needed by our students. The possibility of students
19 attending this charter and returning to Dermott
20 School District after having lost academically is too
21 great for me to pass up the opportunity to oppose
22 this establishing of such a school in our district.
23 Again, my position is not to oppose this charter;
24 however, it is in my support of providing the best
25 education for students in our district and our

1 community. With ongoing advancement in technology,
2 it is vital that students be exposed to updated
3 technology. I doubt if this charter will be able to
4 meet the technology needs and experiences required
5 for these students. The infrastructure needed for
6 such technology is certainly not included in these
7 identified facilities. The students attending this
8 charter will be losers.

9 I cannot pass up this opportunity to impress
10 upon you the loss of any students and thus, the
11 financial impact it places upon the Dermott School
12 District. There exists the possibility that the loss
13 of students and revenue can lead to the closure of my
14 district. Such an act could impact all students in
15 my district, not just the students who may elect to
16 attend this charter. My campaign is more for
17 students and their future than simply opposing a
18 charter school.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you very
20 much. There was about three minutes left for
21 opposition comments.

22 SUPT. FERRELL: I would just like to add that we
23 do have a collaborative nature. We have a
24 collaborative nature with the local private school,
25 and my door is open for collaboration of any kind

1 that is needed. Being new to town I've yet to meet
2 the one saying that we need a charter school for our
3 students. But I'm telling you, you have concrete
4 data in the packet I've given you that shows that --
5 where our data is at and what it needs to do.

6 SUPT. RIDGELL: I've got one more statement.
7 I'm at 365 kids K-12. So if I lose 15 kids or 16
8 kids I'll be below the cap and it's not guaranteed
9 that the State Board will give me the waiver if I
10 applied for it. So that community needs that school
11 there.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you both for
13 being here.

14 And, Ms. Emerson, your school has five minutes
15 to respond.

16 MS. EMERSON: Yes, ma'am. Thank you. The
17 building that the superintendent, McGehee
18 superintendent spoke of where it has home of P3,
19 which is across the street, it's not the school
20 building. The school building is on the opposite
21 corner. Yes, that building presently has a barber
22 shop in it but we've already talked to our architect
23 to have that removed. That will become a classroom.
24 The entire building is owned by the McGehee Desha
25 Alumni Community Center. So we're not in proximity

1 of the building that he speaks of. It's just painted
2 on that building that the McGehee Desha Alumni
3 Community Center happens to own. Somebody painted
4 that on there for us. We are not responsible for
5 what someone will or will not open in our community.
6 There are vacant buildings unfortunately throughout
7 McGehee. People can put in a number of businesses as
8 they saw fit. But as to the numbers that were spoken
9 of, the salaries -- the salary for a McGehee School
10 District teacher is lower than average by \$2,424
11 versus an Arkansas teacher at large. Theirs is
12 \$4,435 -- \$44,325; in McGehee it's \$41,928.

13 As far as the test scores and where we got them
14 from, the elementary school math -- elementary for
15 McGehee, they're 19% at or above proficient, 19% in
16 the McGehee School District currently, especially for
17 McGehee Elementary School. The average is 27% in
18 Arkansas. For high school -- we'll skip high school
19 for now. Their other scores, at the elementary
20 school 22%; in Arkansas, 32% for the elementary
21 school. That's for their English scores.

22 As far as the graduation rates, we'll let them
23 have the graduation rates even though we don't deal
24 with high school, but they're much lower also than
25 the rest of the school districts around and in

1 Arkansas at large.

2 Higher chronic absenteeism -- the McGehee School
3 District's absenteeism 12.7%; Desha County, which is
4 where McGehee School District is located, 9.7%;
5 Arkansas, 10.4%. So their chronic absenteeism is at
6 a higher rate.

7 New school teachers, higher rate of new
8 elementary school teachers in the McGehee School
9 District. McGehee School District for elementary
10 school teachers, new teachers hired, 17.6%; Desha
11 County, 16.4%; Arkansas, 11%. McGehee is at 17.6 for
12 teachers that have two years or less in the
13 classroom, so their turnover rate unfortunately is
14 fairly high.

15 There's gifted and talented. For Desha County,
16 those who are proficient -- fewer elementary schools
17 in McGehee specifically, in the district; Desha
18 County 5%, McGehee School District 4.5%. Fewer
19 schools with limited English proficiency -- McGehee
20 School District, 2.1%; Desha County, 3.8%; Arkansas,
21 9.4%.

22 These numbers were not taken from out-of-state
23 people. We do have a lot of out-of-state folks who
24 come in and visit the school because they come in and
25 talk to our afterschool and our summer program to

1 teach our children that they can dream and be more,
2 be bigger than they think they can be. These numbers
3 were taken from the Office of Civil Rights, the
4 National Center for Education Statistics, the
5 American Community Survey, the United States Census
6 Bureau, and Dun and Bradstreet.

7 We do feel that we can offer our children
8 better. We wanted to give -- we don't want to take
9 from anyone else; all we want to do is give the
10 community an opportunity to choose. If they're
11 coming straight out of kindergarten, out of another
12 area of education -- not coming out of the school per
13 se but coming out of Gene Gregory's academies, then
14 they won't have even gone to the elementary school
15 yet. The McGehee School District won't see these
16 children until 5th grade. We plan to grow our
17 school, so maybe we can eventually go 5th, 6th, 7th
18 and 8th grade. But right now we want to give these
19 children a foundation. No, we've not had the
20 experience that the McGehee School District has, and
21 we don't fault them for that. My mom is from
22 McGehee; she graduated from a segregated school in
23 McGehee. She's a proud person from McGehee; that's
24 why she's back. Faye also went to the schools in
25 McGehee. She's also a college graduate and proud of

1 her McGehee connection. We want to show the children
2 in McGehee that there is another opportunity, give
3 their parents another opportunity, and show them that
4 there is someplace else to go.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

6 MS. EMERSON: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Emerson, your time is
8 up. Thank you.

9 Okay. At this time the panel members can ask
10 questions, and I'll start with Dr. Owoh. Do you have
11 questions at this time?

12 DR. OWOH: I do. Thank you, Madam Chair. First
13 question is about the grade span. It was stated a
14 couple of times in the presentation that McGehee
15 would not see the students until 5th, 6th grade. I'm
16 wondering about the kindergarten. Where would they
17 be? Will they start with McGehee School District
18 first and then -- or --

19 MS. RUBY EMERSON: 1st, 2nd -- my name is Rubye
20 Emerson. 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade would be our
21 primary group to start the charter school with. With
22 growth then we would move on to 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th
23 grade, and continued growth we could go on to the
24 12th grade.

25 DR. OWOH: Okay. Thank you. And so my follow-

1 up question to that: why was that grade --

2 MS. EMERSON: Excuse me, if I may -- C.B. King
3 is an elementary school -- well, not elementary; it's
4 a kindergarten nursery school -- and they go from
5 babies up through like K4, K5. So when they leave
6 C.B. King, which is Dr. Gene Gregory who I spoke of
7 before, they will leave C.B. King and come straight
8 to P3. They won't go into the McGehee School
9 District and then back out for 1st through 4th and
10 then back over for 5th. They'll leave straight from
11 C.B. King, which is babies through K4, K5, and then
12 come into P3.

13 MS. NEWTON: Can I -- I was under the
14 understanding that C.B. King is for developmentally
15 delayed children only. Is that not correct? They're
16 not -- it's not a general public enrollment school,
17 is it?

18 MS. EMERSON: They have developmentally disabled
19 and they have regular, normal children. Not everyone
20 that attends -- and they have more than one campus.
21 There's a campus over at First Baptist; those are for
22 babies, I'll grant you that. But their campus -- and
23 they go throughout Arkansas. But their main campus
24 has both developmentally disabled children as well as
25 normal children.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes, Dr. Hernandez.

2 DR. HERNANDEZ: Just a follow-up. This being an
3 open-enrollment charter school, how do you -- I have
4 trouble with the process of targeting a group to be
5 able to come into your school at 1st grade. There
6 should be -- there has to be open opportunity for all
7 kids to be able to apply to come to your school. So
8 what happens to the kids that may be in McGehee or
9 Dermott that want to come to your school? How is
10 that process going to work?

11 MS. EMERSON: It's open-enrollment for them as
12 well. We will get out and market to them, let them
13 know where we are and what we have to offer. At
14 present we don't offer transportation, only because
15 the transportation that we currently have is not
16 sufficient for picking up that number of children.
17 We do offer transportation in our afterschool and our
18 summer program. So that would be developed to where
19 we could go pick up children from other areas if they
20 need it. Most of the elementary -- before elementary
21 school kids, the pre-Ks, the nursery school type
22 children -- pre-K, pre-4, pre-5 -- are in some form
23 of daycare. So we would go wherever, like wherever
24 we're invited, speak to church groups, speak to
25 parent organizations to let them know that now that

1 their child is on their way into a public school
2 system that they have another alternative besides the
3 one that they currently know about.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: But just to clarify, you
5 are not offering kindergarten?

6 MS. EMERSON: Right.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Your proposal does not
8 include kindergarten, so you would be going into
9 those pre-K environments to let parents know in two
10 years --

11 MS. EMERSON: Yes, ma'am, that there is another
12 choice for them.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Owoh, do you have a
14 follow-up?

15 DR. OWOH: I do. In reference -- you provided
16 data in your presentation --

17 MS. EMERSON: Yes, sir.

18 DR. OWOH: -- about McGehee's and I think the
19 areas' ELL, English Language Learners, population, as
20 well as the gifted and talented program.

21 MS. EMERSON: Yes, sir.

22 DR. OWOH: But these particular programs you've
23 decided not to include in your charter application.

24 MS. EMERSON: Right.

25 DR. OWOH: And so I'm concerned and actually

1 have a question. If it was important enough to
2 provide the information, that data, then why are you
3 choosing not to implement or provide those services
4 to the students who may enroll in your facility or
5 program?

6 MS. EMERSON: The services, we're not -- the
7 reason we're not is because there's not a large
8 enough population that even requests them. That's
9 why the numbers are where they are. They're not --
10 as far as my research shows I didn't see where the
11 McGehee School District had a large number of those
12 students currently registered.

13 DR. OWOH: So even if you have one or two
14 students who are gifted they will not receive those
15 services?

16 MS. EMERSON: We would incorporate them into our
17 current curriculum. And as that population grew we
18 would be willing to grow thereby with them in order
19 to provide them the best that they could have at
20 hand.

21 DR. OWOH: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: If I may, I did look and
23 McGehee School District had about 5% of their
24 students this past year who are English Language
25 Learners. I didn't look up Dermott. But even, you

1 know, if it's 10 or 15 students, if you have a
2 representative population of the school district that
3 10 or 15 students who would need ELL services -- and,
4 again, it might be larger if you look at some of the
5 other school districts. So I do think that's
6 something to note.

7 MS. EMERSON: Yes, ma'am.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Do you want to ask
9 another question?

10 DR. OWOH: I do, but I'll wait till you come
11 back around.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Wait, okay. We'll go
13 ahead and go around. We'll go ahead and move over to
14 Mr. Wilson. Do you have any questions to ask at this
15 time?

16 MR. WILSON: No questions. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Turner.

18 MS. TURNER: Your application lists that you
19 would draw students from the surrounding areas,
20 McGehee, Monticello, Dermott, Dumas, and Lake
21 Village. Do you have any idea -- we've heard about
22 the impact this could possible have on Dermott. Can
23 you tell me about the impact that this could possibly
24 have on any other district?

25 MS. RUBY EMERSON: The McGehee District, we

1 would have an impact of probably 55 to 60 percent.
2 The other students would come from Dermott, Dumas,
3 Lake Village, and Monticello.

4 MS. TURNER: Are any of those other districts in
5 the situation that Dermott is in with their low
6 enrollment of 365, near the 350 threshold there?

7 MS. RUBY EMERSON: Monticello -- I think
8 Monticello, yes.

9 MS. TURNER: Okay. And my other issue was the
10 information you gave us in your application, all of
11 the participants were from McGehee, is that correct,
12 in your public meeting? The parents that attended,
13 they were all from McGehee?

14 MS. RUBY EMERSON: Some was from Arkansas City.
15 A few students came from Arkansas City and then most
16 -- yeah, and the rest of them are all from McGehee.
17 Yes.

18 MS. TURNER: Okay. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Turner, Monticello has
20 an enrollment of about 1900 students.

21 MS. TURNER: Thank you. I thought that would be
22 about right.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And we can pull up the
24 others if you need to on My School Info.

25 Ms. Newton, do you have a question?

1 MS. NEWTON: Yes. I have several points to my
2 question around fiscal ability to be able to operate
3 the school as it relates to building renovation,
4 budget shortfall, computer networking and hardwiring
5 for computer services for students. So all of it
6 revolves -- and there may be some others that some
7 other members may have. But specifically what I'm
8 concerned about in the application is the listed
9 shortfall of over \$300,000, along with the building
10 renovation being contingent upon grant funding which
11 may or may not develop.

12 MS. RUBY EMERSON: Would you please repeat the
13 question?

14 MS. NEWTON: Okay. The questions are, would you
15 address building renovation absent grant funding, the
16 \$370,000 budget shortfall, and the capital that will
17 be needed to put in place the computer networking for
18 obvious reasons, obvious capacity for the young
19 people to have computer access?

20 MS. RUBY EMERSON: We have a computer lab at
21 the current center now and that lab -- all the
22 computers were donated to us, so we would go back to
23 the same source again for our computers.

24 MS. NEWTON: Okay. And the budget shortfall of
25 \$370,000?

1 MS. RUBY EMERSON: We estimated what we would
2 -- for all of the programs that we wanted to offer
3 the students, even though we didn't have the money
4 but we do have collateral to back up some of that
5 shortfall of what we need. One building is totally
6 paid for; the second building is we owe on it less
7 than \$40,000. So we could always use those buildings
8 for collateral for that shortfall, as well as we have
9 other grant partners that would supply some funding
10 for us.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, if you'd like,
12 we have someone here from our finance office that may
13 can --

14 MS. NEWTON: I would appreciate it.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- do that. Okay. So --

16 DR. HERNANDEZ: Just a comment and piggyback off
17 that. I know there are several issues with the
18 budget in regards to the seven-and-a-half percent
19 benefits referenced. So I know Ms. Smith is here, if
20 she may can -- I know there's two budgets inside our
21 applications. So just help us kind of clarify some
22 of the -- what the major issues are.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And if you'll state your
24 name and position for the record.

25 MS. CAUSEY: My name is Selea -- Selea Causey

1 [ps] and I'm the Program Fiscal Manager with the
2 Fiscal Support Services.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. You're recognized.

4 MS. CAUSEY: So can you restate the question
5 please?

6 DR. HERNANDEZ: I know there's two different
7 budgets that's reflected in the application. One of
8 them that was referenced by Ms. Newton talked about a
9 \$370,000 shortfall, but even within that budget it
10 talks about the fringe benefits being at seven-and-a-
11 half percent which we know is probably not realistic.
12 So are there other concerns that you're seeing with
13 this? Obviously we wouldn't want them starting off
14 on the wrong foot.

15 MS. CAUSEY: The fringe benefits was the one
16 that stood out to us because the Charter Authorizing
17 Panel recommends 28% and they have budgeted really
18 low. And even with that increase I think it's still
19 going to be a huge deficit. Other than that, yeah,
20 that's it.

21 DR. HERNANDEZ: Maybe a follow-up. Another
22 question was about -- I didn't see anything that was
23 reflected of renovation costs or anything like that
24 with these buildings. So that would be something
25 that --

1 MS. CAUSEY: Right. Absolutely.

2 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- may be another hole in the
3 budget.

4 MS. CAUSEY: That would be a concern as well
5 since the new evidence came in.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And also in the review of
7 the budget I didn't notice any costs for food. There
8 was for salary and benefits, I believe, and I didn't
9 know if you all had made note of just some of the
10 other major areas maybe where budgeting had not
11 occurred. And then also just the overall total. So
12 if either one or both of you have got any additional
13 comments?

14 MS. SMITH: Cindy Smith, Coordinator for Fiscal
15 Services. Just reviewing it, it just seems
16 everything is budgeted low for a start-up because
17 you're going to run into costs that you never expect
18 to when you're just, you know, starting a charter, a
19 school of any kind. So I feel like the budget is low
20 on the expenditure side. Revenues, that might be
21 even a little high. There's no guarantee of what
22 will come in because you don't know the number of
23 students that will be there, but you're still going
24 to have the expense of the utilities, the salaries,
25 so --

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Does anybody have any
2 remaining questions for our Fiscal Support staff?

3 Okay. Thank you.

4 Panel, do you have any remaining questions for
5 the charter school?

6 Okay. Yes, ma'am, go ahead.

7 MS. RUBY EMERSON: I would like to just make
8 one statement. We operated the afterschool programs
9 and the summer programs with volunteers up to now.
10 The building that you saw on one of the slides, that
11 building took three grants to improve it to make it
12 -- it was going to be destroyed and then we were able
13 to apply for three grants to remodel that building to
14 put it in the condition it is in, currently in.

15 For this -- the instructors that I've talked to,
16 licensed teachers, they are not coming to work at P3
17 for the salary; they are coming to work there for the
18 students. The rest of us that's been there for seven
19 years, we don't have salaries at all. Not one of us
20 gets a salary. And someone asked the question, how
21 are you going to put money in a 529 college plan; we
22 take our social security money -- if a child does
23 well at the public school they bring their report
24 cards with them, we make copies of those report
25 cards, and we reward the students according to --

1 maybe made an F the first semester but they turned
2 that F into a B, or some turn it into an A, that
3 comes straight out of our pockets. I am on social
4 security, so my money that I give I plant seeds into
5 the students. So if we were going to open up a
6 charter school to see if we could get maybe \$75,000
7 or \$80,000 a year, we would've never, ever tried to
8 do that because we know where we are and we're there
9 for the students. Thank you for this opportunity.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Davis, I know that in
11 the application review there were several items where
12 there were some remaining concerns or -- and in the
13 review of the waivers there were just a couple of
14 areas. So if we want to go ahead and go there -- I
15 didn't know if the panel members had any remaining
16 questions that they wanted to ask, but we'll go on to
17 the waiver requests.

18 MS. DAVIS: Sorry; make sure everybody was
19 awake. I think the only concern that I had remaining
20 -- because most of the waivers they said were not
21 necessary, so they were effectively rescinded. The
22 only thing that was not addressed, and it might've
23 been addressed in their application specifically and
24 to you, was their desegregation, which I did provide
25 a desegregation analysis to you. So there may not be

1 anything else that we need to complete or add to.
2 But in their original they were only partially
3 responsive. And then their response back was the
4 waiver was not a necessary waiver; it's just more
5 whether or not they fully responded. But I have
6 provided that information to you already in a full
7 analysis by the Department. So, again, I'm not sure
8 if that's even going to be a remaining issue anymore.
9 But other than that I had none because they rescinded
10 most of their waivers.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So with that, if
12 there are no further questions I will accept a motion
13 for the request for P3 Academy Charter School in
14 McGehee.

15 MS. TURNER: I move to not accept the P3
16 Academy.

17 DR. OWOH: Second.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion and
19 a second to deny the request for the application.

20 All those in favor say "aye."

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Any opposed?

23 Okay. I'm sorry; your request for an
24 application has failed.

25 If you all will go ahead and enter your

1 responses on the sheet. We'll give you feedback in
2 just a moment.

3 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez.

5 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. I voted for the motion
6 because the applicant does not have an application
7 that is fiscally sustainable. The applicant also has
8 several academic and logistical issues that need to
9 be addressed.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Newton.

11 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion. And my
12 reason was that the application -- I'm sorry. I
13 voted for the motion, and the reason being that the
14 application is optimistic, however falls short in
15 adequately being able to be responsive to educational
16 and financial questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Owoh.

18 DR. OWOH: I voted for the motion because I felt
19 that the plan did not support nor indicate the needed
20 support, academic support for the students nor the
21 teaching staff. So --

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Turner.

23 MS. TURNER: I voted for the motion. I am
24 impressed with the dedication from the P3 applicant.
25 But the budget plan lacks sustainability and the

1 impact to local schools is a concern of mine.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And Mr. Wilson.

3 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion for exactly
4 the same reasons. I'm impressed with the sincerity
5 of the applicants, but the financial plan is lacking;
6 it won't work.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I hope that you all will
8 be able to take this feedback and we do appreciate
9 you being here. We know it's a difficult thing to
10 do. So thank you very much.

11 MS. EMERSON: Thank you.

12 Okay. Ms. Boyd, Ms. Davis, is there anything
13 remaining for us to discuss? I know we have an
14 agenda for tomorrow starting at 8:30. And, Ms. Boyd,
15 am I correct that we have -- is it two applications
16 for tomorrow?

17 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am. I just want to remind
18 everyone that the first application on the agenda for
19 tomorrow has been formally withdrawn. So we'll start
20 off the day hearing Prolific Learning Arts Academy's
21 application, followed by the application from Weiner.
22 And that's all for tomorrow.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Two tomorrow. Okay.
24 Thank you.

25 Okay. Ms. Davis, can you think of anything

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remaining?

MS. DAVIS: I cannot.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. Well, if there's nothing else I will accept a motion to adjourn.

MR. WILSON: So moved.

MS. NEWTON: Second.

CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All those in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Any opposed to adjournment?

Thank you very much.

(The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.)

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