

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

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*February 18, 2016*

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

February 18, 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

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

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

Arkansas Department of Education  
#4 Capitol Mall  
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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. The February 18, 2016 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. Welcome, everyone. Please silence all electronic devices.

The Charter Authorizing Panel oversees the authorization, renewal, revision and revocation of charters. Let me introduce our panel to you: Ms. Jennifer Liwo, Mr. Bobby Lester, Mr. Greg Rogers, Dr. Eric Saunders, Ms. Annette Barnes, Ms. Ivy Pfeffer, Ms. Stacy Smith, Dr. Mark Gotcher, our vice chair, and I'm Deborah Coffman, your chair.

As chair, my goal will be to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing. I will request that each person speaking will state your name and title for the record. I will ask that you continue to speak clearly into the microphone for the benefit of the Panel, the audience and the viewing audience that's joining us today via live streaming. This meeting is being recorded and will be posted on the ADE website. Our court reporter will be providing a transcript of this meeting and it too will be available on the ADE website.

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

1 AND PRIORITY STATUS HEARING: SIA TECH LITTLE ROCK CHARTER  
2 SCHOOL

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: With no further ado, let's  
4 get right into Action Item 1. Ms. Boyd, you are  
5 recognized.

6 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 1,  
7 Request for Open-Enrollment Public Charter School  
8 Renewal and Priority Status Hearing: SIA Tech Little  
9 Rock Charter School.

10 The State Board of Education approved the  
11 application for SIA Tech Little Rock Charter School  
12 on November 8, 2010. The charter is approved to  
13 serve students in grades 9-12 with a maximum  
14 enrollment of 275. Representatives from the charter  
15 are appearing before the Charter Authorizing Panel to  
16 request a 5-year renewal for the charter. Also, the  
17 Charter Authorizing Panel has required  
18 representatives of the charter to appear for a  
19 hearing pursuant to Arkansas Code Annotated 6-23-105,  
20 to discuss academic performance. Representatives of  
21 the charter agreed to combine the two hearings and  
22 approved combining the hearing procedures to be  
23 followed. Possible actions to be taken by the  
24 Charter Authorizing Panel include renewal of the  
25 charter based on its renewal application, but due to

1 its Priority status possible actions include  
2 modification, probation, revocation, and/or  
3 nonrenewal of the charter.

4 Now we're going to have Jennifer Davis come to  
5 remind everyone of the hearing procedures we'll  
6 follow for this item. And then, following that, Dr.  
7 Dawson, the superintendent and CEO of the charter,  
8 will start their presentation.

9 MS. DAVIS: Good morning. Jennifer Davis, staff  
10 attorney for the Department. The hearing procedures  
11 today are going to vary a little bit, so we'll just  
12 go over them as we come to them. For the first one,  
13 the hearing procedures are combined. It will start  
14 with everybody needs to be sworn in, except for  
15 attorneys -- anybody that's going to be offering  
16 testimony. The Department will have 20 minutes to  
17 kind of present or make its presentation on anything  
18 that it has to offer. The charter will also have 20  
19 minutes following that to make its presentation on  
20 both of its issues. We'll have 20 minutes for  
21 opposition, and then 5 minutes for rebuttal from the  
22 charter. And as all the other hearings, anything  
23 that is amended either on the floor or that's agreed  
24 to here that differs from your written material is  
25 going to be included in the record and it will be --

1 they are going to be held to anything that they say  
2 here and it will be part of the charter.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Davis.

4 MS. DAVIS: Any questions? Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think we're good. All  
6 right. If all representatives from SIA Tech Little  
7 Rock Charter School and anyone speaking in  
8 opposition, including the Department staff that will  
9 be speaking today, if you'll please stand and raise  
10 your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the  
11 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,  
12 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

13 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Boyd,  
15 you're recognized.

16 MS. BOYD: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.  
17 SIA Tech was first authorized by the State Board of  
18 Education to operate in January of 2011, to serve  
19 grades 9-12. Since it began serving students in the  
20 fall of 2012, the school has been approved to  
21 relocate twice: once in May of 2013, and again in  
22 November of 2013. In May of 2014, the charter was  
23 called in for review by the Charter Authorizing Panel  
24 to address the findings from a site visit conducted  
25 by the Standards Assurance Monitoring Unit. No

1 action was taken after that review. Recently, the  
2 school has been classified a Priority school. The  
3 contract is scheduled to expire in June of 2016.

4 From my visits to the campus it appears the  
5 staff works diligently to insure student success on a  
6 case-by-case basis, both academically and socially.  
7 Ms. Wendy Lynn Bryant and Ms. Katie Tatum have shared  
8 several anecdotes that speak to the work that the  
9 staff does to help students graduate and have post-  
10 secondary options upon graduation.

11 I'll defer the rest of my time to Dr. Toney.

12 DR. TONEY: I am Robert Toney; I'm a School  
13 Improvement Specialist. SIA Tech is one of my  
14 schools that I've been assigned to. They are a first  
15 year Priority school. Their service population is  
16 unusual, different from most of the schools that we  
17 deal with. They really don't fit our approach to a  
18 data analysis, predominantly because of the students  
19 they serve. They predominantly serve students who  
20 would probably be in the third or fourth year of  
21 their high school age. They are a 9-12 charter,  
22 typically dealing with students that are 16 through  
23 21, with the majority of those kids in the older  
24 group there. Therefore, on their official testing  
25 results and such a lot of those kids have already had

1 their tests somewhere else and so they're not  
2 reflected -- the majority of their kids are not  
3 reflected in their testing report.

4 Their instructional model is by and large a  
5 computer-based service delivery. They do have some  
6 direct instruction and tutoring when students get  
7 bogged down in their computer courses.

8 Due to all of this -- the unusualness of this  
9 school and their configuration and their niche of  
10 students they serve, we are in an adjustment period  
11 on how to serve their needs. They -- as a first year  
12 Priority school and what we're doing, we've having to  
13 try to kind of figure out how we fit into that school  
14 improvement model because they don't fit our usual  
15 model for those students.

16 One of the ways that we would expect over time  
17 for them to show -- for them to demonstrate their  
18 success would be not just as the number of diplomas  
19 that students could come into their school and maybe  
20 get five credits or ten credits or whatever to get a  
21 diploma, but what's happening after that. And so  
22 that idea about, you know, what those students are  
23 doing after they leave would be a good way going  
24 forward to talk about the success of this school.  
25 And they do have programs in place to help to track

1 kids after they graduate.

2 There was a couple of issues last week. We were  
3 at a site visit -- Dr. Wilde, myself, and my SIS team  
4 went over and there was a couple of issues with their  
5 ACSIP monitoring. After that meeting they  
6 immediately responded. They've got emails; they  
7 caught up with that almost immediately. And  
8 concluding, as any -- as with any first year Priority  
9 school there's going to be an adjustment for that  
10 school kind of learning the ropes, getting familiar  
11 with the waiver requirements and so-on and so-forth.  
12 So as they go through that and address their plan we  
13 will continue to adjust our service delivery for them  
14 as they utilize the waiver recommendations and  
15 develop their school improvement plan.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Toney.

17 DR. TONEY: You're welcome.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, if you'll  
19 introduce the school.

20 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am. Thank you, Madam Chair.  
21 We'll have Dr. Dawson, who is the superintendent of  
22 SIA Tech.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

24 DR. DAWSON: Good morning, Members of the Panel,  
25 Dr. Coffman. My name is Linda Dawson; I'm the

1 superintendent and CEO of SIA Tech, Inc. We run a  
2 network of charter high schools that are operating  
3 here in Arkansas, in Florida, and in California.  
4 It's my great pleasure to serve in this capacity.  
5 It's the most fulfilling job I've ever had.

6 SIA Tech Little Rock is one of the 21 dropout  
7 recovery schools that are laser-focused on student  
8 re-engagement and graduation from high school. Our  
9 goal is to transform disconnected young people into  
10 independent learners who have the skills and academic  
11 confidence not only to graduate but run past the  
12 finish line of graduation and earning a diploma into  
13 college, the military, and ultimately in family  
14 sustaining careers.

15 Since 1998, SIA Tech schools have been changing  
16 lives as evidenced by over 15,000 graduates, all  
17 former dropouts from traditional schools who didn't  
18 fit into the traditional system. Dropout recovery  
19 and re-engaging at-promise students is not easy work.  
20 We face many challenges given our specific mission  
21 and the unique nature of the program we provide, but  
22 we care -- but we are successful and have been  
23 successful in the work because it's simply too  
24 important to abandon when the going gets tough.

25 You'll hear more specifics about our program and

1 the work that we do from other education  
2 professionals here today. Personally, I am concerned  
3 about the tragic loss of human capital if we in K-12  
4 education allow and continue to allow 30% of our high  
5 school students to drop out and kick -- and simply  
6 kick the can down the road for social services and  
7 law enforcement to deal with.

8 I'm thrilled that the Arkansas state legislature  
9 last year passed an addendum to Act 1272, to allow  
10 the State Board to develop relevant academic  
11 performance measures that show student growth towards  
12 standards. We look forward to their implementation.  
13 Once these measures are in place I'm confident that  
14 SIA Tech and schools like ours dealing with student  
15 recovery and re-engagement will be able to clearly  
16 demonstrate both student growth and success that will  
17 lead to a brighter future for all of our kids. Thank  
18 you very much.

19 MS. PIANKA: Good morning. My name is Laurie  
20 Pianka; I'm the executive director of education  
21 services for SIA Tech Charter High School. Our  
22 presentation today is centered around the Arkansas  
23 Quality Charter Schools standards, and we feel very  
24 strongly that our mission drives our vision of  
25 success and enables our program to maintain the

1 legislative intent of the Arkansas Quality Charter  
2 School Act.

3 SIA Tech feels that our vision of success  
4 results in improved learning for all of our students.  
5 Students will be lifelong learners and will be  
6 contributing members of their community. Our staff  
7 will be inspired by an environment of respect,  
8 recognition, and professional development to  
9 successfully work in our environment and lead our  
10 students on to success. And communities will benefit  
11 from the success and contributions of our students.

12 We have a specialized program to deal with the  
13 needs of our unique population. As Dr. Dawson  
14 already shared, we're a dropout recovery program.  
15 We're retrieving students from the community that are  
16 no longer engaged in educational pursuits. We're  
17 preparing students to be contributing members of a  
18 21st century workforce. We deal with a very highly  
19 mobile population, economically disadvantaged  
20 students. We're an open-entry program. Students can  
21 enroll any day of the week, all throughout the school  
22 year. And our students, upon entry, are most likely  
23 to be below grade level and previously low achieving.

24 Our students come from a background of poverty  
25 that brings with it a myriad of challenges as they

1 walk in the door. Our students have higher than  
2 average absences and attendance is always a  
3 challenge. Transportation, regular transportation to  
4 and from school is something that they just don't  
5 have access to. Many of our students come from a  
6 background of having been dealing with law  
7 enforcement and some of our students have been  
8 incarcerated prior to coming to us. Our students are  
9 also challenged as to regular housing. They may not  
10 know where they're going to be next week or even the  
11 next day. Regular healthcare is also something that  
12 is a major challenge for our students. And as we  
13 know from the participation in our school lunch  
14 program, healthy meals are not something that they  
15 can rely on on a daily basis. A significant number  
16 of our students have symptoms of post-traumatic  
17 stress disorder. Many of our students come to us  
18 with symptoms of depression, and many of our students  
19 also have the challenges of being a young parent and  
20 trying to find regular reliable childcare.

21 But we feel that our keys to success support our  
22 goals and support moving our students toward  
23 graduation. We rely on an individual focus. Every  
24 student that comes in the door will have an  
25 individual learning plan developed that focuses on

1 their needs. Our program is competency-based. So  
2 when students come in they work on what they need to  
3 do, and when they have completed the standards-based  
4 curriculum and show competency they move on to the  
5 next subject.

6 Probably the most important factor of our  
7 program is our caring professional educators that  
8 develop caring professional relationships with our  
9 students. They know -- our students know that our  
10 staff care about them and care about their success.  
11 And we have a career technical focus that prepares  
12 our students to move on to college and careers or the  
13 military immediately upon graduation.

14 The fact that we're an open-entry, open-  
15 enrollment program also allows us to increase  
16 learning opportunities. So while it is a challenge  
17 that we have students coming in every day of the  
18 week, all throughout the year, we also are accessible  
19 to our students. If a student decides that they're  
20 at a place where they want to re-engage with their  
21 educational process, they can enroll; they don't have  
22 to wait till the next semester. And, again, the  
23 increased learning opportunities for students are a  
24 key component, is the individual learning plan where  
25 the specific needs of a student that is coming in

1 below grade level can be addressed and support can be  
2 provided. And we view every student that walks in  
3 our door as being on a path towards graduation, on a  
4 path towards a successful life supporting career, and  
5 on a path toward the military and entering with a  
6 priority status because they are coming from an  
7 accredited high school program. And the fact that  
8 our students come to us low achieving, with a history  
9 of low achieving, and below grade level is something  
10 that we embrace and we provide the support that is  
11 needed to bring them up to grade level to access  
12 grade level curriculum. Thank you.

13 MS. BELZMAN: Good morning. My name is Lori  
14 Belzman; I'm one of the curriculum coordinators for  
15 SIA Tech. One of our greatest strengths, I think, is  
16 perhaps our customized curriculum, which is aligned  
17 to all state standards and all core content areas and  
18 it's continuously updated and revised as needed.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Lori, if you'll speak  
20 into that microphone we'd appreciate it. Thank you.

21 MS. BELZMAN: Is that better?

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Much better.

23 MS. BELZMAN: Thank you. In our English  
24 curriculum, it's thematic based. So each course has  
25 a focus: 9th grade has a global focus; 10th grade has

1 a science focus; 11th grade has an historical focus;  
2 and then the focus for 12th grade is college and  
3 career readiness. In addition to the themes we also  
4 focus on the three text types: narrative,  
5 informational, and argumentative.

6 We have an intensive focus on reading and  
7 writing, which is reflected, of course, in mastery of  
8 the standards. And we also focus on text complexity,  
9 which essentially comes down to it's not so much what  
10 the student is reading but what the student does with  
11 the reading.

12 And, finally, in addition to our highly  
13 qualified staff, our blended learning model, which  
14 was touched upon earlier, allows our students to  
15 master content, concepts, skills, and standards.

16 MS. HOCKER: Good morning. My name is Tami  
17 Hocker; I'm also a curriculum coordinator for math  
18 and science. And I wanted to speak to you about our  
19 math program. We're able to take a student, no  
20 matter where they're at, stick with what Arkansas is  
21 requiring, get them prepared for college and career.  
22 We have a young man that came in yesterday with his  
23 mom, been out of school for three years, and we have  
24 the ability to take that and get that student to  
25 where he wants to be. So, on his resume, if he goes

1 through our program, he'll also have some technology  
2 skills he can list. This is an example of one of our  
3 auto-cad lessons that is embedded in our geometry  
4 program that all students do using polar coordinates.  
5 We also have access to additional resources through  
6 NROC, which is founded by the Gates Foundation and  
7 supported with Khan Academy that has resources for  
8 that young man that can take him from foundational  
9 math up through college readiness. So this is an  
10 example of one dealing with exponential and  
11 logarithmic functions.

12 So our PD program takes our teachers and gives  
13 them the skills that they need that supports the  
14 population on our campus. So it is geared towards  
15 what those teachers need, as well as what the  
16 students need in our classrooms. So we are research-  
17 based. We use the different resources that you see  
18 up there, in addition to quite a few more. So the  
19 staff that come to us -- to give you an example, we  
20 have a new math teacher that joined us recently, this  
21 year. She spent a full week with veteran staff that  
22 we have that deal with our population of students  
23 that have shown success. Our learning support team  
24 was working with her, in addition to the other  
25 teachers. We have a follow-up session for two days

1 that worked with her on data-driven discussions  
2 specific to transitions going on here in Arkansas  
3 with the ACT Achieve requirements. Thank you.

4 MS. BRYANT: Good morning. My name is Wendy  
5 Lynn Bryant and I am the special education and LEA  
6 director for SIA Tech. And I am speaking on some of  
7 the transitional opportunities for our students and  
8 those include things such as we have a partnership  
9 with Goodwill that we work with and they do resume  
10 building and transitional classes with our students.  
11 We also have resume and employee workshops for our  
12 students. We work with them on individual reports,  
13 such as FAFSA's financial aid reporting, entrance  
14 into college, and things such as that. We have  
15 military conferences that are scheduled with any  
16 branch of the military that a student is interested  
17 in and then we'll get that going for them so that  
18 they can be able to know what is expected of them, as  
19 well as ask about preparation. We also have  
20 community partnerships with UALR School of Audiology.  
21 They come in and do various speech and language  
22 tutoring and screening for our students. In addition  
23 to that, we have a partnership with Lions World that  
24 comes in and deals with hearing with our students, as  
25 well, as well as Kidsource Therapy that will handle

1 our physical PT, speech, any kind of therapy that a  
2 student may need.

3 SIA Tech tries to extend to these goals here.  
4 These goals are selected by helping a student to  
5 encourage and increase their skills so that they will  
6 be able to move forward into the workplace. And so,  
7 these goals are selected to help a student who may  
8 not have been previously successful and it's used to  
9 help increase their reading and writing skills to be  
10 more employable in the workplace.

11 And then the enrollment into -- students who  
12 have participated -- we have participated in the  
13 Gallup Poll for the last four years and this helps  
14 with the wellbeing and the measures of non-cognitive  
15 efforts for students. It's a way to gauge student  
16 success in ways other than just their academics.  
17 It's making sure that they are employed and making  
18 sure that they are remaining employed and that we  
19 have done what we needed to do to help them be where  
20 they needed to be as productive members of society.

21 MS. MALLORY: Good morning. I'm Kris Mallory,  
22 the chief instructional officer for SIA Tech. I  
23 would like to -- I want to speak very quickly. These  
24 graphs that you have in front of you now demonstrate  
25 four years of very strong, positive growth trends for

1 math and reading. Additionally, this growth is  
2 statistically significant for all four years of math  
3 and three years of reading. This is aligned with our  
4 externally assessed, value-added analysis of  
5 individual student scores for accelerating student  
6 learning. Ms. Bryant went over the Gallup Polls, so  
7 I will skip those next few slides to go on to --  
8 these are our Gallup Poll results, which you can see.

9 Then, we really pay a lot of attention to hope  
10 because many of our students come in to us without  
11 hope and we build that so they can see their future.  
12 Thank you.

13 MS. TATUM: Good morning. I'm Katie Hatley  
14 Tatum, superintendent/principal of SIA Tech. Stories  
15 of success, innovation despite the challenges -- I  
16 will just -- we only have four minutes left and I  
17 know you guys are a stickler for time, so I'm just  
18 going to let you know that we work with Job Corps.  
19 We have an awesome board of directors who work with  
20 us to make sure that -- they support the mission,  
21 vision and values of SIA Tech. And we work with  
22 local school districts and also some charters who  
23 send children to us, who are not necessarily  
24 struggling academically but are just overwhelmed by  
25 the larger school setting. We work with the local

1 juvenile system. Once a month, I'm at the juvenile  
2 jail to make a presentation about the school to  
3 students and staff. Sometimes I'm called in front of  
4 the juvenile courts to speak on behalf of a student.  
5 Like Ms. Bryant said, military recruiters of all  
6 branches of the military. We also formed a new  
7 partnership this year with Youth Build. Workforce  
8 Ed., that was new to me. And Ms. Melissa Mitchell is  
9 here and I'm really excited about that. But one  
10 thing I want to let the board know is that we work  
11 with a daycare on Geyer Springs who receives a  
12 federal grant for our students who have children.  
13 Their children can go there for free. We have  
14 mothers with three kids -- I mean, it's very sad --  
15 and I applaud them for reaching out to us. They  
16 wanted to tour the school, wanted to know -- I don't  
17 know why people say "are you a real school," but I  
18 tell them to go to the Department of Ed. website. We  
19 get that a lot. And I'm excited about that.

20 So, our alumni -- and this is just from last  
21 year -- 30 of our students are employed, 16 are with  
22 the colleges, and 11 students are in the military.  
23 And of the two students -- well, the three students  
24 -- two are with LRPD, one was at Conway PD -- they're  
25 on their last phase of interviews. So we're really

1 excited for them.

2 And, in closing, I would just like to leave the  
3 Panel with a video that speaks about our program.

4 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: A video was shown, and  
5 is available for public viewing on the ADE's  
6 website.)

7 DR. DAWSON: The kids say it best, don't they,  
8 along with their parents. I'd just like to close by  
9 saying that we have support from a tremendous team of  
10 professionals. Katie Tatum and her team at SIA Tech  
11 Little Rock are doing a fabulous job of building the  
12 program that is truly helping kids. The other thing  
13 I'd like to say is we have some support from state  
14 senators. I received yesterday two letters, one from  
15 John Boozman and one from Tom Cotton, supporting SIA  
16 Tech -- I'd be happy to share this with anybody  
17 that's interested -- supporting SIA Tech in what we  
18 do for kids that are in the greatest need.

19 So I thank you for your attention today and if  
20 you have any questions we'd be happy to answer them.  
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Dawson. Is  
23 there anyone here to speak in opposition?

24 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Hearing none, there are

1 five additional minutes, Dr. Dawson.

2 DR. DAWSON: It's a hand-off. Sorry.

3 MS. TATUM: If the CEO says get up, you get up.  
4 No, but really, we're so unique. This is probably  
5 the hardest job I've had my whole entire life, but on  
6 the flipside probably the most rewarding. Just the  
7 things we do for our students -- we have so much  
8 flexibility there. We have students coming from  
9 North Little Rock who ride the city bus, so we know  
10 they won't get there before 9:00. So we've moved  
11 breakfast to 9:15 because they're hungry. We just  
12 let the other students who were there on time, who  
13 arrived at 8:00, work until it's time for breakfast.

14 Every student and parent who enrolls in SIA Tech  
15 receives my business card and my business mobile is  
16 on there. So we know if a student is out for  
17 whatever reason we -- it was so funny, I picked --  
18 thought I picked up my charter notebook but I picked  
19 up my incarcerated notebook when I went to pull it  
20 out this morning. But it's just that seriousness of  
21 how we track our students. They ask Ms. Bryant and  
22 my self to come to the jail to visit, and I say, "My  
23 parents say they won't come visit me in jail, so I'm  
24 not coming to visit you. But when you get out we can  
25 hook back up and start back working."

1 I asked some parents to come. I'm thinking  
2 they're lost because two of the parents who were on  
3 the video said they wanted to come and address the  
4 Panel. But that school and what we provide is just  
5 -- the people who are interested in it is beyond --  
6 I'm just blown away every day, every day. We've had  
7 students come to our school whose ACT scores range  
8 from 30 to 13. There's just a wide array and we're  
9 just trying to meet the need. And what we're seeing  
10 in larger -- students who are coming, they just can't  
11 handle the population. Some students are just  
12 immature, especially boys -- sorry, guys -- but  
13 they're two to three years behind girls' maturation  
14 level and they just can't handle it. But when  
15 they're there -- you know -- we have one hallway; all  
16 of our classrooms are on one hallway. You can't get  
17 lost. The bathrooms are right there by my office,  
18 strategically put. So you've got about two minutes  
19 to go in there and handle your business; I'm knocking  
20 on the door. So, but some -- they're going to see  
21 somebody's face everywhere at every time.

22 But I just applaud my staff's efforts. I have  
23 my social studies teacher here, Mr. Lloyd. He taught  
24 at a school in Texas. He's from Springdale or  
25 somewhere up there in northwest Arkansas. So when he

1           came and interviewed, I said, "Mr. Lloyd, do you know  
2           most of our students look like me?" And he said,  
3           "Well, my parents made me go teach in Texas at a  
4           tough school that was gang-related with Blacks and  
5           Mexicans." And I said, "Oh, you'll fit in fine."  
6           But I'm happy to let the Panel know that we've had  
7           four fights in five years. So, you know, some school  
8           districts, they fight like that once a week. But I  
9           just think that love and support we provide them --  
10          and we let them know we want the best for them and  
11          they respect our campus. Now they may check-out and  
12          fight, but they won't do anything crazy there at  
13          school. And we handle a tough population. We had  
14          some people from the Department visit and there were  
15          three young men up front on the ankle monitor  
16          charging station. So, you know, they just looked at  
17          us, and I said, "Oh, they're doing -- their charger  
18          ankle monitors are low." So I don't know if other  
19          school districts in the state have that type of  
20          access for students. Sometimes, some of the girls  
21          are a little leery who come from some of the charter  
22          schools, and I say, "We all have a chapter in our  
23          lives that we don't want anybody to read." So we  
24          just have to give these kids opportunities and I'm  
25          thankful that I have the opportunity to be a leader

1 of this school.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. All right.  
3 Panel, who would like to start with the questions?  
4 Ms. Smith.

5 MS. SMITH: You referred to Act 1272 at the  
6 beginning and I would really just kind of like to  
7 give you the opportunity to tell me what would you  
8 like to see change that would mark your school to be  
9 a success. Because, right now, you know, your status  
10 is marked as distressed. So what specifically would  
11 you want to be -- criteria would you like applied?

12 DR. DAWSON: Great question. We do a lot of  
13 work with advocacy nationally for alternative  
14 accountability, not to get an easy way out but to  
15 have accountability that's meaningful and relevant.  
16 We'd like to see a multiple measure system. It's a  
17 little more cumbersome but it's definitely more  
18 definitive of what students can do.

19 Dr. Toney mentioned that data analysis is  
20 different, and it most definitely is when you're  
21 looking at non-cognitive skills are much more  
22 difficult to measure, but we know there's a  
23 transformation. We see that in the graduates that  
24 we've had. How do we put our minds around that? One  
25 way is to look at what we already do, which is our

1 value-added individual student growth model. Over  
2 time we can show trends towards standards. And for  
3 some of our kids that come in with 2nd grade reading  
4 ability, trends toward standards are what we're  
5 looking for. We can get them to where they're  
6 functional and ready to be part of society. And they  
7 help -- they have to, of course, help themselves to  
8 do that.

9 The other I'd like to see is some more non-  
10 cognitive measures. The Gallup Poll was mentioned.  
11 The Gallup Poll measures hope, engagement, and  
12 entrepreneurial aptitude. And we find that in the  
13 last five years of doing this across the nation our  
14 students consistently either are equal to or greater  
15 than traditional schools, as well as schools like  
16 ours in both hope and engagement. And this is  
17 something that is really important. The Gallup Poll,  
18 you may know, has a statistical significance for  
19 success in college that is as good as or better than  
20 the ACT or SAT. So we are confident that our  
21 students, as they leave us with the skills that they  
22 get, will be successful in life.

23 In terms of the accountability system, again, it  
24 doesn't need to be watered down by any means. It  
25 needs to be rigorous, it needs to be to the point,

1 but it needs to measure not just a point in time test  
2 but also it needs to measure what students can -- how  
3 have they changed, how their brains have changed over  
4 the time that they've been engaged with us in this  
5 type of work.

6 The other thing that I've been really pushing in  
7 our organization nationwide is that we need to run  
8 past that finish line. I think I mentioned that. We  
9 need to look at what kids do after they leave us. I  
10 think Dr. Toney mentioned that, as well, right on  
11 point. We need to find out what they do, how many  
12 are in the military, how many are in college, are  
13 they in family sustaining jobs or working toward  
14 that. That's what's important. So we feel that with  
15 our alumni association -- we have a database now that  
16 we'll be able to have entered; we'll be able to get a  
17 much broader picture of what our students not only  
18 have done to earn their diploma but what they are  
19 doing after they leave us.

20 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

22 MS. PFEFFER: Yes. Good morning. And maybe --  
23 Dr. Tatum maybe, you might be the best one to answer  
24 my question.

25 MS. TATUM: Ms. Tatum.

1 MS. PFEFFER: Ms. Tatum. Okay. And I want to  
2 say to all of you thank you for your presentation.  
3 And I want to preface my questions with I am -- I'm  
4 very pleased with the approach you're taking. As a  
5 former high school principal I have a passion to see  
6 those students succeed, so I really applaud the  
7 efforts for them to have those opportunities and all  
8 of the different things that you're providing.

9 So my question is based on all the services you  
10 have and the ability for you to have the -- for the  
11 students to have the individualized personalized  
12 learning opportunities to start wherever they are and  
13 to move them forward, with the goal being  
14 successfully graduating high school. Two pieces of  
15 data that I looked at -- looking at the attendance  
16 rate and over the last -- and I'm just going from the  
17 school performance report which goes through the 13-  
18 14 school year, that's actually -- the attendance  
19 rate has dropped some, from 89% down to 78%, during  
20 that school year. And then the graduation rate,  
21 while it has increased some it's still, you know,  
22 below 20%. So those two things there -- with all the  
23 supports that are in place how do you see going  
24 forward that those efforts that you're making -- can  
25 we improve that? Because, you know, it's still -- it

1           seems that for all those efforts that there's still a  
2           lot of students that are still falling through the  
3           cracks. Or is there some data that they're leaving  
4           you and going somewhere else? So, can you --

5           MS. TATUM: Thank you.

6           MS. PFEFFER: -- talk about that?

7           MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. So with attendance, you  
8           know, we enroll new students every day. Students get  
9           notices on their sixth absence and on their ninth  
10          absence. Of course, they're dropped on their tenth.  
11          But with the new enrollment of students, you know, if  
12          they have a family issue or if it's a fight or  
13          they're locked up, you know, when they get out they  
14          come back. So here recently, I would say within the  
15          last couple of semesters, we've had a lot of students  
16          violating their probation, so they go back to DYS.  
17          But as soon as they get out, you know, they come  
18          back. So our attendance with a larger population --  
19          the younger kids are there almost every day, but the  
20          younger mothers are not, if they don't have anyone to  
21          keep their kids and if they won't let them go to the  
22          daycare or they're out of space. But our attendance  
23          will always fluctuate.

24                 That graduation question, I'm always posed with  
25                 that because we know that with students out of the

1 cohort, those 18, 19 year old, 20, 21 year old  
2 students are not calculated in our graduation rate.  
3 So that's what makes it look -- and that's what we  
4 are really -- who are really graduating. We strongly  
5 encourage young students, if they are able to stay  
6 with their traditional schools, stay with your  
7 traditional schools. We've had students who were  
8 behind, a couple of athletes from Central that came  
9 to us last semester in the spring; they went back to  
10 Central on target. So, but our attendance, it just  
11 fluctuates with the older crowd.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So, on the graduation rate  
13 question then, so that 17% may not necessarily be  
14 reflective? Is that --

15 MS. TATUM: No, ma'am. Because on that ESEA  
16 report -- and that's one thing Dr. Toney, bless his  
17 heart -- he said, "You've only graduated so many  
18 kids." I said, "No, sir, but we have. We've  
19 graduated this many." And so he said, "What about  
20 your cohort?" And I said, "How do we have a cohort  
21 when they're 16?" So on that ESEA report you see  
22 that, so -- and he would just scratch his head. He  
23 said -- I said, "I think it's coding." I'm not  
24 really sure. We're an anomaly in the state. And so  
25 I just feel like we're the guinea pig but we're

1 setting the standard so someone else comes in and you  
2 guys will kind of know -- with the same questions.  
3 And, of course, we moved off the Job Corps campus and  
4 moved to a community school. So that's one of the  
5 things that affected our attendance.

6 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And, again, I just -- there  
7 is -- I guess with the attendance though -- and  
8 understanding -- you know, I understand all of those  
9 different dynamics going on. Attending school is a  
10 pretty big factor in insuring that --

11 MS. TATUM: Oh, yes, ma'am.

12 MS. PFEFFER: -- you successfully make it  
13 through and graduate. So in looking at your plan I  
14 noticed that there are some places where you talk  
15 about, you know, the need for attendance and plans to  
16 address that with students. Can you talk a little  
17 bit about that?

18 MS. TATUM: Plans to address attendance?

19 MS. PFEFFER: Uh-huh.

20 MS. TATUM: So we've put in place student-of-  
21 the-month rewards and try to encourage attendance.  
22 But I want to say at least 60% of our students work,  
23 so they may come -- they may work till 11:00 but  
24 they'll get there about 8:30 or 9:00. By about 1:00  
25 they're leaving to go catch the bus to get ready for

1           their 3:00 job. So very few students, probably 40,  
2           stay all day with us and they're the younger  
3           students, the minors. But moving forward -- we  
4           instituted a student-of-the-month and so some of the  
5           older kids are like, "Well, I don't have to work that  
6           day, so I'm going to stay all day," because they want  
7           to get that reward card; you know, just some  
8           incentive. We're trying to build some incentives for  
9           them to kind of improve attendance. We're always  
10          talking about attendance. And when we meet with  
11          parents, you know, they'll say, "That's the only  
12          thing my child has done?" So I have the registrar  
13          print an attendance report and I say, "You'll see  
14          he's not going to make much progress with just  
15          sporadic attendance." So we're trying to address  
16          that. Ms. Bryant, do you want to add anything?

17                 MS. BRYANT: Sorry, I'm a little shorter. Wendy  
18          Lynn Bryant. We also have implemented some  
19          nontraditional ways to try to enhance student  
20          attendance. We found out where they work, mostly  
21          because we help them get them a job -- get their  
22          jobs. So once we get their jobs, we found out where  
23          they work. We had contact with the managers to make  
24          sure that it doesn't interfere with their everyday,  
25          you know, schooling. And then we go to their jobs;

1 we say, "Hey, you know, we're hoping to see you  
2 tomorrow." We'll go to the daycare. We really try  
3 some nontraditional measures to try to make sure that  
4 we build that rapport, which that rapport -- and when  
5 they feel safe and they feel like that there is a  
6 place that there's -- for them, then they will come  
7 back to us. So if we need to go to their job, if we  
8 need to go to their -- you know -- if we need to go  
9 to their neighborhood on the weekends -- I walk  
10 around John Barrow area; I go over here to the deep  
11 part of Southwest, and I drive around and I walk  
12 around and I find my students. And those that I see  
13 just walking around with their pants sagging I tell  
14 them about SIA Tech, see what they want to do, and  
15 see if they get, you know, a little more interested  
16 in wanting to come back to a place that will meet  
17 them where they are and help increase their skills.  
18 So we're trying to try some nontraditional measures  
19 to increase that population.

20 In addition to that, we're also working with the  
21 Little Rock city bus transportation system to get  
22 some of their rules adjusted for our students that  
23 over 18 so that we can afford to provide more bus  
24 passes for students to come to the school. So we are  
25 trying to work with certain community-based efforts

1 to try to see what they're doing and ways that we can  
2 partner to help increase that attendance.

3 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

4 MS. PIANKA: Hi. I would just like to add that  
5 our plans for the future include a variety of actions  
6 that we're going to take to improve student  
7 engagement and also to allow them opportunities to  
8 see themselves on a career and college pathway.

9 In California, we recently received a \$6,000,000  
10 career pathway grant to build partnerships with  
11 community college/industry partners. And where we  
12 are focusing on providing well thought-out,  
13 articulated pathways from high school to community  
14 college partners to four-year placements with  
15 internships and work-study and job shadowing along  
16 the way that provide our similar population of  
17 disadvantaged students that need to be able to  
18 support themselves, in many cases, with opportunities  
19 to have paid internships while they are in high  
20 school and to be earning college credits while they  
21 are in high school.

22 And our plans for the future for Little Rock is  
23 to target gross industry sectors in central Arkansas  
24 and throughout the state that our students can be  
25 exposed to, picture themselves working in those

1 fields, those middle level, middle paid jobs that are  
2 entry-level for students but often require some post-  
3 secondary training with either a career tech partner  
4 or a community college or state college partner that  
5 allows them to move into a living wage job. And if  
6 they are able to be employed in a thought-out and  
7 appropriate internship that allows them to have  
8 training that supports their goals while they're  
9 still in high school, they could stay in high school  
10 and attend every day and earn elective credits while  
11 they're doing these internships, and then also  
12 benefitting their community by our program providing  
13 a trained workforce that addresses the priority  
14 industry sectors for central Arkansas.

15 MS. PFEFFER: So, Ms. Pianka, is that a grant --  
16 so that is a grant that you've received to get that  
17 started?

18 MS. PIANKA: We did.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

20 MS. PIANKA: We have a grant in California, and  
21 the curriculum that we are developing, either in-  
22 house or purchasing, is shared throughout our network  
23 of schools. It's not just for California. And the  
24 expertise that we are gaining as we're getting this  
25 program up and running in California, we are moving

1           it forward and sharing with all of our sites. And,  
2           you know, that will just build upon the excellent  
3           work that our team is already doing to find  
4           opportunities for our students to work and remain in  
5           school. But instead, we'll build upon that and  
6           provide them with access to high skill, high wage  
7           jobs and to really make a difference in their  
8           community, and it's a life-changing opportunity for  
9           them and their families.

10           CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions or  
11           comments? Mr. Rogers.

12           MS. ROGERS: Okay. You were talking about the  
13           outreach earlier. I guess my question is what  
14           happens if you don't get more students and get them  
15           coming to the school more often? Because just  
16           looking at the budget for the past two years your  
17           expenses have been outpacing your revenues pretty  
18           good. You've had a drop in your fund balance from  
19           FY13 that was \$400,000 to where it's projected to  
20           only be \$20,000 at the end of this year. So while I  
21           agree that what y'all are doing is a good thing I  
22           have to look at it from the fiscal aspect to remain  
23           solvent, and right now I just don't see it. So I'm  
24           asking you to help me see it.

25           MR. BELL: Yes. Chris Bell with Complete

1 Consulting; we provide financial support for --  
2 financial services for SIA Tech Little Rock. Great  
3 question, absolutely great question, and it would be  
4 the exact same question I would ask if I was looking  
5 at the school from the outside. The most -- the  
6 major contributing factor from the reduction in the  
7 fund balance from the 400-plus thousand to the  
8 \$20,000 that's projected is primarily the move from  
9 being housed on the Job Corps campus to moving to a  
10 community-based campus so that we could continue to  
11 insure that we could service all students and not  
12 just those that were on the Job Corps campus. Being  
13 on the Job Corps campus allowed us to take advantage  
14 of several in-kind services that are not available  
15 off the site, but the primary difference there is  
16 that every job -- many of those jobs -- many of our  
17 student population then was derived from the Job  
18 Corps campus. Moving to the community -- moving to  
19 the new facility, we really had to start over in re-  
20 establishing that enrollment. While Job Corps  
21 continues to partner with us and they continue to  
22 send students, it is nowhere near the number that we  
23 were seeing in those early years when we were  
24 actually housed on their campus. So with that, what  
25 you see in the declining enrollment was very -- while

1 we didn't fully see when we made the decision to move  
2 off that the enrollment would be as low as it would  
3 be, again, we anticipated many of the students that  
4 were already with us would continue to flow from that  
5 Job Corps campus. What you see is us utilizing that  
6 fund balance to build the school, to renovate a new  
7 facility, to make the accommodations necessary to be  
8 able to serve that community-based population. But  
9 as you can see, with the decline in the fund balance  
10 you're starting to see that our attendance -- or not  
11 our attendance, but our average daily membership  
12 continuing to increase each year. And going from a  
13 school of 60 students, which is nearly impossible to  
14 maintain, nearly impossible to run a school -- from  
15 60 students to now 166 students, that is starting to  
16 give us the base to be able to rebuild that fund  
17 balance. And so as we continue to recruit and we  
18 continue to develop these additional partnerships,  
19 the community continues to learn more about our  
20 school. There's been so many occasions where people  
21 are coming in the door saying, "I never knew you were  
22 here." So those continued enrollment efforts are  
23 what we needed to be able to recover from that fund  
24 balance. So, again, while I agree with you that is a  
25 great question and the very same question that I

1 would ask if I was looking from the outside, being  
2 privy to sit on the inside and see the increase in  
3 the enrollment and see the internal plans -- with all  
4 of my experience, I know that this school will be  
5 able to stand on its own two feet as we move forward.  
6 And in the event that there is some hiccup, we do  
7 have the support, the full support of SIA Tech, Inc.  
8 that will -- is willing to, and has, when necessary,  
9 step in and support the school financially to insure  
10 that we're able to continue to service our students.

11 MS. TATUM: One other unique thing that made --  
12 this is for the previous question -- we have  
13 graduations twice a year, usually in May and  
14 December. So this past December I think we had like  
15 40-something graduates. But since January 5th, if  
16 I'm quoting this right, I think we've enrolled 60 new  
17 students. So, you know, so we're back up now to  
18 about 166, like Chris said. So they enroll every  
19 single day.

20 And one thing about the funding piece that I've  
21 asked Chris Bell -- he calls me a nerd. I said, "I  
22 know -- explain to me the funding, per-student  
23 funding. If that set amount of dollars is with that  
24 student and follows that student, how does that help  
25 us or work for us when they're with us only for a

1 short period of time, especially if they're seniors  
2 needing two credits?" So they're there for three  
3 weeks or a month and then they're gone. So I told  
4 him that I think the funding matrix needs to be  
5 revisited, which I think he agreed with me because he  
6 couldn't answer my questions either, so --

7 DR. SAUNDERS: That sounds like us.

8 MS. TATUM: Yes, sir, I know.

9 MR. ROGERS: Okay. I understand your attendance  
10 is going up but when I look at the ADM, which goes  
11 back -- and I'm understanding your problem that your  
12 students are in and out, in and out, but that's --  
13 and I see the problem there. But just because your  
14 attendance is going up I'm not seeing that the ADM is  
15 going up, which is causing the problem in the  
16 revenues that are going into the decline in the fund  
17 balance. Because I see that for your PD funding you  
18 were already fully funded but the expenses have  
19 already out-passed you by \$4,000. And then under NSL  
20 you're negative right now, although you will get some  
21 more, but it's not at -- maybe enough to cover what  
22 you've spent right now, but might not. So I guess  
23 I'm still back to while I understand the problems  
24 that you have, I still -- how much of the fund  
25 balance is going to be needed next year? And then,

1 if SIA Tech, your parent company, will step in, when  
2 would that happen? Because if the students are there  
3 and then y'all don't have the money to operate the  
4 next week, then what happens to them? And so that's  
5 -- I guess that's my ultimate concern.

6 MR. BELL: Yeah. And let me address those two  
7 concerns specifically. So you say that they were  
8 overspent by \$4,000 in professional development  
9 funds. That was a plan to overspend. We will  
10 transfer NSLA funds into our professional development  
11 funds to balance that out. And our NSLA funds, yes,  
12 we're outpacing those but that's because of our  
13 professional development spent. We have -- we  
14 received 45 -- just over \$45,000 in NSLA. We used  
15 that to pay for our RTI specialist, who, with salary  
16 and benefits, makes just under \$41,000. So the plan  
17 is still there; it's just the timing of the receipt  
18 of the cash and the disbursement of the cash  
19 throughout the course of the year that creates a  
20 negative balance at a point in time. But, again,  
21 that's -- we're closely monitoring the expenditures  
22 and those receipts of the school. We have a very  
23 robust team. As you all know, we have a team of 15  
24 individuals just in our office. We work very closely  
25 with the schools. We work very closely with the

1 corporate office. It is absolutely unique in having  
2 such a team of experts who are working alongside with  
3 you and your staff, as well, to insure that this  
4 school is moving along a path that allows it to stay  
5 financially solvent. I would not stand here, given  
6 my position, and say that this school will remain  
7 solvent as its ADM continues to increase. Looking at  
8 it just from the documents here that were a part of  
9 the renewal packet, two years ago we had 79 students;  
10 last year, 132 students. And it says here 156, but  
11 we're up now to 166 students. You're seeing the  
12 positive trend in the enrollment, in the ADM, and,  
13 again, that's what our funding is based on. And so  
14 we know that it's going to continue to recover.  
15 Obviously, having 79 students in the facility,  
16 knowing that you're growing, knowing that kids are  
17 coming, you can't make the same expenditure  
18 reductions that you would do if you knew that you  
19 were going to stay at 79. We have to continue to  
20 move forward and continue to plan for and make  
21 accommodations for those students that are coming.  
22 And so that plan is a very meticulous plan and we are  
23 monitoring that plan at multiple levels on a daily  
24 basis, actually, because we're monitoring each  
25 transaction and understanding how it fits into the

1 overall plan. So I stand with confidence in saying  
2 that this school will remain financially solvent.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: I have a follow-up on that.

4 Addressing the drop in the legal balance of  
5 approximately -- was it about a \$375,000 drop over  
6 the two-year period? Was that correct?

7 MR. ROGERS: From FY13 --

8 MR. BELL: Yes.

9 MR. ROGERS: -- it was \$400,000 down to the --  
10 they projected at \$20,000 at the end of this year.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: I want to ask it a little  
12 different way but the same topic. How much of that  
13 drop was the result of one-time expenditures, would  
14 you say?

15 MR. BELL: So the -- and I'm going to do my best  
16 in estimating this.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: That's fine.

18 MR. BELL: But it would've been roughly \$300,000  
19 is what we spent in the move off of the facility,  
20 obtaining that facility, renovating that facility and  
21 bringing it to a point to where we can serve  
22 students.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

25 MR. LESTER: Coming from the federal programs

1 office, I wanted to ask you a couple of questions.  
2 You are eligible -- your free and reduced rate is  
3 57.24% and at 40% could put you at school-wide. We  
4 have you not as participating in Title 1. Has that  
5 ever been discussed or --

6 MR. BELL: Yes. So, and actually this year our  
7 free and reduced rate is just over 82% and we believe  
8 that that's going to continue to increase, so your  
9 point is even more prevalent. But we've -- as part  
10 of -- as part of a -- when we were on the Job Corps  
11 campus -- I don't know if I should speak to this  
12 directly, but when we were on the Job Corps campus we  
13 were under the impression that because Job Corps was  
14 federally funded that they would be almost -- no,  
15 okay. I'm sorry. The boss is going to help me out.

16 DR. DAWSON: I'm sorry. We've looked at special  
17 ed. -- excuse me -- we've looked at federal funding  
18 under Title 1 for 17 years. Unfortunately, because  
19 of the age of our students and because of the --  
20 frankly, the paperwork, we'd need another person that  
21 we'd have to hire with our existing money to get that  
22 money. And the money that we would get would go  
23 largely for paying for that person and so we've  
24 chosen not to participate in the Title 1 program over  
25 the years. We'll continue to look at it, and we look

1 at it every year to see if there's some change that  
2 would make us eligible, where we could put more  
3 resources not into hiring people to do paperwork but  
4 people to work with our students and bring them  
5 along. And that's the reason behind that, and that's  
6 been a system-wide course that we've adopted over the  
7 years. But, again, we look at it every year to see  
8 if there's some change that would benefit us.

9 MR. LESTER: What could you offer to offset that  
10 for the Title 1 children and economically --

11 DR. DAWSON: I'm sorry?

12 MR. LESTER: What could you offer to offset  
13 that?

14 DR. DAWSON: Well, we offer a smaller learning  
15 community with more teacher input. We offer a high-  
16 tech program. We offer the supports that they need,  
17 not just while they're in school but outside of  
18 school in terms of job shadowing, job placement,  
19 those types of things. And helping them -- helping  
20 steer them toward services that they would need, if  
21 they're students in poverty or if they're in need of  
22 some other type of services, either mental health or  
23 something. So we do the functions. We believe we do  
24 the functions that we'd be paying for with the Title  
25 1 funds, but it's been too onerous for us to go down

1           that road when we would be paying people to do  
2           paperwork with the money that we would receive,  
3           because we are such a small school.

4           MR. ROGERS:   Okay.

5           CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN:   Dr. Saunders.

6           DR. SAUNDERS:   First of all, I want to commend  
7           you for taking on a great challenge.  All of your  
8           students, former dropouts, the high free and reduced  
9           rate, you're taking on a very challenging population.  
10          I understand that and I respect that.  And, you know,  
11          on that same regard, looking at the performance in  
12          regards to graduation rate and performance on other  
13          assessments, I don't know if it's at the level it  
14          needs to be.  I don't know exactly what that level  
15          is.  I know you have a very challenging population,  
16          and so I take that into extreme consideration.  I do  
17          note that one word of encouragement that I saw was  
18          reflected in your teacher retention rates from the  
19          50% down to 17%, currently; 20% last year.  So I  
20          think that's key to have the continuity in the  
21          teaching staff within the school.

22          I did have some questions regarding the waivers,  
23          just as a clean-up -- this first one may involve  
24          legal -- in the very first waiver regarding the  
25          school board and the response in reference to 6-13-

1           619. And it was to allow the participation for board  
2 members from distance. Correct?

3           MS. TATUM: Uh-huh.

4           DR. SAUNDERS: And is that currently allowed  
5 with the new legislation?

6           MS. DAVIS: Well, they don't have to, you know,  
7 follow the same school board rules anyway. So, like  
8 I say, we read this as this was clean-up of things  
9 that didn't get asked before. You know, like  
10 sometimes early they'll request certain waivers but  
11 these don't apply to the school boards -- I mean,  
12 these don't apply to charter schools anyway.

13          DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So they already have a  
14 waiver from this?

15          MS. DAVIS: Wait, hang on. Right. Is this one  
16 about attending in person?

17          DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

18          MS. DAVIS: Okay. Yes, they can waive that. I  
19 think they have to do like so many meetings in person  
20 but they can -- you know -- they have to say like  
21 three in person and three without. So, they can do  
22 that.

23          DR. SAUNDERS: So, okay. So you're asking for a  
24 waiver from the new legislation. Correct? Am I  
25 understanding that correctly?

1 MR. WALTER: Yes.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. All right. The next one  
3 that I had questions on regarded the waivers to be  
4 rescinded, the Arkansas history and the teacher  
5 licensure. And I think we just need clarification on  
6 that. Correct?

7 MS. DAVIS: Right.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: And do you want to --

9 MS. DAVIS: Yeah. They had put in there that  
10 they wanted them to rescind, but then they said they  
11 didn't want to rescind them. So we just need them to  
12 clarify do they want to keep them or not. It's a  
13 waiver of the teacher licensure for history and the  
14 Arkansas history requirements.

15 MS. TATUM: It was my understanding that  
16 Arkansas history was no longer a requirement. So,  
17 Tripp, could you speak to that? I wasn't sure.

18 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, staff attorney,  
19 Arkansas Public School Resource Center. And I might  
20 look for direction from Ms. Mallory on this. But it  
21 was my understanding that there was a request from  
22 SIA Tech to rescind those waivers because they were  
23 providing Arkansas history.

24 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Mr. Walter and Ms.  
25 Mallory speak quietly together.)

1 MR. WALTER: Okay, I'm sorry. Apparently, if --  
2 those waivers may have been mistakenly put in to be  
3 rescinded.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So they want to keep those  
5 waivers?

6 MR. WALTER: Yes, sir.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you. That's all I have.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions,  
9 comments?

10 MR. ROGERS: I've got two more questions for  
11 finance, under the finance department. Okay. On the  
12 first one, you said that most of the drop in fund  
13 balance was from one-time expenses from your  
14 relocation?

15 MR. BELL: That it's all attributed to the move  
16 to the new campus.

17 MR. ROGERS: All of it is one-time? I guess  
18 that's what -- that's what I'm wanting you to say or  
19 tell me that it wasn't. Because I think when Dr.  
20 Saunders asked you, you indicated --

21 MR. BELL: No, it's not going to -- so I want to  
22 make sure I'm being clear here. Forgive me if I'm --

23 MR. ROGERS: No, no. That's why I'm trying to  
24 get it clear too.

25 MR. BELL: -- making a misstatement. That's

1           confusing. But when we made the determination to  
2           move off the campus -- so, there are expenses that we  
3           had to incur in the first year, in the initial move.  
4           But we were able to secure a building that was large  
5           enough to accommodate our projected growth, but we  
6           did not renovate the entire building. We've been  
7           renovating in phases as the population has been  
8           growing. So when I say the roughly \$300,000, it's  
9           the completion of those phases to date.

10           MR. ROGERS: Okay. So that's -- so there's  
11           going to be some one-time reoccurring expenses as you  
12           continue to renovate the building you're in right  
13           now?

14           MR. BELL: Correct.

15           MR. ROGERS: Okay. And then my other question  
16           was: you mentioned assistance from the corporate  
17           office if there was a financial situation. My  
18           question I guess was two questions in there. One, is  
19           it -- what kind of assistance is it? And then, is  
20           there a cap on it?

21           MR. BELL: Yes. So, do you want to speak to  
22           that? I don't want to commit to anything that's --

23           DR. DAWSON: Hold on to your wallet, right?

24           MR. BELL: Yes.

25           DR. DAWSON: Our corporate office is committed

1 to supporting our schools. We've had to do this.  
2 There have been a lot of things that have happened.  
3 Everybody knows about the recession, obviously. The  
4 Job Corps changed its model, their recruitment of  
5 students that needed a diploma went down. So we've  
6 had a ripple effect throughout our organization.  
7 We've been able to support our schools. We don't do  
8 it by simply giving money, but they are promissory  
9 notes to pay over time as our enrollment rebuilds.  
10 When we have left Job Corps centers -- and we have  
11 programs that are on Job Corps centers and are off,  
12 depending on what the rules of the state are and how  
13 they're developing their programs. But as we move  
14 forward, where we have monetary needs of our sites  
15 we've been able to provide these loans. It's almost  
16 -- in some places, in California, we've actually had  
17 -- we sold some of our receivables, basically. And  
18 so the cap would only be -- we have hundreds of  
19 thousands of dollars, but that won't happen, we don't  
20 believe, because we are monitoring the budget on a  
21 very -- as Chris said, almost day-by-day basis. So  
22 we believe that we'll be able -- in a position to  
23 help our schools, and we have been over the last five  
24 or six years, as they phased in. As they built their  
25 enrollment, we've been able to back off, recover what

1 we've loaned, and then put that money into other  
2 projects. So that's been our plan. It's worked so  
3 far.

4 As far as a cap is concerned, we don't have a  
5 hard cap but we'll look at every request and every  
6 need that the sites have. Our goal is to keep our  
7 sites open so we can serve students and not give them  
8 one more disappointment in their lives. So we will  
9 do everything that we can to make sure that we're  
10 able to do that here in Little Rock.

11 MR. ROGERS: So if there was a situation where  
12 the campus was -- had fiscal trouble, y'all would  
13 insure that they would at least remain open to the  
14 end of that school year?

15 DR. DAWSON: That's the plan, absolutely. And  
16 as I say, because we monitor the budget with Mr. Bell  
17 and with Ms. Tatum we're able to make adjustments as  
18 we go along so there's not a huge surprise and go,  
19 "Oh, we need X-amount of money." We've made either  
20 adjustments or reductions as we've gone along. But  
21 if there's a case where we have an unexpected expense  
22 and we can come in with a loan to the school to be  
23 repaid at some point in the future when the  
24 enrollment continues to build, we will certainly do  
25 that and we commit to that. We've committed to that

1 at all of our sites and we'll do that here in Little  
2 Rock.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

4 MS. LIWO: Okay. I just need someone to tell me  
5 one more time what you're doing to recruit new  
6 students and letting people know that your school is  
7 out there, and what you're doing to retain these  
8 students, just one more time for me.

9 MS. TATUM: Okay. For recruitment purposes, we  
10 use local radio stations. We set up booths in the  
11 mall, McCain Mall. We go speak at churches. We go  
12 to nonprofit organizations who are having job fairs  
13 or career expos. We set up tables there. We set up  
14 a table at St. Mark; we were invited there. In  
15 Southwest Little Rock our flyers are in some of the  
16 eateries, especially Sim's Bar-B-Que because a lot of  
17 people go there. So we went to every beauty shop and  
18 barber shop there in Southwest and left flyers. I  
19 can't remember. We're doing a lot of things. Oh,  
20 yeah, social media. Yeah, and our partnership with  
21 DYS. I have to be reminded because recruitment and  
22 retention are something we do on a daily basis. So,  
23 and to retain our students, when they're with us --  
24 we've not had many leave. So if they're not there,  
25 it's because they're probably incarcerated or move

1 out of state. When they come -- and if you don't  
2 mind, a parent showed up; can she speak, that was on  
3 the video? She had two sons at our school. Is that  
4 okay?

5 MS. LIWO: I don't --

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, I'll accept that.

7 MS. TATUM: Thank you, Ms. Coffman. Ms. Dixon.

8 MS. DIXON: Good morning.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning. If you'll  
10 please state your name for the record?

11 MS. DIXON: My name is Bartrece Dixon [ps].

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You'll need to be sworn  
13 in, if you'll raise your right hand. Do you swear or  
14 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall  
15 be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the  
16 truth?

17 MS. DIXON: I swear.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You may proceed.

19 MS. DIXON: Okay. Do you have any questions for  
20 me? I'm ready.

21 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Ms. Tatum and Ms. Dixon  
22 speak together briefly).

23 MS. DIXON: Well, I have two sons. My oldest  
24 son, who's Montavious, he's living in Jonesboro now.  
25 But when he first went, his attitude was nasty;

1 didn't care about school, didn't care about --  
2 basically, nothing. He really didn't care about his-  
3 self. But once he -- once I pulled him out of  
4 Pulaski County School District -- I'm not going to  
5 say the school -- and I put him in SIA Tech I see a  
6 big improvement with his attitude. He was more into  
7 getting up in the morning, perked up to go to school,  
8 rushing me to get him to school on time, worrying  
9 about his grades, and he was more prompt on his  
10 education, wanted to go to college and everything.  
11 And he's doing good. He's doing construction and  
12 he's also working a nighttime job and he's in the  
13 process now of doing college courses online. And my  
14 youngest son, Malik, he had trouble with his  
15 education at the same, Pulaski County School  
16 District; I'm not going to say the school. And for  
17 some reason he wouldn't focus. He was more into  
18 wanting to be a dropout, wanted to become a rap  
19 artist. Not. I refused that. I'm a mother. And I  
20 seen my son going down a stream that I worked too  
21 hard for, got up every morning to provide, a single  
22 parent of three, and I'm looking at my self and I'm  
23 like, I did it by myself, raising three kids, working  
24 full-time, going to school full-time, had a 4.0 grade  
25 point average. And I said, "If I can do it as a

1 single parent raising three kids, I'm going to make  
2 sure my kids be better than me." And sometimes you  
3 have to be hard with your kids, and I'm hard on my  
4 kids. I show them tough love and he got to the point  
5 where he just didn't want to do anything at the  
6 school, constantly getting in trouble. And I said,  
7 "You know what, time to pull you out." He got mad,  
8 pissed off, wouldn't talk to me. Didn't care, love  
9 you still. And I remember when I took my son, my  
10 older son to SIA Tech I said, "You know what, I think  
11 I'm going to transfer him over here." And I  
12 transferred him over there in the 10th grade, in  
13 January, and he was kind of like fidgeting around,  
14 didn't really want to do anything. About last year,  
15 when school started, he was considered as a 9th  
16 grader. At the end of last year, he was considered  
17 as a senior. Now he's a senior and he's graduating  
18 this year. And I'm looking at, was it me? I think  
19 it had a lot to do with me but I think it had most of  
20 it because they show compassion, love, support, and  
21 they inspire them. You can do whatever you want to  
22 do; you've just got to be willing to do it. Can't  
23 nobody do it for you. You've got to believe in  
24 yourself. If you can't believe in yourself, then  
25 can't nobody show you that but yourself. And I guess

1 he was looking at they're showing me love, they're  
2 taking time out with me; if I need help on this, they  
3 don't criticize me, they don't push me to the side.  
4 I mean, whatever he needed they were there. And I'm  
5 looking at him going from wanting to be a dropout to  
6 a rap artist and I seen my child going down the  
7 stream where -- I could see my son laying in a  
8 casket; I'm looking at my son being put in the  
9 ground, and I'm seeing -- I don't want to see my son  
10 like that. I don't want to be throwing dirt on my  
11 son's face. I want to see my son walking across  
12 land, speaking and encouraging other kids, "You can  
13 do better with your life if you choose to. It's the  
14 path that you go down." If you've got positive  
15 people in your life, you're going to do positive.  
16 Now, my son, he's talking about going in the service  
17 when he graduates; he's talking about opening up his  
18 own business and he's talking about having his own  
19 clothing line; he's talking about -- he's making sure  
20 that momma is taken care of where momma ain't got to  
21 work no more -- yeah, because they're getting kind of  
22 old now. But he's doing good. He went from making  
23 D's and F's to A's and B's. And, I mean, he's  
24 encouraging other kids that's around the neighborhood  
25 that -- the dropouts -- he's encouraging them to come

1 to SIA Tech; "You need to come to SIA Tech. I mean,  
2 there ain't nothing on these streets." I see  
3 something positive in him where he's speaking  
4 positive now instead of thinking negative. And he's  
5 like, "Mom, I love my life. I mean, if it weren't  
6 for you putting me over there I don't know where my  
7 life would be. I'm going to be honest with you: if  
8 you wouldn't have never put me over there you would  
9 have found me dead in my room," because he was  
10 planning on blowing his brains out. And -- [sobbing]  
11 -- I'm sorry.

12 MS. TATUM: It's okay.

13 MS. DIXON: That school, not only did it help my  
14 son but it encouraged my son enough to the point  
15 where he didn't have to take his life. Instead of  
16 him wanting to commit suicide, he wants to be  
17 something in life now. And he -- we both got on our  
18 knees and prayed and asked God for forgiveness. Now,  
19 he's very active in church; he's working with kids in  
20 the church. He gets up and speaks and he gives his  
21 testimony and he tells them, "Whatever you're going  
22 through, I know your parents are hard on it, I know  
23 you don't like them at times, but sometimes your  
24 parents show you love that you don't understand until  
25 you go through something. And now that I see what my

1 mom was telling me, I love my mom every day; that if  
2 it weren't for my mom saving my life I know I'd be in  
3 the grave because I was planning on taking my life."  
4 And now his attitude is just positive. He's loving,  
5 caring. He loves Ms. Tatum; he loves Ms. Taylor; he  
6 loves everybody at the school.

7 And my stepson -- I'm not going to say his name  
8 -- he dropped out, and now he came crying to me,  
9 begging and pleading with me, "I want to go back, I  
10 want to go back." And he's planning on going back to  
11 school Monday.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

13 MS. DIXON: But what I'm saying is this school  
14 is not just to be for show; it's more compassion,  
15 love, support. They care about the kids' education,  
16 and it's more -- not so much of a school to stay open  
17 because they want to be seen; it's a school for kids  
18 that have that attitude where they're dropping out  
19 and don't care about their self. And they're pulling  
20 them in and encouraging them that there is somebody  
21 out here that will love you; there is somebody out  
22 here that cares; "just give us a chance and we can  
23 prove to you. What you didn't get there we can give  
24 it to you and much more." And that's why I love SIA  
25 Tech and I tell anybody. I mean, they do their own

1 advertising but I've been doing it for them too,  
2 because I've been doing it because I've been  
3 advertising it at my church. So, I know friends at  
4 the radio station; I have them to say something. I  
5 go to the stores and everything. I mean, I just tell  
6 them, "You ought to put your child in SIA Tech,"  
7 because, I mean, people come to me and they're like,  
8 "She's failing in school." "Go on to SIA Tech.  
9 They'll help you out." So, I mean, I'm out there  
10 spreading the word. I spread the word, as well. So,  
11 I mean, they're doing their part and as me being a  
12 parent I'm doing my part as well.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you so much.

14 MS. DIXON: So, I mean, it's got to take parents  
15 as well to do it.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you so much. That's  
17 a great testimony for the power of love and  
18 education.

19 MS. DIXON: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Any additional  
21 questions? Ms. Barnes.

22 MS. BARNES: Good morning, and thank you all for  
23 being here. I don't know that I have questions  
24 because I think they've been answered. I originally  
25 looked at the mission and I was also looking at the

1 grad rate. But I do understand the complexities, or  
2 most of the complexities, of having students in your  
3 school who may have already fallen behind at the  
4 previous school, dropped out. And I guess what I was  
5 looking at more than anything had to do with where  
6 they go from here, you know. I do believe that the  
7 school is meeting the needs of children where they  
8 are and then striving to move them forward. So I  
9 applaud the tenacity, the endurance, and I recognize  
10 that it's sometimes difficult but rewarding.

11 So I appreciated the responses to looking at the  
12 possibilities of Act 1272 and how it can be molded.  
13 And I jotted down responses because we are looking at  
14 all of the things and needs, and we recognize that  
15 this particular school -- even based on Dr. Toney's  
16 remarks, this particular school is not the  
17 traditional; it doesn't fit in any one box.

18 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

19 MS. BARNES: I am concerned, I think, because I  
20 understand about the conversation regarding Title 1  
21 -- I was listening to it -- and I do know that  
22 federal anything is cumbersome. I spoke with Mr.  
23 Lester briefly and stated, you know, we need to get  
24 with them and see what we can do to assist you in  
25 reducing some of that burden of paperwork. But as

1 with anything else, I do also understand that some  
2 people do not feel that the amount of funds is  
3 equivalent to the oversight, the reviews, and things  
4 of that nature. So I'd just encourage you to have  
5 some conversations with our federal program staff  
6 because where there are funds and opportunities I  
7 implore you to take advantage of that.

8 Now with respect to accountability, we have some  
9 things that we have to do. I understand that  
10 sometimes perception is based on designations, labels  
11 can be skewed, and this is one of those cases because  
12 this is actually a dropout recovery missioned and  
13 focused program. Because of that, it does not afford  
14 -- you know -- sometimes if people look at your ESEA  
15 status report they see a lot of end numbers less than  
16 10 because of the number of non-mobile students who  
17 may have been assessed being at the school for that  
18 period of time is so small that it can't be reported  
19 as such. I did see some growth and so I understand  
20 that you're doing at this point what you can do, and  
21 I am trying to decide what we can do.

22 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. BARNES: So I think I'm having a little  
24 moment of commentary to simply say that we intend to  
25 review as often -- and I encourage you to work with

1 our school improvement staff to find out where the  
2 successes are and then begin to build on those. And,  
3 you know, hopefully we will be able to address not  
4 only the needs of this alternative environment, or  
5 alternatively structured environment.

6 I wanted to ask a couple of questions about your  
7 day and evening opportunities. I've read through so  
8 many things, so I just need you to --

9 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. BARNES: -- talk me through how you address  
11 recovery, credit recovery, moving them forward to get  
12 them that diploma within your day and outside of the  
13 day. I did hear the job coordinated efforts and I  
14 remember sometime ago those types of programs that  
15 assisted students in getting internship and hours and  
16 credit. So can you tell me what you do to meet the  
17 needs of those children who have to work but are  
18 struggling to get their diploma?

19 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. So once the student  
20 registers at SIA Tech the first thing they do is go  
21 into our testing specialist's room, and we do STAR  
22 math, reading, get a baseline test score. So we use  
23 that data to see what part of the curriculum they  
24 would possibly struggle with. Then the registrar  
25 develops an ILP, an individualized learning plan,

1           once we get their transcripts from their other  
2           schools. So we look at what credits they're missing.  
3           And going to the assessment piece, you know, if a  
4           student is there on test day legally you have to test  
5           them. So with us registering these students every  
6           day, you know, that's another thing that hurt us.  
7           But we just build a schedule around what credits are  
8           needed. If they're like deficient in a semester of  
9           Algebra 1, even though they may be working in English  
10          12, that's what their schedule will look like. So it  
11          will look like whatever credits are required to get  
12          them up to standards. We have an eight-period day,  
13          with one period A and B lunch, 55-minute schedule.

14           MS. BARNES: So you don't do anything in the --  
15          outside of a regular, let's say, 8:00 to 5:00 day?

16           MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am, we do. And our students  
17          have the opportunity to access the curriculum at  
18          home, if they have --

19           MS. BARNES: Okay.

20           MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. But they cannot take  
21          tests. Yeah. All the assessments are locked.

22           MS. BARNES: Right. Okay. Okay. All right.

23           MS. TATUM: So that gives them the opportunity  
24          to work ahead. So I know people are going, how are  
25          they able to do this? Well, if they're working at

1 home and completing assignments and checking off --  
2 and everything is online so teachers can view it --  
3 then that will let them kind of study. And once the  
4 students are ready to take this test they'll unlock  
5 it and let them take the test.

6 MS. BARNES: Okay. Right. Thank you. I  
7 appreciate that.

8 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

9 MS. SMITH: I just have one comment, piggy-  
10 backing kind of on what Ms. Barnes said. The main  
11 point I want to make today is no one is going to tell  
12 your story if you don't tell your story.

13 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

14 MS. SMITH: And with this new legislation you  
15 have the opportunity to really tell your story. And  
16 listening to you today talk about your graduation  
17 rates and how that wasn't a true reflection, this is  
18 your opportunity now to tell your story and how many  
19 of those kids that you have recovered. They may not  
20 have graduated on time with their cohort, but you  
21 recovered them and they were able to graduate with  
22 this amount of time. Being able to tell your story  
23 of how many credits a student has obtained within a  
24 year, that's a success story that's not reflected  
25 within your application.

1 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. SMITH: And so really taking a whole look at  
3 what your school is doing, how you measure your  
4 success, and making sure that you're really clear  
5 that you're telling that story. Okay? So that's  
6 just kind of my suggestion on that, kind of piggy-  
7 backing off what Ms. Barnes was saying.

8 MS. TATUM: And I would like to say that I'm a  
9 member of the Alternative Task Force for  
10 accountability for ADE.

11 MS. SMITH: Yes, you are.

12 MS. TATUM: And I missed yesterday's meeting.  
13 My 88-year old father had back surgery, so -- yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions  
15 or comments?

16 I'll just close by saying I was fortunate to  
17 visit SIA Tech and had a wonderful tour. Ms. Bryant  
18 did a fabulous job of showing me around the school  
19 and helping me to see the vision. She did a fabulous  
20 job. I was wondering if Mr. Lloyd was the glitter  
21 teacher mentioned in the --

22 MS. TATUM: He is. No, you know, I couldn't  
23 bring every teacher because I had to make sure our  
24 classrooms are covered. But Mr. Lloyd is new; this  
25 is starting his second year. He's very bashful but

1 extremely bright --

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Well --

3 MS. TATUM: -- and his students love him.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- in just my limited time  
5 there I can attest that he is glitter because I saw  
6 him right beside the students --

7 MS. TATUM: Oh, yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- right -- doing exactly  
9 what that young man described.

10 MS. TATUM: Yeah, yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I was an eyewitness to  
12 that.

13 A couple of other things that I thought was very  
14 intriguing, and when I came back I certainly was  
15 singing the praises of my visit there. But when I  
16 walked into the school -- and Ms. Boyd and I arrived  
17 early because that's --

18 MS. TATUM: I head, 7:30.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, I like to get there  
20 early 'cause I like to watch kids come to school.

21 MS. TATUM: Oh, yeah. Good.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: To me, as a teacher, that  
23 tells everything.

24 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I used to love to do car-

1 rider duty because when you open the car door you  
2 know what kind of day you're going to have --

3 MS. TATUM: You're right.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- right then. So I was  
5 very interested to watch the kids come in to see how  
6 they interact. Beautiful children, beautiful  
7 children with so much potential.

8 What I thought was so interesting is the layout  
9 of your classrooms are exactly as I would expect them  
10 to be. And they're very nontraditional because you  
11 are providing a very nontraditional education. And  
12 for anyone who has not visited it's just such a great  
13 environment for doing exactly what your mission  
14 statement says you do. So it just all matched  
15 perfectly.

16 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I just wanted to shout  
18 out to Ms. Bryant again --

19 MS. TATUM: Stand up, Ms. Bryant.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- for a great tour.  
21 She's a little pack of dynamite.

22 MS. TATUM: Yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions or  
24 comments?

25 Ms. Davis, are there any remaining issues

1           regarding --

2                   MS. DAVIS:  No

3                   CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN:  -- the request?

4                   MS. DAVIS:  No.

5                   CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN:  Then I will accept a  
6           motion.

7                   MS. SMITH:  I'll make my first motion.  Okay.  
8           And this is kind of in reflection of what we've done  
9           in the past or the past day with other schools that  
10          were on distress, to make a motion to accept the  
11          renewal on a three-year instead of five based on the  
12          academic distress, but to accept the renewal.

13                  MS. BARNES:  I'll second the motion.  And I  
14          think we're looking more at the Priority.

15                  MS. SMITH:  Yes.

16                  MS. BARNES:  So I do second a three-year  
17          renewal.

18                  CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN:  Okay.  I've had a motion  
19          by Ms. Smith and a second by Ms. Barnes for a three-  
20          year renewal.  Is there any discussion?

21                  DR. SAUNDERS:  Yeah.  I'm not opposed to the  
22          motion but I think I would like to see -- I think I  
23          would like to review this possibly annually, not the  
24          entire application but just a progress report,  
25          possibly January of every year, a financial overview.

1           And just for our purposes I think a one-pager  
2           concerning finances, as well as academic progress,  
3           performance, and graduation rate, and would like to  
4           hear about the strategies going on. And I want to use  
5           that not to create another report to fill out; you  
6           know, we don't need to go through however many pages  
7           this one was, 300 or so. But, you know, possibly  
8           just a condensed version for us just to come in and  
9           discuss the progress, see if there are ways that we  
10          can help, and just help you along in that process.  
11          So I think I would like to ask for an amendment to  
12          that motion to include that.

13                 MR. ROGERS: I would agree with that.

14                 MS. BARNES: I have a quick question. So I  
15           think I understand -- and I have no problems with  
16           annual review; they will be reviewed anyway  
17           continuously. But I was listening to the performance  
18           piece, trying to decide what that may look like since  
19           we're still working on what their successes are going  
20           to look like. That was my only question. If that's  
21           going to become a part of the motion, I just needed  
22           to get it in my head. I think more than anything I'm  
23           mostly concerned with respect to their fiscal  
24           management. And as we are fleshing out the rest of  
25           what "successful" looks like, then we can also look

1 at the academic performance measures in that way.  
2 So, I mean, I assume I'm fine. I'm sorry, you all; I  
3 had to talk that all out in my head.

4 MS. TATUM: And we're feeling the same way with  
5 Act 1272 not really in place, what does success  
6 standards look like for us.

7 MS. SMITH: I kind of agree with Ms. Barnes on  
8 that. I'm more in line with the fiscal, not  
9 necessarily the academic, because I feel like with  
10 the legislation changes and with how -- I mean, that  
11 could change the picture of everything.

12 MS. TATUM: Totally. Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. SMITH: But I'm with the fiscal but I'm  
14 still open to --

15 MS. PFEFFER: I'm looking -- because I read it  
16 just a little bit ago and now I can't find it in the  
17 packet, but where you had outlined your new  
18 performance goals. And going back to the graduation  
19 rate, the more I reflected on that -- being able to  
20 get a sense of what does that really look like in  
21 terms of the students who come and those who complete  
22 -- you had a chart in there that talked about the  
23 number who enter and left without completing the  
24 highest grade offered. So in that, are you referring  
25 to the 12th grade and graduation? So just, to me, I

1 would -- I'm with Dr. Saunders. I think the  
2 financial report is going to be beneficial, but I  
3 would also like an update on -- to me, that's a big  
4 goal here if we're a dropout recovery. So if we  
5 could just have an update annually on where we are in  
6 terms of successfully -- you know -- what our --  
7 number of kids and how many of them are successfully  
8 completing their PLP when they enter, so between  
9 that. So I think I would want to keep those  
10 performance updates if we're going to do those annual  
11 reviews.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So to sum up what I think  
13 I just heard, they're very interested in a yearly  
14 fiscal report and then a conversation about your  
15 unique situation and how we can help you better. So  
16 it really feels more like a conversation at that  
17 point.

18 MS. SMITH: Yeah. Let me ask this question, and  
19 really it may be for Ms. Barnes. Okay. Your unit is  
20 already working with them and you have a school  
21 improvement specialist assigned to them. And will  
22 that school improvement specialist be doing a yearly  
23 report, or what do they have in your office going on?

24 MS. BARNES: Actually, they will be completing  
25 quarterly reports to the State Board oversight of

1 what's going on in those schools.

2 MS. SMITH: So would it be sufficient for  
3 everyone if we included those quarterly reports  
4 within the yearly report so when we bring back --  
5 when we ask them to submit their fiscal report for  
6 the year that we include those school improvement  
7 quarterly reports and the district's responses to  
8 those? Because obviously they have a response to  
9 their reports, right, Ms. Barnes?

10 MS. BARNES: Yes. Those reports are always  
11 going to be a part of State Board when we're doing  
12 reporting on our schools that have been designated  
13 Priority. Like I said, I do know that we're looking  
14 at something very differently here and I have no  
15 problems with the request of, you know, an annual.  
16 But I didn't know if that was an annual presence or  
17 just, you know, a report in the January meeting. I  
18 didn't know exactly what was intended on that part.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think from what I heard  
20 -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- that what you're  
21 saying to Ms. Tatum is that annually you want to  
22 check back in with her because this is a unique  
23 situation. And as Dr. Toney said, and as I think has  
24 come to light here, there are a lot of issues that  
25 need to be resolved to support a unique school like

1 this school. And so some of that falls into  
2 accountability, some of it falls into the financial  
3 side, some of it falls into our technical support.  
4 As -- I mean, I thought Dr. Toney really captured it  
5 when he said, "We've got to do this a little  
6 differently with this school." And so I think the  
7 check-up is not as much -- it's as much for us so  
8 that we can publicly come back and let's talk this  
9 through and see how do we do a better job of  
10 supporting you --

11 MS. TATUM: I agree.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- as much as -- but we  
13 need you to come and say openly and honestly, "Here's  
14 what's working for me and here's what's not working  
15 for me," so we can all think it through and consider  
16 it.

17 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other discussion?

19 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. If there's already a  
20 mechanism in place for them reporting, I'm concerned  
21 about an unnecessary burden on the campus to report  
22 on an annual basis beyond the fiscal piece. So help  
23 me, folks, understand what will they be doing in  
24 addition to their quarterly reports.

25 MS. BARNES: Nothing.

1 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. I'm just asking.

2 MR. ROGERS: I mean, there is a budget review  
3 piece. I mean, I do have their budget. That's why I  
4 was able to look at it today. So that -- if the  
5 report just wanted to come before -- you're talking  
6 about the budget thing, if -- you know -- that way,  
7 we could look at it and if there was something that  
8 we wanted to call them in, then I'm assuming that we  
9 could at any time.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Absolutely.

11 DR. GOTCHER: That's always -- yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd.

13 MS. BOYD: May I ask a question, Madam Chair?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: (Nodding head up and  
15 down.)

16 MS. BOYD: So is it that when we do these  
17 reviews, do you want to see them in person? Is that  
18 the part that we're adding? Or is it that you just  
19 want to see the paperwork?

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Personally, I think it would be  
21 best for all of us to sit down together and look at  
22 it. And I want them to have the ability to be here  
23 and so we can all discuss it and look for proactive  
24 measures. So I would encourage their attendance.

25 MS. BOYD: Right. So maybe it's something that

1 we can prepare on our side, make sure that they see  
2 it before they come to the hearing, and then have her  
3 come to the hearing. Does that sound like what you  
4 guys are looking for?

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. I think the intent  
6 is not to add any additional burden to Ms. Tatum --

7 DR. GOTCHER: That's exactly right.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- at all. But to give  
9 Ms. Tatum an opportunity to have an open dialogue  
10 about --

11 MS. TATUM: What's going on.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- unique needs and are we  
13 adjusting to those needs. Are you comfortable with  
14 that, Ms. Tatum?

15 MS. TATUM: I am. I am. And we don't mind  
16 coming back. That's not cumbersome. But I also  
17 would like if you guys could visit the campus and sit  
18 in the conference room and work through some of these  
19 things. So it's just --

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Maybe we can have our  
21 panel meeting there.

22 MS. TATUM: Maybe not a panel meeting, but an  
23 unofficial meeting before the panel meeting. I'm  
24 good with that. Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. SMITH: Okay. So I would like to amend my

1 motion, if we're --

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

3 MS. SMITH: Okay. I'd like to amend my motion  
4 for a three-year renewal with a yearly report  
5 completed by the Office of Charter Schools -- so,  
6 Alexandra -- and working with SIA Tech in completing  
7 that report, and then just a yearly visit as a  
8 taskforce. But the renewal is for three years.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: I think it would be good for us  
10 to determine the contents of that report. I think it  
11 can all be produced internally on what we want, just  
12 at a later meeting. I think that would just help  
13 everyone along.

14 MS. SMITH: Definitely, specifically with  
15 financial review and the academics piece.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes, do you second  
17 that amended motion?

18 MS. BARNES: I almost started singing I Second  
19 That Emotion. Okay. I second.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis.

21 MS. DAVIS: Can we get a clarification on what  
22 the "taskforce" is?

23 MS. SMITH: Did I say -- oh, the ALE taskforce?

24 MS. DAVIS: I don't know. You just said kind of  
25 like to report back to the taskforce. Do you mean

1 report back --

2 MS. SMITH: I mean Charter Panel.

3 MS. DAVIS: Okay. Just making --

4 MS. SMITH: There's too many things on the line.

5 MS. DAVIS: No, that's fine. We just wanted to  
6 make sure.

7 MS. SMITH: Yes, that's -- yeah, this group.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Are we ready for a vote?

9 DR. GOTCHER: Please.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All those in favor of this  
11 motion?

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? This motion  
14 has passed unanimously. And if you'll give us just a  
15 moment we will record our reasons and report those to  
16 you.

17 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

18 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

20 MS. BARNES: I voted in favor of the motion to  
21 renew for three years with annual review and  
22 conversation because I believe this charter serves to  
23 assist students in recovering credits toward high  
24 school completion. It is uniquely positioned to  
25 forge a path in the way we look at success and it is

1 challenging but worth it.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

3 DR. GOTCHER: I too voted for the motion to  
4 renew. I'm impressed with the mission and purpose of  
5 this institution and support their renewal. I feel  
6 they are a model for others to follow when  
7 considering and addressing the student success at  
8 this unique level. I feel the need to review their  
9 financial picture is very important for their  
10 continued success.

11 MS. TATUM: Yes, sir.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

13 MS. LESTER: I voted for. SIA Tech serves a  
14 nontraditional population. I was glad to hear about  
15 a focus on where the students are going after they  
16 leave high school. I do stress the need to work with  
17 -- continue to work with the School Improvement Unit  
18 and the Federal Programs moving forward.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

20 MS. LIWO: I voted for, as the students  
21 certified the charter presents a unique situation  
22 with regard to accurately assessing the success of  
23 the charter. And since there are financial concerns  
24 I think the three-year renewal and financial reports  
25 and visit by the Panel are warranted.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

2 MS. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion.  
3 SIA Tech offers an opportunity for success for its  
4 challenging student population. The program is  
5 designed to meet personalized and individual needs.  
6 But the motion also allows the continuation of this  
7 school and provides an opportunity to monitor the  
8 progress and support the school to insure that  
9 students graduate ready for success.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

11 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion, along the  
12 same lines as everybody else on the Panel has. I  
13 think that they do serve a unique population and as  
14 long as they can continue to look at that and improve  
15 their fiscal situation they should continue to go.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I voted in favor. I'm  
18 looking forward to the annual updates concerning  
19 their progress and strategies.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

21 MS. SMITH: I voted in favor. I said I am in  
22 favor of the renewal based on the target population  
23 and the testimony presented today. I want to  
24 encourage the charter to continue to seek students to  
25 serve and to establish goals with measurable data

1 that supports your mission.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Tatum.

3 MS. TATUM: Thank y'all.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go forth and do a good  
5 job.

6 MS. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. Y'all have a good day.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We will take a 10-minute  
10 break.

11 (BREAK: 10:24 - 10:35 A.M.)

12 A-2: OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PRIORITY STATUS  
13 HEARING: LITTLE ROCK PREPARATORY ACADEMY (5-8 CAMPUS)

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, we're ready for  
15 action item 2.

16 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Open-  
17 Enrollment Public Charter School Priority Status  
18 Hearing; Little Rock Preparatory Academy, the 5-8  
19 Campus. The State Board of Education approved the  
20 application for Little Rock Preparatory Academy  
21 Charter School on November 4, 2008. The charter is  
22 approved to serve students in grades K-8 with a  
23 maximum enrollment of 432. The Charter Authorizing  
24 Panel will consider -- hold on a second. I'm sorry.  
25 The Charter Authorizing Panel will consider the

1 possibility of acting on the Little Rock Preparatory  
2 Academy open-enrollment charter pursuant with  
3 Arkansas Code Annotated 6-23-105 regarding an alleged  
4 failure to meet academic or fiscal performance  
5 criteria deemed important and relevant for the public  
6 charter school by the authorizer. Representatives of  
7 Little Rock Preparatory Academy are here today to  
8 make a presentation and answer questions. Possible  
9 actions to be taken by the Charter Authorizing Panel  
10 include modification, probation, and/or revocation of  
11 the charter.

12 And since this item is different than the one  
13 before, we'll have Jennifer Davis come and tell us  
14 about the procedures for this item.

15 MS. DAVIS: Okay. The procedures that you're  
16 going to follow today are going to be 20 minutes --  
17 or all persons -- we'll start with that -- who are  
18 going to be providing testimony, outside of  
19 attorneys, will need to be sworn in. The Department  
20 is going to have 20 minutes to make a presentation  
21 regarding the school and its Priority status. And  
22 then the school will also have 20 minutes after that.  
23 At that point, after their presentation, you may ask  
24 questions and then make a decision.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Davis. If

1 all representatives from Little Rock Preparatory  
2 Academy 5-8 campus and anyone speaking in opposition  
3 please stand to receive the oath, including ADE. I  
4 guess there is no opposition -- and ADE staff. Thank  
5 you. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony  
6 you're about to give shall be the truth, the whole  
7 truth and nothing but the truth?

8 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Boyd,  
10 you're recognized.

11 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Little  
12 Rock Preparatory Academy was first authorized by the  
13 State Board of Education to operate in November of  
14 2008, to serve grades 5-8. In May of 2011, the State  
15 Board approved an amendment request to add grades K-4  
16 to the charter and to add Exalt Education as the  
17 charter management organization. With approval from  
18 the State Board in June of 2012, Little Rock  
19 Preparatory relocated their middle school campus.  
20 The charter was renewed by the Charter Authorizing  
21 Panel in February of 2014. Recently, the school has  
22 been classified a Priority school. The contract is  
23 scheduled to expire in June of 2017.

24 Little Rock Prep suddenly and unexpectedly  
25 suffered the loss of the school principal this fall.

1 Under the direction of Superintendent Ben Lindquist  
2 and new principal Anitra Rogers, Little Rock Prep is  
3 working diligently to increase the academic growth  
4 shown under prior school leaders. I'll defer the  
5 rest of my time to Dr. Toney.

6 DR. TONEY: Little Rock Prep is a first year  
7 Priority school. Our involvement with this school as  
8 a Priority school started in September. As we noted  
9 earlier, the first year charter, first year Priority  
10 schools have some adjusting to do, have to come up to  
11 speed with the waiver and the requirements there, and  
12 they are working diligently to do that. The meetings  
13 that we have had at their school include the  
14 superintendent and then all of the leadership from  
15 the campus. They are consistently dedicated to the  
16 ideas that we bring to meeting the requirements that  
17 they are required to do. They have not shied away  
18 from the fact that they want to improve and do  
19 whatever it takes. In the planning part they've been  
20 very, very cooperative with us and we would expect  
21 that to continue.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Toney. Ms.  
23 Boyd, if you'll introduce the school.

24 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. From the  
25 school, to start the presentation we have Ben

1 Lindquist who is executive director.

2 MR. LINDQUIST: Good morning. You all will have  
3 to excuse me; I actually lost my voice last night  
4 unexpectedly, and I've been trying to not do a lot of  
5 talking for the last 24 hours, which is not something  
6 I'm very good at. So bear with me as we go through  
7 this.

8 I want to start by introducing the board of  
9 trustees of Little Rock Preparatory Academy; if you  
10 all could please rise? Little Rock Preparatory  
11 Academy has a seven-member board of trustees which is  
12 very dedicated to the school and very knowledgeable  
13 about the community that we serve. They're pushing  
14 hard in every meeting, every year to make sure that  
15 we advance our mission. And so I want to make sure I  
16 acknowledge them today.

17 We also have a number of members of our  
18 leadership team. There are actually two  
19 organizations that are partnered together around  
20 Little Rock Preparatory Academy. Exalt Education is  
21 a nonprofit Arkansas-based organization that we  
22 started to be a network of schools, a charter  
23 management organization. Exalt supports the two  
24 campuses of Little Rock Preparatory Academy and  
25 another school that we opened two years ago, the

1 Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock. We also have  
2 the middle school of Little Rock Preparatory Academy.  
3 Little Rock Preparatory Academy is its own nonprofit  
4 corporation called Collegiate Choices doing business  
5 as Little Rock Prep and the board of trustees governs  
6 the corporation Collegiate Choices. So I just want  
7 to clarify that upfront.

8 We're going to spend the next 20 minutes with  
9 you -- I'm just going to introduce some background,  
10 some of which Ms. Boyd already touched on. And then  
11 we're going to have Dr. McKenzie, an independent  
12 researcher, share the results of an achievement  
13 report that she did on our middle school. And then  
14 I'm just going to close it out and then open it up to  
15 the Panel for questions.

16 So with that, we'll get started.

17 Our mission is to prepare students from  
18 underserved communities for competitive colleges and  
19 advanced careers by insuring mastery of the core  
20 subjects and developing the key behaviors required  
21 for success, citizenship, and leadership in their  
22 communities and beyond. This mission statement is  
23 something we live and try to breath. It's very  
24 important to us and it's something we've worked hard  
25 to develop together as a leadership team over the

1 last five years.

2 Here's a timeline of some of the major events in  
3 the history of Little Rock Preparatory Academy. As  
4 Ms. Boyd mentioned, in 2008, our charter was approved  
5 for 432 students in grades 5-8. In the 2009-10 year,  
6 the school opened for its first year of operation at  
7 the original location at 12th and Schiller, three  
8 blocks away from Central High School, with 60  
9 students in grade 5 relative to a first year  
10 projected charter enrollment of 108 students in grade  
11 5.

12 In its second year, the school reopened with 85  
13 students in grade 5 and 6 relative to a second year  
14 projected enrollment of 216 students in grades 5 and  
15 6. The school was struggling with enrollment and, as  
16 you know, enrollment affects financing and a whole  
17 variety of different things.

18 In the 2010-11 year, the founding executive  
19 director of the school relocated away from the school  
20 out-of-state. And I had an opportunity to meet  
21 Charles Stewart who was at that time the chairman of  
22 the board of trustees, and we decided that the  
23 school's mission was so vital, the community that it  
24 was serving was so important, central Little Rock,  
25 that we wanted to step in and try to make what was at

1 that time a pretty tenuous situation really work.  
2 So, we decided to do that and the board of trustees  
3 and management have partnered together to do that  
4 ever since.

5 Our management team started in January of 2011.  
6 We did a Needs Assessment. We formally entered into  
7 a service agreement between Exalt Education and  
8 Little Rock Prep in October of 2011. We worked on a  
9 volunteer basis from January to October to support  
10 the school, even though we weren't operating under a  
11 service agreement.

12 We relocated the middle school to its own  
13 separate facility under a two-year lease in 2012.  
14 Since that time, we've extended the lease for another  
15 two years and we will complete that extension at the  
16 end of this year. So, in total, we've been at the  
17 current middle school campus for four years now.

18 We had our first graduating class of 8th graders  
19 in 2013. We've now had a total of three graduating  
20 classes of 8th graders. We are very excited about  
21 that.

22 We were able to get our charter renewed for an  
23 additional three years in 2014. February of that  
24 year, we had a unanimous vote of approval by the  
25 Charter Authorizing Panel, which the State Board

1 upheld.

2 In 2015, this past fall we were designated a  
3 Priority school for our performance from 2012 to  
4 2014, so for that three-year period just before the  
5 state moved to the new college and career ready  
6 standards and the PARCC. And here we are today with  
7 this hearing.

8 In this map you can see the residences of all of  
9 the students that we serve in our middle school.  
10 We're a community public school. We serve central  
11 Little Rock, and the boundaries of central Little  
12 Rock are Interstate 630 to the north, Main Street to  
13 the east, University to the west, and Asher to the  
14 south. As you can see in this map, presently about  
15 60% of our students live within the boundary lines of  
16 that region. There are also a significant number of  
17 students who live west, between University and John  
18 Barrow Road, and to the south, actually in southwest  
19 Little Rock. So you can see all of that here on the  
20 map.

21 This slide provides a basic comparison between  
22 the attributes of our students and the surrounding  
23 Little Rock School District in the state of Arkansas.  
24 Our middle school is a small school with 119 students  
25 this year in grades 6-8. In past years we've

1 actually served grades 5-8 at our middle school  
2 campus. We have 100% poverty rate at the school.  
3 We've seen a pretty steady increase in the poverty  
4 level of the students in our school since I started  
5 as executive director in 2011. Before we went to the  
6 community eligibility provision where we were able to  
7 start providing all students free and reduced lunch,  
8 or free lunch, we were actually at -- last documented  
9 levels at about 85% free and reduced lunch when we  
10 were still administering applications. 83% of our  
11 students are African American, 15% Latino, 2% White,  
12 and, on October 2015, we determined that 17% of our  
13 students qualify for special education. Among those  
14 students we have four students who are in 504  
15 behavior plans. The remainder of the students are on  
16 IEPs, individual education plans.

17 Over the past four years we've learned a lot and  
18 we believe in continuous improvement and growth. We  
19 believe that in this work it's iterative; you have to  
20 really take students and families where they are and  
21 work to serve them as hard and as well as you  
22 possibly can. Over that four year time we've learned  
23 a lot and our value proposition has changed. Four  
24 years ago, we were very focused on the center of this  
25 pyramid, the what, which is that our students need to

1 perform against leading indicators of engagement,  
2 behavior and achievement. However, as we've really  
3 gotten into this work and gotten to know our  
4 population better and better, our value proposition  
5 has expanded. We now believe that we have to provide  
6 all of the different levels and supports that are  
7 necessary in this pyramid to be successful, and that  
8 includes the How, which is meeting our students'  
9 physical, emotional and social needs; it also  
10 includes the Who, making certain that our students  
11 are learning social etiquette and strong character  
12 traits so that we're really helping them become  
13 upstanding human-beings.

14 With that introduction, I want to turn it over  
15 to Dr. McKenzie who's going to be directly guiding  
16 you through the independent analysis that she did of  
17 our student achievement. Dr. McKenzie.

18 DR. MCKENZIE: Good morning. I worked with  
19 Little Rock Prep to conduct an analysis of MAP growth  
20 information. I'm sure y'all are tired of hearing me  
21 talk about MAP growth, but it's very cool. So our  
22 big question was how are students who attend Little  
23 Rock Preparatory Academy middle grades growing  
24 academically. And why do we need to talk about  
25 growth? It's the same thing we've talked about

1 before; students are coming into the school well  
2 behind grade level. At Little Rock Prep it's  
3 approximately two to two-and-a-half grade levels  
4 below in both reading and mathematics.

5 For implementation, we did use NWEA MAP  
6 assessment in reading and math. This is for the fall  
7 and spring of each year so it measures the impact the  
8 school is having directly on the students. And like  
9 we've discussed before, each student has their own  
10 individualized growth percentage. It is not easier  
11 for low performing kids to meet their targets than it  
12 is for high performing kids to meet their targets,  
13 and it's based on a nationally representative norming  
14 sample.

15 For this analysis, we looked at something a  
16 little different. We looked at cohorts of students  
17 that had been at the school for one year, for two  
18 years, or for three years, and wanted to see the  
19 varying impact that staying at the school for one  
20 year, two years or three years would have on  
21 students' growth.

22 So I asked three questions: what percentage of  
23 students in each cohort meet or exceed typical gains  
24 for each year? And then the second question is a  
25 little more nuanced: what percentage of that typical

1 gain was made? So, was it 100%, which would be one  
2 years' growth, 150%, 180%? It gets to the magnitude  
3 of growth being made by students. And the last  
4 question: how does Little Rock Prep student growth  
5 compare to national student growth?

6 Here's the information on our student cohorts.  
7 I collapsed all kids who were the school for one year  
8 into the one-year cohort, and this is over 12-13, 13-  
9 14, and 14-15. It's important to note that any  
10 student who comes to Little Rock Prep as an 8th  
11 grader can only be there for one year because they  
12 have to exit at the end. One-year, two-year and  
13 three-year cohorts -- in the three-year cohort, there  
14 were students who were there 6th, 7th and 8th grade  
15 and there's a couple that were in there for 5th, 6th  
16 and 7th and that is when 5th grade was still at the  
17 middle school.

18 My first question is: are the kids different,  
19 right? Do the kids who just come to Little Rock Prep  
20 for one year and then leave, do they look different  
21 than kids who stay longer? Because we would assume  
22 from our work with traditional public schools that  
23 kids who are more mobile are less academically adept  
24 mostly, because they're dealing with other  
25 circumstances than kids who are less mobile. My

1 analysis: they look exactly the same. Those kids --  
2 and I think it's about being a school of choice. I  
3 think that kids who move in and out don't look  
4 inherently different than kids who stay, so their MAP  
5 scores were similar academically. There may be other  
6 things I could -- I didn't measure, but academically  
7 those one-year, two-year and three-year kids look the  
8 same.

9 So what percentage of students in each cohort  
10 met or exceeded typical gains? 63% overall. And  
11 remember that 50% is the national average. This is  
12 by cohort. 64% of the one-year met in reading; 56%  
13 of the two-year met in reading; and 67% of the three-  
14 year. You can see the same numbers there for math.  
15 I think we thought this was a little surprising  
16 because we expected kids that were there over three  
17 years to have more intense gains. But I think it  
18 tells a positive story too, that no matter whether  
19 you're at Little Rock one year, two years or three  
20 years you get a very productive academic experience.

21 And since the kids aren't different --

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sarah, this is the 100%

23 DR. MCKENZIE: This is the 100%. Yes, ma'am.

24 And since the kids aren't different, we wouldn't  
25 expect there to be really different percentages of

1 kids meeting growth, given that they're getting the  
2 same academic treatment, for lack of a better word.  
3 This is the 100%.

4 And for the three-year it was the expected  
5 growth for them over each of those three years and  
6 what percentage of them met or exceeded that  
7 summative expectation. Okay?

8 So the next question is: what percentage of that  
9 gain was made by students in each cohort? 100% would  
10 be meeting your expected annual growth. It was 120%  
11 in reading and 150% in math. Overall, kids are  
12 making one-and-a-half years of growth in one year.  
13 Here it is by cohort. They are all well above the  
14 100% that we would expect.

15 And the last question is: how does this growth  
16 compare to national student growth? We have school  
17 level norms now that we can use for growth. So  
18 they're better than 79% of schools in reading growth  
19 and 84% of schools in math growth. The national  
20 average again would be 50%. And we see this  
21 consistent growth, again, across all three of these  
22 cohorts.

23 So my conclusion was that students who attend  
24 Little Rock Prep exceed national peers in academic  
25 growth in both reading and math as measured by NWEA

1 MAP assessments. We did have small sample sizes;  
2 it's a small school, and there's quite a bit of  
3 transition in and out as this school has grown  
4 through its changes. I would love to be able to  
5 compare the growth of students who left to the  
6 students who stayed. But, again, I'm limited by the  
7 data that we have available, so I can't do that sort  
8 of comparison once kids leave the school.

9 I know it's not all about growth; it's about  
10 proficiency too. So I pulled districts that have  
11 similar poverty rates -- and here's 14 of them -- and  
12 compared their PARCC proficiency rates to Little Rock  
13 Prep. The purple bar is the percent proficient at  
14 Little Rock Prep. The red bar is the percent  
15 proficient combined at those comparable traditional  
16 public districts. And you can see that in every  
17 grade and in every subject, both literacy and math,  
18 Little Rock Prep students are outperforming in terms  
19 of proficiency on the PARCC their peers in similar  
20 districts.

21 And I'll be finished there. Thank you.

22 MR. LINDQUIST: This past fall -- oh, after  
23 becoming a Priority school we've worked closely with  
24 our liaisons at the Department of Education, with Dr.  
25 Toney and his colleagues. They've been very helpful

1 to us and we've really worked to embrace the process.  
2 We believe that this isn't good enough. We need to  
3 get better, and we think that the Priority school  
4 designation is a signal that we need to get better  
5 and continue to operate with great urgency.

6 In the needs assessment that we did, we tried to  
7 categorize our-self in seven different areas or  
8 principles of effective schools. And we categorized  
9 our-self on a rating system with a scale of basically  
10 a 4-point scale. We gave our-self a formative  
11 rating, the lowest rating, if we're in the beginning  
12 stages of developing practice, developing rating, or  
13 yellow rating, if we're systematically implementing  
14 and improving practice but we don't have a lot of  
15 evidence of growth yet; a good rating if we're  
16 refining practice and there's clear evidence of  
17 significant growth; and an excellent rating if  
18 there's a high absolute level of measurable  
19 performance.

20 In sharing these ratings I want to be clear with  
21 you that this is not something that -- I mean, I  
22 believe that as executive director these things need  
23 to happen under my charge. But I also believe that  
24 Jennifer McMann, the principal that we had at our  
25 school for three years who passed away unexpectedly

1 in September -- Jennifer was a really fantastic  
2 performance manager. She was driven; she was hard-  
3 working; she was a former Marine; she was an  
4 educator. I think she was just an outstanding person  
5 and leader, and I think that's much of the reason why  
6 our middle school has accomplished what it has over  
7 the last three years.

8 So in these seven principles of effective  
9 schools, I'll start by highlighting where we have a  
10 lot of room to improve and then go to the principles  
11 where there's still room to improve, but maybe less  
12 room. The sixth principle, the school environment,  
13 which we also directly connect to student retention,  
14 is the area where we think we have the most room to  
15 improve. There are two principles -- strong  
16 leadership and the use of time -- which effect  
17 student engagement in the classroom where we think  
18 we're developing. So there's also a lot of room to  
19 improve in those two categories, as well. And then  
20 there are four principles where we think we're doing  
21 well. We have a very good faculty, very well  
22 qualified, very hard-working, dedicated faculty, so  
23 we gave ourselves a good rating on that. Good rating  
24 on stakeholder engagement. There's room to improve  
25 there but we've made a lot of progress. And then

1           there are two principles in particular where we  
2           really think we see signs that we're excellent as  
3           defined by the rating system I shared in the last  
4           slide -- curriculum and instruction and use of data.

5           In closing, one of the things we've had to  
6           really take a hard look at -- and this is kind of a  
7           gut-check -- is what are we doing this work for? How  
8           are we doing it against our mission? It's not easy  
9           to be designated a Priority school. I can tell you  
10          it's been the subject of a lot of scrutiny and  
11          introspection. So when we look at it, we look at,  
12          you know, what's the legislative intent, what's the  
13          purpose of charter schools in the state of Arkansas.

14          There are six different objectives for charter  
15          schools, and I want to just address what we think  
16          we're doing relative to each of those objectives,  
17          which are set forth in the charter school law.

18          The first is: are we improving student learning.  
19          As Dr. McKenzie just demonstrated, our middle school  
20          is enabling our students to make achievement gains  
21          among the top 25% in the nation.

22          Are we increasing learning opportunities with a  
23          special emphasis on students who are identified as  
24          low achieving? Our middle school is located in and  
25          is serving one of the most low-income historically

1 underserved populations in the nation. We present  
2 quite a bit of evidence for that in the Priority  
3 school report.

4 Are we encouraging the use of different and  
5 innovative teaching methods? Nearly every aspect of  
6 our middle school's programs are unique and  
7 innovative with an emphasis on doing what works for  
8 the target population, not just experimenting.

9 Are we creating new professional opportunities  
10 for our teachers? We've given our teachers  
11 meaningful leadership roles in our middle school as  
12 department chairs. We have dedicated professional  
13 development time on Wednesday of every week with a  
14 shortened school day. We're doing those things to  
15 really provide an extra level of support for our  
16 teachers in the really hard work that we're engaged  
17 in.

18 Are we providing parents and pupils with  
19 expanded choices? Our middle school is one of the  
20 only accessible alternatives to district neighborhood  
21 schools for most of the families that we serve.  
22 That's the reality.

23 And, are we accountable? We've set forth 18  
24 clear measurable goals in our charter renewal  
25 application in the Priority school report that we

1 presented to you. We reported on our performance  
2 against those 18 goals. We also embrace the schools  
3 AMO system and accountability system and strive to  
4 perform against it. Our middle school in this past  
5 year, the first year of the PARCC, met all of our  
6 AMOs and did quite well.

7 With that, we'll open it up to Panel questions.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Thank you for  
9 a thorough report. Who would like to start? Dr.  
10 Gotcher.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Dr. Lindquist, on your  
12 excellent report. A couple of comments and I've got  
13 a question regarding student-led conferences, so  
14 maybe someone from your team could address that when  
15 I get to that.

16 First of all, I truly appreciate your mission.  
17 It's evident, sir, that you have brought in all of  
18 the stakeholders as a part of that. It was a very  
19 well-worded mission. And having been a witness to  
20 your campus I can see that mission is not just on  
21 print; it's alive in the lives of the students, as  
22 well, and certainly your stakeholders.

23 And also on your responsive report, incredible  
24 work on that. It was one of the best I have seen in  
25 my time here. You took a great deal of time and I

1 know that it's a great burden on any institution  
2 having to respond to that. So I appreciate the work  
3 that you and your staff did in regards to the  
4 responsive report.

5 A little bit of personal experience with  
6 student-led conferences: having been an assistant  
7 principal at a middle school that was a part of what  
8 we did. But we lost the sustainability. So I've got  
9 a couple of comments regarding it, but I want to hear  
10 how you've been able to keep student-led conferences  
11 alive. Because for whatever reason, it became  
12 mundane for us and we moved away from it and I felt  
13 it was a huge mistake. So I'm very curious of how  
14 you're keeping those student-led conferences alive  
15 because there's no better way of reporting to the  
16 parents and having the students report to the parents  
17 at a conference. It's nothing like, "Yeah, Johnny's  
18 got an A and he's doing great." You know, it's --  
19 you have an opportunity for those students to really  
20 share what's going on in their academic life. So,  
21 could you have someone share how you're keeping that  
22 sustainable?

23 MR. LINDQUIST: Tina Long, my colleague who's a  
24 co-founder in our network, is currently transitioning  
25 into the role of Chief Academic Officer of our

1 network after having led the development of our  
2 school, our Exalt Academy. Tina is going to speak to  
3 that.

4 MS. LONG: Good morning.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning.

6 MS. LONG: I too love student conferences,  
7 student-led conferences; they're wonderful. One  
8 thing that we've done is add a little bit more --  
9 we've added a little bit --

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Please state your name  
11 again.

12 MS. LONG: My name is Tina Long. We've added a  
13 little bit more structure to the student-led  
14 conferences as far as goals are concerned. So we  
15 actually implemented AIPs for every single child in  
16 the school, regardless if it's required by the state  
17 or not. Those are really what drive the back -- the  
18 data for the students. So the goals are constantly  
19 changing and then being updated. The students have  
20 actually data notebooks where they track their  
21 proficiency against the standards. So it's not  
22 something that just comes up quarterly for them; it's  
23 actually something that's part of their daily life at  
24 the school that they can have a tool to express how  
25 they're doing. Of course, we have the academic goals

1 but we also have the personal goals for the students  
2 that are extracurricular outside, try to make them  
3 more rounded. We use the structure provided by NWEA  
4 and what they support in it. So that's how we do it  
5 and I think the children really like it.

6 DR. GOTCHER: And how are you keeping the  
7 teachers connected to that? I know that a lot of the  
8 responsibility can rest upon the teachers, especially  
9 at the beginning until the students can take a little  
10 ownership. How are you keeping them connected in  
11 that process?

12 MS. LONG: We have an advisory period, so during  
13 that period is when a lot of this work happens, and  
14 it happens ongoing throughout the year. So I think  
15 that where I made my mistake before in the past with  
16 student-led conferences is waiting till conference  
17 time to do it.

18 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah.

19 MS. LONG: And then it becomes an extra product  
20 or burden that's like, oh, no, we have to get ready  
21 for this, you know. But because it's part of what  
22 they're doing in just their life it works well with  
23 the teachers and the students together.

24 DR. GOTCHER: And with that model you can have a  
25 student-led conference at any time --

1 MS. LONG: Yes, sir.

2 DR. GOTCHER: -- if they are keeping those data  
3 notebooks and those things relevant?

4 MS. LONG: Yes.

5 DR. GOTCHER: That's a good point. I'm glad to  
6 hear it. Keep it sustainable.

7 MS. LONG: Thank you.

8 DR. GOTCHER: You're welcome.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions or  
10 comments?

11 DR. SAUNDERS: I do.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Does someone else have one? You  
14 can come back to me.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

16 MS. PFEFFER: Good morning. How are you?

17 MR. LINDQUIST: Good.

18 MS. PFEFFER: I wanted just to -- and I  
19 appreciate the presentation. It was very well laid  
20 out. And I think, obviously, the work that you all  
21 are doing with the needs assessment and self-analysis  
22 really gives you a good honest picture of where you  
23 are and sets those goals. So I really appreciated  
24 that. I just wanted to talk for a minute about your  
25 teachers because when I -- and I'm just wanting to

1 check on some data here and then see if there's some  
2 things that we can do to assist you. But I'm looking  
3 at -- and I think I've got 15-16 data that was pulled  
4 from the cycle report -- on just your number of  
5 certified staff in that school and the number of  
6 novice teachers. And the data here show nine  
7 certified teachers. Does that sound right on the  
8 total number?

9 MR. LINDQUIST: I actually have the data for  
10 you. Let me just check with her and see if we --

11 MS. PFEFFER: Is it on there? Okay. Because  
12 what this was showing is nine certified teachers and  
13 seven with less than one year of teaching experience,  
14 so that's a huge number of novice teachers to have  
15 and --

16 MR. LINDQUIST: So in the backup slides that you  
17 have in front of you -- again, excuse my voice --  
18 there's a cover slide that says teacher and  
19 administrator qualifications and tenure. And then  
20 there's two slides following that that summarize for  
21 you the qualifications of our faculty and staff, and  
22 we separated them so the first slide is the  
23 administration of the school, and these are the  
24 dedicated site administrators of the school. And  
25 then the second slide focuses on our teachers'

1            qualifications and tenure. And I literally collected  
2            this data and information one-by-one from our staff  
3            members last week. So our interim principal, Anitra  
4            Rogers, who was here, is TESS certified. Anitra  
5            holds a Masters degree in English and she's a Fellow  
6            in the ASPRSC Leadership Institute. She's been in  
7            that institute as a developing Fellow for a year-and-  
8            a-half. Aaron Mickens, who's here with us today as  
9            well, is TESS certified; he holds an Arkansas  
10           teaching license and has a Bachelor of Arts degree.  
11           Mr. Mickens was the chair of our English Language  
12           Arts department at the middle school last year.  
13           Because of how effective he was with our students, we  
14           actually promoted him into the school-wide director  
15           of curriculum role. Our dean of students, Mr.  
16           Johnson, Chris Johnson, who couldn't be with us here  
17           today -- we have a small school -- he has a Masters  
18           degree in counseling and a separate Masters degree in  
19           teaching. He's just incredibly highly qualified for  
20           what he's doing. Our special education director, Dr.  
21           Bruce Battles, actually has two separate doctorate  
22           degrees; he has a doctorate degree in curriculum and  
23           instruction, a doctorate degree in special education,  
24           and he's certified in Arkansas as a special educator.  
25           And then, moving on to kind of directly address

1 your question on faculty qualifications on the second  
2 slide, so we have a total of 13 people who are  
3 teaching classes in the middle school. Now that  
4 includes some members of our administration. It's  
5 anybody that's teaching classes. When you look at  
6 the level of formal education -- and this is the  
7 terminal degree -- one of 13 has a doctorate degree;  
8 5 of 13 hold a Masters degree; 7 of 13 hold a  
9 bachelors degree.

10 In terms of retention, we retained 85% of our  
11 middle school staff from last year to this year. I  
12 think one of the big reasons we had such a high  
13 retention rate, where we've had a lower retention  
14 rate before, is that people have really bought into  
15 the mission and really bought into the leadership  
16 that we have at our middle school and the impact  
17 we're having. It's easier to sustain this work when  
18 you're seeing success. The average tenure of our  
19 staff members in the middle school is three years.  
20 It ranges from six years, as a high. We have one  
21 staff member who's actually been with the school  
22 since we opened. And we also have a few staff  
23 members who have come in, this is their first year.  
24 But the average tenure is three.

25 In terms of qualifications, we've registered all

1 of our teachers as highly qualified with the  
2 Department. We submit an annual report each year and  
3 all of our staff members are registered under those  
4 requirements, and five of our teachers who are core  
5 faculty members are Arkansas certified. So it's  
6 fewer than what you had said, actually. Four of the  
7 13 staff members that I just mentioned are pursuing a  
8 master's degree. So the people that have a bachelors  
9 degree, the seven that do, of those seven four are  
10 pursuing a master's. And so one of the things that I  
11 feel is exceptional about the qualifications of the  
12 faculty is that they're not just striving to get  
13 certified; they're actually striving to get a  
14 master's degree and they're actively taking  
15 coursework towards their master's. And so, you know,  
16 God willing, if we keep them, as we really want to,  
17 we should actually have a higher and higher  
18 percentage of our faculty members who have a master's  
19 degree within, you know, their given domain.

20 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And I agree that it's  
21 always exciting when you have educators who want to  
22 invest in themselves and in their profession and grow  
23 and develop, so I'm glad to hear that your retention  
24 rate is on the rise. And my main concern was just to  
25 make sure that you knew, especially with the -- if

1           you did have that large of a number of first-year  
2           teachers, that as you move forward working with the  
3           Department we would definitely try to provide  
4           whatever specialized help you needed or your teachers  
5           needed, so --

6           MR. LINDQUIST: Yeah. Let's do this. Ms.  
7           Rogers, will you rise? Mr. Mickens, will you rise?  
8           Ms. Rogers and Mr. Mickens are our interim principal  
9           and director of curriculum and instruction at the  
10          middle school. They're both TESS certified. One of  
11          the reasons why we really put a press on getting both  
12          of them TESS certified is for the point that you  
13          raised, which is we have a lot of teachers who are  
14          evaluating through the TESS system. We really buy  
15          into the system; we believe in the system. And we're  
16          actually trying to exceed the requirements of the  
17          system pretty substantially in terms of the frequency  
18          of observations and the feedback we're giving. But  
19          it's really the two of them that are driving that  
20          process. So, thank you.

21          MS. PFEFFER: Thank you. And that feedback and  
22          support is what we really -- we really want that  
23          message to be. Thank you.

24          CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

25          MR. LESTER: I'd just like to make a statement.

1 As you move forward working with ADE, in 2014, you  
2 applied for a targeted assisted Title 1 program and  
3 it was very well written. During that time you  
4 weren't a Priority school but you had a year of  
5 planning and you could have become school-wide the  
6 next year. I don't know if that dropped through the  
7 cracks or a change in principal happened, but I would  
8 encourage you to work with us to look at serving --  
9 you have 86% free and reduced and it would be -- you  
10 know -- it would be awesome to supplement those kids  
11 with that funding. So I'd like to work with you on  
12 that.

13 MR. LINDQUIST: Thank you. We will. We welcome  
14 that help. And I will acknowledge that this has been  
15 a year of kind of a lot of transition.

16 MR. LESTER: Yes.

17 MR. LINDQUIST: It was -- Ms. McMann was so  
18 strong as a personality that you almost didn't  
19 believe that she could ever die of anything, frankly.  
20 And she was battling with breast cancer for a year  
21 leading up to her passing. I mean, it was I think a  
22 surprise to all of us just because of the strength  
23 that she displayed -- and I'm not kidding you,  
24 literally up until days before she was admitted to  
25 the emergency room. She was just that kind of an

1 individual, so --

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

3 MS. SMITH: First off, I just want to note that  
4 I'm sorry for your school's loss. Any type of  
5 tragedy like that for a school impacts many, many,  
6 many, and so I'm sorry for your loss. And I can just  
7 see on the looks on some of your faces that she was  
8 dearly loved and what a legacy she can leave through  
9 the work that you're doing.

10 Just a -- I just kind of want to hear a little  
11 bit about what you're doing for your more advanced  
12 students. I know that you have some struggling  
13 poverty students and some issues there, but within  
14 all populations we have students who do excel. And  
15 so I noted some of your RTI stuff, but tell me about  
16 your students who are exceeding and what your school  
17 is doing to meet those needs.

18 MR. LINDQUIST: I wish that we had our Learning  
19 Pass coordinator here, Tia Townsend; Tia has been a  
20 wonderful addition to our team. So we have a new  
21 program that we've developed and piloted for the last  
22 two years. It's called the Learning Pass Program.  
23 What we did to start that, to kick it off, is we  
24 actually partnered with a practicum team of four  
25 students at the Clinton School of Public Service.

1 They helped us over the course of a year conduct  
2 outreach to different community institutions,  
3 institutions of higher education, museums, cultural  
4 centers, and build partnerships with those  
5 institutions. And we actually memorialized those in  
6 MOUs that we entered into with those institutions at  
7 the end of that year in a formal event. And over the  
8 last two years then what we've done is we've actually  
9 sent our students from our middle school who are  
10 academically in a position to benefit from it; we've  
11 sent them out into the community to learn at a  
12 network of partner sites. They went to 12 different  
13 partner institutions last year over the course of 110  
14 days of instruction out of a 200-day calendar. This  
15 year, same thing, 110 days, and we've had 10 partner  
16 institutions that we've been working with. We have a  
17 bus that we use to transport students to and from  
18 those sites. They go in the afternoon. And it's not  
19 our faculty teaching our students at partner sites;  
20 it's the program staff of the partner institution  
21 teaching our students at the partner site. So it's  
22 really been an incredible experience. I mean, some  
23 of the program staff that we've had involved in this  
24 program -- like the Museum of Discovery is an example  
25 of this; you all may have seen, you know, the guy

1           who's the program director at the Museum of Discovery  
2           on The Tonight Show. He's been on The Tonight Show I  
3           think three or four different times. He's just this  
4           incredibly charismatic guy who loves doing  
5           experiments and he's kind of a mad scientist. He's  
6           been working with our students, helping them learn  
7           science, engineering, you know, the STEM subjects,  
8           and he's doing it at the Museum of Discovery on the  
9           exhibit floor. It's just fantastic. And, you know,  
10          a whole variety of different experiences, like the  
11          First Tee, our students -- it's actually just behind  
12          our middle school, so our students went to First Tee.  
13          They learn the mechanics of a golf swing and the  
14          basics of golf there, which is actually for a lot of  
15          professionals an important life skill, and they also  
16          learned about teamwork. And so that was a great  
17          experience for them that they really enjoyed. We  
18          actually had one student who became a caddy and has  
19          become a shockingly good golfer in a very short time  
20          and he's actually out caddying actively with semi-  
21          professional golfers now. So it's those kinds of  
22          things, I think, that have really made the Learning  
23          Pass a wonderful experiential learning opportunity  
24          for our students. Our students do have to qualify to  
25          get into it as a part of the admissions criteria. We

1 want to make sure that they're performing at a  
2 certain level. And the way that works for us is that  
3 during those time periods when students are out in  
4 the Learning Pass, the students that we're working  
5 with in the school who didn't meet the academic  
6 criteria, it's a driver that motivates them to want  
7 to get to the Learning Pass. And then we're able to  
8 work with them in a more individualized way,  
9 tutoring, other types of more individualized services  
10 to get them up to the academic standards so that they  
11 can participate. So we're planning to continue to  
12 grow the Learning Pass from a pilot program to more  
13 of a school-wide program systematically over the next  
14 two or three years.

15 MS. SMITH: Do you have any kind of like  
16 academic pathway where -- for students to get credit  
17 for high school courses or even kind of like on that  
18 pre-AP track?

19 MR. LINDQUIST: Ms. McMann actually really  
20 wanted to start offering Algebra 1 for high school  
21 credit this year, and we were planning to do that.  
22 And when she passed away unexpectedly, unfortunately  
23 we didn't continue that application process. We do  
24 plan to get started to offer Algebra 1 for high  
25 school credit starting this next year, so our team is

1 moving forward with that. We don't have any plans in  
2 place yet for pre-advanced placement offerings;  
3 however, that is something our board of trustees has  
4 actually been pressing on as we've looked at our  
5 students' needs. And I think it's something, you  
6 know, we need to make sure that we are exploring  
7 actively.

8 MS. SMITH: And just working with the Office of  
9 Educational Policy, but even your NWEA scores could  
10 be indicators of the students that would most  
11 appropriately fit in that coursework. And then our  
12 office would be glad to assist you in applying for  
13 that.

14 MR. LINDQUIST: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Good morning. How are you?

17 MR. LINDQUEST: Good morning. Good.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Good. I enjoyed my visit when I  
19 went up there and got the full tour.

20 MR. LINDQUEST: Yeah. Thank you for making the  
21 time.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Around town. Absolutely.  
23 Absolutely. In looking at the information you  
24 submitted, correct me if I'm wrong here -- hold on  
25 just a second; I'm trying to pull up the right sheet.

1 On October 1st of 2014, that was the last reporting  
2 date concerning free and reduced lunch forms, as you  
3 went to CEP. Correct? Community Eligibility  
4 Provision.

5 MR. LINDQUIST: So our understanding in moving  
6 to the Community Eligibility Provision is that we can  
7 no longer administer the free and reduced lunch forms  
8 to distinguish.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: That's correct.

10 MR. LINDQUIST: Yeah.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah.

12 MR. LINDQUIST: So we stopped, yeah, at that  
13 point.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: I just -- yeah, I just wanted to  
15 clarify that. And in doing so, what it does is it  
16 identifies for accountability purposes -- Ms. Barnes,  
17 you can correct me if I'm wrong -- but for  
18 accountability purposes it identifies 100% of your  
19 student population as being free and reduced. But in  
20 actuality, looking at the state NSL funding, it  
21 always goes back to your base year of when you last  
22 collected the forms. The forms that year was 71%.  
23 So your actual student population more reflective  
24 would be around 71%. Is that a fair statement?

25 MR. LINDQUEST: I believe that 71% free lunches,

1 and I think that if you add in the reduced lunches  
2 it's 85%. That's actually what we found in the last  
3 reported year.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: On the --

5 MR. LINDQUEST: I don't know if it's state  
6 reporting. I saw that on the state report, to be  
7 honest with you, but I don't think that's correct.  
8 But, you know, I don't know what the basis is for it.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Give me -- I'll need to  
10 look into this just a little bit, so --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

12 MR. ROGERS: Yeah. I have concerns about the  
13 funding. First, on -- I see in 2014 you ended with a  
14 \$6400 balance, which is cutting it real close. Last  
15 year you got up to \$26,000 but this year -- I know  
16 your budget reflects \$59,000. But when I look at the  
17 expenses that weren't budgeted, such as -- I'm  
18 looking at -- there were some bonuses, additional  
19 compensation that weren't budgeted; classified  
20 unemployment wasn't budgeted. It looks like most of  
21 your supplies -- electricity, gasoline, diesel, those  
22 kinds of supplies either weren't budgeted or you're  
23 already over-budgeted. And so when I try putting  
24 pen-to-paper to that it looks like you're going to  
25 end this year in the negative by about \$71,000. So

1           -- and my concern is what happens then? Because  
2           that's one.

3                     And then I had also a question about some of the  
4           budget stuff, like the consulting educational  
5           contract; I was just kind of wondering what that is.  
6           And then the redemption of principal expense, I was  
7           just kind of wondering what that is. So that's --  
8           sorry I threw all that at you at once, but it's a  
9           whole lot to throw and that's --

10                    MR. LINDQUIEST: That's actually okay. I had a  
11           sense in the exchange with Ms. Martin that there  
12           would be some questions coming up, and I'm happy to  
13           address them. And let me also add, we'd be happy to  
14           hold a meeting and to work through things in whatever  
15           substantive detail you all need. Because one of the  
16           things that I've consistently observed is that we  
17           have a budgeting process and we have a cash flow  
18           management process, and we have other practice that  
19           we have in place that we observe with quite a bit of  
20           discipline and frequency. And it seems like somehow  
21           that's not getting reported in the way at least I  
22           would hope to the State Department through the APSCN  
23           system. I'm not exactly sure what the gap is,  
24           honestly. So by way of explaining that, let me say  
25           we set out an operating budget at the beginning of

1 this year. The board of trustees approved that  
2 operating budget in August. When we got our funding  
3 estimates from the State, they were actually  
4 substantially lower than what we had budgeted. We  
5 think that what accounts for that difference is that  
6 as a school we've moved from being funded on our  
7 projected growth, so it's a current year funding, to  
8 being funded as a static state school, which is based  
9 on your first three quarters previous year ADM. That  
10 has been difficult for us because there are big gaps.  
11 When you have a growing school, you know, it's -- and  
12 it's significant. I mean, 20 students -- you know --  
13 as you know better than I do, just a difference in 20  
14 students average daily membership is a huge amount of  
15 money. So what we did to respond to that is that we  
16 revised our operating budget. We presented a new  
17 operating budget to the board of trustees. They  
18 approved the new operating budget, and we cut  
19 expenses accordingly. And so we've cut a significant  
20 number of expenses through the first months of this  
21 year of operation. And we actually believe that our  
22 operating budget position is quite solid right now  
23 and we anticipate finishing this year with \$50,000  
24 surplus in year-end. So we feel that we're in a good  
25 position. But the concern that I think you're

1 raising is the question of how well is that internal  
2 operating budget approval and preparation process;  
3 the revisions we've made in expenses, how well is  
4 that being reported through APSCN, and I'm not  
5 certain of that. We do have our director of finance  
6 and operations here and so I'll call her up just to  
7 supplement. But anyway --

8 MR. ROGERS: Yeah. Because I guess that is part  
9 of my concern, because when I look at expenditures  
10 like the bonuses and compensation that was not  
11 budgeted but now it's an expense, it's going to add  
12 to it. And it just looks like a lot of the expenses  
13 are under-budgeted because they already have been  
14 spent over that. So I hear you saying you've cut  
15 expenses, but then when I look at what's reported in  
16 APSCN I'm not able to catch where those expenses are  
17 being cut -- and -- I'm from Arkansas. But that's  
18 part of my concern, so -- and then the other one --  
19 and I still -- I'm trying to get a grasp of what the  
20 consulting education -- I guess what the contract is,  
21 because I see in '14 it was -- you spent \$112,000 on  
22 it and then it's jumped up the past two years to  
23 almost half-a-million. And so what is it, and are  
24 you getting half-a-million worth out of it? Because  
25 when I'm doing a projection here and I'm seeing

1           \$71,000 in the red, and then I see a contract that  
2           you spent half-a-million on, I just -- are you  
3           getting everything out of that? Is there something  
4           that we could do there?

5           And then the other one that I was just kind of  
6           looking at that kind of stood out to me was the  
7           redemption of principal. I was just kind of trying  
8           to figure out what those two things were.

9           MR. LINDQUIST: So let me speak to the service  
10          agreement and the service fees that are being  
11          assessed, and then I'll let Ms. Garth speak to the  
12          budget gap because I think that's worth following up  
13          on actually.

14          So in October of 2011, the board of trustees of  
15          Little Rock Preparatory Academy entered into a  
16          service agreement with Exalt Education. That service  
17          agreement, we submitted it to the State and it was  
18          reviewed by the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.  
19          Under that service arrangement, the school basically  
20          pays Exalt a set fee that's equivalent to 15% of its  
21          operating revenues and it's a set fee; it doesn't  
22          vary from year to year. Under the service  
23          arrangement then, Exalt employs and provides the two  
24          principal members of the site management team of the  
25          school, the director of academic programs, the

1 director of finance. That's a part of the set fees.  
2 We also provide performance evaluation services to  
3 the school. We have a two-person performance  
4 evaluation team that services the school and a  
5 director of performance evaluation. He's here today.  
6 We provide the school with grants, with loans, and  
7 with cash flow financing. Exalt has provided the  
8 school now with over \$200,000 in grants over the  
9 course of the last four years. We've also provided  
10 the school with over \$300,000 in loans for facilities  
11 renovations and improvements as we moved into new  
12 facilities. We provide the school with legal  
13 services. We have a retainer with legal counsel.  
14 The benefit of that is that if a school were paying  
15 for that retainer directly out of its budget it would  
16 be a much higher percentage of the school's operating  
17 budget. We find that it's much more efficient to be  
18 able to spread those services and costs across the  
19 schools in the network. Essentially what it does for  
20 us is it creates a district structure where there's a  
21 support system and team where if Little Rock Prep was  
22 operating as a single school that's freestanding it  
23 wouldn't have the benefit of those services, and  
24 certainly not in an efficient manner.

25 So that's the purpose of the service agreement

1 and the service fee is --

2 MR. ROGERS: And that's the consulting  
3 educational -- is that what you're talking about?

4 MR. LINDQUIST: That's correct.

5 MR. ROGERS: That's the agreement with Exalt,  
6 the administrative duties that y'all would have  
7 otherwise had to pay for yourself?

8 MR. LINDQUIST: (Nodding head up and down.)  
9 Exalt also raises a substantial amount of money. I  
10 mean, you know, this came up as a question. Over the  
11 last five years Exalt has raised, you know, over  
12 \$5,000,000. And so that money --

13 MR. ROGERS: For this school?

14 MR. LINDQUIST: Not specifically for this  
15 school; for Exalt support services and for Exalt as a  
16 charter management organization. Exalt is pretty  
17 consistent -- there are about 250 different charter  
18 management organizations around the country that we  
19 benchmarked our business plan against, and Exalt's  
20 operating model is consistent with those other  
21 organizations.

22 MR. ROGERS: And then the redemption of  
23 principal, is that loans that Exalt has given y'all  
24 that y'all are having to pay back?

25 MR. LINDQUEST: So what happened when we moved

1 to the primary school is that we did \$300,000 in  
2 facilities renovations and improvements to the  
3 primary school site before the school moved to it.  
4 And we did two loans. Actually, we partnered with a  
5 community development corporation that's called Self  
6 Help Corporation. Self Help has provided different  
7 facility financing to charter schools. They have a  
8 portfolio all over the country. They provided a  
9 \$150,000 loan and Exalt matched that with another  
10 \$150,000 loan. Self Help actually required that  
11 Exalt match it, and I think the reason they did was  
12 kind of a -- you know -- a risk assessment and  
13 management strategy; if we're going to put skin in  
14 the game, we're going to make sure Exalt has skin in  
15 the game. And so we basically went in one-to-one on  
16 the financing, and the school has been paying back  
17 that facilities renovation loan over a three-year  
18 period. We did submit the loan agreements to the  
19 State and they were approved by the Commissioner and  
20 by the State's legal counsel, so it's certainly  
21 something the State has been aware of. And the  
22 school will finish out the scheduled payments on  
23 those renovations over the next 12 months.

24 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So, just so I understand  
25 because I know -- when you say that they looked at it

1 -- I mean, but I guess if I get it in piecemeal then  
2 I don't get the whole picture until I get to see it  
3 on paper like this. So --

4 MR. LINDQUIST: I know. I'm happy to meet and  
5 walk through everything --

6 MR. ROGERS: I guess --

7 MR. LINDQUIST: -- because it's a lot to take  
8 in, it really is.

9 MR. ROGERS: I guess because I'm still a little  
10 -- so y'all -- so Little Rock Prep pays Exalt a half-  
11 million dollars a year for administrative costs and  
12 then you're paying back a \$200,000 loan to them. So  
13 of your total budget you're paying \$700,000 to Exalt?

14 MR. LINDQUIST: Little Rock Preparatory Academy  
15 pays Exalt Education 15% of its public operating  
16 revenues for management services to the school. I've  
17 described what those services are. In addition,  
18 Exalt awarded Little Rock Prep a loan of \$150,000 at  
19 a 5.3% interest rate, which Little Rock Prep cannot  
20 get on the open market from any conventional bank in  
21 this state. We tried. And so the school has that  
22 loan and is repaying that loan at a low interest  
23 rate.

24 MR. ROGERS: Okay. I don't know yet. Okay. If  
25 someone else has something --

1 DR. SAUNDERS: I just wanted to clarify. I  
2 didn't quite understand -- I was trying to follow --  
3 and in particular, the relationship I think with --  
4 between Little Rock Prep and Exalt. And I think you  
5 used "we" many times and I could not tell if you were  
6 talking about "we" being Exalt or "we" being Little  
7 Rock Prep. It seemed to be used interchangeably.  
8 Could you explain that?

9 MR. LINDQUIST: Both organizations are nonprofit  
10 organizations. Both are Arkansas corporations. We  
11 share the same mission. I'm the executive director  
12 of Little Rock Preparatory Academy. I'm also the CEO  
13 of Exalt Education. Exalt Education is my employer.  
14 I report to a board of directors of Exalt Education.  
15 Bonnie Johnson, who's here today, is one member of  
16 the board of directors of Exalt. And we basically  
17 view it as though we're partnered together to serve  
18 the school and there are resources and things that  
19 Exalt can do for the school that the school couldn't  
20 do for itself otherwise. And so it's a big benefit,  
21 we think, and we think we can demonstrate this. It's  
22 a big benefit for the school to have that  
23 partnership.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So just so I understand,  
25 because I'm not clear, but -- okay. So you're an

1 employee of Exalt, not Little Rock Prep. Correct?

2 MR. LINDQUIST: (Nodding head up and down).

3 That's right.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you authorize the payments to  
5 Exalt?

6 MR. LINDQUIST: We have a finance coordinator  
7 and we have an approval process by which the service  
8 fees are paid to Exalt, and there's a director of  
9 finance for Little Rock Preparatory Academy, Ms.  
10 Garth, who actually is the one who authorizes the  
11 payments.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: But are you in that process? Do  
13 you authorize those payments?

14 MR. LINDQUIST: Yes.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: And is that person that you  
16 referenced, are they an employee? Are they included  
17 in what you were saying, the services provided by  
18 Exalt, or are they an employee of Little Rock Prep?

19 MR. LINDQUIST: All of the members of the school  
20 are employees of Little Rock Preparatory Academy,  
21 with the exception of the two principal members of  
22 the management team that I mentioned earlier. And  
23 Exalt provides those people, employs them under the  
24 service agreement.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And what positions were

1 they, if you could?

2 MR. LINDQUIST: Yeah. Director of academic  
3 programs and the director of finance and operations.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: So the director of finance and  
5 operations approves those expenditures to Exalt?

6 MR. LINDQUIST: Yes.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: And is an Exalt employee?

8 MR. LINDQUIST: (Nodding head up and down.)

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

10 MR. LINDQUIST: This is audited -- I should  
11 mention this is audited by Hudson-Cisne every year  
12 and it's been audited for four years. And, you know,  
13 it might be helpful for you all to have, you know,  
14 some interaction with the auditing firm to kind of  
15 walk through the ins and outs of how it works.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: It's a unique situation and  
17 that's --

18 MR. LINDQUIST: It is.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm trying to understand it, and  
20 so --

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions or  
22 comments? Ms. Barnes.

23 MS. BARNES: I mean, if Mr. Rogers wanted to  
24 continue the fiscal line that's fine.

25 MR. ROGERS: Yeah. I just want to kind of --

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Mr. Rogers.

2 MR. ROGERS: So going back to the ending fund  
3 balance on it, you said y'all had cut expenses and  
4 you're thinking you're going to have around \$50,000  
5 left at the end of the year. Yes?

6 MR. LINDQUIST: Yes.

7 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Because I don't want to --  
8 because I don't -- because I'm not seeing it. That's  
9 just -- I don't -- I'm still uncomfortable with it  
10 because I don't. So if there is a cash flow problem  
11 for Little Rock Prep at the end of the year, then  
12 Exalt will give them another loan that they'll have  
13 to pay back?

14 MR. LINDQUIST: No. Exalt has never had any  
15 other loan outstanding and there are no loans that  
16 the State -- that the Commissioner hasn't approved  
17 that are long-term loans. It's not like there are  
18 different sources of, you know, income and expense  
19 kind of flowing in and out of the school. Things are  
20 approved and they're handled in the way --

21 MR. ROGERS: Yeah. I mean, I understand it.  
22 But I guess what I'm asking is what if I'm right and  
23 it's negative \$70,000 at the end of the year?

24 MR. LINDQUIST: There are different ways in  
25 which Exalt has supported the school when the school

1 has needs. And we feel that that's been very helpful  
2 and important to the schools' ability to grow and be  
3 successful. So, an example of that is that we made a  
4 \$90,000 grant to the school last fiscal year to  
5 support the school and it was general operating  
6 support; it was an unrestricted grant. So that's an  
7 example of the kind of support that Exalt has  
8 provided in addition to the loan.

9 MR. ROGERS: How many grants -- how many grants  
10 has Exalt given to Little Rock Prep over the years --

11 MR. LINDQUIST: I believe three.

12 MR. ROGERS: -- and how much?

13 MR. LINDQUIST: Three over the -- two or three  
14 or four -- excuse me -- over the last four years.  
15 And the first grants were in 2011. There were two  
16 grants; one was \$50,000, the other was \$60,000.  
17 There was another grant in 2013, and then a grant in  
18 2014.

19 MR. ROGERS: So you said 2013 and 2014. So  
20 Little Rock Prep has already been having to operate  
21 with grants from Exalt to remain fiscally solvent?

22 MR. LINDQUIST: So I think it's different to say  
23 that Exalt is awarding grants to the school to  
24 support its growth and operations than to say that  
25 Exalt is keeping the school fiscally solvent by doing

1 that. During that time, the school has grown from 85  
2 students to 430 students K-8. The school has become  
3 a much larger, much stronger institution.

4 MR. ROGERS: Then, why has -- then why has Exalt  
5 granted them money for the past two fiscal years?

6 MR. LINDQUIST: Because there are expenses  
7 associated with facilities relocations, with growth  
8 in enrollment, and with the different factors that go  
9 into managing that kind of development of the  
10 institution.

11 MR. ROGERS: So you're saying they were one-time  
12 expenses that Exalt granted money to Little Rock Prep  
13 to take care of?

14 MR. LINDQUIST: We expect that Little Rock Prep  
15 can operate at a static state in a very effective way  
16 and we have a plan for doing that. We have an  
17 operating budget that we're executing against. One  
18 of the challenges this year that we went through is  
19 that at the start of the year we were being funded in  
20 our first three-quarter ADM for last year, which was  
21 about 350 students. And our actual ADM this year is  
22 410 students through the end of the first semester.  
23 We're expecting -- we received a first growth funding  
24 payment of \$157,000 in January and we're actually  
25 scheduled -- or we've been led to believe that

1           there's another potentially \$100,000 payment or more  
2           that the State will make --

3           MR. ROGERS: Right.

4           MR. LINDQUIST: -- because of the difference in  
5           ADM. If you look at our operating budget and you  
6           look at the difference in those growth funding  
7           payments coming in to reflect current year ADM,  
8           Little Rock Prep will be in a very good position at  
9           the end of this year.

10          CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm going to redirect us.  
11          Our meeting today is to discuss Priority status and  
12          so I'm going to redirect and we can take up the  
13          financial issues probably in the office. If you'll  
14          come and work with Mr. Rogers, I'm sure that we can  
15          get those resolved.

16          Ms. Barnes, I'm going to come back to you. Do  
17          you have questions about the Priority status?

18          MS. BARNES: Uh-huh.

19          CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

20          MS. BARNES: Good morning. Again, thank you all  
21          for being here. I was just kind of holding on. But  
22          I primarily wanted to ask a question, and I  
23          appreciate the presentation and looking at growth. I  
24          do recognize that on your ESEA status you are year-  
25          one -- you met year-one because of the 2015.

1           However, as most of us know, the AMOs for 2015,  
2           because it was one year of PARCC, are substantially  
3           low. And so I guess my question more than anything  
4           is: prior to 2015, where you have met AMOs all the  
5           way across the board -- because I see that your  
6           tested and expected both last year and this year is  
7           basically -- you know -- your students are coming to  
8           school, students are being tested, so you're above  
9           95% attendance; you're above 95% in testing.  
10          However, last year you -- at the school no targets  
11          were met and so there's a stark contrast between last  
12          year and this year. And I understand, again -- well,  
13          I shouldn't say this year -- in the 14-15  
14          assessments. So can you kind of help me understand  
15          or visualize what this is looking like? I did  
16          appreciate the interactions and the conversation, so  
17          I know that you're very in tune with doing needs  
18          assessments and self-analysis. And I heard Dr. Toney  
19          talk about the relationship and how onboard the staff  
20          and everyone is. My major question and concern just  
21          has to do with sustainability, and the reason I say  
22          that is because the targets are going to change and  
23          the AMOs will change. And so when it was stabilized  
24          -- and I do, again, echo sincere concern for the  
25          loss, not only for her family but for those impacted

1           -- but no targets were met previous year; this year  
2           all targets are met. And because of this particular  
3           2015 status you're a year-one Priority school and  
4           you've met your year-one targets. Can you tell me  
5           what it looks like moving forward to try to sustain  
6           that? Because that is what we're here talking about  
7           is the Priority status and whether or not you see a  
8           trajectory of continuing to accomplish great gains.

9           MR. LINDQUIST: I actually think that's the  
10          question that we're asking in our board monthly  
11          meetings and as a team that we're asking is exactly  
12          that question. And I also want to mention that cuts  
13          to the heart of something that I think has been very  
14          apparent in the hearings yesterday and today with  
15          schools like ours that are serving low-income  
16          populations generally coming in at low performance  
17          levels. So it's not just about growth and  
18          achievement; it's about growth towards a standard and  
19          are we making adequate growth towards that standard.

20          What we have been able to demonstrate through  
21          the independent report that Dr. McKenzie presented --  
22          and we see this in the Priority school report that I  
23          shared with you, the 63-page narrative, in the  
24          sections of that report -- is that each year in the  
25          three years that we've implemented the NWEA MAP as

1 our fall and spring assessment we've really focused  
2 on increasing growth and making sure that growth is  
3 more widespread across our students. And what we've  
4 seen is we've gone from in some cases less than 50%  
5 of classes of students in each subject making the  
6 kind of growth they need to make three years ago to  
7 100% of our students every grade level in each  
8 subject that's tested making stronger than expected  
9 growth. And that's taken a process of continuous  
10 improvement. We make adjustments in curriculum and  
11 instruction every year to try and make those gains.

12 So where is that taking us? We think we're  
13 making strong widespread growth that meets and  
14 exceeds expectations. Here's the challenge: the  
15 challenge is that when we look at the proficiency  
16 levels in the state, you know, an approximation of  
17 scaffolding the PARCC to the MAP, on the MAP the 65th  
18 national percentile is approximately meets  
19 expectations on the PARCC. It's about the 65th. Our  
20 students are coming in at the 33rd percentile or  
21 lower. And so we're making more than expected annual  
22 gains with them, but it's going to take time to get  
23 our students to and above the 65th percentile.

24 That's much higher than where they're starting. And  
25 so I think what you're seeing in the increase in our

1 proficiency rates is that we are moving our students  
2 there and we're going to see over time more and more  
3 students score at or above proficient. But that gap  
4 is so large it's taking time to move them there.

5 The one other thing I want to say is that  
6 mobility is really then the Achilles heel, because if  
7 we're losing a lot of our kids every year and the  
8 progress we're making with them walks out the door  
9 when they walk out the door, then we never get to  
10 proficient. So if you have a high mobility  
11 population and you can't increase retention rates,  
12 you don't have the means to ever get to the  
13 proficient standard at the level of other schools in  
14 the state. And that's the thing we're trying to fix  
15 right now. We're taking a hard look at every factor  
16 of student mobility. We look at early checkouts. We  
17 look at tardiness. We look at average daily  
18 attendance. We're looking at chronic attendance  
19 issues. We're looking at chronic tardiness issues.  
20 We're looking at ways of increasing the daily  
21 engagement of our students, their timeliness, and  
22 also increasing the retention when they tend to leave  
23 at different points in the year, the mid-year, at the  
24 end of the year. And we're working very closely with  
25 our families with a lot of tenacity to try and get

1           our retention rates and our engagement rates as high  
2           as we can. That will ultimately determine if we're  
3           able to achieve our mission, quite honestly, and  
4           that's what you're asking.

5           MS. BARNES: Yeah. Thank you.

6           CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

7           DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I'm just -- after  
8           hearing this wonderful testimony from this team, I'm  
9           wondering, since this is a Priority hearing, if no  
10          action is to be taken, that we allow the mechanisms  
11          that we have already in place, then a motion would  
12          not be necessary or would there need to be a motion  
13          to act -- well, you see where this is going, Ms.  
14          Davis?

15          CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's a seg-way to Ms.  
16          Davis.

17          MS. DAVIS: You would actually need to make a  
18          motion that you take no action.

19          CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I will -- are there any  
20          other questions or comments? I'll wrap this up.

21                 I did also get to make a visit to the school and  
22                 was very impressed with the work that you're doing.  
23                 I have just a couple of quick questions, and I know  
24                 your voice is about to go.

25                 What are you seeing -- because you have an

1 elementary now, are you seeing that students are  
2 coming from your elementary into your middle school,  
3 and are they behind? That's my first question. And  
4 are they coming from the elementary? Those two  
5 questions.

6 MR. LINDQUIST: The timeline in how our primary  
7 school developed has been a little different than the  
8 middle school. We started the primary school in this  
9 school's third year of operation. We started it at  
10 the original site I was talking about at 12th and  
11 Schiller. Then we relocated it to Trinity Episcopal  
12 Cathedral to the former private school facilities  
13 there. They've been a wonderful landlord and partner  
14 to us. We have 330 students at the primary school  
15 today in grades K-5. And so what we're seeing at the  
16 primary school is both exciting and both concerning.  
17 So I'll explain why it's exciting. What's exciting  
18 about it is that we're located in good facilities; we  
19 have a gymnasium. You know, you were there; you  
20 know. But our retention rates have really increased  
21 substantially in our primary school. Typically, from  
22 the beginning to the end of each year we have upwards  
23 of 20% of our students exit our program. Some  
24 students will exit and then come back, but it's  
25 typically been over 20%. At our primary school this

1 year we were actually at below 10% at semester and we  
2 think we're going to finish the year at below 10%.  
3 We're at about 5% and trending towards less than 10%.  
4 So if we can cut in half our student exit rates in  
5 the primary school, with the value of good  
6 facilities, that is -- that's really a critical  
7 break-through for us in the issue I was talking about  
8 earlier. The challenge we've had in the primary  
9 school is that a lot of our students are coming in  
10 without strong behavioral norms established in the  
11 home, quite honestly. There's a lot of reinforcement  
12 that's going on, a lot of structure in the classroom,  
13 structure in passing periods, out on recess, on the  
14 playing field, in the cafeteria. There's just a lot  
15 of time and energy being spent on teaching our  
16 students basic behavioral and etiquette skills that  
17 they haven't learned before they come to us. And we  
18 don't want to blame that on anybody; that's not an  
19 issue to blame. It's just the reality of, you know,  
20 our students' upbringing. And so we're spending so  
21 much time and energy on getting those basic social  
22 norms in place that what we're finding is that our  
23 students get to a level where they now have the  
24 capacity to really engage in learning and grow  
25 academically, but it takes time. And so I think our

1 primary school growth has not been as good as our  
2 middle school growth and that's because we're doing a  
3 lot of that basic blocking and tackling that precedes  
4 the kind of achievement gains that we need now.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think that's going to be  
6 important conversations moving forward because other  
7 charter schools are going to be asking their selves  
8 the same question, should we add an elementary to our  
9 middle school. And serving a high needs population  
10 is not an easy task, as all traditional public  
11 schools have known all along.

12 Any additional questions or comments? If not, I  
13 will accept a motion.

14 DR. GOTCHER: I'd like to make a motion --

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Oh. Ms. Davis, any  
16 additional --

17 MS. DAVIS: No.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

19 MS. LIWO: Could I -- I'm sorry; could I ask a  
20 question?

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

22 MS. LIWO: I just want to make sure I'm  
23 considering the correct information. And this  
24 hearing is pursuant to -- was it 6-23-105 -- and  
25 according to A2, we're supposed to consider whether

1 the charter failed to satisfy generally accepted  
2 accounting standards for fiscal management?

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: They're on -- they're  
4 under review today for academic.

5 MS. LIWO: Only --

6 MS. BARNES: For the Priority status.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: For Priority status.

8 MS. BOYD: Madam Chair, I think I can help. So  
9 when I wrote that agenda item out I copied the  
10 language from the statute.

11 MS. LIWO: Okay.

12 MS. BOYD: But the school was only prepared and  
13 told by us to prepare only for academic reasons.

14 MS. LIWO: Okay. That -- yeah. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

16 DR. GOTCHER: I'd like to make a motion that no  
17 action be taken at this time and would continue  
18 monitoring by our School Improvement Unit.

19 MS. BARNES: Second.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A motion has been made by  
21 Dr. Gotcher and seconded by Ms. Barnes to take no  
22 action at this time with continued monitoring by ADE  
23 staff. Any discussion?

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I would like to see the  
25 annual review similar to the one we did on the

1 previous action to have for this entity, as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Be a little more specific.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: What we did with the -- for next  
4 January to have the internal report prepared where we  
5 could just check on progress that they're making  
6 academically and financially.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Internally?

8 DR. SAUNDERS: We would prepare it internally  
9 and then review it as the Authorizing Panel.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: In a public setting?

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, ma'am.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Is that already being done through  
13 the School Improvement process? We could be hearing  
14 quarterly reports, as well. Am I correct?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. They're coming to  
16 the State Board quarterly. The State Board is  
17 reviewing those quarterly.

18 DR. GOTCHER: For me, I think that's more than  
19 sufficient for -- unless there's something more  
20 specific, Dr. Saunders.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: No, that's fine.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Because I agree that monitoring  
23 needs to continue, but I believe quarterly is -- from  
24 my chair is more than enough.

25 MS. SMITH: Well, and won't they be back for a

1 renewal of application next year anyway? Wouldn't  
2 there --

3 MS. BOYD: That's correct.

4 MS. SMITH: Okay. So we'll see you next year.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Any other  
6 discussion? We have a motion and a second for no  
7 action with continued monitoring by the Department.  
8 All those in favor?

9 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Then the  
11 motion has passed. And if you'll give us just a  
12 moment, we'll give you our statements of reason.

13 MR. LINDQUIST: Thank y'all for your time.

14 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lindquist, as they're  
16 finishing up on their reasons, I would just encourage  
17 you to get with Mr. Rogers and work through all of  
18 the financial questions. And I think today I've  
19 heard several offers of assistance and I would  
20 encourage you to take them up on that. Ms. Barnes.

21 MR. LINDQUIST: We'll take what support we can  
22 get. And, Mr. Rogers, we'll be in touch.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes, when you're  
24 ready.

25 MS. BARNES: Yes. I voted in favor of the

1 motion to take no action at this time. The charter  
2 is already in the process -- or in the processes of  
3 school improvement planning and receiving consistent  
4 reviews. Sustainability has yet to be determined;  
5 however, given the need for time in the process I  
6 felt it was appropriate at this time.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

8 DR. GOTCHER: I also voted for the motion to  
9 take no action. I feel that Little Rock Prep Academy  
10 is a thriving institution with internal and external  
11 accountability measures to insure high student  
12 achievement and teacher effectiveness. And just to  
13 continue to encourage them to work closely with the  
14 Department of Ed.'s School Improvement Unit.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

16 MR. LESTER: I voted for the motion also. Data  
17 indicates growth and I am impressed with the mission  
18 and purpose of the charter. I encourage the charter  
19 to work with the Federal Programs Unit to plan for a  
20 Title 1 school-wide program.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

22 MS. LIWO: I voted for. The data shows that  
23 there is student growth and I think the charter just  
24 needs additional time to continue to improve -- or  
25 show additional success.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

2 MS. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion.  
3 The charter has leadership committed to their work  
4 and a strong application with goals. The support  
5 from the ADE will provide the opportunity to address  
6 academic and fiscal issues.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

8 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion to give  
9 Little Rock Prep the opportunity to continue to grow  
10 student improvement with intensive help from ADE.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor to allow the  
13 School Improvement Unit to monitor and continue to  
14 assist.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

16 MS. SMITH: I voted in favor. Stated AMOs were  
17 met for the first year. I'm confident that the  
18 School Improvement team and school will continue to  
19 work together based on the testimony from the ADE and  
20 School Improvement unit.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations. Another  
22 year of work. I would encourage -- I would say what  
23 an excellent job you did in your documentation and  
24 it's so easy for us when it's well written, and it's  
25 also a really good model for students. So we

1 appreciate good writing. Thank you.

2 MR. LINDQUIST: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: This committee will recess  
4 for lunch and we'll be back in 35 minutes.

5 (LUNCH BREAK: 11:58 A.M. - 12:33 P.M.)

6 A-3: DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PRIORITY STATUS  
7 HEARING: BLYTHEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL - A NEW TECH SCHOOL

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, you're  
9 recognized for Action Item 3.

10 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. District  
11 Conversion Public Charter School Priority Status  
12 Hearing for Blytheville High School - A New Tech  
13 School.

14 The State Board of Education approved the  
15 application for Blytheville High School - A New Tech  
16 School on January 14, 2013. The charter is approved  
17 to serve students in grades 9-12 with a maximum  
18 enrollment of 1,000. The Charter Authorizing Panel  
19 will consider the possibility of acting on the  
20 Blytheville New Tech district conversion charter  
21 pursuant to Arkansas Code Annotated 6-23-105,  
22 regarding an alleged failure to meet academic or  
23 fiscal performance criteria deemed relevant for the  
24 public charter school by the authorizer.

25 Representatives of Blytheville New Tech are here

1           today to make a presentation and answer questions.  
2           Possible actions to be taken by the Charter  
3           Authorizing Panel include modification, probation,  
4           and/or revocation of the charter.

5                     And to clarify, they are prepared to be here for  
6           academic reasons, not the financial reasons.

7                     Do you guys need to be reminded of the  
8           procedures?

9                     CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll have 20 minutes for  
10          the ADE staff and 20 minutes for the charter school?

11                    MS. BOYD: That's correct. And then you guys go  
12          straight into questions and answers.

13                    CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

14                    MS. BOYD: Thank you.

15                    CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All representatives of  
16          Blytheville High School - A New Tech School and  
17          anyone from the ADE staff that will be speaking, if  
18          you'll stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear  
19          or affirm that the testimony you're about to give  
20          shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but  
21          the truth?

22                    (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

23                    CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Boyd,  
24          you're recognized.

25                    MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The

1 Blytheville High School - A New Tech School was first  
2 authorized by the State Board of Education to operate  
3 in January of 2013, to serve grades 9-12. In  
4 September of 2015, the charter appeared before the  
5 State Board of Education to report on its progress in  
6 regards to their 2014 academic distress designation.  
7 Recently, the school has been classified as a  
8 Priority school. The contract is scheduled to expire  
9 in June of 2018.

10 From my visit to the campus, it appears the  
11 school personnel continually seek out strategies and  
12 interventions that work best for their students, both  
13 academically and socially. Director Teryn Spears  
14 works diligently to collaborate with staff to fulfill  
15 the needs of the students.

16 I'll defer the rest of my time to Dr. Toney.

17 DR. TONEY: Some of what you will hear for the  
18 Blytheville schools and the Osceola schools will be  
19 rather redundant. I was at both schools yesterday,  
20 and upon arriving back at my home in Conway I told my  
21 wife, I said, "I always thoroughly enjoy going to  
22 those schools because I always -- I learn some  
23 stuff." But Blytheville first.

24 Blytheville High School, in the 2012-13 year,  
25 was a Focus school. Then last year, which would've

1           been fall of '14, they were designated an academic  
2           distress school, so we started serving them as a  
3           Priority school. Technically speaking, this is their  
4           first year as being designated as an official  
5           Priority school. Even though the services were there  
6           last year, until the designation was made they were  
7           still working under the Focus school rules.

8                     In working with the district really and the  
9           school in particular, the recommendations coming out  
10          of the academic distress committee, all of those  
11          recommendations have been thoroughly and almost  
12          enthusiastically engaged by the district. The  
13          district has decided to fully engage in the solution  
14          to those recommendations at a K-12 level. They  
15          recognize that some of the stuff that was dealing --  
16          that the high school was dealing with was a system-  
17          wide solution. And they have been fully engaged at  
18          the campus, as well as throughout the district in all  
19          four of their campuses K-12.

20                    There is buy-in and alignment. Yesterday, when  
21          I was in the district, as it turned out we talked to  
22          all four campuses. They're all on the same page,  
23          along with their district leadership.

24                    Again, the district in a K-12 model has embraced  
25          the school improvement process and their

1 responsibility to their kids, as Dr. Wilde and I  
2 visited this morning, as well as any district in the  
3 state. They are fully engaged from the  
4 superintendent/school board level all the way down  
5 through K-12 and their campuses.

6 Due to this thorough full engagement our office  
7 are especially interested in seeing the results. To  
8 our best ability we have advised and coached, and  
9 they have advised and coached us, on best practices.  
10 So the idea that we've got a school that's fully  
11 engaged, a district that's fully engaged in their  
12 improvement process, they're fully accepting of their  
13 circumstance and their responsibility to their  
14 students, we are waiting with bated breath for these  
15 best practices to start to result in improved student  
16 achievement as measured by our test scores. We  
17 obviously know that, you know, we've been in a  
18 transition among tests for the last couple of years,  
19 so it's kind of hard to make some comparisons. But  
20 we are looking forward to some of the -- to seeing  
21 some of those results based on the district's  
22 engagement in best practices.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Toney. Ms.  
24 Boyd.

25 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. For this

1 item I believe we have two people -- yeah, we have  
2 two people on conference call to answer questions,  
3 just so you're aware of that. And then to start the  
4 presentation we'll have Teryn Spears, who's the  
5 director of the charter school.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. And I failed  
7 -- did I -- I already did that. Okay.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah, they were sworn.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Just checking myself. All  
10 right. You're recognized.

11 MS. SPEARS: Thank you, Madam Chairperson and  
12 Committee, thanks for having us today. Excuse me --  
13 Panel, thank you for having us today. We're excited  
14 to tell our story. As Ms. Boyd said, we have two on  
15 the call-in, one being Mr. Ashley who has the flu and  
16 we're thankful he didn't come share with all of you.  
17 And so he's available for questions. He is the  
18 principal. The other one being Dr. Kristin Cuilla,  
19 who is with the New Tech Network and is happy to  
20 answer questions concerning our progress and our  
21 process.

22 As I begin today, I just want to tell you, as  
23 Dr. Toney so excellently outlined, what we're doing  
24 at Blytheville High School is not a standalone thing.  
25 That's the beauty of a district conversion charter.

1 We're part of an incredible district who is behind  
2 what we are doing and so bought into what needs to  
3 happen. A systemic approach has been taken. We're  
4 shifting learning, teaching, relationships, the whole  
5 nine yards, K-12, because, frankly, kids don't show  
6 up in 9th grade on the 3rd grade reading level just  
7 all of a sudden. It's a system-wide issue that has  
8 to be addressed and that has been taken as a  
9 district, and so we have a lot of support in that  
10 way.

11 Our mission to create students who will thrive  
12 in a post-secondary environment with the knowledge,  
13 skills and attributes they need to be successful we  
14 hold near and dear. As we look at how we engage  
15 students, how we challenge students, how we connect  
16 students, it's imperative that we keep that mission  
17 central for everything that we do. I'll tell you our  
18 story doesn't just start here. We didn't come do  
19 this -- we didn't engage in the charter process  
20 because all of a sudden we were Priority or all of a  
21 sudden we were Focus. We engaged in the process  
22 because we knew we needed to put graduates out of  
23 Blytheville High School who weren't just graduates  
24 but who could meet that mission and thrive in our  
25 community. We looked around; there were 600-plus

1 jobs open in our community at a time when there  
2 weren't jobs available. That said to us we need to  
3 improve the graduates we're putting out of our high  
4 school. So we began to engage in this process and  
5 felt what we saw in New Tech schools, not just in  
6 Arkansas but around the nation -- we made those tours  
7 -- gave us, quite frankly, a process that we could  
8 employ that would help us in improving what we wanted  
9 to see with our students.

10 So what we hope to show you today in our painted  
11 picture is a picture of students who own themselves;  
12 they're self-possessed, owners of their learning.  
13 And if you know very much about the Delta and  
14 poverty, that's a big statement when you talk about  
15 students who are agents of their own learning and who  
16 engage in learning, period. So I could stand and say  
17 a lot but what we have is a video made by our  
18 students; they wanted to share you -- share with you  
19 what they think about our school. So --

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

22 MS. SPEARS: So those are our students and what  
23 they gathered information-wise to put together under  
24 the direction of their instructor.

25 As we move today -- we just discussed we have

1 far more information than we have time. So, we have  
2 high points that we want to share with you as we talk  
3 about how we're meeting the legislative intent of the  
4 charter.

5 The key thing for us when we look at improving  
6 student learning, which is the topic of our  
7 conversation today, our literacy and comprehension  
8 skills and our math skills we're tracking the skill  
9 level through Renaissance Learning and STAR  
10 assessment and we're trending positively each year.  
11 And the last two years we've made at least a year  
12 growth plus a little more. And, obviously, you  
13 should make at least a year growth but every month on  
14 top of that we can add we're making up for deficits.  
15 We're on track this year to grow 1.3 with our  
16 students, which is huge when you start talking about  
17 what students are able to do because as they come  
18 closer to reading on grade level they do better in  
19 math; they do better in every content area as a  
20 result of that. Our ACT composite scores continue to  
21 trend upward.

22 Our school-wide learning outcomes, we have five;  
23 those were mentioned in the video just now. Thinking  
24 and knowledge is that content knowledge, and that is  
25 key. In a project learning environment that's the

1 number one question: how do you know where every  
2 student is? We're fastidious with this. We have  
3 common assessments, we have individual assessments of  
4 thinking and knowledge, the STAR data -- all of that  
5 triangulated together, we know where every single  
6 student is and we can track them. We intervene --  
7 we'll talk about that in a minute. We intervene for  
8 them on their level, and that's a really big thing  
9 when you start talking about how it is that we go  
10 about improving student learning. But that only  
11 tells one story, one facet for students. We're  
12 talking about preparing them for life outside of high  
13 school. They need to be able to do what I'm doing  
14 today, stand in front of people and speak coherently  
15 and make a point well. They need to be able to write  
16 it. Ms. Coffman spoke of that earlier, appreciating  
17 good written communication. They need to be able to  
18 do that and to collaborate. Heaven knows -- the  
19 teacher spoke of it in the video -- there's not a job  
20 where you don't need to collaborate in some form or  
21 fashion, and that will only continue to grow as the  
22 landscape continues to change in the world.

23 Agency -- agency is that notion that's two-fold:  
24 a growth mindset that says I face setbacks; that's  
25 okay, I'm going to get up, I'm going to keep going;

1           that means that I can grow myself, I own my learning,  
2           and then I take responsibility for who I am. We have  
3           rubrics for all of these. When you talk about how do  
4           you measure these things, that sound very subjective,  
5           we have rubrics that we measure. They're calibrated  
6           by grade level, when we start talking about those  
7           things with thinking and knowledge rubrics as well.

8                     Our engagement continues to increase, as  
9           evidenced by the number of office referrals going  
10          down, the number of out-of-school suspensions going  
11          down; attendance has improved. Those are hard-and-  
12          fast indicators that students are more engaged and  
13          are staying in class and staying engaged when they  
14          are in class.

15                    Our graduation, despite a bauble last year which  
16          we have the data to talk about, continues to trend  
17          positively and we're excited for that continuation.

18                    When you talk about increased learning  
19          opportunities with special emphasis on students who  
20          are identified as low achieving, we have a terrific  
21          support and robust special education program that  
22          supports our students on that lower tier. But then  
23          there are students right above that who are not  
24          identified in that level and they come to us on a 4th  
25          to 6th grade reading level in the 9th grade; they're

1 placed in critical reading classes where all we do in  
2 that, using that good content coming out of the State  
3 Department, those frameworks, for bolstering those  
4 skills and bringing those students on to grade level.  
5 I mentioned this earlier but we have that targeted  
6 intervention within -- the beauty is, because we have  
7 integrated classes it's not just intervention in  
8 English; it's English and history integrated together  
9 so they're getting that assistance in that  
10 environment as well.

11 We at the high school level have Drop Everything  
12 and Read. Every day our kids read for 15 minutes.  
13 The statistics are in the report that I shared. It's  
14 incredible the amount of time that our kids are  
15 spending reading and their comprehension is  
16 improving. Drop Everything and Divide, that's DEAD;  
17 we don't tell them to drop dead but they drop  
18 everything and divide. And that is pure skills, math  
19 skills every day these kids are practicing 15  
20 minutes. A new focus that emerged for us was the  
21 writing deficit that continues to appear on our  
22 common assessments. We've taken that on as a focus  
23 area and then gotten to the heart of it that children  
24 have a fear -- a lot of our students have a fear of  
25 writing because they've not done it well. So the

1 best way to do that is put it in a non-threatening  
2 environment and just let them write. One of our  
3 counselors had that idea and it was brilliant and  
4 it's taken off in our elective classes, free writing  
5 for 10 to 15 minutes a week in those classes. In  
6 addition, we have Jobs for Americans graduates and  
7 then that targets that at-risk population and those  
8 kids. It focuses on giving them job ready skills,  
9 placing them out there, teaching them how to  
10 interview well and go out and get jobs. And we have  
11 -- I believe it's 42 students in those programs  
12 working.

13 When we talk about encouraging innovative  
14 teaching methods, I mentioned project based learning  
15 with integrated course offerings. That shift in  
16 pedagogy represents more than just all of a sudden  
17 we're doing projects. That means all of a sudden we  
18 go from sitting in rows and students sitting-and-  
19 getting to students collaborating, working together  
20 to solve problems that make sense to them. So  
21 they're learning is contextualized in a relevant way.

22 Technology -- we're one to one. Our students  
23 all have Chromebooks. And I can't tell you what an  
24 incredible thing it is that in the last three years  
25 we've only lost five, maybe six of them. That's

1           incredible because they take them home; they're proud  
2           of them; they take care of them; they demonstrate  
3           great responsibility. We have a learning management  
4           system as part of our work with New Tech. It's  
5           called Echo. It operates just like Blackboard or  
6           anything like that does, but the beautiful thing  
7           about that is parents see everything. They see  
8           everything submitted, they see everything returned,  
9           and it has proven to be a great question answered for  
10          parents, as well. And the students, again,  
11          demonstrating agency with that.

12                 Measuring effectively -- Dr. Toney mentioned our  
13          work with the State Department. But as we begin to  
14          dig into common assessments and how we measure  
15          students in an ongoing fashion this is a key part for  
16          us because it doesn't matter what you do if it's not  
17          effective. And you have to know what thing you're  
18          doing is effective so you can, you know, sustain  
19          yourself, so we are keen on that and continue to do  
20          that.

21                 And then the classroom physical space is an  
22          extension of the learning. We want students to  
23          collaborate together. There are tables in  
24          classrooms, and chairs, and the students collaborate  
25          and work together. We view the classroom as a

1 physical extension of the learning expectation that  
2 we have for them.

3 Creating new learning for our teachers is a huge  
4 piece, and I just want to say our teachers own this.  
5 It would not work if this process was owned only by  
6 Teryn, because if something happens and Teryn goes  
7 away the process goes with Teryn. So it has to be  
8 owned by the teachers. When we started this it  
9 started with teacher leadership and it continues with  
10 teacher leadership. Right now, we have seven lead  
11 teachers who sit over content -- four of them are  
12 over content and three of them over grade level 9,  
13 10, 11, 12. And then within each of their PLCs they  
14 have leadership structures that other teachers can  
15 get involved in that and we have a process for  
16 continuing to involve those teachers. That ongoing  
17 professional learning is key. We also -- Mr. Ashley  
18 and his team have done a marvelous job with TESS and  
19 with giving those teachers solid feedback and  
20 opportunity to grow. And it's not just with their  
21 formal and informal observations, but we have a  
22 rotation cycle of just observation and feedback where  
23 we go in and say, "Hey, I'm seeing this." And those  
24 students next week are coming back to see that,  
25 targeted, specific and measurable week to week. And,

1 honestly, it's pretty cool because teachers crave  
2 that. It's kind of generational thing, the ones who  
3 are craving that and asking, "You're not in my  
4 classroom enough. Can I have a peer come in and  
5 observe?" We had a conference last week with a  
6 second year teacher who said, "I need more people in  
7 my room all the time. I've got to get better." So  
8 it's that kind of thing that we're seeing with our  
9 teachers and giving them ongoing support. And as  
10 well with New Tech Network, there are -- there's just  
11 a bevy of resources with online opportunities for  
12 learning through a badging process, through  
13 convenings, and just a host of other opportunities.

14 As far as providing parents and pupils with  
15 expanded choices, we've talked about what our program  
16 looks like and what goes on. But we also have  
17 blended concurrent credit AP courses that we offer in  
18 conjunction with our community college. You all have  
19 worked in school and you know AP is important because  
20 of the five points. So maintaining that is important  
21 but you also know that colleges are not really so  
22 much accepting that anymore; it's a downward trend.  
23 So how do you guarantee that students get college  
24 credit? Pair it with a college course. And so  
25 Arkansas Northeastern College has been incredible and

1 provided this for our students. They have the  
2 opportunity to graduate with 24 college credits. We  
3 have eight of those concurrent credit classes. We  
4 have a full range, nine AP classes, eight pre-AP  
5 classes, the technical center, all of the  
6 certifications -- I won't read all that; it's all in  
7 the material -- internship opportunities in multiple  
8 places. We have also, thanks to the waiver, an on-  
9 staff career counselor who is doing a marvelous job  
10 and giving our other counselors -- freeing them up to  
11 do what it is that they do best as they track  
12 students and get in there and work with them. She  
13 also is working with students. And I just want to  
14 share this with you. We have 172 seniors this year;  
15 140 of them have applied and been accepted to  
16 college. That's incredible and that's a big  
17 celebration for us, not only that that has happened  
18 but that we know and that we're able to track that.  
19 We have 20 students of our top crew who has reported  
20 back to us so far, as of yesterday, February 17th,  
21 \$692,050 in scholarships have already been offered to  
22 20 of those students. Seven of our boys have been  
23 signed on football scholarships, one of them headed  
24 to a Division 1 school, only because -- not just  
25 because he was athletic enough, but because of his

1 academic standing. So incredible, incredible  
2 opportunities. And our college preparatory academy  
3 is working to prepare students to not only be on  
4 college campuses to see all that, but working with  
5 them on their ACT scores. And on average they're  
6 coming up one composite point, which is a really big  
7 deal when you start looking at that.

8 And then, finally, accountability. Ewww, I went  
9 too fast. As Dr. Toney says, we have graciously and  
10 excitedly worked with the Department and with the  
11 School Improvement Unit because we know we need to  
12 improve. We own that and we want to do all we can to  
13 be a system that works. So we're very well aware of  
14 that.

15 When we talk about innovation, how is it that  
16 you can remain innovative despite the scores not  
17 being where you want them to be? The main thing is  
18 to keep the main thing the main thing, keep that  
19 mission central. What is it that we want that ideal  
20 graduate to look at -- look like going out the door?  
21 And we work and throw our weight behind that  
22 entirely. They have to be career eligible and  
23 prepared, so that means we've got to give them the  
24 knowledge that they need; they need to have those  
25 soft skills, and they need to be able to have a

1 character that will take them and keep them anywhere  
2 they go. They also have to own their learning and  
3 own that they may not know everything and be willing  
4 to have that mindset that says I'm going to do that.

5 Also, remaining data-driven. Y'all, this is  
6 central to what we're doing. It's all about the  
7 data, what's it saying, where's it trending, where do  
8 we need to improve. As I said earlier, you don't  
9 know where to go if you don't know what you're doing  
10 that's working or not working. So, the data is key  
11 to us.

12 Recruiting and retaining excellent educators --  
13 this is important. We don't shy away from the fact  
14 that we have a turnover issue in our district, and  
15 this is at-large. It's one of our academic distress  
16 recommendations. We are working and, in fact,  
17 empowered -- just last week we had one of our  
18 teachers, one of our brand-new teachers come and say,  
19 "I've got some ideas for retention." She's putting  
20 together a first-year teacher retention committee  
21 made of first-year, second-year teachers geared at  
22 how is it we support, how it is that we can retain.  
23 That's a really big deal when you start empowering  
24 those to do that and give that institutional  
25 knowledge like when can you go to the bathroom. So,

1           it's those kinds of things that they're really  
2           focusing on, all the way up to how do you support a  
3           new teacher in a classroom instructionally.

4           We're also shifting the focus of the system. We  
5           touched on this and we would be glad to talk about it  
6           for three hours, probably. But we're doing this. We  
7           believe in this, because you can't just change one  
8           part of the system and expect it to improve if the  
9           rest of the system does not work and does not shift.  
10          So we believe in that.

11          And we're future facing. We just believe and we  
12          know that what we're doing is going to pay off and we  
13          continue to connect in the community and believe  
14          those results will reap a reward. Mr. Atwill.

15          Sorry. Okay. So I just got told our 20 minutes  
16          is up. I'm sorry.

17          CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you want to just -- do  
18          you have a few more, just a little bit more to finish  
19          up?

20          MS. SPEARS: I would love to, Madam Chair. If  
21          it's okay, I would love for Mr. Atwill just to close  
22          with a story, a couple of student stories, just  
23          something to round out the picture of where we are.

24          CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

25          SUPT. ATWILL: I'm Richard Atwill; I'm

1 superintendent of Blytheville Schools. There was a  
2 lot more information, and I'm sure we'll get to those  
3 in the questions because we may not have touched on  
4 something that you want to know about. But I was  
5 standing outside in the foyer earlier today and I was  
6 told about -- we have a student voice initiative in  
7 Blytheville with Arkansas Leadership Academy. My  
8 oldest daughter, who graduated last year from  
9 Blytheville, is a part of that and we have some  
10 students at the high school that are a part of that.  
11 And one of the young men -- they were skypeing the  
12 writer of the book that they're studying, and one of  
13 our young men named John said, "I was the kid that  
14 was headed down the wrong path. I started getting in  
15 trouble. I was getting in trouble, but the things  
16 that are going at the high school and this student  
17 voice initiative I've turned my life around and this  
18 is what I want to do. This is how I want to lead."  
19 And the author of the book told him, said, "Young  
20 man, in 100 words or less I want you to email that to  
21 me. That's going in my next book."

22 My son, my youngest son is graduating this year.  
23 And his mother and I were always concerned about his  
24 ability to be prepared for work each day because  
25 getting up and going to bed and feeding himself and

1 finding clothes -- we were concerned. We were really  
2 concerned about him being appropriately ready for  
3 college because he just -- he's a brilliant child;  
4 he's just out there. So I said to him one day right  
5 before Christmas, I said, "Cody, we need to sit down  
6 and start applying for colleges." He said, "Pop,  
7 I've already been accepted to Arkansas State." I  
8 said, "You're just going to apply to one?" He said,  
9 "No, sir. I find out in January" -- which we found  
10 out in January he's been accepted to the University  
11 of Arkansas. And what I mean, what I'm saying is he  
12 took it upon himself, he was responsible for his  
13 learning, he was responsible for his future, and he  
14 learned that at Blytheville High School. He learned  
15 that at Blytheville High School.

16 So those are examples, my son being one of them,  
17 of the process in our school system. It's not just  
18 at Blytheville High School, although that's what  
19 we're here for. We realize we had to change the  
20 adult learning in our system in order for the student  
21 learning to take place, the student -- the cultural  
22 change to take place. We believe heavily in defined  
23 autonomy. The schools can use the techniques and  
24 things that they have, as outlined in our 45-day  
25 plan. We have one for each school. Two schools

1 aren't required to have it, but all four of our  
2 schools have those 45-day plans because as Ms. Teryn  
3 -- Ms. Spears and Dr. Toney has said, data is the  
4 necessary part of systemic change. So at this point  
5 I guess we'll entertain questions. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Excellent  
7 presentation and, once again, excellent writing in  
8 your report; we do appreciate that. And you're  
9 right; it's a great place to tell your story. Just  
10 remember, it's recorded. And for all those people  
11 that didn't join in to watch us live-streaming you  
12 can send that recording to them and I'm sure patrons  
13 in the community -- some would want to see it because  
14 it really does tell your story.

15 Questions? Who's ready? Ms. Pfeffer.

16 MS. PFEFFER: I don't know if I have a question  
17 as much as just a couple of comments, first of all.  
18 I don't always hear the positives about our teacher  
19 excellence support system, but I just -- I really  
20 appreciate your articulation of exactly what it needs  
21 to be. And I am going to go on record and say I do  
22 want to come and visit so that I can talk to your  
23 principals who I know are doing that very hard work.  
24 But that feedback and support to teachers is going to  
25 be as much of a retention tool as anything else we

1 do.

2 And then the second thing that I got really  
3 excited about is your -- in talking about the  
4 retention, you know, you've got a first-year teacher  
5 that feels empowered to come and talk to  
6 administration, say, "Hey, I have some ideas." And I  
7 don't think that first-year teachers always even  
8 think that's possible, so I think that does speak to  
9 your culture.

10 And so those are just two things I wanted to  
11 say, you know, really are impressive to me and I  
12 think a positive.

13 SUPT. ATWILL: A comment I would like to make on  
14 the TESS issue, we found significant worth in the  
15 process when it's done with integrity. And the  
16 problem we have is, like any other school district,  
17 it's time for our administrators to actually get in  
18 there, do a good job, and give that quality feedback  
19 in an effective short period -- short amount of time.  
20 So we implemented leadership team meetings where  
21 other people were taking care of like facilities or  
22 community and stakeholder involvement and just the  
23 various things that are going on in schools. They  
24 have their subcommittees that come to this person  
25 that's on the leadership team. Now the principal has

1 time to go out and be in those classrooms and then  
2 immediately give that feedback to those teachers  
3 through the TESS process.

4 MS. PFEFFER: Well, and I would very much  
5 appreciate being able to come in and get more  
6 knowledge and then possibly utilize the ideas that  
7 you all have done because your people have the street  
8 credibility to share that information with others --

9 MS. SPEARS: Absolutely.

10 MS. PFEFFER: -- that, you know, that they're  
11 not going to get from --

12 MS. SPEARS: Sure.

13 MS. PFEFFER: -- people who are not as directly  
14 involved. So, yeah, very exciting, so --

15 MS. SPEARS: Well, thank you. And I think to  
16 just add on to what Mr. Atwill said, the  
17 intentionality with the team structure then frees up  
18 a principal to let somebody else put out a fire, and  
19 letting him or her be in a classroom is critical; and  
20 then empowering principals who feel like they don't  
21 have content knowledge to give good feedback to  
22 teachers still, that's been a really critical element  
23 for us in that process as well. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr.

1           Atwill, I think that's powerful because most  
2           principals want to be instructional leaders. And  
3           through experience from many on this panel some days  
4           you are strictly a manager; you are putting out the  
5           fires, as Ms. Spears said. So making that time is  
6           powerful. And I wanted to seg-way; I know Mr. Lester  
7           had a question, but mine was on the leadership team.  
8           I scanned through my notes one more time and didn't  
9           see it, so I'll allow you guys --

10           MS. SPEARS: Okay. Sure.

11           DR. GOTCHER: -- to jump in. I may have  
12           overlooked. How often do you meet? And if I took a  
13           look at your agenda and meeting notes and I read  
14           those, what would I read that would show me that  
15           you're addressing the Priority status, the academic  
16           distress status that your school is in at this point?

17           MS. SPEARS: Thank you for the question, and I  
18           do apologize for the omission in all of this. I  
19           can't believe that. We meet every week.

20           DR. GOTCHER: Every week. Well, I had missed  
21           it.

22           MS. SPEARS: Every week.

23           DR. GOTCHER: I may have missed it. Yeah.

24           MS. SPEARS: And so the purpose behind that is  
25           not simply to meet to meet, but to go about the

1 business of improving our school. For so long  
2 leadership teams were about going through -- I've got  
3 a list of things I want to run through. No  
4 housekeeping; leadership team time is learning time.  
5 We need to look at the data; we need to dig in.

6 So to look at our minutes you would find two  
7 things for sure. We're addressing the Priority  
8 indicators. We do self-assessments on those Priority  
9 indicators. That is first and foremost, to see where  
10 we are, where we need to go, and an honest look at  
11 that.

12 And then, secondarily, we are very big on  
13 protocol. And when we look at data using a very low  
14 inference protocol, wherein we don't make  
15 assumptions, we put the data on the table. And as a  
16 team we look at it and we say, what is the data  
17 saying to us? Where do we need to go from here? I  
18 would say historically perhaps in education the point  
19 of entry has been, "Hey, here's a new strategy; let's  
20 try that." For us, it's the data. We start with the  
21 data, we analyze it, we say, "Hey, what can we do in  
22 response to that?" So you will see evidence of that  
23 cycle of inquiry in our leadership meeting minutes.  
24 And we're still learning. Honestly, we're still  
25 learning how to work that process well. But we have

1 had powerful -- I'm going to call them revelations in  
2 those meetings, one of them being key around student  
3 writing. Obviously they're not writing, but why? So  
4 digging down into that and so -- and around  
5 observations. And I could keep going; sorry.

6 SUPT. ATWILL: And I would like to make one  
7 comment about -- we also -- you talk about the  
8 instructional leadership of the principals in the  
9 schools. The district administration team as a part  
10 of that defined autonomy meets once or twice a month  
11 for principal growth time, and that's where we bring  
12 them in to administration or we meet -- well, we meet  
13 at administration, we talk about the instructional  
14 process or whatever, and then they have peer  
15 observations. We go to one of their schools each  
16 month and then they get feedback from other  
17 principals about their school. So it's about the  
18 whole process of our high school principal literally  
19 knowing what's going on in kindergarten.

20 DR. GOTCHER: That's great. May I follow up  
21 with just a word of encouragement? One of the things  
22 that I've heard off and on throughout my time here,  
23 many teachers feel such a lack of support -- and  
24 whether that's intended or unintended, it occurs.  
25 And, folks, I'm telling you having a strong

1 leadership team and then making time for those  
2 principals to be instructional leaders, you're going  
3 to have a very supported staff; it will reduce that  
4 turnover. Folks, I commend you for that. That's  
5 powerful information. Just --

6 MS. SPEARS: Thank you.

7 DR. GOTCHER: -- make it sustain.

8 SUPT. ATWILL: And a nice sidekick from that is  
9 teacher absences are down, as are student absences --

10 MS. SPEARS: Yeah.

11 SUPT. ATWILL: -- because -- because of the  
12 engagement of the students in the classroom on the  
13 content. And we found that out from a student  
14 survey.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Well done.

16 MS. SPEARS: So I would -- I'm going to just  
17 keep adding on. So when we meet -- what Mr. Atwill  
18 was talking about, we meet monthly with our  
19 principals for -- just call it learning and growth  
20 time where we come in. We've done book studies  
21 together but we're looking at the problems they face,  
22 the support they need as principals. In effect,  
23 we're trying to model the model. What we do with  
24 them, we want them to go back and do with their teams  
25 and with their teachers in their building. But as we

1 work with the principals we work around things, Ms.  
2 Pfeffer, specifically about how is it that you go and  
3 observe and give feedback; what does that look like;  
4 how does that work with TESS; how does that work in  
5 addition to TESS. That's something that's huge for  
6 us because as we learn to be -- and we have a good  
7 cross-section of administrators who are used to being  
8 managers and trying to make that transition to  
9 instructional leaders. So we're just really looking  
10 to support them in that way to hopefully let that  
11 carry down to the teachers.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

13 MR. LESTER: Yes. Being from the Federal Unit,  
14 I always take a look at the education services and  
15 y'all are school-wide and have been for quite  
16 sometime, have a high percentage of economically  
17 deprived kids. Looking at your website it looks like  
18 you use a lot of your community partners in your  
19 tutoring. How is that -- is it being used in, you  
20 know --

21 SUPT. ATWILL: Where do you begin?

22 MS. SPEARS: Yes. Yes. Well, let Ms. Cook --  
23 we do. Yes. And, actually, on that note we've just  
24 had two additional community organizations come to  
25 the high school, gone through the background check

1 and volunteer certification process who have just  
2 started helping in our homework help line and  
3 tutoring. So that's very much still alive and well.  
4 Ms. Cook, our curriculum director, wants to speak to  
5 that.

6 MS. COOK: I'm Sally Cook; I'm the curriculum  
7 director. And, yes, the tutoring from our community  
8 has been a pivotal piece for us. We have industries  
9 that have partnered with our district for our  
10 kindergarten through our 5th grade schools, both of  
11 the primary and the elementary school that provides  
12 an afterschool program and a summer program where  
13 we're getting additional hours in with students.  
14 We're working -- focusing on literacy and math skills  
15 as a strong suit. But we're also bringing in science  
16 because this company has a strong engineering  
17 background and they're helping with that engineering.  
18 They want us to get that science piece in. And so  
19 we're spending a lot of time with those children  
20 after school hours and during the summer. We also  
21 have other local groups that want to come in and  
22 partner with our schools and they come in sometimes  
23 before or after school and provide other things for  
24 our students. So there's a strong partnership there  
25 to provide that extra layer of support that our

1 students need.

2 MR. LESTER: And I see a wide variety of times  
3 too, which I commend you for, 9:00 to 12:00 and 3:00  
4 to 5:00. And so there's a wide variety of times the  
5 kids can --

6 MS. COOK: Yes. Because we want to make sure we  
7 get every opportunity for them to have that extra  
8 time to learn.

9 MR. LESTER: Okay. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

11 MS. BARNES: Good afternoon.

12 MS. SPEARS: Good afternoon.

13 MS. BARNES: Wow. I'm trying to determine how  
14 -- or the best way to articulate what my questions  
15 are. I appreciate all of the information and I  
16 appreciate the presentation thus far. And I am -- I  
17 guess I'm grappling with what to do when you don't  
18 know what to do, because I'm looking at -- if I just  
19 looked at a snapshot of the school and the various --  
20 you know -- you hit accountability quite quickly and  
21 moved on. So, of course, I said, well, dang, she's  
22 going to put that on me, I suppose, to talk about  
23 2012 Focus, 2013 academic distress, 2014 academic  
24 distress, Priority 2015. I guess my questions are  
25 centered around -- I hear the kinds of things that

1 work and I heard Dr. Toney talk about the great work.  
2 And now you're looking at it as a systems approach,  
3 K-12, which I applaud because I think that's  
4 obviously something that you want to do. And, you  
5 know, I guess my thing is it sounds like we're doing  
6 all the right things.

7 MS. SPEARS: Uh-huh.

8 MS. BARNES: So then my question is just, you  
9 know, what do you attribute the consistent decline?  
10 And some of it is rollercoaster.

11 MS. SPEARS: Yeah.

12 MS. BARNES: You know, I was looking at  
13 performance. But, you know, math -- I hear the  
14 strategies that you have in place, so I guess -- I  
15 mean, you know, I'm trying to determine --

16 MS. SPEARS: Sure.

17 MS. BARNES: -- have you pinpointed -- because  
18 this hearing is about your --

19 MS. SPEARS: Yeah, absolutely.

20 MS. BARNES: -- you know, your Priority status.  
21 And I'm trying to embrace all of the things that  
22 you're doing --

23 MS. SPEARS: Sure.

24 MS. BARNES: -- to address these needs. And so  
25 I guess, you know, I'd like to know have you

1           pinpointed some things that you feel --

2                   MS. SPEARS:    Sure.

3                   MS. BARNES:   -- are sure-fire effective  
4           measures, pinpointed some things that we just blew it  
5           on that?  I mean, you know --

6                   MS. SPEARS:    Yeah, sure.  Sure.

7                   MS. BARNES:   -- we tried it, it didn't work, and  
8           because of that this is what the result is.

9                   MS. SPEARS:    Sure.

10                  MS. BARNES:   Can you kind of just give me that  
11           kind of information to help me with --

12                  MS. SPEARS:   Yes, ma'am.  Absolutely.  Thank you  
13           for the question.  I would say in all transparency  
14           we're in year three of a five-year implementation  
15           process.  So when we talk about arighting the ship I  
16           feel like we're on a good trajectory for doing so.  
17           The things we've talked about that we're doing we  
18           have started doing.  We need to continue doing those  
19           things.

20                  We have uncovered -- can I say this?  We have  
21           uncovered systemic issues that have landed us, Ms.  
22           Barnes, where we are in a great big way.  And the --  
23           I'll let Ms. Cook speak to some of that.  But just to  
24           be honest, it's being a process and knowing that we  
25           didn't get here essentially overnight.  It has taken

1           some time for us to aright the ship and to move. And  
2           that's not saying all the people who came before  
3           weren't working hard and doing a good job, but as the  
4           dynamic of our district shifts, as the student  
5           population shifts, as we deal with different barriers  
6           and things that are facing us now that weren't facing  
7           the district 10 years ago, there are a lot of things  
8           for us to consider. But the big thing is in-house  
9           and the work we're doing that. I want Ms. Cook to  
10          speak to that for us.

11           MS. COOK: One of the things that I think that  
12          we have learned to embrace is the process itself. We  
13          have found through working with the Department and  
14          all of the different things that they have brought  
15          for us is that our biggest learning as adults is  
16          occurring in the process of digging in and examining  
17          where we are and how we got there. And as we've done  
18          that there have been things that have come to light.  
19          We have found that there were gaps in our curriculum  
20          that we were not aware of because prior to that, the  
21          student population was such that they just moved  
22          right past those gaps; they went on and they made  
23          those scores and things went ahead. We've had a lot  
24          of shift in personnel, and in that shift in personnel  
25          we have not always been able to get back in and shore

1 up some of those. We have completely started fresh.  
2 We have taken where we were; we've looked at what was  
3 working; we've kept that and we're rebuilding from  
4 that, from the kindergarten up. And that, I think,  
5 is one of the most pivotal pieces that we are truly  
6 spending that time together. We have instructional  
7 facilitators that -- many of them that are new to the  
8 positions where they are, and we're looking at the  
9 data; we're trying to find out what has worked; we're  
10 keeping those pieces and we're finding out the areas  
11 where our students have lagged, and we're filling  
12 those things in so that we can make that change.  
13 It's going to take time. We didn't get here where we  
14 had -- in one or two years. Our students, as she  
15 said, didn't show up in 9th grade just because  
16 suddenly between 6th grade and 9th grade they fell  
17 off the wagon somewhere; this has been something that  
18 they've missed some standard things that were pivotal  
19 early on. And we're seeing that now and we're not  
20 letting those kids move forward. We're digging in  
21 with the extra tutoring, with the extra intervention.  
22 We've built in interventionists into every building.  
23 There are two to three interventionists in at every  
24 school now that are working to help that, so -- and  
25 our teachers -- all of our teachers are taking on

1 that role of intervention. We've said to them, "You  
2 are the first front for these kids. You are that  
3 first good solid education. But when your students,  
4 as we look at our data, aren't where they need to be"  
5 -- we've built in time from kindergarten through 12th  
6 grade for them to go back and re-teach the skills  
7 that certain groups within their classrooms are not  
8 getting. Because we can't just teach and move  
9 forward. That's where the pre- and post-assessments,  
10 our common assessments are really helping us because  
11 we're able to track what children know what and what  
12 are the exact skills that they are missing so we can  
13 go back and in small group time re-teach those skills  
14 so that they don't move out of a grade missing those  
15 skills. And we're just in the throes of being able  
16 to say that we are really, truly doing that this  
17 year. And so I think we're going to see good  
18 progress, but it is not going to happen this year  
19 only.

20 SUPT. ATWILL: Ms. Barnes, I want you to know  
21 they're killing me with all these extra people, as  
22 superintendent. The interventionists, I had to put  
23 my money where my mouth was and if I wanted the  
24 students to improve -- you know -- we had 14.3%  
25 special ed. students were over-identified. But then,

1           again, we've got those students who are right on --  
2           who are right above that academically that need that  
3           extra scaffolding. So the interventionists, for me  
4           to hire somebody who doesn't have a teacher --  
5           they're not a teacher of record or have a class  
6           roster is difficult, as superintendent, because it's  
7           a money thing. But if you really want the children  
8           to achieve and arrive at high -- I know we're talking  
9           about high school, but we have to solve the problem  
10          before we get there.

11                 MS. BARNES: Thank you, Mr. Atwill. I -- you  
12                 know -- and, of course, I know I had to address the  
13                 elephant in the room.

14                 MS. SPEARS: Sure.

15                 MS. BARNES: But, you know, frankly, I was  
16                 grappling with my verbiage --

17                 MS. SPEARS: Sure.

18                 MS. BARNES: -- because I almost said I hear the  
19                 talk but will you --

20                 MS. SPEARS: Right.

21                 MS. BARNES: -- please show me the walk. That's  
22                 actually what I was about to say, so I was glad to  
23                 hear what you just said. You know, I've been  
24                 reviewing the reports and looking at the fact that it  
25                 has been a gradual thing. And so I do -- I recognize

1 that you don't get in a rut overnight, but I also  
2 recognize the urgency --

3 MS. SPEARS: Absolutely.

4 MS. BARNES: -- you know, with the children and  
5 the supports that are needed, you know, for the  
6 instructional personnel working with them. So, you  
7 know, I'm glad to hear the comprehensive approach.  
8 And I guess my number one thing is however we move  
9 forward and you move forward just make sure that we  
10 are implementing with fidelity --

11 MS. SPEARS: Absolutely.

12 MS. BARNES: -- and, as you have already stated,  
13 keep the main thing the main thing.

14 SUPT. ATWILL: That's right.

15 MS. BARNES: Because you can have a lot of  
16 people but if you get -- you know -- and I understand  
17 why we have the people. So I'm just saying I need us  
18 to find that turning point --

19 MS. COOK: We need that, too.

20 MS. BARNES: I know.

21 SUPT. ATWILL: And I believe -- Ms. Barnes, I  
22 believe we're actually at that turning point with the  
23 guides that the Department has given us through Dr.  
24 Toney and his crew, Dr. Wilde. I mean, we're going  
25 to be -- we're going to be back in front of you

1 again. But eventually, we're going to get to where  
2 we don't see much of you guys -- and we're at that  
3 turning point right now. If you look at our -- I  
4 didn't get to talk about our scores, especially with  
5 the PARCC and all. We have stopped the blood-  
6 letting; it's leveled off. We've shored up where we  
7 have our problems now at the high school, but we're  
8 fixing the high school from the bottom up.

9 MS. COOK: If I may, I also want to add to that,  
10 Ms. Barnes, that there are -- I think it's a whole  
11 group of things that are coming together. It's not  
12 just the academics. That is our priority; that  
13 remains our main priority. But for us, we decided  
14 that our kids were lagging and we couldn't let them  
15 wallow in that lag. We had to continue to build that  
16 hope and growth in them around the whole person, so  
17 helping them to thrive in things like football and  
18 band and choir and drama and bringing those things  
19 like student voice in; helping every teacher to  
20 understand that all adults, every single adult in our  
21 district is a learner and that they're all continuing  
22 to move forward and that we're growing together as a  
23 system. I think all of that was important because  
24 we're looking at multiple measures on where we're  
25 succeeding. We can't look at just the scores. Now

1 we are continuing to always look at the scores;  
2 that's our baseline and we know that's what gets us  
3 here. But we have to look at a lot of other things,  
4 as well, and we didn't want to put all those things  
5 on hold because of the academic issues. We felt like  
6 if we don't move that forward then we're going to  
7 lose our culture, we're going to lose our  
8 relationships, and we're going to lose our  
9 commitment. So we have been working these things  
10 simultaneously because we feel like it's important  
11 for our students to want to be in our district, for  
12 our parents to want to be there, for our teachers to  
13 want to be there and to work there. And so there's  
14 sort of a wraparound approach to all of that.

15 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

17 MS. SMITH: Okay. Well, I just want to know  
18 real quick, Dr. Toney, when he started off, he said  
19 that the district has been nothing but enthusiastic  
20 with recommendations. And that was evident today as  
21 far as your enthusiasm presenting about your school  
22 and the pride that you have in your school. I have  
23 some specific questions. I mean, you've said all the  
24 right words for me as far as alignment and formative  
25 assessment and professional learning communities,

1 data literacy. What specifically I want to talk to  
2 you about, have you guys made a curriculum change in  
3 math? I know you said that you did alignment and  
4 that you found gaps. So was there a change in  
5 curriculum in some of those areas, specifically math  
6 because that was an area that was --

7 MS. COOK: At the lower grades we are using TLI.  
8 But what we were finding is that as we did that we  
9 had built units and our teachers were teaching a unit  
10 -- they would get to the end of a unit and it didn't  
11 matter how many students had succeeded, they moved to  
12 the next. And what we're doing to revamp is breaking  
13 them down into smaller unit, smaller chunks that are  
14 more measureable, where we can measure in shorter  
15 periods of time. And then as we look at that and  
16 someone doesn't meet a goal we're re-teaching right  
17 then, rather than moving forward. And that's where a  
18 lot of our gap came from as well at the primary and  
19 elementary grades. Because so many times you think,  
20 well, I taught that. What you have taught and what  
21 the children have learned are two different things  
22 and we have to get our mindset around the fact that  
23 just because you've taught something -- and if it was  
24 a six-week unit, that's too long. You can't wait six  
25 weeks with our children to find out where those

1 children are and how many of them know that. We need  
2 to do two- and three-week increments, smaller times  
3 to go in so that we can actually dig back into within  
4 that two weeks. As we do the pre-assessment, we  
5 already know now what is -- what are the skills that  
6 they're going to struggle with, and we can do some  
7 frontloading right there so that it makes it a little  
8 bit easier as they move forward. So it's not as much  
9 a shift in what we're teaching, but how on the math  
10 end.

11 MS. SMITH: Okay. So specifically what kind of  
12 instructional resources are teachers being able to  
13 use in the classroom? I realize you're probably  
14 using TLI to do your pacing guide for instruction in  
15 math. So what type of instructional resources are we  
16 using to support our teachers K-12?

17 MS. SPEARS: Okay. I'll speak to the high  
18 school and we'll let her come back to the elementary  
19 piece. But with respect to support in the high  
20 school, I'm going to answer your first question.  
21 Yes, there has been some realignment and specifically  
22 with Common Core State Standards, as we move -- we  
23 moved ahead of the shift of state requirement around  
24 that and realigned our offering order. But then,  
25 specifically, as we've transitioned to problem-based

1 learning, in Algebra 1 and Algebra 2 and the upper  
2 level math -- the project-based learning works really  
3 well actually in geometry. There's had to be a shift  
4 in the way that the curriculum is prepared as they  
5 build projects, as they build problems, and it has  
6 been a work in progress. And thinking about  
7 formative assessment, they do that within those  
8 projects, within those pieces; there are benchmarks.  
9 And what happens is you start with a pre-assessment  
10 -- and this just happened to our geometry teacher  
11 with one of the projects last semester -- he thought  
12 going into it that the students would have -- should  
13 have, actually, a certain bank of knowledge. They  
14 didn't. Had he launched into the project the  
15 students would have failed miserably. So he had to  
16 take time to create a mini project right there to  
17 address that need. So that support, we're doing  
18 that; it comes within their collaboration, their  
19 professional learning time around content, and then  
20 the instructional support with the facilitator at the  
21 school. So on the high school level, as we've  
22 shifted to that project and problem based approach,  
23 it's brought with it a natural realignment of those  
24 resources. But then laying in those common  
25 assessments, those formative assessments to drive the

1 instruction gives even a clearer picture on that  
2 process. And to be transparent, this is our first  
3 year, coming back to you, Ms. Barnes, to really  
4 employ -- consistently employ with fidelity formative  
5 assessment that's measurable quarter-by-quarter,  
6 semester-by-semester. So I hope that answers that.

7 MS. SMITH: It did. And I did see in your plan  
8 where you talked about trying to realign like  
9 schedules for collaboration for your teachers.

10 MS. SPEARS: Yes. Yes.

11 MS. COOK: Yes.

12 MS. SMITH: And so I want to encourage you to  
13 continue to do that, to support them as -- if they're  
14 not -- if they don't have some type of scope and  
15 sequence --

16 MS. SPEARS: Right.

17 MS. SMITH: -- on how they're addressing their  
18 math skills, and it's kind of based on pulling  
19 lessons together --

20 MS. SPEARS: That's right.

21 MS. SMITH: -- without a -- I mean, that's a  
22 huge, huge piece. And, you know, being a master  
23 teacher and having to be responsible for kind of  
24 pulling all that together, that's your master  
25 teachers. And then when you have teachers who are

1 brand-new --

2 MS. SPEARS: That's right.

3 MS. SMITH: -- or you have teachers who are  
4 struggling, without something for them to -- I'm not  
5 saying that they have to follow a --

6 MS. COOK: No.

7 MS. SPEARS: Right.

8 MS. COOK: I totally understand.

9 MS. SMITH: That's not what I'm saying. But  
10 just I want to encourage you to make sure that in  
11 that level not only are you developing your  
12 leadership PLC, because it sounds like you're doing a  
13 great job there, but watch for that teacher  
14 professional learning community that's occurring and  
15 that data literacy that's going on with them, that  
16 they're knowing how to look at their formative  
17 assessments to move forward.

18 MS. SPEARS: And that is a key component on the  
19 high school level, too. And learning -- learning  
20 that process, but coming out of those, a solid  
21 mapping of their projects, which only -- not only  
22 involves quarter-by-quarter project-by-project, but  
23 let's reflect on this and see what happened and what  
24 didn't. And they're even working within that to  
25 analyze data and to bounce off of one another in that

1 critical fringe most of looking at student work,  
2 bringing student work to the table and saying, "Are  
3 we meeting expectations of these standards?" Looking  
4 at student work is not about the student work, but  
5 about the teacher expectation around the student  
6 work. And so we've seen a lot of growth with  
7 teachers. But, again, this year with fidelity is our  
8 year -- we've begun to implement and really see shift  
9 in change in that practice.

10 MS. SMITH: Thank you for your response, and I  
11 appreciate your enthusiasm. You made me want to jump  
12 up and go to school. So, thank you for that.

13 MS. SPEARS: You're welcome. Okay. Thank you.

14 MS. COOK: And just as a follow-up to what you  
15 asked originally about the math support K-12, they  
16 are getting -- they have built in time within their  
17 day where they are working together across teams of  
18 math teachers, across teams of literacy. So we've  
19 actually built that time in so they have that time to  
20 support. There's an instructional facilitator for  
21 each of those in each building. We also are working  
22 closely with our co-op; they're doing the CGI math  
23 and ESM, the MDC. We're giving them those scaffolds  
24 and supports, as well, and giving them time to learn  
25 together and practice that craft in the buildings.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions  
2 or comments?

3 Having visited the school district and spent  
4 some time with them, Ms. Barnes, I can tell you  
5 they're walking as well as talking. I saw every bit  
6 of this in play, in action. So I am encouraged and I  
7 hope you get to tell your story in a lot more places.

8 MS. SPEARS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You did a great job today,  
10 so I hope you get to tell it more and more.

11 SUPT. ATWILL: We appreciate it. We're a little  
12 long-winded, so whoever listens is going to have to  
13 have some time.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: People who really love  
15 education get excited, like Ms. Smith does. We get  
16 excited about it. During your presentation, Ms.  
17 Pfeffer was over there looking at me, going --

18 SUPT. ATWILL: Well, I was going to tell Ms.  
19 Barnes if she wants -- if any of you want, when Ms.  
20 Pfeffer comes, y'all can come too.

21 MS. COOK: That's right. Please do.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. All right.  
23 Ms. Davis, do you have any remaining issues?

24 MS. DAVIS: No.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then I will accept a

1 motion.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: I make a motion to take no  
3 action.

4 MS. PFEFFER: Second.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by  
6 Dr. Saunders and seconded by Ms. Pfeffer to take no  
7 action. Any discussion?

8 MS. BARNES: I don't have discussion but I do  
9 want to reiterate -- and I appreciate the fact that  
10 you are affirming, Ms. Coffman, that they are in fact  
11 walking the talk today. I just want to make sure  
12 that the district understands that it's okay to say I  
13 need some help with this. I know that we are there;  
14 I know you have other people there. But when you  
15 begin to see -- or if you begin to see that something  
16 that you have employed is not fitting in the right  
17 spot, I'm just imploring today that you stop, just as  
18 you have with not stretching those lessons all the  
19 way out and making it smaller, check-in times,  
20 because this is -- you know -- this is critical not  
21 only for the children involved but the community. I  
22 know you know the far-reaching effects of it. So I'm  
23 just -- I want you to know that I am sincerely  
24 encouraged today because I did not know how I was  
25 going to feel prior to. Thank you.

1 MS. SPEARS: Thank you.

2 SUPT. ATWILL: I appreciate that. We own where  
3 we are. We're not afraid of ideas, no matter where  
4 they come from. We're not afraid to cut something  
5 off when it's no longer necessary or doesn't fit our  
6 children.

7 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

8 MS. PFEFFER: Can I make a comment too? I just  
9 wanted -- and this is for Dr. Toney and our school  
10 improvement people here -- that as you're working to  
11 assist and support this district -- I'm going to  
12 speak for my unit -- if there's some human support  
13 that I can lend from my unit, you know, to come and  
14 work with you, if you identify specific areas, I  
15 would be happy to do that. And I think that your  
16 comments about this district just really illustrate  
17 that when they're fully committed to making it work  
18 --

19 DR. TONEY: I'm leaving at 4:30 in the morning  
20 on March 8th. You want to go?

21 MS. PFEFFER: I'll find somebody. Yeah. Yeah.  
22 But seriously, I mean, I think that's the  
23 responsibility of all of us too that, you know, the  
24 School Improvement Unit and district, if there are  
25 specialized -- that's why we have people specializing

1 in areas. So I think it's a good opportunity for all  
2 of us.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. We have a  
4 motion and a second to take no action at this time.  
5 All those in favor of the motion?

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? The motion  
8 has passed. Congratulations.

9 SUPT. ATWILL: Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: As they're taking a moment  
11 to write in their reason, I will just add that, to  
12 kind of sum up what I saw during my visit, is you're  
13 changing the culture of your school at the same time  
14 that you're shoring up all of those systems. And now  
15 as you're going forward it's about that fine-tuning  
16 that has to happen to make it operate and produce the  
17 results that you are expecting. And so I think in  
18 our conversations with -- Ms. Spears and I had that  
19 conversation, is over time I'm going to expect that  
20 your curriculum become more and more rigorous.

21 MS. SPEARS: Right.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But right now it's right  
23 where it has to be for right now --

24 MS. SPEARS: That's right.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- but it's not where it's

1 going to be in a couple of years.

2 MS. SPEARS: Right.

3 SUPT. ATWILL: Well, yeah, and I appreciate  
4 that. And along with what Ms. Pfeffer said,  
5 especially with the TESS model, this is a situation  
6 where we can find out the true, honest, down to the  
7 grit effectiveness of that being implemented.

8 DR. GOTCHER: I would agree.

9 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

10 MS. SMITH: For such an enthusiastic  
11 presentation you sure are quiet now.

12 SUPT. ATWILL: I have to be quiet when they tell  
13 me to.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Oh, one thing I did want  
15 to make public is -- and thank you for waking me up  
16 to my note -- Mr. Atwill, will you just speak briefly  
17 about your relationship with your local charter  
18 school?

19 SUPT. ATWILL: Blytheville has a KIPP public --  
20 open-enrollment public charter school. Which part do  
21 you want me to tell? I'm really happy because they  
22 just deposited \$800,000 in my checking account.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Well, I think it's  
24 admirable the relationship that the two schools have  
25 serving the public.

1 SUPT. ATWILL: Scott Shirey and I have had --  
2 and Maisie Wright, who's the principal at the KIPP  
3 Blytheville, we've had conversations and it's about  
4 serving children. We've got to get past ourselves as  
5 adults sometimes to see what's in the best interest  
6 of the child. It's very -- those of you who are  
7 school folks know it's very hard to sell a school  
8 building because they're usually only good for school  
9 buildings. And for us to be able to sell that and it  
10 still -- that school has been in the community since  
11 the early 60s and they found a way to repurpose it  
12 and use it to serve children in Blytheville. Yes, I  
13 would like those children back in Blytheville School  
14 District; we're working on that. But serving the  
15 children of Blytheville is what's the most important  
16 because that's the only way our community is going to  
17 be better. So we work hard to serve the children and  
18 I know KIPP does too.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. That's how you  
20 keep the people living in Blytheville.

21 SUPT. ATWILL: That's right.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Barnes.

23 MS. BARNES: I voted in favor of the motion to  
24 take no action. Admittedly, I have some anxiety but  
25 I do believe that the statements today warrant the

1 opportunity to provide time to address the systemic  
2 issues that bring you before us. And I will be  
3 eagerly looking forward to our next conversations.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

5 DR. GOTCHER: I feel strongly that the  
6 implementation of the leadership teams and that shift  
7 from managers to instructional leaders, leveraging  
8 those principals to have that time, are two of the  
9 most powerful components towards seeing this  
10 designation of Priority status go away. Well done.

11 SUPT. ATWILL: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

13 MR. LESTER: I'm going to have to start wearing  
14 my glasses every time because I wrote under Pfeffer  
15 and had to cut and paste right quick. So, sorry, Ms.  
16 Pfeffer.

17 MS. PFEFER: I didn't know who that was but it  
18 sounded really good and I agree with it.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We could do some phonics  
20 work with you.

21 MR. LESTER: Exactly. Based upon -- I did vote  
22 for the motion. Based upon the report from the  
23 School Improvement Unit and the presentation, I feel  
24 the charter is on the right track for improvement. I  
25 do like the focus on the systems approach and I am

1 impressed with the number of students that have been  
2 accepted to your colleges.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

4 MS. LIWO: I voted for. I think the charter has  
5 taken a critical look at itself and is implementing  
6 carefully considered plans to achieve success with  
7 student performance.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

9 MS. PFEFFER: In favor of the motion. I believe  
10 the district is fully engaged in their improvement  
11 process and partnership with the Department of Ed.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

13 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion. I believe  
14 the district is enthusiastic and working hard to  
15 continue to improve.

16 SUPT. ATWILL: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor. The district  
19 is open to new ideas and working with the School  
20 Improvement Unit.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

22 MS. SMITH: The district showed evidence of  
23 collaboration with ADE. I appreciate the enthusiasm  
24 in the presentation and the initiatives they have in  
25 place.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations. And  
2 please tell everybody else that coming before the  
3 Charter Panel can just be a great opportunity to tell  
4 your stories.

5 SUPT. ATWILL: That's right. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The wonderful thing about  
7 having a nice well-written story is it helps you  
8 moving forward to know -- as Ms. Spears said, you  
9 know what you're doing well so you keep doing that  
10 and you realize what you're not doing so well that  
11 you can improve or change. And that's the  
12 articulation we hope for every school --

13 SUPT. ATWILL: Sure.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- because that's how we  
15 all move forward.

16 SUPT. ATWILL: And this process that we're doing  
17 has changed me as a superintendent, because when I  
18 was a principal -- and now I have to reflect back on  
19 did I really do all that I could back when I was a  
20 principal and now I can see those things by what  
21 we're finding, by looking at ourselves.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's just really a good  
23 opportunity for that kind of peer review. It is.  
24 Thank you for coming today. Thank you.

25 Break? 10 minutes.

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(BREAK: 1:50-2:00 P.M.)

A-4: DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PRIORITY STATUS  
HEARING AND REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT: OSCEOLA STEM ACADEMY

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, you're  
recognized for action item 4.

MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. District  
Conversion Public Charter School Priority Status  
Hearing and Request for Amendment: Osceola STEM  
Academy.

The State Board of Education approved the  
application for Osceola STEM Academy on January 9,  
2012. The charter is approved to serve students in  
grades 5-8 with a maximum enrollment of 450.  
Representatives of the Osceola STEM Academy are  
appearing before the Charter Authorizing Panel to  
request an amendment to their charter. Also, the  
Charter Authorizing Panel has required the  
representatives of Osceola STEM Academy to appear for  
a hearing pursuant to Arkansas Code Annotated 6-23-  
105 to discuss academic performance. Representatives  
of the charter agreed to combine the two hearings and  
approved combining the hearing procedures to be  
followed. Possible actions to be taken by the  
Charter Authorizing Panel include approving or  
denying the amendment request, but due to its

1 Priority status possible actions include  
2 modification, probation, and/or revocation of the  
3 charter.

4 Do you all need Ms. Davis to repeat on the  
5 hearing procedures for this, since it's a combined  
6 hearing?

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. We'll have ADE for  
8 20 minutes, charter for 20, opposition for 20, and  
9 charter rebuttal for 5?

10 MS. BOYD: That's correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. If all  
12 representatives from Osceola STEM Academy and anyone  
13 speaking in opposition and all ADE staff will stand  
14 and raise your right hand; do you swear or affirm  
15 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the  
16 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

17 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, you're  
19 recognized.

20 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Osceola  
21 STEM Academy was first authorized by the State Board  
22 of Education to operate in January 2012, to serve  
23 grades 5-8. Recently, the school has been classified  
24 as a Priority school. The contract is scheduled to  
25 expire in June of 2017.

1           In my visits to the campus and conversations  
2 with the school leadership, I have noticed that the  
3 school has recently come under the leadership of a  
4 new principal, Ms. Christel Smith. Under the  
5 direction of Ms. Smith, the school seems to be  
6 building a stronger sense of community and initiating  
7 a drive to increase academic rigor.

8           I'll defer the rest of my time to Dr. Toney.

9           DR. TONEY: I've sworn more today than I have in  
10 six, seven years. As I said earlier, when we started  
11 the Blytheville presentation, a lot of what I'm going  
12 to say in this presentation will be redundant. As a  
13 matter of record, this is the first year that I have  
14 been assigned to the Osceola schools. With  
15 Blytheville, I've been three -- two or three years,  
16 so some of my knowledge is not quite as deep with  
17 Osceola. But with the Osceola STEM school we also  
18 serve the Osceola High School. As a matter of -- as  
19 an example of how the district has bought into that  
20 district-wide K-12 engagement -- as a matter of fact  
21 and compliment, I've been to meetings at the high  
22 school and the middle school, sometimes jointly. And  
23 just as an example, to my knowledge I don't think  
24 that Mr. Cox, the superintendent, has missed one of  
25 those meetings. That's not the case in some places.

1           Some places we have to go track down the  
2           superintendent. But I think that's an example of how  
3           this district works together and communicates.  
4           They'll probably talk to you about a communication  
5           model that they've built in that I think adds to  
6           that. So I think that is a telling sign that the  
7           Osceola Schools have bought into the school  
8           improvement process. I know we're here talking  
9           specifically about the STEM school, which is  
10          basically the middle school, and the experiences I've  
11          had with them. Their leadership team meetings are  
12          lively, they are focused, and they have all the  
13          representatives that they need at the different  
14          levels of the district so that decisions can be made  
15          based on the student data.

16                 One example -- another example -- I know this is  
17          not the STEM school, but recently, May of last year  
18          maybe, the high school moved off of the academic  
19          distress list. I think that's just another example  
20          of this district moving in the right direction and  
21          they are fully engaged and enthusiastic. I'm not  
22          going to say that they're going to put on a show like  
23          Teryn just did, but they are enthusiastic about their  
24          growth.

25                         CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Toney. Ms.

1 Boyd, if you'll recognize the school.

2 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. To start off  
3 the presentation for Osceola STEM Academy we have the  
4 principal, Christel Smith.

5 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Boyd. Good  
6 afternoon. I'm Christel Smith and I'm the principal  
7 at Osceola STEM Academy and I'm excited to be here.  
8 I can stand before you and tell you a lot of things  
9 that we have similarity to Blytheville in terms of  
10 teacher retention, the Delta, low socioeconomic. I  
11 can go on and on. We're very similar but my plan  
12 today -- and you'll hear me talk about some of the  
13 things that we're doing. But my plan today is to  
14 talk about and tell our story where we are now and  
15 where we're headed.

16 When the charter, STEM charter came about it was  
17 -- at that time our district did a reconfiguration of  
18 the whole district. We combined grades 5-8, so my  
19 campus serves all 5-8. We feel like that was very  
20 essential to our students and their academic success  
21 that all our students be exposed to the STEM  
22 components. So we feel like at this point, even  
23 though I -- this is my second year as a principal --  
24 I still feel like the foundation was there when I  
25 became the leader.

1 I want to talk about the very important  
2 components of my campus, and that is the project  
3 based learning opportunities. In the classroom not  
4 only do we have classroom and our atmosphere is set  
5 up to be able to have this type environment, but we  
6 have provided professional development for our adult  
7 learners through PLCs. We've done it through PD  
8 before the year started. We gave them not only the  
9 training but the support and resources that they  
10 needed.

11 Our campus and our classrooms are all set-up for  
12 cooperative learning across the curriculum or across  
13 the content. One of the things we do is we encourage  
14 our students to do a lot of small group discussion.  
15 We've found that a lot of our kids -- we feel like  
16 process was an issue. They get to the part where  
17 they're struggling and we tend to instead of let them  
18 go through the struggle and process and get it, we  
19 tend to help them out a little bit more than they  
20 need to be helped out. So small group discussion,  
21 academic discussion was very important.

22 Another thing that the district has done  
23 district-wide and also as part -- STEM is a part,  
24 that is -- we have implemented Engage New York across  
25 the district, the curriculum. Prior to this year we

1 didn't have any type of alignment. I'm the bridging  
2 school for high school and I'm the bridging school  
3 for -- I'm in between high school and elementary.  
4 Before I took this job I had the pleasure to be  
5 elementary assistant principal, so I kind of knew  
6 what was going on in there. So I'm the bridging  
7 school and one of the things we did, we sat down  
8 during the summer as a district and we aligned the  
9 district from the elementary to high school. One of  
10 the things we were finding, even our kids that were  
11 performing which were our pre-AP students and also  
12 students who were not in pre-AP, was they weren't  
13 being exposed to novels that they needed to be  
14 exposed to for AP, which is high school level; they  
15 weren't being exposed to vocabulary content -- and  
16 I'll talk a little bit more about that when I get  
17 into literacy. So we thought it was very important  
18 that we align the district, so we're excited about  
19 that.

20 Another thing is we made sure that we looked at,  
21 -- on my campus, in particular, because we're a STEM  
22 school -- we looked at our lessons, made sure our  
23 lessons are standard-based, our activities are  
24 standard-based, and we wanted to make sure that the  
25 STEM components were included. And we wanted to make

1           sure that we integrated the STEM components across.  
2           So one of the things that we do a lot on campus is we  
3           plan and collaborate math and science. So I'll give  
4           you an example: for instance, if we're doing geometry  
5           in the math class, we make sure in our other  
6           classrooms -- like our GTT, which is our robotics  
7           class, we make sure that that teacher collaboratively  
8           plans with the math teacher and they can get it in  
9           both places.

10           Another thing I did on campus was, because I  
11           felt like over the years we'd shown some growth but  
12           we're like a rollercoaster, we're back and forth. I  
13           increased the academic instructional time. I  
14           restructured the block schedule that was already in  
15           effect. With the waivers -- we had waivers with this  
16           charter that allowed us to be able to allow a teacher  
17           that is strong in the content but maybe not certified  
18           in that grade level to be able to teacher. I used my  
19           instructional facilitators that were academically  
20           strong in literacy and also in math to take some math  
21           and literacy classes; also, to do some intervention.  
22           So we're thankful for that waiver as well.

23           Another thing we do is we're doing some of the  
24           things that Blytheville does, as well. When I became  
25           the principal me and my leadership team, which were

1 part of Arkansas Leadership Academy -- I'm also part  
2 of the Master Principal Academy, as well -- what we  
3 did was we decided that we wanted to do a gap  
4 analysis. I was new to the campus. I wanted to know  
5 -- because one of the things I seen, it was a trend  
6 from the time they came to STEM, 5th grade, up to 8th  
7 grade. We seen little growth but it was a  
8 rollercoaster. When I was talking to the principal  
9 that was there and talking to teachers, everybody was  
10 telling me that our kids, you know, "They're not on  
11 grade level. They can't read." Nobody could really  
12 tell me what was the problem. So we did a gap  
13 analysis and we decided to put in some assessment  
14 pieces that would give us more information. One of  
15 the things we found was it wasn't so much that our  
16 kids couldn't read, because when you have them read  
17 some of them can read fluently. And -- but when you  
18 assess them, they're below grade level. So one of  
19 the things we found that over 70% grades 5-8 were --  
20 had comprehension issues. So what we did, we decided  
21 to not blame elementary. We decided we're going to  
22 assess right where they were and we put in assessment  
23 pieces. For 5th and 6th grade what we did was we  
24 work with DIBELS. We assess them in shorter  
25 increments of time. We do not wait our six weeks'

1 units; we did it two to three weeks. We also allowed  
2 the students to be able to track themselves in their  
3 growth and we had -- we implemented growth  
4 conversations. I feel like my students didn't really  
5 know when you say, "you're not on grade level" what  
6 that meant. So when we started having these growth  
7 conversations and we're saying these things to these  
8 children, that, you know, "you're one or two grades  
9 behind," you know, "let's talk about that" -- and  
10 we're doing these fluency checks and we're talking  
11 about -- and then we put in a vocabulary piece, which  
12 is -- and I'll talk a little bit more about it when I  
13 start talking about our tier interventions, as well  
14 -- a vocabulary piece, because we felt like a lot of  
15 what they were reading in these complex texts, they  
16 had not been exposed to those type of words of  
17 vocabulary. And I'll go more into that when I start  
18 talking about literacy, but I wanted to share with  
19 y'all some of the things that we did and what when we  
20 assessed we found that through our gap analysis were  
21 the issues.

22 So then we looked at the instruction because  
23 when we start thinking about 80%, 85% of our kids --  
24 and some of them had passing grades -- when we  
25 started looking at that and seeing that they're still

1 not mastering standards, they're not at grade level,  
2 we figured out that that was a Tier 1. Tier 1; that  
3 was a core instruction issue. So we looked at the  
4 adult learners. We talked about things that we need  
5 to do within the core instruction, which everybody  
6 gets Tier 1. And then we will work down to get to  
7 our Tier 2 and our Tier 3 intervention in our  
8 students. So what we did was we're part of -- we  
9 have partnered with Word Generation. They're our  
10 consultant across the district. We also share  
11 consultants, meaning the consulting that works with  
12 me for literacy also works with elementary; she also  
13 works with high school. So we had that vertical  
14 alignment also with our consultants. My math  
15 consultant does not work with any other building.  
16 But what we did was we adopted the MSLI, which is  
17 part of the Generation Ready approach -- okay -- and  
18 it's research based and it's best practice. We  
19 adopted -- for literacy we adopted the vocabulary  
20 piece, which is Word Generation. And I'll give you  
21 an example what it is, if you've never heard of it.  
22 Word Generation is any week we have five days not  
23 only do they have a reading passage there, but they  
24 have focus words. We use those words in every class  
25 for a whole week, whether it's in the math classroom,

1           whether it's in literacy, whether it's in science or  
2           social studies. They have to -- and we use it within  
3           the context of that content. So we did that to try  
4           to expose -- and I'll tell you about the assessment  
5           piece of that and our growth in that, as well -- we  
6           did that to try to expose our kids to different  
7           vocabulary or different language. Because we felt  
8           like a lot of our kids -- not giving them an excuse,  
9           but in their culture they only hear very limited  
10          vocabulary.

11                    Another thing we did was we implemented -- it's  
12           called Text Diet and the teachers start it off and  
13           then the students end up. They tally how much text  
14           is read. And we do that -- every once-in-awhile we  
15           look at the data to see how much text our students  
16           are exposed to weekly. Another piece of that is, and  
17           which has been huge -- and I'm going to talk a lot  
18           more about that -- is we implemented the strategy of  
19           reciprocal reading. It's a strategy and what it is  
20           it is part of the teacher instruction, it is part of  
21           cooperative learning; the teacher is the facilitator  
22           but the kids do it all. They get in groups, they  
23           read the passage; the kids have to -- you have a  
24           clarify/summarizer; you have a reader. Okay. And  
25           what they do is they all take a role and the teacher

1 structures it, and they have this academic  
2 discussion. They create their own questions. We  
3 felt like that would really build comprehension. It  
4 was a strategy that we did across all core subjects.  
5 We do it in math, literacy; we do it social studies  
6 and science. They started doing this before I became  
7 the principal, which was 13-14, and they seen growth.  
8 We went into full implementation, meaning we went to  
9 Word Generation, we went to Text Diet, we went to  
10 growth conversations this school year. And when I  
11 show the data -- in a few minutes I'll be talking  
12 more about that -- what we do is we assess in the  
13 fall, we assess in winter, and then we have an  
14 assessment in the spring. But throughout these  
15 things we also do a lot of what Blytheville do; any  
16 unit -- we use MBC strategies, we use LBC strategies.  
17 What we do is we assess in shorter increments. A lot  
18 of people say, "Man, that's a lot of testing." It's  
19 how you present it, because testing does not have to  
20 be a lot of testing. But what we do is we take -- we  
21 assess our kids in shorter increments and what we do  
22 is we take the data -- every PLC is data-driven. Any  
23 time we implement something or we decide whether we  
24 need to change something or continue going down the  
25 road, we look at data to support our decisions. But

1           what we do is we look at the students and through our  
2           gap analysis we found out that a lot of our students  
3           were missing -- it wasn't that they couldn't master  
4           the entire standard; they were missing those pre-  
5           requisition skills. And so what we did, we put in  
6           place, particularly for math, we put in place a time  
7           where we individualized and we did centers and they  
8           went to their appropriate skill level center to try  
9           to address some of those areas.

10           Okay. When you look at the strategies that we  
11           -- these strategies that we implemented for  
12           instruction, we started looking at several assessment  
13           for literacy. We looked at DRP. We looked at DRP  
14           assessment, and what we did was we looked at the  
15           national average growth. And on the chart up there  
16           when it says 6th, 7th and 8th grade, those are the  
17           national average growth. And we only looked at us  
18           from the fall until winter and we've already exceeded  
19           the national yearly -- that's for a year growth,  
20           except for 7th grade. What we did, we sat down also  
21           as a leadership team and tried to -- "Well, what do  
22           you think might've happened in 7th grade?" So we're  
23           already analyzing that and looking at that before our  
24           spring assessment. But we'll also have a spring  
25           assessment. But that's what we did; we look at our

1 data and then we make decisions, do we need to  
2 continue down this road with this strategy, do we  
3 need to go back and look, do we need to go in, do we  
4 need a model -- and we do lots of modeling. We try  
5 our best to support our teachers any way possible.

6 Math -- for math we use TLI as an assessment for  
7 our teachers to use for progress monitoring. We look  
8 at mastery of standards strictly for TLI, what  
9 student is mastering standards, what student is not.  
10 We set them up in groups and we do intervention for  
11 TLI assessment. But the MAP assessment, which is  
12 NWEA MAP assessment, we actually use that for growth.  
13 On the MAP assessment across -- and math is a high-  
14 concern area for us -- we grew tremendously from fall  
15 to winter. I think it's because -- well, I know it's  
16 because -- what we did, we tried to implement --  
17 because we wanted our students to do more; process  
18 was the issue, we thought, with math. We have our  
19 students deconstruct the standards them-self. They  
20 do item task analysis. So what they do is they take  
21 a math problem and they have to analyze that math  
22 problem and tell every mathematic procedure or step  
23 that you have to do to be able to solve that problem.  
24 That has been successful for us, particularly when  
25 they work as a group and you start to hear the

1 conversation. At the time this is going on, the  
2 teacher is walking around and she's facilitating and  
3 she's listening. She pulls students for growth  
4 conversations during this time. She also -- if she  
5 feels like they're struggling she will probe them.  
6 But we're really trying to have our students not only  
7 feel like they're accountable for their own learning,  
8 but also we want them to go through the struggle some  
9 because we feel like that is really important to  
10 grasp some of these standards. Okay.

11 Literacy -- like I said before, with literacy  
12 we've seen growth, 50% or higher in all our grades.  
13 We do have a concern because for reciprocal reading,  
14 which is an awesome strategy to use, we don't use it  
15 for 5th grade; we only use it for 6th, 7th and 8th  
16 grade. We're thinking about something we need to put  
17 in place. We did try some things with 5th grade. We  
18 done Running Records this year with them. Also with  
19 5th grade we had the teachers do Latin and root  
20 words. We blend chunk words to try to have something  
21 in place, because we feel like the year before this  
22 year, when we seen that drop, it's because the kids  
23 -- all the other grades had been exposed to  
24 reciprocal reading strategies.

25 So I wanted to share some of that data, and I

1 know I'm going fast; I don't have a lot of time. But  
2 I also want to talk about TLI. TLI is one of our --  
3 it was one of our goals. When this charter was  
4 written, TLI was solely the biggest piece of  
5 assessment that STEM Academy used. We don't do that  
6 anymore under my leadership, but it was solely at  
7 that time what they used. During this time one of  
8 our goals was that we would make 80% mastery. Well,  
9 I'm going to tell you, any school that's tough for  
10 TLI. TLI designed a rigor that's not only higher  
11 than the state assessment rigor but also it has an  
12 adjustment score, as well, which can help you or it  
13 could hurt you. But looking at the TLI assessment --  
14 I wanted to bring some of that data because it was  
15 important -- we took the last three years. And if  
16 you look at the top, that's 5th grade math, and then  
17 if you look at the bottom, that's 5th grade literacy.  
18 We grew across the board this year in 5th grade, all  
19 the way up till winter. Okay. The next chart is 6th  
20 grade; 6th grade math grew. Like I said, this year  
21 we have had a math consultant that I think has played  
22 a big role in that. And we also have implemented in  
23 literacy and math as well not PLCs but departmental  
24 meetings bi-monthly. They meet every two weeks. So  
25 we plan across the grade levels. But if you look at

1           6th grade math we seen a -- I mean, 6th grade  
2           literacy we seen a slight decrease and we're looking  
3           at that to kind of see what might have happened  
4           there. 7th grade math grew across the board. And if  
5           you look at 7th grade literacy it went up and down.  
6           I think a lot of that is the 7th grade teacher this  
7           year she had five deaths in her family, so she's been  
8           out a lot and we're going to address that as well.  
9           When you look at 8th grade, 8th grade math increased  
10          tremendously, and then when you look at 8th grade  
11          literacy it decreased slightly. We have an awesome  
12          8th grade teacher but she's a first-year teacher.

13                 Before I have Ms. Raper come up here and talk  
14          about the innovative ways that we feel like that our  
15          charter is very important to us, even though we're  
16          struggling academically -- and when I say struggling  
17          academically I don't want y'all to think that my kids  
18          are not growing; they are. But we do look at the  
19          whole child. When I came in I feel like even though  
20          they had great things in place, I feel like they were  
21          trying to do the best they can; they were addressing  
22          teacher retention. The district has put things in  
23          place so we have also now a retention incentive as a  
24          district. But one of the things that -- when I came  
25          in I felt like the culture needed to trump, so I

1 spent a lot of time trying to make sure that the  
2 culture was a learning environment and how important  
3 it was that my students also, as well as my teachers,  
4 realize that we're all learners and we couldn't keep  
5 doing the same thing and getting -- and think we're  
6 going to get different results.

7 So, at this time I'm going to bring Ms. Raper up  
8 and I'll let her introduce herself. But she's very  
9 vital to the STEM because she wrote a lot of it.  
10 Thank you.

11 MS. RAPER: Okay. I'm Chantel Raper; I'm the  
12 director of Federal Programs and Special Projects.  
13 And in one-and-a-half minutes I'm going to tell you  
14 about the fun stuff at Osceola STEM Academy. One of  
15 the pieces that we tried to implement was to have an  
16 environment that instilled a love for learning for  
17 students. We wanted -- this is outside the wall of  
18 our cafeteria, so these were math and science. This  
19 is a timeline of innovations for math and science.  
20 The QR codes are there. Our discovery zone, little  
21 birdhouses -- the students, you know, we wanted them  
22 to measure for a reason. You know, what reason do  
23 5th graders have to measure? Well, because they want  
24 to make a birdhouse that's perfect for their mom for  
25 Christmas, that's why. So those are the types of

1 things that we're doing.

2 Our Project Lead the Way, our Gateway to  
3 Technology program, I sort of created a problem with  
4 7th and 8th grade because we had 60 8th graders that  
5 wanted to continue that program at 9th grade. So I  
6 had to go to Mr. Cox and say, "I'm sorry, but I have  
7 a problem. Now we have to advance this program to  
8 the high school." So that has gone from a STEM  
9 Academy program to a 4th through 12th grade program.  
10 These students were at Arkansas Northeast College,  
11 not as students but as instructors to high school  
12 students. Okay. Here they are; the Connects, that  
13 was in a discovery zone. This is an example of  
14 STEAM, our math and art integrated. Our science lab,  
15 the students visit the science lab once a week.  
16 Again, our robotics program. And if you notice in  
17 your packet, this summer our students were part of  
18 the ANC Young Manufacturers Academy in that, again,  
19 they served as instructors to 9th grade students  
20 across the county. So our students actually -- the  
21 students across the county came to us and our  
22 students were able to utilize our Gateway to  
23 Technology program as a program to instruct other  
24 students in engineering.

25 We're out of time but I did -- I think Mr. Cox

1 did want to talk about the teacher retention.

2 SUPT. COX: Yeah.

3 MS. SMITH: Okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Cox, let me check and  
5 see if there's anyone here to speak in opposition.

6 (A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Continue on.

8 SUPT. COX: I don't know why anybody in this  
9 room would be in opposition.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's on my list to check.

11 SUPT. COX: Well, I just want to talk just a  
12 minute. But, you know, as superintendent, when I  
13 came to Osceola I had a lot of problems. Well, Ms.  
14 Raper was in a classroom, middle school classroom as  
15 a teacher. Ms. Smith, I think, was dean of students  
16 over at the middle school. Mr. Hogan wasn't even  
17 there. And I hope you can tell that I think I was  
18 successful in finding the right people and putting  
19 them in the right places because I don't know a lot  
20 about data; I do know it's very, very important and I  
21 know the answers are in the data, so I'm going to go  
22 find somebody that knows about data and can dig it  
23 out. And I raised Ms. Smith up from dean to -- I  
24 think she was assistant principal for a year or two,  
25 and she has worked her way up to be principal, and

1 she's one of the best we have there at Osceola today.  
2 So I'm very proud of these people.

3 We have a good group of administrators and  
4 academic coaches. Our problem has always been  
5 attracting good quality teachers to Osceola and then  
6 retaining them once we get them. And I recommended  
7 to the board last year, and they adopted it, we --  
8 you know -- we took the state teacher shortage areas  
9 and we added two or three more because we had a few  
10 that wasn't on the state list. And we have a policy  
11 now that if you come to work at Osceola, if you're a  
12 success, if you stay one full year, the first year  
13 you get \$3,000 in additional money. If you stay  
14 another year, at the end of the second year you get  
15 \$2,000. At the end of the third year you get \$2,000.  
16 And the fourth year you get another \$3,000. That's  
17 \$10,000 if you stay there four years. Now we wasn't  
18 able to do that with all of our teachers, but through  
19 the SIG grant that we were so fortunate to get this  
20 year at the high school we extended that over to our  
21 veteran high school teachers. And I think it has  
22 some evaluation type situations that go with it too.  
23 Some of our veteran teachers have been there 10, 20  
24 years; they will be able to get that at the high  
25 school too. So that's been our -- I have built

1 capacity in the level below me, but we've got to  
2 build capacity in the level under the -- below the  
3 administration and the academic coaches. So that's  
4 one of my main concerns and that's what I'm working  
5 on every day is trying to retain. And I understand  
6 Teach For America got some additional money from the  
7 Walton Foundation maybe and from the Governor, and  
8 I've been on the phone to Commissioner Key and I've  
9 talked to Jared Henderson, I believe is his name,  
10 from Teach For America. One year we had like three  
11 high school Teach For America teachers and they were  
12 tremendous. I mean, they truly did us a good job.  
13 We don't have any right now but these people would  
14 really help us if we can get them. So -- and that's  
15 all I have to say about the bonuses. But we're ready  
16 to, I guess, answer questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Thank you.  
18 Ms. Smith, you're up.

19 MS. SMITH: First off, Mr. Cox, I think you  
20 probably did do a good job setting up your people  
21 with you because I'm going to tell you right now of  
22 all the presentations that I listened to yesterday  
23 and today this is the one that had the most meat and  
24 regarding curriculum and decisions that have been  
25 made regarding data pertaining to being a school that

1 is academically challenged, in a manner. So I could  
2 have sat and listened to you all day, Ms. Smith. I  
3 mean --

4 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Oh, thank you.

5 MS. SMITH: I mean --

6 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: I was nervous.

7 MS. SMITH: You didn't throw buzzwords at me  
8 today; you literally gave me the meat of what you  
9 were doing and you talked specifically about  
10 curriculum and resources that you were putting in  
11 your teachers' hands and how to use the data to make  
12 decisions. Mr. Cox, I mean, when you got up, in your  
13 one-and-a-half minutes you were able to give us  
14 information specifically on what you were doing in  
15 the fields there. So I was thoroughly impressed with  
16 what you said beyond what was on paper. If you've  
17 got all that in action at your building, you're going  
18 to move because you're being so targeted and so  
19 specific. And it wasn't buzzwords. You don't --  
20 there's a difference between a building manager and  
21 an instructional leader, and teachers want to follow  
22 a strong instructional leader. And you will keep  
23 people in your school district if you have strong  
24 instructional leaders in place that people want to  
25 follow. There's no question; that was just a

1 comment.

2 MS. LIWO: Can we get an Amen.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I thought she was just  
4 going to preach. Mr. Lester, follow that.

5 MR. LESTER: I don't know about all day, but  
6 I'll listen a little longer. Looking at your  
7 supplemental monies for Title 1, I looked at y'all's  
8 plan and it looked like that y'all had a community  
9 liaison that you were using this year, and you have  
10 summer school and also afterschool programs. How are  
11 those tied into your overall picture here?

12 MS. RAPER: Go ahead.

13 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: No, you can go ahead and  
14 then I'll go.

15 MS. RAPER: Well, an overall picture, of course,  
16 one of our goals, because we will talk about meeting  
17 our goals -- but one we do not want to amend is  
18 addressing our dropout rate. And so knowing that we  
19 were losing our students -- we were losing our  
20 students at about -- around 10th grade because that's  
21 when they were starting to -- we weren't losing them  
22 physically; we were losing them because they were  
23 losing credits because they were not engaged in  
24 learning. And so by the time it was time to graduate  
25 they were too far behind and when it was -- they were

1 old enough they were, you know, out of the picture.  
2 So the community liaison that we utilize -- and we  
3 have one at the high school, as well -- he's on the  
4 road. He's finding our students that if there's  
5 problems, if there's behavior problems, if there are  
6 attendance problems, he's there making contact with  
7 the parents, getting them back into school and  
8 keeping them engaged. What were some of the -- the  
9 afterschool?

10 MR. LESTER: Yeah, the afterschool and you had a  
11 summer school -- and I don't know if that was tied  
12 into the --

13 MS. RAPER: Yeah. Go ahead.

14 MR. LESTER: Okay.

15 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Okay. On the afterschool  
16 program, what we did -- because we didn't have a lot  
17 of money that was allocated to afterschool. So what  
18 we did, we found strong teachers that was willing to  
19 stay without being paid, particularly our GTT because  
20 our students are highly involved with robotics. And  
21 we have a brand-new teacher, she stays after. She  
22 also has background in literacy, so she helps us with  
23 literacy. I have one math teacher that stays  
24 sometimes to help. But what I did was I built in 100  
25 instructional minutes a day for both literacy and

1 math. We also had a reading block outside of that  
2 100 minutes, 50 minutes for 5th and 6th grades, to  
3 try to address some of that deficiency area. So when  
4 they get to us, even if they're behind from  
5 elementary, for two years they get 150 minutes of  
6 literacy skills. So we felt that was important.

7 Our summer program, we don't have like a summer  
8 retention program; we have a summer enrichment  
9 program. Okay. And it is --

10 MS. RAPER: That's a buzzword.

11 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Huh?

12 MS. RAPER: That's a buzzword, but keep on  
13 going.

14 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Well, it's enrichment and  
15 I'll tell you why. When I say enrichment, I don't  
16 think my -- I'm not saying like my strongest  
17 academically students. Okay. We promote it to all  
18 our students. But when I say enrichment I mean  
19 hands-on; we do it across the district. We have a  
20 whole enrichment program. But we have all kinds of  
21 hands-on activities for them, as well.

22 UNKNOWN MAN: The summer program, the  
23 attendance, there were 560 on the bleachers side in a  
24 day in July when it was packed, you know, at the end  
25 of their program.

1 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Oh, yes. We also end with  
2 a very -- a program at the end of it and it's always  
3 pretty much filled to capacity.

4 UNKNOWN MAN: We bring in college students.

5 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Yeah. And we bring in  
6 college students, also. I should have said a little  
7 thing about -- also about how high school  
8 collaborates with my campus. High school also comes  
9 over and they do intervention with our students and  
10 they do it as just volunteer to help our students  
11 out.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I will share with the  
13 group that I visited the school unannounced. I like  
14 to go in to see what school is really like on a day  
15 when no one is planning on someone being there. It  
16 is exactly as you have described. One thing I would  
17 point out that warms my heart is when I see kids  
18 walking around with library books in their hands.  
19 And I saw your students walking around with  
20 paperbacks that have been loved and read and loved  
21 and read, and they're wearing them out, and that is  
22 always a good sign. When I walk around and see a lot  
23 of new books it stresses me because they're not being  
24 read. And you surely have kids that are reading  
25 because I saw that. They all had a book laying

1            somewhere or open or -- but they had them in their  
2            hands. Just like many of us carry around a cell  
3            phone, they were carrying books and that's super  
4            exciting. That tells the tale.

5            Ms. Pfeffer.

6            MS. PFEFFER: I just have one thing. You talked  
7            about your NWEA MAP assessment data and you had --  
8            you showed the different percentages of students who  
9            had met growth. And that was just from the fall to  
10           winter. Correct?

11           MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Yes.

12           MS. PFEFFER: Correct. So they'll be taking  
13           that again this spring.

14           MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Yes.

15           MS. PFEFFER: And I noticed that on your  
16           amendment request, in your goals, you're modifying  
17           one of your goals from the TLI to be looking at the  
18           NWEA MAP. So I would just encourage you to -- and  
19           just in some way really look and see how is that  
20           going to -- how is that MAP data going to align with  
21           future assessment data.

22           MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Yes, ma'am.

23           MS. PFEFFER: And you might want to, you know,  
24           reach out and look at what should your MAP data look  
25           like so that it's telling you things and is it going

1 to predict what's going to happen on the state  
2 assessments in the future. Because, you know, just  
3 the -- it is a problem when your data doesn't align  
4 and it's not telling you what you want it to. So if  
5 that's something new you're doing, I would just  
6 encourage you to look at resources or just make sure  
7 that you understand what the data is really telling  
8 you and that it doesn't set up any false sense of  
9 "oh, it seems that we're really growing students,"  
10 but yet that growth doesn't translate into levels of  
11 performance that you want. But, again, I understand  
12 that it's something new and you're taking steps to  
13 move forward, so -- and I enjoyed the presentation,  
14 as well.

15 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Thank you. And MAP is an  
16 adaptability test and we realize that a lot of people  
17 doesn't like to do the winter assessment. I chose to  
18 do it because that's 20 weeks of instruction. I do  
19 know it does not -- it's not going to cover every  
20 standard, even though it does give us a norms -- it  
21 gives us a -- doesn't give you a projection in terms  
22 of PARCC or anything like that, but it gives you also  
23 -- it gives you a scale score to tell you if they're  
24 on grade level. But I'm going to tell you what  
25 weighs more to us than MAP and those are our interim

1 assessments that we use every two to three weeks.  
2 Because we look at those to see if our students --  
3 and we do it in short increments because what I found  
4 when I first came there was they assessed so long --  
5 they were using TLI, and you talk about some modules  
6 went six weeks, some went eight weeks. But if you  
7 wait till the end how am I going to have time to  
8 address those essential skills? Now I've got to try  
9 to figure out through the next module how I'm going  
10 to squeeze in time. So that's the reason why we went  
11 to shorter increments and then we're addressing those  
12 essential skills that are necessary. Because like I  
13 said before, it's not that our kids, a lot of them,  
14 can't master the standard; they're missing those  
15 essential skills that are needed to master. They can  
16 do some of it, but not all of it.

17 MS. RAPER: And we also use our MAP for our  
18 ILPs.

19 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Yes. And I forgot to talk  
20 about our ILPs. So we use MAP for our ILPs, as well.  
21 And we do use Classworks as a supplementary and also  
22 we use Classworks within the classroom with a  
23 teacher. They use that also as Tier 2 intervention.

24 MS. RAPER: So we import our MAP results into  
25 Classworks and develop individual learning paths for

1           our students. And so in the math centers that Ms.  
2           Smith was describing, a center may be Classworks  
3           where they are getting at-level skill instruction.

4           MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: He wanted me to explain a  
5           little bit on when I talked about the 100 minutes  
6           that I increased the academic time. What I did was  
7           -- we did 85 minutes the prior year. What I found --  
8           and a lot of it was because I feel like our teachers  
9           wasn't really trained well enough to maximize that  
10          85-minute block. We saw a lot of instruction time  
11          lost, low engagement. So what we did was we split  
12          the 100-minute blocks, 50; they get a morning session  
13          and an afternoon session for literacy and math. And  
14          what we did, we structured it where the first block  
15          they had of math, it was more the instructional  
16          approach, and then the -- or computation. And then  
17          the application was in the afternoon where the kids  
18          actually got to work on those projects and apply what  
19          they learned.

20          CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions  
21          or comments? Ms. Barnes.

22          MS. BARNES: Good afternoon. Yeah, race is not  
23          given to -- oh, okay. Since we've been preaching I  
24          was just thinking. You guys have been here a long  
25          time, I do know that. I was just trying to refresh

1 my memory on a couple of things. Can you help me  
2 recall or walk me through how many reconfigurations  
3 have occurred that involve not the grade  
4 configuration of 5-8 as it is but that has involved  
5 those grades at any point. Because, you know, I was  
6 looking back and I do recall, you know, in the  
7 earlier days, so I'm just trying to get an idea of  
8 how many times or ways we've revamped this particular  
9 --

10 MR. COX: Yeah. I'm so glad you asked that  
11 question because I was thinking about it. When I  
12 came to Osceola I think they'd had a pre-  
13 kindergarten/kindergarten building. They had a  
14 charter, OAC, Osceola Academic Center, and it was  
15 grades 1 through 8. And then they had a West  
16 Elementary, grades 1 through 5, and they had a middle  
17 school, grades 6 through 8. Now the problem was the  
18 charter school was about -- the racial mix was about  
19 50/50. Well, West Elementary was about 85%, 90%  
20 black; the other middle school was about 85%, 90%  
21 black. When they pulled the charter, the powers that  
22 be at Osceola wanted another charter. They got one,  
23 but I don't think they got what they wanted -- but  
24 they got one. So I came down here and was talking to  
25 Dr. Kimbrell, director at the time, and I was under

1 the impression at the time it was because the  
2 teachers were teaching out of area; they wasn't  
3 certified in areas. And Dr. Kimbrell said, "Look at  
4 your racial make-up." He said, "You're not ever  
5 going to get another charter until you do something  
6 about that." I said, "Well, I can tell you I can do  
7 something about that real fast." We built a new  
8 elementary school, put all the grades 1 through 4 in  
9 that school, and we got a charter school with all the  
10 grades 5 through 8, and we've got a high school with  
11 all the grades 9 through 12. So we solved that  
12 problem. Now we're better off, the kids are better  
13 off. The only problem -- and I don't know how to  
14 stop this -- I've got 15 school choice request  
15 transfers right now that are all white leaving the  
16 district. We've probably lost 60 to 70 white kids  
17 since we did this because they didn't want them all  
18 together. And I'm just being completely honest with  
19 you. But I don't know -- and I've sent letters to  
20 all of them, I want some input over why, and I've  
21 heard from one parent so far about why they're  
22 pulling their kids out of the district. They're  
23 going to another district down the road that's about  
24 half-and-half, the ratio. So -- and I've got one  
25 response and this grandmother made sense; she said,

1 "I don't think kids ought to go anywhere where  
2 they're all black or all white, either one. I think  
3 there needs to be a good mix of kids." And she said,  
4 "My granddaughter was talking to me and she said she  
5 only had three white kids" -- of course, they were  
6 black -- said, "My grandmother -- granddaughter said  
7 she only had three white kids in the class." So she  
8 wanted to go down where they're about half-and-half.  
9 But I can kind of see that. I agree, too; there  
10 needs to be a pretty good mix. You know, the city of  
11 Osceola is probably split about 50/50, but our school  
12 is -- I don't know -- 85% maybe African American  
13 students. But we're going to go on and do what we  
14 need to do for the kids we have and that's --

15 MS. BARNES: Yes, sir.

16 MR. COX: -- what we're going to do.

17 MS. BARNES: Yes, sir. And, of course, you know  
18 I'm well acquainted with the history there.

19 MR. COX: Yeah.

20 MS. BARNES: And -- but I could not recall how  
21 many times the shifting had occurred and I was trying  
22 to --

23 MS. RAPER: Ms. Barnes, in our reconfiguration,  
24 you know, we chose the district AMO.

25 MS. BARNES: Yes.

1 MS. RAPER: So with this -- when we started the  
2 charter we pulled in the Priority status of Osceola  
3 --

4 MS. BARNES: Right. Right.

5 MS. RAPER: -- Middle School but still took the  
6 district AMO.

7 MS. BARNES: Yes. Yes. And I do recall that,  
8 and that's why --

9 MS. RAPER: Which was confusing times, which is  
10 why we're here asking for amendments to the goals  
11 because the goals were --

12 MS. BARNES: I get that. And I do agree that  
13 you have to -- you know -- you have to stop and do  
14 some revamping and take a look to make sure that what  
15 you're addressing fits where you are.

16 MS. RAPER: And we shifted in that where we had  
17 a 6th through 8th grade campus those students went to  
18 a 5th through 8th grade campus, but where we had a  
19 1st through 5th grade those 5th graders came to a 5th  
20 through 8th.

21 MS. BARNES: Yes, ma'am.

22 MS. RAPER: So I believe we went from about  
23 seven LEA numbers to four.

24 MS. BARNES: Yes. Okay. And so I think the  
25 reason I asked you that question is I was trying to

1 make -- you know -- just make some -- I needed some  
2 organization in my head. Unfortunately, I have --

3 MS. RAPER: We have an organizational chart that  
4 we have to --

5 MS. BARNES: Unfortunately, I know -- I have a  
6 lot of the history with regards to everything that  
7 we've been talking about. But I do believe that it  
8 has an impact on performance and growth and morale  
9 and student engagement, and so that's why I was  
10 trying to get that question.

11 I was looking at your performance and this is  
12 similar to my question with a previous school  
13 district, but not quite the same. The 2015 AMOs, you  
14 know, they were pretty low, and so -- for the state,  
15 because we needed to do that. It was that one  
16 assessment. So when I was looking at your  
17 performance I noted that we didn't meet those AMOs  
18 and I was trying to decide -- because this is such an  
19 interesting age/grade span, what do you have in mind  
20 to try to address the literacy and the math?

21 MS. RAPER: Well, with the stability -- because  
22 looking at those goals the charter school has yet to  
23 -- much like other schools, but we've yet to have a  
24 goal that is a true goal for the particular students  
25 in that building. So when you pulled a district --

1 when we utilized our district goals that also pulled  
2 in those elementary school students of that charter  
3 that -- we had a 4th grade that was performing at 80,  
4 90 percent, yet we pulled in a middle -- the middle  
5 school students that were performing -- where were  
6 they? Yeah, 30, 40 percent. So we're just now  
7 getting to a point where we can set goals that are  
8 appropriate for the students in that building,  
9 hopefully.

10 MS. BARNES: Okay. Yeah.

11 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Can I add a little bit to  
12 that?

13 MS. BARNES: Sure.

14 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: Also, when you said in  
15 reference to PARCC, it goes back to -- I said this  
16 year we went in full implementation of MSLI. We felt  
17 particularly with our students, telling them that,  
18 you know, you're not at grade level -- and they've  
19 been told that for so long, 2nd, 3rd grade, then they  
20 had in their mind -- because I don't think they even  
21 understood the relevance of how important their  
22 education is to them. So when I make the statements  
23 that we're addressing the whole child I feel, as the  
24 leader, that our kids did not perform to their  
25 ability on the PARCC assessment. I truly feel that

1 way. That's the reason why I'm really trying to put  
2 in place a culture and they understand that their  
3 education is so important beyond just that test  
4 assessment and these pieces are important to be  
5 successful in life. Okay.

6 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

7 SUPT. COX: Let me mention -- I'd like to  
8 mention one other thing. We talked about a while ago  
9 about the principal being an instructional leader.  
10 Ms. Smith and I have been talking the last -- well,  
11 all this year, I guess. She has a dean of students  
12 who's also a coach, so that means he's gone two to  
13 three periods a day. And I put deans -- at least  
14 deans in places -- the standards doesn't call for any  
15 help for her, but I realize she needed help. But she  
16 needed more than what she's getting. So we're going  
17 to -- I'm going to look at hiring her an assistant  
18 principal that can help her with evaluations and  
19 knows about curriculum. In fact, I told her to tell  
20 her dean he needs to go in one of two directions;  
21 he's either going to coach or be an administrator,  
22 one of the two, but he's not going to do both. So,  
23 and I think he's going to go to coach, which is fine.  
24 But we need to hire her some help. She can't do it  
25 all. With that grade level and those, you know,

1 middle school age kids, I don't know whether to cuss  
2 or cry, you know, and she's got to have more help.  
3 Now she's good with discipline but she can't be an  
4 instructional leader if she's handling discipline all  
5 day long. So we're -- as far as the future, we're  
6 looking at that too. She needs some help. And this  
7 is only her second year over there, so --

8 MS. RAPER: As we analyzed our PARCC scores, in  
9 the handout that we provided, on page 14, and we  
10 looked at all of the middle schools that were in  
11 improvement, that were Needs Improvement. And when  
12 you compare the middle schools that were in Needs  
13 Improvement, and especially for our TAGG students,  
14 we're performing above average for those students.

15 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional comments or  
17 questions?

18 Ms. Davis, do you have any issues to bring  
19 before the Panel?

20 MS. DAVIS: I do not.

21 MS. BARNES: I'm sorry; a quick question. I  
22 know we're listening to the information related to  
23 Priority, but we're also looking at the amendment.  
24 Correct?

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's correct.

1 MS. BARNES: Okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, Ms. Davis, do we need  
3 to take a no-action for the Priority or just --

4 MS. DAVIS: You could do them together or you  
5 could do them separate.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

7 MS. DAVIS: So if you're not going to take any  
8 action and you're going to adopt the amendment, you  
9 could make a motion to adopt the amendment with no  
10 action or you could do them separate if you feel  
11 better doing that.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I just want to give Dr.  
13 Saunders guidance.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: I need it.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. At this time  
16 I'll accept a motion, however you want to -- go, Ms.  
17 Barnes.

18 MS. BARNES: I move that we accept the amendment  
19 and take no action at this time on the Priority  
20 status.

21 MS. PFEFFER: I'll second that.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any discussion? A motion  
23 has been made by Ms. Barnes and seconded by Ms.  
24 Pfeffer to accept the amendment and take no action on  
25 the Priority status. All those in favor of the

1 motion?

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? Motion has  
4 passed. If you'll wait just a moment, we'll give you  
5 detailed reasoning.

6 MS. BOYD: Madam Chair, while we're waiting on  
7 people to explain their votes could we ask Ms. Smith  
8 to talk about what she's done with her ALE students?  
9 I think it's a good example of what other districts  
10 can do with their ALE students.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Absolutely. We'd love to  
12 hear that.

13 MS. BOYD: Thank you.

14 MS. CHRISTEL SMITH: She must know that I have a  
15 passion for alternative education but sure, I'll talk  
16 about it. One of the things that -- and I did ALE,  
17 I'll admit it; I did ALE one year and I think that's  
18 when I learned how to be passionate and love  
19 education and children. But I want to say that  
20 before I say this: what I did with my alternative  
21 education program, what we found was -- because we  
22 had a high -- not a high, we have about 10% of  
23 students that need an alternative setting, not always  
24 for discipline, whether it's test anxiety or  
25 classroom size anxiety, family problems, or whatever.

1           What I did was I felt like those students we were  
2           losing because we were sending our students to  
3           another facility, not under the leadership of me --  
4           and not that that principal -- that principal was  
5           doing a great job, but they were sitting on a  
6           computer most of the day. They weren't getting a lot  
7           of instruction. They were getting some. They were  
8           doing the best they can. So what I did was I took  
9           one of my strongest not only academic but management  
10          teachers and I created ALE on my campus under my  
11          leadership. And what I did was I put in my master  
12          schedule where those students go to their regular  
13          teacher. And not only do they go to their regular  
14          teacher, they also get every opportunity every other  
15          kids get, whether it's exploratory classes,  
16          intervention. So even though they're in a different  
17          setting, smaller classroom setting, they get all the  
18          opportunities that my other students get. They're  
19          getting instruction at the rigor. It was hard to  
20          take one of my strong content teachers out of the  
21          classroom, but it was essential. And I felt like  
22          when we're working particularly with behaviors you're  
23          not going to change the behavior in 20 days. So I  
24          need to know if they were going to stay at least a  
25          quarter, sometimes a semester. I have one that he is

1 very intelligent but he does not like a classroom  
2 with more than five kids. So we keep him in that  
3 setting just because of anxiety, to get him to come  
4 to school. So thank you for letting me share that,  
5 but I feel like every -- the shoe doesn't fit  
6 everybody and one size doesn't fit all. So,  
7 alternative education to me is way more than just  
8 putting kids in a room and setting them at a  
9 computer. So I feel that was real important that we  
10 provide them the same opportunity.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. That's a great  
12 explanation. And I did get to see those kids during  
13 my visit.

14 Ms. Barnes, when you're ready.

15 MS. BARNES: Wow. How did I get --

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I don't know. Somebody  
17 put your name on the top.

18 MS. BARNES: I was long-winded, so -- okay. I  
19 made the motion to approve the amendment and take no  
20 action on the Priority status at this time because I  
21 believe the amendment reflects the appropriate change  
22 that's necessary to sustain your current strategies  
23 that you're implementing. I also believe that time  
24 is necessary to allow these strategies to impact the  
25 academic direction in the school.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

2 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the amendment, as well  
3 as taking no action. I feel that leadership is  
4 certainly in place to support the systemic changes  
5 toward student success. I strongly recommend  
6 continued support of the teachers, both in  
7 professional development and in personal development.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

9 MR. LESTER: I voted for no action, plus the  
10 amendment. Based upon the report from the School  
11 Improvement Unit and the charter presentation, I  
12 believe the charter is on the right track for  
13 improvement. I am impressed with the leadership that  
14 is in place to support these tactics.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

16 MS. LIWO: I voted for. The charter has  
17 identified problem areas and has very specific plans  
18 in place to help them improve. I think that they  
19 will be a future success.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

21 MS. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion  
22 because the district is working with the ADE School  
23 Improvement Unit to address the issues related to the  
24 Priority status. And the district recognizes the  
25 need for improvement and the school is under new

1 leadership with a clear focus and goals for improved  
2 outcomes for student achievement and growth.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

4 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion. Leadership  
5 at the charter is very positive and I believe the  
6 right personnel can continue the positive improvement  
7 on the Priority status.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, voted in favor. I believe  
10 the district clearly articulated a plan of action and  
11 I look forward to their future success.

12 MS. SMITH: I voted in favor -- sorry.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Anxious.

14 MS. SMITH: That's right. Very impressed with  
15 the district's current curriculum and leadership  
16 team. Instructional leadership was evident and  
17 instructional decisions based on data. And, Mr. Cox,  
18 I think this at least should guarantee at least a  
19 Sonic stop on the way back to Osceola for the team.

20 SUPT. COX: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. And keep up  
22 the good work.

23 Are there any issues, additional issues before  
24 the Panel today?

25 Thank you to all that participated. And I'll

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ask for a motion to adjourn.

DR. SAUNDERS: I move --

MS. PFEFFER: So moved.

DR. GOTCHER: Second.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer and Dr.  
Gotcher. All in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We stand adjourned until  
8:30 in the morning.

(The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.)

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A-2: LITTLE ROCK PREPARATORY ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-2: LITTLE ROCK PREPARATORY ACADEMY

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

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		<b>245:11</b>	<b>accomplished (1)</b>	<b>227:17;244:8,10,19,24;247:20;248:3,9;249:10</b>
<b>\$</b>	<b>[</b>	<b>academic (47)</b>	99:6	<b>actions (7)</b>
<b>\$10,000 (1)</b>	<b>[ps] (1)</b>	4:20;10:10;11:10;	<b>according (1)</b>	4:23;5:1;35:5;
225:17	55:11	70:12;71:2;72:1,9;	142:25	83:9;149:2;204:23;
<b>\$100,000 (1)</b>	<b>[sobbing] (1)</b>	83:4;85:3;95:20;	<b>accordingly (1)</b>	205:1
134:1	59:10	96:2,24;103:20,25;	121:19	<b>active (1)</b>
<b>\$112,000 (1)</b>		104:25;116:5,10,16;	<b>account (1)</b>	59:19
122:21	<b>A</b>	123:25;130:2;143:4,	199:22	<b>actively (3)</b>
<b>\$150,000 (3)</b>		13;147:6;148:22;	<b>accountability (12)</b>	110:14;115:20;
126:9,10;127:18	<b>A-1 (1)</b>	149:6;150:6;151:1,	26:14,15;27:23;	117:7
<b>\$157,000 (1)</b>	3:25	10;165:1;166:15;	63:8;67:10;75:2;	<b>activities (2)</b>
133:24	<b>A2 (1)</b>	173:15;179:23,23;	102:3;118:16,18;	210:23;230:21
<b>\$2,000 (2)</b>	142:25	188:5;204:20;206:7;	146:11;165:8;179:20	<b>actual (2)</b>
225:15,15	<b>A-2 (3)</b>	207:18;208:20;	<b>accountable (2)</b>	118:23;133:21
<b>\$20,000 (3)</b>	82:12;251:24;	209:21;211:13;	101:23;219:7	<b>actuality (1)</b>
37:20;38:8;44:10	252:24	216:1;225:4;226:3;	<b>accounting (1)</b>	118:20
<b>\$200,000 (2)</b>	<b>A-3 (1)</b>	235:6;236:14;246:9;	143:2	<b>actually (55)</b>
124:8;127:12	148:6	247:25	<b>accounts (1)</b>	29:18;38:24;43:24;
<b>\$26,000 (1)</b>	<b>A-4 (1)</b>	<b>academically (16)</b>	121:5	45:6;52:16;63:12;
119:15	204:2	7:6;20:24;92:24;	<b>accredited (1)</b>	73:24;86:3,18;90:18;
<b>\$3,000 (2)</b>	<b>Aaron (1)</b>	94:23;95:5,6;114:10;	15:7	91:1,8;104:15,20,23;
225:13,16	108:8	141:25;144:6;	<b>accurately (1)</b>	107:9;108:14,21;
<b>\$300,000 (4)</b>	<b>abandon (1)</b>	150:13;185:2;	80:22	109:21;110:6,13,17;
44:18;51:8;124:10;	10:24	211:19;221:16,17;	<b>Achieve (4)</b>	111:16;113:24;
126:1	<b>ability (8)</b>	227:1;230:17	18:3;139:3;185:8;	114:5,8;115:11,14,
<b>\$375,000 (1)</b>	16:24;27:4;29:10;	<b>academics (3)</b>	202:6	18,20;116:19;117:4;
44:5	76:22;132:2;152:8;	19:16;78:15;	<b>achievement (9)</b>	119:2;120:10;121:3,
<b>\$4,000 (2)</b>	168:24;241:25	187:12	87:12;92:2,17;	21;123:13;126:4,10;
41:19;42:8	<b>able (57)</b>	<b>Academy (43)</b>	100:20;136:18;	129:10;133:24;
<b>\$400,000 (2)</b>	11:15;16:19;18:18;	17:7;82:13,18,20;	142:4;146:12;	136:9;139:17;141:1;
37:19;44:9	19:6;28:16,16;31:5;	83:2,7;84:2,12;86:9,	152:16;249:2	171:17;177:23;
<b>\$41,000 (1)</b>	35:17;36:6;39:8,16,	11,20,24;87:1,2,3;	<b>achieving (5)</b>	185:22;186:22;
42:16	23;40:5,10;51:4;	88:3;92:23;104:2;	12:23;15:8,9;	190:3;191:3,13;
<b>\$45,000 (1)</b>	52:7,15,22,25;53:10,	123:15;127:14;	100:24;158:20	194:19;218:12;
42:14	17;64:3;65:25;66:21,	128:12;129:9,20;	<b>Achilles (1)</b>	223:20;235:18
<b>\$5,000,000 (1)</b>	22;72:19;76:4;89:22;	146:9;165:2;168:7;	138:6	<b>adaptability (1)</b>
125:12	91:6;97:4;103:10;	204:3,9,11,14,18;	<b>acknowledge (2)</b>	233:16
<b>\$50,000 (3)</b>	116:7;122:16;	205:12,21;208:3,7;	86:16;112:14	<b>add (15)</b>
121:23;131:4;	124:18;136:20;	212:1,2;220:5;	<b>acquainted (1)</b>	33:16;35:4;77:6;
132:16	139:3;156:17;	222:14;223:9,18;	238:18	84:15,16;104:8;
<b>\$59,000 (1)</b>	157:13,15,17;164:18;	251:24;252:24	<b>across (21)</b>	119:1;120:13;
119:16	165:25;172:5;	<b>accelerating (1)</b>	27:13;58:11;96:21;	122:11;142:8;
<b>\$6,000,000 (1)</b>	182:25;184:11,15;	20:5	124:18;135:5;137:3;	156:14;172:16;
35:9	190:12;200:9;209:5;	<b>accept (9)</b>	194:17,18;209:12,12,	187:9;198:11;241:11
<b>\$60,000 (1)</b>	211:16,18;213:2;	55:6;70:5,10,12;	24;211:1;214:10;	<b>added (3)</b>
132:16	218:23;223:22;	142:13;195:25;	216:4;218:13;	104:9,12;225:9
<b>\$6400 (1)</b>	225:18,24;227:13	244:16,18,24	220:18,25;221:4;	<b>addendum (1)</b>
119:14	<b>above (8)</b>	<b>accepted (5)</b>	223:20,21;230:19	11:9
<b>\$692,050 (1)</b>	96:13;135:8,9;	143:1;164:15;	<b>ACSIP (1)</b>	<b>adding (2)</b>
164:21	137:23;138:3;	169:7,10;202:2	9:5	76:18;176:17
<b>\$70,000 (1)</b>	158:23;185:2;243:14	<b>accepting (2)</b>	<b>Act (11)</b>	<b>addition (12)</b>
131:23	<b>absence (2)</b>	152:12;163:22	11:9;12:2;18:3;	16:3,12;17:18,24;
<b>\$700,000 (1)</b>	30:9,10	<b>access (6)</b>	24:7;26:5;27:20;	18:22;34:20;75:24;
127:13	<b>absences (3)</b>	13:5;15:11;17:5;	62:12;72:5;139:13;	113:20;127:17;
<b>\$71,000 (2)</b>	13:2;176:9,9	25:20;37:6;65:17	156:20;165:5	132:8;160:6;177:5
119:25;123:1	<b>absolute (1)</b>	<b>accessible (2)</b>	<b>acting (2)</b>	<b>additional (20)</b>
<b>\$800,000 (1)</b>	98:18	14:18;101:20	83:1;148:19	17:5;23:1;39:18;
199:22	<b>absolutely (12)</b>	<b>accommodate (1)</b>	<b>Action (27)</b>	61:20;67:14;77:6;
<b>\$90,000 (1)</b>	38:3;43:1;53:15;	51:5	4:4;7:1;82:15;	89:23;119:18;
132:4	76:10;117:22,23;	<b>accommodations (2)</b>	139:10,18;143:17,22;	142:12,16;146:24,25;
	172:9;180:19;	39:7;43:21	144:1;145:7;146:1,9;	177:24;178:13;
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<p><b>7 (1)</b> 109:8</p> <p><b>7:30 (1)</b> 68:18</p> <p><b>70 (1)</b> 237:16</p> <p><b>70% (1)</b> 212:19</p> <p><b>71% (3)</b> 118:22,24,25</p> <p><b>78% (1)</b> 29:19</p> <p><b>79 (3)</b> 43:9,15,19</p> <p><b>79% (1)</b> 96:18</p> <p><b>7th (10)</b> 94:14,16;217:16, 20,22;219:15;221:4, 5,6;223:4</p>	<p><b>9 (3)</b> 162:12;204:11; 237:11</p> <p><b>9:00 (3)</b> 23:10;32:24;179:3</p> <p><b>9:15 (1)</b> 23:11</p> <p><b>90 (1)</b> 241:4</p> <p><b>90% (2)</b> 236:19,20</p> <p><b>9-12 (5)</b> 4:13;6:19;7:21; 148:17;150:3</p> <p><b>95% (2)</b> 135:9,9</p> <p><b>9th (8)</b> 15:25;57:15;154:6; 158:25;183:15,16; 223:5,19</p>			
<b>8</b>				
<p><b>8 (4)</b> 4:12;236:15,17; 237:10</p> <p><b>8:00 (2)</b> 23:13;65:15</p> <p><b>8:30 (2)</b> 32:24;250:9</p> <p><b>80 (1)</b> 241:3</p> <p><b>80% (2)</b> 213:23;220:8</p> <p><b>82% (1)</b> 45:7</p> <p><b>83% (1)</b> 91:10</p> <p><b>84% (1)</b> 96:19</p> <p><b>85 (3)</b> 88:12;133:1;235:7</p> <p><b>85% (7)</b> 91:9;109:10;119:2; 213:23;236:19,20; 238:12</p> <p><b>85-minute (1)</b> 235:10</p> <p><b>86% (1)</b> 112:9</p> <p><b>88-year (1)</b> 67:13</p> <p><b>89% (1)</b> 29:19</p> <p><b>8th (17)</b> 89:18,20;94:10,14; 197:20;212:6; 217:16;219:15; 221:9,9,10,12;223:4, 4;239:17,18,20</p>				