

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

February 17, 2016

*Sharon Hill Court Reporting
4021 Robinwood Cr.
Bryant, AR 72022
(501) 847-0510*

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

February 17, 2016

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

Ms. Deborah Coffman	Chairman/Chief of Staff
Dr. Mark Gotcher	Vice Chair/Deputy Commissioner
Ms. Ivy Pfeffer	Asst. Commissioner - HR/Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
Dr. Eric Saunders	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Administrative Services
Ms. Annette Barnes	Asst. Commission - Public School Accountability
Mr. Greg Rogers	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Admin. Services
Ms. Jennifer Liwo	PLSB Attorney
Mr. Bobby Lester	Director of Federal Programs
Ms. Stacy Smith	Interim Asst. Commissioner of Learning Services

ALSO APPEARING:

Ms. Alexandra Boyd	Public School Program Coordinator
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ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

Ms. Kendra Clay	ADE General Counsel
Ms. Jennifer Davis	ADE Deputy General Counsel

Arkansas Department of Education
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning. The February 17, 2016 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education. I would ask that you please silence all electronic devices.

The Charter Authorizing Panel oversees the authorization, renewal, revision and revocation of charters. The Arkansas Quality Charter Schools Act of 2013 requires the Commissioner to appoint an ADE staff to panel, to this panel. Recently, Commissioner Key has made a few revisions to this Charter Authorizing Panel, and we'd like to welcome Ms. Stacy Smith, interim assistant commissioner, and welcome Dr. Mark Gotcher, our new vice chair. Congratulations to both of you.

Let me introduce the entire panel. We have Ms. Jennifer Liwo, our PLSB attorney; Mr. Bobby Lester, coordinator of Federal Programs; Mr. Greg Rogers, assistant commissioner; Dr. Eric Saunders, assistant commissioner; Ms. Annette Barnes, assistant commissioner; Ms. Ivy Pfeffer, assistant commissioner; Ms. Stacy Smith, interim assistant commissioner; and Dr. Mark Gotcher, our deputy

1 commissioner and vice chair. And I'm Deborah
2 Coffman, chief of staff and chair.

3 As chair, my goal is to facilitate a fair and
4 reasonable hearing. I will request that each person
5 speaking please state your name and title for the
6 record each time. I will ask that you continue to
7 speak clearly into the microphone for the benefit of
8 the panel, the audience and the viewing audience.
9 The entire meeting today is being live-streamed and
10 recorded and will be posted on the Arkansas
11 Department of Education website. Ms. Sharon Hill,
12 our court reporter, will be providing a transcript of
13 this meeting and it will also be posted on the ADE
14 website.

15 And as we begin this morning I believe in our
16 audience is Senator Blake Johnson. Senator Johnson,
17 if you'd like to address the panel? And I believe,
18 Senator, you are also on our special ed. taskforce.
19 We appreciate your service.

20 SENATOR JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am. I appreciate the
21 opportunity to speak. I hadn't got anything to say.
22 My school that I would be representing is Imboden.
23 And I appreciate your service to the state of
24 Arkansas, and thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you for coming

1 today.

2 I have no report today. Does any member of the
3 committee have a report? All right.

4 CONSENT AGENDA

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then, we'll move to the
6 consent agenda. Panel Members, you've had an
7 opportunity to review the January 20th minutes. Are
8 there any corrections or questions?

9 Then I'll accept a motion to approve the consent
10 agenda.

11 MS. BARNES: So moved.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes has moved.

13 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Second by Dr. Gotcher. Any
15 questions, discussion?

16 All in favor of the motion?

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? The motion
19 has passed.

20 A-1: REQUEST FOR DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

21 RENEWAL: CROSS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, A NEW TECH SCHOOL

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Let's move on
23 into the action agenda, action item 1. Ms. Boyd, you
24 are recognized.

25 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Action item

1 is a request for a district conversion public
2 charter school renewal, Cross County High School, A
3 New Tech School. The State Board of Education
4 approved the application for Cross County High
5 School, A New Tech School on January 14, 2011. The
6 charter is approved to serve students in grades 7
7 through 12 with a maximum enrollment of 500.
8 Representatives of the Cross County High School are
9 appearing before the Charter Authorizing Panel to
10 request a 10-year renewal for the charter.

11 Before we start we're going to have Jennifer
12 Davis, our attorney, come forth and tell you guys
13 about the procedures that we'll follow for this
14 hearing.

15 MS. DAVIS: Good morning. Jennifer Davis, staff
16 attorney for the Department. I passed out a chart; I
17 didn't know if you guys still had it, the schools
18 that we're going to be hearing from over the next
19 couple of days. And the hearing procedures are going
20 to be slightly different, so they are included in
21 your packet. But we're going to go over the ones
22 that you'll be hearing for the first two schools
23 today, and then when we change procedures I'll go
24 over them at that time instead of giving them to you
25 all at once. But for the next two schools your

1 hearing procedures are going to be that everybody,
2 with the exception of the attorneys, do need to get
3 sworn in. The charter school is going to have 20
4 minutes to make their presentation to you. Any
5 opposition is going to have 20 minutes to state their
6 opposition -- that's 20 minutes collectively -- with
7 5 minutes time for rebuttal from the school. At that
8 point you can ask any questions that you may need,
9 you can have any kind of discussion, and when you're
10 done you can take a vote. If you choose to not take
11 a vote today and take it under advisement, you can
12 take a vote next time and allow the school time to
13 have technical assistance from the charter office.
14 Also, just as a reminder, as in all your other
15 hearings, a charter is a contract, so anything that
16 differs from -- that's said today that differs from
17 your written materials or anything that's verbally
18 amended today, the charter will be held to that. So
19 any vote that you make, that will become a part of
20 their charter or their amendment documents. Do you
21 have any questions? Okay.

22 MS. BOYD: Okay. To start their presentation we
23 have Superintendent Carolyn Wilson.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If all representatives
25 from the Cross County High School, A New Tech School

1 will stand, raise your right hand. Do you swear or
2 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
3 be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
4 truth?

5 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Wilson, you're
7 recognized.

8 SUPT. WILSON: Good morning. I'm Carolyn
9 Wilson, superintendent of Cross County High School --
10 Cross County School District; I'm sorry. It's hard
11 for me to believe that it's been five years since we
12 received this original charter, but it's been a very
13 eventful five years and it's passed very quickly. We
14 immediately became members of the New Tech Network
15 and joined the Teacher Advancement Program, called
16 TAP, and we've been caught up in a whirlwind of
17 activities ever since. We have received tons of PD
18 from both programs, and that's been from top to
19 bottom; no one was exempt. As a New Tech model
20 school for the state, we received and hosted hundreds
21 of visitors in this five years and they have been
22 school teams and dignitaries and people we have been
23 excited to show what we are doing. You can come to
24 Cross County every day, any day and we like to show
25 what we are doing. Governor Beebe has been to the

1 school, Governor Hutchinson has been to the school,
2 Senator Boozman and Representative Rick Crawford,
3 several Arkansas legislators, numerous school teams
4 and individuals, ranging from administrators,
5 teachers, board members, students, parents, and
6 community members. They've spent days with us,
7 they've spent hours with us, and they call back lots
8 of times.

9 In this five years we've formed several
10 partnerships that have been very important to us.
11 First of all, ARcare and Mid-South Health System,
12 which were both instrumental in helping us implement
13 our education of the Whole Child and a part of our
14 school-based health center. We have -- with Higher
15 Ed., we have a partnership with the University of
16 Arkansas and East Arkansas Community College. The
17 faculty has written and received several grants to
18 help fund the additional initiatives that we have
19 going on. We've got the Cross County Economic
20 Development grant, Entergy grant, and ARcare, and
21 those are the funds that make it possible for us to
22 do some extra things.

23 Several initiatives that we've implemented in
24 this last five years that really impacted our
25 students -- the mobile apps classes have been very

1 successful; we have a writing center and a math lab,
2 which offers peer tutoring for our students; and our
3 newest effort is a college and career program that
4 we're very proud about and want to tell you about.
5 The great things that are happening at Cross County
6 are made possible because of this grant. This
7 charter allows us to put the right resources in the
8 right places to drive us toward our mission and
9 vision of educating the Whole Child. It has enabled
10 us to give students the skills they need to be
11 successful in the 21st century and our rapidly
12 changing world.

13 My peers and I could talk to you all day about
14 the things that's going on at Cross County. But more
15 importantly, I wanted to bring some students with you
16 to tell you -- I mean, with us to tell you what it's
17 like firsthand to be a student at Cross County High
18 School, A New Tech School and how it impacts them.
19 Before I introduce any of those, I'm going to turn it
20 over to Matt Swensen. He's going to tell you a
21 little bit about New Tech and the career center.

22 MR. SWENSEN: Good morning. My name is Matt
23 Swenson -- bad hair day though -- but my name is Matt
24 Swenson and I am the director of the College and
25 Career Access Program and I'm also a New Tech teacher

1 and trainer at Cross County High School. In the next
2 few minutes, I'm going to talk to you about the New
3 Tech Network, some of our teacher supports, and then
4 our College and Career Access Program.

5 Cross County High School joined the New Tech
6 Network in 2011. And the New Tech Network is a
7 network of schools that want to redesign what high
8 school looks like with three main principles:
9 technology that enables, curriculum that engages, and
10 culture that empowers. Every school implements these
11 principles differently; for us though, technology
12 that enables means a one-to-one rollout of MacBook
13 Airs and they're used in every classroom; curriculum
14 that engages means co-taught classes, facilitators
15 instead of lecturers, and project-based/inquiry-based
16 learning for all; and culture that empowers means
17 more student choice and empowerment throughout the
18 school. And we believe that these are game-changers
19 for our students and it changes the way that they
20 learn every day.

21 Some of these pictures are ways that our
22 students learn, from Socratic seminars to computer
23 repair, and something we're very proud of, our mobile
24 apps course.

25 But with change we understand that we must bring

1 a lot of teacher support and Cross County does this
2 as well. The first way the teachers are supported is
3 through weekly PLC's, which we call cluster. This is
4 a time for teachers to analyze, both qualitatively
5 and quantitatively, data; discuss best teaching
6 practices; and grow as professionals. You can see on
7 the left, the picture on the left, our data wall and
8 this is what we use to take student work, look for
9 trends, and build strategies to intervene. Teachers
10 are also provided one-to-one support through our New
11 Tech and TAP structures. I myself am a New Tech
12 trainer, so I may work with teachers on project
13 design, backward planning, or behavior management in
14 the classroom. We realize that we need to have
15 everyone in our building be empowered, and that
16 includes our teachers and our faculty, so when we
17 consider growth of the school all voices are
18 considered. And we use something called the Cycle of
19 Inquiry where we look at data and research; we
20 analyze that data and then we devise the plan
21 together and execute, and this is how we came up with
22 our College and Career Access Program.

23 We realized from looking at the data that our
24 students were enrolling in a post-secondary
25 experience -- and what I mean is two-year college,

1 four-year college, technical school, and the military
2 -- at a rate far below the national and state
3 averages. Thus, we started a program that was
4 designed to mitigate these factors and help our
5 students have access, preparedness, and eligibility.
6 And later in this presentation you're going to hear
7 from students who are part of this program and have
8 lived and breathed it. But before they come up, I do
9 want to point out some of the successes we've had
10 with the College and Career Access Program.

11 As you can see from the data, from the class of
12 2013 to the class of 2015, we've had a steady
13 increase in the percentage of students who are
14 enrolling in post-secondary experiences.
15 Additionally, we're excited about 100% of our seniors
16 last year applying to at least two colleges; 100% of
17 our seniors last year being accepted to a college;
18 and 85% of our seniors indicating on an exit survey
19 that they are ready for a four-year institution.
20 However, it's important to note that we're not
21 satisfied and we're going to continue to expand and
22 grow. At Cross County we want every student to have
23 meaningful choices throughout their lives and we're
24 not going to rest until that's a reality.

25 At this point it's my pleasure to introduce

1 three of our students: Truman Jones, Elizabeth
2 Woolbright, and Austin Phelan. Thank you.

3 MR. PHELAN: Thank you, Mr. Swenson, and thank
4 you, Charter Authorizing Panel for allowing us to be
5 here today. I'm Austin Phelan, and behind me are
6 Truman Jones and Elizabeth Woolbright, and we're
7 going to tell you about what it's like to be a Cross
8 County High School student.

9 MR. JONES: Now the first thing you really need
10 to know about Cross County is our school-wide
11 learning outcomes. These outcomes are how we are
12 assessed. We have content, which is worth 30%; we
13 have knowledge and thinking, which is how students
14 critically and creatively problem-solve, and it's
15 worth 10%; there is agency, which is the growth
16 mindset of a student, and it's worth 10%; there is
17 written and oral communication, both are worth 10%;
18 and then collaboration, which is worth 10%. All of
19 these we are given a rubric for at the beginning of
20 the year so we know how -- what grade we'll get. And
21 then, finally, we have comprehensive exams, which is
22 worth 20%. All of these outcomes help us prepare for
23 the 21st century environment we live in today.

24 MS. WOOLBRIGHT: Cross County is a New Tech
25 school, meaning we use technology and projects to

1 learn year-round. And here's a basic overview of a
2 project. As you can see, we go through multiple
3 benchmarks and then that leads us to our final
4 presentation and our reflection of the project.

5 MR. PHELAN: To kick-start these projects, we
6 have entry documents or an entry event that
7 introduces us to what we're going to be learning or
8 what we're going to be doing in the project. It gets
9 us excited about the project and it helps to engage
10 our brains in what we will be doing. This particular
11 entry document is the Zombie Apocalypse entry
12 document and it is written in the form of a poem
13 because in the future we would have to write our own
14 poems about Zombie Apocalypse later on.

15 MR. JONES: After the entry event, we have
16 something called a project calendar. Now the project
17 calendar is where you will find all the due dates and
18 when everything is due. This is really important
19 because it helps us learn how to be organized.
20 Another thing that helps us be organized is the daily
21 agenda; there you can find what we're doing day to
22 day each day.

23 Next we have the project briefcase, which has
24 assignments and resources in it. But the most
25 important part of the project briefcase is the

1 driving question, which you can see highlighted
2 above. The driving question is what we're trying to
3 answer throughout the entirety of the project; it's
4 the big picture question.

5 MS. WOOLBRIGHT: After we explore the project
6 briefcase and the entry doc, we then make a list of
7 knows and need-to-knows. And our need-to-knows
8 aren't only answered by our teachers, but other
9 teachers, our classmates, even our parents and
10 community members.

11 MR. PHELAN: Benchmarks help lead us to our
12 culminating event. And as a student athlete, I can
13 say that benchmarks are to a project as a quarter is
14 to a basketball game. You can't have a final score
15 without a first quarter, and you can't have a final
16 product without the first benchmark.

17 MR. JONES: There in the benchmarks we learn in
18 a variety of different ways, from workshops, which
19 are teacher ran, to small groups that are student-
20 based. We also learn in labs, real-time
21 demonstrations, and unlike a lot of schools we learn
22 using co-teaching, which is where two teachers come
23 together to teach two subjects in one classroom.

24 MS. WOOLBRIGHT: At the end of our project we
25 then present to our class, sometimes community

1 members and business leaders. And on average, we do
2 32 projects a year but it often feels like more.

3 MR. PHELAN: When it comes to assessment every
4 project starts with the state standards for the
5 teacher to build on. The state standards that are on
6 the board were for the Zombie project. They outline
7 our project and what we're going to be learning. We
8 can be assessed through assignments online, through
9 paper and pencil assignments, rubric based grading,
10 and even exams. Most of our products are assessed
11 through rubrics. This is the Zombie rubric. It
12 showed us how to get an A, a B, a C, or a D on the
13 project.

14 MS. WOOLBRIGHT: We have a really great college
15 and career program. Grades 7 through 11 are able to
16 take college trips and juniors are allowed two job
17 shadowing opportunities. Through our College and
18 Career Access Program we went on a college trip up
19 north, which we called the Rock Star Trip. This is
20 where we saw different colleges and I saw many that
21 stuck out to me, like Washington University,
22 Wisconsin-Madison, and Chicago University. And even
23 though I may not go to these colleges, it was a
24 really great experience and it showed me what I want
25 in a college.

1 MR. JONES: Cross County really focuses on
2 individual support with helping students apply and
3 learn about colleges. One way they do this is with
4 parent nights, and a parent night is where students
5 and parents come to help fill out difficult things,
6 such as the FAFSA, and other things they might need
7 support with.

8 MR. PHELAN: At Cross County High School seniors
9 are not the only ones that get college and career
10 opportunities. In fact, every single 11th grader is
11 required to take the college and career readiness
12 course that focuses on college and career knowledge,
13 ACT readiness, and academic vocabulary. As a student
14 of this class, I can say that it has helped me in
15 many of the areas, such as improving my ACT score by
16 three points.

17 Another unique course we have at Cross County
18 High School is the capstone course, and the capstone
19 course has four main pillars to it. The first one is
20 sustainability, which asks the question how do we
21 insure our world is sustainable; the next is ethics,
22 which asks the question what is right; then we have
23 truth in patterns, which asks the question how do we
24 know we know what we know; the last one is civic
25 life, and it asks the question how do we become a

1 good citizen. At the end of the year we'll build a
2 portfolio and present it to our teachers and
3 community leaders.

4 Cross County also provides support for all its
5 alumni because they want to not only insure their
6 students get into college, but also graduate. In
7 return, the alumni give support back to us. They do
8 this by having one-to-one discussions with current
9 students and even attending panels. Another way our
10 alumni give back is with the alumni blog. This blog
11 includes their successes and failures with college,
12 and even tips and tricks they may have picked up
13 along the way to really help out the students now.

14 MS. WOOLBRIGHT: Cross County has shown me that
15 just because I'm from a small school that doesn't
16 mean I can't go out and do things. It showed me what
17 I want in a college experience and I know that when I
18 graduate that I will be prepared for college and
19 there's no surprises.

20 MR. PHELAN: Cross County has really pushed me
21 to my limits and challenged me greatly. The alumni
22 before me has taught me that it doesn't matter that
23 I'm from a small town. I'm from a small town and my
24 opportunities coming from this small town are
25 endless. I've learned to be a leader and I hope to

1 set a good example for the following classes.

2 MR. JONES: Cross County has such a drive for
3 making sure its students learn and have -- retain the
4 most knowledge they can. That has really inspired me
5 to become a teacher when I'm older. I hope to one
6 day teach history and philosophy. It has been my
7 honor to present to you all, and at this time I would
8 like to introduce Mr. Stephen Prince, the principal
9 of Cross County High School.

10 MR. PRINCE: Good morning, Members of the Panel.
11 It's going to be really hard to follow those great
12 student presentations. They clearly represent our
13 students' mission. I would be comfortable asking any
14 of our students at Cross County High School to come
15 present to you today. When I think back to myself as
16 a student I wouldn't be as comfortable coming and
17 doing something like this today, but our students are
18 willing and excited to do so.

19 With that said, our students -- with that said,
20 we have made great strides in building and fostering
21 21st century skills in our students and preparing
22 them to compete globally. We realize that our test
23 data doesn't always point to that conclusion and our
24 standardized test scores are not always reflective of
25 our students' abilities. And we understand that that

1 is something we need to continue to grow on. As we
2 continue to innovate and research ideas that will
3 help us better prepare our students to be successful
4 on standardized tests, we think our accomplishments
5 prove that we are driving towards our mission and
6 vision. With our school model we use projects and
7 problems to drive student learning and at times this
8 does not perfectly align with standardized testing.
9 Yet, we believe that the value our students gain from
10 diving deep into content to understanding it at a
11 level beyond just repeating it. It's providing them
12 with the opportunities and experiences necessary to
13 live a passion driven life.

14 Our charter has allowed us the flexibility to
15 provide our students with the best teachers in every
16 classroom. We know it's necessary to insure that all
17 our students leave us as great readers, writers,
18 thinkers, citizens, and leaders. We acknowledge that
19 we still need to improve and grow, but we are
20 confident that we are doing what is best for kids.

21 After telling you all of this, we feel it's
22 better summed up by our alumni. So here is a short
23 video with their comments.

24 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: A video was shown,
25 which is available for viewing on the ADE website.)

1 MR. PRINCE: We do want to thank you for your
2 time and consideration with our charter renewal. And
3 I guess that's our presentation.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Is there
5 anyone that will speak in opposition of this charter?

6 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then, we have five
8 additional minutes.

9 MR. PRINCE: Dr. McClure has prepared a short
10 video as part of our closing.

11 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: A video was shown,
12 which is available for viewing on the ADE website.
13 Following is the transcription of Dr. McClure's
14 statements.)

15 DR. McCLURE: Good morning. I'm Matt McClure,
16 Chief Learning and Financial Officer and former
17 superintendent of the Cross County School District.
18 I apologize for not being there in person. I'm
19 currently in DC as president of ASED and we are
20 holding a summit for the CEO's of the largest
21 educational organizations and companies, and this has
22 been planned for almost a year.

23 Now when we first applied for a charter for the
24 high school we were the catalyst for starting former
25 Governor Beebe's STEM-Works initiatives. STEM-Works

1 served as a vehicle for multiple schools across the
2 state to move toward a curriculum that teaches
3 students to think and prepare themselves to be
4 successful, whether they are preparing for college or
5 career. We also piloted for the career and technical
6 education a course of study for mobile app
7 development. That is thriving in our school and has
8 expanded across the state.

9 Now our charter focuses on five primary goals
10 for our students in addition to the pre-requisite
11 academic skills of math and literacy. These goals
12 are: to teach our students to be able to problem-
13 solve real world problems; to think analytically; to
14 break things down into steps, from beginning to the
15 end; to collaborate with others to solve those
16 problems; to be able to communicate, both written and
17 verbally, what it is that they've learned; and last
18 but not least, to be able to use the most effective
19 and efficient technology to solve the problem at
20 hand.

21 Now as a member of the New Tech Network the
22 delivery mechanism is project process-based learning.
23 And over the last four year we've had many successes,
24 as well as many learning opportunities. One of the
25 learning opportunities we have had is the

1 implementation of many programs simultaneously. At
2 the same time we implemented New Tech we also
3 implemented the Teacher Advancement Program, also
4 known as TAP. And it has embedded professional
5 development, staff evaluation, and field teaching
6 strategies -- field testing strategies that are then
7 rolled out school-wide. It was a massive undertaking
8 to implement both of these initiatives at the same
9 time and I believe that it caused one of our
10 implementation dips at the beginning.

11 Another of the major hurdles we discovered is
12 that for teachers to become facilitators and students
13 to own their own learning there is an implementation
14 gap that must be overcome. We have begun over the
15 last few years gradually reducing the impact of the
16 7th and 8th grade levels to condition our students to
17 have the maturity to own their learning and work
18 collaboratively with others.

19 Staff turnover has been another obstacle that we
20 have had to overcome. We've had some teachers elect
21 to retire or relocate, rather than be retrained.

22 The second obstacle has been the utilization of
23 Teach for America teachers. That is essentially
24 built into the system that there will be staff
25 turnover, even though we've had multiple teachers --

1 TFA teachers that have stayed three to four years.

2 Now when we look at multiple measures of student
3 data we are seeing some areas that are showing
4 positive growth, including but not limited to ACT
5 scores, college going rate, and students' ability to
6 talk about, in-depth, what they have learned and how
7 it's applicable to the real world.

8 Now we've also seen areas where we must improve,
9 including the overall student test scores. And to
10 accomplish this we have begun really focusing on not
11 only going deep in the learning but providing
12 additional resources for those students not
13 possessing the appropriate academic skills for their
14 grade level. This is being accomplished through
15 tutoring, RTI, and workshops in the classroom. We
16 also understand that multiple test changes may have
17 impacted our students and their test scores in some
18 of these areas.

19 Another area that we're diligently working on
20 improving is our graduation rate. We knew that the
21 increase in rigor in the classroom would affect some
22 of our students' abilities to be successful
23 initially. To address this we've implemented online
24 credit recovery, as well as the things I mentioned
25 previously. This past year there's been some

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positive growth in the graduation rate.

So when you look at our successes and areas for improvement under the multiple measures of student success, it's a mixed bag. But when you walk into our classrooms and you have conversations with our students about what they're learning, their ability to articulate what they're learning, there's no question that we are succeeding in what our charter was intended to do. Our school is not an open enrollment charter. We take all students and have had many school choice into our district. For nine of the past ten years we've had an increase in enrollment, while most schools in the Delta have declined. The ability to overcome the obstacles that we must address, and continue to find ways to address these obstacles, is paramount to our success. But if you ask our students, parents, community leaders, and staff if our students are more prepared for college and career than before we received our original charter, the answer would be absolutely yes.

I would implore you to vote to renew our charter for the successes we've had and the commitment that we have to overcome the obstacles that are keeping us from becoming the school we want to be and our students deserve, as well as continuing to be a

1 model, to be looked at statewide for its innovation
2 and commitment to excellence. Thank you.

3 [END OF VIDEO]

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I believe Dr. McClure is
5 online --

6 MR. BRADBERRY: Correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- if we have questions.
8 Okay. Panel Members, are there any questions? Dr.
9 Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Good morning. I wanted to get
11 some clarification on some of the things in the
12 application, in particular looking at -- let me find
13 it here. It's on page -- it's labeled as page 161,
14 and it's the comparison from the charter school to
15 surrounding school district enrollments. It's got
16 four tables on it. It talks about the demographics
17 of your students at your school and in your district.

18 MR. PRINCE: Is that in the original application
19 -- I mean, the renewal application? Is that the page
20 you're talking about?

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Let me see if it has
22 another page number on it. I don't see another page
23 number. I actually have it as the last page, maybe
24 the very last page on there.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is that packet one or

1 packet two?

2 DR. SAUNDERS: It's A-1, 161.

3 DR. GOTCHER: Well, that's on a pdf document.

4 They may not have that --

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

6 DR. GOTCHER: -- in the same order.

7 MS. SMITH: It's in this section with districts
8 with similar demographic data.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Got it?

10 MR. PRINCE: Yes.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you. What I was
12 looking at, in particular, was the 14-15 student
13 status on the bottom left, and it has a reported free
14 and reduced population of 43.86%. Is that for the
15 high school?

16 MR. PRINCE: It's showing 71.93 on this chart.
17 That is the incorrect number.

18 SUPT. WILSON: That should have probably been
19 73. I thought typically that we range from 70 to 75
20 every year. Now I don't know whether that was a typo
21 and none of us caught it when we were looking back
22 through this, but we have ranged from 70 to 75 every
23 year for the last six or eight, maybe even ten years.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: I thought that -- yeah, that
25 really jumped out at me and that's one thing I wanted

1 to clarify.

2 SUPT. WILSON: You know, we look at this stuff
3 so much that we see what we want to see or what we
4 intend to see.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Also, on the -- in a
6 similar section, I think one page before then, the
7 comparison to the other schools with similar
8 demographics, and it looks like the schools in
9 particular for comparison you did with percent free
10 and reduced, approximately a dozen schools right
11 there, with yours being right in the middle. And of
12 concern that I noticed in many reports was the math
13 performance in here. It had the math performance as
14 8.24%, one of the lowest on the chart. Is that
15 correct?

16 MR. PRINCE: That is accurate. Yes.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: And I think -- and I'll give you
18 a chance to address that, if I can, just to tie it
19 all in at once. Also, on the grade letter assignment
20 it was a D for last year. So I'll just turn it over
21 to you and let you address that.

22 MR. PRINCE: Okay. So to address the D rating
23 that we got, we received that D rating mainly because
24 of our graduation rate that particular year, which
25 was significantly lower than any other years we've

1 seen in the past, and it was an anomaly year. I
2 believe we ended up having 16 or so students who did
3 not graduate for one reason or another, despite our
4 best efforts to try to get them to do so. So that
5 really made a big negative impact on that for that
6 particular school year. And in terms of our math
7 scores, we realize that our math scores are not good
8 and we are trying several different things to try and
9 remedy that and change that. And some things that
10 we're working -- looking at doing on the math: you
11 know, obviously, the problem inquiry-based learning
12 and the problem-based learning in math to try to make
13 the lessons and things more engaging to the students
14 and more real world applicable when it comes to math
15 concepts, but also making sure that we are teaching
16 those math concepts because math is a conceptual
17 content area. So making sure that they can take
18 both, learning the concepts and apply them in a real
19 world scenario to see how that concept works for that
20 math. And I do have a couple of example problems if
21 y'all would like to hear that we've done recently to
22 kind of -- that kind of helps hopefully get us moving
23 in the right direction.

24 SUPT. WILSON: Before you address that, one
25 thing that happened to us on the implementation of

1 New Tech is when we were trained originally it was
2 all project-based learning, and we quickly learned
3 that that wasn't a success in math. And so we
4 started delving back into it. We started talking to
5 the other schools. We started looking at New Tech
6 schools that were having success, and they were using
7 what they call problem-based. So it wasn't a -- like
8 in Biocom that they talked about, the project, that
9 might've lasted three weeks; it was daily problem
10 solving. And so we had a period of the first two
11 years that we didn't know whether we were doing it
12 wrong or what's happening here. But then when we
13 figured it out we've changed that and I think we'll
14 start doing better on that. We have had one teacher
15 that caused a huge gap one year; this teacher is no
16 longer with us.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So how long ago were those
18 changes made so we'd be able to see the results?

19 SUPT. WILSON: Well, actually, two years. This
20 is our second year to have those changes back in
21 place that should start impacting it. But teacher
22 turnover has forced changes in 7th and 8th grade for
23 three times in this five-year period, and we've
24 calmed that teacher turnover. And I feel like every
25 year -- and I say it -- we've got the best teachers

1 ever. But still yet, when scores comes out we can
2 tell that things aren't going exactly the way we
3 thought they were going, so --

4 MR. PRINCE: And if I might add a little bit to
5 what we're doing with math, then I will redirect back
6 to your question about graduation rates also in
7 accordance to the D rating and everything. When we
8 think about the math, when we found out that we were
9 moving toward the ACT Aspire, that really excited us
10 about being -- as a staff being really ready to
11 better prepare our students, because that is a test
12 that the students see as meaningful. So we also
13 think that that's going to also help because the
14 testing itself is going to seem more meaningful to
15 the students, because it's going to lead to that real
16 test, that real world test that they need to be able
17 to, you know, apply to colleges, apply for
18 scholarships, apply for, you know, just different
19 things, tech schools and all that. We are providing
20 PD to our math teachers in certain ways, such as
21 sending them to shadow other exemplar problem-based
22 math classrooms in the area. We've already reached
23 out to two schools to get that set up. We also
24 really utilize our TAP system and we utilize our
25 embedded professional development, which our cluster

1 meetings, where we as a leadership team look at data,
2 develop focus areas -- or determine focus areas, and
3 take that and develop research-based strategies. And
4 this year we are focusing on starting with the
5 content vocabulary strategy that reaches everyone,
6 and also -- which will also narrow down soon into a
7 focus strategy for fractions, which that's applicable
8 across the board in math with fractions and decimals
9 and percentages. So we're hoping those things are
10 going to tighten up some of the math deficits that we
11 are seeing. We are using Marilyn Burns' research to
12 help us drive that math strategy and Marzano's
13 vocabulary research to help drive our vocabulary
14 strategy development, which that's already been
15 rolled out -- to name a few things that we're doing.

16 To go back to the graduation rate, some of the
17 things, of course, with the new added college and
18 career readiness program, with the mentoring that Mr.
19 Swensen does with our students, the meetings and the
20 conferences that I have with students and that the
21 school counselor has with the students, we really are
22 staying on top of those students to make sure they
23 see the need in graduation. And whatever we can do
24 to help -- if that means some credit recovery, which
25 that has already started to be something that we've

1 had to offer some students to work on. So there's
2 been several things that we're doing to help improve
3 that graduation rate. And I will say that our
4 graduation rate should improve based even on last
5 year's graduates.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Can I just follow -- one follow-
7 up?

8 DR. McCLURE: Mr. Prince --

9 MR. BRADBERRY: Dr. McClure?

10 DR. McCLURE: Yes. Dr. Saunders, can I answer
11 that question a little bit too on the math piece?
12 Every bit of research that we know indicates that the
13 number one indicator of student success is the
14 teacher in the classroom. And over the course of our
15 charter, to be completely frank, we have removed two
16 of the teachers from the district because of
17 deficiencies, I guess would be the easiest way to say
18 it, but they weren't being successful. We had done
19 embedded professional development, we had done
20 coaching with them, we had tried to retrain them, and
21 it just didn't -- they weren't right; they were not
22 the right fit. And so I think that's one of the
23 constant struggles that we've had in the past there
24 and, you know, hopefully, we will not continue to
25 have. But I think a key is also recognizing when

1 someone is not effective in the classroom, working
2 with them to improve -- and if they're not able to
3 improve, making sure that you make a change in that
4 situation. And I think that we've demonstrated that
5 over the course of our charter.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: All right. Thank you. One
7 follow-up question that I had: what type of proactive
8 formative assessments that you have so that students
9 are successful to make adjustments on the front-end?

10 MR. PRINCE: We utilize The Learning Institute,
11 so we do utilize their interim assessments. We've
12 also developed interim assessments from the Noble
13 Network, which is for 9th and 10th graders, well,
14 predominantly. It's kind of -- it's an interim
15 assessment; it's the Noble Network of schools that
16 have developed those. So we use those two indicators
17 and we also use our data walls to help track that
18 from our TLI data, those ACT pre and post tests that
19 we've developed, and set those baselines to track
20 that data. And also our field testing, the school-
21 wide strategy data that we meet on every week and we
22 look at that data, the qualitative pieces and the
23 quantitative pieces, to give teachers direction on
24 how to change instruction in their classroom.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

1 MR. PRINCE: And can I add one thing about our
2 AC -- or our graduation rates? I'd like to point out
3 that, you know, that off-year where we received that
4 D we were at 72.2% graduation rate. Well, at the
5 2013-14 school year, when we -- I believe that's the
6 year that we had a new leader in that building --
7 that graduation rate went up to 89.1%.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

10 MR. PRINCE: And that leader is here today, by
11 the way.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Good morning. I just wanted to
13 first commend those students who are here. And I
14 don't think I got your last names correct, so I just
15 want to -- it's Elizabeth, Austin and Truman. Right?

16 MR. PRINCE: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. PFEFFER: Stand up for just a second because
18 I really want to commend you. I get so nervous every
19 time I stand up there to speak to a group, and I just
20 want you to know I'm so impressed with your
21 presentation and with your willingness to be here.
22 So, thank you. And you all did a good job helping me
23 understand what your everyday school looks like and I
24 appreciate that, as well. So -- and, Ms. Wilson,
25 that was a very good strategy bringing them here

1 today.

2 SUPT. WILSON: I am in awe of students every
3 time I go into that building. If I do a walk-thru
4 that's supposed to be two minutes, I end up staying
5 there for 30 minutes because our students are very
6 articulate and never get nervous. As you saw in the
7 video, they spoke to Governor Hutchinson just like he
8 was the neighbor next door.

9 MS. PFEFFER: Well, and thank you again. I have
10 just a couple of questions -- I think it would be for
11 Mr. Swensen -- about your College and Career Access
12 Program.

13 MR. SWENSEN: Absolutely.

14 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. When did you all start this
15 initiative?

16 MR. SWENSEN: So there was pieces of it that
17 started in the 2013-2014 school year, but we did full
18 implementation last year, 2014-2015.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And so the data there,
20 that's pretty significant data in looking at the
21 increase in the percentage of students who are
22 enrolling in -- am I correct? You all had a slide up
23 there about the --

24 MR. SWENSEN: Yeah.

25 MS. PFEFFER: -- enrollment numbers.

1 MR. SWENSEN: So we went from -- I'm sorry to
2 interrupt.

3 MS. PFEFFER: No, you go ahead.

4 MR. SWENSEN: Okay.

5 MS. PFEFFER: I can't find it on my page.

6 MR. SWENSEN: So we went from -- and I have it
7 on a card here. Just give me one sec. We went from
8 having around -- I think it's mid-40's, 45% of our
9 students doing two- and four-year. And we track it
10 through a program called Naviance in the
11 clearinghouse, and we actually saw 73% of our
12 students go to post-secondary experiences.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

14 MR. SWENSEN: And what we count -- and it's the
15 same thing the network counts -- and that's two-year,
16 four-year, technical school, and then military.

17 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

18 MR. SWENSEN: So we're really happy about that,
19 but we want it to be higher.

20 MS. PFEFFER: But just the implementation of
21 that program and the gains that you've made, I was
22 very impressed with that. So, and I really
23 appreciate Dr. McClure's information on looking at
24 the multiple measures of student success, because as
25 we review these charter applications we do that

1 because, you know, one piece of data doesn't always
2 tell us everything we need to know. So, you know,
3 just in looking at that -- and I think though that
4 Mr. Prince addressed it a minute ago. When I looked
5 at the graduation rate and it, you know, kind of had
6 been in the 80%, dropped down to 70, back up in the
7 80s, that is some fluctuation there that I'm
8 optimistic that with your continued College Access
9 that should increase. As you said, you know, you --
10 if the numbers of those going to school increase, you
11 know, hopefully your graduation rate will increase as
12 well because that would be the signal that all of
13 your students are getting the preparation they need
14 to move on.

15 The other thing though that I was looking at
16 were the AP scores which would also be to me
17 indicative of preparation for college success. And I
18 was wondering are your students accessing that level
19 of college rigor with AP classes only? Are they
20 getting opportunities for concurrent credit? So I
21 was -- because those things can make a big
22 difference, as well.

23 MR. SWENSEN: Absolutely. I'm going to have Mr.
24 Prince speak -- Mr. Prince is going to speak to the
25 AP scores and then do -- I do want to say one thing

1 to your point about graduation rates and how that's
2 connected to the College and Career Access Program.
3 So I wasn't a very good high school student; I was a
4 great college student. And I think what we need are
5 students to have is they need to understand what's
6 possible after high school, because sometimes
7 otherwise it can just seem like it's in a void. And
8 that's what we're trying to avoid. And I do think
9 there will be higher graduation rates because our
10 students will have a purpose to their work, and we're
11 already seeing some of that. So, and yeah. So I
12 just want to point that out and then Mr. Prince is
13 going to talk about AP scores.

14 MR. PRINCE: So obviously you see the charts
15 with their AP scores and they don't look good. So
16 some things that we are -- we put in place to try to
17 remedy that: currently, we've had several students
18 more interested in concurrent college credit than AP
19 classes. So we started there and wrapped our minds
20 around what can we do to change that mindset. So we
21 -- starting this year we began offering concurrent
22 credit on campus with a dually certified teacher. So
23 our biology teacher is teaching AP biology but she is
24 also teaching -- in the second semester she will be
25 teaching concurrently college level biology. So our

1 hopes are that adding that rigor with both those
2 courses and adding those learning styles with both of
3 those courses and those instructional methodologies
4 that we're going to see not only are the students
5 continually getting their credits for college and
6 leaving us with more credits to enter college, but
7 also doing better on those AP exams. And I hope I
8 answered that well enough for you.

9 MS. PFEFFER: You did. Because that was my --
10 my interest was, you know, really thinking about are
11 they getting that level of college rigor while
12 they're in high school. So do you have plans to try
13 to expand your --

14 MR. PRINCE: Yes. Next year.

15 MS. PFEFFER: -- concurrent --

16 MR. PRINCE: We have already met with East
17 Arkansas Community College. And we've already
18 identified our environmental science teacher on
19 campus and she will be doing the same thing with
20 offering AP environmental and teaching a concurrent
21 credit class that will meet the same criteria. So
22 we're hoping with New Tech's rigor, with the rigor of
23 AP classes, and the rigor with the college class
24 we're going to start seeing some gains in several
25 different areas in terms of AP status.

1 I would like to point out that our first
2 semester we had 28 students enrolled in taking a
3 concurrent credit class. This semester we have 18.
4 Last semester we had two students that did not pass
5 their concurrent credit, but one of those students is
6 retaking the same class and is doing very well in the
7 class.

8 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And if I could ask one more
9 question. And so this relates to the teachers
10 because your teacher retention almost kind of
11 mirrored what we were seeing with the graduation
12 rate. And I don't know if the years exactly match,
13 but you had that one year where you were saying that
14 you had quite a bit of turnover. You've mentioned
15 using the TAP model as part of a tool to insure high
16 quality teachers and to retain them. Do you have or
17 are you putting in place any other formalized ways to
18 retain some really good teachers? Because I know
19 with -- you know -- with those who are qualified to
20 teach concurrent credit, those aren't easy to come
21 by.

22 MR. PRINCE: Absolutely.

23 MS. PFEFFER: And the AP training and those that
24 are really able to provide that instruction to get
25 those students to those high levels of performance

1 are not easy to come by. So can you talk a little
2 bit about maybe some formalized things you're going
3 to be doing?

4 MR. PRINCE: Absolutely. So I'll start with the
5 TAP model. The TAP model, one of the tenants in TAP
6 is the multiple career paths, which what that means
7 is we -- part of that is a leadership team, and that
8 leadership team is made up of the principal, master
9 mentor teachers, and our New Tech trainer. So we
10 have a variety of people on that team. And those
11 people have been able to move up from just a career
12 classroom teacher into those leadership roles. So
13 really looking at distributive leadership in our
14 building; providing those leadership opportunities is
15 one way we're trying to retain teachers so they can
16 grow within the system. And we're also working with
17 TFA this year to work on what we call irreplaceables.
18 So we've gone through a process with them and gotten
19 a strategy from them to sit down and work with some
20 of those teachers we've identified as those
21 irreplaceables and those ones that we really need to
22 stay to get them to stay. And sometimes in my
23 experience already this year with speaking with some
24 of them it's just been the simplest things that we
25 can fix within the system that's going to change

1 their mind about even considering leaving. So that's
2 been a real positive for us this year in terms of
3 those highly effective teachers. Some of the
4 research that we learned through working with TFA and
5 retaining highly qualified or high quality teachers
6 is that it on average takes 11 hires to replace that
7 highly effective teacher that you lose. And so those
8 are just a couple of the big things that we're doing
9 to try and -- to keep those teachers there. And also
10 with the New Tech model, you know, fostering that
11 idea of a positive culture in the building and just
12 having a positive culture; not necessarily with the
13 New Tech model, but fostering that positive culture
14 in the building where teachers feel safe speaking
15 with the leaders in the building and feel like they
16 have a voice and a choice in different things. And
17 we do that through our Wednesday morning meetings and
18 through our distributive leadership paths.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Gotcher.

20 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Well, folks, it was a
21 privilege a few months ago to be a guest at the New
22 Tech high school; it was an honor to be there. And
23 one of the things that struck me, Mr. Prince, was
24 student leaders and I think that that is a powerful
25 component. And when you look at, as Ms. Pfeffer

1 said, the multiple measures when you're evaluating a
2 school, seeing the student leaders was a powerful
3 piece for me and I want to commend you folks for
4 that. I actually had some notes regarding the TAP
5 model, and I think you've addressed most of them.
6 But knowing that it's required to have a school
7 leadership team and a cluster, tell me your -- in
8 your observation how you've seen those leadership
9 teams change. When you address math scores or any
10 other issue, what does an agenda look like, and how
11 have you seen those changed, and are you encouraged
12 by what you're seeing?

13 MR. PRINCE: Yeah. So the leadership team over
14 the last few years, with the teacher turnover --
15 because there have been some leadership team member
16 turnover with some of those teachers that left --
17 but, currently, the leadership team we have in place
18 now looks to be in it for the long-haul with us. And
19 we meet weekly on Wednesdays after school. I devise
20 an agenda that includes what we call DICE, which
21 includes data points; IGP, we review teacher IGPs;
22 cluster, we talk about what's going on with cluster,
23 with field testing, how our strategy is coming along,
24 what's that data looking like, are we looking good,
25 do we need to go back to the drawing board on some

1 things; and looking at also evaluation data on our
2 teachers. Our teachers are evaluated and observed
3 four times a year using our TAP rubric, which was
4 developed by Charlotte Danielson, and it includes
5 everything from instruction in the classroom to
6 managing classroom to the culture in the classroom
7 and even managing behaviors in the classroom. So it
8 covers the whole gamut when we go in and do an
9 observation. And those observations are not only
10 done by me, but also members of the leadership team.
11 So the master mentor teachers, those peers that they
12 work closer with actually evaluate them and provide
13 them with feedback as well. And we provide them with
14 the one reinforcement; we always start with what was
15 good and then one refinement. We don't bombard them
16 with tons of things they didn't do well; we pick one
17 and one and we dig in and we provide them research to
18 improve that and research that attests to what
19 they've done that was well. And we try to promote
20 them to continue that reinforcement area and continue
21 to do those things that we saw in the classroom and
22 give them ways to improve, give them solid ways and
23 guidance during the post-conference, to sit down with
24 them and say, "Okay, you tried this; I think these
25 things will change." So we actually give them actual

1 strategies to take back from that post-conference.
2 And then we build their next IGP goal based on that
3 and they work on that throughout -- until their next
4 observation.

5 DR. GOTCHER: You've got a very impressive
6 model. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

8 DR. McCLURE: Dr. Gotcher?

9 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, sir.

10 DR. McCLURE: Dr. Gotcher, can I -- Dr. Gotcher,
11 can I address one other thing? Also in those cluster
12 meetings they're bringing in student work at both
13 high, medium and low levels. And so we're developing
14 terminology so all teachers know, okay, what does
15 high student work look like, what does medium student
16 work look like, so then they're actually talking
17 about what the strategies are to move low to medium
18 and medium to high. And I think it's very important
19 to big cognizant of if your teachers don't understand
20 what high work looks like, what that [sound cut out
21 here] student work, it's going to be hard to achieve
22 that.

23 MR. PRINCE: And can --

24 DR. GOTCHER: Very good. Thank you, Dr.
25 McClure.

1 MR. PRINCE: May I add how we support our
2 teachers through the TAP model, because I think
3 that's important, because it's not just evaluations
4 in the way we support them. Throughout the TAP model
5 that provides opportunities for our master mentor
6 teachers to identify those areas during cluster, to
7 work with them during cluster, to set appointments
8 with those teachers, myself included to set
9 appointments with those teachers and identify when
10 we're -- what it is that they still need a little
11 work on, even if that means the way to implement the
12 strategy. So we will go in the classroom; we will
13 co-teach with them; we will model for them what
14 effective instruction should look like; we will do
15 some extra observations for them; we will pinpoint an
16 area and we'll say, okay, so I'll come in and I'll
17 just look at this chunk of your lesson and give you
18 some solid extensive feedback on that. And then New
19 Tech does the exact same thing in terms of getting in
20 there, making appointments, helping teachers plan
21 lessons, helping teachers assess students -- just
22 going through all those pieces. So it's really a
23 high level of support with our TAP and our New Tech
24 systems. And I just wanted to make sure you
25 understood how we do support our teachers. It's not

1 just about the evaluations. It's everything. We try
2 to include everything under that umbrella of support.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Smith.

4 MS. SMITH: I kind of have the same comments
5 with your AP scores and your math scores and just
6 really having a strategic plan for professional
7 development with your teachers. You know, even with
8 your AP courses your enrollment numbers in those
9 areas have also dropped, not just the scores. So as
10 you're supporting your teachers, is there a strategic
11 plan and benchmarks that you're looking for
12 improvement in those areas? Because I haven't -- I
13 guess earlier, when you were talking about your math
14 I didn't hear any specifics as far as strategic PD
15 for math.

16 MR. PRINCE: Yeah. So some things that we've
17 already done, we've had Think Forward come in to
18 provide some structured problem-based learning. That
19 was a three-day training over this past summer. Like
20 I said, we're going to do some shadowing to get some
21 firsthand knowledge of what that looks like in
22 action. I've got this listed. Hang on.

23 MS. SMITH: You bet.

24 MR. PRINCE: Because I don't want to forget
25 anything. So we also do a new teacher induction

1 training for those new teachers that come on-board
2 and we really walk them through different avenues,
3 what our data looks like, what data do we use, what's
4 our instruction methodology. This year, Mr. Swensen
5 and our other New Tech trainer has already had a
6 couple of sessions with new teachers and any other
7 teachers we deemed that they need the training, that
8 they go in and they are learning -- they are teaching
9 them how to build a project, how to do those
10 benchmarks, what math instruction should look like
11 under this umbrella, what this type of instruction
12 should look like under this umbrella. So we are
13 planning and we already have put together a solid
14 plan and what certain things and for certain teachers
15 need to happen.

16 MS. SMITH: Okay.

17 MR. PRINCE: And we also strive to make sure
18 that all of our AP teachers get through that AP
19 certification.

20 MS. SMITH: Okay. You know, data literacy is
21 probably the hardest thing to overcome and get people
22 to that point. And it sounds like you have all the
23 right things in place; it's just getting that laser-
24 like focus to move the needle.

25 One other comment I wanted to make was -- and

1 you guys actually cited it in your paper -- but it
2 had to do with your discipline regarding tardies.
3 The in-school suspension for tardies, an excessive
4 amount of tardies is really a traditional way of
5 thinking. And so when you're thinking about being an
6 innovative school I would challenge you also to look
7 at innovative ways instead of removing a student from
8 a classroom for that.

9 MR. PRINCE: Absolutely. And we actually --
10 when that was brought to our attention when we got
11 our renewal data, we thought, oh, my goodness --

12 MS. SMITH: Right.

13 MR. PRINCE: -- I can't believe that. You know,
14 it doesn't seem like there was that much. So we met
15 as a staff in one of our Wednesday morning meetings
16 -- another one of those things we want to give our
17 staff some voice and choice in -- to come up with
18 plans and ideas on how we can keep our kids in the
19 classroom. And we've come up with one way is a lunch
20 detention and that's been very effective this year.
21 We do not have teachers do lunch detention. The
22 leadership team members, we go and we deal with those
23 kids during lunch detention. We don't have many
24 repeat offenders, so we're hoping that's going to
25 curb some of that. And so that's just one way. And

1 we just wanted the staff to have a little bit of
2 voice in that because they have a lot of good ideas
3 and we really needed their help on that. But it was
4 an eye-opener when we looked at that data because
5 that's something that we don't look at as closely,
6 when you think about it, is that discipline data,
7 unless it's on a certain student, you know, that
8 you're pinpointed on for some reason. So -- and we
9 also are encouraging and we've actually required some
10 teachers to go to some classroom management training.
11 We do some of that stuff during our new teacher
12 induction, for some of those fresh new teachers. But
13 Harry Wong, we've sent some folks to Harry Wong. We
14 do use Fred Jones and Harry Wong's work when we're
15 training new teachers. I sit down and Mr. Swensen
16 has sat down this year with some individual teachers
17 to work with on some classroom management planning,
18 to help some of those things also in terms of
19 discipline and keeping them in the classroom.

20 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

22 MS. BARNES: Good morning. Thank you all for
23 being here and especially to the students. We
24 appreciate their presentation. It's always good to
25 see what the students feel about their learning

1 environment. Most of my concerns have already been
2 addressed and there is -- conversations have touched
3 on some of the things that I did want to ask about.
4 So I'd like to go back, I suppose, initially to the
5 letter grade. You spoke at length about the
6 graduation rate but not necessarily about the
7 achievement gap. You lost three points because of
8 the large gap. And so looking at that and looking at
9 the math performance -- and you've spoken about some
10 of the things that you are going to be doing and have
11 already put in place. I'm just, I guess, more
12 interested in what you're doing to specifically
13 target your TAGG and how you are -- I mean, you have
14 talked about and I read about you have Ruby Payne;
15 you've also talked about Harry Wong for discipline,
16 because that was one of my major concerns.

17 MR. PRINCE: Yes, ma'am.

18 MS. BARNES: I know that I'm saying several
19 things, so I'll just -- let me go ahead and talk
20 about it a little bit and then you can address any --
21 or anyone can address the concerns that I'm talking
22 about.

23 So, you know, as far as your minority
24 population, I am going to ask about how many
25 minorities you actually have. Because in the

1 discipline data I was very concerned when I noted
2 that it's basically two-to-one with respect to
3 discipline infractions or sanctions for African
4 American students compared to the Caucasian
5 population. And so I was wondering if there's
6 diversity training, cultural sensitivity with respect
7 to teacher preparation training. I know that you
8 also talked about your new teachers coming in, but I
9 was wondering how often do the returning teachers
10 have exposure to, you know, a refresher training?
11 And so I guess more than anything my concerns have to
12 do with -- you've spoken of the quality of teachers
13 and having done some sincere review of whether or not
14 teachers needed additional assistance or if they just
15 needed to find somewhere else to find a vocation
16 because of the impact on the learning environment. I
17 looked at your 2014 ESEA status report and I looked
18 at your 2015, and I do see where you are making some
19 progress there. But, again, I'm looking also at the
20 struggle. And so, I mean, you know, you can talk to
21 me a little bit about --

22 MR. PRINCE: Sure.

23 MS. BARNES: -- what you're doing with respect
24 to trying to close the achievement gap, how you're
25 addressing meeting individual needs of students, and

1 making sure that teachers are comfortable working
2 with minority children, as well as those who may have
3 a lot of other concerns more than academic, the Whole
4 Child. And I did read a lot about what you're doing.
5 So, again, I'm not -- I hope I don't sound dismal
6 because I appreciate all of the work and I'm very
7 familiar with the district and the work that you're
8 doing. But I am concerned --

9 MR. PRINCE: Right.

10 MS. BARNES: -- when I see a pattern.

11 MR. PRINCE: Absolutely.

12 MS. BARNES: So can you help me with a little
13 bit of that?

14 MR. PRINCE: Yes, ma'am. Yes. I'll start with
15 the diversity, the diversity concern that you have.
16 Absolutely, you're right. I will say this, our
17 staff, our current staff does mirror our school
18 levels. We are about 10 to 11 percent African
19 American and then 85 -- 80-something percent white
20 and then -- so our staff does mirror that, so that
21 does help with some of that. But when we got the
22 data and we got the rebuttal questions back, we
23 started -- yeah, it really does, it really does. And
24 so that really made us be more thoughtful in terms of
25 when we started analyzing that data and some things

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what do we need to do.

One thing we're going to consider looking at is a diversity audit just to kind of help us dig better and analyze more of our data and what is it that we can do in terms of strategies to help reach all of our students better and making sure that we're paying attention to all of our students too. Obviously, our school based health center has been a big help to help us with some of those other issues that you're referring to, especially with our mental health. We have a very good partnership with our mental health provider and she does an excellent job helping our students with strategies and different things in terms of therapy. So that has been a really good help. We do offer, of course, some different things in terms of response to intervention that we have on-site to help any kind of way to help with our achievement gaps. And we offer a math lab, which is math tutoring during the day. We offer a writing center, which is writing and English tutoring during the day; afterschool tutoring. We also use APEX, which is our credit recovery tool. We have alternative learning environment for those students who need that extra support, and we do have a few students that are getting that extra support through

1 their action plans and through alternative ed.
2 education. We do use behavior plans when needed for
3 students and to help support them and to help give
4 them strategies to better -- to be and feel more
5 successful. We do use Reading Plus as an
6 intervention strategy for -- to help with that
7 achievement gap also.

8 But to go back to the diversity, we just really
9 wanted to be more thoughtful after we saw the data,
10 to find ways that we are addressing that problem,
11 that perceived problem, to make sure that we are
12 educating every child and educating the Whole Child.

13 MS. BARNES: Right. And thank you.

14 MR. PRINCE: And there is some upcoming summer
15 PD at our local co-op that should also address some
16 of those concerns that we've already looked into.

17 MS. BARNES: I appreciate that. And, again,
18 when I speak of minorities I'm not just speaking of
19 African American.

20 MR. PRINCE: Absolutely.

21 MS. BARNES: And I know that you have small
22 numbers of other ethnicities.

23 MR. PRINCE: Right.

24 MS. BARNES: But I'm also -- you know --
25 primarily I am concerned about your TAGG which would

1 be --

2 MR. PRINCE: Yes.

3 MS. BARNES: -- your economically disadvantaged

4 --

5 MR. PRINCE: Absolutely.

6 MS. BARNES: -- and your students with
7 disabilities.

8 MR. PRINCE: Yes. I would --

9 MS. BARNES: And English Learners.

10 MR. PRINCE: Right. Can I say something about
11 the students with disabilities and --

12 MS. BARNES: Yes.

13 MR. PRINCE: We ran -- and I may have to ask for
14 a little help here. But we did run an open-response
15 strategy and we got the data back on that from those
16 test scores. We saw a nice improvement among our
17 special ed. population on open responses, and that
18 data is in your packet.

19 MS. BARNES: Okay.

20 MR. PRINCE: And I also want to talk a little
21 bit about how we measured growth for our students,
22 because obviously ESEA measures did they pass or not.

23 MS. BARNES: Yeah.

24 MR. PRINCE: So with our TAP system we use
25 value-add, and value-add is a mechanism that doesn't

1 look at can they pass the test; it looks at what kind
2 of growth are these students -- what kind of growth
3 is happening with these students for that course of a
4 year. And that is on a scale of 1 to 5, with 3 being
5 those students are demonstrating one years of growth
6 in one school year. And so I would like to proudly
7 say that over the last five years of using TAP the
8 school-wide value-add scores for our students has
9 been a 3, with the exception of one year it's been a
10 2. So our students are demonstrating one years of
11 growth in one year of time, but it just may not
12 always translate to them passing the test.

13 MS. BARNES: Right. Yeah.

14 MR. PRINCE: But we are seeing growth through
15 that value-added model and obviously through the use
16 of our strategies. We just may not always see it
17 translate to the test scores.

18 MS. BARNES: Exactly.

19 MR. PRINCE: Yes.

20 MS. BARNES: And I do understand that. That's
21 why I was glad to hear that you are looking at
22 multiple measures.

23 MR. PRINCE: Yes, ma'am.

24 MS. BARNES: I also am, you know, excited, I
25 guess, about our board, our State Board understanding

1 that we are all concerned about growth, as well as
2 performance. And so I think even based on what you
3 just said hopefully the upcoming results will mirror
4 the --

5 MR. PRINCE: Yes. We would love to be a 4 or 5.
6 We might have a big party if we got a 5.

7 MS. BARNES: Well, if you get a 5 I've got to
8 tell you I would hope that other people would
9 communicate with you and find out what you're doing
10 --

11 MR. PRINCE: Yes, ma'am.

12 MS. BARNES: -- to have those successes. So I
13 appreciate that.

14 MR. PRINCE: Thank you.

15 MS. BARNES: I did have a question about
16 waivers, but I can wait on that.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

18 MS. BARNES: Huh?

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

20 MS. BARNES: Okay. Dr. Saunders, this is
21 usually your role. But I did notice you asked for a
22 waiver for teaching one unit of PE. And I think what
23 I read was that it will -- that you will teach a
24 maximum of .5 or allow for a maximum of .5 credit
25 with athletics. And since I guess my question is

1 about this particular waiver, since athletics can
2 already count through approval toward meeting the .5
3 graduation requirement but the district is required
4 to teach one unit of PE, with the waiver does that
5 mean that you're asking not to have to teach one unit
6 of PE? And what happens for those students who are
7 not in athletics --

8 MR. PRINCE: Right.

9 MS. BARNES: -- with respect to physical
10 education? And why would it be necessary?

11 MR. PRINCE: Right. So maybe -- I think our
12 description may be a little bit foggy there, so let
13 me help clarify. We would like the waiver -- and you
14 can get the waiver. Obviously, we can do that with I
15 think a course approval.

16 MS. BARNES: Course approval.

17 MR. PRINCE: Yes.

18 MS. BARNES: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

19 MR. PRINCE: But we wanted to go ahead and just
20 ask for the waiver for the same thing. But our goal
21 is for those students who are in athletics, for that
22 to count as half of their credit of PE. And, of
23 course, any students who are not in athletics they're
24 still going to be offered and they'll still have
25 their PE and they'll still run through all that. But

1 we wanted to make sure those athletes who have that
2 athletic period have a little flexibility in their
3 schedules in terms of taking some more electives.
4 Because if they are an athlete throughout high school
5 they have that athletic period and so that kind of
6 cuts out an elective for them. So having that PE,
7 which is a requirement for those students, helps, but
8 it also hopefully is going to open up some ability
9 for them to take some other --

10 MS. BARNES: Right.

11 MR. PRINCE: -- other electives.

12 MS. BARNES: And I get that for athletes. And
13 like I said --

14 MR. PRINCE: And we do have other PE courses.

15 MS. BARNES: I see that also.

16 MR. PRINCE: Yeah.

17 MS. BARNES: So when you say a waiver -- because
18 you asked for a waiver of the rule for the one-and-a-
19 half units of health and PE, except I'm assuming you
20 didn't want to waive the health.

21 MR. PRINCE: No.

22 MS. BARNES: But you're asking to waive the full
23 unit of PE, and this is a requirement for teaching.

24 MR. PRINCE: Right.

25 MS. BARNES: So the district is required to

1 teach one unit. Students can get up to one unit to
2 graduate, but they only need a half unit and that's
3 why I was trying to determine why you needed a waiver
4 for the whole one unit of PE to be taught if you were
5 just talking about the athletes, to count their
6 physical education.

7 MR. PRINCE: Yeah. I think it was just maybe a
8 miss-wording. But really our goal was there to be
9 able to use it for athletics, for those students.

10 MS. BARNES: Okay.

11 MR. PRINCE: But obviously we'll still have our
12 typical PE offerings and all that.

13 MS. BARNES: So is there a reason to waive that?
14 I mean, I don't hear it.

15 MR. PRINCE: Right. Right. Well --

16 MS. BARNES: I'm concerned. I guess my concern
17 would be if you waive the full unit of physical
18 education that's required to be taught, even though
19 you may be teaching some PE, at some point it may be
20 that you don't teach a full unit and there may be a
21 student who would like a full unit towards their
22 graduation. The athletes would already get through
23 approval the .5 that's required for graduation. But
24 what would the others get if over time it just fell
25 off because you don't have to teach it?

1 MR. PRINCE: No. They still have to teach it.

2 MS. BARNES: But that's why I'm asking about
3 that waiver.

4 MR. PRINCE: Okay. I think I'm confused.

5 MS. BARNES: I know. I believe Mr. Walter would
6 like to --

7 MR. WALTER: May I address the Panel?

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

9 MR. WALTER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Tripp
10 Walter, staff attorney, Arkansas Public School
11 Resource Center. I just -- and Mr. Prince can help
12 me out here -- my understanding is this, that
13 apparently that the district has asked for this
14 waiver really out of an abundance of caution to make
15 sure that what they were planning to do was
16 acceptable and any approval they needed from the ADE
17 to do so they would get through this process. I
18 understand there's a separate process for course
19 approval in the standards, but I think that was kind
20 of the genesis of the idea. My understanding is this
21 is in no way an attempt to back off of either the one
22 unit requirements for PE in total or the half unit of
23 health and safety.

24 MS. BARNES: Okay. And I did note that it
25 specifically said physical education. I'm just

1 uncomfortable with a waiver of the one unit when
2 there's already a mechanism to do what is
3 specifically asked for in here.

4 MR. WALTER: Well, again, I'd reiterate it's
5 definitely not an attempt to retreat from the one
6 unit.

7 MS. BARNES: Yes, I understand that. I just --
8 sometimes over time things get -- you may not be
9 there or you may not remember, the superintendent may
10 not be there, and that happens.

11 MR. PRINCE: Right.

12 MS. BARNES: Get a new principal sometimes and,
13 "Well, we don't have to do this," so it gets pulled
14 out of the schedule. So, I mean, that's my concern.

15 MR. PRINCE: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

17 MS. PFEFFER: So, and I had a question when I
18 read that as well. So I think what I was thinking
19 maybe the intent is that if athletes who maybe would
20 be enrolled in basically an athletic period every
21 year for their entire high school career, the
22 athletic -- the person in athletics, the coach that's
23 in the athletics may not be a certified PE teacher.
24 And, therefore, if they're enrolled in the athletics
25 for that full-time and they're only getting the

1 athletic credit that's a non-PE counting for -- is
2 that -- was that at all part of that? Because that's
3 what I was wondering, whether or not you wanted to
4 basically substitute that for a PE credit. That's
5 what I wondered when I read the waivers.

6 MR. PRINCE: Yeah. We --

7 MS. PFEFFER: So is that the intent or not?

8 MR. PRINCE: We are looking to substitute the
9 athletics for the PE. Yes.

10 SUPT. WILSON: Just for the athletes.

11 MR. PRINCE: Yes.

12 MS. PFEFFER: So is that different from what
13 Annette was thinking?

14 MS. BARNES: No. I mean, what you said is
15 different from what is here. I guess what I'm saying
16 is I know that you're asking to substitute --

17 MR. PRINCE: Yes, ma'am.

18 MS. BARNES: -- athletics. I thought that's
19 what I was reading. And that can be done. It
20 happens all the time. Coaches, if they are teaching
21 -- or coaching football, basketball, any of the major
22 ones, they would already have basically the required
23 licensure --

24 MR. PRINCE: Right. Yes.

25 MS. BARNES: -- to teach a PE class. So the

1 certifications didn't enter into it for me; licensure
2 didn't enter into it. What entered into it for me
3 was it removes the requirement to teach the unit of
4 physical education.

5 MR. PRINCE: Yeah.

6 MS. BARNES: And --

7 MR. PRINCE: That's not our intention.

8 MS. BARNES: I know that's not your --

9 SUPT. WILSON: Yeah, that was not our --

10 MS. BARNES: I didn't think that was your
11 intent.

12 MR. PRINCE: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. BARNES: That's why I was asking --

14 MR. PRINCE: Absolutely.

15 MS. BARNES: -- is the waiver absolutely
16 necessary.

17 SUPT. WILSON: We were strictly looking at the
18 fact that those athletes have five --

19 MS. BARNES: Yes, ma'am.

20 SUPT. WILSON: -- periods -- I mean, five units
21 of athletics --

22 MS. BARNES: Right.

23 SUPT. WILSON: -- over -- or six units,
24 whatever, but over -- I guess over 9 through 12 is
25 four. But those are the same students that would

1 take it three times a day --

2 MS. BARNES: Oh, I understand.

3 SUPT. WILSON: -- if we would allow it.

4 MS. BARNES: I understand.

5 SUPT. WILSON: So I guess we were kind of
6 looking at it as, "No, you've already got your PE
7 class." And we were strictly looking at it for the
8 athletes, not for --

9 MS. BARNES: Right.

10 SUPT. WILSON: -- the rest of the student body.

11 MS. BARNES: And I don't know that -- I don't --
12 someone would have to help me. I don't know that it
13 could just be waived for athletes. That's my thing.
14 It would be waived period. That's what was
15 concerning.

16 SUPT. WILSON: Right. Well, the course approval
17 -- is that what you were saying, the course approval
18 will actually give us that same ability?

19 MS. BARNES: It would give you the same ability
20 --

21 SUPT. WILSON: Without --

22 MS. BARNES: -- to give them a half unit of PE
23 toward graduation.

24 SUPT. WILSON: Without -- and so I think, really
25 and truly, we were thinking if we do this --

1 MS. BARNES: Yes, ma'am.

2 SUPT. WILSON: -- do they need to know that.

3 MS. BARNES: I understand that. I think that's
4 part of why they have me up here --

5 SUPT. WILSON: Okay.

6 MS. BARNES: -- to talk about those things that
7 give me pause.

8 SUPT. WILSON: Yeah.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: It's already waived.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Explain that, Dr.
11 Saunders.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Well, your question was
13 concerning certification. Correct?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That was Ms. Pfeffer's
15 question.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I thought that's what I
17 heard you say.

18 MS. PFEFFER: I was just clarifying the way I --
19 or what I thought that they were asking for, is what
20 I was doing. I wasn't trying to put words in their
21 mouth. So I just wanted to make sure because I got
22 confused after Annette asked her question.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: And just to clarify on that, you
24 do have a waiver from teacher certification and
25 qualified teachers in the classroom existing already,

1 so that is totally separate --

2 MR. PRINCE: That would cover that.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: -- and already in place.

4 MR. PRINCE: Absolutely.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

6 MS. SMITH: So I would encourage you to submit a
7 course approval to my unit for PE with the PE
8 certification and we'll be happy to assist you.

9 MR. PRINCE: Yeah, we'll do that.

10 MS. BARNES: I appreciate that. It just makes
11 me feel a little bit better.

12 MR. PRINCE: We will definitely do that. Yes,
13 ma'am.

14 MS. BARNES: So I appreciate your indulgence and
15 patience with me.

16 MR. PRINCE: No problem.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I want to first start off
19 by telling you that I really -- I honor what y'all
20 have done because I think y'all started early on
21 innovation and tried some things that no one had
22 tried before. And I think that's courageous and I
23 think you've really disrupted the classroom in a
24 positive and respectful way when I say that. I think
25 as we look at doing things different we have to be

1 careful and look at what are the results. And I know
2 that y'all have made a lot of changes that really
3 changed a lot of things within the environment. And
4 I think when you have major changes like you have
5 done I think the implementation dip, the time of the
6 implementation dip can be longer than it can be for
7 other things. And so I respect that and I honor that
8 and I think that many people have learned from what
9 other people do first, and I hope we continue to do
10 so.

11 So as we're at this point in the process I'm
12 really concerned about in particular the math scores.
13 And is this a result of the implementation dip? How
14 long will it continue? Or are the waivers that are
15 given, are those the result that -- without those
16 waivers would the math scores be higher? These are
17 things I'm weighing in my mind and, you know, trying
18 to balance because ultimately how the students
19 perform academically is our goal, what we're trying
20 to do and how we're trying to prepare them for life.
21 So that's really weighing on me heavily and I just
22 want to turn it over to you.

23 MR. PRINCE: I don't think the waivers are
24 having a negative impact on that. I think that --
25 you know -- we talked previously about some different

1 things, the teacher turnover, the implementation of
2 all the different things at once. I would like to go
3 back to some of the training that we talked about. I
4 think that's going to help with the math. We don't
5 teach math in a combined class. Math is a standalone
6 course, so that's another thing that we're going to
7 make sure stays that way. We're not going to combine
8 it or do an integrated course with the math and
9 something else. It will stay a math standalone. I
10 think we're going to see an increase in scores,
11 especially with the changeover to ACT Aspire, and
12 hopefully we'll keep ACT Aspire. That way, we can
13 have longevity in data and longevity in planning
14 things from that data to help improve that. I hope
15 that answered your question.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: It does. And just, you know, one
17 thing on a side note, as I look at the waivers and
18 look at some of the plans that you're doing, you have
19 the freedom to do lots of things that you want to do
20 and I know that you have integrated fine arts into
21 courses. Yet, looking at some of the athletics or
22 the PE things -- and I want to I guess encourage you
23 to be careful. It's been proven time and again how
24 many times those subjects, while they are not the
25 individual assessment subjects, those improve those

1 areas as well, and so that those are not looked over
2 and those are enhanced and help --

3 MR. PRINCE: Yeah.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: -- on the math and literacy side
5 as well.

6 MR. PRINCE: Well, with the fine arts we
7 obviously still have all our art class offerings and
8 everything. I think that waiver may have been a part
9 of the integrated classes because we do have English
10 and one fine arts class taught together to help merge
11 some of those because it's a natural fit.

12 SUPT. WILSON: And we did -- for lack of a
13 better word, we did play around with combining
14 classes. We had an "algebrysics," and
15 algebra/physics class; figured out that was a
16 disaster. But, you know, we went through some things
17 that hurt our kids, we really did, and now we're
18 repairing those things that we did. But we found out
19 real quickly, you know, we're not going to put our
20 math classes with anything else. They've got to get
21 those skills and it can only be in that class. And
22 we figured out that big projects, like I said before
23 -- we figured out a lot of mistakes. I mean, we know
24 where we've made our mistakes. Now we've got to get
25 on track with what we're trying to get done right.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Well, I honor you for being
2 willing to make those mistakes because I think that's
3 how we grow and learn.

4 SUPT. WILSON: Yeah, they really hurt though.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions?

6 I would just take a moment to say I certainly
7 appreciated my recent visit to your school, had a
8 great time conversing with the students, and was just
9 certainly impressed.

10 One of the points that I would like to make
11 public today, Mr. Prince, is our conversation about
12 your really deep-dive into your data and recognizing
13 the areas that you need to improve on. And we walked
14 through your cluster room and I saw those charts
15 where your teachers were really analyzing to see what
16 they needed to work on to help students grow. Our
17 conversation too was about sharing those lessons
18 learned with K-6, because many times the foundational
19 skills are built in the primary grades that may not
20 show up on your assessments at that time but they'll
21 show up in middle school, high school. So it takes
22 some really good digging to find out where the
23 foundations need to be repaired. And so would you
24 talk just briefly about how you're collaborating with
25 the K-6 and how this work is being handled district-

1 wide?

2 MR. PRINCE: Yeah. TAP is our main avenue to do
3 that. I was the K-6 principal for six years and we
4 saw some great gains with our strategies in different
5 things. And one of our master teachers has now moved
6 up into the principal position. And we actually
7 spoke just recently about the word study research and
8 about how that 6-8 is a very pivotal year in actually
9 getting some real foundations in that word study that
10 goes far beyond, you know, the phonetic connections
11 and those different things, and she was very onboard
12 with starting that process. We have a lot of good
13 things at the elementary school in terms of building
14 those reading and literacy foundations and even math
15 foundational skills. So we work really close
16 together on that and I think we're going to see great
17 things with that, with that partnership with us, with
18 me and her.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think that's very
20 admiral. I would really encourage you to -- as
21 you're digging through your math data, you have to go
22 beyond the data sometimes. And I'll give you just a
23 personal experience really quickly. I worked in a
24 school and we kept seeing a problem show up on our
25 math scores in 5th and 6th grade. And we dug through

1 it and dug through it and realized that's not where
2 the problem was occurring. Even though the 3rd grade
3 test scores were awesome, there were some instruction
4 that was going on in 3rd grade that was undermining
5 what started to happen in 5th and 6th grade when the
6 math got more challenging. And so once we were able
7 to repair that we saw the change in math scores at
8 5th and 6th grade. So it can be very subtle just to
9 have one little weak link in the instruction that is
10 causing problems further down the road when math gets
11 more challenging.

12 MR. PRINCE: We've actually seen that, so I
13 definitely see that for sure what you're saying.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's great.

15 MR. PRINCE: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Keep up the great work.

17 MR. PRINCE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other -- Ms. Pfeffer,
19 you have another comment?

20 MS. PFEFFER: Or just a question and it's -- Ms.
21 Boyd or one of the attorneys may be better able to
22 answer this. The renewal application is asking for a
23 10-year renewal. What do we -- just I guess a
24 historical perspective in terms of renewal, is 10
25 years typical or is 5, 10, more? How many do we have

1 --

2 MS. DAVIS: Actually, for a district conversion
3 you can only grant it for up to five years. So you
4 can do it for one or anywhere up to five.

5 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

6 MS. DAVIS: So --

7 MS. PFEFFER: That answers my question.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions or
9 comments?

10 Ms. Davis, are there any remaining issues
11 regarding the request?

12 MS. DAVIS: The only remaining one is can we
13 just get the applicant to confirm that you are going
14 to withdraw your waiver request --

15 MR. PRINCE: Yes.

16 MS. DAVIS: -- in lieu of the course approval
17 process?

18 MR. PRINCE: We will do the course approval.
19 Absolutely.

20 MS. DAVIS: Okay. No, that was it.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then I'll accept a motion.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: I'd like to make a motion to
23 approve the renewal for three years.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is there a second?

25 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion dies for lack of a
2 second.

3 Is there an alternative motion?

4 MS. PFEFFER: Can we have discussion for a
5 moment?

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. I guess my -- and I
8 probably should --

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're here for you.

10 MS. PFEFFER: I should have asked before the
11 motion died. The three years, can you elaborate a
12 little bit on why you would do the three years
13 instead of five? And I'm assuming five then is
14 anywhere from one to five. Okay.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. My thoughts on it, as
16 opposed to the five, was looking at the math scores
17 in particular and the literacy scores and trying to
18 evaluate those before it's too late. And with the
19 changes, making sure that the changes are positive
20 and that we see a positive effect of that, I don't
21 want to wait five years before we have a chance to
22 evaluate that again. And so that was my thought
23 process.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'll accept a motion.

25 MS. PFEFFER: I guess just -- okay. Continuing

1 my thought process here, I guess part of mine was
2 looking at -- initially, I thought the request was
3 for 10 years because that was what was in their
4 application. So my thought had been -- I thought 10
5 years was too much time because of the current
6 outcome data that we have. The things that I see in
7 the application that are very strong is the
8 improvement in the percent of students who are
9 enrolling in two- and four-year institutions. I
10 think it will be interesting to follow-up how many
11 are successfully completing a two- or four-year
12 degree and how many continue to enroll is based on
13 their College and Career Access. I also think that
14 the leadership here today, I feel like they do have
15 some solid plans in place. And so I do agree that --
16 I did have concerns in how everything matched up when
17 we look at these multiple measures. While there
18 seems to be some really positive trends, and based on
19 their honest assessment of where they are and where
20 they need to improve, I would feel comfortable with
21 the five years, knowing though that we've got a lot
22 of transitions in moving forward. And we're going to
23 have to be looking at a lot of data over the next
24 five years. But that's just some discussion out
25 there.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

2 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. If I could add a comment,
3 Dr. Saunders, I certainly was concerned as well and I
4 saw the 10-year -- and I was actually going to
5 discuss the 10-year as well. But based upon the
6 leadership model that I'm seeing and based upon some
7 of the things that Mr. Prince has said regarding the
8 school leadership team and the cluster teams, I'm
9 confident that a 5-year renewal would be appropriate
10 for this institution.

11 And so, if I may, I'd like to make a motion that
12 we consider the renewal for a 5-year term period. Is
13 that possible?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We have a motion from Dr.
15 Gotcher for a 5-year.

16 MS. SMITH: I second it.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Second from Stacy Smith.
18 Any discussion?

19 All those -- oh, I have to do a roll-call. I'll
20 make a roll-call. Ms. Liwo.

21 MS. LIWO: I'm for it. Yes.

22 MS. BARNES: Do we write in here --

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Pardon me?

24 MS. BARNES: Don't we write --

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No.

1 MS. BARNES: Oh, okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We vote first. Mr.
3 Lester.

4 MR. LESTER: For.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

6 MR. ROGERS: For.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: For.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

10 MS. BARNES: For.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

12 MS. PFEFFER: For.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

14 MS. SMITH: For.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

16 DR. GOTCHER: For.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It is unanimous for a 5-
18 year renewal. If you will wait just a moment, our
19 panel members will write out an explanation and then
20 we will go around and hear that explanation, that
21 written explanation.

22 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: May I have your attention?
24 I'll ask each panel member to read their written
25 response. And just for the public to know, all panel

1 members include a written response that goes to our
2 State Board for consideration. Ms. Barnes.

3 MS. BARNES: I voted for the renewal because I
4 believe the school is implementing sound
5 instructional practices. And if the current measures
6 in place to address the deficits are put forth with
7 integrity, positive results will occur.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

9 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for. I believe the school
10 leadership teams are solid and further, along with
11 the capacity for sustainable student leadership, I
12 found that most impressive. I feel strongly that a
13 legacy model of education is being formed with
14 continued support and accountability.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

16 MR. LESTER: I voted for. Going forward, I
17 believe the charter has a plan in place to improve on
18 the concerns that the Panel has presented today.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

20 MS. LIWO: I voted for. CCHS has recognized
21 that they have problems but they've done their
22 research, they've brought forth plans that they think
23 will make their situation turn around, and I think
24 five years is sufficient time for us to determine
25 whether they are -- whether they'll be successful or

1 not.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

3 MS. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion.
4 The district is demonstrating plans for moving
5 forward and does have evidence of progress towards
6 meeting goals to prepare students in terms of college
7 readiness. The district will need to continue to
8 monitor outcome data on student performance for
9 multiple measures to make sure that they are in line,
10 particularly focusing on the graduation rate and math
11 and literacy scores.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

13 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. Along the same lines
14 as everybody else on the Panel, I think that the 5-
15 year renewal will allow the leadership to have time
16 to show evidence of success or not.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted for. I think this will
19 give time for the new changes to show improvement.
20 And I do have concerns over the math and literacy
21 scores.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

23 MS. SMITH: I know -- I voted in favor. My
24 questions regarding concerns with math and AP were
25 answered. I also felt like the students could

1 articulate the actions of the school within their
2 presentation.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations to the
4 Cross County School District, New Tech High. You
5 have a 5-year renewal.

6 SUPT. WILSON: Thank you.

7 MR. PRINCE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You're welcome. Great
9 job.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: I think the students did it for
11 them, so they need to thank the students.

12 SUPT. WILSON: I guess you know that in the car
13 coming down one of the students says, "If we get
14 this, could we have dessert when we have lunch?"

15 MR. PRINCE: The answer is yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: They deserve dessert.

17 SUPT. WILSON: Absolutely.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Absolutely.

19 SUPT. WILSON: And yes, I will let them have
20 dessert today.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Absolutely. Great job.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah. I would charge it to Dr.
23 McClure's credit card, if you could.

24 SUPT. WILSON: Absolutely. Absolutely.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Wilson.

1 I see that Representative Gossage has entered
2 the room. Would you like to speak to the Panel?

3 REPRESENTATIVE GOSSAGE: No. Just want to say
4 hi.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're always happy to see
6 you.

7 REPRESENTATIVE GOSSAGE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll take a 10-minute
9 break and come back for action item 2.

10 (BREAK: 10:15-10:30 A.M.)

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

12 RENEWAL: IMBODEN AREA CHARTER SCHOOL

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think we're -- if we're
14 ready to resume, action item 2, Ms. Boyd, you're
15 recognized.

16 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Request for
17 Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Renewal,
18 Imboden Area Charter School. The State Board of
19 Education approved the application for Imboden Area
20 Charter School on March 11, 2002. The charter is
21 approved to serve students in grades K-8 with a
22 maximum enrollment of 150. Representatives of the
23 Imboden Area Charter School are appearing before the
24 Charter Authorizing Panel to request a 10-year
25 renewal of the charter. From the charter we have --

1 Judy Warren, the director, will be the first person
2 to speak to you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If all representatives
4 from the Imboden Area Charter School and anyone
5 speaking in opposition would please stand, raise your
6 right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the
7 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
8 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

9 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Warren,
11 you're recognized.

12 MS. WARREN: Good morning, Members of the Panel.
13 I'm Judy Warren; I'm the director of the Imboden Area
14 Charter School. I -- do we have our presentation?
15 Oh, okay. Sorry. I'm sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Warren, if you'll get
17 very close to the microphone.

18 MS. WARREN: Okay. All right. IACS has the
19 distinction of being one of the oldest charter
20 schools in Arkansas, of 14 years. We are the
21 smallest school in Arkansas, with a population that
22 ranges from 50 to 75 students each year, and our
23 demographics are significantly different from any
24 other school in Arkansas. Imboden Area Charter
25 School is denoted by the heart on the map and it lies

1 along Highway 63 at the center of Imboden, which is a
2 rural community in northeast Arkansas, about 45 miles
3 northwest of Jonesboro. The blue pentagon-shaped
4 outline on the map represents the large surrounding
5 area from which IACS has historically drawn its
6 students, the farthest points on the map being Warm
7 Springs to the north, Swifton and Bono to the south,
8 Paragould to the east, and Hardy and Cave City to the
9 west. The black line on the map represents our bus
10 route that runs through 10 different communities.
11 With the majority of our students being
12 disadvantaged, transportation is a necessity for
13 them. We run about a 50-mile loop and transport
14 approximately 90% of our students each year. We own
15 two buses to guarantee that our bus service will not
16 be disrupted and also we use them for extended-day
17 field trips.

18 IACS's focus is to provide a high-quality
19 education that is tailored to the individual needs of
20 the students. One-hundred percent of our teaching
21 staff is fully certified and highly qualified with
22 experience. We serve USDA reimbursable state-
23 approved breakfast and lunch, with fresh fruit and
24 vegetables daily. We had our child nutrition review
25 last year and had no violations. This year we have

1 begun an afterschool extended learning program for
2 students who are below level in reading and math, and
3 teachers have seen a significant improvement in
4 student achievement. And our small and inviting
5 atmosphere encourages our parents to be active in the
6 learning of their children. Our facility is leased
7 through a private individual from the Imboden
8 community, and it's approximately 3200 square feet
9 and houses our four large multi-age classrooms and
10 our school offices. We also have a large playground
11 area with an open playing field and equipment where
12 students can play and participate in our daily cardio
13 workout for grades kindergarten through 8th grade.

14 Parents play an important role in the life of
15 our school and 100% of our parents have attended both
16 parent/teacher conferences yearly. In the parent
17 surveys, 100% of the parents believe that the staff
18 and the teachers are always willing to communicate
19 with them and they tell us they have never felt so
20 welcome at a school. The parents take ownership in
21 the school and 90% of them and their extended
22 families volunteer and help in areas in which they
23 feel competent. At the end of each school day,
24 parents routinely call us or gather in the school
25 offices just -- sometimes just to visit with us, and

1 this has created a vital relationship with them.
2 They now trust us, they trust our knowledge and our
3 advice, and they feel comfortable discussing the ways
4 in which they can help their children succeed.

5 Our demographics are unique to any school in
6 Arkansas, which makes test score comparisons almost
7 impossible. There are schools in Arkansas who do
8 have a high percentage of disadvantaged students, but
9 IACS has a far higher percentage than any area school
10 in the state average. Now on the slide that -- if
11 you can go back to that last one -- on the slide
12 you'll see that there are two numbers under the
13 enrollment section. The beginning number notes the
14 beginning enrollment; the end -- the last number
15 notes the ending enrollment for the school year. So
16 in 13-14, we started the year with 46; we ended the
17 year with 66. And there were some coming and going
18 that would account for even more total students than
19 that. Because our population is so disadvantaged,
20 they are very highly mobile and so that demonstrates
21 that. Right now we have 49, as of today, and I just
22 keep getting calls daily and this is traditional for
23 us.

24 No school in the state though has the percentage
25 of special education students that IACS has. This

1 graph shows the comparison data for the past three
2 years between the state average, Sloan-Hendrix, and
3 IACS. The blue bars indicate the percentage of
4 disadvantaged students and the orange bar is special
5 education students. At this time we are at an all-
6 time high of 40%. Almost all of these students come
7 to us already identified. We refer very few students
8 to special education. And many of these students
9 have been in self-contained classrooms and we place
10 them, which they're -- with their peers, which is the
11 least restrictive environment, with some pullout
12 time. One student came to us in 2nd grade from a
13 self-contained classroom with a normal IQ and a
14 medical diagnosis of ADHD. He did not know any
15 letters or any numbers. Now he is a 5th grader; he's
16 reading at the 4th grade level; he interacts normally
17 with his peers. However, he's not at a level yet to
18 do very well at standardized tests. Most special
19 education students we receive are categorized as
20 specific learning disabled, which means there's a
21 discrepancy between their IQ and their achievement.
22 And most of these students have a normal IQ but
23 because of their situations or their environments
24 they become lost academically, and some were referred
25 for special education. Many times, when we think

1 about special education we may think about students
2 who are intellectually disabled. We currently have
3 only one student who is intellectually disabled; most
4 of the rest of them are specific learning disabled.
5 In October of this year, we had our monitoring visit
6 by the state special education unit and our special
7 education program was fully approved and we had no
8 violations.

9 The next graph shows statistics less likely to
10 be considered and that is the number of homeless and
11 foster children who attend IACS. The state has an
12 average of 2% homeless and Sloan-Hendrix slightly
13 above 0%, compared with IACS who has 13% homeless.
14 Foster student average for the state is slightly
15 above 0, Sloan-Hendrix has about 1.5%, but IACS has
16 about 10%. With this unique population we provide a
17 need satisfying environment, trying to erase some of
18 their concerns about survival needs. Over the years
19 staff members have bought numerous coats, shoes and
20 clothing items for students without. A teacher came
21 to me for help one day with two little girls who were
22 sisters who tended to stay in the bathroom much
23 longer than was necessary. I told them to call me
24 the next time she sent them to the restroom and when
25 I watched at the door I saw them each at a sink; the

1 water was running, all the way open, soap applied to
2 their hands, their arms, their faces, and they were
3 both washing and laughing. And I told them their
4 teacher was waiting for them and they needed to go --
5 wash more quickly and get back to the classroom.
6 Later that day, I found out they did not have running
7 water in their home. They were then allowed to wash
8 and play in the water. And learning comes in many
9 forms. We also have a highly mobile population.
10 Many of our students are used to moving from place to
11 place and school to school. Maybe they are not able
12 to pay their rent; some are escaping law enforcement
13 agencies, moving between the three counties in our
14 area; and some have violent or unstable relationships
15 at home. And while we have them at least we provide
16 acceptance and a stable environment. Many students
17 do not have the social skills or the name-brand
18 clothing to be accepted by their peers. And because
19 of their environment -- or because of our
20 environment, students at IACS are never made to feel
21 inferior by others. And because of their
22 socioeconomic status their lack of general world
23 knowledge hinders their ability to connect to others
24 and to new information. One student came to us in
25 1st grade with a letter from his teacher. The letter

1 said that there was definitely something wrong with
2 him; he was either autistic, mentally challenged or
3 insane. He hid under his desk and refused to
4 participate. He spoke to no one. He was the only
5 student who didn't know where the word wall was. He
6 was the only student who colored his trees blue. And
7 when his mother drove by the school during recess he
8 was walking along the fence alone. That day, she
9 picked him up and she brought him to IACS. He
10 graduated in 8th grade. He was highly intelligent,
11 reading and math at high school levels, and he was
12 well liked by his peers and teachers. He's a senior
13 now. He's working part-time at Wal-Mart and he
14 already has scholarship to attend Harding University
15 in the fall. And this is just one story. In order
16 to address their needs, the learning environment must
17 be flexible and differentiated, yet highly structured
18 while addressing the required standards.

19 And I'm going to turn the presentation over to
20 Mr. Wells, the assistant director, to explain how the
21 curriculum and the student management systems combine
22 to create a need satisfying environment.

23 MR. WELLS: Good morning. My name is Matthew
24 Wells; I'm the assistant director of the Imboden Area
25 Charter School. In the summer, teachers spend hours

1 desegregating data on individual students, evaluating
2 curricular programs based on that data, aligning
3 materials with Common Core State Standards, and
4 developing checklists for documentation that each
5 student has met those standards. Language arts
6 curriculum is divided into three sections: whole
7 group, small group, and individualized instruction.
8 Language, vocabulary and writing are addressed
9 through direct teaching in a whole group setting.
10 Informational text, impaired reading aligns precisely
11 with Common Core State Standards and allows the
12 teaching of strategies for reading in the content
13 areas. Because these selections are content area
14 based, they tie into the science and social studies
15 objectives. During read-alouds, teachers model
16 quality reading and teach the elements of literature,
17 along with developing increased vocabulary and
18 comprehension. Our read-alouds are selected mainly
19 of classics that present complex text and require
20 high-level thinking skills for comprehension. For
21 example, my 6th, 7th and 8th grade class is currently
22 reading The Odyssey by Homer.

23 When we look for curricular pieces we look for
24 published programs that come with formal or informal
25 assessments. We then group students within our

1 classrooms using the results of these assessments.
2 These small groups may be addressing objectives that
3 are below grade level, on grade level, or well above
4 grade level. Students are assessed six times per
5 year using a standardized test and may change groups
6 based on those assessment results. In these small
7 groups we address phonics and word study, spelling,
8 and reading strategies. We use the Accelerated
9 Reading Program for individualized reading practice
10 at the student's current level of reading. During
11 this time the teacher conducts small group reading
12 instruction or simply monitors individual reading
13 progress.

14 Our math curriculum is also divided into three
15 sections: individual skills, whole group instruction
16 that addresses math concepts, and a review section
17 where grade level objectives are practiced. We use
18 several different published programs throughout our
19 math instruction. Students are tested for basic
20 skills; then the needed skills are organized into an
21 individual student folder where students can work to
22 master those skills. Whole group instruction
23 consists of concepts related to current grade levels
24 and is aligned with Common Core State Standards, such
25 as numbers and operations, geometry, or data

1 analysis. And then, of course, we review and
2 practice grade level objectives daily.

3 Science at IACS is a guided discovery hands-on
4 program designed to allow students to learn
5 scientific concepts through inquiry based lessons.

6 Social studies is aligned to the Arkansas social
7 studies frameworks and utilizes the whole group
8 instructional method to present project-based
9 learning. These projects emphasize a deep
10 understanding of content and its application to the
11 real world.

12 Even though our curriculum is aligned and
13 tailored to meet individual needs, it would not be
14 successful without our philosophy of student
15 management. It may be difficult, perhaps impossible,
16 to imagine a public school without discipline issues.
17 But because of the way in which we manage students,
18 discipline involving more than a few conversations
19 simply does not occur. The first thing we do is
20 establish a quality relationship with our students.
21 Because we are so small this is relatively simple.
22 This encourages students to respect us and follow
23 school rules.

24 Our individualized learning program motivates
25 students to learn. This feeling of success breeds an

1 environment where students are motivated to
2 continually succeed, thus creating intrinsic
3 motivation. A classroom of intrinsically motivated
4 students becomes a collaborative learning environment
5 where students become each other's cheerleaders,
6 rooting each other on to continually succeed.
7 Students are excited to learn and to help others
8 learn, leading to an environment where students are
9 at the center of learning and the teacher plays a
10 mentor role, as described in the Danielson Framework
11 of Test.

12 Our students enter typically two to four levels
13 behind what they should be, given their current grade
14 level. In one year's time, IACS students make about
15 one-and-a-half years of progress. At the end of
16 their first year, most have not reached grade level
17 and assessment shows this. After one year, only
18 about 50% are proficient. However, within three
19 years at IACS that number has risen to about 70% and
20 then after four or more years proficiency rises to
21 about 80%.

22 I'd like to draw your attention to the handout
23 we provided this morning. This is a listing of all
24 students and their benchmark proficiencies in
25 literacy and math for the past three years, along

1 with notations indicating which students were
2 disadvantaged, in special education, or homeless or
3 foster children. We provided scores dating back to
4 2009 for some students since their ending scores fell
5 within the last three-year period. I would encourage
6 you to look at these scores from left to right and
7 notice the growth, rather than looking at percentage
8 of proficiency for a given year. For example, on the
9 first page, student number 21, the students was
10 disadvantaged, in special education, and a foster
11 child. He or she entered IACS well below grade level
12 but after three years was advanced on the benchmark
13 and in the fourth year was one point shy of matching
14 the state average on the PARCC exam.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Warren, your time is
16 up. Do you have a -- is there anyone that would
17 speak in opposition?

18 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

20 MS. WARREN: Okay. I'm going to quickly address
21 the financial accountability. I wanted to address
22 some concerns about the segregation of duties at IACS
23 as it relates to our financial matters. We have
24 formal organizational structures written into policy
25 and procedural manuals and checklists assist staff in

1 meeting all of those expectations. Even though we
2 are aware of possible risks in a small setting such
3 as ours, we have segregated duties at several key
4 stages. We've set up controls and restrictions and
5 increased the number of people responsible for
6 supervision. My assistant director has several
7 supervisory responsibilities in key areas, and Mr.
8 McCloud has monitored some areas as well. The board
9 of directors is responsible for making major
10 decisions and they review check registers and fund
11 balances at each meeting. Segregation of duties is
12 the only audit finding we have ever had and each
13 auditor has told us that most small schools in
14 Arkansas receive the same finding.

15 As a matter of public record, I wanted to
16 address an error in the IACS summary prepared by the
17 State. It is stated that our current fund balance is
18 \$47,000, but it is actually \$100,000 and we have been
19 financially stable for 10 years.

20 The last concern was the Title 1 application and
21 all required paperwork has been submitted.

22 I'm going to turn it over to Mr. McCloud who has
23 a few words.

24 MR. McCLOUD: Good morning. My name is James
25 Michael McCloud; I'm the counselor and also the

1 certified classroom tutor at the charter school.
2 This is my seventh year as a charter school educator.
3 If I had an opportunity to have a do-over with my
4 career of 46 years, I would adopt the philosophy of
5 the Imboden Area Charter School, Glasser's Choice
6 Theory: self-understanding of students competing with
7 one's self and direct parental contact and assist on
8 the individualized learning that encourages learning
9 at the student's current level. These are all the
10 things that make for a successful school environment.
11 I strongly believe and support the concepts of the
12 IACS because the school serves as a successful model
13 of innovative and good educational practices, that if
14 other public schools would implement they could
15 improve the educational environment and performance
16 on a statewide basis. I was not a fan of the charter
17 school concept when I was in the regular public
18 school setting. The Imboden Area Charter School
19 should be supported by the state as a school where
20 learning is promoted for each student at the highest
21 level possible. After all, is that not the goal of
22 elementary and secondary education in Arkansas?

23 SUPT. WARREN: IACS embodies the intended
24 meaning of the charter school concept in Arkansas.
25 We do not ask for the best and the brightest. We do

1 not recruit students. We take those students who
2 come to our door. In an area where people are
3 intensely loyal to their loyal community school,
4 parents do not consider sending their children
5 elsewhere, unless there is a problem and that problem
6 is continued for several years. We use research
7 based curriculum, employ philosophically sound
8 principles, and have a highly experienced staff who
9 works diligently to improve each child's academic
10 potential. Because 95% of all students come to us
11 two to four grade levels below normal, test scores
12 cannot show what differences we have made. Almost
13 all students who come to us are at risk individuals,
14 impoverished, homeless, foster, in special education.
15 In fact, at the present time only three students do
16 not fit into one of those categories. It is clearly
17 evident why they struggle to learn. We instill
18 confidence. We inspire a higher level of learning
19 than others thought possible and see success in all
20 individuals. And when these students leave us they
21 have successful high school careers and many of them
22 attend college and many of them are successful in the
23 workforce.

24 We are asking for a 10-year renewal this time.
25 We have developed a highly innovative program and

1 serve a population that no one else is serving. We
2 face no opposition from the area schools. In fact,
3 students are referred to us at times by their local
4 school district who can see that we're doing a good
5 job. And we realize the difficult task that you face
6 during these renewal decisions. We just ask that you
7 take our unique population into consideration and
8 know that we will continue to strive to meet whatever
9 standards are set by the state. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Warren.
11 Senator Johnson, did you have additional words?

12 SENATOR JOHNSON: If I could.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, please.

14 SENATOR JOHNSON: I came to speak on behalf of
15 the Imboden Area Charter School, as it is one of our
16 older charters. And they went through this process
17 four times in the 14 years, and I ask that they be
18 given this time. It's all in, you know, just like
19 whenever their accounting came in they do more than
20 one job, and it's all in. And whenever you have to
21 go through this process, like they have every three
22 years, it's constant. And they need a time to
23 concentrate on those students and help -- this -- the
24 charter in this area -- because I was over there at
25 Sloan-Hendrix day before yesterday. It's not an

1 antagonistic; it's -- they're part of the regional
2 learning team and they can better care for some of
3 this population than the traditional public schools.
4 And I'm a product of the traditional public schools;
5 my mother taught in it for 37 years, and the multiple
6 grade teaching -- I was talking to her last night at
7 my birthday party and she was telling me about
8 whenever she taught at Success, which is near Corning
9 -- she taught 1st through 3rd grade -- and how those
10 -- if she was teaching to those 1st graders, those
11 3rd graders were helping the 2nd graders, and they
12 all heard it more than once in that classroom. And
13 the building of learning that can happen in a small
14 setting like this is what I want to emphasize and
15 would appreciate your renewing them for a 10-year
16 period and a good vote on that. I thank you for your
17 time and God bless your service. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Senator
19 Johnson. I think you'll be pleased to know that
20 there's a couple of northeast girls on this team.
21 And, in fact, I recently visited the school and was
22 very impressed.

23 SENATOR JOHNSON: Well, I got up at 4:30 this
24 morning to make sure I could be here for them. I got
25 -- well, this is my first time to sit through one of

1 these. I got a little concerned with the thing in
2 the middle; I thought that might be for legislative
3 flogging. But maybe I shouldn't have said that; it
4 might be a possibility now. But I appreciate your
5 time and giving me the ability to speak. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We appreciate your
7 support.

8 All right. Questions. Who would like to start?
9 Any questions? Ms. Barnes.

10 MS. BARNES: I don't know that I have a
11 question. I, you know, I looked at the responses --
12 and, first of all, thank you all for being here.
13 It's a pleasure to see you again, Ms. Warren.

14 SUPT. WARREN: Thank you.

15 MS. BARNES: I don't know if you remember but I
16 --

17 SUPT. WARREN: I do. I do.

18 MS. BARNES: -- I was probably one of the first
19 ADE people to set foot on the grounds when the
20 charter first started. So I certainly want to state
21 that I understand the trials and I also am pleased to
22 see that the charter is still in operation. Because
23 I recognize it does serve a very special population
24 of students. I do get concerned sometimes because it
25 almost looks like, you know, only a certain group of

1 students get to come to the school. It's an open-
2 enrollment charter and I do understand that. And
3 it's commendable that the relationship with the
4 neighboring districts is a good one. So I know
5 you're looking at me, waiting, what's the question.
6 And, actually, I don't have a question. I simply
7 wanted to point out that I do have some concerns just
8 because I don't always know how well the recruitment,
9 the opportunities for others to attend the school
10 comes along. But I'm very familiar with the location
11 of the school; I'm very familiar with the area of the
12 state. And so I'm simply saying that this -- I do
13 appreciate the handout. Oftentimes, as stated, we do
14 look simply at whether or not a student is achieving
15 or advanced or not, and we don't always stop to take
16 time to look at areas of growth and where students
17 are. So, again, I don't have a question at this
18 time. The questions I had I believe have been
19 answered. I was going to ask about the Title 1
20 application; I do know that it has been submitted.
21 And so I just want to let you know that I appreciate
22 the struggle, but I also appreciate the small
23 successes and the large ones. I would encourage you
24 to make sure that you don't get comfortable because
25 there are many children who may also be able to

1 benefit from the services at the school.

2 SUPT. WARREN: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning, Ms. Warren.

5 SUPT. WARREN: Good morning.

6 DR. GOTCHER: I truly appreciate the fact that
7 you shared a great student success story. That's
8 something that's always impressive to me and I look
9 forward to hearing great stories, and certainly that
10 was a compelling story and it really touched it. I
11 appreciate that. I have a couple of points, if I can
12 make, and I appreciate you also. I had on my prep
13 notes to ask about the segregation of duties, and I
14 certainly understand that that is a common reflection
15 from legislative audits and other entities about the
16 segregation of duties. So I bring in your advisory
17 board on our -- the statement says that they oversee
18 the school's finances. So how would they oversee
19 them? How -- what form of communication do you have
20 with the board in overseeing the finances? How do
21 you report to them? How often? And then I have a
22 second point to make.

23 SUPT. WARREN: Board members as individuals, we
24 have two members that actually sign checks, and so
25 they are in the office. All of the board members

1 have children who attend the school, and so they're
2 there every day either in, you know, their official
3 capacity as a board member or their other role as a
4 parent, of course. And the board as a whole sees
5 financial statements during our monthly board
6 meetings.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Board?

8 SUPT. WARREN: Uh-huh.

9 DR. GOTCHER: Very good. I just wanted to --

10 SUPT. WARREN: Okay.

11 DR. GOTCHER: -- ask a little more clarifying on
12 that. That's wonderful. And the second piece that
13 really struck my interest the other evening as I was
14 reviewing this is your parents as teachers program.
15 I wonder if someone could talk more about that. I
16 found that to be an interesting piece.

17 SUPT. WARREN: Well, we know that we make good
18 progress with student learning. We can see it
19 happening day by day, and sometimes not just reading
20 or math but in personal gains. And -- but those
21 scores, they're low; you know, they're low when they
22 come in and sometimes they stay that way for awhile.
23 And so we talked at great length -- you know -- we
24 have an active parent involvement program. Our
25 parents, they love the school, they love us. Every

1 day I get two or three "thank you so much, I'm so
2 glad you're here;" you know, "my kid did this today,"
3 and they're just so pleased about that. And I was
4 sitting at home one night and I thought, you know,
5 those people are intelligent. If we just showed them
6 what to do and explained to them how do you read with
7 your child -- because if you send a book home with a
8 child and you say, "Here, you know, read this with
9 your child," well, there are multiple ways that that
10 can occur. And I've listened to parents throughout
11 the years saying, "Well, I read a page and they read
12 a page." "Oh, what did you do when they come to a
13 word that they didn't know?" "I told them what it
14 was." Well, that's probably not the best way to
15 instruct them. And so if we sit down with the
16 parents and explain exactly how to do that, we model
17 it for them, we teach them, we provide materials that
18 they can take home and work with their own child on
19 their child's level. So we have these things in
20 place for every child in the school, even our gifted
21 students.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Is that an ongoing time that you
23 meet with them or is it something that you do at the
24 beginning of the year, maybe before a parent/teacher
25 conference, et cetera? What would -- when does that

1 occur?

2 SUPT. WARREN: The new parents, we invite them
3 in at -- usually, we have a meeting near the
4 beginning of the school year and so we invite them in
5 at that time. But when the parents are working with
6 the teachers usually -- I mean, it can be a small
7 group of them, one or two of them; it could be a
8 larger group. But they're instructing them on what
9 their particular child needs. And they go home and
10 they practice it. As soon as they're done with it,
11 they come back, "We finished this, we've got these
12 all checked off," and they're very excited about
13 doing that because they want their children to
14 achieve.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Very good. Thank you.

16 SUPT. WARREN: Uh-huh.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. I had a question for
19 Legal, I think. Is this entity -- they are eligible
20 for the 10-year as applied for. Is that correct?

21 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And at any -- in any case
23 like that, for 10 years, if throughout the course of
24 those 10 years if performance or the situation was to
25 change is there a mechanism in place to come back

1 before the committee?

2 MS. DAVIS: Sure. If you have concerns, you can
3 call them back in front of the committee to address
4 whether it's, you know, academic concerns, fiscal
5 concerns, or whatever your concerns may be.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I do want to commend you
7 all on -- I think you have a challenging population
8 and I'm really encouraged to hear -- what I continued
9 to hear was the personalization and the relationship
10 building and how important that is.

11 SUPT. WARREN: Yes.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: And I know you have a high
13 concentration of students with difficulty and I just
14 want to encourage you to keep working with them. I
15 encourage you on that. So I'd just --

16 SUPT. WARREN: Thank you.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: -- like to make a motion at the
18 proper time.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

20 MR. ROGERS: I have a couple of questions.
21 First of all, on your funding you said you had
22 \$100,000 right now.

23 SUPT. WARREN: Yes.

24 MR. ROGERS: But is that all funds?

25 SUPT. WARREN: No. That was the operating --

1 that was the legal balance. I'm sorry.

2 MR. ROGERS: You're sure?

3 SUPT. WARREN: Yes.

4 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

5 SUPT. WARREN: Yes, I'm sure.

6 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

7 SUPT. WARREN: In fact, I pulled it up. I
8 actually may even have a copy of it.

9 MR. ROGERS: Because --

10 SUPT. WARREN: I pulled it up from the ADE
11 website and it's --

12 MR. ROGERS: Because what I'm looking at right
13 now shows that for the past three years you had a
14 declining fund balance. In 2013, you were at
15 \$108,000; then it's \$71,000, to \$68,000, and so that
16 your budget is going to finish at \$35,000. And then
17 that was when you had an ADM of 60 and now you're
18 saying that you only have 44, so I'm kind of
19 concerned about the declining fund balance.

20 Then the other concern that I have was what Dr.
21 Gotcher had talked about on the segregation of
22 duties. In the application there it said that you
23 have one person that did the writing of checks,
24 receiving checks, and so -- but then when you spoke
25 earlier you said that there was some separation. So

1 I kind of wanted to touch on that a little bit. You
2 know, you can do all of them at once or just --

3 SUPT. WARREN: Probably not, if I can just
4 answer one at a time.

5 MR. ROGERS: Sure.

6 SUPT. WARREN: The first one about the fund
7 balance, first of all, it says, you know, we're
8 expected to have \$35,000 at the end of the year.
9 While that's not a bad sum, it's a low sum. And we
10 started with zero though at year-one and, you know,
11 at the end we continually built up funds. It's
12 something that I always am concerned about, of
13 course. If you don't have the enrollment, you're not
14 going to have the funds coming in. I know that. But
15 in my 14 years at Imboden it has shown each year we
16 may have a year of low enrollment, the next year
17 we'll be very high, the next year we'll be very low,
18 and it just continues like that. And it seems that
19 either one year we get growth funding and then the
20 next year we get declining enrollment funding, and so
21 that is how it has proceeded. And as far as
22 finishing the year with that amount, that's what I've
23 budgeted -- you know, based on what I budgeted. But
24 we always budget more than we're planning to spend,
25 so --

1 MR. ROGERS: Right. But my concern is that the
2 actual legal fund balance, not including your
3 building or categoricals, has been dropping over the
4 past three years.

5 SUPT. WARREN: That's correct.

6 MR. ROGERS: And if you are a public school, I'd
7 probably be talking to you about early intervention
8 and so that's why I'm concerned about it.

9 SUPT. WARREN: Well, I mean, I can assure you it
10 has nothing to do with mismanaging the funds or --

11 MR. ROGERS: I'm not trying to say -- it's just
12 --

13 SUPT. WARREN: -- spending them. But it's --
14 you know -- it has to do with the enrollment. I
15 mean, it's directly related to that.

16 MR. ROGERS: Right.

17 SUPT. WARREN: And so, you know, I understand.
18 If we don't have the students, we don't continue.
19 So, I mean, I'm fully aware of that and I do
20 understand your concern and I am concerned about that
21 as well.

22 MR. ROGERS: The other concerns I have, after I
23 started with that then I did pull up a bank
24 reconciliation and there's one check that y'all had
25 outstanding for over two years, and then two more

1 that are almost two years.

2 SUPT. WARREN: Uh-huh.

3 MR. ROGERS: And so they're not a whole lot but
4 any time I see that, have that kind of -- I just
5 wonder is there -- are you trying to find out why or
6 are you -- I mean, I understand that the amounts, you
7 probably don't want to stop payment on them. But
8 those are still going to be something that's always
9 going to be hanging out there.

10 And then the other concern that I have was on
11 EDD payments. I get a notification of all the school
12 districts and charter schools when we have -- when
13 they have turned it in late, and that's another \$100
14 penalty every time you turn it in late. And from
15 what I understand, this past month it was late and I
16 was just wondering how many -- do you know how many
17 times it has been late? And is this just a one-time
18 occurrence?

19 SUPT. WARREN: It has been late twice this year,
20 but in no other year has it ever been late. And the
21 reason for it being late was that -- it's the reason
22 that I no longer have the administrative assistant
23 that I had. So that problem hopefully will have been
24 taken care of.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions?

1 MS. BARNES: I'm sorry, I was going to say -- I
2 have a question but it's probably one for later and
3 it was based on something Mr. Rogers just said. I
4 was just wondering what role we take with the fact
5 that -- they are an open-enrollment, so they are a
6 public school. And do we need to be looking at
7 providing some kind of assistance with early
8 intervention? That was my question. I didn't know
9 if that was something that we needed to be talking
10 about right here, right now though.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, Ms. Warren, do you
12 want to address the declining enrollment? Is there
13 -- are you taking steps to get the enrollment back up
14 so that you do have the financial means to sustain?

15 SUPT. WARREN: Yes. We have tried many
16 different ways to recruit students in the past.
17 We've tried ads in the newspapers, posters at
18 different locations, things like that. We've tried
19 television, which is very good but not very cost-
20 effective; it's very expensive. We used radio this
21 year, which we have not used, and I've received more
22 calls about that than we have from some of the other
23 things we've used. The other successful thing we've
24 used is a postcard mail-out to all the area
25 communities. And I have had those come back folded

1 and the people say, "We've kept these for two years.
2 My child was too young and now they're old enough."
3 And so those are the things that we have done this
4 year to attempt to improve our enrollment.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

6 MS. LIWO: Let me ask, because enrollment -- you
7 said that your enrollment impacts your funding.

8 SUPT. WARREN: It does.

9 MS. LIWO: And we've just talked about
10 recruiting students. In your application, I noticed
11 that you gave reasons that parents provided to you
12 for pulling their students out of your school.

13 SUPT. WARREN: Yes.

14 MS. LIWO: I have 10.81% indicating that they
15 were not satisfied. Could you flesh that out for me
16 and tell me what you've done to address their issues
17 there?

18 SUPT. WARREN: Well, unfortunately, there's not
19 a lot I can do about most of those issues. If
20 someone says they -- you know -- they don't like the
21 teacher, I try to get specific about, you know, what
22 it is and what can we do better, what can we do to
23 help the next person. But if there's something like
24 -- like I recall last year, we don't allow the
25 students to wear hats inside the classroom. Well,

1 she got mad because we wouldn't let her child wear a
2 hat in the classroom, so she said, "I'm taking him
3 out." Another one said, "Y'all don't have good meals
4 here. We want hot meals for our kids," and they took
5 their kids out. So it's reasons like that that I
6 can't change.

7 MS. LIWO: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Warren, I'll take the
9 liberty of sharing with everyone that Ms. Boyd and I
10 had an excellent visit at your school. We came
11 unannounced purposefully so that we could just walk
12 in and see what daily life was like, and it was a
13 great story; it's a great story to tell. I think
14 your point that the local school districts are very
15 proud of the work that they do and the patrons are
16 very proud of their public schools is really a
17 testament to a parents' decision to bring their child
18 to your school. But I think they certainly are being
19 served. I saw really great instruction; I saw kids
20 engaged; I heard proficient readers; and when I
21 walked into Mr. Wells' class I saw that he was
22 teaching word study, so I was excited immediately.
23 It's very rare that I see that in middle school but
24 it's certainly something that I know will improve the
25 learning when it's applied properly. So I really saw

1 excellent work going on there, so I just wanted to
2 commend you for that work.

3 SUPT. WARREN: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

5 MS. PFEFFER: And my question kind of goes back
6 -- I guess it's more of a discussion with Mr. Rogers
7 on the financial issues. Are there some steps that
8 would make you more comfortable with moving forward
9 with the decision on this charter? Are there some
10 recommendations that you would have that maybe we
11 could include in terms of a recommendation that might
12 be --

13 MR. ROGERS: I don't know if there's anything
14 that -- when I see the drop in the ADM and the drop
15 in the fund balance as much as I've seen, I don't
16 know if there's anything really that is going to make
17 me feel comfortable. Because like she said, it is --
18 if the kids aren't there, then -- I don't know.
19 That's just --

20 MS. PFEFFER: So you don't feel it's an issue in
21 need of technical assistance; you just think it's
22 more of a --

23 MR. ROGERS: Well, it may be something. I
24 haven't gone into their budget that much to know how
25 much -- what everything is and how things are going.

1 I just -- when I look at their ADM, you know, they
2 were at -- I think they were at right around 60, 59,
3 and now we've had a drop to 44. In such a small
4 school district, any time it has that much of a drop
5 it's going to be significant to anybody in that small
6 of a school district. And so then also looking back,
7 since, you know -- this is from 2013 that they've
8 lost \$70,000 just in fund balance, so that's just a
9 concern of mine. I don't have their --

10 SUPT. WARREN: I mean, if it makes the Panel
11 more comfortable, we could send a yearly report about
12 our fund balance and about our enrollment. But, you
13 know, the issues are, you know, the recruitment, of
14 course, but also the fact that our population is
15 highly mobile and so some of that is very hard to
16 control. But we do have new business going in in
17 Pocahontas and that's supposed to add -- how many
18 hundred, five?

19 MR. McCLOUD: I want to say about 800.

20 SUPT. WARREN: 800 new people to the area. And
21 so we have already been proactive with that going to
22 the recruiting offices and handing out brochures
23 about our school for students of parents that come to
24 work at that plant. But it is an economically
25 depressed area. There isn't much of an economic base

1 there and so lots of people do move. You know, it is
2 difficult even for the other regular public schools
3 to maintain the students that they have.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions,
5 comments?

6 MR. ROGERS: Is that something that we could do
7 where she's talked about a yearly report and having
8 -- just that way, we can see how the ADM and the --
9 for however long, if we do -- if there is a motion to
10 renew it, and however long it was, is there -- could
11 that be part of it that they would come?

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Are you comfortable with
13 that, Ms. Warren?

14 MS. WARREN: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then I will accept a
16 motion.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I'd move to approve the
18 renewal for 10 years based upon the condition of the
19 annual financial status report, which to include
20 enrollment, as well as their legal balance, end-of-
21 year legal balance, minus the categorical and federal
22 funds. Is that what you were looking for?

23 MR. ROGERS: Yes.

24 DR. SAUNDER: Okay.

25 MS. PFEFFER: Second.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A motion has been made by
2 Dr. Saunders and seconded by Ms. Pfeffer for a 10-
3 year renewal with an annual report of enrollment and
4 legal balance minus categorical and federal funding.
5 Discussion?

6 MR. ROGERS: Okay. If we do this 10 years, and
7 then they come in not -- just -- I'm trying -- before
8 I say what I want to say -- if it's continuing to --
9 their ADM is continuing to drop and the -- because
10 \$36,000 is a scary ending fund balance for any school
11 district with any -- especially with one that is
12 losing its ADM. So if we do it for 10 years but next
13 year it comes in and they're down to 30 kids and that
14 fund balance is down to less than that, in worse case
15 scenario -- and, once again, I'm not wishing that at
16 all -- but if it does, what can we do then if we've
17 renewed it for 10 years?

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So as Ms. Davis said, we
19 can call them back at any time. We can provide
20 support, technical assistance to them through our
21 charter office and then call them back. Is that
22 correct, Ms. Davis?

23 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: At any time. Dr. Gotcher.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. And while I'm in full

1 support of moving forward with this, I'm not
2 comfortable with 10 years. I feel like there's so
3 many moving parts in such a unique school, and so I'm
4 thinking that maybe fewer years, while, again, I'm in
5 full support of moving forward with a renewal.

6 MS. SMITH: Just a comment about that too. I
7 mean, I do have some concerns too. I have concerns
8 with Title 1 application being late; I have concerns
9 with missed payments; I have concerns with declining
10 funds; I have just concerns with an F on the report
11 card, and I realize that's not a reflection of
12 everything. But if -- and I realize we have a
13 transient population and I realize we have a low-
14 income population, but we still expect those students
15 to succeed too. And I myself have worked in poverty
16 schools and those are still kids that we want to see
17 be proficient. I did hear lots of great things that
18 you were doing and students that you were serving,
19 and so I do want to recognize that. Ms. Coffman's
20 comments about what she saw when she came to your
21 school on a visit and the actual strategies, the word
22 study shows that there was high quality instruction
23 going on. So that gives me some pause to go, okay,
24 well, maybe I'm not seeing the whole picture here.
25 But I would be more comfortable with less than 10,

1 maybe a 5-year.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I have a motion on
3 the table and a second. So we'll take a vote on
4 that. Our motion is for 10 years with the annual
5 financial report. Ms. Liwo.

6 MS. LIWO: No.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. -- Mr. Lester.

8 MR. LESTER: No.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

10 MR. ROGERS: No.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

14 MS. BARNES: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

16 MS. PFEFFER: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

18 MS. SMITH: No.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

20 DR. GOTCHER: No.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. That motion
22 fails. Is there a second motion?

23 DR. GOTCHER: Since Ms. Warren made part of
24 record the agreement regarding the enrollment and
25 financial report, I won't enter that in my motion

1 since I believe, Ms. Jennifer, that makes it part of
2 the --

3 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Therefore, I'll make a
5 motion to renew the Imboden Area Charter School for
6 five years.

7 MS. BARNES: Second.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A motion has been made by
9 Dr. Gotcher and seconded by Ms. Barnes for a 5-year
10 renewal with the same annual --

11 MS. DAVIS: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- measures.

13 MS. DAVIS: Make sure just the motion --

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

15 MS. DAVIS: -- has with the annual reporting.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And we'll go
17 through another count. Is there any discussion on
18 the second motion?

19 All right. Then --

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Can I --

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Can I clarify? Did that include
23 the financial?

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I just wondered.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. The same enrollment,
2 legal balance, minus categorical and federal funding.

3 DR. GOTCHER: That's my intention, yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Liwo.

5 MS. LIWO: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

7 MR. LESTER: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

9 MR. ROGERS: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

13 MS. BARNES: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

15 MS. PFEFFER: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

17 MS. SMITH: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

19 DR. GOTCHER: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You are approved for five
21 years.

22 SUPT. WARREN: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, will we need to
24 create two sheets?

25 MS. DAVIS: No, I don't think so. No.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. So on our form we
2 will -- they will vote as they voted in the second
3 motion and give their reasons. Okay. Ms. Warren, if
4 you'll wait just a moment we'll have an explanation.

5 [A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE]

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

7 MS. BARNES: I voted -- I'm sorry. I voted in
8 favor of the renewal for five years because I believe
9 the charter has longevity. And while achievement is
10 incremental, growth with respect to multiple measures
11 is encouraging. Additionally, the charter is not
12 designated in any persistently low achieving
13 categories. The annual financial reporting review
14 will be helpful in assisting with precautions.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

16 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the motion to approve;
17 very impressed with the mission and core values that
18 this school represents. I commend them for their
19 student centered approach to student learning. I'm
20 further impressed with the parents as teachers
21 support. I think that's a powerful piece, Ms.
22 Warren. I commend you for that. I urge them to seek
23 out technical assistance as needed to insure fiscal
24 and other accountability measures.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

1 MR. LESTER: I voted for. I believe the Imboden
2 Charter School has shown a history of being able to
3 operate with the current population. I do still
4 believe that the enrollment and fund balance will
5 need to be monitored.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

7 MS. LIWO: I voted for. I think your school is
8 not only catering to your students academically,
9 given the population that you have to deal with, but
10 also just on an individual level as people. And I
11 really respect that; I admire that. I think you're
12 doing great work and just continue.

13 SUPT. WARREN: We will.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

15 MS. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion.
16 This is a charter with a long history of service.
17 This charter serves a high population of
18 disadvantaged students and provided evidence of
19 student achievement over time. The charter is not
20 under any academic or fiscal distress designations.
21 But while there are financial concerns due to the
22 declining enrollment, the motion provides for ongoing
23 updates as to the status of enrollment and fund
24 balances and the ongoing operations can be addressed
25 in a timely manner if the need arises.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

2 MR. ROGERS: I voted for it. Ivy said it better
3 than I did. But just because I have concerns over
4 the declining fund balance and declining ADM, but I
5 do know that this charter school provides service to
6 a very needy population. And as long as we have the
7 yearly review I'm comfortable with them to keep
8 going.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor. I believe the
11 school has shown a history of serving a diverse and
12 challenging student population.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

14 MS. SMITH: I'm comfortable with the 5-year
15 renewal and yearly financial reports with support
16 from ADE regarding balance and students served. The
17 charter aims to serve disadvantaged students and it's
18 commended for their commitment to this work.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Ms.
20 Warren. I would like to say publicly that we
21 appreciate that your charter school opens its doors
22 to all students. Thank you so much for doing that.

23 SUPT. WARREN: Thank you very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Transportation is a real
25 bonus for the community. Thank you so much.

1 SUPT. WARREN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If it pleases the Panel,
3 would you like to take lunch now?

4 DR. GOTCHER: It always pleases the Panel to
5 take lunch.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It pleases the Panel to
7 have lunch. We will resume at 10 minutes after 12:00
8 with action item 3. Thank you.

9 (LUNCH BREAK: 11:30 A.M. - 12:14 P.M.)

10 A-3: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL
11 AND PRIORITY STATUS HEARING: COVENANT KEEPERS COLLEGE
12 PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll bring the meeting
14 back to order. Action item 3. Ms. Boyd, you're
15 recognized.

16 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Request for
17 Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Renewal and
18 Priority Status Hearing for Covenant Keepers College
19 Preparatory Charter School.

20 The State Board of Education approved the
21 application for Covenant Keepers College Preparatory
22 Charter School on January 15, 2008. The charter is
23 approved to serve students in grades 6-8 with a
24 maximum enrollment of 380. Representatives of
25 Covenant Keepers are appearing before the Charter

1 Authorizing Panel to request a 10-year renewal for
2 the charter. Also, the Charter Authorizing Panel has
3 required representatives of Covenant Keepers College
4 Preparatory Charter School to appear for a hearing
5 pursuant to Arkansas code annotated 6-23-105, to
6 discuss academic performance. Representatives of the
7 charter agreed to combine the two hearings and
8 approved combining the hearing procedures to be
9 followed. Possible actions to be taken by the
10 Charter Authorizing Panel include renewal of the
11 charter based on its renewal application, but due to
12 its Priority status possible actions include
13 modification, probation, revocation, and/or
14 nonrenewal of the charter.

15 With all of that being said, I'm going to ask
16 Jennifer Davis to come talk to you about the
17 procedures that we'll follow for this hearing.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

19 MS. DAVIS: Okay. The procedures that you're
20 going to be following for the next two hearings are
21 going to be -- they should be in your packet; it's
22 the combined procedures. For the most part it's
23 fairly the same as what you're used to, but at the
24 beginning -- like I say, everybody except for
25 attorneys will still need to continue to be sworn in.

1 But the Department has 20 minutes to present a
2 presentation regarding the school. It's, you know,
3 much more of a very factual what's-been-done, what,
4 you know, assistance the Department has been giving
5 the school. After that, the charter itself will have
6 20 minutes to make its presentation, followed by 20
7 minutes for opposition, and another 5 for rebuttal.
8 So it's for the most part the same. It's just the
9 Department has 20 minutes as well to make a
10 presentation.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And, Ms. Davis, is the ADE
12 staff sworn in as well?

13 MS. DAVIS: Yeah, they do.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. If all
15 representatives of Covenant Keepers College
16 Preparatory Charter School and anyone speaking in
17 opposition would please stand to receive the oath,
18 including ADE staff. Raise your right hand. Do you
19 swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to
20 give shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing
21 but the truth?

22 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Boyd.

24 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Wilde
25 and I will be sharing the 20 minutes for ADE staff.

1 I'm going to give you a brief background of Covenant
2 Keepers. Covenant Keepers was first authorized by
3 the State Board of Education to operate in January of
4 2008, to serve grades 6-12. In April 2013, the
5 charter received a 3-year renewal. During the
6 renewal process, the location of the charter was
7 changed and grade levels reduced from 6-12 to 6-8.
8 The school has a history of academic distress, being
9 designated both in 2013 and 2014 as an academic
10 distress school. More recently, the school has been
11 classified as a Priority school. The contract is
12 scheduled to expire on June 30, 2016. In my visit to
13 the campus and conversations with school leadership,
14 I have noticed that the school has recently come
15 under the leadership of a new principal, Mr. Leonard
16 Blocker. Under the direction of Mr. Blocker, the
17 school seems to be building a stronger sense of
18 community between the staff and students. I'll defer
19 the rest of my time to Dr. Wilde.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Wilde, you're
21 recognized.

22 DR. WILDE: Richard Wilde, School Improvement
23 Unit. For the last three years, we have been
24 providing technical assistance and support to
25 Covenant Keepers, as we were asked to submit a report

1 in relationship to progress that had been made. As
2 you can see on the second page that Covenant Keepers
3 has, in terms of their planning, assessed 14
4 indicators and that they have filed with us 51 tasks
5 that they are in the process of completing, and so
6 they have embraced the process. Now part of their
7 challenge has been turnover in staff, changing
8 student population, so there has been a number of
9 issues. However, we would say initially there was
10 some resistance in collaboration. In the last two
11 years we would say that they are very engaged in the
12 process with us. That concludes any comments I would
13 have.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Wilde. Ms.
15 Boyd, would you like to recognized the school
16 district?

17 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am. From Covenant Keepers,
18 we'll be starting off the presentation with Dr.
19 Valerie Tatum, the school director.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Ms. -- good
21 afternoon, Ms. Tatum.

22 DR. TATUM: Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. So
23 glad to be here. As you know, my voice goes in and
24 out, so I'm going to notice an out-day. Okay? So
25 pardon all the raspy voice and all of that. How we

1 will proceed, I'll start it out and then my wonderful
2 team, they will come and talk about the changes that
3 have made a difference.

4 So with that being said, who we are: eight years
5 operating in southwest Little Rock, designed to serve
6 a high-needs population, 96% free and reduced lunch,
7 55% African American, 45% Hispanic, and 31% ELL.

8 As you know, we have turned all of this 72% into
9 opportunities, so -- and they come from four
10 different areas: new to the U.S., 7%; ALE's, 4%; and
11 61% of our students come from Priority schools and
12 Focus schools. So I'll turn it over to Principal
13 Blocker.

14 MR. BLOCKER: Thank you, Dr. Tatum. Good
15 afternoon. As mentioned, I'm the principal at
16 Covenant Keepers Charter School and as the principal
17 I lead initiatives and programs that lead to the
18 overall support of climate and culture in the school.
19 These initiatives include, but aren't limited to,
20 leadership development, effectively establishing and
21 nurturing relationships. Also, I work very closely
22 with the dean of students to monitor, analyze and to
23 respond to the discipline data.

24 A change that has made a difference in our
25 culture and our discipline data is the implementation

1 of our one-to-one interventions. This is where if we
2 recognize a disconnect between a student and a
3 teacher, I facilitate a meeting that fosters an
4 environment for open communication for both parties
5 to discuss expectations. And the implementation of
6 the one-to-one interventions has led to a 98% success
7 rate, meaning after the intervention follow-up takes
8 place with the teacher, asking the teacher how is the
9 relationship with the student since the intervention,
10 do you feel it was beneficial, do you feel another
11 intervention is necessary. And the teachers respond
12 98% of the time stating that no further intervention
13 is necessary.

14 Overwhelming support and training for our
15 faculty has had a positive impact on our culture and
16 school-wide demerit system. When I took on the role
17 as principal, the dean of students and I sat down to
18 review behavior documentations and we noticed that a
19 lot of our students were spending quite a bit of time
20 out of the class. Therefore, we implemented a new
21 demerit system which allows for more student
22 reflection before consequences are dispensed. In the
23 2015-2016 school year, the current school year, we
24 noticed that the demerit system has impacted our
25 school in such a way that 60% of our returning

1 students have experienced a decrease in referrals.
2 The students that have reoccurring issues that
3 continue to display disruptive behavior are referred
4 to more in-depth wraparound services that Ms.
5 Rosalind Washington will speak to later. The demerit
6 system wouldn't be as effective if it had not been
7 for our interaction with our parents through constant
8 communication and home visits. In fact, as you see,
9 our parents are very satisfied; 90% say that CK
10 (Covenant Keepers) has had a positive effect on their
11 child's behavior and 97% have committed to return for
12 the 2016-2017 school year.

13 Now I'll pass it on to Ms. Laurette Whipps and
14 Ms. Jenna Jones and they'll talk about the changes
15 that have made a difference in the academics.

16 MS. WHIPPS: Good afternoon. My name is
17 Laurette Whipps and I am the lead teacher at Covenant
18 Keepers Charter School. I work closely with the
19 administrative team to insure both our teachers and
20 students are getting what they need in our
21 environment.

22 MS. JONES: And I'm Jenna Jones; I'm the data
23 coordinator at Covenant Keepers and I analyze
24 assessment data to assist teachers in planning and
25 instruction.

1 When we received our PARCC scores we knew that
2 that data was not a complete picture of our students'
3 progress. If you can look at page one in the handout
4 that you received from us, we received a report from
5 NWEA's research team comparing our Fall 2014 to
6 Spring 2015 growth data with other schools with
7 similar demographics nationally. When we looked at
8 observed versus expected percentages of students
9 within each achievement band typically there are 10%
10 of students on each of these levels at the beginning
11 of the year. However, on page 1 this chart shows
12 that 27% of our students are starting off the year at
13 the very bottom decile of students nationwide. If
14 you turn to page 2, when we look at our students in
15 the spring averaging growth in all subjects together
16 -- and that's reading, math and language -- and
17 compared with schools of similar demographics
18 nationally, we see that we're making more than
19 typical growth with nearly all groups of our
20 students, regardless of their observed percentage at
21 the beginning of the year. This proves that the
22 changes we have made are making an impact on student
23 growth.

24 Now Ms. Whipps will discuss the changes we have
25 made academically, especially as we are transitioning

1 to PARCC, from PARCC to the ACT Aspire.

2 MS. WHIPPS: To address the performance report
3 as it relates to achievement, we have set very high
4 expectations for our students' academics. We spent
5 time developing our teachers to both manage our
6 population as well as pinpoint the needs of each
7 individual student. We've aligned our curriculum to
8 a nationally recognized research based curriculum to
9 meet the rigor of Common Core and to supply our
10 teachers with the tools needed to effectively execute
11 high quality lessons. We have both developed and
12 implemented innovative teaching techniques such as
13 using a research based lesson planning schema by Jane
14 Pollock -- we call this GANAG -- and this uses
15 Marzano's nine high-yield strategies. We use
16 interactive notebooks for student reflection and
17 student work, pre- and post-assessments, and Show-
18 What-You-Know's are something we use daily as well.
19 These help the teachers identify learning gaps or if
20 and when a student has mastered a particular skill in
21 math or literacy. We are dedicated to student
22 achievement and have scheduled our school days to
23 that end. Both math and literacy have 80-minute
24 periods blocked daily. Since our curriculum lessons
25 are around 45 minutes, this means that teachers are

1 able to intervene in real time through
2 differentiation, extra support and individualized
3 instruction. Also, we have a plus-time period daily
4 that offers intensive individualized or personalized
5 interventions. We're taking students where they are
6 and we're devoting this time to build on what they
7 actually need.

8 Professional learning communities have been
9 assigned to give teachers an opportunity to
10 collaborate about student interventions based on our
11 classroom -- excuse me -- classroom assessment data.
12 To insure Covenant Keepers' faculty is getting the
13 support that they need, we are aggressively working
14 to resolve any classroom issues they may incur. We
15 have enforced a support cycle that gives our faculty
16 an advisor that will support them weekly in various
17 areas, such as classroom management, discipline,
18 eSchool, lesson planning, which includes GANAG data,
19 ELL, and technology. Through the support cycle we're
20 able to help provide the necessary professional
21 development for our teachers.

22 Ms. Jones will discuss how these academic
23 changes make a difference for our students.

24 MS. JONES: First, I think it's important to
25 address where our students are upon entering Covenant

1 Keepers. According to the first NWEA test our
2 students take upon entering Covenant Keepers, 90% of
3 our students enter below grade level, with 20% of our
4 students entering three grade levels behind. 78% of
5 our students enter below grade level in reading, with
6 18% of our students entering four grade levels
7 behind.

8 We've been able to make significant growth with
9 our students, especially comparing the 2013-14 school
10 year with the 2014-15 school year. In the spring of
11 2014, our students made -- 41.63% of our students
12 made growth in reading, meeting their growth goals.
13 And in 2015, 67.3% of our students met their growth
14 goal, when typically nationwide having 50% of the
15 students meet their growth goal is typical. In math,
16 in 2014, 38.4% of our students met their growth goal,
17 while last year 58.9% of our students met their
18 growth goal in math. And in language, two years ago
19 48.33% of our students met their growth goal, but
20 last year 74.7% of our students met their growth goal
21 in language.

22 I'd now like to introduce Dr. Sarah McKenzie.
23 She's with the Office of Educational Policy and she
24 has taken a more in-depth look at our NWEA data.

25 DR. MCKENZIE: Thank you. I'm here to talk a

1 little bit about measuring growth with MAP data. You
2 all know this is different than proficiency and it is
3 not a replacement for proficiency, but it's a step on
4 the way, progress to proficiency on our state
5 assessments. So each student has an individualized
6 growth assessment and we base this on fall to spring
7 assessments. So you can meet your growth target but
8 still be well below grade level. If you're coming in
9 four grade levels behind, you can meet or even exceed
10 your growth target and still not be to grade level.

11 Catch-up growth is one thing I like to talk
12 about. It's when you've made a 150% of your academic
13 growth for the year, so basically making one-and-a-
14 half years worth of growth in one year. And that's
15 the kind of growth we need to see from students if we
16 want to get them caught up to proficiency when
17 they're starting so far behind.

18 So the first question I examined was what
19 percentage of students are meeting annual MAP growth.
20 The students, like I said, were assessed in the fall
21 and the spring. And as Jenna mentioned, at a typical
22 school 50% of students meet or exceed their growth
23 target. This is for the past four years. In 2012-
24 13, we didn't get spring testing taken care of
25 appropriately, so I don't have growth data from that

1 year. But you can see the trend over time. It's
2 gone from 25% meeting in reading to 68% of students
3 meeting their goals in reading.

4 Like all of you, I'm concerned about growth for
5 all students but I'm particularly concerned about
6 growth for our students that are so far behind. So
7 for this analysis I looked at what percentage of low-
8 performing students are meeting their annual MAP
9 growth. To meet the expectation of being a low
10 performing student, they had to be in the bottom
11 third of students nationally, so well, well below
12 grade level. That's about 60% to 70% of Covenant
13 Keepers' students. Sometimes we think these kids are
14 easier to make growth with because they're so far
15 behind; that's actually not the case. It doesn't
16 matter whether you're a low performing student or a
17 high performing student. On NWEA MAP everybody has
18 the same probability of meeting their growth targets
19 because the growth targets are individualized.
20 Again, in a typical school that will be 50% of
21 students that meet or exceed their growth target.
22 And you can see at Covenant Keepers, in 2014-15, over
23 73% of those low performing kids met their growth
24 targets in reading and 64% met in math. And that's a
25 big change from prior years.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sarah, is that 100% of
2 their growth or 150%?

3 DR. McKENZIE: This is 100%. But thank you very
4 much for that lovely transition to the catch-up
5 growth. I didn't pay her for that.

6 So again we're looking at these low performing
7 students; we're looking at what percentage are making
8 catch-up growth, because if you're just making
9 regular growth you're just staying as far behind as
10 you were before. So this slide -- again, students
11 must be assessed in fall and spring. When we talk
12 about meeting typical growth we say 50% of kids at a
13 typical school. There is no typical for catch-up
14 growth. In my experience, 30% is exceptional. If
15 you're getting 30% of your kids to make year-and-a-
16 half growth, that's a lot. So you can see in 14-15
17 Covenant Keepers had 66% of those lowest performing
18 kids making at least one-and-a-half times annual
19 growth in reading and 54% in math.

20 Oh, I went the wrong way.

21 Okay. So when we're talking about one year
22 growth for the lowest students what does this look
23 like? That red box shows the kids -- oh, I've got to
24 go back one more. Oh, I missed a slide. Okay. The
25 wrong slide is in there. That's okay. This was

1 showing those students that were in that lowest
2 percentage for reading and for math. All those
3 little blue dots were in that square in the fall and
4 then by the spring lots of them had moved out. In
5 particular, you could look at a student, like Student
6 A, that had started very, very low performing and
7 then that blue line as it moves up till spring 2015,
8 they're well out of the danger range and catching up
9 to their peers.

10 So, in summary, MAP is a great tool for
11 measuring student growth, particularly at schools
12 like this where we have a lot of students coming in
13 well, well below grade level. We've seen a lot of
14 increases in the percentage of students who are
15 making growth at Covenant Keepers and a high focus on
16 data use. You know, they call me a lot to ask is
17 this what we should be pulling from this data, is
18 this what this means, what would you recommend that
19 we do, how do we set goals with students. A high
20 percentage of students are making more than one-and-
21 a-half years' growth in one year. Are they caught up
22 to proficient yet? No, not all of them are. But
23 they're well on their way. More students are below
24 grade level in math than in reading. We're
25 continuing to struggle in math. And as in all

1 schools, there are some students who are still not
2 making the kind of progress we would like for them to
3 make. But in my discussions I feel like they have
4 identified who those students are and are working on
5 different approaches to try to get growth for those
6 students too.

7 Okay. If you'll turn into your packet, just as
8 sort of a summary picture, on page 3, this is a part
9 of NWEA MAP's virtual comparison group which doesn't
10 compare Covenant Keepers to the rest of the nation
11 but to similar performing schools. There's a four
12 quadrant grid. You can see they're labeled high
13 growth/high achievement, low growth/high achievement,
14 and then the little square where Covenant Keepers has
15 a red dot right there, high growth and low
16 achievement. It's the same thing we've been talking
17 about, a lot of growth for kids. The red circle is
18 reading and the gray circle is math. So for math
19 they're still in that low achievement, fairly low
20 growth category, but for reading they've moved into
21 the low achievement, that high growth category.
22 Thank you.

23 MS. JONES: All right. I will address our
24 English learner population and any questioning.
25 Right now, I would like to introduce Ms. Rosalind

1 Washington and Dr. William Tollett and they're going
2 to talk about a change that makes a difference with
3 our wraparound services.

4 MS. WASHINGTON: Hello. My name is Rosalind
5 Washington; I am the resource coordinator for
6 Covenant Keepers. As it's been stated, our students
7 come with extreme disparities. We understand that
8 there are complexities that they face outside of the
9 classroom that makes it difficult for them to learn
10 inside of the classroom. We have worked to develop a
11 plan that will look at individualizing a component
12 for our students that will help not only our
13 students, but our families achieve those academic
14 successes, successfulness that they need to be inside
15 the classroom.

16 In 2015, October, we started to look at our
17 returning student was at 80% and our free and reduced
18 lunch was at 96%. We realized that our students
19 would have a situation as it deals with hunger, to
20 possibly needed shelter, moving from place to place
21 with their families. As we began to sit down with
22 different components, we began to look at the
23 wraparound process. What you see is the four phases
24 that include engaging the families. We believe that
25 when you begin to engage the family it helps to have

1 success in the classroom and the academic that we've
2 seen and the planning and the implementation as we
3 begin to transition students out. As we go on and
4 look at the wraparound model, there are four -- not
5 only the four phases, but 10 components that make the
6 model up. These 10 principles that we use is to look
7 at the family and individualize the family need based
8 upon the family's voice and looking at the student of
9 how we can help them as a team specific to build out
10 a plan that will accomplish their goals inside of the
11 classroom.

12 From that, we began to develop stakeholders
13 within our community, one of which we have here
14 today, Dr. Tollett. He will be coming and speaking
15 to you about his community involvement with Covenant
16 Keeper as we continue on to make success in the
17 wraparound model. He also at this particular time,
18 due to another engagement, will accept any questions
19 you may have as it relates to his partnership. Dr.
20 Tollett.

21 DR. TOLLETT: Thank you so much. It's good to
22 be with y'all today. I'm Dr. William Tollett; I'm
23 the director of Community Relations and Development
24 for the Salvation Army here in central Arkansas. We
25 serve four counties: Pulaski, Saline, White and

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Lonoke counties.

The Salvation Army under a letter of intent to Covenant Keepers and through a management agreement seeks to provide voluntarily social services to students and their families through our food pantry, clothing assistance, tutorial assistance, and housing and utility assistance. We seek to do this through a set of goals that we provide without discrimination to those who come to us. We seek to provide and to promote economic, health and social well-being for individuals, families and communities; to promote healthy development and readiness for children, especially those in low income families; to promote safety and well-being for children, youth and families; to support the underserved and the under-represented populations; and to upgrade the capacity of the Salvation Army to make a difference in the lives of families and in our community. And I do apologize. I have a 1:30 appointment that I was just not planning well enough for, so please accept my apology. If you have questions, I would be more than happy to try to answer those questions at this time.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Panel Members, are there any questions for Dr. Tollett?

(BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

1 DR. TOLLETT: Thank y'all so much.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Tatum, we
3 are to the end of our 20 minutes. Let me ask if
4 there is anyone in the audience to speak in
5 opposition?

6 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So you have 5 remaining
8 minutes.

9 DR. TATUM: Five remaining minutes? We'll have
10 Dr. Guerrero from -- the president of LULAC.

11 DR. GUERRERO: Good afternoon, Madam Chairman
12 and Members of the Committee. LULAC is a advocacy
13 organization for Latinos. We have 1,000 councils in
14 37 states. Currently, I'm serving as president of
15 our central Arkansas council and also as deputy state
16 director. And we're here in support of the petition
17 from the Covenant Keepers Charter School to ask you
18 to allow them to continue their outreach in serving
19 Latino students. I've paid visits to the school over
20 the years and I just recently, two weeks ago, spent
21 the better part of an afternoon meeting with them and
22 their staff, and I looked up data on our Arkansas
23 data center on the internet as well.

24 A couple of things -- it's amazing to me that
25 23% of their enrollment is English Language Learners

1 and they're doing as well as they are with their
2 students. I'm thinking specifically of the
3 previously referenced data from the NWEA assessments
4 where they're making a year-and-a-half academic
5 progress in one year. There's been a growth, general
6 growth in the Latino population in the general
7 population and in our school population. And one of
8 the things that encourages us to support this
9 application or renewal with you is that the
10 Department and the state keeps talking about choice
11 for families, and this is one of the very few places
12 we have found where a choice for Latino students in
13 charter schools -- where there has been such a
14 commitment, especially with academically stressed
15 Latinos and English Language Learners. They're doing
16 a very good job.

17 If I would do a quick quote inspection of
18 whether they're ESL program would meet the
19 requirements of adequate components, and I took a
20 look at it through those -- through that lens, I
21 found in visiting and looking at their program that
22 they have an ESL endorsed coordinator who
23 participates on their leadership team. Their
24 curriculum strategies, including shelter instruction,
25 is an acknowledged way to address these issues with

1 ELL students. They have a language placement
2 committee, a requirement by law. They do
3 supplemental assessment with their EL's, which is
4 important. They have professional development, peer
5 tutoring. Their community outreach is actually, I
6 think, given the requirements on Dr. Tatum to
7 administer the school, quite exceptional. They
8 participate in the southwest Little Rock Mayor's
9 group, which reaches our Latino community. They
10 participate in the business leaders' luncheon, the
11 Lifeline Church, and the Arkansas United Community
12 Coalition, which targets recent immigrant students.
13 And, of course, they do receive technical assistance
14 from the Arkansas Public School Resource Center, and
15 I had a nice conversation with Barbara Hunter Cox on
16 that.

17 I want to just finish up quickly by mentioning
18 that this wraparound program that they're doing to my
19 knowledge is not available to Latino families through
20 schools any place else in the central Arkansas area.
21 I could be wrong, but that's what I've been able to
22 discover. So I think that is a very important
23 service that they're offering. Also, in my
24 experience here at the Department it takes schools
25 and school districts years to develop the

1 infrastructure to adequately service English Language
2 Learners and Latino students in general, years,
3 schools with much larger resources, larger
4 enrollments, larger budgets. And Covenant Keepers is
5 making a very good effort and has made an effort to
6 improve where they started from to where they're at
7 today, and we certainly hope you will favorable
8 consider them. Thank you.

9 MR. HERNANDEZ: Hello everyone. My name is
10 Aviamiel Hernandez. I'm an 8th grade student at
11 Covenant Keepers Charter School. I'm here to tell
12 you guys that Covenant Keepers actually helped me to
13 grow so much throughout these three years of my
14 experience at Covenant Keepers. After -- before
15 coming here, I was a student that had nothing
16 compared to what I am now. I used to get in trouble
17 a lot, expelled once, and I had to find a tradition
18 -- a way to actually get my life back on track. I
19 was at a point where I was going to end all of it,
20 especially my life, because throughout my life I've
21 been through so much pain, trouble, and I really had
22 to find something to like support me, to help me out
23 in my life. And one day my mother actually told me,
24 "Hey, I found this school; it's called Covenant
25 Keepers." And then I thought to myself probably the

1 school is just a normal school, so I'm just going to
2 be in trouble again. Maybe the school is just going
3 to be a normal school that I might get in trouble.
4 But then when I came everything changed for me. The
5 community was different, the people in it was
6 different, the teachers were different; everything
7 was different. And what really surprised me was that
8 a guy, who was Mr. Blocker, actually supported me
9 throughout these three years of my life. And I'm
10 really thankful for Covenant Keepers because they
11 actually taught me so many things that I never knew
12 before. Life taught me things too, but not as much
13 as Covenant Keepers taught me. After these three
14 years, I changed my life around. I've been getting
15 better grades now. My behavior is extremely better
16 now and I'm actually -- I'm actually really thankful
17 for Covenant Keepers because my life was about to be
18 at a point where it was going to end if I never had
19 it. And to be honest with you, if I never had
20 Covenant Keepers I'd probably be in prison or
21 probably dead. That's how important Covenant Keepers
22 is to me and I'm really thankful for it. And thank
23 you guys for your time, to explain to you guys that
24 Covenant Keepers has saved my life. Thank you.

25 MR. PHILLIPS: Good afternoon. My name is

1 Anthony Phillips; I'm a father of a daughter, and my
2 daughter goes to Covenant Keepers. It's her second
3 year, actually. And my daughter -- I'll make it real
4 quick -- my daughter was flunking at least four of
5 her classes prior to coming to Covenant Keepers. She
6 was enrolled in Texas, and once I got her here they
7 automatically assigned her to another school and I
8 wasn't really happy with that choice. So I went
9 outside of the box, and outside of the box has had my
10 daughter on honor roll ever since she enrolled in the
11 school, A and B honor roll. Her -- I mean, her
12 change has been right before my eyes as a young lady.
13 She went in the school as a little girl and she's
14 just growing every day. The staff is so open-hearted
15 and open-minded and they scholastically challenge my
16 daughter -- and I mean challenge her on every level,
17 actually. And I was just -- it's a beautiful school
18 and the staff. It's a true blessing to the community
19 and I'm just really happy that I made that choice to
20 take her -- or to send her to Covenant Keepers. I do
21 not regret it. And I'll tell any student or any
22 parent to do so, as well. Thank you so much.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Tatum, our time is up.
24 Do you have any final words?

25 DR. TATUM: I wanted to quote what we have, but

1 we are ready to address any questions that you may
2 have.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right.

4 DR. TATUM: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer, we'll start
6 with you.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. How are you, Dr. Tatum?

8 DR. TATUM: I'm very well. How are you?

9 MS. PFEFFER: I'm doing well. Can you introduce
10 me to your student again?

11 DR. TATUM: His name is Aviamiel Hernandez.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. I just wanted to tell you
13 that I am very impressed with your coming here. I
14 mentioned earlier how nervous I get and you were so
15 articulate, and thank you for coming and sharing
16 that. Because I know it's difficult to speak in
17 front of an audience like this, and especially to
18 share things. If you don't mind, you talked about
19 one -- you know -- one aspect that really helped you
20 with going to school at Covenant Keepers was a
21 connection with an individual that really helped.
22 Can you tell us just, you know, some other things
23 that were so different at Covenant Keepers that you
24 don't feel like you were getting before? And then
25 I'd be interested in hearing about your plans for

1 your future.

2 MR. HERNANDEZ: Well, Covenant Keepers had a lot
3 of changes I never had before. For example, they
4 actually helped me realize what I've done back then.
5 My math grades are better now. A lot of schools
6 never had that before. Other schools just left me in
7 the dirt, "Just sit here and read this." That's all
8 they ever done to me back then. The big thing that I
9 really noticed these three years of school: the
10 support and help, because I never had that ever. I
11 never had any of that ever in my life and I'm really
12 thankful for that. My future now, it gives me a
13 chance to actually find out for myself because I
14 really don't know what's my future. My future is
15 really crazy, to be honest, because I never actually
16 thought of it and Covenant Keepers just actually
17 helped me realize what my future is. And I really
18 want to see what kind of future I have, if I ever
19 have one.

20 MS. PFEFFER: Well, I just want to tell you I
21 think you will have a very, very bright future and
22 wish you the best of luck.

23 MR. HERNANDEZ: Another thing, my teachers --
24 well, they actually help me in a lot of ways I can't
25 even explain. One way is that they actually connect

1 with me. They actually understand me. Other
2 teachers never done that. They actually ask me daily
3 if I need help with anything and I always say yes
4 because they know that I need help with everything I
5 do. They know I need help with basically my life.
6 But they actually support me all the way and I'm
7 really thankful for those teachers.

8 The students -- my real buddies, they actually
9 help me too. They actually give me advice. Every
10 time I feel down I just say, "Hey, what's up," and
11 tell them about my day, and they actually do give me
12 advice. Like last week I was feeling down about
13 something that happened on the weekend and they
14 actually helped me through it and actually gave me
15 advice. And at the end of the day like it felt like
16 nothing happened.

17 As you may have heard, the shooting that
18 happened a couple of weeks ago, that was my aunt and
19 that really hurt me. It really did. After it
20 happened, when I went back to school they knew I was
21 -- something happened to me and they actually asked
22 me, like, "Hey, Avi, what's up with you." Like,
23 "What happened to you," and this other thing. And I
24 responded back, I told them there was a shooting,
25 they killed my aunt, and the little girl saw

1 everything, and I really felt really down that day.
2 My teachers were actually concerned about me. And to
3 be honest, this school actually connects with me,
4 they actually understand me. And I never even had a
5 person to just talk to, never had that person before.
6 I'm really thankful.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Thank you. Thank you. Can I ask
8 a couple more?

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

10 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And so kind of going off of
11 some of those comments, it sounds like teachers are
12 -- and while we all know that the teachers are the
13 most influential aspect in school in terms of student
14 growth and achievement, I wonder if you could talk to
15 us a little bit about your teacher retention.
16 Because I know that's a challenge across the state
17 but it seems to be a particular challenge in Covenant
18 Keepers and with the percentage of new teachers and
19 even experienced teachers. So can you talk to us a
20 little bit about that and the impact that has?

21 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am, I can. Over the years
22 we've recognized that we've had a high turnover of
23 teachers. And in moving forward, over the last three
24 years it wasn't all because of our student
25 population. We've had teachers that have decided to

1 go on and take on other careers in business and may
2 have been family situations, as well. So it wasn't
3 always a turnover of our student population. But
4 what we've done is we have now -- we have a teacher
5 support cycle and that teacher support cycle really
6 helps us. Every two weeks there's a rotation of
7 teachers that we meet with to really get a personal
8 insight of what's going on maybe in the classroom,
9 their frustrations, even down to grades and how to
10 utilize eSchool. And it has been really great for
11 our leadership team to work with every teacher there
12 to insure that they are making the growth as well,
13 and making effective decisions that will help our
14 children. So Clancy may have a couple of answers, as
15 well.

16 MS. CLANCY: Hi. Lori Clancy. I'm assistant
17 director at Covenant Keepers. And I just wanted to
18 throw in that -- thank you --

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Would you speak into the
20 microphone please --

21 MS. CLANCY: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- for our viewing
23 audience?

24 MS. CLANCY: Yes. The teacher turnover at
25 Covenant Keepers, although we aren't -- we're not

1 surprised by it, it is -- it's a tough job. You
2 heard a little bit from Avi about -- you've really
3 got to have a heart for these kids and that's hard to
4 find. When we find those teachers we hang on to them
5 and we support them like crazy. I always say that
6 they learn more their first year with us than they
7 did in their teacher programs, and I wish more
8 schools were like that. But when a teacher doesn't
9 work out we simply don't have time to -- the need is
10 too urgent; our kids need their teachers on point.
11 And if we have to let somebody go, you know, we have
12 that waiver in place which is very beneficial for us.

13 MS. PFEFFER: And I want to just ask a little
14 bit -- the data that I'm showing is -- that you had
15 looks like seven beginning teachers this year.

16 DR. TATUM: Turnover teachers?

17 MS. PFEFFER: First year teachers. I'm sorry.

18 MS. CLANCY: Oh, first year teachers.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Yeah. Of your total number of
20 teachers --

21 MS. CLANCY: No.

22 DR. TATUM: Not that many.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

24 MS. CLANCY: We had -- I want to say we had
25 three.

1 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

2 DR. TATUM: I thought it was two, but three.

3 MS. PFEFFER: That may be -- that may be --

4 MS. CLANCY: First year with us or first year
5 teaching?

6 MS. PFEFFER: From what I'm showing it would be
7 -- the data in the Cycle 2 report, would've been
8 first year teachers, but I can check on that. It
9 just looked like a very high number of first year
10 teachers and I was just wondering about, you know,
11 the support provided to them, but --

12 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. That report cycle is
13 not accurate. I'm looking at our cycle individually
14 and it's been two teachers.

15 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

16 DR. TATUM: Yes.

17 MS. PFEFFER: All right.

18 DR. TATUM: Not three.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So, and then my next
20 question probably is for Dr. McKenzie Davis. And so
21 I think my question there is in looking at school
22 data our concerns are that the designations of
23 Priority school, academic distress. So, you know,
24 knowing that on the state assessment student
25 performance is low and -- but also recognizing that

1 we are in a transition/transition period, getting
2 ready to transition again. So you were showing us
3 the NWEA data and, according to that, there is
4 growth; the school is showing growth for a great
5 number of their students, or a pretty large
6 percentage of the students, and even a year's worth
7 of growth for a good percentage. So how does that
8 NWEA data correlate with the ACT Aspire -- or does it
9 correlate? Is there any way that, you know, as we
10 look at the growth there can we expect that there's
11 going to be some growth in the future? And I know
12 they're two different tests and, you know -- but just
13 trying to think through and put some of this data
14 together because it just seems the data is telling
15 different stories.

16 DR. MCKENZIE: Yes. I can speak to that
17 question, definitely. NWEA, just about two weeks
18 ago, released a linking study between NWEA MAP
19 results and ACT Aspire. The two assessments are
20 highly correlated. You know, any test that tests
21 reading is going to be really correlated with a test
22 that tests reading, even if they have different
23 formats and different relationships. The challenge
24 -- same thing with math. The challenge comes in
25 where that bar is set. So under the old Arkansas

1 benchmark exam you had to be at about the 33rd
2 percentile on NWEA MAP nationally to score proficient
3 in Arkansas. With ACT Aspire and with PARCC that's
4 bumped up to about the 63rd, 65th percentile
5 nationally. So the expectation for proficiency, we
6 can still do a translation, like euros to pesos or
7 pesos to dollars; it's just what that exchange rate
8 is. So using their fall MAP data and now their
9 winter MAP data we're really going to be able to
10 identify which kids are on track to be proficient,
11 whether it's the ACT Aspire this year or the PARCC
12 last year. Well, we didn't have the linking for the
13 PARCC. But whatever assessment it is we can find
14 those relationships between them. And in the
15 meantime, not just focus on the kids that are close
16 to being proficient and getting them over the line,
17 those bubble kids, but making sure kids at all levels
18 are making that growth. Did that answer your
19 question?

20 MS. PFEFFER: I think so. And so I guess now,
21 Dr. Tatum, what steps are you all using then, in
22 using your MAP data moving forward, realizing that
23 just in a few months we'll be looking at that new
24 assessment?

25 MS. JONES: What we're doing using our MAP data

1 is we're looking at the areas in which students are
2 showing deficiencies. So when we looked at our fall
3 data of this year we noticed that several of our
4 students in math -- and historically, you know, that
5 has been an area of concern -- were landing, you
6 know, below the grade level. And so we worked with
7 our curriculum coach and developed a plan during our
8 plus-time, that Ms. Whipps spoke about. And our
9 plus-time groups are small and individualized and
10 they are arranged by NWEA MAP scores, and in that
11 case they were the math MAP scores. We trained our
12 teachers in how to address the needs for those
13 students in math. And a lot of it was simple basic
14 math skills, a lot of multiplication facts, a lot of
15 work with fractions, and we worked with those
16 teachers so that they could carry that out in the
17 classroom. I'm also going to let Ms. Whipps share
18 what we're doing, as well.

19 MS. WHIPPS: Of course, as I stated earlier, we
20 are -- we do have 80-minute periods a day, which
21 gives us an opportunity to do interventions real-
22 time. So something that we're doing, of course, with
23 our curriculum is using our interactive notebooks and
24 students are able to reflect on what we've talked
25 about today, interact with what we're talking about

1 today. Our language scores are so high because we've
2 been focusing a lot on language and using a lot of
3 defrayer models to help them, because that's one of
4 the lowest areas on NWEA. Also, we are doing what we
5 call Show What You Know's. We don't tell the
6 students if these are assessments, but they are
7 assessments that students take every day when they
8 come in the classroom. It is based on a focus
9 standard in literacy and students are assessed on
10 these when they walk in. They take about 10 minutes
11 to take it. Then we give feedback directly to them
12 on it and then students give us their feedback. We
13 fill in any gaps that are missing, and then the next
14 day they're assessed again so that we can track their
15 growth with the standard and say yes, they've
16 mastered it and now let's move on to our next
17 standard. Also, during the pre- and post-assessments
18 data is tracked as well. We have PLC meetings with
19 our teachers where we discuss this data and we make
20 interventions for class -- for math and literacy
21 classes, as well as for science and social studies,
22 because they teach RI standards for literacy as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

24 DR. GOTCHER: Dr. Tatum --

25 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

1 DR. GOTCHER: -- I remember my visit to your
2 school. I had more hugs and I was involved in more
3 photographs than the Gotcher Family Christmas last
4 December. So, thank you.

5 DR. TATUM: I'm a selfie queen.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you for all the tweets and
7 Facebook posts.

8 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

9 DR. GOTCHER: That was very kind, as well. So I
10 want to share just a couple of things that I've
11 observed in the data that we've all had a chance to
12 review. And I'm always intrigued by mission
13 statements; I'm kind of a geek on those things. And
14 I was just curious, when was the last time your
15 mission statement was reviewed? And I have a follow-
16 up, if that's all right.

17 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir. We reviewed it actually
18 this past summer and we have made some additional
19 changes that it fits Covenant Keepers and our mission
20 and vision of where we want to go.

21 DR. GOTCHER: The phrase that caught my eye,
22 because from my observation, from my personal
23 perspective, and based upon the incredible reports
24 I've heard today, you're much more than a college
25 prep program. And in fact I think as much as I would

1 love to see all kids participate in college and
2 career opportunities, that's just something that
3 caught my eye and I think that's something to be
4 reviewed. Just as an outsider looking in, you're
5 much more than a college prep program for students;
6 you're meeting the needs of a Whole Child, not just
7 those that are pursuing college. And so that's just
8 a freebie from me, so --

9 DR. TATUM: Thank you.

10 DR. GOTCHER: And the other piece, you're also
11 meeting the needs of a Latino population that's
12 pretty unique in this city. And so I'm curious, do
13 you feel that the staffing, whether it's a support
14 staff member -- one of the concerns that was listed
15 in the report was how to be able to communicate with
16 Latino families. I know you can't always use
17 students to translate because of the confidentiality
18 pieces. So are there plans to look at a fulltime
19 Latino employee that can serve the families as they
20 come in and their needs being met?

21 DR. TATUM: Yes. And I will let Ms. Jones speak
22 to that. But if I could talk about the college prep?

23 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, ma'am.

24 DR. TATUM: 2008, that was our vision, mission,
25 where we wanted to go. Every year it's twisting,

1 it's moving, it's changing. So I've already called
2 the Department. I've asked about changing the
3 college prep piece because we are much more than a
4 college prep school. So I'm well ahead of the game
5 --

6 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

7 DR. TATUM: -- to really be on track to get that
8 not necessarily removed but do other greater things
9 with kids outside of just sending them to college.
10 So with that being said --

11 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you.

12 MS. JONES: All right. Covenant Keepers
13 currently has two bilingual staff members on hand.
14 If one is not -- if one is absent, the other one is
15 present. And they are there to communicate with
16 teachers and with parents and with students that may
17 need assistance. As far as teachers go, if there's
18 an academic issue or behavioral issue, our bilingual
19 staff member will call the parent and let them know
20 and will also interpret during parent meetings. Our
21 bilingual staff members will also translate any
22 letters or memos that we send home so that parents
23 are always in communication.

24 DR. GOTCHER: So as far as communication
25 regarding parent/teacher conferences, you're --

1 that's part of the structure of making sure that a
2 bilingual communication is taken care of for all the
3 families? I'm sure that was in there but I was just
4 --

5 MS. JONES: Yes, sir.

6 DR. GOTCHER: I wanted to hear it. Okay. And
7 one last thing, if I may, Madam Chair -- as I was
8 leaving the parking lot, that wonderful Latino
9 volunteer ran out to the car and took yet another
10 picture.

11 DR. TATUM: So you're not coming back because of
12 our pictures. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. I just wanted to get some
15 clarification. Looking at the -- I believe the graph
16 on the low performing, meeting MAP growth, is there a
17 way we can pull that slide back up? And I just want
18 to understand what I'm looking at a little more
19 there.

20 DR. McKENZIE: Is this --

21 DR. SAUNDERS: That'll work.

22 DR. McKENZIE: This one?

23 DR. SAUNDERS: I think that'll work. Yes. So
24 if I look at this, if I'm interpreting this, it would
25 be, for example, in reading 72% low performing

1 students are meeting annual MAP growth. And I saw
2 that for the low performing. Do you have any numbers
3 for all students?

4 DR. McKENZIE: Yes. The prior slide -- oops,
5 let's see if I can make it go the right way. This is
6 all students.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. It's all students.

8 DR. McKENZIE: 68%.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: And is this all three grade
10 levels combined?

11 DR. McKENZIE: Yes, it is.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. How many students are
13 included in this?

14 DR. McKENZIE: I think that we were talking
15 about 311. I can look to find out exactly.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: I think there's only 170
17 enrolled.

18 DR. McKENZIE: Oh, the 300 was the virtual
19 comparison group. So I think about 100.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: 100. What about the other 71?

21 DR. McKENZIE: Oh, I'm sorry.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

23 MS. JONES: As Covenant Keepers does have a
24 mobile population, for a score to be counted they
25 have to have a fall score and they have to have a

1 spring score for them to have measured growth. If a
2 student enrolls in January, they will have only taken
3 the winter test and the spring test; they will not
4 have had a fall test unless they have taken NWEA at
5 another school. And most of our schools [sic] are
6 coming from traditional public schools and they do
7 not use NWEA testing.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So approximately about 35
9 roughly in each grade level. And so you would have
10 70 out of 170. I'm trying to do the math quick in my
11 head and I can't do it that fast. But is that your
12 mobility rate within a given year for your student
13 population? Is that typical?

14 MS. JONES: I don't think that that would be
15 necessarily accurate because we're also talking about
16 students leaving but also students coming in. This
17 is all included in the mobility rate.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So you would only have --
19 out of -- I'm trying to understand. Basically, from
20 the first of the year to the end of the year, you
21 would have approximately 100 of the same students and
22 the other students in excess? Help me out just to
23 understand that. I'm trying to --

24 MS. JONES: Yes. That particular year, last
25 year. We found that this year though our students --

1 we've been maintaining a higher percentage of our
2 students this year.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Is there a way you'd have
4 access to -- I'm just curious how many students were
5 included, just a total number on those?

6 DR. MCKENZIE: Yes, I'll find that for you.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. That's all for right now.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

9 MS. BARNES: Good afternoon, Dr. Tatum.

10 DR. TATUM: Good afternoon.

11 MS. BARNES: First of all, let me also say that
12 I appreciate the presentation today, I appreciate all
13 of the dialogue, and I particularly am appreciative
14 of some of the other comments that have been made
15 with respect to meeting the needs of specified
16 populations. I listened to quite a bit of the
17 information and, of course, my role at the Department
18 in accountability I see a lot of other numbers as
19 people are talking. I am encouraged with respect to
20 growth and us looking more closely at growth. But I
21 am also concerned that while there may be some
22 improvements being made and we are in year eight,
23 eight years of addressing academics, now we are
24 beginning to understand and appreciate more of the
25 wraparound services meeting the needs of the Whole

1 Child. I am -- I have yet to hear some things to
2 push me over the edge with respect to what type of
3 other strategies are in place to address the
4 academics. Because at the end of the day we still
5 have to look at that. I understand that students
6 come at very low levels sometimes with respect to
7 their performance, and I believe you even discussed
8 in the presentation that most of them, many of them
9 come three years behind. So any growth is always to
10 be applauded but we can't be content. And because
11 there is so little movement, I'm concerned about our
12 expectation. I know that the school is dealing with
13 constant fluctuations of student populations. And
14 when you really boil it down to the non-mobile
15 population sometimes the numbers aren't great enough
16 to make movements outside of the data that is being
17 shared through the MAP growth. Because when you look
18 at some of the other documents that we are using with
19 respect to designations, it's not; it's declining,
20 the performance. So I'm not saying that there's not
21 growth, understand that, because I do understand that
22 there is growth. But the performance is already
23 starting so low that a lot of times it takes so much
24 more to get it up to and then over the hump. I'm not
25 -- you know -- I'm not negating that. I hope you

1 don't hear that coming from me, but there is great
2 concern. Because not only with respect to the
3 continued labels -- and, you know, I know; I
4 understand what labels can do. I understand that
5 it's difficult to overcome some things. But there
6 are also, you know, continual concerns with what is
7 the actual population. You know, our office had a
8 lot of conversations during corrections period trying
9 to make sure that we are accurately reflecting what's
10 happening. So I'm not discouraged but I am gravely
11 concerned because I know that I have a
12 responsibility.

13 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

14 MS. BARNES: While I see great things happening
15 for some, and maybe even all of the students -- I
16 don't know -- I cannot be content with the constant
17 bottom performance, the lowest performance, the
18 bottom 5%, Priority schools, academic distress.
19 First year we had schools in academic distress under
20 the new legislation. You're there. The next year
21 you're there. And so I need some help is what I'm
22 trying to say. I looked at 15, 14, 13 with math and
23 literacy combined and it was declining. I looked at
24 --

25 DR. TATUM: Would you go back and say -- you

1 looked at math and it was what, now?

2 MS. BARNES: Literacy and math combined.

3 DR. TATUM: Okay.

4 MS. BARNES: Because, you know, I'm looking at
5 it and each year it has -- it's going down; it's not
6 going up. But now, again, that's -- because we're
7 looking at the non-mobile population over three
8 consecutive years, the three years combined. And so
9 I'm trying to grasp at what I can hold onto because I
10 get a warm feeling, understand. I feel great knowing
11 that the Red Cross is joining hands. I'm not --

12 DR. TATUM: Salvation Army.

13 MS. BARNES: Yes. Excuse me. Salvation Army.
14 I remember seeing red or that might be my rose
15 colored glasses. I don't know. But, yes, I remember
16 Dr. Tollett talking about how they are reaching out.
17 I appreciated Dr. Guerrero explaining how critical it
18 is. But I'm also thinking -- so because you do have
19 a high Latino population, why haven't -- are we not
20 also looking at during parent conferences having a
21 way to translate while we're talking? Because, you
22 know, there's so many digital ways to do that now. I
23 can -- a parent can type in a question in Spanish and
24 it shows up in English. I mean, I'm just saying I
25 didn't hear some of those kinds of ways. I heard we

1 have two people, one or the other. I'm not saying
2 those are the only things. I'm just trying to find
3 where we're reaching deep and pulling up strategies
4 and where we're showing success outside of "we have
5 some growth." And, you know, even our targets, our
6 AMOs were so miniscule this time, but we didn't -- we
7 made it. I mean, I'm looking at the reports; that's
8 what I'm saying. So talk to me outside of my
9 emotions and give me something to --

10 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. We can do that.

11 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

12 DR. TATUM: Okay.

13 MS. WHIPPS: Before Dr. Tatum speaks, I just
14 want to share one thing and make sure you guys
15 remember this, that every year we lose one-third of
16 our population and we have to start those
17 interventions over again with the new ones that come
18 in. So they have to get acclimated to what we're
19 doing. And, again, they're coming in really low and
20 we're growing them up. We're doing something that
21 they weren't getting before they were coming in. So
22 even though the test is showing, hey, they're not
23 proficient, you know, when you break it down and look
24 at how many years of growth that they've made, you
25 know, we are making a difference for them. And,

1 again, I'm not trying to play on the emotional side
2 but academically, if these students had proceeded
3 with where they were, by the time they're leaving 8th
4 grade and going to high school they would be even
5 more behind. So we're building them up as much as we
6 can and we know growth takes time. You know, you're
7 not going to be proficient by the end of a year if
8 you're coming in on a 3rd grade level and you're in
9 8th grade. So we're doing, you know, everything we
10 can, putting everything in place we can so we can
11 make sure that they are able to succeed and be able
12 to take their educational career on into high school.

13 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

14 DR. TATUM: And, Ms. Barnes, just a couple of
15 things to consider. When we left 8300 Geyer Springs
16 we -- that was the first launch of Common Core; we
17 were still under benchmark. That was another animal.
18 Then we got into 5615 Geyer Springs Road, second year
19 of Common Core, final year of benchmark. Okay. That
20 -- so now two years, now going into PARCC one year,
21 ACT Aspire and then we're dealing with the influx of
22 -- well, the testing cycles and things that are
23 changing. Since then, we've had two external
24 providers. I made a choice the second year we were
25 in -- an external provider, or looking for one, we

1 reached out to APSRC because we truly feel they are
2 the best. They were not available or they couldn't
3 because of the manpower or whatever. They're here to
4 speak on their behalf. Nonetheless, this year still
5 did growth. Last year, as you heard, from June and
6 now moving forward, let me tell you some things that
7 we have done internally to insure we're going in the
8 right direction. Two years ago, we adopted Engage
9 New York and Expeditionary Learning.

10 MS. BARNES: I'm sorry. The first one was
11 Engage New York?

12 DR. TATUM: Engage New York and Expeditionary
13 Learning. Those are curriculums where teachers don't
14 necessarily have to be burdened with lesson planning,
15 but they're blueprints that we use across the board.
16 And so in aligning that, that has helped us with the
17 jump in NWEA scores. Because as an instructional
18 leader I'm like you, Ms. Barnes; I want to know that
19 we're doing something out there. I don't want to
20 just sit on 56 -- or sit at 5615 and we're twiddling
21 our thumbs. Great things are going on. Then we had
22 to align the curriculum, then we went into the GANAG
23 lesson plan schema that we're doing across the board.
24 So as we're using that, we've implemented the
25 interactive notebooks. We have daily formative

1 assessments, Show What You Know, PLC meetings. This
2 is something that has really been a safe haven for
3 us. When Ms. Pfeifer --

4 MS. BARNES: Pfeffer.

5 DR. TATUM: -- Pfeffer asked us about how are we
6 retaining teachers, as an instructional leader and as
7 an educator -- I'm an educator first and I know how
8 much -- how important it is to have a teacher in the
9 classroom. So we implemented -- I implemented a
10 teacher support cycle. That teacher support cycle
11 allows us time to sit down with every teacher, not
12 only my leadership team, my self, asking them how do
13 they know they're moving toward proficiency. Our
14 teachers can tell that. Over the last two years we
15 have successfully implemented and started using the
16 data scores to get us on track where we're going.
17 Through that teacher support cycle Principal Blocker
18 has come alongside; we have implemented a new demerit
19 system. It's rolling out, as he said. At first,
20 there was grave concerns because our teachers --
21 because our students were out of school or in-school
22 suspension. So we've had to make a shift in this
23 particular population in order to make sure, as the
24 instructional leader, everybody is going in the same
25 direction. I have to insure that through my self and

1 Ms. Clancy meeting with teachers every other week to
2 insure that they are not twiddling their thumbs in
3 the classroom. They are rolling out the lesson plan.
4 And Ms. Whipps, she talked about the whole curriculum
5 and how that's rolled out. I can assure you, yes,
6 the growth is quite low. As you know, 90% of them
7 are coming in well below grade level.

8 And this also is another factor that I
9 definitely need to mention. When we asked the Board
10 three years ago to allow us an opportunity to get a
11 longer stretch-way -- we wanted to get on a longer
12 runway -- we recognized then, three years ago, we
13 needed more time. We're asking now give us the time
14 to get on the longer runway. Three years, yes, we've
15 done well. We have done very well. But when you're
16 working with three years of time, a population which
17 we know that has challenges, and we're putting layers
18 in place in order for us to really teach our children
19 -- if you note our Hispanic population, they don't
20 necessarily have an over abundance of problems. But
21 we've begun to use the wraparound services to really
22 help with our African American families. Because
23 those wraparound services, they're needed when they
24 come in. We just had -- there was an announcement
25 that was made with two schools in our areas. We've

1 had a flood of calls from those parents and we have a
2 waiting list. We need a stretch of time. We need a
3 runway to show you all that we're doing something
4 very well, very special in southwest Little Rock.

5 So -- and, Ms. Barnes, to that point I'll let
6 Ms. Whipps begin to speak. But all of those things
7 that I mentioned we have put in place. We have
8 consistent teachers that are there every day. We
9 haven't had the high turnover this year. So progress
10 is being made. It may not be where you want it to
11 be, but progress is being made and the proof is in
12 the pudding.

13 MS. BARNES: Okay. Before -- yeah, I don't want
14 to take up all of the time.

15 DR. TATUM: No, ma'am.

16 MS. BARNES: But what I do -- you know -- and
17 some of my colleagues may also need to ask a couple
18 of questions. So before you move forward, I did have
19 one other question that you might want to be
20 addressing at the same time.

21 I was looking at the information with respect to
22 13-14 school performance growth for literacy and it's
23 a comparison of the other middle schools, some of the
24 Little Rock School District middle schools. And you
25 have Covenant Keepers at 49.09 and that was for 13-

1 14. So for 14-15 we are well below that, you know,
2 and I'm not -- I don't have the comparison for the
3 other three. But I'm simply saying that those are
4 the kinds of things that stand out for me, is that
5 while I recognize you're having to regroup and you're
6 having to double-up and catch-up I still -- we're
7 still where we are, I guess is what I'm saying. I'm
8 not telling you that I don't see some progress.
9 That's not what I'm saying because this is a much
10 better presentation. I can see and hear and I see
11 the growth, the changes. But I'm going to be held
12 accountable for making some decisions that affect the
13 lives of children, and so that's why I sound the way
14 I do. I don't -- it's not personal to anyone.

15 DR. TATUM: No, ma'am. We know that.

16 MS. BARNES: I know you don't take it that way.

17 DR. TATUM: No, ma'am.

18 MS. BARNES: But I recognize that there may be
19 some urgency in my voice because we've been here
20 before. And so I need something. Because right now
21 -- and I certainly will say I understand you need
22 time to get it working. But when you start a
23 presentation with eight years and then you say we
24 need time, then that -- it doesn't balance out for
25 me.

1 DR. TATUM: And, Ms. Barnes, now consider just
2 the three years. If you go back and you look at the
3 first five years, our growth was there. We were
4 making that growth; not at advanced levels, we were
5 not. The last three years, that's when the
6 instability in the growth began to happen. So when
7 we talk about eight years I don't want us to think
8 it's been eight years of challenges. No, it has not
9 been. It's been three years where we have not been
10 able to get into a benchmark set where we can
11 actually show where we're going. So the only thing
12 that we're using is the NWEA to really pace us and
13 get us where we need to go. So, Ms. Barnes, I don't
14 want it to be eight years.

15 MS. BARNES: Okay. I won't go with eight.
16 Let's go with in 2013, which was based on the most
17 recent --

18 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

19 MS. BARNES: -- three years, which means that
20 that's the year before 2013 and the year before 2012
21 --

22 MS. WHIPPS: And I can speak to that.

23 MS. BARNES: -- all included, and that's when --

24 MS. WHIPPS: Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. BARNES: -- the academic distress

1 designation was first --

2 DR. TATUM: Correct.

3 MS. WHIPPS: One of the big things -- oh, I'm
4 sorry; I don't mean to cut you off. One of the big
5 things that we were going through, of course, was the
6 change to Common Core and, you know, it becoming you
7 must teach, you know, the Common Core standards. So
8 our big thing then was professionally developing our
9 teachers, making sure we can do the rigor, making
10 sure, you know, we have the right curriculum. And it
11 wasn't until the end of that year that we actually,
12 myself and one of the math lead teachers, discovered
13 the Expeditionary Learning, which we are using now.
14 So we were actually trying to get things in place
15 ourselves with that change and not to make it as an
16 excuse or anything. But we were doing pretty good
17 until it was time to change those standards, and now
18 we have to learn these all over again. And, you
19 know, with teachers coming out of school that's fine,
20 but teachers who are going through school, like me,
21 and we've only known Arkansas, that was a big
22 challenge for us in getting our students there as
23 well because our minds were set in Arkansas
24 standards. So we dealt with changing to the new
25 curriculum, changing our lesson planning schema,

1 including some innovative things that other schools
2 were doing would definitely push us toward the right
3 direction. And it's been within the last year when
4 we actually began developing things ourselves based
5 on the knowledge that we now have from Common Core,
6 again during our plus-times, doing individualized
7 things for students according to what we see on NWEA.
8 This is pull-out time for them so they can work on
9 programs, such as Khan Academy for math or Reading
10 Plus for reading, which gets on that student's level
11 and it doesn't take an individual teacher standing in
12 front of them to do that.

13 Also, again, those 80 minutes built into class
14 time, we've always had that. We've never experienced
15 it the way that we've experienced it within the last
16 two-and-a-half years, and using it toward focusing in
17 the math class on interventions for math and focusing
18 on interventions for literacy. So I know one thing
19 that you're looking for is what are y'all doing; we
20 want to hear what you're doing. And our
21 interventions are what we're doing. We have decided
22 that every moment that we have to intervene we're
23 going to intervene in math and literacy class and
24 science and social studies. Intervening with us, we
25 feel like we are going to push them over to that next

1 level.

2 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Dr. Tatum, you said something that
5 I had chosen not to ask any questions because of your
6 enrollment numbers, but you said you have a waiting
7 list now because of some changes in the Geyer Springs
8 area. Is that correct?

9 DR. TATUM: That is correct, sir.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Therefore, let's talk about
11 your lottery process. Will a waiting list cause you
12 to have a lottery, I guess, for enrollment for next
13 fall?

14 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. Yes, sir.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. And I think the
16 encouragement, based upon the remaining concerns from
17 the application, it will be very important that you
18 have -- that you work with Ms. Boyd and have a good
19 transparent documented lottery process. So that's
20 encouraging because that means you have a waiting
21 list, but it also means just an urgency to make sure
22 that that is a well-documented and transparent
23 process. So that's just a bit of encouragement for
24 that.

25 DR. TATUM: Thank you. And as we move forward,

1 we're in southwest Little Rock area and our growth
2 comparisons show much better, that we're the better
3 option in that area, especially after two schools
4 have made that announcement. There is really no
5 other middle school out there in the area. I've had
6 conversations with the superintendent of Little Rock,
7 other individuals out in -- key leaders, key city
8 directors in southwest Little Rock, coalitions,
9 associations. I even had a conversation with the
10 mayor. We've made a choice to stay out there. Our
11 needs are great; we know that. We're not standing
12 here making the excuses. The proof is in the
13 pudding. We know we're making an impact. One year,
14 everybody -- it hasn't been a stable place for
15 benchmarks. Now we're moving forward. We have to
16 remain out in southwest Little Rock to make an
17 impact, to do greater for our children. And I can
18 guarantee you Covenant Keepers is on track. We're
19 making -- are we there moving toward proficiency?
20 We're going in that -- a growth mindset; we're moving
21 in the right direction. And when I say a longer
22 runway I'm not talking about time. Eventually, we
23 want to be a feeder school rounding down. We need
24 time to be able to work with our children. When we
25 were here before, three years ago, we asked. We need

1 time, real time to come back and to show you what
2 we're doing to make our -- to work towards
3 proficiency, even greater. So those are my remarks.
4 Thank you, Dr. Gotcher.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

6 MS. SMITH: Dr. Tatum, I just wanted to kind of
7 highlight a couple of things that I heard in today's
8 presentation. One of the things in your application,
9 it referred to this year as the come-back year. And
10 within some of your presentation and within the
11 different speakers, some of the things that were
12 alluded to was the formative assessment, daily
13 formative assessment being used within your staff,
14 the professional learning communities working around
15 that formative assessment. The NWEA growth, working
16 with the Office of Educational Policy to assist with
17 that and looking at that growth to me was impressive.
18 A question around the NWEA growth: did y'all take the
19 winter test for this year, right now, from --

20 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

21 MS. SMITH: -- the fall? And how is that growth
22 looking right now in comparison to last year's data?

23 MS. JONES: So when we look at the students and
24 how they have scored from fall to winter, 57% of our
25 students made growth on the reading test and 64% of

1 our students made growth on math.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. So right now, you're on track
3 for a higher yield at the end of this year than you
4 were last year?

5 MS. JONES: Yes. And definitely for math. And
6 we believe that's because of our plus-time
7 implementation and having that individualized time
8 with the students.

9 MS. SMITH: Okay. Another comment that was made
10 within presentations today, this was by ADE staff,
11 Dr. Wilde specifically mentioned the last two years
12 of being a collaborative -- much more collaborative
13 in the work with Covenant Keepers, which I think is
14 important to note. Within that, the principal --
15 sir, if you'd come up, the principal -- you started
16 last year, in February, and then full-time this year?

17 MR. BLOCKER: I started last year, in February,
18 full-time in February as the dean of student affairs.

19 MS. SMITH: I personally believe the building
20 administrator is one of the key people in a school.
21 Okay? And so if this is truly the come-back year, I
22 think that you probably have a lot to do with that.
23 So, one of the things that I would like to kind of
24 ask you about a little bit more -- first off,
25 congratulations on that.

1 MR. BLOCKER: Thank you.

2 MS. SMITH: You had alluded to earlier on about
3 your one-to-one with discipline --

4 MR. BLOCKER: Correct.

5 MS. SMITH: -- and your approach in that. And
6 I'd like you to share a little bit more about that
7 because that was probably one of the things that
8 stood out to me. And you guys did site it within
9 your application, but when you look at your total of
10 231 either in or out of school expulsions with 171
11 students that's a lot. And so your approach this
12 year and your change, what changes are you really
13 seeing?

14 MR. BLOCKER: Well, we're just doing more
15 culture sensitivity training and working with the
16 students and working with the teachers to help them
17 understand the population better. And the one-to-one
18 interventions is just when we notice a disconnect
19 there's a miscommunication a lot of times between the
20 student and the teacher. And because of the
21 population that we serve, a very risk adverse
22 population, sometimes they don't know how to manage
23 their emotions very well or how to communicate what
24 they really feel. And so when we notice those
25 disconnects we foster an environment to allow them to

1 communicate very freely, openly and respectfully.
2 Because as adults, as educators, as teachers, as
3 administrators, sometimes we want to demand the
4 respect and we have to earn the respect of the
5 students. And the students, they have a voice and
6 they want to be heard and we notice that when we
7 allow them the opportunity to be heard instead of
8 disrupting the class and going back and forth in the
9 classroom. When we foster that environment we
10 realize that there's just a break in the
11 communication. And working with the teachers to help
12 them understand how to communicate with this
13 particular student, because they all are different --
14 you can't use the same approach with all the students
15 -- and working with the teachers, we've had a high
16 success rate with the interventions.

17 MS. SMITH: I noticed that you said your team
18 was doing the Ruby Payne. Is that something that
19 you're doing through school-wide or is that just
20 something you're working with your leadership team
21 on?

22 MR. BLOCKER: Well, that's something where we've
23 adopted the concepts of the Ruby Payne. One
24 particular concept that I brought onboard is SOAR
25 with Susan Kruger and -- but that's what I'm most

1 familiar with. I've researched the Ruby Payne and
2 studied up on it, as far as understanding how the
3 male and female deal with their emotions and how to
4 help them manage their emotions. But the SOAR
5 curriculum has really helped, you know, teaching
6 these students how to set goals and be organized and
7 feeling comfortable asking questions. Sometimes a
8 student will sit in class and they don't know because
9 they won't ask the questions because they're
10 embarrassed or fear that their peers may make fun of
11 them. And so we empower them to, you know, ask the
12 questions and teach them -- you know, acknowledge --
13 raise your hand and wait to be acknowledged, and if
14 you don't get acknowledged write it down and ask the
15 teacher later. You know, working with Aviamiel, you
16 know, this guy, you know, he's an artist and helping
17 -- you know -- the SOAR curriculum helps them --
18 helps us to identify the students' gifts and
19 strengths. They call them "super powers." And so in
20 really working with Aviamiel -- and he was featured
21 on Fox 16 Good Day. He's a poet; he's an artist.
22 And so we're really encouraging him to pursue his
23 future in art some kind of way. So that's what we're
24 doing, just working with the teachers and the
25 students to help them understand the different

1 dynamics of what it means to be a struggling student.

2 MS. SMITH: Well, and when you're talking about
3 behavior in the realm that you're talking about
4 behavior, there are definitely teachable moments
5 there, and so having that structured curriculum in
6 that area is a plus. Also, just a note on your
7 structured curriculum that you guys have adopted in
8 the last two to three years with the change --
9 probably with the high teacher turnover rate, that's
10 needed and so I'd encourage you to continue that.

11 MR. BLOCKER: Thank you.

12 MS. SMITH: On your professional development
13 plan, lots of work there as far as like doing your
14 walk-throughs and things like that, but getting that
15 more down to a instructional piece --

16 MR. BLOCKER: Gotcha.

17 MS. SMITH: -- I think is a highlight. One last
18 question and I will be done. I noticed that -- I
19 know this is a 6-8 school. Okay. So how do you help
20 transition your kids either coming to your school or
21 leaving your school? And what's the plan there? So
22 how are you going to insure when your kids leave you
23 that they're going to be successful in their next
24 phase? And that may be a question for Dr. Tatum.

25 MR. BLOCKER: Well, I can speak on it a little

1 bit. One of the things we're focusing on is
2 developing the Whole Child. I mean, we do know it's
3 about academic achievement. However, research has
4 proven that students do better when you -- when
5 they're emotionally and physically healthy. So
6 that's one of the things that we're focusing on. So
7 I'll let Dr. Tatum speak on the rest.

8 DR. TATUM: What we're doing to transition
9 students out is we look at all of the high schools'
10 open enrollment or their time, such as Parkview. We
11 look at that and we begin to have conversations with
12 the parents about specific schools. Every year on --
13 this year, with 3rd and 4th, I'll be sitting with
14 every teacher -- not every teacher -- every parent
15 and their 8th grade student and they'll tell me
16 pretty much where they want to go, their desire. And
17 so those conversations happen every year because I
18 just don't want them to be disconnected after they
19 leave. Many of our parents call back if it's not the
20 right fit; we work on another alternative place for
21 the child to be. So it could be Pinnacle Pointe, it
22 could be Parkview, other charter schools; it could be
23 anywhere. But I sit down intimately with every
24 parent and their child to really hear what their
25 desire is and we move forward on that. And our

1 success rate has been phenomenal.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay.

3 MS. JONES: I'd also like to add something.
4 Speaking of our students, how we know they'll be
5 successful in the future, I'd like to speak on the
6 students that have been with us for three years, our
7 students that are currently 8th graders now, that
8 were with us in 6th grade. And when we look at our
9 NWEA data we show that in math -- you know -- we're
10 still working on building them up and on average
11 students have grown from a 4th grade level to a 6th
12 grade level, which is not on grade level; we
13 understand that. But in ELA those students that have
14 been with us for three years, 55% of them are now in
15 the 50th percentile. And as Dr. McKenzie was saying,
16 that's not necessarily where the ACT Aspire has them,
17 but we know that that is a lot closer than we've ever
18 had our student data show before in reading.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Did you get those?

21 DR. MCKENZIE: Yes, I do have those for you.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

23 DR. MCKENZIE: I had 133 students tested in the
24 fall, 146 tested in the spring. I show October 1
25 enrollment on OEPs website as 157. There was 100

1 kids that were tested in reading both times, 97 that
2 were tested in math both times.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

4 DR. McKENZIE: So there are some -- about 30
5 that were only there in the fall and about 50 that
6 were only there in the spring.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: All right. Thank you.

8 DR. McKENZIE: You're welcome.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: And I think this would be for Dr.
10 Tatum. I have some concerns and that's why I want to
11 look at that data carefully. I know last year we met
12 and I remember last year you were asking, said we
13 just needed some more time and presented data on
14 growth specifically with the math and the growth of
15 your students and how they were doing well. And I
16 look at the ESEA reports from this last year and I
17 look at your largest race subgroup, the African
18 American group, and I look at English Language Arts,
19 and of 58 students tested only three were achieving.
20 When I look at mathematics there were 59 that were
21 tested and only one ended up achieving. And so I see
22 that as being contradictory to the growth reports, as
23 we saw last year when you were before us. So if you
24 could, just address that for me.

25 DR. TATUM: Well, I still have to go back to the

1 data that we know. When we look at the last -- I
2 guess the ESEA report, is that -- those are PARCC?

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, ma'am.

4 DR. TATUM: Those are PARCC. Well, I would say
5 that was the one-time test and then the shift is
6 happening to ACT Aspire. I would also say that it
7 still didn't allow us time to really build the -- it
8 didn't give us time to really measure in one year
9 where our population would really be. So, but again,
10 we take the NWEA test and we begin -- we look at that
11 and that has become our trajectory where we're moving
12 towards proficiency or how we're growing our
13 students. And so I would like for -- come on, Ms.
14 Clancy.

15 MS. CLANCY: One thing to keep in mind is the
16 ESEA reports, the numbers that you're looking at,
17 that's proficiency. What Dr. Tatum -- what we've all
18 been talking about, what we talked about last year
19 was growth. So those don't always look the same.
20 And when you look again at the data that we've showed
21 you where we test students when they first come to us
22 and 90% of those kids come to us below grade level --
23 in some cases, far below grade level -- no, they're
24 not going to be proficiency the next year; sometimes
25 even three years later. And so that's what Ms. Jones

1 was referring to when she talked about the numbers
2 just a moment ago about when the 8th graders leave us
3 after having been with us for three years.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Under that mindset then, do you
5 always anticipate to have students enrolling at the
6 levels that you're currently receiving?

7 DR. TATUM: It depends on the Priority and the
8 Focus schools. As we noted, 61%, that is not an
9 excuse. No, that's not what our expectation is and
10 that's not what we're enrolling. Mr. Anthony
11 Phillips, Mr. Phillips, he spoke very well. His
12 child was failing four subjects from -- when she
13 entered from Texas, and she came into Covenant
14 Keepers. After being there, we recognized she's a
15 very intelligent young lady. She had the academics
16 but she needed a structured environment where she
17 could grow. She didn't come here four grade levels
18 below. She's a quite -- she's a really bright child.
19 So, no, they're not all four grades below grade level
20 but it's some things we have to put in place
21 internally for children to grow. And we did that for
22 his daughter.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: And I think what I'm trying to
24 say is if -- at some point growth has to turn into
25 performance --

1 DR. TATUM: True.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: -- if we expect different results
3 in the end. And so if we have high growth, if we're
4 showing high growth, saying everything we're doing is
5 good for these kids and we're going to always get the
6 same level of incoming students, then will we always
7 expect this performance?

8 DR. TATUM: And, sir, when we talk -- no. And
9 that's why we work with our feeder schools out in the
10 area to get the information, work with the children
11 that are coming to us from the elementary schools,
12 begin to have meetings, entrance interviews, and just
13 really talk, commitments, conversations to really
14 find out real early where their kid -- where they
15 are. And so when we look at just the box that we're
16 in, we're making great runs. We're making great
17 growth. So, Dr. Saunders, growth for us will turn
18 into proficiency. That's just not a mindset, but we
19 want every child to experience a level of
20 celebrations, yeas, different things where they are.
21 So we were so in a rush to proficiency, which is
22 right, we were leaving some of our children behind.
23 So now over the years we've paused and we had to give
24 every child a chance, intimately, to show growth and
25 we've done that. We've done that.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. On this, on just a quick
2 side note, what's your current cap?

3 DR. TATUM: 380.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: 380. Okay. So you would not
5 need to initiate a lottery unless your number of
6 applicants exceeded 380. Is that correct?

7 DR. TATUM: Our seats -- it's the number of
8 seats in our building and the capacity we have will
9 not allow us to have 380. That's 380 on our
10 application, but our seats are full at our school
11 now.

12 MS. BARNES: How many is that? How many,
13 again? So I know -- I mean, how many do you have?
14 Since your seats are full what's your --

15 DR. TATUM: We have 172, 71 students.

16 MS. BARNES: Okay.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: So the number of students
18 enrolling, if they exceed that number a lottery
19 process would take place. Am I correct in --

20 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: -- understanding that?

22 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

25 MS. PFEFFER: So these questions kind of follow-

1 up on what Dr. Saunders had been asking. I was
2 looking at your goals and when I pull up the packet
3 -- it is on page 17 of the packet from the posted
4 information. So I'm looking at the three columns
5 where you had the performance goal, the tracking tool
6 and the timeframe. And if I'm understanding right,
7 your growth goal comes into play -- it's that last
8 one listed there, 70% of students will meet their
9 goal as determined by their designation on the
10 Covenant Keepers wraparound growth goal model, as
11 measured by the NWEA MAP assessment. Is that --
12 that's correct?

13 DR. TATUM: We're trying to find it on the
14 application.

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

16 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So it's your -- and this
17 goes back to the question I asked Dr. Davis [sic]
18 about the alignment between NWEA and our future state
19 assessments, that if there is a correlation then as
20 your students are meeting exceedingly or -- yeah, if
21 they're meeting their growth goals, at some point
22 that ought to translate into higher levels of
23 performance.

24 MS. JONES: Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. But then when I look at

1 your performance goals in terms of proficiency -- and
2 this may be a point of conversation -- your goal is
3 that the proficiency level will be 3% higher than
4 Cloverdale Middle School and Mabelvale Middle School
5 and LEA -- or ELA in math.

6 MS. JONES: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Both of those are Priority
8 schools, as well. So I guess when I read that and
9 I'm thinking in terms of proficiency and performance,
10 are those the goals that we need to set? Do those
11 goals align with expected growth in terms of
12 performance? And we also need to be looking at
13 growth in terms of performance associated with this
14 future -- well, this year's state assessment and
15 future because that's where you're going to start
16 seeing the match between growth and performance in
17 terms of proficiency. So I just -- that gave me
18 pause when I read that. When I first read it I was
19 thinking 3% and then when I looked at the comparison
20 group that -- I guess I have some questions about
21 that. I don't know, my colleagues may have some
22 comments to that as well.

23 MS. JONES: Yes. I'll go ahead and address the
24 3%. Eventually, we don't want to have to compare
25 ourselves with other area schools. We want to be

1 able to compare us to ourselves and the progress that
2 we've making. We want to allow for some time for the
3 testing to stabilize. So starting out, we would
4 compare our results with other schools but we want to
5 go ahead in the future and compare ourselves with
6 ourselves and the progress that we're making along
7 the way. So I don't believe the 3% was ever meant to
8 be the end goal.

9 MS. PFEFFER: But I guess my concern is more
10 with the comparison group being other very low
11 performing schools. That's I think more of my pause,
12 so --

13 MS. JONES: The reason we have chosen those
14 schools is that's the -- those are the neighborhoods
15 that our students come from. If our students weren't
16 attending Covenant Keepers, the majority of them
17 would be at Cloverdale, would be at Mabelvale, would
18 be at Henderson.

19 MS. BARNES: Okay. And then I'm done --

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

21 MS. BARNES: -- believe it or not. I want to
22 say that -- and I was listening to Ms. Pfeffer and
23 Ms. Smith and Dr. Saunders' questions. So here's
24 what I'm trying to say to you. I'm trying to say
25 that I understand everything that we have discussed.

1 Growth is probably where your charter should be
2 aiming rather than fitting into a traditional mold.
3 However, even with growth you could meet your AMOs
4 last year based on performance or growth; you didn't
5 make it on either. But I do believe that in light of
6 -- because Ms. Smith hit on what I had intended to
7 talk about, and that was -- I was listening to Dr.
8 Wilde and I listened to the fact that he said over
9 the last two years things are beginning to morph and
10 gel and begin to move in the direction that the
11 relationship of the School Improvement Unit has with
12 other -- any school district; it's beginning to take
13 shape. I also listened to the fact that the
14 principal has put some things into place with respect
15 to understanding that we all are different, we handle
16 our emotions differently, and, of course, unless a
17 student feels safe and secure it's difficult to sit
18 down and work on academics.

19 You know, I'm trying to make sure I hit all the
20 things that I intended to say before we went around
21 the bend. So I get that we are now again looking at
22 a crossroad with Covenant Keepers because you have
23 the very same issues that many others have with
24 respect to transitions of assessments. What you have
25 that is possibly a little more unique is your

1 population and those -- the populations or
2 subpopulations that you're showing greater gains with
3 than with others. The instability of the assessments
4 have an impact, sure; instability of personnel. So I
5 assume you have -- you're now feeling a little more
6 comfortable and you feel like you're rounding the
7 bend to get on track. Because I always feel that we
8 need at a minimum two years with some stability in
9 order to look at anything; even to show growth we
10 have to have at least a couple of years. I'm willing
11 to accept the fact that you feel that's where you are
12 now. Okay. "We're getting ready to -- the State has
13 said that they're going to be a little more stable
14 with the assessments; if you want to make a decision,
15 make a decision based on when we get stable." I'm
16 saying you may want to look at some adjustments also
17 with respect to how you plan to measure success. I
18 think that, in and of itself, would temper a lot of
19 the concerns because then we could actually measure
20 apples with apples. If we're talking about growth,
21 if we're talking about moving the needle, if we're
22 talking about making the change, yes, over the long
23 haul if you start to see growth and it's consistent
24 it will equate to improved performance and
25 achievement.

1 And so I don't know really how I plan to do it
2 but I'm willing to make a motion at some point. I'm
3 really done. I just wanted to -- I wanted you to
4 understand I recognize -- I've worked with
5 oppositional student populations over my career and I
6 worked with middle school students. So I get the
7 challenge and I did understand why you had the
8 comparison, because you have to compare it with the
9 schools in the area. And unfortunately that's
10 something that we're challenged with in the state but
11 particularly right now in this area that at a very
12 critical grade span and level we are seeing failing
13 populations and we need to make that look
14 differently. We need to make opportunities for
15 success. So unless other people have some concerns
16 or questions I'll make a motion.

17 MR. ROGERS: Let me ask.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I've got several. Mr.
19 Rogers.

20 MR. ROGERS: I'm fixing to change it completely
21 up. I have just two things. One is I pulled up the
22 APSCN bank rec. report and the checks outstanding,
23 there are two that are three years old and four --
24 and three that are two years old. So I just wondered
25 if we could take a look at that and find out what's

1 going on with that.

2 The other thing that I have is on the EBD report
3 it shows that Covenant Keepers was late filing and
4 got penalized \$100. And so I was wondering if that's
5 one time or is that something that --

6 DR. TATUM: I'm cringing myself.

7 MR. ROGERS: By the look on your face I take it
8 you were surprised too.

9 MS. MARQUITA HILL: I'll speak on the EBD
10 checks. It was that time because we have to take our
11 mail to a different area. We're in a building with
12 other businesses, so the mail did not get picked up
13 until late. So that's not a consistent --

14 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So --

15 MS. HILL: So we're working on actually trying
16 to -- we don't get the mail at our address and we
17 can't get it picked up from our address. So that's
18 something we're trying to work on with the Post
19 Office so we won't keep having that issue of mail
20 getting picked up -- getting to us late or getting
21 sent out late. And he'll speak to the bank rec.

22 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

23 MR. HAMILTON: Deron Hamilton. We are a CPA
24 firm; we do some consulting with Covenant Keepers.
25 As far as the outstanding checks, we have confirmed

1 with the vendors and those checks will be removed off
2 of there. We just wanted to do our due diligence to
3 make sure that they were not checks that would come
4 back --

5 MR. ROGERS: Right.

6 MR. HAMILTON: -- to bite us in the future.

7 MR. ROGERS: Right.

8 MR. HAMILTON: But we're comfortable that those
9 checks are going to be taken off the system and so it
10 wouldn't be an issue going forward.

11 MR. ROGERS: Okay. When are they going to be
12 taken off the system? I'm sorry.

13 MR. HAMILTON: We'll have them taken off
14 probably -- actually, it was scheduled to be taken
15 off last month. It was just we took them -- we
16 wanted to make sure before we took them off, because
17 some of those are like real small dollars --

18 MR. ROGERS: Right. Right.

19 MR. HAMILTON: -- and it was going to a vendor
20 where it's hard to get someone on the phone to say,
21 "Is this a good check or not?" But we're going to
22 make sure that they're off here in the next -- we'll
23 make sure -- actually, this reconciliation.

24 MR. ROGERS: Okay. All right. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. I just had a question. I
2 know that on this particular item we have two issues,
3 one concerning Priority and one concerning renewal,
4 and wondering will we be handling those separate or
5 as together? I know this is kind of one, I mean, but
6 prior to any motions -- I know on the renewal I have
7 lots of questions concerning the waiver requests and
8 I haven't -- I was looking at it. Currently, it's
9 just been Priority first but I may be looking at it
10 wrong, so --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, your advice?

12 MS. DAVIS: You don't have to -- you can do it
13 all in one motion or you could do it separate. I
14 mean, if there are concerns about whether or not you
15 are going to renew them or non-renew them, then you
16 might want to handle that separately and then you can
17 go into how you want to deal with their Priority.
18 But you don't have to; you can do it in one motion.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Dr. Saunders, if
20 you have questions about the waivers, go ahead and
21 ask those.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: All right. Dr. Tatum -- give me
23 just a second to get it up. All right. From my
24 understanding, I'm looking at the new waiver
25 requests, looking at a waiver from teacher planning

1 time, duty-free lunches. Is that correct?

2 MS. CLANCY: Yes, sir.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: What are you planning on doing
4 different that you would need those waivers?

5 MS. CLANCY: Those are not new waiver requests.
6 We've had those since inception and those are in
7 place just in case we need them, if we're getting
8 more flexible with our teacher prep time.

9 MR. WALTER: Madam Chairman, may I address the
10 Panel?

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Absolutely.

12 MR. WALTER: All right. Thank you. Dr.
13 Saunders, to address your questions, I think the two
14 things that those waivers have in common is they're
15 not a diminution in the time that's the statutorily
16 required time that Covenant Keepers has to provide in
17 those areas; it's just asking for flexibility as to
18 how they're provided. For example, with the planning
19 period it's certainly the intent to provide the full
20 200 minutes. It's just that the statute, as you
21 know, requires they provide it within the
22 instructional day. Because Covenant Keepers has
23 extended hours and extended day, then they're just
24 asking that that be moved to a later time in the day
25 that's non-instructional.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: So it would be after the school
2 day?

3 MR. WALTER: Yes, but still within the teachers'
4 employment --

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

6 MR. WALTER: -- per their agreements but not
7 within the actual instructional day.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: But this is a new waiver, is that
9 correct?

10 MR. WALTER: I think it's a new -- an
11 explanation of --

12 MS. CLANCY: Right.

13 MR. WALTER: -- a utilization of a currently
14 held waiver.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And the duty-free lunch?

16 MS. CLANCY: It's the same thing. We've had
17 that in place.

18 DR. TATUM: Since the inception.

19 MR. WALTER: So I think the intent here was as
20 part of their renewal process, when we had to go
21 through a waiver examination process, anyway is to
22 kind of not only bring up new waiver requests but
23 find a vehicle in which we could better explain the
24 ones that are in place now and how they're currently
25 going to be utilized.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And then, seat time?

2 DR. TATUM: The seat time is pretty much the --
3 it is the same, but we have implemented a plus-time
4 in order to give us that flex in our schedule. So we
5 want children and -- wait a minute. Okay, I'm trying
6 to find it here. Hold on. The seat time is because
7 of the digital coursework, project-based learning,
8 and the RTI. That's why we wanted to ask for that
9 particular waiver.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Can you give me an example of --
11 for example, a grade or subject and what that might
12 look like?

13 DR. TATUM: Well, we have Reading Plus, so it
14 would mean that -- or keyboarding, where the children
15 are actually still getting academic time during those
16 -- during the seat time.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: That's only for keyboarding. Is
18 that what you said?

19 DR. TATUM: No, sir. It's not only for
20 keyboarding.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

22 DR. TATUM: And it's also -- we have a Reading
23 Plus and other digital courses that we provide to our
24 students. We use a computer lab where we have two
25 particular computer labs where children can get

1 digital coursework, as well as we have Ingenuity
2 where our students are getting that seat time and
3 taking that online course, which is our Algebra 1.
4 So when we talk about seat time that helps us to roll
5 out a full curriculum alignment with the frameworks
6 -- or standards, I guess I should say.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. What courses besides
8 Algebra 1 would this include, and Reading Plus? Are
9 those the only two?

10 DR. TATUM: We have -- and we have keyboarding,
11 as well.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Keyboarding. And it would be
13 limited to those three?

14 DR. TATUM: Yes. Keyboarding, Reading Plus, and
15 Ingenuity, which is an online Algebra 1 class.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. The Ingenuity is Algebra
17 1. Right?

18 DR. TATUM: It is an Algebra 1 class.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: It is the one?

20 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh. It's a digital course.
21 Yes, sir.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: And what would be a typical time
23 for a student to need to complete that for credit?

24 DR. TATUM: For the Algebra 1 it would be a full
25 year. For keyboarding it would be at the semester.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: But with the waiver of seat time
2 it would no longer be a full year and semester. So
3 what would be a typical --

4 DR. TATUM: It would change at that semester
5 time and they may go into not the Ingenuity class,
6 but they may go into another digital course, which
7 could be the Reading Plus. So when it finishes at
8 the semester time it's not that they go home or
9 whatever; they do into another digital course.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: So -- okay.

11 DR. TATUM: That's required by standards.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: So it would be a full credit of
13 Algebra 1 for one semester. Am I understanding that?

14 DR. TATUM: Yes. And if they finish it --

15 MS. CLANCY: And they can work at --

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

17 MS. CLANCY: I'm sorry. They can work at their
18 own pace and so if they finish the course early, all
19 of their requirements of the course, they will finish
20 the course and we can have them in some kind of --
21 some other enrichment.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Well, do you have a plan on what
23 -- this specific course, what the average amount of
24 time a student spends to complete it?

25 DR. TATUM: When you -- the course for math,

1 it's an hour-and-a-half and so they do that time
2 there in the classroom --

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Right.

4 DR. TATUM: -- doing this digital course. But
5 they can also utilize it when they're at home. So
6 there are certain dates that the teacher in this
7 digital course -- let's just say Algebra 1 -- she
8 gives to the facilitator and the teacher. So the
9 seat time could last a whole year when we talk about
10 that. But some children, they do finish early;
11 they're aggressive about finishing. You know, it
12 could be three weeks early or two weeks. It just
13 really depends on the child's pace and finishing the
14 online course.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And that's what I'm
16 asking, and I'm not being difficult but I want to
17 understand. So if the child is in there for an hour-
18 and-a-half a day, is it possible that that student
19 could complete the entire Algebra 1 course in a
20 month?

21 DR. TATUM: No, sir.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. What's the minimum amount
23 of time that child would need to be in there to
24 receive the credit?

25 DR. TATUM: I would say the child would need to

1 be, probably seven or eight months.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

3 DR. TATUM: Seven or eight months.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: At an hour-and-a-half a day?

5 DR. TATUM: That is correct.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

7 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Just for clarification,
9 are these students in the Algebra 1 class, they're
10 proficient in 8th grade math?

11 MS. JONES: We have -- the students that are
12 proficient in math that are 8th graders, they are all
13 in that class. However, we do have some students
14 that are not quite at proficiency; I'd say maybe four
15 students that we're still working to build them up to
16 where they need to be.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But they're taking Algebra
18 1 for credit?

19 MS. JONES: They are taking Algebra 1 for
20 credit. Yes, ma'am. And we're talking about
21 according to -- okay, I was going to say we're
22 talking about -- we're talking about NWEA. Are you
23 talking about whether they were proficient in 7th
24 grade and ready to move on to Algebra 1?

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I would've assumed that

1 they would've been proficient at 7th grade math if
2 you were to place them in an Algebra 1. So do you
3 have them in an 8th grade math class plus an Algebra
4 1 class --

5 DR. TATUM: The Algebra --

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- or in place --
7 replacement of?

8 DR. TATUM: We have a highly qualified teacher
9 that teaches math. And when the children didn't --
10 or they haven't shown the -- or have the grade in the
11 past to move into the Algebra 1 class, then we have a
12 full-time highly qualified teacher. Be mindful that
13 parents are -- they know about the Ingenuity course
14 because there are signed permission slips. Parents
15 are onboard with us and really understand the whole
16 breakout of the Ingenuity class. So, as Ms. Jones
17 said, the three to four students who are in there,
18 they are in there by parent request as well, so
19 they're fully aware of this digital course and the
20 progress that it's going to take for the child to
21 finish in a timely manner.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions?

23 DR. TATUM: I guess I'm trying to figure out
24 what the confusion is, I guess.

25 MS. BARNES: I got confused.

1 MS. JONES: I also want to include that,
2 remember, this is an hour-and-a-half class and half
3 of the class is used -- you know -- it's Algebra 1
4 and then the other half is used to build up that 8th
5 grade math, as well. Okay.

6 MS. BARNES: Okay. So, I'm sorry, but I got
7 tangled up in there a little bit and I just need a
8 little help. I'm trying to be sure that students who
9 are in the hour-and-a-half class who are taking
10 Algebra 1 were proficient in the 7th grade math, I
11 believe, before they moved into an Algebra 1 class?
12 Are there 8th graders who have not shown proficiency
13 but they're in the Algebra 1 for acceleration? I'm
14 -- help me. I got lost.

15 MS. JONES: Well --

16 MS. BARNES: I just don't -- I don't want to --

17 MS. JONES: Right.

18 MS. BARNES: -- feel that I heard what I thought
19 I heard.

20 MS. JONES: We didn't yet have PARCC scores
21 though whenever they were placed in the class.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But you had NWEA.

23 MS. JONES: Yes, we did. And that's what I was
24 speaking to, that, overall, the majority of those
25 students were on the correct level and there were

1 three students that were not on that level.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But you felt that they
3 were close enough to be successful?

4 MS. JONES: Yes. Yes, ma'am.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. That's what we were
6 trying to --

7 MS. JONES: Okay. Yes, ma'am.

8 MS. SMITH: Are they getting high school credit
9 for completion of the Algebra 1 course?

10 MS. JONES: Yes, they are.

11 MS. SMITH: Okay. Okay. And you're basing
12 their enrollment in that course on their NWEA score,
13 which is an indicator that they'll be successful in
14 Algebra 1?

15 MS. JONES: Yes, ma'am. And there is a linking
16 study --

17 MS. SMITH: Yes.

18 MS. JONES: -- that has been done that shows
19 that.

20 MS. SMITH: Yes.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: So just to clarify on that, the
22 student would receive credit for 8th grade math and
23 Algebra 1 for that hour-and-a-half course. Correct?

24 DR. TATUM: Yes.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

1 MR. WALTER: Ms. Coffman, may I just interject
2 one thing, a point of clarification?

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You might not want to. I
4 think we're all straight now.

5 MR. WALTER: Okay. Well, this is on something
6 else. I'm not going to try and mess that up.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thanks, Tripp.

8 MR. WALTER: I just wanted to go back to Dr.
9 Saunders' questions on the planning period and duty-
10 free lunch and take another look at it. I think
11 those may have been waivers that were formally held
12 but they're not held now. So they are indeed new
13 waiver requests.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So they are new?

15 MR. WALTER: Yes, sir. That is correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Does anyone else have
17 questions?

18 Dr. Tatum, I always save mine for the end. I've
19 been to visit your school twice and I always feel
20 very welcome there. I'm sure that's why the students
21 feel so comfortable there, because it is a very
22 welcoming and nurturing environment. I really see
23 your school as a niche school. I think it really
24 fits a nice because it fits the needs of a certain
25 group of kids that need just what it is you're

1 providing. And I've always felt really good about
2 the school but I have to say today I -- as I read
3 through here -- I didn't have questions, but as we've
4 gone on I now have a list. So I'll try to do them
5 quickly.

6 Two things that came up: one is one of your
7 staff said you're doing everything for the kids and
8 so that's a flag for me.

9 DR. TATUM: Me personally?

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No, the school. The
11 school is doing everything they can for the school --
12 for the students. So just very quickly I want to ask
13 a few questions. What's the number of days you go
14 total per year?

15 DR. TATUM: 192.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Student contact days?

17 DR. TATUM: A hundred -- well, that's admin.
18 So, 188.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And the length of your
20 day?

21 DR. TATUM: From 7:15 until about 5:15, teachers
22 are released.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But I'm talking the
24 students.

25 DR. TATUM: Students, 7:35 until 4:00.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you have a positive
2 behavioral support system in place?

3 DR. TATUM: Yes, we do.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you offer
5 transportation?

6 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And do you have a word
8 study program in place for derivational constancy,
9 roots, affixes?

10 MS. WHIPPS: Yes, ma'am. It's built into Engage
11 New York. Whenever we're going over a new unit each
12 lesson deals with vocabulary, it deals with how to
13 introduce the vocabulary, we study word roots. We do
14 it across the board, even our science and social
15 studies teachers do it.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And my final
17 question is, there was a request for additional time
18 that was made over and over, and I think Ms. Barnes
19 kind of alluded to that. How much time is the time
20 needed? Are we talking one year, two years, three
21 years?

22 DR. TATUM: For our charter?

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Uh-huh.

24 DR. TATUM: We need a chance to -- once the test
25 stabilizes, we need to do five years.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So in five years we could
2 expect that that growth has begun to show itself in
3 proficiency? Is that what you would say? Even
4 though we realize you're coming in with a new group
5 of kids, you know, they're coming in every three
6 years or in more rapid -- when would we see that
7 consistency from the school?

8 DR. TATUM: As ACT Aspire -- if that's it -- and
9 you give us a chance to show that growth, that
10 stability, we need solidly five years because, as Ms.
11 Jones and Ms. -- Dr. McKenzie -- they've shown our
12 8th grade. Our 7th graders, our 8th graders, when
13 they're there with us and they get that seat time
14 there's no question they're growing. We now just
15 need --

16 MS. JONES: We want an extended -- we want an
17 extended runway with our students. We want to be
18 able to build on and have them come in at earlier
19 grades so we're able to have more of an impact on the
20 population of students that we're serving in
21 southwest Little Rock. By being able to build lower
22 grades, we're being able to spend more time with them
23 and have a greater impact on those students.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But that's not a request
25 today?

1 MS. JONES: Right. That's not a request today.

2 MS. CLANCY: That's a projection.

3 DR. TATUM: So that's where we were saying at
4 least five years with the test stabilizing and being
5 able to use those wraparound services, because Ms.
6 Barnes alluded to our African American population.
7 So there's just time that we need to have in order to
8 really stabilize us. We also have a principal that's
9 there and he's using SOAR, so there's so many great
10 things in place that's making a difference.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have one final question.
12 Do you do any kind of data tracking on your students
13 once they go into high school?

14 DR. TATUM: We don't do the data tracking. We
15 were just successfully able to really have
16 conversations with people within some of the high
17 schools. So we look forward to moving forward to
18 really be able to have those conversations and be
19 able to really get some data back. We really have a
20 great relationship with one of the Little Rock School
21 District ELL directors and really moving some of our
22 kids to Hall so they could be a part of that ELL
23 program this fall.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Thank you.

25 Any other questions? Are you ready for a

1 motion? I'm ready. Oh, wait. Wait a minute. Let
2 me check with Ms. Davis. Ms. Davis, are there any
3 remaining issues?

4 MS. DAVIS: No.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Now I'm ready for a
6 motion.

7 MS. BARNES: Okay. Oh, the principal, are you
8 planning to stay?

9 MR. BLOCKER: Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. BARNES: Okay. All right. Given that the
11 current requirements -- this school is a Priority
12 school and we cannot exit any Priority schools prior
13 to the results of our 16-17 assessment data. So I
14 would like to make a move [sic] to approve the
15 renewal for two years with academic review of growth
16 and performance on the 15-16, 16-17 administration of
17 the ACT Aspire.

18 DR. GOTCHER: Say that again.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yeah, repeat that, just
20 that end part. What were the dates?

21 MS. BARNES: 15-16, which is this current year,
22 and 16-17, which is next year, administration of ACT
23 Aspire. That's two consecutive years of the same
24 assessment to demonstrate whether or not the
25 strategies put in place are showing growth that would

1 lend itself to improved achievement. It also would
2 identify whether or not the school is in a position
3 to be moved from Priority status. And so with their
4 continued work with the School Improvement Unit,
5 that's why.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: I'll second that.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And a second from Dr.
8 Saunders.

9 MS. PFEFFER: Is it okay if I get some
10 clarification?

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

12 MS. PFEFFER: When you say the review of data,
13 reviewing it in light of the goals in the charter
14 that they've set as their goals or and also state
15 performance goals?

16 MS. BARNES: I think reviewing it with respect
17 to not only their goals but state performance goals,
18 growth goals. Because growth is a great part of this
19 charter and the abilities that they have shown with
20 respect to, as Ms. Coffman talked about, a niche for
21 a specific subpopulation, similar to a previous
22 charter that we just reviewed. So that's why I was
23 saying two consecutive years of data.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

25 DR. GOTCHER: So two consecutive years but with

1 the latter part of your language, was that a -- just
2 specific -- it wasn't necessarily a probationary type
3 request; it was --

4 MS. BARNES: Well, the thing is they're asking
5 for more time but we need to see evidence of what
6 they're doing because that way we can see whether
7 it's working. And so I'm saying because the state
8 assessment is the ACT Aspire and this is the first
9 year for it, and then next year would be the second
10 year -- that's two consecutive years to demonstrate
11 whether growth is occurring over a period of time.
12 And that's also when we would be looking at our
13 accountability system kicking in with the 17-18
14 school year.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Just as a point of
17 clarification, from -- if we give two years is that
18 going to give us enough time to have the data back to
19 actually review?

20 MS. BARNES: As I understand it, we should be
21 getting our data back fairly early. So we should be
22 able to. I don't know all of the timelines, so
23 someone may -- Ms. Boyd or Ms. Davis may have to
24 assist us. I'm saying we need to look at it, review
25 it, and that may be an internal review, and at that

1 time it would be up to us to make a recommendation as
2 to whether we want to call them in to move forward or
3 whatever. I'm not calling it probation; I'm just
4 simply saying renew it for two years with -- so that
5 they have an opportunity to have consecutive years of
6 the same assessment to demonstrate whether or not
7 growth is actually occurring.

8 MS. SMITH: Is this our discussion time --

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

10 MS. SMITH: -- so we can discuss?

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It is.

12 DR. GOTCHER: We've had a motion and a second.
13 Correct?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Right.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're in --

17 MS. SMITH: So this is discussion time. Okay.
18 So we're talking about renewal and then we're also
19 talking about their academic distress status. Right?
20 So if we said they could renew their application for
21 five years, that keeps them from having to come back
22 and do the whole application process. But then the
23 Priority status, since they're working with our
24 improvement specialists, they can be continually
25 called in anyway. Right? I mean, don't they have to

1 show --

2 MS. BARNES: For academic distress, they would
3 also be looked at by the subcommittee for Priority;
4 they would be a part of the quarterly reports. So, I
5 mean, there is going to be reviews going on but I
6 don't want to -- I personally didn't want to extend
7 my --

8 MS. SMITH: Okay.

9 MS. BARNES: -- renewal beyond two years for
10 this initial renewal based on this.

11 MS. SMITH: All right.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis.

13 MS. DAVIS: I just wanted to -- I'm not exactly
14 sure when the 2016-17 data will come out, but if you
15 extend it for two years, if you renew them, that
16 would extend their charter until June 30, 2018. So
17 by then you should have the 2016-17 data back and the
18 two years would still be sufficient.

19 MS. BARNES: We'd definitely have it back by
20 then.

21 DR. TATUM: And, Ms. Coffman, could Mr. Scott --
22 he wants to say some words. Can he speak?

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure. We're open to
24 everyone.

25 MR. SMITH: Madam Chair, Members of the Panel,

1 Scott Smith with APSRC on behalf of the applicant.
2 Just something for your consideration, obviously you
3 can bring a charter in at any point in time and see
4 whether they've made sufficient progress on their
5 goals and what they're doing. From their
6 perspective, I think a couple of things that you may
7 wish to consider. The length of term of their
8 charter does matter as far as their viewed strength
9 to the clientele they're trying to serve. This is a
10 three-year grade-span school, so if you're saying
11 they're only going to get two years then the next
12 year's 6th grade class isn't certain whether this
13 school -- the message it may send to whether or not
14 that school may be there by the 8th grade.
15 Obviously, if they're not making their goals that's
16 an issue you're going to look at anyway. So I think
17 from their perspective they may -- they would like to
18 request that you consider their request for a five-
19 year term and set maybe a two-year review window
20 internally, if you would like to do it that way. And
21 that helps them from a strength perspective as far as
22 the message of whether this school is stable and who
23 it's trying to serve, and it seems to work well with
24 the goals that they've submitted. There's somewhat
25 of a little bit of a cross-conversation about review

1 in two years and the goals that they've set in their
2 charter. So I'd just bring that to your attention as
3 well.

4 MS. BARNES: We need to vote on this one and
5 then let it die, and then somebody else can make a
6 motion.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. So the motion
8 stands as-is, Ms. Barnes? Yes?

9 MS. BARNES: Right now. And I think don't we
10 have to go ahead and --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You can always amend your
12 motion.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Can I ask Mr. Smith a question on
14 that?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Mr. Smith, could I ask you a
17 question on that? I understand what you're saying
18 about the two-five/five-year, as far as student
19 enrollment or perception or however you want to
20 address that. But don't they already face that
21 currently any time that a charter school is coming up
22 for renewal, there is a sunset date on every school
23 prior to renewal?

24 MR. SMITH: You know, but if you're looking to
25 enroll and this is currently, right now, a three-year

1 school program. If you're a 6th grader going in, you
2 know, you think you'd come out of this program in the
3 8th grade. And then they say, "But I see you only
4 have two years; your term is only two years," then
5 that certainly communicates a message to families of
6 whether or not they would be willing to consider that
7 school anymore. And that -- I think that's not the
8 intent; I think the intent of what you're talking
9 about is let's look and see if they're making the
10 progress that we want to see them making. And we're
11 merely suggesting that there's a way you can do both
12 in a healthy fashion.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes, what is your
14 will?

15 MS. BARNES: I know you didn't just say "Ms.
16 Barnes, what is my will." I wish that worked
17 everywhere. I have a spotlight on me. Let me look
18 at me. I'm thinking through it because I know, again
19 -- and I have certainly stated that I recognize
20 children, their futures, students and personnel.
21 There's a lot at stake here. I am willing to make an
22 amendment through a three-year window. I don't -- I
23 still don't want to go full-fledged even though --
24 even at the end of one year I recognize that the
25 charter can be called in. But I also don't want to

1 give any indication that it's okay, because right now
2 it's -- you know -- I have some angst. But I also am
3 encouraged to give you the opportunity to demonstrate
4 what you're talking about. I don't want to
5 necessarily go the whole five years. It may be that
6 when you come back you can; I don't know. I do know
7 that I'm willing today to -- based on what I have
8 heard, what has been demonstrated, the discussions
9 that have occurred, I am willing to make an amendment
10 that we do a flat three-year with a review of your
11 academic performance on growth and performance within
12 that three-year period. So how do I do that?

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You just did. Dr.
14 Saunders, do you second that amendment?

15 DR. SAUNDERS: I just want -- I want to ask. I
16 need clarification. So what you -- if I'm
17 understanding you correctly, a three-year renew but
18 with review in two years or review in three years?

19 MS. BARNES: Well, the renewal is for three
20 years. We will be looking at the data continuously
21 but certainly at the end of two years there would be
22 assessment -- I mean, there would be evidence of
23 growth.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: So could we --

25 MS. BARNES: So we -- so I'm just asking for the

1 renewal for three years. Within that three years we
2 have our two-year window that I was initially asking
3 for. I'm not asking for them to come back in two
4 years, unless they are called back at our request or
5 State Board's request or another request. I'm just
6 saying three years.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: I'll second that.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. We've had a
9 motion, amended motion for renewal of three years
10 with a -- by Ms. Barnes and a second by Dr. Saunders.
11 Any additional discussion?

12 Let's go -- we'll go in order. Ms. Liwo.

13 MS. LIWO: Yes, to the amended motion.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

15 MR. LESTER: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

17 MR. ROGERS: No.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

21 MS. BARNES: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

25 MS. SMITH: Yes.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

2 DR. GOTCHER: No.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. We have six-
4 to-two. The motion has passed.

5 If you'll give us a few moments, we'll write our
6 responses and give those to you.

7 DR. TATUM: Could I ask a question afterwards?

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

9 DR. TATUM: Okay.

10 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

12 MS. BARNES: I made the motion to renew for
13 three years based on the fact that while this charter
14 has come before us multiple times some successes with
15 a population that other area schools have not shown
16 is evident. A local high school has supports
17 available for exiting students and transition time
18 must be taken into consideration for stabilization.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

20 DR. GOTCHER: I feel growth has been
21 demonstrated through formative assessment data and
22 leadership stability. Covenant Keepers are meeting
23 the needs of the Latino community and feel they may
24 need more support in that area as changes continue to
25 occur geographically. However, I felt support in

1 support of extending their renewal more than three
2 years; therefore, I voted against the motion.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

4 MR. LESTER: I voted for. I want to give the
5 charter three years to implement plans for their
6 growth and data will be available for consideration
7 by the Panel.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

9 MS. LIWO: Okay. I voted for, obviously. This
10 was a little -- I was on the fence with this one.
11 Honestly, I'm not quite sure that you guys are going
12 to make it; I'm not. But come with plans in place to
13 hopefully make progress in the future. I really -- I
14 guess for me what the deciding factor was was Mr.
15 Hernandez, what he had to say about what you guys
16 have done for him. And if there is even a little bit
17 of a possibility that you can do what you've done for
18 Mr. Hernandez right now in your current situation to
19 students down the line, and show that increase in
20 performance, I think it's worth giving you a three-
21 year renewal just to see if that can happen. And
22 that's why I voted for. Sorry, long-winded.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

24 MS. PFEFFER: I too think that the wraparound
25 services is definitely something positive that you

1 provide for your students. I believe that the three-
2 year renewal is going to provide you with an
3 opportunity to demonstrate that your new
4 administration and your current efforts can align to
5 help insure higher achievement and growth. I -- you
6 know -- I battled this, as well. I have concerns
7 regarding your current status and the designations.
8 But I do believe that in the future we'll have a more
9 stable environment and stable data to use to align
10 with your NWEA data. And that's a lens that I would
11 continue to look at that, in terms of is your data,
12 your local ongoing interim data, is it aligning with
13 the outcomes that you see at the end of the year.
14 And you'll be able to start getting some of that
15 information as soon as this year. So I did vote in
16 favor of the motion.

17 DR. TATUM: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

19 MR. ROGERS: I voted against the motion because
20 I thought it should've been longer. Although they do
21 need to be monitored for academic progress, I think
22 that, with the testimony of Mr. Hernandez, they are
23 doing good things in their community and they are
24 serving people that do need that. And I feel like
25 with the longer time, with stability in the

1 community, that it would give them that chance to
2 keep growing.

3 DR. TATUM: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I voted in favor. I had a
6 concern over the current performance. I believe that
7 the consistent standards and assessment will provide
8 us with an opportunity to demonstrate that
9 performance or growth. And I just want to encourage
10 you to look more so towards -- look towards the
11 statewide assessments at the end of the years, the
12 determiners of success, as opposed to internal
13 formative assessments. They can be used as a tool
14 and a guide to get to the statewide test, so just
15 encourage you with that.

16 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir. Thank you.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

19 MS. SMITH: I voted for. I noted that the
20 application presentation shows significant
21 improvement in school culture, academic growth, and
22 professional learning over the past two years.
23 Continued focus pertaining to academic status needs
24 to be closely monitored. I was impressed by the
25 community relationships with many in the area in an

1 effort to meet the needs of the students. And I want
2 to recognize that you guys are 91% free and reduced
3 lunch. You are testing all of your students 6th
4 through 8th grade. And, boy, as a principal, if I
5 knew every one of my students was testing at that
6 middle grade level, that's a challenge. And so
7 continue your efforts to lead and be strong.
8 Leadership is by example and continue to do that.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher, correct me if
10 I'm wrong but your no-vote was to -- you voted no
11 because you wanted to give them more time. Is that
12 correct?

13 DR. GOTCHER: That's correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, Dr. Tatum, I think I
15 would take this as a super success. Six voted for
16 the three years and two voted to give you more time.

17 DR. TATUM: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So it's not really six-to-
19 two as in two no's; it's two for -- no for the three
20 years and wanting longer.

21 DR. TATUM: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So we expect great things
23 from you and we look forward to future reports to
24 show that that trust was put in the right place.

25 DR. TATUM: Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: This committee will take a
2 10-minute break and then we will hear action item 4.
3 Thank you.

4 DR. TATUM: Thank you.

5 (BREAK: 2:44-2:57 P.M.)

6 A-4: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL
7 AND PRIORITY STATUS HEARING: PINE BLUFF LIGHTHOUSE CHARTER
8 SCHOOL

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, we're ready for
10 action item 4. You're recognized.

11 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The State --
12 oh, sorry. Request for Open-Enrollment Public
13 Charter School Renewal and Priority Status Hearing
14 for Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School. The State
15 Board of Education approved the application for Pine
16 Bluff Lighthouse Charter School on November 8, 2010.
17 The charter is approved to serve students in grades
18 K-12 with a maximum enrollment of 650.

19 Representatives of the Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter
20 School are appearing before the Charter Authorizing
21 Panel to request a 5-year renewal for the charter.
22 Also, the Charter Authorizing Panel has required
23 representatives of Pine Bluff Lighthouse to appear
24 for a hearing pursuant to Arkansas code annotated 6-
25 23-105 to discuss academic performance.

1 Representatives of the charter agreed to combine
2 these two hearings and approved combining the hearing
3 procedures to be followed. Possible actions to be
4 taken by the Charter Authorizing Panel include
5 renewal of the charter based on this renewal
6 application. But due to its Priority status,
7 possible actions include modification, probation,
8 revocation, and/or nonrenewal of the charter.

9 Do you all need to be reminded of the hearing
10 procedures? They're the same as the ones for the
11 item immediately before this.

12 Okay. Would you like --

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. We're good.

14 MS. BOYD: You're good. Okay. So I'm going to
15 go straight into the 20 minutes for the State.

16 Pine Bluff Lighthouse Academy, part of the
17 greater Lighthouse Academies network, was first
18 authorized by the State Board of Education to operate
19 in November of 2010 to serve grades K-12. Recently,
20 the school has been classified a Priority school.
21 The contract is scheduled to expire in June of 2016.

22 In my visits to the campus and conversations
23 with the school leadership, it has come to my
24 attention that the school has had four school leaders
25 since it opened its doors in August 2011. However,

1 the school seems to have gained a dependable and
2 capable leader in Mr. Bryant -- excuse me -- Mr.
3 Brent Mitchell, who began working at the campus in
4 late fall 2014. Under the direction of Mr. Mitchell,
5 the school has increased teacher retention and the
6 impact of having a more consistent staff from last
7 year to this year is apparent within the school
8 culture.

9 I'll defer the rest of my time to Dr. Wilde.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Wilde. Yes, ma'am?

11 COURT REPORTER: They need to be sworn.

12 MS. BOYD: Oh.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Before you
14 start, let's -- if all the representatives -- I
15 hadn't turned my page yet -- all the representatives
16 from Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School and anyone
17 speaking in opposition please stand and raise your
18 right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the
19 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
20 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

21 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Wilde,
23 you're now recognized.

24 DR. WILDE: Thank you. Richard Wilde, School
25 Improvement Unit. Pine Bluff Lighthouse this year

1 was classified in Priority status. As such, we're
2 just beginning or just initiating through fall
3 interaction from the School Improvement Unit with the
4 site. The other component of school improvement is
5 also the ACSIP and the general ACSIP and the general
6 ACSIP submission. So there's two roles here: one is
7 looking at their general school improvement process
8 and then their application for categorical and
9 federal funds. The part where we would be somewhat
10 critical would be in their submission of their
11 general ACSIP, and that is said lightly in the sense
12 that we are in transition from one model to a new
13 model, so we have a number of districts and a number
14 of schools this year that we're having difficulty
15 with submission of ACSIP. So I want to at least give
16 that caveat that they're not unique in that sense of
17 struggling with that part.

18 We'd like to highlight that on the second page
19 of the report that we submitted that it has also been
20 typical, it's been our experience, when a charter
21 school has been identified in Priority status that
22 there is naïveté' about the process. So when School
23 Improvement shows up and says, "We're here to help,"
24 there is some resistance, and that resistance is in
25 the form of, "Well, we're doing everything

1 appropriately and everything we could possibly do
2 right now." Again, given their history of change in
3 leadership, and with Mr. Mitchell coming in at the
4 beginning of this year, he did not have and did not
5 possess that long-term history of the school itself,
6 so he couldn't give us a lot of background knowledge
7 on why they had not done certain things. That said,
8 however, we'd like to also indicate that Mr. Mitchell
9 is an experienced principal, so that was a plus we
10 gave them, and he was familiar with the school
11 improvement process. One of the pieces that is not
12 yet in place, but he has assured us that they are
13 working on it, is the hiring of a school improvement
14 specialist. And the position has been offered; it
15 just hasn't been accepted yet. So from our
16 standpoint looking at it, they are about where we
17 would be with any first year Priority school in terms
18 of the school improvement process and we're working
19 through still those initial stages.

20 Any questions for me on that?

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Would you clarify on the
22 school improvement specialist that has not been
23 accepted: the person that's been offered the job has
24 not accepted the job. Is that what you're saying?

25 DR. WILDE: Correct.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

2 DR. GOTCHER: Can we ask questions --

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

4 DR. GOTCHER: -- later?

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yeah. We'll have
6 questions later. Thank you, Dr. Wilde.

7 Ms. Boyd, if you'll introduce the school.

8 MS. BOYD: First to address the Panel from the
9 school we have a number of parents. And we're going
10 to remind them and ask them to speak directly into
11 the mic and state their names before they address you
12 all.

13 MR. WINSTON: Madam Chair, to the rest of the
14 Panel, good afternoon. My name is Michael Winston,
15 Senior, and I am a parent of one of the Lighthouse
16 scholars. And I can truly say that like a concerned
17 parent my son, he's only in 1st grade. Last year, I
18 was concerned about his behavior and his grades in
19 school. Well, like any kind of parent, I took a look
20 at it and I started showing up at school. And when
21 I'd get him on the weekends -- because I don't have
22 him every day -- when I'd get him on the weekends I
23 started paying attention to his behavior. Come to
24 find out, my son is lazy, not only at home but at
25 school. Because I was about to blame it on the

1 teachers. Well, when I saw how the teachers was
2 teaching and how concerned they was about not only
3 just one but all, it hit me, okay, I have a lazy
4 child. You know, instead of paying attention he
5 wants to play, he wants to do this. So instead of
6 going fishing when I'd get off work, I would go to
7 school and I would sit with him and I would see his
8 behavior and see his performance. Well, there's no
9 way you can learn if you're not paying attention. So
10 by me showing up, helping out in class and helping
11 out more at home he's improved tremendously from only
12 getting D's and C's, he's making A's and B's. And
13 this is only his second year. And with that being
14 said, I really appreciate that because when I'm able
15 to go to the classroom and not look at a teacher just
16 sitting at her desk, you know, she's literally
17 walking around, spending time with each and every
18 individual. You know -- and when you have a
19 classroom as a whole can raise their hand to numerous
20 questions, that lets me know that they're paying
21 attention and they're catching on. So by this year I
22 really appreciate what has been done in my son's
23 classroom. And come to find out, I didn't know that
24 Lighthouse teachers Chinese. I was shocked to get
25 that information. And that's in the 6th grade, if

1 I'm correct -- 5th grade, yeah. He's only in 1st
2 grade, you know. Me, personally, I would rather see
3 a little bit more foreign languages. No offense but,
4 you know, I would. And, you know, I'm looking
5 forward to see more. And with that, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Winston.

7 MS. SEEPERSAD: Hello. My name is Sandra
8 Seepersad. I have a child at Lighthouse that's in
9 the 5th grade. He's been there ever since he's been
10 in 1st grade. He'd been having speech problems when
11 he first got there. Lighthouse has great programs;
12 they have speech therapists, special education. He
13 was slow in his reading. He has learned a lot from
14 Lighthouse. The teachers inform me if he's having a
15 bad day. They have no problem picking up the phone,
16 calling me. Sometimes I can just talk to him on the
17 phone and he's okay. And it's like Lighthouse makes
18 you feel like we're family; they include me in
19 everything. And like you said, Chinese -- my son is
20 in the 5th grade, so he came and wrote something and
21 I'm like, "What is that?" But, you know, he's
22 helping me learn things that I didn't know. And as
23 far as the special education program, it's like --
24 you know, I'm a little older and I have a 5th grader
25 and when I didn't understand his school homework all

1 I had to do was just pick up the phone and call the
2 teachers, and they give you their personal telephone
3 number. They have no problem. I can call if it's
4 5:00 in the evening and they'll explain it to me
5 because I'm, you know, trying to help him with his
6 homework. And I just want to say that I appreciate
7 Lighthouse being there and I don't really know what I
8 would do without them, because I didn't want my child
9 to go to a public school. So I'm just, you know,
10 here to speak on their behalf and letting them know
11 that I appreciate them being there for him.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Sandra, what was your
13 last name?

14 MS. SEEPERSAD: Seepersad.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

16 MS. BROADWAY: Good afternoon. I'm Lenisha
17 Broadway, the regional vice president for Pine Bluff
18 Lighthouse Charter School. I'm not going to take a
19 lot of time because I know that we already have had
20 some parents speak, but just to talk about who we
21 are. And I'm sure the presentation is coming up
22 shortly.

23 We are a national nonprofit charter network that
24 is dedicated to insuring a college education for a
25 population of students who would otherwise face a

1 future with limited opportunity. Lighthouse Academy
2 sets out to distinguish itself by forming a family of
3 schools that use an arts-infused K-12 college prep
4 program to generate excellent results while using
5 only the state and federal funding provided.

6 Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School opened in
7 2011 with 165 scholars in grades K-4. Each year the
8 school added a grade level. In the 2015-16 school
9 year Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School has 343
10 scholars in grades K-8. Throughout the years the
11 school has always enjoyed the support of parents and
12 the community, as you can see.

13 Today, we are fortunate to have a few of our
14 board of directors present: Ms. Reshona Walker, who's
15 the board president -- she's in the back; Ms. Joy
16 Blankenship -- I'm not sure if she made it; Reverend
17 Doctor Walter Van Zandt Windsor is here -- and we use
18 his --

19 REV. WINDSOR: The obvious one.

20 MS. BROADWAY: Yeah, he's right there. Mr.
21 Tommy Palmer, who's not here; Ms. Wanda Bateman is
22 here; Dr. Joseph E. Brown -- he's not here; and my
23 self, Lenisha Broadway. Also, we have our CEO and
24 president of Lighthouse Academies, Mr. Khori
25 Whittaker who's with us today, and a host of our

1 local leaders in Arkansas, and parents. So we thank
2 them for coming today.

3 To get a better idea of who we serve, I would
4 like to share a few facts about Pine Bluff and the
5 industrial and big businesses within the city -- and
6 they're posted to your right on the slide. Pine
7 Bluff's population is 45,332. The median household
8 income is \$28,050. Eighteen percent of residents
9 have a bachelor's degree or higher. Pine Bluff was
10 ranked 15th in the most dangerous metro areas across
11 the U.S. in 2015. And all the schools in the Pine
12 Bluff School District currently have an academic
13 Needs Improvement or Priority status.

14 Who we serve -- again, we have 343 scholars.
15 Within the 343, we serve 88 families which consists
16 of two to seven children in a family. We are a Title
17 1 school-wide K-6 and this year we are a Targeted
18 Assistance in grades 7-12 because our LEA changed.

19 Our meal status -- one unique thing is that we
20 offer Universal Feeding to our scholars because of
21 our high free and reduced lunch rate of 98%. And our
22 demographics is listed below with 96.5% African
23 American, 1.45% Hispanic, 1.16% Caucasian, and .87%
24 two or more races.

25 Now our educational model -- arts infusion,

1 incorporating the arts in daily instruction is what
2 we do. We have arts specialists who co-teach with
3 content area teachers daily. Arts infusion PB is
4 offered during the summer institute as well as
5 throughout the year. Our school also provides public
6 theater performances each year at local community
7 venues. And the school partners closely with UAPB
8 art department and Southeast Arts and Science Center
9 Arkansas. We also daily expose our scholars to
10 master artists and works of art.

11 Another part of our model is our standards
12 driven planning and instructional resources.
13 Recently, this year, in 2015-16, we incorporated new
14 curriculum at our campus. We now use Eureka Math, K-
15 8, Expeditionary Learning for our literacy, grades 3-
16 8, and Core Knowledge literacy for grades K-2. We
17 believe in educating the Whole Child, so social
18 development is a big aspect of what we do. Our
19 habits of a scholar, which really emphasizes ACES,
20 which stands for Active Community Membership,
21 Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, and Self-
22 Discipline and Self-Management. In our lower grades
23 our teachers really focus on our SHINE curriculum,
24 where SHINE stands for Self-Discipline, Humility,
25 Intelligence, Nobility, and Excellence.

1 Next, just to look at our data -- in 2012-13,
2 Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School scored higher in
3 both the combined population and targeted achievement
4 gap group as it pertains to the Pine Bluff School
5 District. In 2013-14, as you can see, we took a
6 decline. There were many challenges that affected
7 the school's performance that year. One, we hired 10
8 new teachers. We had to staff the school with those
9 positions as well as we lost four teachers during the
10 year. As you know, Pine Bluff is a critical area for
11 finding top talent. Our partnership with TFA has
12 been strong but, unfortunately, maintaining those
13 teachers after their two-year commitment has been a
14 struggle. Our special education population grew in
15 2013-14; 19% of the tested population that year was
16 identified as special education. Only 15% of the
17 scholars had been with Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter
18 School for three or more years within the tested
19 population. And most of our scholars in their first
20 year were coming from surrounding D and F schools.

21 Mathematics between 2012 and 2014 -- in 2012,
22 Pine Bluff Lighthouse scored approximately the same
23 as the Pine Bluff School District in mathematics in
24 the targeted achievement gap group. In 2013, the
25 Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School scores were

1 approximately 12% higher in the combined population,
2 as well as the targeted achievement gap group. But
3 as you can see in the 2013-14 school year, we took a
4 decline. And, again, those same challenges that
5 appear for literacy are the same as in our math.

6 The data for our recent PARCC scores -- our
7 upper academy African American scholars met the AMO
8 in literacy and Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School
9 scholars that attended Pine Bluff for three or more
10 years were the ones that met the standards in
11 literacy. For math our lower academy African
12 American scholars met the AMO in math. Pine Bluff
13 Lighthouse Charter School scholars that attended Pine
14 Bluff Lighthouse Charter School for three or more
15 years again are the ones that are meeting the
16 standards.

17 So some of the variables responsible for our
18 challenges -- as we talked about before, teacher and
19 leader retention. Our four-year retention rate is
20 51.8%. This year 82% of the teachers remained. So
21 great teachers and leaders are needed and great
22 teachers and leaders are being developed.

23 Our scholar retention -- as you can see, and as
24 you probably all know, Pine Bluff is a highly mobile
25 city. Scholars are in and out. People are moving in

1 and out at all times. We know that Pine Bluff has
2 closed two of their schools due to a decline.

3 So some of the reasons that we lose teachers or
4 leaders: personal illnesses, the TFA commitments
5 expire, the lack of rapport from some of our previous
6 leaders with staff and scholars, promotions that have
7 been received by some staff members that moved on,
8 and the demands of a charter school principal. Some
9 of those principals just could not meet the demands
10 of a charter school principal, and then trying to
11 find a principal that's willing to commute because
12 most do not want to live in the city of Pine Bluff.

13 Other variables for our challenges was our
14 curriculum. I believe most -- there are some on the
15 Panel that have seen Lighthouse before and know that
16 we once used Saxon and we once used Imagine It. This
17 year, because of the data we saw a need that we
18 needed to make a change and make it quick. So we did
19 change our curriculum to Eureka Math and
20 Expeditionary Learning and Core Knowledge. We saw
21 that our curriculum was not vertically or consistency
22 -- or there was no consistency from class to class; a
23 lack of student engagement, which we know is huge
24 with students and their academic performance; and
25 just a lack of rigor.

1 Other variables responsible for our challenges
2 -- one, discipline and classroom management. Out-of-
3 school suspensions in 14-15 were 36. Several of our
4 first-year teachers were on staff and were challenged
5 to manage behavior and academics due to teacher
6 retention. A lot of our hires are late hires due to
7 the pool of candidates, so some may miss that initial
8 classroom management training. Because we do do a
9 week-long of responsive classroom for our new
10 teachers, but due to the late hires sometimes that
11 prevents them from receiving that initial training.
12 And then several of our teachers are just
13 nontraditional teachers that are on staff. So, of
14 course, we do have challenges there.

15 But now I want to talk about some of the things
16 that are really working in our school. We are one of
17 the only charters I know in the city of Pine Bluff --
18 we offer transportation to and from school. We've
19 even reached out to areas as far as Wabaseka for
20 scholars. So there's no limitation of us making sure
21 scholars get to school. We also this year
22 incorporated -- due to our lack of commitment from
23 scholars and parents in our afterschool program for
24 remediation, we provide transportation for those
25 scholars to attend our afterschool program. So we

1 are proud of that. We've recently instituted a
2 Saturday arts academy where scholars are also
3 receiving remediation. We do home visits each year,
4 and our parents look forward to that, because we want
5 our teachers to know where our scholars are coming
6 from. Our SWAG program -- and I'm sure you read --
7 it was in the renewal in 2012-13. That was one of
8 the programs that we had in place that worked, where
9 we saw a lot of achievement, where we met AMOs. We
10 have reinstated that this school year because we
11 have a committed staff and leadership team that's
12 willing to push that program; our Universal Feeding
13 Program that we offer for all of our students because
14 of our free and reduced population; and in our social
15 and emotion development program, which really focuses
16 on college readiness; it focuses on character and it
17 builds those student relationships and teacher
18 relationships that are needed; our 160 hours of
19 professional development; also we're part of a
20 charter management organization where we have a
21 network of schools across the United States; and just
22 strong community partnerships within the city.

23 So now that I've talked about the challenges and
24 what's working, I want to talk about our Revamp
25 Restart Plan. Upon a successful renewal, the

1 leadership will launch a restart plan to dramatically
2 increase student achievement. One: significant
3 teacher leadership investment, staffing the school.
4 We want to make sure that we have the right people in
5 front of our scholars providing the best instruction
6 possible. So as we look at school turnaround models
7 we look at how schools are re-staffed sometimes, how
8 schools have to reapply for their jobs. I had to do
9 that when I worked in North Little Rock School
10 District, when we opened a charter school. I was an
11 assistant principal and had to reapply. The right
12 people, if they're doing what they're supposed to be
13 doing and they are committed to being at the school,
14 which means they're going to do what it takes,
15 they'll be there. We did a revamp compensation
16 policy based on school performance, teacher
17 leadership performance, their retention bonuses to
18 try to maintain our high performing staff.

19 Another part of our Revamp Restart Plan:
20 Lighthouse Academy's corporate is launching a teacher
21 hiring and selection training which kicks off
22 February 25th. We also have an April 2nd LHA teacher
23 fair that's going to be hosted here in Arkansas,
24 where Lighthouse Academy is vetting candidates for
25 our school. Attendance at local and college teacher

1 fairs are happening now, hiring bonuses we have in
2 place for the critical shortage areas, and sign-in
3 bonuses for high performing teachers on state
4 assessment.

5 Another part of our Revamp Restart Plan is an
6 increased student retention initiative. Of course,
7 because we lose most of our scholars when it gets to
8 the 7th and 8th grade because of the extracurricular
9 programs that the district schools offer that's
10 becoming an issue. So kids transfer out to go play
11 football, to go play basketball. We did have a
12 girls' basketball team last year, but we did not have
13 enough guys in those grades in order to have a male
14 basketball team. So we may lose scholars to that,
15 and we know that. So this year we did have a boys
16 and girls basketball team. Of course, you know, Pine
17 Bluff is big on band, so we have a drum line; a
18 mentor program with the University fraternities and
19 sororities; choir, dance team, track, drama, and an
20 ambassador program; again, additional tutoring
21 programs with UAPB and our afterschool programs and
22 Saturday arts academy. We did begin GT this year,
23 even though we had a waiver for it. We wanted to
24 make sure we were serving those scholars that met
25 those qualifications, so we do have that in place.

1 Annual college trips for motivation; the kids are
2 taking a trip next week, a local one to UAPB. And
3 mentoring programs for all of our at-risk scholars.

4 Revamp Restart Plan, I've already spoken about
5 what we're doing with our new curriculum. But just a
6 little bit more about it:

7 K-2, Core Knowledge -- it really focuses on
8 additional phonics work as a core component.

9 For 3-8, Expeditionary Learning -- it's heavily
10 aligned with Common Core State Standards; emphasis on
11 reading non-fictional texts, which we knew our
12 scholars did not do a lot of; closed reading
13 incorporating writing through different units of
14 study; and we are implementing the repeated reading
15 strategy.

16 3-8 -- and actually it's K-8, Eureka Math --
17 real world issues vertically and horizontally
18 aligned. And then with the Priority status we are
19 instituting the pre- and post-test in all literacy
20 and math classes. So biweekly assessments are
21 happening and they're used to determine intervention
22 levels for -- in our classroom instructional support.
23 And just another thing about Eureka Math, it
24 incorporates daily exit slips, so we're assessing our
25 kids daily. And also it has net module assessments

1 to make sure that we're checking how our scholars are
2 doing and performing.

3 Another part of our Revamp Restart Plan is our
4 new interim assessment system. We did move from TLI
5 to Link It and it's Common Core aligned. It gives us
6 a variety of test items where we did not see the
7 rigor at a lot of the TLI questions. So we did move
8 to Link It. And it also helps us analyze third-party
9 data, as well as like NWEA and all of those items.

10 The new curriculum provides us with lots of
11 support, pacing guides, curriculum maps, lesson plan
12 templates, and we also make sure that our teachers
13 have grade level meetings that's focused on student
14 achievement data and one-on-one coaching using the
15 Danielson framework. We have ramped up our RTI
16 process advancements where we're focusing on Tier 1
17 instruction first, and then identifying Tier 2 and
18 Tier 3 scholars by name and tag them to skill
19 deficits.

20 The last part of our Revamp Restart Plan is
21 managing student behaviors with restorative practice.
22 So we started the transition this year. In 16-17, we
23 will be moving to full implementation. Year One
24 results, we reduced our out-of-school suspensions to
25 allow students to receive instruction at school.

1 Currently, right now, we have five out-of-school
2 suspensions this entire school year versus the 36 in
3 14-15. Our goal going forward is the reduction of
4 out-of-school suspensions from implementation of
5 restorative practice by 95%. Reflection forms are
6 used to help students understand their actions and
7 options; daily classroom morning meetings are
8 happening to build a community; student-led
9 conferences three times per year to place students at
10 the center of their own learning; and ongoing
11 professional development to add remediation, peace
12 circles, and restorative conferences.

13 The Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School board
14 of directors and leadership of LHA will seek to amend
15 the charter agreement upon successful renewal of the
16 charter. We're requesting to restructure the school
17 to a K-8 campus only to commit to excellence before
18 adding a high school.

19 Our CEO, Mr. Whittaker, would like to take a few
20 minutes, if possible.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Yeah, your time is
22 up. Is there anyone here to speak in opposition?

23 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then, you have five
25 minutes.

1 MR. WHITTAKER: Thank you, Panel, for the time.
2 And so if you think about some of the communities in
3 this country with the most educational needs chances
4 are you'll find a Lighthouse Academy school in that
5 community doing the work. We do what we do because
6 we deeply care about the communities that we serve.
7 We care about the -- about our scholars. So I
8 believe that charter schools, charter management
9 organizations are entities that work in partnership
10 with state and local education organizations in
11 serving scholars and we are in this work together.

12 So I took on this role about a year-and-a-half
13 ago, and for the first several months I was
14 observing, listening, looking into the data, and
15 finding out exactly what's happening in the network
16 as a whole and in Pine Bluff Lighthouse, in
17 particular. I sought to first understand the data
18 before we began to take action. And so Ms. Broadway
19 has outlined a whole slew of initiatives that we've
20 implemented to directly attack our -- and improve our
21 academic excellence.

22 So I want to highlight a few of the changes that
23 we are making. So in adapting to the realities of
24 more rigorous assessments and accountability, and the
25 realities of what our scholars will face now and in

1 the future, we've implemented a more rigorous Common
2 Core aligned curriculum, and Ms. Broadway has talked
3 about that: Core Knowledge, Eureka Math, and
4 Expeditionary Learning. Before, our teachers were
5 working very hard putting together resources and now
6 we provide them with resources that they can learn
7 and implement and spend less time making up things
8 themselves. That also provides them the opportunity
9 to add some creativity in arts infusion into the
10 curriculum that's already laid out for them.

11 Because we are committed to a data-driven
12 approach, we've implemented a stronger Common Core
13 aligned interim assessment with the Link It platform
14 and a data management system to accompany that, and
15 we're providing training for our educators and our
16 teacher leaders on that platform.

17 Now an initiative that is near and dear to my
18 heart is our restorative practice. When I was an
19 educator 16 years ago in the classroom one of the
20 things that I was bound and determined to do was to
21 make sure that I kept all my kids in my class and not
22 suspend them and not expel them, and that took some
23 serious work, took some serious creativity. But I
24 knew that the best place for my students was with me.
25 And we want that same energy throughout our network

1 and that same commitment to keeping scholars in
2 classrooms in Lighthouse schools.

3 The Lighthouse network also employs a targeted
4 tiered support structure because our schools are
5 different; they have different needs. And so we have
6 other educators and leaders in the network visiting
7 schools and providing another eye to support our
8 local leaders.

9 So, all of these network-wide initiatives create
10 opportunities for network-wide collaboration. So our
11 school leaders and our educators have the ability to
12 collaborate with and work with Lighthouse teachers,
13 not only here in Arkansas but throughout our network
14 nationwide.

15 The other challenge that we are addressing is
16 the human capital realities of working in Pine Bluff
17 and thinking about how we source, recruit, hire,
18 onboard train and develop our educators. Now this is
19 a major challenge for us now and it's going to be an
20 ongoing challenge for us going forward, but we are
21 determined to make progress and to make improvements.
22 So we now have a human capital expert that we've
23 hired on my senior staff at the national network who
24 is leading our efforts. We're using our budget more
25 intelligently to target retention initiatives for

1 high-performing teachers. And we've also seen
2 there's a strong correlation between when you hire an
3 educator and the impact on growth that they have in
4 the subsequent year. And the difference from the
5 teachers you hire in April and May versus those you
6 hire in July and August is substantial. And so we
7 are making sure that we are determined to hire most
8 of our teachers early in the hiring season to prevent
9 that from happening in the future.

10 So Lighthouse Academies, we are -- everyone
11 should know we are not satisfied with our academic
12 performance by any means, and we are committed to
13 doing better. But recent data indicates that some of
14 the changes that we've implemented this year under
15 Mr. Mitchell's leadership is starting to show
16 improvements. A question was asked earlier, in an
17 earlier session, about the fall-to-winter NWEA data.
18 And so what we've seen from our fall-to-winter is
19 that 53% of our scholars are meeting or exceeding
20 their growth targets so far in English Language Arts
21 and 51% of our scholars are meeting or exceeding
22 their growth targets in math. So that's a positive
23 indicator that we're going to continue to push.

24 We model a K-12 approach in Lighthouse in
25 general and we prepare our scholars for college and

1 career through a rigorous arts-infused program. Now,
2 and our CPAs, or college preparatory academies, over
3 the last three years we've seen outstanding
4 graduation and college access outcomes. So over the
5 last three years we have 88-plus percent graduation
6 rates from our CPAs in places like Gary, Indiana,
7 Indianapolis, and the south Bronx. And we have 90-
8 plus percent college acceptance rates in those places
9 as well, and so we look forward to serving the full
10 K-12 continuum in Pine Bluff.

11 But as Ms. Broadway just said, what we want to
12 do, and one of the changes that we're making with
13 regard to Pine Bluff, is making sure that in
14 kindergarten through 8th grade we have an excellent
15 program before we launch into high school there. So
16 we're committed to making that change.

17 Lighthouse Academies is 100% committed to the
18 Pine Bluff community and we are 100% committed to
19 supporting this school to achieve the level of
20 excellence that is expected of us from our parents
21 and that our scholars deserve.

22 We thank you so much for your thoughtful
23 consideration.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. I'm sorry,
25 your time is up.

1 MR. MITCHELL: No, I'm here to answer any
2 questions for you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Was that Mr.
4 Whittaker?

5 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Khori Whittaker.
7 All right, Panel; time for questions. Ms. Smith is
8 ready.

9 MS. SMITH: Yeah, I have a question. And this
10 may involve Mr. Whittaker also. I'm just curious to
11 -- discussing the curriculum -- okay -- within the
12 presentation you talked about two new curriculum
13 programs that you guys have used, Eureka Math and
14 Expeditionary Learning, and that you guys have just
15 kind of implemented those within the last -- this
16 year?

17 MR. MITCHELL: This current school year.

18 MS. SMITH: Okay. So what did you do
19 previously?

20 MR. MITCHELL: Well, that was Saxon --

21 MS. SMITH: Saxon?

22 MR. MITCHELL: Saxon Math was there --

23 MS. BROADWAY: And Imagine It.

24 MR. MITCHELL: Imagine It.

25 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so I'm just -- from your

1 network, the national Lighthouse network, do you guys
2 advise as far as curriculums that districts use or
3 schools use or do you leave that up to the individual
4 schools?

5 MR. WHITTAKER: Yeah. So in the past at
6 Lighthouse it was a sort of flexible model where most
7 of the states and the boards were doing their own
8 thing. But recently, in looking into the -- you know
9 -- the new environment with charters and the more
10 rigorous assessments and standards, I've decided that
11 we need to be more prescriptive in terms of the
12 curriculum in each of the states.

13 MS. SMITH: So how do you guys come in and
14 support the school then?

15 MR. WHITTAKER: Yeah. So, Ms. Broadway can
16 speak to that.

17 MS. BROADWAY: So one thing that LHA corporate
18 does is we do have institutes throughout the year.
19 We have a summer, a fall, winter, and we have spring
20 institutes that focuses on the curriculum. We took
21 the initiative locally to bring in Eureka Math to do
22 PD with our teachers this summer, as well as we did
23 the same with Expeditionary Learning and Core
24 Knowledge.

25 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

2 DR. GOTCHER: Good afternoon.

3 MR. WHITTAKER: Good afternoon.

4 DR. GOTCHER: In reviewing your reading scores,
5 I just have a couple of questions. First of all,
6 talk a little bit about your reading curriculum,
7 guided reading, what kind of -- really specifically
8 for your 1st grade through 5th grade students. And
9 then my concern is that those scores have remained
10 pretty flat. And so I'm just curious if someone
11 could address, number one, what reading curriculum is
12 being supported and maybe address the scores.

13 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. I'm sorry I didn't
14 introduce myself. I'm Brent Mitchell; I'm the
15 current principal

16 DR. GOTCHER: Hi, Mr. Mitchell.

17 MR. MITCHELL: -- at Pine Bluff Lighthouse.
18 This is my second year. I think there may have been
19 some confusion in the submitting, but this is my
20 second year. I came aboard late October last year.

21 Okay. To answer your question, there's two
22 curriculums that are used by the elementary school.
23 So we have a K-2 curriculum and then we have a 3-8
24 curriculum. But the K-2 curriculum is scaffolding
25 into the 3-8 curriculum, and so it kind of goes hand-

1 in-hand and so it allows us to get the results we
2 desire.

3 As far as the flat scores, when we're looking at
4 using that curriculum as of this particular school
5 year, NWEA indicates growth in very grade level so we
6 know that it's working. And so we're satisfied but
7 we know there's more work to do. Like we said,
8 there's a 50% success rate for math and 51% for
9 literacy, so the model is currently working that we
10 have in place. We also think that doing the pre- and
11 post-tests helps with that, as well. And so we're
12 excited about the growth we're showing.

13 DR. GOTCHER: Very good. So what I'm seeing
14 here in Table 6 is not reflective of the NWEA scores.
15 Table 6 is on your page 15, I believe, Mr. Mitchell.

16 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. And that's previous data.
17 The NWEA scores I just spoke about were just
18 released. We just took our winter NWEA.

19 DR. GOTCHER: So for the 15-16 school year?

20 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, sir.

21 DR. GOTCHER: I was -- okay. I kind of get
22 connected to three-year trend data. That's why I was
23 kind of wanting to get an explanation of that.

24 MR. MITCHELL: Absolutely.

25 DR. GOTCHER: So, that table represents what

1 curriculum?

2 MR. MITCHELL: The previous curriculum. So that
3 represents the Imagine It, the Saxon, et cetera.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. So Saxon has a reading, as
5 well?

6 MR. MITCHELL: No. I'm saying -- that's not --
7 that's -- on page 15, the literacy data --

8 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, sir.

9 MR. MITCHELL: -- is just particularly for
10 Imagine It, whatnot.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Very good.

12 MR. MITCHELL: That's old curriculum, you know,
13 that we used.

14 DR. GOTCHER: And you're saying that beginning
15 15-16 -- that was handed to me, Alex, earlier?

16 MS. BOYD: Uh-huh.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Well, I don't want to waste your
18 time, so --

19 MR. MITCHELL: Right.

20 DR. GOTCHER: There it is.

21 MR. MITCHELL: That is our current growth that
22 we've shown this current school year using the new
23 curriculum.

24 DR. GOTCHER: All right. I'll look at that and
25 not waste any --

1 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

2 DR. GOTCHER: -- of my colleagues' time.

3 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, sir.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Mr. Mitchell.

5 MR. MITCHELL: No problem.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If someone might -- you or
7 Ms. Broadway, someone mind kind of talking us through
8 the document that you handed us?

9 MS. CROWDER: Hi. My name is Amanda Crowder;
10 I'm the curriculum coordinator and state testing
11 coordinator for Lighthouse Academies in Arkansas.
12 What we did is you'll look at each grade level. As
13 you can see, their average RIT score for fall in the
14 first column; second column is their average RIT, and
15 our overall observed RIT score for RTI -- for the RIT
16 score, I'm sorry. And the last column, that is the
17 number of students' percentage of all of our students
18 that either met their growth or exceeded their
19 growth. So at the top you have, under percent of
20 students by growth classification, you have a red
21 that says No, an orange that says No-plus, Yes-minus,
22 and a Yes. Our Link It assessment system, we've
23 stated they were a third-party data analysis; they
24 help us analyze our data and send us back this
25 information. We're able to go through and pull from

1 their systems our RTI groups. We talked about our
2 Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction. So our teachers have
3 this information readily and in front of them with
4 our Link It system. So you're showing that 22% of
5 our students in literacy met their growth goal for
6 the year, from fall to winter; 31% exceeded their
7 growth goal. So that's an overall of 53% that either
8 met or exceeded their growth goal on the winter NWEA.
9 And the same is for math.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So they've met their
11 growth goal for the entire year?

12 MS. CROWDER: For the entire year.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- by the first -- by the
14 end of the first semester?

15 MS. CROWDER: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So then you would
17 accelerate those kids and go on while you're working
18 with the 47% that have not met?

19 MS. CROWDER: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And is there any
21 commonality in the 47% of the literacy, the 47%
22 literacy and the 48% math? Are those the same kids
23 by any chance?

24 MR. MITCHELL: Yes and no. It's a little mix of
25 everything. Some kids tend to do better in math;

1 some kids do better in literacy. Of course, you do
2 have some kids that represent both populations, but
3 for the most part it's kind of different.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Have you ever applied for
5 a 21st century?

6 MR. MITCHELL: We did. We applied last summer
7 and we felt that our application was very strong;
8 however, we did not receive the grant.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But you'll apply again?

10 MR. MITCHELL: We're going to apply every time
11 they offer a chance to us to apply.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That is the right answer.
13 Mr. Lester.

14 MR. LESTER: I see here that -- and I know you
15 have to go target-assisted your first year of looking
16 into moving towards school-wide. Have you already
17 started looking at a plan for your school-wide?
18 Because you're 86% free and reduced.

19 MR. MITCHELL: We have. We work hand-in-hand
20 with Complete Consulting who kind of does all out
21 financials and that's already been determined would
22 be a good route for us to go.

23 MR. LESTER: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I will just say, and while
25 they're getting their questions together, I did visit

1 the Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School.

2 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I did a drop-in visit, Ms.
4 Boyd and I. We were -- we had a great visit. I
5 appreciate the hospitality. Mr. Mitchell showed us
6 around to all the classrooms and I did see good
7 instruction going on in every room. Mr. Mitchell and
8 I had a great conversation about the next steps --

9 MR. MITCHELL: We did.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- to move the rigor up,
11 but a good solid foundation in classrooms. I saw a
12 great phonemic awareness lesson, a great phonics
13 lesson; we saw good student writing on the walls. So
14 all those things that a literacy teacher looks for
15 when they go into a school I saw evidence of, so I
16 applaud that.

17 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I can tell you're doing
19 good work and as a result of that, everyone else is
20 as well.

21 MR. MITCHELL: Oh, thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. I had some questions
24 concerning the new waivers: duty-free lunch and
25 planning time. Can you talk to me about that?

1 MS. BROADWAY: So, yes. The duty-free lunch, we
2 just want to have the flexibility there to be able to
3 utilize that waiver as needed, if needed. One thing
4 that we're really looking at, the planning time and
5 -- for the teachers, we really want to have more
6 impactful instruction going on all day and be able to
7 work with teachers before or after school. We just
8 feel like keeping them in the classroom, making sure
9 time is being utilized to impact instruction during
10 the day is something that is detrimental to our
11 scholars moving forward.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So now the planning time
13 would occur outside of the school day?

14 MS. BROADWAY: Yeah.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: And the duty-free lunch, a waiver
16 of that would mean teachers would be assigned duty
17 during lunch on some days?

18 MS. BROADWAY: On some days.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And the waivers to be
20 rescinded, you had you wanted to rescind the
21 publication of school district goals. Correct?

22 MS. BROADWAY: Yes. Our first year, you know,
23 we didn't have any data, so that can be removed now.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: And there's a need clarification
25 on the gifted and talented.

1 MS. BROADWAY: Right. We do want to rescind
2 that because we do have that program in place now, so
3 that's the clarification. This year we did get
4 approval to begin the GT program and so it is already
5 up and running. So, we do want to rescind that one.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: And I just need clarification
7 from Legal on -- did ask about the sections 1801 and
8 1802 on the Standards of Accreditation with that tied
9 together. What do we need to do? Did we clarify
10 that?

11 MS. DAVIS: Yeah. She said that they're going
12 to rescind them. The only thing I would add is they
13 also have the waiver of the ADE gifted and talented
14 program approval standards rules that they probably
15 need to confirm they need those rescinded, as well.

16 MS. BROADWAY: Yes.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Are you in agreement? Okay.

18 MS. BROADWAY: Yes.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And down to the
20 performance, I know that looking at your performance
21 on literacy ELA was 8.1% this last year, in English
22 Language Arts, and 10.8% in mathematics. Correct?

23 MR. MITCHELL: Correct.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you want to just expand on
25 that for me?

1 MR. MITCHELL: Well, we --

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Talk to me?

3 MR. MITCHELL: I can expand on what we've done
4 to kind of combat that after receiving that data.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: How did it get to that point
6 though?

7 MR. MITCHELL: How did it get to that point?

8 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah.

9 MR. MITCHELL: I think we just -- the curriculum
10 was not rigorous enough, which we obviously
11 understood after seeing the data. Teacher retention
12 has always been an issue for us until last year and
13 so we had cycles of people coming in to teach our
14 kids. One class of kids maybe had four math teachers
15 in the course of one year, and so retention has
16 always been an issue. We're doing much better with
17 that now. And I think some of the things we're doing
18 to combat that are going to help with this year's
19 scores, such as our interventions, our pull-outs, our
20 push-ins, our Saturday school program, our ELL, et
21 cetera.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Can you tell me more of what are
23 you doing specifically on that teacher retention,
24 some of your efforts towards that?

25 MR. MITCHELL: Well, research says it has a lot

1 to do with leadership. This is my second year and so
2 we only had to replace three people this last school
3 year. We even had a TFA teacher commit for another
4 year to our campus. We also are doing a better job,
5 as Mr. Whittaker stated, in going out and recruiting
6 high-quality people early versus trying to hire
7 people in April, rather than trying to hire people in
8 June and August. I think our retention has a lot to
9 do with the fact that we have a great working
10 environment. We have great families -- as you can
11 see, our parents are here to support us today; a
12 great school board; great partnerships. We're very
13 unique. Coming from the district, I did 14 years in
14 public schools before joining charter schools and
15 there's so much difference and so much levels of
16 commitment that public schools don't offer, and I
17 think that environment is healthy for anyone who
18 wants to be an educator.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

21 MS. PFEFFER: Mr. Mitchell --

22 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. PFEFFER: -- I just wanted to make a couple
24 of observations. And when I look through here and
25 with the presentation I am very interested in your

1 plan for the recruitment and retention, and if the
2 results continue to be what you want and, as you move
3 forward, if there are new things that you try,
4 because that is -- it is a serious issue. But I
5 found it very refreshing to see a very specific --

6 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. PFEFFER: -- concerted defined plan for
8 that. And I also feel like you all are very focused
9 in on, you know, realizing that when you can -- when
10 you get students and when you can keep them --

11 MR. MITCHELL: Absolutely.

12 MS. PFEFFER: -- you can make an impact.

13 MR. MITCHELL: Absolutely.

14 MS. PFEFFER: And that certainly helps with data
15 in really being able to know your success, so I do
16 appreciate that. And I also appreciate how clear you
17 were, all of you were in the application in terms of
18 goals. You went through, did you meet goal, yes; did
19 you meet goal, no, and you had a very thorough
20 rationale in the plan going forward. So I just
21 wanted to make those positive comments --

22 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

23 MS. PFEFFER: -- about the overall application.

24 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you.

25 MS. PFEFFER: So it's very helpful for us.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
2 or comments? Dr. Gotcher.

3 DR. GOTCHER: A couple of pieces. I think I'll
4 stick with just the one as it relates to behavior
5 plans and then parental support. If you can tie
6 those two together, Mr. Mitchell, I'll try to do this
7 in one question. I'm concerned about the
8 effectiveness of the behavior plans and how involved
9 are the parents in the process. And talk about a
10 little bit -- seg-way into your --

11 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Since you don't have an active
13 PTA, according to your report, how are --

14 MR. MITCHELL: It's not called a PTA; it's
15 called the Light Keepers Association.

16 DR. GOTCHER: That's why you don't have a PTA --

17 MR. MITCHELL: Right. Yes, sir.

18 DR. GOTCHER: -- because it's called -- yeah.

19 MR. MITCHELL: And then -- yes, sir.

20 DR. GOTCHER: That's my point.

21 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, sir. They're very active.

22 DR. GOTCHER: So explain more about that please

23 --

24 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

25 DR. GOTCHER: -- because I'm turning a little

1 red right now.

2 MR. MITCHELL: That's okay. One thing that's
3 unique about Lighthouse is that we have what's called
4 an SBMT meeting monthly, which is School-Based
5 Management Team, which involves a parent. And so
6 that parent is allowed to give input as far as field
7 trips, as far as extracurricular activities, as far
8 as things that we should do as far as our parent
9 nights we offer monthly. And so that all in turn
10 allows the parental support to be great. When you
11 look at that same committee review with the handbook
12 -- when I came on last year the handbook was already
13 in place and so the suspensions were, but they were
14 due to -- you have to follow your due process as far
15 as your handbook.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Agreed.

17 MR. MITCHELL: And so when we went to
18 restorative practices we did more of committing to
19 keeping kids in class versus sending kids home. And
20 then when you have the type of parents we have, all
21 of our parents are a phone call away versus in some
22 schools you may not even have a working number. I
23 can text every parent that's sitting out here before
24 you right now and they'll be at the school within 15
25 minutes to support their child, and then my goal is

1 to get the child back in class immediately. I'm not
2 really into -- I've done alternative schools; I've
3 seen what happens to kids in those systems. That's
4 not why I committed to Pine Bluff. My commitment was
5 to get these kids to where they need to be by 12th
6 grade.

7 DR. GOTCHER: All right. Thank you very much.

8 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. What's the feeding program
11 that you mentioned, Universal?

12 MR. MITCHELL: We have Universal Feeding Program
13 which provides free lunch and breakfast for every kid
14 on our campus. We also provide snacks for every K-2
15 scholar, as well. And through a partnership with Mr.
16 Cedric Jackson we're able to feed every child in our
17 afterschool program and provide them with snacks on
18 the way out the door.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Is Universal Feeding Program, is
20 that the name of it or does it --

21 MR. MITCHELL: That's the -- I think that's how
22 it's worded when you apply for the paperwork and so
23 --

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Is it CEP?

25 MR. MITCHELL: Right.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. MITCHELL: All right.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You want to translate for
4 Sharon, community eligibility provision?

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Community eligibility
6 provision.

7 MS. SMITH: This is simply just a comment, but I
8 wish you could see the head-nodding going on in this
9 section over here. I mean, I almost feel like
10 there's going to be an Amen in a second. But you --
11 I mean, the head-nodding is just going on.

12 MR. MITCHELL: Well, it's unique. I attended
13 UAPB with some of my parents. Some of my parents
14 were my teachers at UAPB. My family is from Pine
15 Bluff, so the commitment for me was easy. Once I got
16 onboard we kind of just rolled up our sleeves from --
17 I think my first day there we had a parent meeting at
18 the church and I got like 10 initiatives that very
19 first night from my parents on what they wanted. And
20 then, as you can see, our enrollment grew from 275 to
21 343 that very next year. So I think it's just about
22 commitment; I think it's about doing what's best for
23 kids and allowing parents of our 88 families to have
24 a choice in their child's education. That's why
25 we're here.

1 MS. SMITH: Well, it's obvious you have
2 leadership skills and your heart is in the right
3 place.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I was checking on red in
5 the money file just to make sure that wasn't a
6 concern. Ms. Barnes.

7 MS. BARNES: Good afternoon. Thank you for the
8 presentation, and to each of you. Your support is
9 evident for the school. I only have, well, I guess a
10 question --

11 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

12 MS. BARNES: -- with respect to the Priority at
13 your lower --

14 MR. MITCHELL: Three-four.

15 MS. BARNES: -- building. And then the middle
16 school, middle grades, you seem to be doing -- you
17 know -- you're close.

18 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

19 MS. BARNES: But I guess I think I just want to
20 kind of hear what you really feel created this
21 scenario that put the lower grades in the Priority
22 status and what you're doing -- or how you see that
23 rolling up to the middle grades.

24 MR. MITCHELL: I think the biggest issue we have
25 was teacher retention.

1 MS. BARNES: Okay.

2 MR. MITCHELL: That group of kids has never just
3 had a consistent teacher to follow them, for various
4 reasons. I know we've had teachers who have left to
5 go to graduate school at Harding -- I mean, at
6 Harvard; we've had teachers leave to come to State
7 Department, et cetera. It's a hard commitment. I
8 think the difference is now that some of the best
9 practices we use as far as pre- and post-tests and as
10 far as intervention will help those scores to
11 increase. Also, I just think we have a good cluster
12 of 3-4 teachers now.

13 MS. BARNES: Okay.

14 MR. MITCHELL: There's a good mix. There's two
15 returning and two new. We have a teacher who's
16 certified from Arizona who's probably the strongest
17 teacher in our building her first year. And so she's
18 able to work -- when we do peer-to-peer, when we do
19 grade level meetings she's able to offer some of the
20 strategies she used in her classes school-wide so
21 that everyone has the opportunity to have the same
22 success she has. And I just think that we're a group
23 of people who are committed. And so when we work
24 sunup to sundown it's just -- it's a commitment.
25 Usually, in a public school when the bell rings the

1 parking lot is empty. For us, that's when we get
2 started. We look at data. Some teachers volunteer
3 their time to help kids after school for various
4 groups. We have probably 10 pockets of kids
5 throughout the building till 5:30 every day.

6 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

7 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Addressing those students
9 that did have those multiple teachers that find
10 themselves behind, is there a plan to get them caught
11 up?

12 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am. We do strong
13 intervention throughout the day. So any teacher that
14 has flexibility in their schedule pushes into a
15 classroom, especially in math and in literacy. Once
16 the instruction has been given, that person either
17 flips/swaps with the teacher so the teacher can pull
18 out kids for small group or that teacher will take
19 kids out for small group and kind of reinforce the
20 instruction that's already been made. That model is
21 also followed by my assistant principal, my school
22 (inaudible) and my self. And so we all have 15 to 20
23 kids a day that we intervene with and then we go back
24 and reassess those kids to make sure they got the
25 concept that was taught that day. And so if the exit

1 ticket -- prime example, I have a little girl in my
2 group who we worked for an hour-and-a-half on a day,
3 had the skill mastered, and she did not pass the exit
4 ticket. So that very next day, "Mitchell, Mitchell,
5 your baby didn't pass the exit ticket," and so I was
6 able to get her again during lunch time, work on it
7 again, because we just want to make sure our kids
8 have it. We want to be able to take this ACT Aspire
9 test with confidence, for our kids to be able to
10 manipulate through the screens and have confidence in
11 what they'll be able to compute.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have a couple more
13 questions. Talk to us a little bit about ACSIP and
14 school improvement specialists.

15 MR. MITCHELL: Well, our school improvement --
16 let me kind of backtrack. We posted the job
17 immediately after meeting with Dr. Wilde in his
18 office, maybe in October. Variety of applicants but
19 no one had a public school background whatsoever. We
20 had applicants from the Tyson plant; we had
21 applicants from the local newspaper; no one with
22 educational credentials whatsoever. The one person
23 that we did find with those credentials, we brought
24 her in. She has been retired maybe three to four
25 years, and so she would have been a great

1 interventionist but not necessarily a school
2 improvement specialist. The person we've offered
3 that job to, it would be added on to her current role
4 and so once we figured out compensation and whatnot
5 we're confident she'll accept that position.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Talk to us about
7 ACSIP.

8 MR. MITCHELL: The ACSIP is submitted. We did
9 that -- we're still working on some revisions but it
10 has been submitted, I know, for the indicators. Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, you know, school
12 improvement can be a real -- it can be an asset to
13 you. It was a game-changer for me as a teacher when
14 I really understood how that process can help --

15 MR. MITCHELL: Right.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- improve a school. So I
17 really encourage you to let it be your best asset.

18 MR. MITCHELL: Absolutely.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Talk to us a little bit
20 about technology. It's something you and I addressed
21 --

22 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- at the end of our
24 conversation.

25 MR. MITCHELL: And I'm excited to tell you I've

1 got a meeting Friday on how I'm going to spend my
2 money, and so I'm excited. I've already got a quote
3 for 45 laptops, two carts; excited about that. We
4 did get -- did we talk about the mini grant?

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

6 MR. MITCHELL: Got the mini grant, so we do have
7 a few little tablets on campus already. And then I
8 think the good thing is we do work with whatever we
9 have, and so our 26 computers in our lab we do use
10 them throughout the day. We involve them on
11 afterschool programs and on Saturdays. Even when a
12 kid is sent to us for restorative practices, we have
13 that kid log in to a remediation program while
14 they're sitting in my office, sometimes on my
15 personal laptop, just because I don't want to waste
16 instructional time.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's exciting. I'll
18 just tell you my pet peeve is to come by for a quick
19 drop-in visit and find carts locked up.

20 MR. MITCHELL: Oh, no, ma'am. Oh, no, ma'am.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: They need to have
22 fingerprints on them.

23 MR. MITCHELL: We're going to use them, I
24 promise you that. We cannot wait till Friday for
25 this meeting. Depending on what you tell me today,

1 we might meet tomorrow.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions or
3 comments? They are requesting a 5-year renewal.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: I have a comment.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Oh, you have a comment.

6 All right. Go right ahead.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I'll tell you, I'm
8 encouraged from what I hear --

9 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, sir.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: -- today. I still have concern.
11 I have concerns simply because I think -- and I was
12 looking at your application, in particular one
13 section that referenced the -- give me just a moment
14 here -- the interim assessment data from 11-12
15 through 14-15, the two tables side-by-side, one being
16 math on the left and reading on the right. Actually,
17 one table but that was what it was. And it was -- I
18 think the purpose for what it was pointing out in
19 that was the decline in performance over time.

20 MR. MITCHELL: Uh-huh.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: And it almost seems to me, if I
22 could verbalize it, that it hit really low and now
23 you are taking steps and there's been change, changes
24 needed for it to go in the upward direction.

25 MR. MITCHELL: Correct.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: And I'm very encouraged by what I
2 hear, but at the same time I'm very cautious that --
3 I hope it does well. From what I hear I think it
4 will do well. But I can't just turn around and just
5 assume it's going to --

6 MR. MITCHELL: Absolutely.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: -- for the kids' sake.

8 MR. MITCHELL: Absolutely.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: I think it still needs to be
10 monitored with that. And so with all that being
11 said, I think that my motion --

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Hold on. Ms. Davis --

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Never-mind.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- are there any remaining
15 issues?

16 MS. DAVIS: No, there's no issues with the
17 waivers but I just want to clarify one thing. I know
18 several people had spoke about their K-12 program,
19 but they requested it to be amended to K-8. So I
20 just want to make sure that that was understood and
21 clear. Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That makes good sense.
23 Now, one more time.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: One more time. So my motion
25 would be reflective -- I think while every case is

1 different, I think this is real similar to feelings I
2 had on the case before for a 3-year renewal and with
3 internal review of the academic performance.

4 DR. GOTCHER: I would second that, as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I've had a motion
6 by Dr. Saunders and a second by Dr. Gotcher for a 3-
7 year renewal with internal review. Any discussion?

8 MS. SMITH: Just going off of what Dr. Wilde
9 said earlier, that this was the beginning of the
10 process and you were kind of in that place. But to
11 fully -- please open yourself up to that process
12 because they're truly there to help and lead and give
13 support, so to really open yourself up to that.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No discussion? All right.
15 All those in favor?

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any no's? He asked me to
18 do them all together so he could see what everybody
19 votes at the same time.

20 All those in favor? I didn't hear everyone.

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

23 All right. If you will write your responses,
24 we'll go around with those.

25 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

2 MS. BARNES: I voted in favor of the motion. I
3 believe that a 3-year renewal allows for
4 stabilization of the systems currently in place. It
5 provides time to determine whether the charter is
6 able to utilize the collaborative relationship, to
7 move forward with school improvement planning, and
8 improve student achievement.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

10 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the motion to renew.
11 I was impressed with the presentation and impressed
12 with the shift in a stronger leadership model. I
13 also feel that -- I hope to see a culture of
14 sustainable leadership. I think it's very important
15 for this academy. Academic performance is improving.
16 I encourage you to continue to work closely with the
17 School Improvement Unit of the Department of
18 Education.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

20 MR. LESTER: I voted for. With new leadership
21 and stability I feel that the charter will continue
22 to improve. I'm impressed with the community
23 involvement and the push for teacher retention.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

25 MS. LIWO: I voted for. I think the three years

1 will give the charter enough time to demonstrate
2 increased academic performance. I was also very
3 impressed with the Revamp Restart Plan.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

5 MS. PFEFFER: The new leadership and community
6 support seems to be moving the school in the right
7 direction and the application is strong. I'm
8 cautious about moving forward based on the 2015
9 Priority designation but feel this motion provides
10 the necessary support for the charter to move forward
11 and be successful. As teacher and student stability
12 occurs, the data should align and tell the story of
13 success.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

15 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. The stability and
16 leadership seems to be having a positive effect. I
17 probably would have allowed for a longer renewal, but
18 I'm comfortable with what -- with the 3-year while
19 Lighthouse works with ADE on their Priority status.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I'm encouraged by the
22 change in plan of action. I do feel that close
23 monitoring is still needed.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

25 MS. SMITH: I voted in favor. I noted that

1 curriculum changes were made in reflection to the
2 poor student data, that support is given to
3 administration and teachers by the Lighthouse Academy
4 national. NWEA growth data shows positive progress.
5 This is the first year to work with the ADE School
6 Improvement and want to encourage continued
7 collaboration.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Mr.
9 Mitchell. I hope that Friday meeting turns out well
10 --

11 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- and we get some new
13 technology. And good luck to all of you.

14 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Are there any additional
16 items before the Panel today?

17 MS. BOYD: No.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll have the same kind
19 of fun tomorrow at 8:30. And I'll accept a motion to
20 adjourn.

21 DR. GOTCHER: Motion to adjourn.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher, seconded by
24 Dr. Saunders. Thank you everyone.

25 (The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.)

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A-2: IMBODEN AREA CHARTER SCHOOL

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-3: COVENANT KEEPERS

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-4: PINE BLUFF LIGHTHOUSE

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
 COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas State Department of Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on February 17, 2016, 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: March 1, 2016.

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

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