

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

December 21, 2017

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

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

December 21, 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. 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
DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS	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. VIRGINIA PERRY	Public School Program Advisor
MR. FREDDIE SCOTT	Learning Services Operations Mgr.

LOCATION:

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

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E X H I B I T S

A-1: ARKANSAS ARTS ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

Enrollment Report as of 12/7/17

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

Photographs of New Building Construction

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Well, good morning, everyone. At this time we will call to order the December 21st meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel. I want to welcome everyone, add to Mr. Lowery's welcome. I know it's getting close to the holiday season, so we do appreciate you being here and we're excited to get to hear from you today. And we started out yesterday morning with sharing some of our experiences and getting to be in schools. I think it's always great when we can be out there getting to see the great work that's going on. I know different members of the Panel have had an opportunity to visit many different places and our team members at the Department of Education are always excited once they've gotten to come and visit with you.

So before we get into the agenda, does anyone on the Panel have anything that they would like to express this morning?

Okay. Mr. Wilson.

MR. WILSON: Madam Chairman, I just would like the Panel and others to know that I was able to visit Northwest Academy in Bentonville a month or two ago. Because I might have to leave early today, I wanted

1 y'all to know that I was quite impressed with the
2 program there, with the teachers, with the students.
3 I was able to talk with many of the students and
4 observe some of the classes. I was convinced that
5 their operation there is a first-class and well-
6 supported learning situation for that community. And
7 if I do have to leave early, I wanted you all to know
8 that I would vote for their renewal. Thank you,
9 Madam Chairman.

10 CHAIRMAN PFEFFER: Thank you. Anybody else have
11 anything they'd like to share?

12 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Madam Chairman. I had an
13 opportunity to visit the Arkansas Arts Academy and it
14 was a good visit. But I'm going to kind of hold my
15 specific comments since they're up first in the
16 process here.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I understand.

18 Okay. So at this time I'd like to introduce the
19 Charter Panel. We do have a few of our members who
20 are not here today. My name is Ivy Pfeffer and I am
21 the ADE Deputy Commissioner. Dr. Mike Hernandez is
22 here to my left; he's the State Superintendent for
23 the Office of Coordinated Support and Service. Kathi
24 Turner is the Deputy Director for Career and
25 Technical Education at the Arkansas Department of

1 Career Education. Mr. Mike Wilson is an education
2 advocate and attorney in Jacksonville. And Dr.
3 Naccaman Williams is a former State Board of
4 Education member and he's here with us today. We do
5 have a couple of members, Dr. Jeremy Owoh and Ms.
6 Toyce Newton, who are not here with us.

7 As chair, it is my goal to facilitate a fair and
8 responsible hearing. And I will ask that each person
9 speaking please state your name and title for the
10 record. And I also ask -- let me turn off my -- I
11 also ask that you speak clearly into the microphone
12 -- that goes for panel members as well -- because it
13 is -- this entire -- this entire meeting is being
14 live-streamed for our viewing audience and also it is
15 a little difficult for us to hear. So we do ask that
16 you really try to grab that microphone and pull it
17 close.

18 Ms. Sharon Hill, the court reporter will be
19 providing a transcript of the meeting and it will be
20 posted on the ADE website.

21 HEARING PROCEDURES

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So at this time we will go
23 ahead and get started with our action agenda. And
24 Ms. Jennifer Davis, our attorney will come up and go
25 through the process with us this morning.

1 MS. DAVIS: Hi, good morning. Jennifer Davis,
2 Staff Attorney for the Department. The procedures
3 you're going to follow today will be much like those
4 you followed yesterday. All persons, with the
5 exception of attorneys, will need to be sworn in.
6 The applicant will have 20 minutes to make its
7 presentation to you, followed by 20 minutes by
8 collectively any opposition that there may be. The
9 applicant will then have an additional 5 minutes to
10 respond to any opposition or make any final
11 statements to you. You can ask any questions of the
12 Department or any staff that's here or the applicant
13 in order to make your decision. You can make your
14 decision today on the agenda item or you can choose
15 to defer it to a future meeting. If you vote today,
16 you do have a Google doc for you to go ahead and make
17 your reasons for your vote in there to be known for
18 the State Board and also the applicant.

19 Any questions?

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. Thank you, Ms.
21 Davis.

22 A-1: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

23 RENEWAL: ARKANSAS ARTS ACADEMY, ROGERS

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So the first item on our
25 agenda is the request for open-enrollment public

1 charter school renewal for the Arkansas Arts Academy,
2 in Rogers. And, Ms. Boyd, you are recognized.

3 MS. BOYD: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 Alexandra Boyd, Director of Charter Schools.

5 On November 13, 2000, the State Board of
6 Education approved the application for Arkansas Arts
7 Academy. The charter is approved to serve students
8 in grades K-12 with a maximum enrollment of 1,225.
9 Representatives of Arkansas Arts Academy are
10 appearing before the Charter Authorizing Panel to
11 request a renewal of their current charter.

12 As a reminder, the request for renewal time for
13 this charter is for 10 years. And the first person
14 you will hear from on behalf of Arkansas Arts Academy
15 is Mary Ley. She is the superintendent of the
16 charter.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So will all
18 representatives from the Arkansas Arts Academy and
19 anyone speaking in opposition please stand to receive
20 the oath. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony
21 you're about to give shall be the truth, the whole
22 truth and nothing but the truth?

23 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you. Ms. Ley.

25 SUPT. LEY: Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And you have 20 minutes.

2 SUPT. LEY: Happy Holidays. We're excited this
3 is our last day of school today, so that's why the
4 principals didn't come because when you're a
5 performing school, we're performing a lot today. So,
6 that's cool.

7 We're real excited about being here. We have so
8 much to share and so much joy and so much passion and
9 feel like in the last three years we've really come a
10 long, long way, and that we are something the whole
11 state can be proud of.

12 Our mission is to be the ultimate K-12 choice
13 for excellence in arts and academics and we feel we
14 are well on our way of being just that. We have a
15 clear and shared focus based on the foundation of
16 four pillars and we never waiver from these, and all
17 of our goals are around these four pillars:
18 academics, arts integration, museum initiative, and
19 mastery of the arts. We stay clear of what our
20 school is about and they are all -- all of our goals
21 and lesson plans are all wrapped around those four
22 pillars. That's what keeps us strong and makes us
23 the unique special school we are.

24 We've had many changes over the last three
25 years. And these are the changes and assurances that

1 we had made since our last renewal:

2 Innovative and creative principals -- we've
3 hired two new principals over the last three years
4 that are just amazing. And a lot of us all come from
5 Bentonville Public Schools. I was an executive
6 director, Matt was a principal there, Natalie was
7 their chief financial officer; she's our CFO now.
8 And we feel like we've been a great hybrid of knowing
9 what was right about traditional public schools and
10 what is really exciting and inspiring about
11 curriculum -- I mean about charter schools. So it's
12 been great to blend our past knowledge and the
13 excitement of what we've learned with our new
14 knowledge of what the charters are all about.

15 We have development of a well thought-out
16 curriculum, pacing guides, lesson plans. We employed
17 an arts integration director to collaborate and
18 create high-end arts integration with teachers. It's
19 not crafty; it's intense, it's with museums. It
20 underscores what they're learning and the standards
21 in each area.

22 We are very strong in our assessment monitoring.
23 We constantly see where our kids need to progress.

24 Students' use of technology is integrated in all
25 learning. We are a one-to-one device campus. All

1 6th graders, on, take their devices home.

2 We have critical thinking and problem-solving
3 skills and strategies, especially aligned to our
4 museum art.

5 And we have become very focused on hiring
6 qualified -- of hiring qualified teachers and
7 instructors.

8 This is the results we've had of our high school
9 in just mostly the last year. We were the second
10 best high school in the state by U.S. News and World
11 Report. We have received Arkansas Recognition School
12 Status every year since its conception. We became a
13 national level Art School Network Exemplary School.
14 Last year, you know, we only had a graduation class
15 of around 49 last year and five of them were
16 Governor's Scholar recipients. We had a 97%
17 graduation rate. We started entering all the
18 contests that we can in the arts and we won the best
19 Governor's Visual Art Award in Inc. and the best in
20 pencil drawing. For the first time we have AP Arts;
21 that should've been there forever, but we are finally
22 where we should be there -- and we have many that
23 scored the five on the AP exam. We had graduates
24 last year accepted in Art Institute in Chicago,
25 Kansas City, Ringley's College of Art and Design,

1 Savannah School of Art and Design in Georgia, music
2 programs in Oklahoma City, music programs at Belmont
3 College, and dance programs in California. So, you
4 know, we're getting our kids to be accepted at the
5 highest levels of schools in their areas.

6 That's going to be hard for me to see, but you
7 can see it, I'm sure. We're real proud of where the
8 K-8 has come. Out of 30 categories in the
9 assessment, state ACT Aspire, we went up in 24 areas,
10 and some as much as -- I think there's seven or eight
11 categories where we went up 20 or 30 percent. And
12 then three we stayed the same, but we were already
13 high. Three we did not do very well, but we have
14 already implemented strategies, changed staffing in
15 that area, and that was in the 3rd grade, and we've
16 already made the provisions that we need to to
17 succeed there too.

18 Arts integration is not like any other. We have
19 traveled to every major arts school in the nation.
20 Nobody has arts integration like we do, at Crystal
21 Bridges museum and the other local museums. This is
22 -- the kids at the left are working with a Broadway
23 specialist there. That's creative writing in the
24 museum over there. That's kids recycling and having
25 a fashion show out of recycled junk. That is kids

1 singing at the Peele Mansion, songs of that era, to
2 all the 4th graders in northwest Arkansas. That's a
3 student having a poetry slam that is honoring peace
4 and love and all the things that we need to do better
5 in this country. That's art in the middle; that
6 represents the DNA lost during the Hitler regime and
7 made into sculptures so that we understand what was
8 lost during that time. So those are all examples.

9 We had 72 field experiences last year, 22 trips
10 to Crystal Bridges last year. And every one of those
11 crayons represents a museum that we're involved in.

12 There's more museum experiences. Our kids
13 perform at Crystal Bridges. They perform at Peele
14 Mansion. They designed the National Park Pass for
15 Pea Ridge Military Park. They're at the Indian
16 museum there down at the bottom and sketching and
17 learning from the past. And then doing their own
18 art. That is an art show at the Community Creative
19 Center in Fayetteville, where they also participate
20 with visiting artists. This is the Shiloh Museum
21 where kids first helped shave the sheep and we made
22 the wool and then now they get to weave the wool, so
23 they see the whole process.

24 Mastery of the Arts, we have piano studios now
25 for kindergarten on up, all the way through high

1 school. We have orchestra; we have theater; we have
2 dance; we have guitar. We had 75 kids on the stage
3 last year, all rocking it out at one time. If you
4 want to feel good, you ought to see 75 kids playing
5 the guitar at one time on the stage. It was pretty
6 amazing.

7 There's all the things that we have. We have
8 creative writing. We have such a special teacher in
9 creative writing at the high school; I call her the
10 Teacher Whisperer. She is so amazing, and she never
11 raises her voice. She has this environment just
12 where kids just get her and she walks them through
13 town where they see things and feel things, and then
14 they come and do their writing; and then they go to
15 Crystal Bridges and site it, the art -- very exciting
16 program.

17 Those are new programs that will be added when
18 the high school opens in the fall -- the new high
19 school.

20 Beyond the arts, we have cross country archery,
21 mountain biking competition, and we also added junior
22 high -- or middle school basketball this year. We
23 haven't won anything, but we've learned to be
24 graceful winners and losers. So we've learned how to
25 put ourselves out there and do it with grace. But

1 it's good for kids to learn to put themselves out
2 there and not be afraid.

3 This is the K-8 campus. It used to be kind of
4 yucky. But Marlon Blackwell designed that free for
5 us, the entry to the K-8 office. We re-did our gym.
6 We share the gym with all the other local charter
7 schools and private schools in competitions. We
8 compete against a private school the other day; it
9 was really cool. And we even had our pep band out
10 there, so it was all fun. That's the mountain bike
11 trails that we have to train kids how to ride
12 mountain bikes. And that's the way our hallways are
13 painted, with lots of design.

14 This is our high school. Alexandra was kind to
15 put an updated picture on your -- in front of you
16 today. But that's what our high school will look
17 like and that's where it was yesterday. In the
18 picture on the bottom, it shows the back; it's not
19 the front. Because what you see on that right-hand
20 corner there, that building, that's the way the
21 building in the back looks too. The one you see on
22 the right-hand corner is more academics; the one you
23 see in the back will be more arts. So we're very
24 excited about our new building. It will represent
25 our state very well of what a national-level art

1 school should look like. And our teachers are so
2 excited; they put the new heat and air condition
3 systems in the frames yesterday and that's what
4 they're most excited about because sometimes they
5 don't work. So they're real excited about that.

6 Here's our last slide: the difference between
7 now and the last renewal is the new principals of
8 both campuses. We have changed about a third of the
9 staff. We have learned that highly qualified
10 instructors are everything. And although we do, in
11 the arts especially, hire people that do not always
12 have masters degrees and educational license, we've
13 found that in the core subjects that we just think
14 that the highly qualified instructors are to our
15 students' advantage. We are very supportive of all
16 staff with a great arts -- I mean great professional
17 development. We are in partnership with A-Plus.
18 We're in partnership with AIMS. We constantly have
19 all kinds of professional development to make all of
20 our teachers highly qualified. We have clear staff
21 expectations. We have clear goals.

22 We have a 10-year plan. It's a living document.
23 And it meets every strategy and every need that we
24 have, from our facilities to our curriculum to our
25 recruitment to the -- everything that changes, and

1 then our team quarterly goes through our 10-year plan
2 and updates it as is needed to meet the needs and the
3 goals of our vision and mission.

4 We have over 400 on the waiting list. When I
5 started three-and-a-half years ago, we had 88 on our
6 waiting list. So the team has worked very, very
7 hard; I'm so proud of them. We have high academic
8 achievement now in both schools, one-to-one
9 technology, National Arts Program.

10 Natalie is a CPA, BA in Accounting, and our
11 Chief Financial Officer. She keeps us in line and
12 makes us very professional, and we're very proud of
13 what she does for us.

14 And we continually improve communications with
15 all stakeholders. We have a financial sustainability
16 plan that you helped pass not too long ago. We are a
17 fearless, creative, driven, academic team.

18 And that's all I have to say.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

20 Ms. Boyd, is there anyone here in opposition?

21 MS. BOYD: (shaking head from side to side.)

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right. Well,
23 if you finished with your presentation, then we can
24 proceed to questions.

25 SUPT. LEY: Yeah. I do want to say one more

1 thing. The reason why I feel it's applicable to ask
2 for 10 years is when we just raised our bond money
3 for our new high school -- people have been so kind
4 to us. And within that same statement I want to say
5 the State Department of Education, I want to say the
6 Charter Department of the State have been very kind
7 to us. Anybody we have called has been nothing but
8 very helpful and we just want to recognize every
9 department has been responsive to our -- anything
10 we're insecure about or do not know about. They
11 always get back with us right away and are
12 supportive. And I just think that's worth saying
13 because I don't know if they're always valued like
14 they should be, but they should be.

15 And then I want to say that when we had to get
16 bonds for our school Crews and Associates and Edwin
17 Hurst -- Edmond Hurst helped us get those bonds, and
18 he was so excited the day the bonds were put up to
19 purchase. They sold out in two hours and 15 minutes
20 at a low rate of 4.3%. And they refinanced our old
21 bonds and saved us \$610,000. But he said it was the
22 mission and the vision of the school and what we had
23 done and even the 10-year plan that they shared that
24 people felt like it was secure to loan us their money
25 for a 30-year plan. So we think it's only fair to

1 them to say that we're supported with a 10-year
2 renewal. And we're really proud of how excited he
3 was to how well people bought into what our charter
4 school and what our state is representing. And now
5 I'm done. I'm sorry.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you.

7 Okay. So we are ready to start with questions.
8 Do you want to start, Dr. Williams?

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Now I guess I go to my
10 visit. I don't have a lot of questions because we
11 just had them here recently. So my biggest question
12 would've been around the financial model and we
13 addressed that previously. So I guess I'll just
14 touch a little bit on my visit there. This is -- I
15 can confidently say that this is probably a world-
16 class art school. Everything that you see in the
17 pictures actually exists. I look for teaching and
18 learning, whether it's taking place, in my visits to
19 schools. So I try to look beyond the pomp-and-
20 circumstances of the moment. And they have some
21 outstanding teachers. In the chemistry class they
22 were learning about painting and how you make paint,
23 with the integration of the arts throughout. Seeing
24 different people in ballet, from -- I don't want to
25 be cliquish, but from all -- from your athletes to

1 just about everybody that's participating. If I had
2 to make a summary statement, for me it's about the
3 kids, always about the kids. Every child looked like
4 they belong. You know, kids that you may see in a
5 different place in a traditional school they're all
6 in there, in their place.

7 Also I believe that the 10-year -- I had a
8 chance to tour the facilities, see what needed to be
9 done in the process. I think you all are on a good
10 track. My biggest concern was paying for the
11 facilities; that piece has been addressed. So I
12 really don't have any -- the teaching and learning is
13 taking place; you have outstanding leadership there.
14 What's most important, these kids can graduate and
15 they can go to world-renowned art schools on the next
16 level. So congratulations to you.

17 SUPT. LEY: Thank you.

18 DR. WILLIAMS: That's -- I'm trying to think of
19 something that we really need to focus on, but we
20 kind of -- for me, we addressed that at your most
21 recent visit here.

22 SUPT. LEY: Thank you.

23 MS. TURNER: I have no questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: No questions?

25 Mr. Wilson?

1 MR. WILSON: One question about your facilities.
2 Do you anticipate that your new construction will
3 allow you to take in additional students to cut down
4 on the waiting list?

5 SUPT. LEY: Yes, sir.

6 MR. WILSON: What's your guesstimate? Will you
7 be able to take everybody that wants to --

8 SUPT. LEY: Our figures right now is, the way
9 our K -- which will now be K-6 facility, we'll be
10 able to add another 20 students per grade next year.
11 We were hoping 40, but we don't have room. And so if
12 we take another 20 off that waiting list for each
13 grade and the additional kids by moving the 7th, 8th
14 grade over to the high school we'll have about 150
15 left on the waiting list; so we'll be able to take
16 most of them. And that 250 or 300 that we'll have
17 next year will definitely give us -- we're making our
18 payments now. I mean we're already paying our bond
19 issue now, the full price, and we're doing it -- and
20 we were able to even give our teachers bonuses. But
21 we're able to do it because of Natalie. And Natalie
22 was the financial director for Bentonville and wanted
23 more time with her family, so she wanted a smaller
24 environment. But I'm so blessed to have somebody
25 that's a CPA and a graduate in that area, and she's

1 real straightforward with good financial management.
2 So we're real blessed to have -- they say that one
3 person doesn't -- that nobody is indispensable, but I
4 disagree. And she's pretty important to me. So I'm
5 real blessed; she's my Christmas present every day,
6 all year. So we're making our payments now and with
7 300 more students we hope to be still tight for a
8 couple of years.

9 And then one thing I'm really proud of is our
10 teachers; our teachers are amazing people that are
11 there because they want to be there; they're there
12 because they love children; they're there because
13 they like the arts mission. I can truly stand up
14 here -- I mean I did take my oath; I can truly say
15 that. We're surrounded by four big districts that
16 make \$11,000 more a year and they stay with us
17 because they feel it. And that's the optimism you
18 can have as a board and we can have as a country that
19 education is still very healthy in a lot of ways.

20 You know, this has been a bad year for the
21 country in so many ways. Men have taken such a
22 beating lately. But even though I'm a woman
23 superintendent I've been blessed with great men
24 around me that are so pure with their families and
25 their people and our kids at school, like Mr.

1 Skelton, our assistant principal that came with us
2 from Harding, who is helping teachers be teachers.
3 He wants to work with kids -- what a concept -- and a
4 father and a husband and a son that's always believed
5 that I could do anything. And then Edmond Hurst.
6 And then the architect that designed the high school
7 didn't charge me anything for two years because he
8 just believed in the mission. So our community has
9 been behind us and that's what makes it so special.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Hernandez, do you have
11 questions?

12 DR. HERNANDEZ: I don't.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: No questions. Ms. Ley, I
14 have a couple of questions.

15 SUPT. LEY: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I'm looking at the data --
17 and thank you for -- you did a great job on your
18 application, providing us with your achievement data
19 and the charts.

20 SUPT. LEY: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: It's very helpful --

22 SUPT. LEY: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- to have that in one
24 place. On your 2016 and '17 -- and I guess -- I
25 think what really caught my attention was your 2017

1 ACT Aspire and English Language Arts, your 3rd grade
2 reading scores.

3 SUPT. LEY: Right.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And they were -- they
5 actually were lower and so --

6 SUPT. LEY: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- I mean than they were
8 in '16. And when you look at your data I wonder what
9 you are doing in terms of reading and promoting that
10 reading.

11 SUPT. LEY: Absolutely.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And, you know, so what's
13 going on to really shore that up into insure --
14 because your scores then do go on up after that. So
15 can you talk to us a little bit about what's going on
16 --

17 SUPT. LEY: Sure.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- very early at that
19 point?

20 SUPT. LEY: Well, that was one of those
21 situations where it was more of an employee -- one of
22 the teachers had taken off lots of days, and we
23 replaced that employee in January. And also 4th
24 grade on had a lot -- really used the devices more.
25 They had reading but extra reading, supplemental

1 things on their Chromebooks, and 3rd grade hadn't
2 done that. And also we brought in more professional
3 development. But there's all new teachers at the 3rd
4 grade level and specific professional development for
5 them. And we also have purchased much more
6 curriculum. When I started there three-and-a-half
7 years ago, it was kind of embarrassing to be honest
8 with you. One teacher was teaching what she wanted
9 and one teacher was teaching what she wanted and one
10 teacher was teaching what she wanted. Now they're
11 all on the same page and they have team discussions
12 and our principal is very good at sitting down with
13 them to say, "Now where are we at? Where's your
14 pacing guides? What are your goals?" We also
15 switched our media specialist. She's amazing and has
16 reading, you know, points where the more books you
17 read the more little tokens you get. And she also
18 instructs on how to use the library.

19 Another thing our principal has been so great at
20 is creating a schedule that allows daily
21 interventions. There's a pocket where if a kid if
22 weak, other kids get to do more -- we have PE for
23 Life, where it's just every day. While they're at PE
24 for Life, then we also use that for an intervention
25 time. If a child is struggling at reading we bring

1 in other people to help them with that reading. So,
2 all those have been changed since those scores.

3 And, Mr. Skelton, would you like to say anything
4 on that, of what you guys have all done?

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And I think also, as
6 you're addressing that, the K-1-2 levels, the things
7 going on at, you know, that K-2 really has a direct
8 impact on this --

9 SUPT. LEY: Right.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- because it can't all
11 get done in grade 3.

12 SUPT. LEY: That's right.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So --

14 SUPT. LEY: Well, we have some really great 1st
15 grade teachers. I will say -- I want to say this
16 about our school. Our kids, we have some kids that
17 come in exceptionally bright and with kids that have
18 had a lot of pre-K and all that. We have a lot of
19 kids whose parents choose us because they're mad at
20 the other schools -- I'm just being honest with you
21 -- and they'll be mad at any school; I mean they're
22 just -- and their kids haven't had pre-K and
23 whatever. But what's exciting for you to look at is
24 by the time they get to high school we're the second
25 best school in the state. And so that has happened

1 -- you know, like our high school principal, right
2 now every Tuesday and Thursday any child that got a D
3 on anything stays after and they have I mean teachers
4 for free that aren't even on their contract stay to
5 work with those kids that have a D and teachers --
6 students that are real successful academically stay
7 and their scores go up. So it's not because the high
8 school has -- I mean they come with -- and we help
9 them get through that.

10 Do you want to say what else is going on with
11 the K-8?

12 He's our assistant principal.

13 MR. SKELTON: I'm David Skelton, the assistant
14 principal at the K-8 building and so happy to be
15 there and to see what's going on inside the building,
16 and also outside the building. But I would like to
17 speak on our intervention program that we have in
18 place where our students that are struggling in
19 different areas, and we identify that both by
20 classroom assessment and by MAPS, using that
21 throughout the year to find out where our kids are
22 now so that the interventions that we put in place
23 are appropriate. And what we do is we bring in
24 teachers from a different grade level to work with
25 those kids. A lot of times maybe their teacher that

1 they have all day may be missing something, but by
2 bringing in another staff member to work with five or
3 six students on particular skills is very
4 appropriate, I believe. Also, we use the Northwest
5 Arkansas Education Co-op to provide PD. We -- all of
6 our teachers have been trained or are in the training
7 process of Charlotte Danielson's model, and we use
8 that as we do classroom visits. We're also going
9 through AdvancEd this year in using their observation
10 model as well. So a lot of good things are going on
11 in the classroom to provide support for our students
12 that are struggling.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And I'm just
14 curious, are you all involved with the RISE
15 initiative, the reading?

16 SUPT. LEY: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So --

18 SUPT. LEY: Maybe we need to check that out.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: You might want to, and
20 that would be the State's initiative for Reading for
21 Student Excellence. And so it would be something you
22 might want to check out. And the co-op also has
23 those resources as well.

24 MR. SKELTON: Thank you.

25 SUPT. LEY: Thanks for bringing it up. Yeah.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. If it's okay, if
2 you all don't have another question, one other thing
3 I wanted to just ask about, in reviewing your goals
4 -- and I know you've updated your goals -- I like how
5 the goals really are specific to your school and they
6 seem to reflect the goals for your school. But just
7 a couple of things that -- some quantitative measures
8 that you might include --

9 SUPT. LEY: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- in thinking about this.
11 Because we visited with this -- about this topic with
12 several -- you know, when you -- one of the things
13 you talked about and highlighted was your students
14 who go on and leave your school and go on into
15 further their education in music or different types
16 of art. When you look at, you know, your ACT scores
17 for your students, your college-going rate -- you
18 know, maybe those are some things you might want to
19 look at.

20 SUPT. LEY: And we are. So you're saying what
21 -- our new high school principal has already started
22 an alumni databank and has got that going to see how
23 what we did helped them and what they missed, so --

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Because, you know,
25 with a 10-year --

1 SUPT. LEY: Yeah.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- charter, you know, it
3 -- you know, that's a pretty long time --

4 SUPT. LEY: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- and to look at coming
6 back. And I think some of the things you've talked
7 about with how involved your community is and how
8 supportive they are, those are some measures that can
9 really --

10 SUPT. LEY: Absolutely.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- assist them into
12 continuing to see excellence in education going on
13 with that. So we just really want to encourage all
14 of our charters --

15 SUPT. LEY: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- that are coming to
17 really focus those goals around what it is that you
18 value and what it is that makes your charter unit --

19 SUPT. LEY: We're kind of competitive. I mean
20 not against another school, but with ourselves, you
21 know, if that makes sense. We're always challenging
22 ourselves to -- I wish you could meet the two
23 principals today because we're always challenging
24 ourselves how to do better, so --

25 And then another thing, one reason why the 10-

1 year is very applicable -- there's no reason to be
2 insecure about it -- is because I think your charter
3 office is just doing amazing things. They check on
4 us all the time; you know, our finances are being
5 turned in and they call me like if the report -- you
6 know, they give me plenty of warning for things and
7 they're not going to let me slip.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

9 DR. HERNANDEZ: I have a follow-up to that.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Hernandez.

11 DR. HERNANDEZ: So just kind of piggybacking on
12 that -- I was waiting to see if anybody else has a
13 question about the goals. So I mean just for example
14 in your -- where it talks about your academic
15 performance, you know, you do have a metric there
16 where you say "exceeds state and national averages"
17 in those different areas. And then your milestones
18 were things like, you know, all K-12 is vertically
19 aligned, increase critical thinking. And so I think
20 what would be helpful is, you know, increase by how
21 much. You know, obviously in a lot of these
22 categories you are exceeding the state averages in
23 math and literacy, which is great. But you said
24 that, you know, that you're against yourself, and so
25 I think having that kind of "well, this is where

1 we're at; this is where we want to go to" will really
2 help, you know, show us.

3 SUPT. LEY: Yes, sir.

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: And I don't know what that
5 process looks like. I know we asked another one that
6 once the ESSA School Indexes come out to maybe
7 revisit your goals.

8 SUPT. LEY: Okay.

9 DR. HERNANDEZ: And I don't know that we -- once
10 we approve the charter we'll really have a process of
11 having them come back to say, "Here's what our new
12 goals are" or we wait 10 years or -- so that's -- I
13 don't know if Miss --

14 SUPT. LEY: Well, I'm a pretty proud person.
15 You won't have to ask; I'll send them to you. I like
16 to show off what we do, so we won't be quiet. You're
17 going to hear how we go up because that's -- we just
18 like to shout it out to the world.

19 So, and then in the supplement we got back the
20 things you'd like for us to tighten up, we did answer
21 a little tighter on those where we said we'd like to
22 go up 3% and then 5% on different things. So if
23 you'll look at the things you asked for me to work
24 on, we did put specific measurements.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Which document is that?

1 DR. HERNANDEZ: That's in the --

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: The application rubric?

3 SUPT. LEY: That was the --

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yes.

6 SUPT. LEY: Right. It's in there, percentages.

7 DR. WILLIAMS: Here's just a question or a
8 comment. When we approve -- if we approve this, can
9 we just have them come back in say five years or
10 whatever? I would think that we could. And actually
11 I think 10 years is a long time without a check-in
12 personally.

13 SUPT. LEY: Yeah, I'd love that.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: So I think that we -- it would be
15 appropriate for us to put something like that in
16 there.

17 SUPT. LEY: Sure.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Boyd may have
19 some comments and I want to look at this, the update
20 here. Is it this one?

21 DR. HERNANDEZ: Ms. Boyd, and maybe -- I
22 remember looking at that because it references a
23 chart --

24 MS. BOYD: Yeah. I just looked at -- I forgot
25 to put the chart up.

1 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

2 MS. BOYD: I'll email it to you. I'm sorry.

3 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. So --

4 MS. BOYD: And then I'll get it put up.

5 DR. HERNANDEZ: So that may help with the -- if
6 their chart references that they've tightened up
7 their numbers then I -- I mean that would be their
8 goals then as far as how they're going to show
9 growth. So that was -- that helps.

10 MS. BOYD: I apologize for overlooking that
11 document.

12 I do want to respond to what Dr. Williams said,
13 and I spoke to my unit about this yesterday. It
14 occurred to me that it's probably a good idea for us
15 to encourage and remind charters, especially with the
16 new ESSA plan coming out, that every time -- a couple
17 of months prior to every time that you are hearing
18 amendment requests that we remind charters that that
19 would be a good time for them to amend their goals.
20 I think once the new ESSA plan comes out all of our
21 charters will be in a situation where they may need
22 to amend their goals. And so we'll be working and
23 providing technical assistance to all charters about
24 going through that process.

25 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

1 MS. BOYD: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right. Panel,
3 are there any other questions?

4 All right. Ms. Davis, do we have any issues or
5 questions about waivers that we need to address?

6 I see you still have Vicki with you, so --

7 MS. DAVIS: I do. Yeah, I do still have Vicki,
8 so we always --

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: It makes it a little
10 slower for you, I know.

11 MS. DAVIS: Yeah. Well, that and it's like an
12 obstacle course to get up here.

13 Did y'all -- I don't know that you got the
14 waiver sheet for -- that was on the agenda. So I
15 just -- they did ask for some new waivers, but I did
16 not have any issues with them. I just wanted to make
17 sure that you did see that they had asked for some.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

19 MS. DAVIS: It wasn't --

20 DR. HERNANDEZ: What are the new waivers?

21 MS. DAVIS: They asked for a waiver of the
22 posting of the Arkansas and the United States flag;
23 that was because they're under construction, so right
24 now they have no place to put a pole. They also
25 requested a waiver of the daily planning period,

1 Arkansas Code 6-17-114. And that's because they have
2 a -- their rationale is an A/B schedule, so some
3 teachers have, you know, certain times and others
4 have another, but how it averages out throughout the
5 year is different. They also requested a waiver of
6 the non-instructional activities, 6-17-117, and that
7 was only through the period of their construction; so
8 that way they could use their teachers to volunteer.
9 They had before afterschool duties to assist like
10 with safety during the construction period.

11 So I did not have any issues with any of those.

12 DR. HERNANDEZ: So the waiver request, does that
13 have a sunset that after construction is done -- is
14 that the same for the flag?

15 MS. DAVIS: Uh-huh.

16 SUPT. LEY: Uh-huh.

17 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So no further issues?

19 MS. DAVIS: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. Ms. Boyd, did
21 you want to add anything?

22 MS. BOYD: Just that I just sent the chart to
23 you in an email and I'll get it posted on the agenda
24 before we publish it to our Charter Authorizing Panel
25 page. It's going to be the last few pages of that

1 document.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Have you all got
3 that email with the chart?

4 I'm going to give the panel members just a few
5 minutes --

6 SUPT. LEY: Sure.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- to look at that.

8 MS. BOYD: I believe it starts on page 7.

9 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: Ms. Boyd, was the flag waiver on
11 this sheet? I'm only seeing the planning and the
12 instructional periods.

13 MS. BOYD: So on the email, the document I just
14 emailed you, the only reason you're seeing those is
15 because they're the only ones that Ms. Davis had
16 questions about and those were their responses to her
17 questions.

18 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

19 MS. BOYD: If you go on and look at the legal
20 review document on the agenda, you'll see all of them
21 in that one document.

22 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. I did have a question
23 about the goal. I know it was referenced about going
24 up by 3%. But just the one -- there's one that says
25 that in 4th grade you're planning on increasing by

1 30% in year-one. Is there --

2 SUPT. LEY: I think it was probably supposed to
3 be 3%. That must be a typo.

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay. Yeah, just that one --
5 that one jumped out.

6 SUPT. LEY: Yeah.

7 DR. HERNANDEZ: The way it reads, it says --

8 SUPT. LEY: I'm sorry. Yeah, I think that
9 should've been 3%.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: And you say increase pass rate
11 by 30% in 4th grade and increase other grades by 3%
12 to 5%. So --

13 SUPT. LEY: Well, let me get my thoughts
14 together. It was 30% because we've been working
15 intensely because that was the 3rd grade. The 4th
16 grade are the students that had trouble in the 3rd
17 grade, so we've been doing more intensive things to
18 help them catch up.

19 DR. HERNANDEZ: Okay.

20 SUPT. LEY: So that is correct. Sorry; I had to
21 get my head --

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And then you say pass
23 rate, you're referring to students scoring at ready
24 or exceeding?

25 SUPT. LEY: Yes.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Anyone else have
2 questions based on the document with these specific
3 goals?

4 Okay. All right. Panel, I think that at this
5 time we would be ready for a nomination -- I mean a
6 motion. Excuse me.

7 MR. WILSON: I move the approval of the charter
8 request, renewal request.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Second.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Motion to approve
11 the renewal and a second.

12 All those in favor say "aye."

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Anyone opposed?

15 Okay. Congratulations.

16 SUPT. LEY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: The Panel has approved and
18 the State Board will decide next month whether or not
19 to review the decision.

20 SUPT. LEY: And I hope -- every detail really
21 won't be done till January of next year, but I hope
22 when we have our grand opening you'll all be there
23 because you'll be invited. We'd like for you to be
24 part of it. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: If you'll wait just a

1 minute we're going to provide you with some feedback
2 on the vote.

3 SUPT. LEY: Okay. Thank you.

4 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Mr. Wilson, we're going to
6 let you start.

7 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion. I'm very
8 impressed with the standing of the academy in the
9 community and statewide. It's very impressive. I do
10 appreciate Dr. Williams' personal inspection; that
11 meant a lot too. Thanks.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Hernandez.

13 DR. HERNANDEZ: I voted for the motion. I said
14 the Arkansas Arts Academy has done a great job in
15 becoming fiscally sound and academically effective
16 for the students in need of the arts-based education.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Turner.

18 MS. TURNER: I voted for the motion. The school
19 is meeting the needs of many students and providing
20 opportunities for students in the arts and academic
21 areas.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Williams.

23 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted for the motion. The
24 school is providing an excellent art-integrated
25 curriculum for students. It provides a different

1 option at a high-level for both parents and students
2 in the area.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right.

4 SUPT. LEY: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you very much. And
6 have safe travels back home.

7 SUPT. LEY: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. Before we get
10 to the next item, do you all need just a minute to
11 help get the presentation loaded? No?

12 Okay. Panel, are we good to keep going?

13 DR. HERNANDEZ: We're good.

14 A-2: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

15 RENEWAL: NORTHWEST ARKANSAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY, BENTONVILLE

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. So the second
17 item on our agenda is the request for the open-
18 enrollment charter school renewal for the Northwest
19 Arkansas Classical Academy in Bentonville.

20 Ms. Boyd, you are recognized.

21 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair.

22 On November 1, 2012, the State Board of
23 Education approved the application for Northwest
24 Arkansas Classical Academy. The charter is approved
25 to serve students in grades K-12 with a maximum

1 enrollment of 685. Representatives of Northwest
2 Arkansas Classical Academy are appearing before the
3 Charter Authorizing Panel to request a renewal of a
4 current charter. As a reminder, this request is for
5 10 years. And the first person you'll hear from from
6 Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy is Steven Gast,
7 the superintendent.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Will all
9 representative from Northwest Arkansas Classical
10 Academy and anyone speaking in opposition please
11 stand to receive the oath? Okay. If you'll raise
12 your right hand? Do you swear or affirm the
13 testimony that you're about to give shall be the
14 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

15 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you. And, Mr. Gast,
17 we welcome you to the podium --

18 SUPT. GAST: Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- and you are recognized.

20 SUPT. GAST: Good morning. Again, my name is
21 Steven Gast; I am the superintendent of Responsive
22 Education Arkansas. And I'd like to take this
23 opportunity to thank the Panel in advance for your
24 time, your consideration. I know the work that's
25 involved in having to read through all these

1 different applications, and we really do appreciate
2 it.

3 A brief background as far as educationally about
4 myself, I have 15 years experience as a classroom
5 teacher, also as a head football and a head baseball
6 coach; I'm certified in social studies, broad field
7 social studies, sociology, and also in special
8 education. I hold my administrator's certificate
9 with 23 years of experience as an administrator, as
10 well as my Texas superintendent's certification. I'm
11 currently applying for my Arkansas certification in
12 superintendency as well.

13 I'd like to introduce just the members that I've
14 brought with me from our team. I have Mr. Richard
15 Cromwell, who is our Arkansas board president, is
16 with us; Ms. Kristi Campbell, our director of
17 academics; Mr. Curtis Shack, our director of programs
18 and operations; Ms. Marla Pierson, our special
19 programs director; Ms. Katie Stevens, our director of
20 finance; Dr. Steve Burgess, our director of data and
21 research from our corporate office; Ms. Susan
22 Provenza, our headmaster at Northwest Arkansas
23 Classical Academy; and also Mr. Dennis Felton who
24 will be speaking with a little bit later about our
25 Premier.

1 The application process is one that obviously we
2 take very, very seriously. It is an application that
3 has been vetted and reviewed by the Arkansas
4 Department of Education, also by APSRC, by Responsive
5 Education, our local staff and independent
6 consultants. We feel that our application is not
7 only comprehensive but also addresses the individual
8 challenges and the needs of each particular campus.

9 What I'd like to do is kind of give you just a
10 very brief introduction of Responsive Education since
11 we are a charter management organization, to give you
12 a little bit of background about the company and then
13 turn it over to Ms. Provenza to talk to you about
14 this particular campus.

15 So this is a picture of Responsive Education, of
16 our home office in Louisville. This building houses
17 our operations, our marketing, our research, and our
18 academics, as well as the executive/administrative
19 offices. Our curriculum department, which is
20 involved with not only the development of curriculum
21 but also purchasing of curriculum, is in another
22 location. We are in the process of celebrating this
23 year our 20th anniversary. In April of 1998, the
24 company was started; it was called the Eagle
25 Educational Reform Learning System and it was formed,

1 like I said, 20 years ago. In that time it's grown
2 to be one of the largest charter school organizations
3 in the United States. We have over 95 campuses,
4 2,800 employees, and we serve 25,000 students K-12 in
5 both Texas and Arkansas.

6 The way Responsive Education, the CMO, is
7 structured, we have the charter holder, which is
8 Responsive Education, and then there's a second
9 branch called the Charter Management Organization.
10 Underneath that, there are two separate strands of
11 schools; there are the Texas College Preparatory
12 Academies, which are standard accountability, which
13 would be in Arkansas our ACT Aspire; and we have the
14 Premier High Schools which are an alternative form of
15 instructional delivery and they're under an
16 alternative accountability system in the state.
17 Underneath them then we have the different brands,
18 which are specific models of school that deal with
19 specific types of students and specific types of
20 needs within communities, from classical education to
21 middle schools to high schools, founders classical
22 academies, which is what Northwestern [sic] Arkansas
23 Classical Academy is. And then we have a foundation
24 school of autism that's in San Antonio. We also have
25 our virtual schools, the Texas Virtual Academy and

1 Comprehend Academy. And then under Premier we have
2 the -- all the different Premier high schools.

3 In Arkansas, we have our Responsive Education in
4 Arkansas, which includes our Premier High School of
5 Little Rock, our Quest Middle Schools in Pine Bluff
6 and West Little Rock, and our Northwest Arkansas
7 Classical Academy in Bentonville, which of course is
8 the school that we're addressing this morning.

9 I wanted to include a slide that talks about
10 Responsive Education's commitment to Arkansas, to
11 give you a taste and a flavor for exactly what type
12 of commitment the larger organization has for our
13 state here in Arkansas. We've established a
14 permanent district office which is located here in
15 Little Rock. They've hired an experienced
16 superintendent; we've hired an experienced Arkansas
17 educator and administrator as our director of
18 academics, who's not only reviewed our curriculum and
19 works with the campuses but also is highly involved
20 in the professional development of all of our staff
21 members. We opened our district office and we
22 included in there space for professional development
23 that will be large enough to be able to bring all of
24 our staff together at one time so that on those
25 occasions where you want to train the entire group we

1 have a spot to do that, as well as obviously going to
2 the different campuses to provide staff development
3 when necessary.

4 We have a dedicated -- or we've purchased a
5 building in Bentonville, the school that Mr. Wilson
6 visited, and we currently own that building. We have
7 a dedicated Arkansas financial team that is here in
8 Arkansas that deals specifically with the finances of
9 each individual school. They work in conjuncture
10 with our finance department in Louisville, but
11 everything is handled here in the state; it's not
12 shipped out to another state. Also, the financial
13 support for all of our schools as far as the CMO
14 investing very heavily in capital to not only
15 guarantee that we have quality schools but also to
16 make sure that we are always financially sound.

17 What I'd like to do now is turn this over to our
18 headmaster of the school, Ms. Susan Provenza, who
19 will give you some more information about the
20 Classical Academy.

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Provenza, if you'll
22 state your name and position for the record you'll be
23 recognized.

24 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am. Susan Provenza; I'm
25 the headmaster at Northwest Arkansas Classical

1 Academy. And I appreciate the opportunity to talk
2 with you guys today about our school. So as you
3 know, we're an open-enrollment public charter school
4 in Bentonville. And our mission is to provide young
5 people with a rigorous, classical education in the
6 liberal arts and sciences that cultivates
7 intellectual excellence, wisdom and virtue.

8 And we opened in 2013, and at that time we were
9 a K-8 campus. And we've added a grade each year, so
10 that this year we are now K-12. We're going to
11 graduate our first class of seniors this year. We're
12 very excited about that; they're very excited about
13 that. We have over 550 students and we have 513
14 students currently on our waiting list. And as I
15 said, you know, I'm thinking about our seniors; this
16 time of year they're kind of getting a little antsy
17 because they're taking their final exams. But they
18 are so excited and so thrilled to graduate, be the
19 first graduating class.

20 As far as our demographics go, we mimic the
21 demographics of the northwest Arkansas area. We've
22 got a significant population of Asian and Middle
23 Eastern students. We have 569 students total, with
24 275 males and 294 females.

25 We pride ourselves on providing a distinctively

1 classical education. And what that means is that our
2 students read the great books, they study history in-
3 depth, they learn math and science, not only from the
4 practical perspective and the computation perspective
5 but they also learn the beauty of it and why it
6 matters in life.

7 This type of education has been around for
8 thousands of years and it's been actually
9 experiencing a revival of sorts lately. You might've
10 heard of the trivium, or what we like to refer to as
11 the hierarchy of knowledge. And that simply means
12 that we believe that students start in the grammar
13 stage and then they progress through the logic stage
14 and finally are able to engage in rhetoric at the
15 high school level. So that solid foundation of broad
16 academic content knowledge is what should be built on
17 beginning in those early grades so that the students
18 can more successfully engage in reasoning activities.
19 And we emphasize the Socratic method as well in the
20 upper school especially, and so you will oftentimes
21 see our students engaged in vigorous discussions in
22 their classes.

23 In addition to our strong academic program we
24 also focus on virtuous character building. The
25 environment and curriculum at Northwest Arkansas

1 Classical Academy, they're both designed to promote
2 and build strength of character in students by
3 promoting good habits, by teaching precepts, and then
4 providing examples of virtue. We know that there are
5 a lot of people out in the world who are very highly
6 educated, who are making very poor decisions
7 character-wise. And we want our students to leave us
8 with the understanding that character is important to
9 who you are and to our society. So we emphasize
10 virtue and vice in our literature and history
11 courses. Our administrators and teachers encourage
12 and model habits of honesty and respect and
13 individual responsibility and self-discipline. And
14 then even our discipline program models this idea.
15 We use what we call a character card system and this
16 is tagged directly to the student motto that we
17 recite every morning together as a K-12 campus and it
18 gives our students and our parents and our teachers
19 an opportunity to talk about behavior as it relates
20 to character. So instead of just going home and
21 saying, "Mom, today I was on orange," they can go
22 home and say, "Mom, today I had an issue with
23 respect," and it opens up that opportunity to talk
24 about what is respect, how does that work, and why is
25 it important.

1 Our motto for our school is "Respice, Adspice,
2 Prospice," and that is Latin for by studying the past
3 and analyzing the present our students are going to
4 be ready to contribute to the future.

5 We have several distinctives at our academy and
6 some of the ones that I'd like to highlight -- we
7 have a knowledge-rich curriculum that we focus on.
8 We like to teach reading and spelling through an
9 explicit phonics program. You know, children learn
10 language first by talking and so they learn the
11 sounds of that. And so by teaching them that there
12 are symbols that relate to those sounds and that is
13 how English works we end up with students who read
14 very well and then learn to spell very well as a
15 result.

16 We teach formal logic in the 8th grade and then
17 we also have a rhetoric course in our high school.
18 We teach history and science every single day,
19 beginning in kindergarten. One thing that I'm very
20 proud of is our seniors write and defend a senior
21 thesis each year and they're kind of in the throes of
22 that right now. But they choose a topic that is of
23 interest to them and that ties to what they have
24 learned in school so far, and they have an academic
25 advisor, and they literally write and publicly defend

1 the thesis on that.

2 And then we also began teaching formal Latin for
3 high school credit in the 7th grade, and all of our
4 students receive two years of Latin.

5 One thing that is also a distinctive for our
6 academy is the recitations. Our students even at an
7 early age begin memorizing and reciting poetry,
8 famous speeches, things that are important to what
9 they're learning in their classes. This right here
10 is some of our students reciting the Pledge in Latin.
11 They learned it in Latin and they enjoy being able to
12 recite it, not only for their class but they do that
13 for our morning assembly as well. What this does is
14 it helps students be comfortable speaking in public;
15 it helps them understand that it is important what
16 you know, but it is also really important that you
17 can communicate well what you know. And so it gets
18 them a little more comfortable with public speaking.

19 As far as our awards and recognition go, we have
20 been an achieving school every year since opening.
21 We are an AdvancEd accredited school as well; we
22 achieved that in 2016. Our test scores are always
23 very good. Last year we were the number three
24 district in the state for our ACT Aspire scores,
25 which was really exciting for us.

1 The Office for Educational Policy at the
2 University of Arkansas has also recognized us several
3 years in a row. Their most recent data is from the
4 2015-16 school year and our overall rating from them
5 was number nine in the state and number four in the
6 northwest Arkansas region. We also had recognition
7 for math, ELA and science that year.

8 Our PSAT results were also really exciting. The
9 very first year that we had 10th graders our
10 students, 72% of them, met both benchmarks as
11 compared to 45% in the state and 47% nationally. The
12 second year that we had sophomores it took a little
13 bit of a dip, but it took a dip statewide and
14 nationally as well. So we were at 67% that year, but
15 then this current year with our current sophomores we
16 were at 86% for our students meeting both benchmarks
17 for ELA and math and science as compared to the state
18 at 31% and the nation at 38%. Those kiddos were
19 pretty excited about that, very proud of themselves.

20 In addition to being academic and focused on
21 academics, we also want our students to be well-
22 rounded and so we promote in-school involvement
23 through clubs, activities, sports. We have a lot of
24 events going on at school. Music is a big deal at
25 our school; we have four different orchestras, two

1 different choirs; we have a junior high student
2 council, a high school student council; a theater
3 club that performs a couple of plays each year --
4 they're working on The Importance of Being Ernest
5 right now to perform in the spring. We have a
6 volleyball team, we have a tennis team. We're very
7 proud of our girls' doubles team. The first year
8 that they competed, which was 16-17, they took third
9 place and then this past year they took second place,
10 which was really exciting. We have a golf team,
11 boys' and girls' basketball teams. We also have a
12 Spartan Bowl flag football game that our kids
13 participate in each year, which just an intramural
14 thing, very fun for them. We have a Spartan Spirit
15 Squad. The cross country team also did very well
16 this year; robotics, chess club, we have a newspaper
17 staff, and then we also have students that
18 participate in Young Marines.

19 We like to be involved in our community as well,
20 so we're often at the First Friday events in downtown
21 Bentonville, kind of getting the word out about our
22 school. We also participate each year at the
23 Northwest Arkansas School Choice Fair, which is in
24 Springdale. And then we even have students who
25 volunteer around the area we well.

1 As far as the future ahead goes for us, like I
2 said, we're going to have our first graduating class
3 this year. Our goal is to have 100% college
4 acceptance; we're about halfway there right now.
5 Half of our seniors have already received their
6 acceptance letters from the colleges that they choose
7 to attend. And then we recently partnered with the
8 BHS Ignite program, the Bentonville High School
9 Ignite program. They have a video production group.
10 And they came to our campus and helped us create a
11 promotional video from our -- for our front lobby.

12 Yes, ma'am, if you wouldn't mind pressing play
13 on that. It should be kind of at the bottom.

14 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE WHILE TRYING TO START THE VIDEO)

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I paused the timer so
16 you're not --

17 MS. PROVENZA: Okay. Thank you, ma'am. I
18 appreciate it.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Do you want to go on with
20 your presentation?

21 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Yeah.

23 MS. PROVENZA: That is just fine. If you guys
24 get an opportunity to watch it, it's really great; it
25 was a fun project to do.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Is this in the
2 presentation?

3 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.
4 Typically, when it's running in slide-show there will
5 be a little play button at the bottom and you should
6 be able to press Play and it should go just fine.

7 So, by anyway, we had a good time with this and
8 the students that came over from BHS were really
9 helpful and we enjoyed being able to do that.

10 So at this point I would like to turn it back
11 over to Mr. Gast.

12 MS. GAST: Thank you. As you can tell, it's an
13 outstanding school, a school we're very, very proud
14 of and a lot of really, really great things are
15 happening.

16 Just to summarize before we go ahead and go into
17 the questions, we're requesting a 10-year renewal;
18 we're requesting an amendment to expand our
19 enrollment up to 1200 students; we're requesting no
20 additional waivers, and rescinding or deleting any of
21 those waivers that through the application process
22 was deemed are no longer applicable through the state
23 education code.

24 So that concludes our presentation, our formal
25 presentation, and we are more than willing and

1 interested in addressing any clarification or any
2 questions that you might have.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Boyd, is there anyone
4 here to speak in opposition?

5 MS. BOYD: No, ma'am.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So if you have
7 anything else you want to add you've got a little bit
8 of additional time; if not, we'll go ahead and
9 proceed with questions.

10 MR. GAST: No. I think we're ready for the
11 questions. I would like to add that our board
12 president who is here today also has students, has
13 children in that particular school. And so he has
14 been a very supportive individual, as has the state
15 individuals. And I would like to spend a second
16 thanking the staff at APSRC, as well as ADE, for all
17 of their help in reviewing these applications,
18 providing us with comments, you know, information,
19 things that we can do to improve and things that we
20 can help us make the application as clear as we
21 possibly can so that you can get a real accurate
22 picture of the schools that we're bringing in front
23 of you. So --

24 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you.

25 MR. GAST: Uh-huh.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I'll go ahead and start on
2 this side this time. Dr. Hernandez, do you have any
3 questions?

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: I do. So the amendment request
5 is to increase the cap to 1200 students.

6 MR. GAST: Yes, sir.

7 DR. HERNANDEZ: Right now, you have a cap of 685
8 with a current enrollment of about 500 -- a little
9 over 500 students. So, and I also heard it mentioned
10 there was a 510 student wait-list. So I guess my
11 question is the wait-list -- or why is there a wait-
12 list if your cap is 685?

13 MR. GAST: Sure.

14 DR. HERNANDEZ: Is it a room thing? And if so,
15 moving to that 1200 cap what's the plan for growth?

16 MR. GAST: Great. And, yeah, great question.
17 And it's not a room thing as much as it is a
18 concentration of what grade levels we have that wait-
19 list in. And so with the cap being at 685 we have to
20 be very careful that if it stays there those lower
21 grades are what ultimately are going to change the
22 enrollment in the upper grades later on down the
23 road. And so with the cap at 685, with us not adding
24 any students whatsoever, in a process of between two
25 and three years we'll already have hit that cap

1 without adding anyone, therefore not being able to
2 address the waiting list issue that we currently
3 have. Our goal with the increase in enrollment is to
4 be very responsible as far as how we go ahead and
5 advance those grades to start getting those lower
6 grade kids into the school at the elementary level
7 and then naturally that enrollment grows each year as
8 that group of kids moves forward. And so our plan is
9 to grow over an extended period of time, not to just
10 all of a sudden -- we don't have space, nor do we
11 have the availability to just all of a sudden add 500
12 kids into that school. But we have the availability
13 to gradually move them in the right direction, but
14 the enrollment cap will allow us then to not have to
15 come in a year in front of the Panel for another
16 amendment to add -- you know, to add enrollment, to
17 increase enrollment. So right now we have room. We
18 were just more concerned about wanting to make sure
19 that we had an eye on the future as well, as far as
20 the growth is concerned, so that we can support those
21 kids as they get into the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and
22 11th grade.

23 Ms. Provenza, anything that you want to add to
24 that?

25 MS. PROVENZA: No. That's great.

1 MR. GAST: Okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So to follow-up with those
3 -- with that line of questioning, it seems then that
4 your largest numbers are in 3rd through 6th grade
5 currently?

6 MR. GAST: Actually, K through 6, the lower
7 grades. You know, we have a -- yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Well, true. True. But
9 just in that you go from 46 in 2nd grade to 69 in 3rd
10 grade?

11 MR. GAST: That's correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So it is a little larger
13 there, but -- so when you talk about -- you have the
14 space then for 1200 currently; is that what you're
15 saying? You have the space and you're going to be
16 able then with the 1200 to go ahead and where -- and
17 really working to get the larger enrollment in those
18 early grades and still be able to support them as
19 they go all the way through. Am I understanding that
20 correct?

21 MR. GAST: Yes, yes, no and yes, I guess is kind
22 of the way that works. Yeah, the building itself
23 right now for our first round of expansion, we have
24 four classrooms that are currently already available.
25 If you look at -- I provided a schematic or a

1 blueprint of the facility. We have a great deal of
2 area in the building that is currently not built out
3 that we can actually add classrooms to. Our long-
4 range plan for Bentonville is not to continually
5 still remain in that particular building; our goal is
6 as we continue now to increase the enrollment -- and
7 one of the reasons for the 10-year advancement is --
8 or 10-year renewal is a building plan that would
9 eventually allow us to build a campus there in
10 Bentonville that would house the lower grades, middle
11 grades and the upper grades on one central campus
12 location. This particular building is probably going
13 to be fine for us to house up to 800, maybe 900
14 students, but our long-range goal is to have a
15 permanent facility built there that mirrors some of
16 our other classical academies in the state of Texas
17 that have everything; it's almost like a miniature
18 college campus.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Did you have additional
20 questions?

21 DR. HERNANDEZ: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Wilson, any
23 questions?

24 MR. WILSON: No.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Dr. Williams?

1 DR. WILLIAMS: Currently, what's your senior
2 class that are graduating now? How many do you have?

3 MS. PROVENZA: We have 10 lovely seniors that
4 will be graduating this year.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I was just trying to get a
6 sense of what it looks like. Thank you.

7 I had -- my other question was about the
8 increase in the enrollment, but Dr. Hernandez asked
9 that one.

10 MS. TURNER: I guess I'm still a little bit
11 confused on the enrollment. So do you think that the
12 1200 students that you're expanding to over a 10-year
13 period -- because you're asking for a 10-year
14 renewal, so is that what you're telling me or not?
15 I'm not sure I understand that.

16 MR. GAST: And I think what we're basically
17 doing, Ms. Turner, is stating that -- we're going to
18 grow in a responsible fashion; we are not going to
19 put more people in a building that it can either hold
20 or that's safe to do. We wanted to have flexibility
21 in the process because we do plan on building down
22 the road. That model of school is really never
23 structured or built to get any larger than 1,000 to
24 1,200. It's just not built to do that, and we have
25 no intentions. One of the things we pride ourselves

1 on is the schools that have a certain size because of
2 the benefits of that size of school. So instead of,
3 again, coming on a regular basis and saying, "Hey, we
4 need another 100 kids or we need another 200," we
5 thought we would go towards the absolute top, whether
6 we actually ever achieve or work towards that. We're
7 less concerned about the overall number and more
8 concerned about the quality that we're going to
9 provide for those kids that we put in the building.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So I think we've asked
11 most of the others this, so I'll go ahead and also
12 just take a minute for you all to talk about the
13 goals that you've established, the new goals. And so
14 along the same lines as with the others, when you're
15 talking about your goals for student success in math
16 and in science and literacy, in your application you
17 have -- okay. So you all did go into performing at
18 or above the 75th percentile?

19 MS. PROVENZA: (Nodding head up and down.)

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So, you want to
21 talk a little bit about how you established those
22 goals and --

23 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. So we took a look at the
24 data that we already have based on ACT Aspire scores,
25 based on the MAP testing that we do each year, and

1 determined that we felt like that was a realistic
2 number for us to look at in terms of improving and
3 for students to be at that proficient area.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And I also notice
5 you do include your college acceptance and you're
6 setting some ambitious goals there --

7 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- in terms of the college
9 acceptance. And in reviewing your data you do have
10 high performance in your 3rd grade; you've got -- I
11 believe the last year was 73.4% at ready or exceeding
12 levels there. So can you talk a little bit about
13 what you have going on in K-2 that's kind of jump-
14 starting those kiddos to be successful in that early
15 start?

16 MS. PROVENZA: You bet. Absolutely. I actually
17 really love bragging on our K-2, so stop me if I get
18 boring. But -- yeah, right, just kind of nudge me a
19 little bit. But I think one of the things that I can
20 attribute that success to in terms of the reading is
21 that explicit phonics program that I talked about. I
22 would venture to say -- and I could go through and
23 count, but the majority of our kindergartners are
24 reading when they leave kindergarten. And so they
25 are -- some of them are reading on the 3rd grade

1 level when they leave kindergarten. And so by
2 teaching students to read very well and being very
3 explicit about how the English language works I think
4 that that has really helped our 3rd grade teachers
5 because they come to them with a really great
6 foundation already. Ditto for math; we use a
7 Singapore math program that really focuses on how
8 math works, why it's important, let's really learn
9 how to do good math. And so just by building that
10 great foundation at that K-1 and 2 level I think that
11 that speaks to the results in 3rd grade.

12 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I think that was my
13 last question. Do you all have any others?

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Just a minor one. You've
15 referred twice, the phonics. No whole language
16 involved in that program in any way, or just strictly
17 the phonics aspect?

18 MS. PROVENZA: Yes and no. So in terms of
19 learning to read we are very focused on the explicit
20 phonics program which teaches to think and to spell
21 type of way of learning, so that when students are
22 faced with a word that they've never, ever seen
23 before, if they know the rules of the way the English
24 language works they can figure out what that word is
25 and how it sounds; and so in terms of that kind of

1 reading, yes.

2 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

3 MS. PROVENZA: We also have a literature course
4 though --

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

6 MS. PROVENZA: -- starting in kindergarten. So
7 they're hearing good stories, they're hearing good
8 reading, and then throughout that explicit phonics
9 program it also touches on grammar. So our
10 kindergartners are learning what is a noun, what is a
11 verb. So it's all in it.

12 DR. WILLIAMS: So, yes and no.

13 MS. PROVENZA: Yes and no.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

15 DR. HERNANDEZ: I've got a comment.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. Dr. Hernandez.

17 DR. HERNANDEZ: I noticed, you know, one of the
18 -- I know we didn't get to see the video. I just
19 want to make a comment that, you know, I thought it
20 was pretty neat that you've got Bentonville School
21 District, who, you know, a lot of people feel like
22 this is a competition and that they're coming into
23 your school and providing a service to help promote
24 your program. I just wanted to make sure that wasn't
25 lost on the folks that that was a -- that's a pretty

1 unique relationship, and I just wanted to point that
2 out.

3 MR. GAST: And I appreciate that. And, you
4 know, one of the goals that we have coming in as far
5 as developing our district office and those types of
6 things is -- as I told you, I'm 35 years in the
7 public schools and had always -- you know, the
8 charter school -- the whole idea there was, you know,
9 they were the other side, as you indicated. And as
10 I've been now three years with Responsive Education
11 and learned the major benefits that a charter school
12 can offer to a community, we're actually now starting
13 to try and reach out to the school districts that are
14 in the campuses that we serve because we do believe
15 that partnerships are important. I believe that, you
16 know, there are kids and they're the kids of
17 Bentonville too, and we can benefit from the stuff
18 that goes on at those schools and they certainly can
19 benefit from the things that we as a charter school
20 have to offer if we just start talking to each other
21 and if we would just start realizing that we're not
22 in competition with each other; we're teaching the
23 same kids, and they're what it's all about. And so
24 we're real excited about the team that we've put
25 together because all of us have that same vision that

1 what we want to do is we want to work with and be
2 partners with the local school district, not
3 necessarily their competition. Because if everyone
4 is in it for the right goal, they're in it to benefit
5 those particular students and it shouldn't matter
6 what school it goes to; it should matter that we're
7 servicing them and giving them and the community what
8 they need. So, I agree. Thank you for the comment.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Just a comment along those lines.
10 You know, being in northwest Arkansas and watching
11 the changes over the years, as different companies
12 come in and bringing in people from all over the
13 world having different options for education becomes
14 important. This is really interesting. You know,
15 first we had -- just had the Arkansas Arts Academy
16 and now we have Classical Academy. And I never
17 thought of it this way, but they're both a great fit
18 for northwest Arkansas. I mean there is a clientele
19 for students. There's another school coming online,
20 Dayton School that's coming online, a private school
21 in northwest Arkansas; there's Providence Academy in
22 northwest Arkansas. And my kids attend Harbour High
23 in Springdale public elementary school. The options
24 up there are just -- it's amazing. And it's a great
25 fit if you're going to have a vibrant economic

1 community where you bring in people from other parts
2 of the world and they're going to have different
3 expectations of what education should look like. So
4 this is -- I just think that Classical Academy is a
5 great fit for that. I love the Latin piece to all of
6 this too.

7 MS. PROVENZA: Thank you.

8 MR. GAST: If I would've went there, I probably
9 would've been a much better speller than I am now.

10 MS. PROVENZA: Me too.

11 MR. GAST: I also want to share with you one of
12 the things that we have put together -- and I can
13 provide you down the road a copy of this; it's our --
14 it's a 10-year vision that we have put together for
15 Arkansas, because just as the comments you made about
16 Bentonville providing the opportunities for different
17 types of schools for those kids, you know, there's a
18 lot of cities in Arkansas that the communities would
19 love to have -- the parents and community would love
20 to have those options as well. And so, you know, we
21 try to look at not just what we're currently doing
22 but also what types of schools and what brands will
23 be very beneficial for other areas of Arkansas, as we
24 again responsibly look at growing and going into
25 other communities with a school that would fit the

1 needs of that particular group.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. Thank you.

3 Ms. Boyd, I notice they are not seeking any --
4 or Ms. Davis, I guess -- they're not seeking any new
5 waivers? And it does look like there's one being
6 rescinded in the legal review.

7 MS. BOYD: Yeah, that's a clean-up. Ms. Davis
8 had to step out, but she wanted me to let you all
9 know that she didn't have any remaining concerns.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right.

11 Well, if that's the case then at this time I
12 will accept a motion on this request.

13 MR. WILSON: So moved. I move the approval of
14 the request.

15 DR. HERNANDEZ: Second.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So I have a motion to
17 approve the request for renewal and a second.

18 All those in favor say "aye."

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Any opposed?

21 Okay. Congratulations, your renewal request is
22 approved. And it will be on the State Board agenda
23 for consideration, if the State Board wishes to
24 review the Panel's decision. But congratulations --

25 MS. GAST: Thank you, Dr. Pfeffer.

1 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- and we look forward to
2 seeing your continued work and growth in that area.

3 MR. GAST: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And if you'll wait just a
5 minute we will have feedback for you --

6 MR. GAST: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- from each of the
8 members.

9 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: While they're finishing
11 up, Mr. Gast, I wanted to tell you thank you for your
12 team that you brought with you today. It's obvious
13 that you've got a lot of people who are very excited
14 and committed to the program, so -- I know it's a
15 long trip, so thank you to all of you who came as
16 well.

17 And it looks like we're about finished here.
18 So, Dr. Hernandez, do you want to provide your
19 feedback?

20 DR. HERNANDEZ: Yes. I voted for the motion.
21 Northwest Classical Academy has proven to be a great
22 option for students and parents in northwest
23 Arkansas. They're also striving to be great partners
24 with other educational providers in the area.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Turner.

1 MS. TURNER: I voted for the motion. This
2 school provides great opportunities and a high
3 quality education for a select group of students.

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Williams.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted for the motion. The
6 school provides an option for parents and students
7 built around the classics, while providing an
8 excellent education.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Mr. Wilson.

10 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion, partly as a
11 result of my visit there and on-the-scene inspection,
12 which I very much enjoyed, and because of the
13 school's proven record in that community and the
14 support of the community. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Thank you again.

16 MR. GAST: Thank you very much.

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And we will see you in the
18 future.

19 MR. GAST: In fact, just in a few minutes.

20 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: In a few minutes, that's
21 true.

22 MR. WILSON: Don't over-do it.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: At this time we'll go
24 ahead and take a break until about 10:00 and come
25 back and hear our final request.

1 (BREAK: 9:53 - 10:02 a.m.)

2 A-3: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
3 RENEWAL: PREMIER HIGH SCHOOL OF LITTLE ROCK

4 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. Welcome back,
5 everyone. Make sure we've got all of our group back
6 together. We have our grand finale for today.

7 MS. BOYD: For the year.

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: For the year, yes.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: I like that.

10 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So we are going to
11 get started with item number three on our agenda,
12 which is the request for the open-enrollment public
13 charter school renewal for Premier High School of
14 Little Rock. And, Ms. Boyd, you are recognized.

15 MS. BOYD: Thank you. On November 1, 2012, the
16 State Board of Education approved the application for
17 Premier High School of Little Rock. The charter is
18 approved to serve students in grades 9 through 12
19 with a maximum enrollment of 240. Representatives of
20 Premier High School are appearing before the Charter
21 Authorizing Panel to request a renewal of the current
22 charter. The request is for five years. And the
23 first person you'll be hearing from will be Steven
24 Gast, who is the superintendent.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Will all

1 representatives from Premier High School of Little
2 Rock and anyone speaking in opposition please stand
3 to receive the oath. Okay. If you'll raise your
4 right hand? Do you swear or affirm that the
5 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
6 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

7 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

8 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

9 And, Mr. Gast, you are recognized.

10 MR. GAST: Thank you. If you'll recall, back at
11 the first presentation that we just completed I
12 showed you a slide dealing with the different schools
13 that we have within our system. And Premier High
14 School is one such school and it is quite different
15 from other schools that you're probably used to
16 hearing about. So what I'd like you to do for just a
17 second is to imagine a high school where the average
18 enrollment is around 100 students, but over 200
19 different kids come through the doors in a regular
20 school year. Imagine a school where a high
21 percentage of the students in attendance have either
22 dropped out of the local high school or fallen so far
23 behind in their credits that they see no hope in
24 their local public school of ever catching up and
25 graduating. Imagine a school where the majority of

1 the students enter the school two to three years
2 behind academically or in earned credits, a school
3 where most of the students have never been involved
4 in a club, a sport, or a school-sponsored
5 organization; a school where many of the students
6 come to school in the morning and raise their own
7 children in the afternoon; a school where many of the
8 students will be the first to graduate from a high
9 school in their entire family; a school where for the
10 first time students will feel welcome, challenged and
11 in control of their own learning; also a school that
12 provides hope, that each student really can have a
13 future and that there really is an avenue to college
14 or post-secondary training, regardless of their past
15 educational experiences; a school that picks up
16 students, builds them up, and sends them back on
17 track to their local school or provides them with an
18 actual avenue to graduate from high school. Imagine
19 a school that you have a staff that will go to homes
20 in areas most will not venture into to find those
21 students, pick them up, and bring them back to
22 campus. Imagine a school where the average student
23 has a set of issues and problems that in most cases
24 would overwhelm the average kid; a school where the
25 student is not judged by the neighborhood they come

1 from, their socioeconomic status, the car their
2 parents drive, or the clothes they wear, but the fact
3 that they have a second or third chance to work with
4 adults whose only mission is to help these kids
5 experience success and to be given a fighting change
6 in life and for a future. There are not many schools
7 that exist like that. One school that does is
8 Premier High School.

9 What I'd like to do is introduce to you the
10 director of that campus, Mr. Dennis Felton, who will
11 go through a slide presentation of a very unique and
12 a school that provides a tremendous, tremendous
13 service to a certain group and a population of kids
14 that really are underserved in Arkansas.

15 Mr. Felton.

16 MR. FELTON: Thank you, Mr. Gast.

17 Good morning. I'm Dennis Felton; I serve as the
18 principal of Premier High School of Little Rock. I
19 want to help -- piggyback off Mr. Gast and just help
20 paint a picture of Premier High School and the
21 students that we serve. And so over the past four
22 years 20% of the students that graduate from Premier
23 High School were already teen parents; 71.5% of the
24 freshmen class of 2017 are actually in their second
25 year of 9th grade, which means that only 28% of our

1 freshmen class this year are true freshmen; 30% of
2 the students that graduate from Premier High School
3 over the last four years were actually dropout
4 recovery, which means that these students were not
5 enrolled in school previously before enrolled into
6 Premier High School; 18% of Premier High School
7 students take public transportation to school, rain,
8 sleet, snow; and 7% of the population is homeless.

9 The unique thing about this slide is when most
10 students come to Premier it's their second chance or
11 last hope or last chance, an irony -- Premier stands
12 for first. So one of the things we want to do is we
13 want to attract the disengaged student. Every year
14 -- 7,000 students each day are dropping out of high
15 school. In the state of Arkansas alone over 5,100
16 students dropped out of high school and as to
17 pursuing a GED there was a lack of interest. So one
18 of the things we want to do is we want to take the
19 disengaged student and get them back reinvested in
20 the education process and we want to basically
21 instill hope and put a plan together to insure they
22 get their high school diploma. In the city of Little
23 Rock, there are several students that are walking
24 around just two, three credits away from graduating.
25 And so what we want to is we want to reach out to

1 those students, get them back engaged in the
2 educational process to receive a high school diploma.

3 So to give you a little history on Premier High
4 School of Little Rock, it started four years ago with
5 collaboration between Arkansas Baptist College and
6 Responsive Education Solutions. One of the unique
7 things about this high school is its actually on a
8 college campus and so a lot of students can start
9 high school with the end in mind.

10 So one of the things Premier High School focuses
11 on is providing students hope. We want to give
12 students in the community of Little Rock hope through
13 an innovative and encouraging learning environment.
14 Our staff members go above and beyond to insure that
15 we're doing everything we can to meet the needs of
16 our students. Just looking at a snapshot, we're
17 small by design. We have 110 students. That
18 actually has changed; we're 70% poverty right now,
19 almost 90% African American population. Seventy-
20 percent of our students are overage. The average 9th
21 grader that comes into our building is actually 16
22 years old; the average senior is almost 19 years old.
23 Eighty-five percent of students on campus are at-
24 risk. So we're talking about students that are
25 currently failing in their current school. We're

1 talking about students that are dropped due to lack
2 of attendance, students that are in the juvenile
3 justice system, students that have been retained.

4 One of the things we like to brag about is our
5 staff retention. Each year our staff attrition is
6 getting better, so -- as well as our staff retention,
7 our student retention is getting better. And so we
8 know the longer we have students the more we can do
9 with them. The average tenure of a Premier High
10 School graduate is 1.5 years, which means that we
11 don't have students long, and the time we have, like
12 Mr. Gast said, we want to spend time meeting them
13 where they're at, building them up -- and whether
14 that's graduating or sending them back to the high
15 school.

16 So one of the challenges we've identified, when
17 you focus on the dropout recovery population, is the
18 graduation rate. We have a lot of students during
19 their fourth year, fifth year, sixth year cohort that
20 we're getting back on track. Also, student
21 attendance -- a lot of students come to our school
22 because they battle with chronic absenteeism.
23 They've been dropped from their local school district
24 because of attendance. And then ultimately they're a
25 highly mobile population. We have students that come

1 to our school for various reasons; some students come
2 over for small interventions to get back on track; we
3 have some students that come over for a small
4 environment; we have some students that take
5 advantage of our credit recovery options. And so
6 since it's highly mobile, you hear me communicate
7 that the average graduate spends a year-and-a-half at
8 our school.

9 And so talking about that personalized learning
10 involvement, one of the things we want to do is when
11 a student steps in the door they're treated almost
12 like a college freshman. They have an academic
13 advisor that sits down and works through a graduation
14 projection plan, in which we identify what the
15 student needs to graduate.

16 We support the curriculum also with our
17 character education, because we know in order for the
18 students to be successful outside of high school they
19 have to have that character piece. As we sit down
20 with business owners in Little Rock and local college
21 representatives, a lot of students in the workplace
22 right now are just listing the soft skills. So we
23 spend time bringing in guest speakers, hosting
24 school-wide assemblies, and each month we have a
25 character virtue that we focus on school-wide.

1 And so some of the things we like to brag about
2 as well is our academic partnerships. We want to
3 insure that we can serve every student, no matter if
4 it's a student coming to our school that's behind or
5 a student that's trying to get ahead. So we have
6 partnerships with Arkansas School of Math and
7 Science, Arkansas Tech University, Arkansas Baptist
8 College, and also Virtual Arkansas, just to offer
9 students more courses and more curricular options.

10 So one of the things we've found out, a lot of
11 students come to our school because the traditional
12 instruction strategies are not working. And so we
13 attack our students with different instructional
14 strategies, where students are doing digital
15 learning; we have some students that are doing face-
16 to-face direct instruction; we have some students
17 involved in project-based learning, doing science
18 labs and things like that as well.

19 So another thing we've figured out is we have to
20 have high quality professional development for our
21 teachers. We have teachers that are coming in and we
22 would send them to regional training. We have
23 relationships with co-ops, where we send teachers to
24 the co-ops. We send teachers to state trainings, as
25 well as we spend a lot of time focusing on leadership

1 training as well and constantly revisiting our
2 professional development to insure that we're helping
3 teachers help students.

4 So some of the powerful practices that we like
5 to brag on as well is our one-to-one interaction with
6 students; the individualized learning plan for each
7 student; the continuous feedback, giving students the
8 ownership of their learning; increasing their student
9 engagement, integrated with emerging technology. We
10 have a one-to-one technology ratio on our campus, so
11 students have access to the latest technology where
12 they can come to not only do projects and research
13 but they can access the digital courses as well.

14 And we also utilize NWEA MAP assessments, ACT
15 Aspire, interim summative assessments, the ACT, as
16 well as our local assessments. And we like to use
17 those assessments to identify students who need
18 intervention, to monitor progress -- I mean monitor
19 student progress, to identify students that are
20 college and career ready, to identify the
21 professional development needs of the teachers.

22 So as we continue to grow as an academic
23 institution one of the unique things, this year we
24 had an opportunity to participate in the PLC pilot
25 project. The PLC pilot project has offered us

1 embedded coaching, an instructional side and an
2 administration side. We've conducted self-
3 assessments identifying what are those school-wide
4 deficiencies that we're struggling with. We have
5 experts that are coming in, working with our
6 administration, with our teachers, and working and
7 looking at the data to identify what are the things
8 that our teachers and staff need to be working on as
9 a school. And the cool thing about it is we're going
10 from working out of isolation to collaboration.
11 We're getting data-driven. We're diving into the
12 data, and that data is driving the actions that we're
13 making. So we're getting goal oriented and action
14 oriented as well.

15 So one of the things that we've found out as
16 well is in order to keep our students invested we
17 have to offer them extracurricular activities. And
18 so we want to connect students and give them
19 opportunities they actually wouldn't have if they
20 didn't go to Premier High School. And so, even
21 research indicates that participation in
22 extracurricular activities may increase a student's
23 sense of engagement and attachment to their school
24 and therefore decrease the likelihood of school
25 failure; and also indicators of successful completion

1 of school, impact student achievement, attendance,
2 and aspirations beyond high school. So one of the
3 things we're trying to do is get parents involved in
4 our school as well. So we want to offer parents
5 opportunities to volunteer; we want to increase our
6 parent communication; we want parents sitting down at
7 the table, talking about these school decisions,
8 talking about looking at this data and making sure
9 that we're all -- all stakeholders are on the same
10 page.

11 We want to have a college night where we educate
12 the students and not just take them to college; we
13 want to invite colleges in. We invite parents and
14 students each year to come to our college and career
15 fair. We invite counselors, the college
16 representatives to sit down and complete these
17 college applications for these students to help them.
18 A lot of our students will be first-time, first
19 generation college graduates. So their parents are
20 learning at the same time as they're learning. We
21 have students that attend the transitions fair; what
22 are services in the community; what are programs, the
23 agencies that can help our students when they
24 graduate. We want to take students there. A lot of
25 our students, they live right in Little Rock,

1 Arkansas; students that have never been on the campus
2 of the University of Arkansas/Little Rock; students
3 that have never been on the campus of University of
4 Central Arkansas; students that have never been on
5 the campus of University of Arkansas/Pine Bluff. We
6 take those students to the campus so they can see
7 what it looks like, they can see it, they can feel
8 what it feels like to be a college student.

9 We invite different people from the community
10 out as well to our school. We try to have student
11 life to get students involved. Because you come to
12 Premier High School of Little Rock doesn't mean you
13 have to sacrifice things that are going on in
14 traditional school. And so that goes back to us
15 helping with our student retention and steadily
16 engaging students and keeping them invested in what
17 they're doing. The cool thing about a lot of these
18 clubs, they're actually student driven. We have
19 staff and parents and community members who actually
20 volunteer to make these organizations happen. And so
21 cool things like the service club that goes out to
22 the community, that teachers students skills well
23 beyond academics, about how they can invest in their
24 local community and give back.

25 Another unique thing, we've incorporated

1 athletics in our program. And so we've been lucky
2 enough also to see some success and so our track team
3 this past spring was the state runner-up in the AACS,
4 as well as we had a second place in college
5 championship with our basketball team last year. And
6 so when we start talking about student attendance,
7 investment and engagement, this helps big-time. We
8 have science club, collaborating with Lisa Academy, a
9 local charter school as well, and we're participating
10 in the STEM festival. So we're able to showcase
11 student skills. That's the cool thing about it.
12 We're going to tap into those talents that may not
13 otherwise be seen in the classroom. So one of the
14 things -- culture-wise we want to embrace students.
15 A lot of these students may have not ever been
16 recognized for anything. They may have never
17 received an award. So we want to celebrate the small
18 wins at Premier High School/Little Rock. We want to
19 have honors assemblies and school choice week
20 assemblies.

21 Once again, students going out to read to the
22 local elementary schools; so we want to be a changing
23 agent in our community. This is Dr. Martin Luther
24 King, Junior Elementary School, which is probably
25 about a half-a-mile from our school. We invite

1 different artists in and business members as well,
2 and leaders in the community; that way, they can talk
3 to our students, expose them to different
4 opportunities as well. We want to get students
5 invested in service learning projects as well, where
6 they understand the importance of giving back to
7 their local community.

8 One of the things we've been noticed in the
9 media as well is our personalized learning
10 environment. And so we had a magazine feature in
11 which the magazine kind of focused on the innovative
12 and personalized learning environment that we have to
13 offer. A unique story, we had a student that came to
14 us that actually graduated early. This student was a
15 high-excelling student and actually started going to
16 school on the campus of Arkansas Baptist College,
17 first semester took 15 hours, made the Dean's list.
18 We were accredited by the Arkansas Department of Ed.,
19 as well as AdvancEd accreditation.

20 We've had staff members being recognized for the
21 great work they're doing. So this is one of our
22 teachers that was recognized by Little Rock Family
23 magazine for the Amazing Educator Award. And I like
24 to brag that I'm blessed to be able to work with a
25 great group of people. We have people that take the

1 sacrifice -- make the sacrifice and take the time out
2 to do necessary things to make it happen for the
3 kids.

4 And at the end of the day, the most -- the thing
5 we like to brag the most about is beginning with the
6 end in mind and graduation. It's priceless, every
7 May, to see our auditorium and our gymnasium fill up
8 with parents, community members, and students who
9 thought this day would never happen. It's priceless.
10 And so each May is one of the best events that we
11 have all year. The ratio for student to guest is
12 usually 1 to 30, and so that is evident of how
13 important this day is for our students and their
14 families.

15 And so one of the unique things as well,
16 athletics opens up other doors. Athletic programs
17 are offering more accessibility to post-secondary
18 institutions. So we had three individuals who
19 actually signed to play basketball at a local
20 college. And so we go all the way back in talking
21 about students who may not even had opportunity to
22 play basketball, and these students have the
23 opportunity to play college basketball. So over the
24 last four years we've graduated 68 students and 70%
25 of those students are actually in post-secondary

1 education, military training, or in some kind of
2 post-secondary training institution.

3 But we don't want to stop there. We want to get
4 better at what we're doing after high school, and so
5 we've created an alumni organization which we take
6 our students that graduate, bring them back to the
7 school to mentor the other students. We want them to
8 see that hope; if they see students that graduated
9 from Premier High School, in college, being
10 successful, playing college basketball, they glimpse
11 and give them a light at the end of the tunnel as
12 well. We want to create a network. When we talk
13 about students whose family members can't advise them
14 on college, whose family members don't have a lot of
15 experience in college, and so we create a network of
16 students. And I think about Philander Smith College;
17 we have a network of six students right now -- and
18 creating that network where students support each
19 other.

20 And so we also had a message from the Governor
21 presented to our class of 2017, which raised over
22 half-a-million dollars in scholarships.

23 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT, AS FOLLOWS:

24 (Available for viewing on the ADE website)

25 GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON: Congratulations to the

1 2016 graduating class of Premier High School of
2 Little Rock. Graduates, it's my honor to commend you
3 for your achievements and to encourage you as you
4 continue your pursuit of education and career path.
5 I challenge you to seek opportunity, even in
6 unexpected places, to prevent setbacks from defining
7 you, to guide you in service to other people and to
8 keep your focus on our values. As Governor, I
9 recognize your diligence, your countless hours of
10 hard work, and your determination to succeed.
11 Students, as you go from Premier High School to
12 college, military service, or workforce, or other
13 ambitions, I encourage you to continue working hard
14 in pursuing your dreams. Again, congratulations to
15 the graduating class of 2016.

16 (END OF VIDEO)

17 MR. FELTON: We thank the Governor for that.

18 So, what have we learned? We've learned the
19 importance of academic intervention as well as
20 behavior intervention; working as a professional
21 learning community versus working in isolation; let's
22 make data-driven decisions to have data-driven
23 instruction; let's attack the dropout intervention;
24 let's attack the attendance intervention -- I mean
25 let's provide dropout intervention and address the

1 attendance by providing intervention. Let's invest
2 in human capital and continue to build relationships
3 and partnerships in the Little Rock community, as
4 well as include parents in our decision-making, as
5 well as community leaders, and providing our staff
6 with high quality professional development.

7 2017 school year, Premier High School is also
8 recognized with the Arkansas Charter School Office as
9 a best practices identified in Arkansas charters.

10 You may have to press Play on that for me.

11 (WHEREUPON, a short video was played; it is
12 available for viewing on the ADE website.)

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I paused the time during
14 that video, but you've got about a minute-and-a-half.

15 MR. FELTON: Okay. I'm having a hard time going
16 to the next slide.

17 So Meagan Alexander is one type of student that
18 comes to Premier High School of Little Rock. Meagan
19 came to Premier; she was frustrated in her local ISD
20 school. She wanted to go to a school that was
21 smaller and offered a smaller environment, and so she
22 took advantage of our Premier Prep program. She's
23 kind of one of the reasons why we created it, because
24 we constantly wanted to assure that we're attacking
25 individual needs. And so Meagan had opportunity to

1 not only participate in concurrent credit in AP
2 courses and graduated, going to TCU on a full
3 scholarship, as well as also being able to take 15
4 college hours with her as well.

5 Calvere Robinson was one of the students I
6 talked about earlier who was struggling, got behind,
7 came back to our school, took advantage of the
8 personalized learning model; actually graduated on
9 time and ended up attending Arkansas Baptist College
10 and earning 30 credit hours the next year.

11 Wade Williams is one of our students in the
12 alumni association. So Wade graduated from Premier
13 High School of Little Rock, went to school at
14 Arkansas Baptist College; he comes back during his
15 downtime in classes to mentor and assist, and he's
16 kind of an office aid. We're teaching him how to
17 work that copier.

18 (TIMER BELL RANG)

19 MR. FELTON: And so taking advantage of those
20 opportunities.

21 (TIMER BELL RINGS AGAIN)

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Ms. Boyd, is there
23 anybody to speak in opposition?

24 MS. BOYD: No, ma'am.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. You can have an

1 additional five minutes, if you want to finish up
2 anything here or if there's anybody else that you
3 would like to have.

4 MR. FELTON: I just want to point out the fact
5 that, you know, we serve the Little Rock community as
6 well, and a lot of our students that come to us are
7 not currently enrolled in school. And so we know
8 we're up against a strong task but we're up for the
9 challenge and we continue to own up to what's going
10 on, but at the same time we're always believing in
11 continuous improvement. We're always looking at what
12 we're doing and how we can do it better and continue
13 to build relationships with individuals to help us
14 support our goals as well.

15 When you look at even the crime statistics
16 across the nation 75% of the crime that's done is
17 done by dropout students. And so one of the things
18 that we're trying to do is keep students off the
19 streets of Little Rock and put them in classroom
20 seats. And ultimately, as Chief Buckner said at our
21 community luncheon this past summer, "You're helping
22 me because if you're working with students and
23 keeping these students off the streets of Little
24 Rock, then that's less work my men have to do during
25 the day as well."

1 MR. GAST: Thank you, Dennis.

2 I just want to piggyback off his last statement.
3 You know, we have a great partnership with the Little
4 Rock Police Department as well. They are a presence
5 on our campus, not only just for I want to say
6 enforcement but at the same time just the presence
7 itself, as we know Resource Officers are a major
8 benefit to campuses and to schools. And we have a
9 great partnership with them as well.

10 I'm sure you can tell from listening to the
11 individual people that one of the things that I'm
12 really blessed with is the fact that I have people
13 that have tremendous passion around me and around our
14 kids. And I think that's very, very important.

15 We are realistic. We do understand that if you
16 look at proficiency on the ACT Aspire you're not
17 going to see Premier High School being near up at the
18 top, nor are you going to see them even with really,
19 really good scores. Now at the same time we have a
20 very -- you know, a small sample population where if
21 we had one, two or three students that pass a
22 particular section we could come to you at a 30% or
23 40% rate. And so we wanted to show you that there's
24 so much more to the picture of what we're doing with
25 these kids. That doesn't mean we ignore it, and it

1 doesn't mean that we -- you know, there's a fine line
2 in education between spinning data and the gray areas
3 and the things that are out there. The gray area
4 with Premier High School really is in the type of
5 students that we service and the fact that right now
6 we have almost 70 students who have a chance at a
7 future because they do have a high school diploma.
8 These are students who have traditionally never been
9 successful on assessments, and they don't -- I don't
10 want to say they don't take them seriously, but, you
11 know, the units that they take, the individualized
12 personalized learning that we provide these students,
13 that is a means toward something; it's a means to
14 their diploma. They take it extremely seriously.
15 Other assessments that don't necessarily do that
16 aren't always as important to those students. It's
17 our job to create that and to make that, and we
18 continue to work that way and we continue to address
19 those things. So I don't want the Panel to think
20 that in any way, shape or form that we're saying that
21 it's okay that we don't see a lot of proficiency in
22 some areas or no proficiency in some areas with our
23 particular students. That's the reason why we
24 continue to work hard; it's the reason why we have
25 our PLC project; that's why we were selected to work

1 with our particular staff. A couple of months ago,
2 we met with Ms. Turner and her staff and one of the
3 questions we asked is, what are some things that we
4 can do in working with your organization to try and
5 improve the program at Premier High School -- at all
6 our schools actually, but at Premier High School
7 specifically -- so that we can provide some training
8 for those students that aren't going to be college-
9 bound but do have a diploma and do want to go
10 further; they just don't know where to go. And so,
11 we're in a partnership right now, working very
12 diligently with the Department in the area of CTE to
13 start looking at other avenues that we might be able
14 to do to continue to serve our particular students.

15 We are extremely proud of Premier. We're
16 extremely proud to be able to stand up in front of
17 you. I've got a whole lot of parents out there who
18 are extremely happy with the fact that their child,
19 who they were afraid was going to dropout of school
20 and not have a place to go, now there's a future.
21 And the neat thing about that -- and I'll end with
22 this -- it's so important to understand that
23 generally in a family, especially the families that
24 we serve, there's not generally just one student
25 who's had difficulty or who has struggled; there's

1 other students as well. If those students can start
2 seeing their brothers and sisters experiencing some
3 success and graduate from high school, it's the light
4 and the hope that we can present to those younger
5 kids as well that when they get up to high school age
6 that there is a place like Premier that can truly
7 benefit them.

8 So we are proud of it. We are not blind to the
9 challenges that we face, but these kids are worth it
10 and this population is worth it. And if we don't
11 serve them nobody will, and we're going to continue
12 to serve them.

13 So thank you so much for having the opportunity
14 to present Premier.

15 Dennis, thank you; you do a tremendous job, as
16 does Susan.

17 And it's individuals that have the passion in
18 their eye, like Dennis, that make all the difference
19 as far as our schools are concerned. So, thank you
20 and we'll address any questions that you might have.

21 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you very
22 much.

23 Panel, I will begin with Dr. Williams for
24 questions.

25 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I think you all are doing

1 some good work there. First, my comment: I like the
2 idea that they're applying for a five-year renewal
3 and not longer and so we can, you know, get the
4 updates.

5 Where do you get your -- how do students come to
6 Premier?

7 MR. FELTON: A quick answer, I like to think
8 word of mouth now. We like to think that through the
9 collaboration -- we go to these local schools, Little
10 Rock Central, Little Rock Hall, other charter
11 schools; we go out and speak to those counselors,
12 those administrators, because a lot of times they
13 know the students before we know them. I can get out
14 here -- I do; I go door-to-door in the hot summers.
15 But a lot of times it's referral. And so a student
16 will be sitting there with a counselor, a counselor
17 kind of knows the student at-risk, attendance is
18 falling, grades are falling. And we try to build
19 those relationships and that way students can be
20 referred versus they're dropping out and then we're
21 finding them. But we do actively recruit in the
22 Little Rock area in different communities and local
23 schools as well.

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Your dropout recovery, if
25 students don't have Premier as an option, just based

1 on the students you all have attending, what's
2 usually -- what will usually happen to those
3 students?

4 MR. FELTON: As far as you're saying a student
5 dropped out of school and they didn't enroll?

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Let me rephrase.

7 MR. FELTON: Okay.

8 DR. WILLIAMS: What are the -- what other
9 options do students that are currently attending
10 Premier have educationally?

11 MR. FELTON: Well, we're open-enrollment. A lot
12 of students we have, they have been expelled. Some
13 students have been expelled from their traditional
14 school, and so they'll come over. For instance,
15 we'll have a student say they were expelled till the
16 remainder of this year; they'll come over to our
17 school and they'll finish the year out. We'll have
18 some students also that have been dropped through the
19 lack of attendance, and so they've missed 10
20 consecutive school days; Premier's LEA has dropped
21 that student, and so we're trying to get them back
22 reinvested.

23 MR. GAST: And one of the things that -- you
24 know, we talk about the challenge of mobility. One
25 of the other options for our students that go to

1 Premier is they can get caught up credit-wise and
2 actually go back to their home campus and graduate
3 with the class that they started with, and that's a
4 big deal for some of them. So, you know, there are
5 several students that we get that come in that might
6 be three, four, five, eight, ten credits behind; they
7 stay with us for a year, year-and-a-half; they get to
8 where they need to be; they go back to Central or
9 they go back to their local school to be back with
10 their class and to graduate. And we're okay with
11 that. I mean our goal is to get the student
12 graduated. We'd love for them to be able to graduate
13 with us, but on the other side of that coin also --
14 when you look at our proficiency scores, you know,
15 some of those students that we get caught up that
16 would probably do well on that particular test aren't
17 at Premier when that test is administered; they're
18 back at their other campus because we got them caught
19 up and got them going. So that's another avenue for
20 them as well.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

22 MS. TURNER: Thank you for your presentation. A
23 couple of questions: what is the percentage of
24 students who were parents that come to you? I missed
25 that in the beginning of your presentation.

1 MR. FELTON: Twenty percent.

2 MS. TURNER: Twenty percent. So can you tell me
3 what additional services you have to provide those
4 students to help them be successful at your school?

5 MR. FELTON: Some of those -- most of them don't
6 have transportation, and so we have a partnership
7 with Central Arkansas Transit System in which we
8 provide those students with bus passes. And the cool
9 thing about it, that bus pass doesn't just get that
10 student to school; so that bus pass gets that student
11 to work as well, and maybe medical appointments.

12 The flexibility in the school day, some of those
13 students take advantage of that and so they're able
14 to go to school during the daytime, find a babysitter
15 or a daycare or childcare and then in the afternoon
16 -- we have a partnership with a local nonprofit as
17 well. They come in once a month and work with our
18 teen parents and they do all types of child
19 development training, as well as small projects for
20 their families.

21 MS. TURNER: Okay. One thing -- and we have had
22 a conversation, and I appreciate that very much. And
23 from Department of Career Ed., we probably need to
24 look at what else we can do. We also have parenting
25 and child development classes, and so at some point,

1 you know, that might be something else you'd want to
2 look at there.

3 Where are you on -- because in your application
4 you mentioned that you've talked to us about the JAGG
5 program. Can you give me an update on that and where
6 you are in that process?

7 MR. FELTON: We're working on the application.
8 The original individual I kind of had that was going
9 to lead the program, we've had a change in personnel.
10 And so I met with my new personnel and talked about
11 it and everything, but we're still in support of it
12 because we have a lot of students that are currently
13 working as well as we want students to be able to get
14 credit for that. They've already got those job-
15 embedded -- and trying to build on even internships
16 as well.

17 MS. TURNER: Okay. Because through that JAGG
18 program they can also provide those students some
19 necessary support to be successful --

20 MR. FELTON: Sure.

21 MS. TURNER: -- in the jobs they have, as well
22 as transitioning to other jobs or to education. So I
23 do want you to pursue that with us.

24 MR. FELTON: Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. TURNER: That is rolling funding. Our other

1 funding was due October 1, but that is rolling, so
2 I'd like for you to continue that.

3 And I guess the other thing -- well, I think you
4 ended up answering my other question that I had
5 early-on. So that's probably all I have right now.
6 Thank you.

7 MR. FELTON: Thank you.

8 MR. GAST: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Hernandez.

10 DR. HERNANDEZ: I notice that there's kind of a
11 remaining question about how you guys plan to
12 increase -- one of your goals is about increasing
13 parental involvement. So can you talk a little bit
14 about how you plan to do that?

15 MR. GAST: Yeah. You know, speaking from a guy
16 who's been a high school principal for a lot of
17 years, you know, it's always interesting in just a
18 regular school where, you know, you drive by the
19 elementary school and the parking lot is absolutely
20 packed; there's a few less cars in the middle school;
21 and when you get to the high school and you've got
22 parent-teacher conferences, you know, you've got a
23 few that show up but not many. Same challenges that
24 we face. I think one of the things is, you know, we
25 do reach out; we do make home visits; we do talk with

1 individual parents. Word-of-mouth is huge in a small
2 school. And so with our efforts that we've started
3 with our alumni club, as well as trying to get, you
4 know, more parents into the building to actually see
5 what we're doing is a benefit. The different
6 activities, providing, you know, the cookouts -- you
7 know, churches a long time ago realized that, you
8 know, if you bring food they will come kind of deal.
9 And so, you know, it's putting together the types of
10 activities in the area -- you know, our basketball
11 program that Coach -- or that Dennis was talking
12 about, as well as our track program are totally
13 voluntary. They were started by staff, not because
14 they were going to get paid but because they knew the
15 kids needed it. And that brings -- you know, we had
16 a basketball game the other night on campus and it
17 was our Quest West Little Rock school playing the
18 Premier High School kids, and so we had two of our
19 charter schools playing each other. It was a great
20 opportunity for myself, Mr. Felton, Ms. Campbell and
21 others to walk around and introduce ourselves, talk
22 with parents, invite them into the school. It's that
23 personal touch that makes all the difference. So,
24 you know, there's a lot of not actual systematic
25 types of ways as much as there are informal ways that

1 tend to make a difference. I won't lie to you, it's
2 a challenge. But we're also starting to realize and
3 find that some of the parents that are now starting
4 to see that their child who has never been successful
5 in school is starting to experience some success that
6 that word is getting around and we're getting more
7 people that are coming and visiting and just saying,
8 "What can you do for my kid" or "What is there?"

9 And so, Dennis, any other parental types of
10 activities?

11 MR. FELTON: One of the things we found out was
12 awareness and communication. And so one of the
13 things that we incorporated, we actually have a
14 parent-teacher association and so we give parents a
15 voice. We have parent representation on like our
16 parental involvement committee, our school
17 improvement committee, our Title 1 school-wide
18 committee. And so we continue to try to get better
19 at the awareness and at the same time give the
20 parents voice. And so like through parent surveys, a
21 lot of times I found out we shouldn't have parent
22 meetings on Wednesday nights because that's a night
23 where parents like to go to church. And so sending
24 surveys out as well, getting that information from
25 parents, getting feedback, and that way we can make

1 better decisions and then giving those opportunities,
2 like the Booster Club and the parent-teacher
3 association, to have a voice as well.

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: Another question I had was in
5 regards to, you know, your number of kids that are
6 expected to be tested versus the number that actually
7 is; so you're what's called "percent tested." And
8 looking at it being really low, and then also with
9 your graduation rate -- so my question is: is that
10 because of just kids not showing up to test or is it
11 one of those things that because of your population
12 that you have several kids coming in and out all the
13 time? You know, is it a data quality issue with like
14 not tracking the kids very well to make sure they
15 should or should not be counted on your records and
16 things like that?

17 MR. GAST: Yeah, I think kind of it's all of the
18 above and a multiple choice answer to a question. I
19 think that there are a lot of factors that do that.
20 I think the difference with working with that staff
21 is they're not willing to look at any of those as an
22 excuse; that's something that we need to work on;
23 it's something that, you know, we -- we have to
24 instill in those particular kids the importance of
25 that assessment because of the fact that it helps the

1 school, it helps them, and that in general. So I
2 think that it's a combination of a lot of those
3 things. I don't think it's as much as a tracking
4 issue as it is a mobility issue. And oftentimes, you
5 know, we have kids who have not been there for a long
6 time that may end up sitting for the test because
7 they happen to be there or kids that have just left.
8 So I think it is a concern, as far as something that
9 we need to work on; it's something that we're aware
10 of. But really I can't attribute it to one specific
11 issue. I think there are several factors, and the
12 several factors are different for each one of those
13 kids within it. But you are correct in seeing that.

14 DR. HERNANDEZ: I guess maybe a follow-up, and
15 this may be something to work with some of our folks
16 is just to make sure that, you know, there is a good
17 understanding of the rules as far as, you know, which
18 kids --

19 MR. GAST: Yes, sir.

20 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- count, which ones don't.
21 Does that make sense, what I'm asking? Because what
22 I'm trying to -- this is not particular to your
23 district because there's a lot of the schools that --
24 you know, with a graduation rate specifically is
25 that, you know, that's over a four-year period. So

1 when they start to make corrections in the 12th grade
2 year, or that school is making corrections --

3 MR. GAST: Right.

4 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- of past graduates they're
5 having to go back several years to figure out, you
6 know, were those kids really --

7 MR. GAST: Right.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: Should they count on my records
9 or should I submit a correction. And so those are
10 the kinds of things -- and, you know, knowing that,
11 you know, we're going for a high threshold in the 90s
12 as far as 95% -- is that right? -- of kids that are
13 required to test and you guys are at 70% --

14 MR. GAST: Yes, sir.

15 DR. HERNANDEZ: -- that that may be a factor;
16 you know, this kid really shouldn't be on our record
17 as the guy personally whose not supposed to be
18 testing; it should be --

19 MR. GAST: Yeah. Great information. Thank you.
20 And I agree that -- you know, I think one of the
21 things that the Department has learned relatively
22 quickly is we have a staff that's really not afraid
23 to pick up the phone and say, "Hey, we need some help
24 in this area," you know, or "What suggestions might
25 you have?" I think it's different when somebody

1 comes up and makes a bunch of excuses, compared to
2 somebody who comes up and says, "You're right, we're
3 going to work with you guys; we're going to take
4 whatever ideas you have and we're going to get better
5 at it." And I really -- I mean that's what we're
6 about. So, I agree. Thank you.

7 Other questions?

8 MR. WILSON: Just briefly. Mr. Felton and Mr.
9 Gast, I'm deeply impressed that you all are working
10 as hard as you can with the most difficult,
11 disadvantaged kids that you have in your school.
12 It's critical to me that you continue your work and
13 provide a ray of hope for those kids that desperately
14 need it.

15 I think both of you mentioned -- I think Dr.
16 Williams mentioned too -- the communication or the
17 need for communication and cooperation between
18 Premier and Little Rock School District and others
19 that the kids may come from. Do you find -- are you
20 finding open communication or cooperation with other
21 school districts that the kids come from,
22 particularly Little Rock?

23 MR. GAST: Yeah, and that's a great question
24 because we're such a unique school in the group of
25 kids and the services that we provide that I think

1 more so than just other charter schools who are more
2 in direct competition so-to-speak with the
3 traditional types of schools. We find that there's
4 more of a willingness, you know, to work with us and
5 to work with those with that particular group of kids
6 because this is a group of kids that, for the most
7 part, have already taken their shot in the local ISD
8 and we're providing an option and opportunity to
9 them. So it's our plan to continue -- as we continue
10 to grow, because there's a need for Premier High
11 School in many areas of Arkansas; it's just not
12 Little Rock. But as we continue to perfect our model
13 here in Little Rock and continue to work with the
14 community we believe that as we develop a stronger
15 partnership with Little Rock Public Schools that it's
16 going to help us in general. Because, again, our
17 heart is for the kids, regardless of whether they're
18 going to Premier or whether they're going to Central,
19 and so we feel very positive about it. We have not
20 felt the same type of negative reactions that we've
21 seen with certain factions of the Little Rock School
22 District towards charters, as it is towards this
23 particular group. Because it's very difficult to
24 find an adult, whether they're in the school system
25 or not, who doesn't say we're doing a good thing in

1 trying to help these particular kids. And so we need
2 to continue to work on the partnership to, you know,
3 to make it grow. But there has been more openness
4 with our particular school than I think with others
5 in Little Rock.

6 MR. WILSON: I'm glad to hear it.

7 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Do you have one? Okay.

8 DR. WILLIAMS: Just a follow-up. You know,
9 looking at the population that you serve I think it
10 would be over-optimistic to think that you're going
11 to get 100% successful with all the students. About
12 how many students are not successful? And let me
13 define that for you: those would be students that end
14 up dropping out of Premier that do not transition
15 back to another school.

16 MR. FELTON: Good question. We're getting
17 better at that. It was one of the things we're
18 trying to do. We've actually developed an individual
19 tracking system. It kind of supplements our
20 individual graduation plan. And so it's kind of --
21 it's a snapshot; we're trying to take a snapshot of
22 what a student has when he comes in the door and a
23 snapshot of when that student leaves. And so that's
24 an area of growth and we're actually -- we've just
25 started getting better at that and putting a system

1 in place in which we could; that way we can do a
2 better job as far as our success. Because sometimes
3 when students come to us it's intervention and if a
4 student comes for three or four months or a semester,
5 goes back, then a lot of times we don't get credit
6 for that. So we want to do a better job of being
7 able to showcase what we are doing for every single
8 student.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And I think that question
10 there leads into what I wanted to just bring up too,
11 because, first of all, I want to commend you with one
12 of the data things you presented was 70% of your
13 graduates for the past four -- 70% of your past four-
14 year graduates are enrolled in post-secondary.

15 MR. FELTON: Right.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Some type of post-
17 secondary program. So now I'm not sure of the number
18 then -- you know, your graduation rate is not where
19 you want it; you even mentioned that the average time
20 in your school was about 1.5 years for your students.
21 So, but having those that were successful there to
22 have that high a percentage of those who are now in
23 some type of post-secondary opportunity is a really
24 good thing. So I think where our questions are kind
25 of going is that the key for you all is to help keep

1 your students there -- you know, students who come to
2 you, you know, how do you keep them there. And it's
3 really kind of a retention issue for your students
4 and your teachers.

5 Our data showed that you had a .5% attrition
6 rate from last year to this year, so a lot of
7 teachers to have to replace and to bring up-to-speed
8 and to really work with and develop to be able to
9 teach students who come with all types of different
10 challenges, academic challenges included. So when I
11 look at your goals I don't necessarily -- I see where
12 you have a goal for increasing student class
13 participation, but you're kind of focusing on the
14 attendance there. So I would encourage you to take
15 that further and not just do attendance, but that
16 student retention. Because I believe that if you do
17 keep those students based on what you've shown us so
18 far, we can really see some changes there.

19 So I would ask you -- and this also goes along I
20 think with your PLC work -- the goals in your PLC
21 work aren't necessarily reflected in the goals that
22 you've stated. So I would ask you all if you would
23 be willing to commit, if your charter's renewal is
24 approved today, you know, if you would commit to
25 coming back and working with us into helping you to

1 really refine those goals so that we -- using the
2 ESSA School Index data, using what you all are
3 already doing. But I really think that we can work
4 with you and help you refine these goals so that the
5 goals are very laser-focused on what it is that you
6 need.

7 MR. FELTON: Yeah. We definitely appreciate
8 your support. And one of the cool things about the
9 PLC is here in three weeks our Solution Tree support
10 will come back; we'll revisit our goals. It's kind
11 of like on a 12-week revolving deal, and so we'll
12 revisit the goals and make some amendments as well.
13 So, but we appreciate your support.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I just don't want that to
15 be seen as a separate from what you have overall with
16 your school. So I would feel very comfortable with
17 that commitment from you all that, you know, you
18 would be working with our team and bringing all those
19 goals together. But --

20 MR. GAST: Yeah, and we'll work with the ADE
21 Charter Office to update them and to get those things
22 and get them to them, as well.

23 And the one other comment I wanted to make, Dr.
24 Williams, that you had on that is one of the neat
25 things about the new program that we started to start

1 tracking this is it's also going to allow us to start
2 looking at tendencies, which goes right along with,
3 Dr. Pfeffer, what you were saying about if we can
4 start identifying tendencies of some of these
5 students that we're losing and why we're losing them,
6 there's a good opportunity then for us to develop an
7 internal program within the school that might address
8 that. Because if there's one or two, there's
9 probably ten or twelve or there could even be more.
10 And so, you know, it takes the first step to get to
11 the second, third and fourth, and, you know, we've
12 taken some of those major steps. But as we start
13 finding tendencies that will also start defining our
14 goals to some of the other things. So we appreciate
15 the input.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Panel, do you have
17 any other questions or comments?

18 Okay. Ms. Boyd, Ms. Davis, I was going to go
19 back and look at whether or not there were any new
20 waivers been requested.

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

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: No new waivers. Okay.
23 And so any remaining issues? Nothing, Ms. Davis?

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

25 Okay. Ms. Boyd, do you have any thoughts or

1 comments?

2 MS. BOYD: No, ma'am.

3 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So if there aren't
4 any -- if there's no further discussion, I would
5 entertain a motion on this renewal application.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: I move that the Premier High
7 School be renewed for five years.

8 DR. HERNANDEZ: Second.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. I have a motion and
10 a second from Dr. Hernandez.

11 All those in favor say "aye."

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Any opposed?

14 Okay. All right. Congratulations. If you'll
15 wait just a minute we'll provide you with feedback.

16 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

17 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: We'll start with Dr.
18 Hernandez.

19 DR. HERNANDEZ: I voted for the motion. Premier
20 High School provides a specialist environment for the
21 students that allows them to work toward graduation
22 and develop a plan for after high school.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Mr. Wilson.

24 MR. WILSON: I voted for the motion. I'm
25 impressed and encouraged that the Premier High

1 School, Mr. Gast, ResponsivEd, and Mr. Felton are
2 making the effort, a superhuman effort almost in
3 helping the most disadvantaged kids that we have in
4 the community. And I appreciate the work that y'all
5 are doing and give you an E for Effort.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Turner.

7 MS. TURNER: I voted for the motion. This
8 school is doing great work with a challenging group
9 of students, and this is very important for our
10 community and state. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Dr. Williams.

12 DR. WILLIAMS: I voted for the motion. Premier
13 High School provides an educational opportunity for
14 students and parents in which there may be limited
15 options; that you continue to work with ADE to refine
16 their goals and tracking of students.

17 MR. GAST: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Again, thank you
19 all. We wish you a Very Merry Christmas and safe
20 travels if you're going to be out and about.

21 MR. GAST: Thank you. Merry Christmas to y'all
22 as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So, thank you.

24 MR. GAST: Thank you for your time.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Ms. Boyd, going back

1 through, do we have anything remaining that we need
2 to discuss or consider?

3 MS. BOYD: I just want to make you aware you'll
4 be receiving correspondence from me soon about
5 completing a Statement of Financial Interest. Some
6 of you have done this before from sitting on the
7 State Board or in other capacities. So from my
8 understanding, if you've already done one you don't
9 have to do an additional one for this panel. But for
10 those of you who haven't done one I'll be
11 communicating with you over the next month to get one
12 completed.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: And those are due at the
14 end of January; is that correct?

15 MS. BOYD: Yes, that's correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. All right.

17 MS. BOYD: That's all I have.

18 MR. WILSON: And our next meeting is --

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay, yes. What are the
20 dates for our next meetings and what should we expect
21 as far as information and timelines?

22 MS. BOYD: Right. So your next meeting is going
23 to -- is scheduled for January 17th. There is the
24 one amendment request that is up for that agenda.

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. So, January 17th --

1 MS. BOYD: Uh-huh.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- and only one amendment
3 request?

4 MS. BOYD: Yes. I don't have access to that doc
5 right now, but that's the only one I'm aware of.

6 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. And we will be
7 meeting here; is that correct?

8 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am.

9 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. We might -- since
10 there's only one, we might want to look at the time;
11 that might make it more conducive for travel --

12 MS. BOYD: Okay.

13 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: -- for those who are
14 traveling. I mean I know coming in for one amendment
15 request and there's a great distance it might be
16 where it could be made into a one-day trip. That
17 would be better for some.

18 MS. BOYD: Uh-huh.

19 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Any thoughts, discussion
20 about that?

21 DR. WILLIAMS: I think that would be great. You
22 know, something like -- no earlier than a 10:00 start
23 time would make it easier for me to drive down.

24 MS. BOYD: Okay. What if it's 10 a.m.?

25 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Is that possible?

1 MS. BOYD: 10:00 a.m. Yes, ma'am.

2 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay.

3 DR. WILLIAMS: One other suggestion -- I wear
4 trifocals, so I'm having a little -- if we could have
5 the -- we had some of the presentations embedded.
6 The last two were not and so I'm afraid I couldn't
7 quite see it up on the screen there. So if they
8 could continue to be embedded in our agenda, it would
9 be helpful.

10 MS. BOYD: Yes. Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: Okay. Anything else?

12 MR. WILSON: Merry Christmas.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Merry -- oh, we need to adjourn.

14 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: So if there isn't anything
15 else, we can -- I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

16 DR. WILLIAMS: So moved.

17 MR. WILSON: Second.

18 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: I have a motion and a
19 second.

20 All those in favor?

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRPERSON PFEFFER: All right. We are
23 adjourned.

24

25 (The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.)

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A-1: ARKANSAS ARTS ACADEMY
EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-1: ARKANSAS ARTS ACADEMY
EXHIBIT TWO (2)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
 COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas State Department of Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in North Little Rock, Arkansas, on December 21, 2017, that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

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

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

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: January 7, 2018.

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

	45:1,7;46:20;47:1; 49:1;50:5;51:6; 67:15,16,21;68:4; 70:21;85:8;120:24; 121:24	add (10) 3:5;20:10;35:21; 56:7,11;58:11,16,16, 23;60:3	7:20;41:12;73:4	62:14;67:9;112:19; 114:2
§		added (3) 13:17,21;47:9	AFFIRMATIVELY (3) 7:23;41:15;73:7	alternative (2) 44:14,16
\$11,000 (1) 21:16	accept (1) 69:12	adding (2) 57:23;58:1	afraid (4) 14:2;95:19;107:22; 119:6	although (1) 15:10
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