

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

February 19, 2016

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

February 19, 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

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Little Rock, AR 72201

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. The February 19, 2016 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education, and ask that you please silence all electronic devices.

The Charter Authorizing Panel oversees the authorization, renewal, revision and revocation of charters. The Arkansas Quality Charter Schools Act of 2013 requires the Commissioner to appoint ADE staff to this panel. And at this time I'd like to introduce these panel members: 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, chair.

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

1 Arkansas Department of Ed. website. Our court
2 reporter will be providing a transcript of this
3 meeting and the transcript also will be posted on the
4 Arkansas Department of Ed. website.

5 So, welcome everyone. And before we move into
6 our first action item, I'd like to recognize Senator
7 Joyce Elliott.

8 SENATOR ELLIOTT: Thank you, Madam Chair, and
9 good morning, Panel, and good morning, Arkansas. I
10 was here a few months ago to make a statement about
11 the expansion of eStem and Lisa charter schools. I
12 do have a meeting at 9:00, so I appreciate your
13 indulging my statement at this point. And this is a
14 statement strictly from me as a state senator who
15 lives in the Little Rock School District, and one who
16 is a grandparent in the Little Rock School District
17 at this point, and one who just cares overall about
18 what happens to the district.

19 So I'm concerned about the expansions, not
20 because charter schools are wrong, not because
21 they're bad. But I'm concerned because I am an
22 educator and I'm a policymaker and I make it a point
23 to stay abreast of what the research says about
24 education and I make it a point to stay abreast of
25 what's good policy. So I do have the convenience, if

1 you want to call it that, of being able to see both
2 at the same time.

3 So policy-wise, I'm before you to ask you to
4 think about -- every one of you up here is an
5 educator. I know every one of you is a person who
6 stays on top of what makes good education policy. I
7 know that about you. So what I'm asking you to think
8 with me: is it good policy if there is a school
9 district (i.e., Little Rock) that the State has taken
10 over -- and for the good or bad of it you are part of
11 that apparatus -- is it good policy if a school
12 district is trying to get back on its feet, as it
13 should? And not only that, at the mandate of the
14 State is it good policy if then somehow it is
15 undermined by this group from the outset by taking
16 away much of the assets that are needed in the Little
17 Rock School District to do what the State has
18 mandated that it should do and to do what every
19 parent and child, every family, every citizen
20 deserves in the Little Rock School District.

21 At some point it might make sense to extend
22 these schools. It might make sense to expand their
23 population. But I don't see the logic of on the one
24 hand you say you must do it but with the left hand
25 over here we're taking away the ability for you to do

1 that. And that's what I'm asking you not to do this
2 morning; don't take away the ability when folks are
3 beginning to get some confidence in the process. Not
4 everybody has. But the State has an onerous position
5 here. The State is in a position of making sure we
6 don't get ourselves as legislators into a point where
7 somebody looks at us and says, "You are making sure
8 Little Rock can't succeed." And I would be remiss if
9 I didn't say, because I always say publicly because
10 I'm not blind to this, to this whole thing, there are
11 people when this district was taken over who thought
12 the whole idea was behind charterizing the Little
13 Rock School District. The last time I was here there
14 was a virtual school that was requesting
15 authorization, that they finally got, and it seemed
16 very clear the target was Little Rock even though
17 they are located in Bentonville. And, once again,
18 the target is Little Rock in a way that we would have
19 to compete, while we are trying to get a foothold,
20 with a school district that's called a charter that
21 would be as big as most of the school districts in
22 this state.

23 So I'm asking you because you are educators and
24 make great educational policy. There's a difference
25 between good policy and good politics. I ask you not

1 to mix bad politics with good educational policy, and
2 not approve these schools expanding at this time.
3 Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Senator
5 Elliott.

6 A-1: OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL ACADEMIC
7 PERFORMANCE HEARING AND REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT: QUEST MIDDLE
8 SCHOOL OF PINE BLUFF

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: At this time we'll move to
10 action item 1. Ms. Boyd, you're recognized.

11 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Action item
12 1, Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Amendment --
13 excuse me -- Academic Performance Hearing and Request
14 for Amendment: Quest Middle School of Pine Bluff.
15 The State Board of Education approved the application
16 of -- for Quest Middle School of Pine Bluff on
17 November 1, 2012. The charter is approved to serve
18 students in grades 5-12 with a maximum enrollment of
19 460. Representatives of Quest Pine Bluff are
20 appearing before the Charter Authorizing Panel to
21 request an amendment to the charter. Also, the
22 Charter Authorizing Panel has required
23 representatives of Quest Pine Bluff to appear for a
24 hearing pursuant to Arkansas Code Annotated 6-23-105
25 to discuss academic performance.

1 Representatives of the charter agreed to combine
2 the two hearings and approved combining the hearing
3 procedures to be followed. Possible actions to be
4 taken by the Charter Authorizing Panel include
5 approving or denying the amendment request, but due
6 to its academic status, possible actions include
7 modification, probation, and/or revocation of the
8 charter.

9 Madam Chair, would you like for Jennifer Davis
10 to remind us of the hearing procedures?

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, please, just for the
12 record.

13 MS. DAVIS: Good morning. Jennifer Davis, staff
14 attorney for the Department. The hearing procedures
15 today are going to be the combined procedures that
16 you've been working with the last couple of days.
17 Those will be that all -- I mean, everybody that's
18 going to be providing testimony, with the exception
19 of the attorneys, will need to be sworn in. The
20 Department is going to have 20 minutes to make a
21 presentation, followed by a 20-minute presentation by
22 the school. After that, there will be 20 minutes for
23 opposition and 5 minutes also after that for any
24 rebuttal from the school. Are there any questions?

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Davis.

1 At this time I'll ask all ADE staff,
2 representatives from Quest Middle School of Pine
3 Bluff, and anyone speaking in opposition please stand
4 to receive the oath. Raise your right hand, please.
5 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're
6 about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth and
7 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. Quest Pine
12 Bluff was first authorized by the State Board of
13 Education to operate in November of 2012, to serve
14 grades 5-12. At an amendment request hearing last
15 fall, the Charter Authorizing Panel took note of the
16 charter's low student achievement and required the
17 charter to return for a review hearing. The contract
18 is scheduled to expire in June of 2018.

19 In my visits to the campus, I have noticed that
20 the school has experienced a change in leadership and
21 a great deal of teacher turnover. On my most recent
22 visit, the students appeared to be more engaged in
23 the learning process than I had previously observed.
24 And since the school is not in Priority status they
25 have not been working the School Improvement Office,

1 and so that will conclude the comments from the
2 State.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Would you like to go ahead
4 and recognize the school?

5 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. To
6 start off the presentation from the school we have
7 Dr. Mary Ann Duncan, who is their interim
8 superintendent.

9 DR. DUNCAN: Good morning to you all and thank
10 you for having us here today. We appreciate your
11 time. We are here today regarding an amendment
12 request and a performance review of Quest Middle
13 School of Pine Bluff. Quest is a member of the
14 ResponsiveEd family, which is in its 15th year of
15 operation, currently serving some 72 schools, 20,000
16 students in two states. Through its years of growth
17 ResponsiveEd has sought to provide hope to parents
18 and students, seeking viable quality educational
19 options. It was with this thought in mind that
20 ResponsiveEd came to the Pine Bluff area of Arkansas.
21 Prior to our presentation details were listed by the
22 charter school office. That being said, I would like
23 to take a moment to highlight additional information
24 regarding the campus and the current students it
25 currently serves.

1 The numbers before you for 15-16 are reflective
2 of the October 1 eSchool accounts. Presently, there
3 are 96 students in grades 5-9; the campus has grown.
4 Presently, the economically disadvantaged is at 95%
5 for those students. And presently, 16% of the
6 students are in special education services. High
7 mobility for these students continues to be a major
8 point of concern as the staff works with them with
9 their academics. Staffing, teacher retention and
10 leadership in the first two years of the school prove
11 challenging, as well as parental engagement within
12 the community. This year, under the direction of Mr.
13 Arnold Robertson a new instructional team was
14 assembled with a vested interest within the community
15 itself and in particularly the success of the
16 students of Quest. Mr. Robertson and his staff, with
17 many years of teaching experience and administrative
18 experience as well, have greatly assisted in
19 providing the support for the campus this school year
20 and successful growth.

21 In a review of the literacy scores for 13-14 and
22 14-15, it appears that all local campuses serving
23 middle school grades, including Quest Middle School,
24 saw a drop in literacy scores when compared to the
25 Arkansas benchmark test of 13-14 and the PARCC test

1 of 14-15. Math scores for the same period show a
2 more pronounced drop in passing scores within all
3 local campuses serving middle school grades. Again,
4 though these are two different testing instruments
5 the downward trend is significant for all. Though it
6 appears here scores for Quest Pine Bluff are at the
7 bottom or floor of the analysis, we question what
8 type of growth those students actually have and what
9 is not presented on this graph is that growth.

10 At this time I would like to turn the
11 presentation over to Dr. Steve Bourgeois for review
12 of the actual student growth we are seeing on the
13 campus.

14 DR. BOURGEOIS: Good morning. Steven Bourgeois;
15 I am the executive director of Research, Evaluation
16 and Instruction at ResponsiveEd. I would like to
17 provide some context and interpretation of the most
18 recent PARCC results and provide insight into what we
19 can expect moving forward based on formative
20 assessments. Understandably, the Panel will
21 certainly privilege state assessment data over
22 formative assessments, like the NWEA MAP; however, in
23 light of the instability of measures in Arkansas,
24 three different tests in three areas at this point, I
25 think a stable measure, an interim measure is

1 beneficial. And I want to note the recent linking
2 study between the ACT Aspire and the NWEA MAP, and it
3 was a favorable correlation. They reported in
4 reading between 80 and 84 percent correlation or, as
5 they said, consistency rates, and for math between 77
6 and 86 percent. So this is a very good predictor of
7 success on the state assessment.

8 Worth noting also would be the cut-point,
9 according to this linking study. To get to the ready
10 or passing standard they suggest the 67th percentile
11 as the low end, particularly for reading, and
12 actually in math as well. So keep that in mind when
13 we look at our slides showing how the students are
14 doing at Quest Pine Bluff.

15 Teachers and administrators at Quest Pine Bluff
16 administer the MAP assessment three times a year, in
17 the fall, winter and spring. And they do this to
18 provide formative data to guide instruction, also to
19 provide an accurate measure of growth over time, and,
20 finally, a prediction of proficiency on the state
21 assessment.

22 And while the students have under-performed on
23 the state assessment, I'm going to demonstrate their
24 growth below that cut-point. And I'm going to
25 provide three -- actually, four different analyses.

1 First of all, a two-year percentile analysis cohort
2 -- those that started with us in the fall of 2013 and
3 also took the test two years later in the fall of
4 2014; also, a comparison to comparable ResponsiveEd
5 campuses with similar demographics. I believe the
6 Panel is familiar with the virtual comparison group
7 analysis of the NWEA. I'll be sharing those results,
8 as well. And I have passed out a supplement today
9 showing the percentage of who met the growth index in
10 the first two years of operation.

11 So my intention is not to overstate the growth
12 of these students through MAP, but as we can see with
13 the recent PARCC on the previous slide that's a lot
14 of ground along the road to travel and this is where
15 we started out. And I'm going to come back to this
16 slide and talk about it in a little bit more detail.

17 Okay. The floor effect -- this is the essence
18 of our argument. This is a term used to describe a
19 situation in which many subjects in a study measure
20 at or near the possible lower limit, or the floor.
21 This makes analysis difficult since it reduces the
22 amount of variation in the variable. And I think
23 it's best to see this effect, so this is -- these are
24 the state assessment scores in literacy and you see
25 the green line representing the passing rate and most

1 of the students -- nearly all of them are below that.
2 And really, if you analyze what's happening below --
3 this is not a growth line; it's really a normal
4 distribution, so we don't have students in groups
5 near the top or near the bottom, but it's relatively
6 consistent. What does this mean? Looking at math
7 it's even more telling because all of our students
8 who took the assessment, the PARCC, were below the
9 cut-point. And so the point I want to make is that
10 there is growth below that line and this is a
11 categorical measure though. When we look at the
12 students in the math, we do have some encouraging
13 signs. But I want to stress that in time the MAP
14 results are not enough, and I think the Panel would
15 agree that at some point it needs to translate to
16 passing the state assessment.

17 I do believe that the Panel is familiar with the
18 MAP methodology, so I'm not going to dwell on it.
19 But I want to mention that this is a computer adapted
20 assessment and it is nationally recognized. For this
21 analysis we filtered data to show students who sat
22 for two periods of growth. So not just all students
23 who tested; it's a true growth measure. It allows us
24 to compare it to the national norm and we analyze
25 separately for the three subject areas, and we'll

1 close with a virtual comparison analysis.

2 Okay. We have seen this slide before and this
3 would be a group of students who sat for both the
4 tests, language, math and reading. And as a
5 statistician, I will report sample sizes. We had 12
6 students in language who sat for both two years
7 apart, 19 in math, and 16 in reading. That is
8 important because when you're looking at a percentile
9 of the mean score that type of analysis is vulnerable
10 to outliers, so the sample size is important. But
11 the trend is clear for the students who have been
12 with us the longest that they have grown relative to
13 the national norm, and the national norm would be 50.
14 And so we're moving in the right direction. I would
15 argue that the reading score is the most impressive.
16 And if you take these in context, it really shows
17 that our students come to us about three grades --
18 three years below grade level.

19 And the other sheet that I gave you, I'd like to
20 spend a little time, but leave this slide up. This
21 is another measure that I believe the Panel is
22 familiar with. It's a growth index or the percentage
23 of students who met their anticipated growth based on
24 NWEA tables. And we chose these two growth periods
25 because they start taking the test in September and

1 the spring assessment of 2014 was in March, so that's
2 a good amount of time to show growth. And you can
3 see during those years that in language usage our
4 students approached 77%, meaning 70% of them met
5 their growth. They had at least a year's worth of
6 growth. In mathematics, that number is a little bit
7 less at 63 and then reading 73%. In the following
8 years, 2014 and 2015, same time period, I will say
9 that the fall assessment was in September and this
10 second assessment was a little bit later; we took
11 that in May. But we see a similar pattern: 61% met
12 their expected growth in language, almost 59% in
13 math, and 70% in reading.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: As a point of
15 clarification --

16 DR. BOURGEOIS: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- are you saying that
18 they have met their growth as in 100% of the growth,
19 not any beyond that?

20 DR. BOURGEOIS: This only says that they met or
21 exceeded, and so we're not reporting how much they
22 exceeded by. But they did meet the threshold.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

24 DR. BOURGEOIS: So is that a zero -- you're
25 welcome. This is analysis of comparative schools in

1 Texas. I don't want to put too fine a point on this
2 because these are Texas schools, but it is the same
3 measure. And we do have schools, particularly the
4 school in Dallas is 97% economically disadvantaged.
5 And we want to show that there is -- we have a
6 history of moving students forward. It's also
7 insightful just to see the gap between Quest Pine
8 Bluff -- and I believe it's even more pronounced in
9 math. So the campus in Dallas actually moved above
10 the national norm. But as I said before, we have a
11 ways to travel in Quest Pine Bluff. And then
12 remember what I said before about the linking study
13 and that 67% threshold; there is a way to travel.

14 I want to say a few words about the virtual
15 comparison methodology. We're using a growth period
16 of fall 2014 to spring 2015. That was the largest
17 sample we have and parallels our most recent PARCC
18 results. These students are first matched at campus
19 level variables, by eligibility, by free and reduced
20 lunch, and also urban or rural. And once they've
21 done that, they match students; specific subject,
22 grade level, starting RIT score, and then even number
23 of days between the assessments -- and that's very
24 important for a mobile population. So we are in fact
25 comparing apples to apples here. The way that it

1 works is that they randomly select 51 matches
2 nationally and make that comparison, and then it's
3 just a student-to-student comparison, and we'll see
4 the results of this analysis.

5 Normally, I don't make a slide so small but I
6 thought it was important to show the NWEA table.
7 This is not my analysis; they have our data and they
8 ran the data and gave us the results. It shows that
9 -- it's a very small dot in the top left-hand
10 quadrant -- that we are high growth and low
11 achievement. And just to report the number, 54% of
12 our students exceeded their virtual comparison and
13 the sample size for our students here was 39, and
14 this was in language usage. The next analysis is in
15 reading and we did a little bit better. We exceeded
16 the performance of our virtual comparison 63% of the
17 time and that sample size was 40 -- so once again
18 high growth, low achievement. And, finally, less
19 favorable, we were at 50% -- here, you can see it's
20 right on the line; that means that we broke even and
21 the comparison went with our virtual comparison
22 group. And that sample size was 41.

23 The people from NWEA suggested this was the most
24 powerful table to show how we're doing with specific
25 students. The top table just shows the initial score

1 of our students, and the top two bands are telling
2 because the first one says that 37% of our students
3 are in the first to ninth percentile. And so that is
4 very low. And then at the second band it means the
5 21% are in the 10th through 19th. So all-in-all, I
6 would say 58% of our students are starting out below
7 the 20th percentile nationally. Now the analysis
8 below shows how we did in comparison to the virtual
9 group. And that line, the black line going down
10 shows did we exceed it with those bands. And so this
11 is for language usage and it shows that we
12 outperformed our virtual comparison group, most
13 significantly at the lowest initial level of
14 achievement, and that means that we've done best with
15 our lowest performers.

16 The next analysis is for reading and it's a
17 similar story as far as where we start out; 58% are
18 actually starting below the 20th percentile. And the
19 results are a little bit mixed. We have some gaps
20 here but we did exceed our virtual comparison in the
21 top two bands, and then we have success in the middle
22 and then at the very top. But it's a less convincing
23 story but still overall for a sample of 40 students
24 we outperformed this virtual group.

25 And then, finally, math, 56% of our students

1 start out below the 28th percentile and that black
2 line lines up, meaning that we broke even. We were
3 comparable to this virtual group in math. And that's
4 a story that comes up again and again, relatively
5 speaking; our performance in math is lower than in
6 the other subjects. I think that's worth noting as
7 we move forward. However, when we look at the MAP
8 results we don't just tell the campus our students
9 need to do better in math; please tutor them.
10 Rather, we give them specific objectives and so the
11 MAP will give us six objectives in math; it's
12 operations in algebraic thinking, number and
13 operations, measurement and data, geometry,
14 statistics, and probability operations and algebraic
15 thinking. And so that's the way that MAP will drill
16 in. And there's even a pathway to study (inaudible),
17 one of additional tools that we have. And so
18 directly from the MAP results it can provide a
19 learning path for our students for this program.

20 The last thing I want to talk about is growth,
21 and I've been really talking about growth since I've
22 been up here. In statistics, there's a change model,
23 meaning two points in time, and there's a growth
24 model. And we're more confident when there are three
25 or more data points to show longitudinal growth and

1 this allows for a trajectory that is statistically
2 stable. And so we hope this -- this is the ACT
3 Aspire; we hope to see that for three years and on
4 into the future so that we don't have this situation
5 we've had now with multiple measures.

6 Once again, we recognize that success on MAP
7 alone is not enough and at some point this growth
8 needs to translate to passing of the state
9 assessment. I believe due to the strong correlation
10 with the ACT Aspire, MAP and ACT that the impressive
11 growth that we're seeing is eventually going to break
12 through this floor effect that I mentioned before and
13 our students will move into the passing category.

14 Dr. Duncan.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You have approximately one
16 minute.

17 DR. DUNCAN: Thank you. In summary, it is
18 evident that students are experiencing quality growth
19 as demonstrated by the MAP. Quest Middle School has
20 demonstrated success with low performing student
21 populations; however, reading, ELA, math will
22 continue to be area of focus, as well as language.
23 Wraparound strategies are in place from character ed.
24 to parent nights to weekly discussions with parents;
25 student incentive programs are in place;

1 transportation is being provided; SMART Board
2 technology is in place at this time for classroom
3 instruction; additional time on task is now in place
4 at the campus until 4:00 p.m. each day; and the staff
5 is experienced with a vested interest in the
6 community for the students that they serve regarding
7 our strategies.

8 Now looking at our interventions and looking at
9 the prospect of our amendment for early intervention
10 to provide that growth and less of an achievement gap
11 when we get students, we are bringing forth today the
12 amendment request to serve students in grades K
13 through 4. We expect that this early intervention
14 will allow us to close the achievement gap for
15 students of Quest Pine Bluff.

16 We've noted a lot of gains regarding growth
17 today. This is a campus that is only in its second
18 year of inception -- third year; excuse me. So we're
19 looking at two separate instruments for state data.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Anyone here to
22 speak in opposition?

23 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Duncan, you have 5
25 additional minutes.

1 DR. DUNCAN: Madam Chair, I'd just like to make
2 a few short comments and then we'll defer the rest of
3 the time to questions and answers. We're aware of
4 the length of the agenda today. You are here because
5 you're vested educators, and I am here because I have
6 a vested interest in this campus and in education in
7 this state. I appreciate your time today to allow us
8 to explain what is actually going on at the campus,
9 as well as growth that is there and evident that we
10 would like to continue. And it's with these points
11 in mind that I also ask you to remember back -- I was
12 not here for the November hearing, but there were
13 parents, there were students, and there were staff
14 members here, and they were very genuine in the love
15 for their school and the successes that they have
16 seen. We did not bring them back today because
17 they've already come before you. So we appreciate
18 your time and consideration. And with that I'd like
19 to waive the rest of the time. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Panel, we'll begin with
21 questions and comments.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: I can go.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Good morning. I want to start
25 off first looking at some of the information you

1 presented and some of the comparison reports. When
2 I'm looking at this immediately I'm looking at your
3 comparison -- let me just start off, I know you made
4 a statement about 16% special education.

5 DR. DUNCAN: Correct.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Is that correct? Are you
7 including 504 in that designation?

8 DR. DUNCAN: Yes, sir.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Because as I'm looking at
10 the data submitted to the Department, Cycle 3 of this
11 year, November 15th, it had special ed. as around
12 11.9%.

13 DR. DUNCAN: That was the most recent data that
14 was reported at the end of the semester.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I'll check into that. And
16 then the reason that's important to me is because I'm
17 trying to look at the demographics, looking at the
18 populations, and finding comparison schools. And it
19 appears to me that it does seem to be very closely
20 aligned with the Pine Bluff School District. Do you
21 agree with that, disagree with that, or --

22 DR. DUNCAN: The campus is located in Dollarway,
23 and so since Dollarway is Pine Bluff it's pulling
24 from all districts in that area, sir. We do have
25 some students from Watson Chapel also.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And I'm just trying to
2 look at the overall student makeup --

3 DR. DUNCAN: I understand.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: -- and it appears to me -- I know
5 it's apples to oranges, but as close as possible.
6 Any time you have two populations you're going to
7 have a variation. But it does appear to be similar
8 to the Pine Bluff School District population. Is
9 that a fair statement?

10 DR. DUNCAN: I would say that's a fair
11 statement.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And so in looking at that,
13 I'm trying to look at the results comparing your
14 scores to the Pine Bluff School District. And the
15 results that I have, if I just -- I have to go back
16 before the PARCC, but just looking at the PARCC
17 scores, and I would consider them to be substantially
18 lower than the performance to Pine Bluff. Is that a
19 fair statement?

20 DR. DUNCAN: I would say that is a fair
21 statement. I would like to also state that our
22 students took the test in the computerized format.
23 It is my understanding that several campuses or
24 several districts within the state received a waiver.
25 I do believe Pine Bluff may have been one of those.

1 And if so, that might also account for some of the
2 change and difference within the two. Also, last
3 year the campus was under the direction of a new
4 leader. That leader was not from the community.
5 You'll note that at that point in time Student ADA
6 also fell and enrollment fell, which is why we sought
7 long and hard to bring back a quality leader that is
8 certified, that has a vested interest in the
9 community to assist.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: I think that's a wise move. And
11 if I look -- referencing your slide -- if I could
12 look at probably about the third slide or so that you
13 had the comparison numbers? So aside from it being
14 an online test --

15 DR. DUNCAN: Literacy?

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

17 DR. DUNCAN: This one?

18 DR. SAUNDERS: No, one more. Oh, where you
19 were. Yes. In trying to look at -- you know --
20 prior to it being online or a paper test that the
21 performance does appear to be less. And I just say
22 that because as I look at the potential on the
23 amendment for expansion I'm all for expansion
24 whenever I can see that performance is occurring, and
25 so I try to compare it with the relative population.

1 And I have pause. And so I just -- I will invite you
2 to address that.

3 DR. DUNCAN: I would be glad to. For the
4 benchmark test scores, that was the campus's first
5 year of inception, the first year to bring a student
6 population together, the first year to build culture,
7 which was extremely important. Leadership was
8 difficult, as well as finding staff that was
9 qualified that we could retain and keep over time was
10 difficult. I think all of those factors together
11 helped to build the -- in looking at the benchmark
12 scores, I don't think it was one thing in particular.
13 I think there are commonalities within young charters
14 in general your first year. But certainly, a young
15 charter within an area of the state that is
16 struggling and grappling to show students growth and
17 success.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

20 MS. SMITH: One thing I do want to acknowledge
21 that this is a very young school and that you're in
22 your third year. And one of the statements that was
23 made was that growth eventually has to show academic
24 grade level work. And that made me just pause and
25 think about for the last two days how many times

1 we've seen NWEA growth, and a lot of times it's been
2 in schools that have been in place for many years and
3 we're still seeing growth, but we're still seeing
4 academic stress. So I want to note that at this
5 point I think it's very appropriate that your growth
6 shows positive results and I want to encourage you to
7 continue that growth. But the fact that the
8 statement was actually made, at some point this
9 growth has to lead to students performing at academic
10 levels. I think you hit that one right where it
11 needs to be, so I appreciate that.

12 One of the things I want to ask is how exactly
13 is ResponsiveEd assisting the school? Because they
14 acknowledged when he was talking about the growth
15 model was "we're not where we want to be." And I
16 appreciate the fact that you actually showed
17 comparison schools where you were not at the top and
18 acknowledged the fact that you're not where you want
19 to be. So, one, how is that organization assisting
20 the school?

21 And, two, some more specific information
22 regarding your actual curriculum. I noted in your
23 paperwork where it talks about a computer-based and
24 paper-based curriculum.

25 And then I would also like to hear from Mr.

1 Robertson, just because I know you, but I really want
2 to hear about when you went into the school as a new
3 leader this year what did you see that had to change
4 and what is it that you needed to tackle to put this
5 school going in a different direction? Okay. So
6 kind of -- those are my points.

7 DR. DUNCAN: Put it all together?

8 MS. SMITH: Put it all together now.

9 DR. DUNCAN: I will do my very best.

10 ResponsiveEd helps to provide a lot of services for
11 the campus. We provide a child nutrition supervisor
12 for the campus to help bring appropriate nutrition to
13 students that may not be having those meals daily.
14 We provide special education services and supervision
15 to monitor what's going on on the campus level to
16 insure that it's meeting all required regs, but also
17 just to look individually at the students at the
18 small campus level. We provide also financing.
19 We've provided additional technical materials that
20 were needed on the campus. We've provided a number
21 of instructional things for the campus, including
22 support from professional development staff first
23 that have come down from our corporate office in
24 Dallas, as well as providing time and effort and
25 budget for those staffers to attend state workshops

1 and state mandated things, additional instructional
2 items that the state provides that often young
3 charters don't have the money to provide travel for
4 and to. We also work closely with other staffers.
5 We have had Barbara Cox from APSRC in the campus and
6 have supported through a number of initiatives in
7 that manner. There are several things going on on
8 the campus curriculum-wise and several things that
9 are being used. And for that I'd like to turn that
10 over to Mr. Robertson; he knows best what is working
11 with his students and what is being utilized, with
12 your permission.

13 MR. ROBERTSON: I'd like to say good morning to
14 the Panel. Thank you once again for the opportunity
15 to come and share with you about my school.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Robertson, if you'll
17 state your name for the record please.

18 MR. ROBERTSON: Yes. My name is Arnold
19 Robertson. In order to really talk to you about what
20 we are doing there at the school, I really need to
21 kind of set a foundation about the community there
22 that we're working in. Because our community is
23 struggling, as you can see from the data; even the
24 surrounding districts are having their issues, as
25 well. But I want to see our school be the nucleus of

1 our community, and I say that because I'm from Pine
2 Bluff and so I work the hardest for it to be the
3 nucleus of our community. And hopefully by it being
4 that nucleus we can cause other districts around us
5 to kind of open their eyes and we can all -- can
6 compete to make our students the best. When I first
7 got to Quest, and you noted the curriculum that we
8 use there, the curriculum that we use -- that we do
9 use there is called a Quest -- it's a Quest model
10 that is research-based, Common Core State Standards
11 aligned. We also have pacing guides with it.
12 However, that curriculum was designed for students to
13 be able to be self-motivated to self-teach, self-
14 learn. But when I got there I noted that our
15 students were so low that we needed to have some good
16 strong instruction to go along with that. And so the
17 first thing that I asked was how could we get good
18 certified teachers in place, such that we could
19 receive that instruction? And that's what has taken
20 place and that's the reason for the turnover rate
21 from last year to this year. So we have -- at this
22 point we have six certified -- well, five -- six
23 total teachers, five of which are certified, one
24 highly qualified, and that's in mathematics, and --
25 but we're making the gains. As you can see from the

1 data, reading -- we're making the most gains in
2 reading, language arts is second, mathematics is
3 last. Research says that if you will -- if you would
4 get your kids to read, then the math will come along.
5 So we're trying to get them to that point to where
6 the math will come. But in essence, our -- what
7 we're doing to have made that gain there is our RTI
8 program is in place, utilizing our RIT scores. We
9 have -- we've gotten our tiers from our RIT scores,
10 and each time that we've tested we have realigned our
11 tiers based upon the data that we're seeing from our
12 RIT scores. We're utilizing our technology. We have
13 finally gotten our promethean boards installed.
14 Chromebooks arrived day before yesterday; I haven't
15 had an opportunity to get them out and get those to
16 going. But we feel that with the technology that we
17 have gained we'll be able to see even more growth in
18 our data.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

20 MS. PFEFFER: Yes. Good morning. I wanted to
21 just extend a little bit on Ms. Smith's question
22 regarding the growth data, because you do -- the data
23 does show a significant percentage of students who
24 are meeting growth goals. But I want to go back to
25 the statement about the cut point for meeting the

1 standard is at about the 67th percentile. So do you
2 -- and you may have shared that and I missed it. Do
3 you have kind of an overall percent of -- how many
4 students actually grew, made that growth to where
5 they would be meeting that growth total that would
6 then indicate on the ACT Aspire whether they would be
7 at that meeting expectations?

8 DR. BOURGEOIS: Well, really, the only way to
9 analyze that is to look at the ACT results because
10 we're talking about a prediction, but results already
11 exist.

12 MS. PFEFFER: So with your NWEA, how many of
13 them were performing -- how many of them made that
14 growth that would be at a standard to where you would
15 be feeling confident that, you know, if this was --
16 what are we predicting as far as the results from
17 this year?

18 DR. BOURGEOIS: What I'm saying is that we have
19 a -- if we look overall at a percentile, we're still
20 low. But we have students -- now we have a
21 distribution and students particularly in reading
22 that are very close to the cut point, and even above.
23 And in math we have a group, a bigger group than I
24 expected that are closing in but they're not in there
25 yet. And so that's why I'm glad that we're talking

1 in February and not a couple of months from now, so
2 there is some room for that. But I have looked at
3 those tiers most recent.

4 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And then I guess my next
5 focus would be on the amendment request, you know,
6 because as I listen, I understand you all -- you said
7 this is your third year and you've had a change in
8 leadership, and, you know, it does take time to bring
9 things together. But in the amendment request,
10 adding additional grades at the lower end and at the
11 upper end of grades, and in looking at your -- the
12 teachers that are going to be needed as you expand
13 those grades, especially at the high school level
14 where you're going to have, you know, so many
15 different needs in terms of certifications or just
16 expertise areas to have people to fill all that. You
17 all are really working and focusing on data, focusing
18 at looking at every child and are they growing and
19 improving. But I have some questions and concerns
20 about your current capacity to be adding as
21 aggressively as you are. I do realize that when you
22 have students and they're in your district the longer
23 you have them the more impact you can have. So I
24 completely understand that. But I would just -- I
25 have pause when I'm thinking about are you -- do you

1 have the capacity right now -- have you got
2 everything fully in place where you can now focus on
3 adding all of those grades. So, can you talk a
4 little bit about that?

5 DR. DUNCAN: I feel that a lot of the center
6 around what goes on at Quest deals with community
7 involvement and community buy-in. And I think that
8 in and of itself is going to be something that
9 parents look to for security, look to for
10 consistency, because people working at the school
11 have an immediate buy-in as to what goes on within
12 their community. And so in looking at it from that
13 aspect and then looking at the request for the
14 amendment for growth, that all ties in together.
15 Parents are seeking options and that's why students
16 are attending the school in the first place, for
17 whatever reason. And I respect your comments and I
18 also appreciate the fact that we all recognize that
19 earlier intervention is most important. And taking
20 students in at 5th grade has not been able to allow
21 for the growth we would like to see over time to
22 build that achievement with students we serve.

23 MS. PFEFFER: And you are currently approved for
24 -- I was going to go back -- is it 5 through 12?

25 DR. DUNCAN: We are currently approved for 5

1 through 12.

2 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

3 DR. DUNCAN: We brought before you today an
4 amendment request for K-4, but not a cap increase.
5 Our cap increase -- our cap is set at 460 and we are
6 doing very slow growth for a particular reason for
7 that. And so adding grades does not mean we will
8 have volume by grades; it means we will have slow
9 growth by grades.

10 MS. PFEFFER: And how many current 9th grade
11 students do you have? I found it.

12 DR. DUNCAN: Seventeen. I did not have that in
13 front of me.

14 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. That's all I have right
15 now.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning. I too share some of
18 the concerns Ms. Pfeffer had brought up and I had a
19 few things prepared from our study of the report. If
20 I understand the amendment request correctly, by the
21 year 2023-2024 you'll be just a K-8 campus with that
22 previous year of seniors rolling off and you'll be
23 only a K-8 campus eventually. Am I correct in that?

24 DR. DUNCAN: I would like to clarify that, if I
25 may.

1 DR. GOTCHER: Sure. Because that -- I was a
2 little confused in that, but please. Thank you.

3 DR. DUNCAN: Understandably so. But in looking
4 at the growth at the school and what's going on with
5 the growth at this time, what we would like to do,
6 with permission, would be next year add K-2 and go 5-
7 10. The following year it would be K-3, 5-11. The
8 following year, again, it would be K-4 and then 5-12.
9 This follows also a more general structure for growth
10 that has been successful within other charters within
11 the state.

12 DR. GOTCHER: So by the year 2023-2024 you would
13 be a K-12 campus?

14 DR. DUNCAN: That is correct.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. So with that statement
16 being made, Ms. Davis, would that just be a change in
17 their amendment since that was not in the print that
18 we received? It's not a problem, I'm sure, but --

19 MS. DAVIS: No. If that's what they're
20 requesting today and that's what -- if you choose to
21 approve it, then that's what they would be held to.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Thank you. May I follow-
23 up, Madam Chair?

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

25 DR. GOTCHER: All right. Moving into the

1 preparation -- I think you had addressed the question
2 regarding capacity for hiring the teachers with Ms.
3 Pfeiffer. Having been an elementary principal for
4 many years, professional development is very
5 important, especially on the literacy. All of it is
6 important, but especially on the literacy side. So I
7 have a question regarding the training of the
8 teachers regarding the phonics-based guided reading.
9 And, secondly, I'm familiar with the science 5E
10 model, so talk about from now until the fall of 2016
11 what preparations are being done to prepare for a
12 strong guided reading program in this Science 5E
13 model.

14 DR. DUNCAN: I can say from my perspective that
15 I will help supply whatever support is needed for
16 that professional development. And I would like to
17 have Mr. Robertson speak to exactly what has gone on
18 with professional development so far on the campus
19 this year.

20 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Thank you.

21 MR. ROBERTSON: Once again, Arnold Robertson
22 here. As it relates to professional development to
23 this point, we've done extensive PD for our RTI, how
24 to work with students with disabilities, cultural
25 diversity, and some differentiated instruction in

1 which we're looking for even more in that area.
2 Upcoming professional development that we're looking
3 at is de-escalation training and how to engage
4 students in the learning environment, and that's with
5 our current staff. And so I guess to address your
6 question -- how would we handle those for the new
7 teachers that would be coming in?

8 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Who will be doing the
9 training, and then speak more about the 5E science
10 model.

11 MR. ROBERTSON: Right. As far as those coming
12 in, I would have to kind of research that because I
13 -- you know -- as far as what -- we do a lot of PD on
14 our campus and a lot of it we call in from RES. They
15 have trainers, as well, that come in and help -- and
16 assist us with that. And then the 5E model, that's
17 kind of a new model to me.

18 DR. GOTCHER: That's fair.

19 MR. ROBERTSON: Very new. And so we're yet
20 looking at that 5E model, because it's actually new
21 to my science teacher. However, we are aware that
22 the 5E model is engage, explore, explain, and
23 extending -- or elaborating and evaluate. But, you
24 know, as I've stated, we are looking at PD in that
25 area as well.

1 DR. GOTCHER: And do we have any -- and if you
2 don't, I understand; I don't mean to get too picky.
3 But do we have any indication that this 5E model is
4 aligned to our Arkansas K-12 or K-8 science standards
5 at this time? Do we have any idea, Ms. Smith?

6 MS. SMITH: No.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. All right. And I think
8 that's it for now. Thank you.

9 MR. ROBERTSON: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions or
11 comments from the Panel?

12 I did visit the school; had a great visit with
13 Mr. Robertson. I'm encouraged by some of the changes
14 that have taken place with your leadership and
15 hearing that the promethean boards are in place now.
16 They were in a package when I was there.

17 MR. ROBERTSON: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And the Chromebooks have
19 been ordered. So I think my concern is that we're
20 three years in and on the day I was there teachers
21 were writing on butcher paper, which I'm okay with
22 because making charts with kids -- you know -- I'm
23 just all about anchor charts. But when there were
24 not the usual equipment in a classroom, the usual
25 tools, three years in, that kind of concerns me about

1 the preparation, which also concerns me about the
2 preparation for K-2. Could you kind of speak to
3 that?

4 MR. ROBERTSON: Yes, ma'am. That was a concern
5 of mine as well when I arrived to the campus. And so
6 I immediately -- that was one of the first requests
7 that I made was for us to get those promethean boards
8 in place. And, however, they are in place and the
9 teachers already had experience in using those
10 promethean boards. As a matter of fact, our students
11 are using the promethean boards as we speak. So we
12 have the capacity to move forward with the technology
13 age; it's just a matter of getting it in place such
14 for the students to use.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Another question
16 that I had -- and this is for Dr. Duncan -- you
17 talked about the challenge of a 5-8 campus in taking
18 on the highly mobile students. I would just remind
19 you those are highly mobile for the traditional
20 public school that they're bouncing back and forth
21 into, as well. So I -- and we've heard that
22 consistently now for three days. I think that kind
23 of speaks to some of the issues in our state. But
24 with that said and with it pretty well being an equal
25 variable for all, I need to have a better

1 understanding of, when I go back and look at that
2 data, why your middle school is challenged to meet
3 the needs of kids when those same kids are in those
4 other schools, or children just like them, children
5 with the same challenges are in those other schools,
6 why your scores are so drastically lower.

7 DR. DUNCAN: And I appreciate and respect your
8 comments. I do think the scores you're looking at
9 from the PARCC are relative to last school year when,
10 again, we had someone not from the community, not
11 from the area, not having an understanding of the
12 struggles that students go through from this area.
13 And I can't help but feel that there's an appearance
14 of a correlation there, honestly.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And that makes sense. So
16 tell me what's going to be different in the next two
17 years.

18 DR. DUNCAN: I think at this point in time what
19 we need to do as leaders is look at the growth we
20 have and see, one, how to take that growth further;
21 see how I can support the campus in my capacity to do
22 what needs to be done to expand that growth up into
23 student achievement.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is that something that's
25 going to be done or is being done currently?

1 DR. DUNCAN: When I spoke of myself personally,
2 I am new to this position, so I have to speak to that
3 in future. This campus has shown a lot of growth
4 with the students it serves consistently. And,
5 again, I totally understand your comments and respect
6 them.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And my final question was:
8 your capacity -- let me flip back to my -- the number
9 was 460 -- can you have 460 students in your current
10 facility?

11 DR. DUNCAN: Not at the current facility. No.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And so if you go to full
13 capacity you would be looking to expand facilities --

14 DR. DUNCAN: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- or alternative or --

16 DR. DUNCAN: There is additional room at the
17 location that we're at. We have not built it out.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

19 DR. DUNCAN: But there is additional room right
20 beside us at that location. I believe Mr. Robertson
21 would also like to speak to parent involvement, if he
22 may.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

24 MR. ROBERTSON: As a comment to your previous
25 question concerning, you know, what we're going to do

1 differently, I'd like to speak about our parent
2 component very briefly. And it's a component that I
3 believe that we can not only use now, but use
4 forwardly as we move into our elementary as well. We
5 have a parent component I'm very proud of at this
6 point. Our parents are meeting every Tuesday night,
7 not once a month, not once every-other-week but every
8 Tuesday night to talk about the concerns that they're
9 seeing with their students in our school. And we are
10 listening to our parents and making the moves that
11 will help not only assess their children, their
12 students that are at school, but also assist them at
13 home and their communities. They're talking about
14 the things that they want to see to help their
15 students academically. We're sharing with them,
16 "Here are some on-site -- online things that you can
17 do with your students at home that parallel, such as
18 Study Island, that parallel with the results that
19 we're seeing in math. They're also talking with us
20 about other needs that they as parents have that they
21 don't know how to meet, and we are helping them with
22 those services. By doing that, we are assisting them
23 and assisting their student to be successful. And
24 with us doing that I think that has had a great
25 impact on not only our numbers increasing but also

1 the attitudes on which our students are coming to
2 school; they're better prepared when they come to
3 school and they're able to concentrate when they come
4 to school because some things have been done at home
5 that has bettered their life.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have one final question.
7 I think my struggle is I did not see a level of rigor
8 in the instruction. And you and I walked through
9 classrooms and we actually witnessed some instruction
10 that I didn't feel was accurate. And so could you
11 address, is that being corrected?

12 MR. ROBERTSON: Yes, ma'am. That has been
13 corrected.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

15 MR. ROBERTSON: Yes, ma'am.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. That makes me
17 feel better. Thank you. Ms. Barnes.

18 MS. BARNES: Good morning, and thank you all for
19 being here. It's always good to see you, Dr. Duncan.

20 DR. DUNCAN: You also, ma'am.

21 MS. BARNES: I want to say that I -- you know --
22 I'm fully aware of the request, the needs, and growth
23 is not disputed. Throughout the morning we've talked
24 about you moving in the right direction. And my
25 concerns are centered around the timing of this

1 request based on what is current reality and looking
2 at expanding. I understand the reasoning for it --

3 DR. DUNCAN: Thank you.

4 MS. BARNES: -- but what I don't see and what I
5 have not been able to wrap my mind around is why
6 right now? Because I need more evidence, especially
7 when I'm looking at math. I mean, you know, it's
8 something that we have to, you know, just address
9 that while you may be moving in the right direction,
10 depending on the mode of transportation we take we
11 can get there. But will we get there in time? If we
12 go by car, bus, boat, plane, we'll get there -- but
13 we'll get there at different rates, different speeds.
14 And so that's the same way it is with children, and I
15 get that. But my thing is will we get there in time
16 for our intended purpose of the trip. So I need -- I
17 don't even know what evidence I need you to give me
18 that would make me feel more comfortable right now.
19 I believe that you do need time; I think that's what
20 I'm trying to say. I believe you need time to
21 establish whether or not this growth is going to
22 continue so that I could feel comfortable with
23 bringing more children, lower grades -- and I know
24 that you need to start lower so that you can have
25 children for a longer period of time. But being

1 three years in, it's not there yet for me. So, I
2 mean, can you help me with that, just -- and if not,
3 I mean, you know, if current reality is what we're
4 dealing with, that's great and I understand that.
5 But I guess I just felt I needed to say that. I
6 don't have to pull up numbers or anything like that
7 because we've had that conversation. I'm not trying
8 to be discouraging; I'm simply -- I'm actually trying
9 to be encouraging. But I think what my concern is is
10 that right now, three years in, and with the
11 performance and even the growth both in math and
12 literacy it's not substantial enough to continue to
13 push forward. So we need something that's going to
14 be consistent so that we understand -- or I
15 understand -- let me say it like that -- I don't mean
16 to speak for the Panel -- I'm simply saying that for
17 me everything I'm hearing -- you know -- I hear some
18 good, I hear some things that there's room for
19 improvement. But I don't hear that -- and I know you
20 can't guarantee me that the babies would be safe and
21 cared for and comfortable and learn and grow faster
22 than they are growing where they are right now. So I
23 need to give you time, is what I'm saying. I need
24 you to take some time so that you have something that
25 is -- that I can work with. But I did need to state

1 that and I see I have someone that wants to help me
2 with my dilemma.

3 MR. BAUMANN: I knew that was going to happen.

4 MS. BARNES: Okay. Okay. No, I need some help.

5 MR. BAUMANN: My name is Chris Baumann, B-a-u-m-
6 a-n-n, and I serve as general counsel for
7 ResponsiveEd, as well as working with the business
8 development there. I've been there since we started
9 in 1999. What I want to do, Ms. Barnes, is try to
10 give you -- hopefully explain why we're asking for
11 this request now, why are we coming here for this
12 amendment now after only two years, and why do we
13 think it's appropriate.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Baumann, if you'll
15 grab that microphone.

16 MR. BAUMANN: Because I'm tall.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No. Because the general
18 -- the viewing public can't hear you if you're not in
19 the microphone.

20 MR. BAUMANN: Okay. Excellent. So when we
21 started off coming to Pine Bluff -- this is our third
22 year, so two years ago, and then -- what we wanted to
23 try to show you is what we found. We're getting
24 these students two to three grade levels below their
25 chronological grade. And now we have two years of

1 academic growth to be able to come and show you, say,
2 all right, here -- according to the MAP data, we know
3 that these students have been with us, have
4 experienced one or more years of academic growth per
5 year. We think that's phenomenal. We're excited
6 about that. We think that's a phenomenal job with
7 what we've done with those students and we truly
8 believe that if those students stay with us that
9 growth, as they get into 8th, 9th, 10th grade is
10 going to translate in them passing those assessment
11 exams. So that growth, we're confident it will
12 relate to achievement on the exam. But now we're in
13 a situation with our current grade levels served,
14 between 5 through 12, that we're always going to be
15 in a situation where we're receiving this new crop of
16 students at 5th grade. Right? And so we're always
17 arguably, at least for these first three years, we're
18 always going to be receiving students two, three
19 grade levels below. We're going to do a phenomenal
20 job teaching them and they're going to have more than
21 a year of growth, where before they've had about a
22 half-year of growth maybe per year. And so during
23 this middle school year, year after year, even though
24 we make more improvements to hopefully increase that
25 already good growth, you'll be coming back and saying

1 growth is good at middle school, achievement is poor,
2 now your achievement and growth at high school is
3 good, because we've had them long enough to be able
4 to have that translate. So the purpose of the
5 request after having two years of academic results is
6 to come to you and say, "You know what" -- we have
7 these programs in place in other states as well. We
8 have the infrastructure in place. We have the
9 professional development to be able to put in place
10 this K-2 right away. We don't want to have to play
11 catch-up with these students who are in 5th grade and
12 6th grade. We'd prefer to be able to get them in
13 kindergarten, 2nd grade, as well, and not have to
14 fight that battle all along. So the rationale, we
15 weren't trying to come to you and say, "We don't feel
16 like we have a proven academic track record; we're
17 asking you to take a leap of faith." We're actually
18 not -- we don't want you to take a leap of faith. We
19 want to be able to come in front of you and say, "We
20 have established academic growth that's exceptional
21 for these students who are low-performing, and we
22 want to be able to serve them at a younger grade
23 level so we don't have to fight this battle all the
24 time." Because two years from now, when we come up
25 for renewal, perhaps what's going to end up happening

1 is this: we'll be able to demonstrate to you that the
2 students have been with us for five years, they're
3 now achieving, but the students we're getting at 5th
4 and 6th grade are still high-growth low-achieving.
5 That's the rationale that we had going into it. We
6 think we have a proven program; we think it's
7 exciting. We think that we're doing great things and
8 we think what they're going to implement is going to
9 improve that growth, as well. That was the rationale
10 that we were thinking about in going into it.

11 MS. BARNES: Okay. Thank you so much. I
12 appreciate that. That's a much clearer explanation
13 of your rationale for me. And again I -- like I
14 said, I do not dispute that there is some growth. My
15 concerns I've already, you know, relayed them. So
16 thank you so much.

17 MR. BAUMANN: Okay.

18 DR. DUNCAN: And I guess in short, Ms. Barnes,
19 we'd like to build more consistency earlier, no
20 matter what vehicle or car comes to us, and do that
21 at earlier grades.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

23 MS. SMITH: Okay. Here's where I'm struggling
24 and I want to give the opportunity to -- okay. We've
25 said we have a proven program; that was the last

1 statement that was made. But when specifically asked
2 what is the strategic instructional curriculum plan
3 for K-2 regarding reading, I didn't hear anything.
4 When asked about professional development for your
5 current school I heard lots of PD that wasn't
6 necessarily a laser-like focus on instructional
7 practice or curriculum work. And so my struggle
8 right now is if we're going to improve academics
9 we've got to improve classroom instruction and make
10 sure our teachers have the resources needed. And so
11 give me another try to tell me what is the academic
12 plan that you have in place to support me voting yes
13 today for you to have kindergartners, 1st graders and
14 2nd graders in your school next year.

15 DR. DUNCAN: And so just in looking at the
16 discussion today, I think what might behoove not only
17 the campus but myself is to enter into a
18 comprehensive study of looking at the growth of the
19 students that we currently have and looking at the
20 types of strategies that align with the Common Core,
21 not only that we already use in other campuses that
22 we serve but specifically for students in Pine Bluff
23 that need to show that academic growth. I don't want
24 to tell you something that's not true; that's not me.
25 And I don't want to tell you something that's not

1 going to work. And so my honest gut feeling is
2 taking a look at the situation at the campus level,
3 taking a look at the growth we have seen, and those
4 strategies and curriculums that align specifically
5 with the situation, and the learning going on
6 presently.

7 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you for that response.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Are you withdrawing your
9 request for an amendment?

10 MR. BAUMANN: No, ma'am.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I have on the --
12 signed up for public comment was Curtis Shack. Mr.
13 Shack, do you plan to make a comment?

14 MR. SHACK: No.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Any additional
16 questions or comments? Mr. Lester.

17 MR. LESTER: I looked at your Title 1
18 application and y'all are targeted assisted at this
19 time. And I was just -- your percentages for your
20 free and reduced lunch is 96%. Have you looked at
21 going school-wide? And I know you're familiar with
22 that, Mr. Robertson. What would be some plans for
23 you to look at that to serve that amount of students
24 that you, the percentage that you have?

25 MR. ROBERTSON: We just had that conversation

1 and our plan is for next year, if I'm correct --
2 we've started that process for us to be school-wide
3 on that.

4 MR. LESTER: Okay.

5 MR. ROBERTSON: Yes, sir.

6 MR. LESTER: All right. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions or
8 comments?

9 Ms. Davis, do you have any remaining issues
10 regarding this request?

11 MS. DAVIS: I don't.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: At this time I'll accept a
13 motion.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: I have one clarification before
15 we go on. For the amendment, the only thing included
16 is the expansion of the grades. Is that correct?

17 DR. DUNCAN: Yes, sir.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: That was the only one. Okay.

19 MR. BAUMANN: It's only for an expansion for K-
20 4, not an expansion on the cap. And then if you're
21 curious about the anticipated rollout from year to
22 year, as we talked about earlier --

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Baumann, no one in the
24 general public can hear you at all.

25 MR. BAUMANN: So on the -- so the amendment

1 request is K-4 --

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A little closer to the
3 microphone, please.

4 MR. BAUMANN: Let me do this.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You can take it out if you
6 need to.

7 MR. BAUMANN: The amendment request would be for
8 K-4, would not be an increase in the cap for students
9 served. And then on the thing that we had actually
10 revised was the anticipated rollout of grades served,
11 what year would be serving which grades. And so
12 that's been revised. But the amendment request
13 stands at expanded by K-4.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you for the
16 clarification.

17 DR. GOTCHER: And, Ms. Davis, the performance
18 hearing does not require any action since we invited
19 them to give the performance hearing based upon our
20 November meeting. So that was just simply for --

21 MS. DAVIS: Right.

22 DR. GOTCHER: -- the hearing. Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

24 MS. PFEFFER: I'm ready to make a motion. I
25 would make a motion to take no action regarding the

1 academic performance, but that the amendment request
2 would be denied.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have a motion by Ms.
5 Pfeiffer to take no action on the academic status and
6 that the amendment is denied, seconded by Dr.
7 Saunders. Any discussion? All those in favor?

8 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? The motion
10 has passed.

11 If you'll wait just a moment, there will be a
12 written response.

13 DR. DUNCAN: Thank you, ma'am.

14 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeiffer.

16 MS. PFEFFER: Yes. And I am glad to have the
17 opportunity to explain why I made the motion that I
18 did. Your charter is for two more years and so you
19 can come back for renewal at that time. And I just
20 feel like that at that time it would be a more
21 appropriate time to really look at the expansion into
22 the lower grades. I feel like right now with your
23 expansion into the high school grades with your --
24 with the performance issues that you've dealt with
25 and that you're working to turn things around and

1 make improvements that you really do have your hands
2 full right now. And that the capacity you're going
3 to need as you add high school grades is already
4 going to be challenging. So I made the motion to
5 allow you time to put in place the infrastructure and
6 stability needed to have capacity for future
7 expansion. And I believe right now to also add on
8 elementary grades could be problematic to your -- and
9 be detrimental to your future success.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

11 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion, along the
12 same lines as Ivy just stated, that it is still a
13 developing charter since you're still moving up into
14 the high school years. And I would like to see the
15 student growth that y'all brought evidence of
16 translate into more -- with student achievement
17 before we go expanding any further.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I voted in favor of the
20 motion. I would feel more comfortable with the
21 expansion after the performance is similar or greater
22 than entities with like populations.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

24 MS. SMITH: I voted for the amendment. I noted
25 that this is a young school that is showing growth.

1 However, I did not feel that the school has a
2 strategic academic plan to serve K-4 at this time. I
3 also want to encourage the school to continue to
4 strengthen their current professional development
5 plan regarding instructional practices. And I am
6 excited about your new principal there and I know
7 that he'll do good things there. And possibly when
8 you come back we can really seriously have a well-
9 developed plan. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

11 MS. BARNES: I voted in favor to deny the
12 amendment at this time because I feel -- well, I'm
13 actually uncomfortable with the expansion. I feel
14 it's premature due to the current reality and the
15 fact that the charter is in early development. I
16 believe time allows for growth to be sustained.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

18 DR. GOTCHER: I also voted for the amendment --
19 to deny the amendment. I feel the academic and the
20 leadership components have great potential; yet, I'm
21 just not confident at this point that the capacity
22 for expansion in the lower grades is in place. But
23 my strong encouragement is to work towards -- as Ms.
24 Smith said, towards a strategic comprehensive plan
25 for a K-4 curriculum aligned to the Arkansas

1 standards.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

3 MR. LESTER: I voted for the amendment also --
4 against the amendment. I feel growth has been
5 demonstrated through the formative assessment data
6 and the leadership stability. However, I am
7 uncomfortable at this time with the amendment for
8 expansion.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

10 MS. LIWO: I voted for the motion. There is
11 student growth here; however, I think this is a young
12 charter which just needs some additional time to show
13 improvement with regard to student performance.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Duncan, I hope you
15 will take this as a vote of confidence in moving
16 forward, and when you're ready come back to see us.

17 DR. DUNCAN: I very much do so. I appreciate
18 the Panel, your thoughts and comments today, and you
19 will be seeing us. So thank you so much.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

21 We'll take a 10-minute break.

22 (BREAK: 9:52 - 10:12 A.M.)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Just for the audience,
24 we're taking a few moments to look over the documents
25 that have just been placed in our hands, if you'll

1 give us just a moment.

2 (OFF THE RECORD)

3 (BACK ON THE RECORD)

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

5 AMENDMENT: QUEST MIDDLE SCHOOL OF WEST LITTLE ROCK

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Action item 2, Ms. Boyd,
7 has been pulled from the agenda. Is that correct?

8 MS. BOYD: That is correct, Madam Chair.

9 A-3: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

10 AMENDMENT: eSTEM PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

11 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Panel Member Jennifer
12 Liwo recused from participating in this action item.)

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then we are ready to
14 proceed with Action Item 3.

15 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Request for
16 Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Amendment:
17 eStem Public Charter School.

18 On December 10, 2007, the State Board of
19 Education approved the applications for eStem
20 Elementary, eStem Middle School, and eStem High
21 School that merged into one charter, as approved by
22 the State Board during the renewal process on March
23 14, 2011. The charter is approved to serve students
24 in grades K-12 with a maximum enrollment of 1,462.
25 Representatives of eStem are appearing before the

1 Charter Authorizing Panel to request amendments to
2 the current charter.

3 Madam Chair, would you like Jennifer Davis to
4 remind you of the hearing procedures?

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I would. Thank you.

6 MS. BOYD: Thank you.

7 MS. DAVIS: Okay. The hearing procedures for
8 the rest of the day are actually going to be the
9 same. So they are going to be that all members who
10 wish to testify, except for attorneys, will need to
11 be sworn in by the Chair. The -- no, the school is
12 going to have 20 minutes to make a presentation,
13 followed by 20 minutes of opposition, and then you'll
14 have 5 minutes for rebuttal by the school, at which
15 point then you can make your questions. Any other
16 questions?

17 MS. BOYD: Madam Chair, from the school we have
18 John Bacon who is the chief executive officer for
19 eStem Public Charter School.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: At this time I'm going to
21 ask all representatives from eStem Public Charter
22 School, including all the people who have signed up
23 for public comment -- if you would, please stand and
24 raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that
25 the testimony you're about to give shall be the

1 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

2 (ALL WITNESSES ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

4 MR. BACON: I understand there's some microphone
5 issues here, so --

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. And if you will --
7 if you want to take it off of the stand, that's fine.
8 But our viewing public can't hear unless you're
9 speaking directly into the microphone.

10 MR. BACON: I may do that.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Mr. Bacon,
12 you're recognized.

13 MR. BACON: Thank you. I'm John Bacon; I'm the
14 chief executive officer for eStem Public Charter
15 School. It's such a privilege for me to be here
16 today on behalf of our students, our parents, our
17 faculty and staff, our board, and all of those who
18 support us in the community. And so it's such a
19 privilege to present these proposed amendments to our
20 charter to you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Bacon, I'm going to
22 encourage you to get the microphone up there.

23 MR. BACON: Hold it right here. Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, please. Thank you.

25 MR. BACON: Okay. So let me give you an

1 overview of the presentation. We're going to start
2 with just a brief history of our schools, tell you
3 about the eStem impact, present the amendment
4 request, and then, finally, give you some anticipated
5 outcomes that we think these amendments will provide.

6 Just for the brief history, I think Ms. Boyd has
7 shared a little bit of that. We opened in 2008, in
8 July, with grades K-9 serving 840 students. We've
9 had a couple of expansions, an additional building
10 that we moved into. So, at present our maximum
11 capacity is 1462 students and we've been serving that
12 number of students for about the last four or five
13 years. We graduated four classes. When we began we
14 started with 84 9th graders. Since that time we've
15 had four classes, so 436 students are now graduates
16 of eStem High School. And as you know, in 2013, when
17 we had started as three separate charters, when we
18 were going for our renewal we had the charters
19 combined into one charter and we were renewed for a
20 10-year period at that time.

21 Let me tell you about the eStem impact. We
22 think there's four key areas that are worth
23 consideration when you think about our opportunity to
24 grow. First is our demographic diversity; the second
25 is a record of success; the third are our innovative

1 approaches and ways that we're impacting education on
2 a larger scale; and, finally, the substantial
3 applicant interest in our schools.

4 Starting with the demographic diversity, this is
5 based on the October 1, 2015 enrollment numbers. Our
6 school is extremely diverse. Our African American or
7 black population is just over 45% of our students and
8 our white population is just under 43%. So you can
9 see that it's a very diverse racial school and it
10 actually reflects more of a greater racial balance
11 than what we even see in the city of Little Rock and
12 Pulaski County. We noted our white population of 43,
13 black of 45; the city of Little Rock itself is 47%
14 white, 42% black; the county is substantially more
15 white. But what we think this shows is as an open-
16 enrollment public charter school that's open to
17 anyone -- we run a random anonymous lottery process
18 and our schools greatly reflect the demographics of
19 the community that we serve. So we think that says a
20 lot about our opportunities to expand and to continue
21 to serve a diverse population of students.

22 Second, in looking at a record of success we've
23 had numerous students who've received national awards
24 and statewide awards. We've had national merit
25 scholars, we've had Arkansas Times academic all-

1 stars, we've had three national Hispanic scholars,
2 and we've even had three Gates Millennium scholars --
3 and if you know what that is, it's for African
4 American students and it basically provides full
5 college for under-grad, graduate, any level of
6 college they want to attend, anywhere that they
7 attend. It's fully paid for. And we've had three of
8 those students in the last three years. Last year, I
9 think there were either three or four in the entire
10 state and we had two of those at eStem High School.
11 And, of course, everyone is familiar with our former
12 teen Jeopardy champion, Leonard Cooper, who is now a
13 junior at Prince -- excuse me -- at Brown. He would
14 kill me. He's a junior at Brown University.

15 Beyond the academics and in the classroom, we've
16 also had success. As you know, a couple of years ago
17 our girls were actually the Class 3A state basketball
18 champions and that's with no gym. And we still today
19 have no gym; we have to rent space. So we're so
20 proud of the accomplishments of those young ladies.
21 Additionally, we've had the Wendy's Arkansas High
22 School Player of the Year, Olivia McWilliams, who is
23 now playing for UCA. We're the current state winners
24 of the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition. We
25 actually had a Boys Nation delegate in our short

1 history of existence; that's Shawn Alexander, who's
2 graduating from Hendrix this semester, and he was
3 just recently named a Marshall scholar. So he'll be
4 going on to study at Oxford for a couple of years.
5 We've even had an Emmy award winner as one of our
6 students; Chris Scribner graduated last year and won
7 an Emmy for a film that he did, a documentary about
8 his life.

9 But the success goes beyond just our students.
10 We have an incredible faculty who've won different
11 awards. Here's Mr. Peevy, one of our science
12 teachers, who won a National Science Teacher Award.
13 He actually participated in a research trip on the
14 Nautilus, and if you Google him on CNN and Google Mr.
15 Peevy and sperm whale you'll find him talking on CNN
16 Live as part of that voyager expedition as they were
17 encountered by a group of sperm whales in the ocean.
18 We've had a Presidential award finalist; we've had an
19 Eco Hero for Arkansas; we've had an Arkansas Life
20 Arkansan of the Year; and we also currently have five
21 national board certified teachers on our staff.

22 We're always recognized within the community for
23 success. We've been winners in the Best Charter
24 School, Best Public School, Family Favorite -- these
25 are from the Arkansas Times, the Arkansas Democrat

1 Gazette, Sync magazine, Little Rock Family, Kids
2 Choice. So we feel like there's a lot of support in
3 the community for people recognizing that the work
4 that we're doing is valuable.

5 But the biggest thing we think that shows a
6 record of success are the outcomes for our students.
7 And so as I told you earlier, we've had 436 students
8 who've graduated from eStem High School. In those
9 four years, the 436 students have accepted almost
10 \$15,000,000 -- keep in mind, that's acceptances, not
11 offers -- so almost \$15,000,000 which is an average
12 of over \$34,000 per graduate to pursue higher ed.
13 Here are the statistics for all four classes. You'll
14 see starting with that first class of 84, growing to
15 our most recent class of 125. One of the things I
16 think is valuable here to note is that even with that
17 first group of students who came to us as 9th graders
18 -- so they'd had most of their educational background
19 somewhere else -- 90% of those students were accepted
20 to at least one college when they graduated from
21 eStem High School. And you'll notice that number
22 continues to increase, and last year we had 98% of
23 our graduating class that were accepted to at least
24 one college. And you can see also how the total
25 scholarships accepted have grown as well as the

1 average. Last year's class had an average of more
2 than \$40,000 per student in scholarships accepted.

3 Our students are attending colleges and
4 universities across this state and across this
5 nation. As I told you, we've had students at
6 Hendrix; we have them at Princeton, Dartmouth,
7 Wellesley, Wesleyan, Swarthmore, Colorado College,
8 all of the Arkansas public universities and private
9 universities. So it's a great diversity of places
10 where our students are going when they leave us and
11 we're so proud of the success that we're seeing
12 there. And these are just a few of our members of
13 the Class of 2016 proudly displaying their college
14 acceptances and scholarship letters, so we know we're
15 well on our way to continuing to see those same
16 trends and those same patterns.

17 The next thing I want to talk to you about is
18 our innovative approaches. This is something that is
19 often brought up when we discuss charters and their
20 impact, "Are you doing anything different," and, "Are
21 you having any sort of an impact on the greater good
22 of public ed.?" We feel like we are in both; our
23 answer to both of those would be yes, we are
24 innovative and we feel like we're having an impact.

25 Just to give you a rundown of a few of our ways

1 that we feel we're innovative: the maximization of
2 resources -- we've done an extended day and extended
3 year since we opened our doors. We do a faculty
4 performance award program, which would be called
5 Merit A program where teachers earn awards based on
6 success with student performance. We've also started
7 our own innovative project-based learning program
8 where teachers can apply for grants. And to date,
9 we've awarded more than \$75,000 to teachers to try
10 out new ideas within their classrooms to see if they
11 have potential to expand. These kids here are some
12 of our kindergartners working in a garden project;
13 that was one of those grants from a year or so ago.

14 In terms of curriculum, we require 26 units for
15 eStem graduation. We know that SmartCore requires
16 22. We've always felt we needed to set a high bar.
17 That includes math and science every year, at least
18 two units of a foreign language for every graduate,
19 and one unit of economics. I want to point this out:
20 when we opened -- because obviously economics is the
21 little "e" in our name -- we felt it was important
22 that students had an understanding of economics. So
23 we made economics a required course for all of our
24 students that first year in 9th grade, and we're so
25 proud with the work of Economics Arkansas and others.

1 That is now a requirement for all students in the
2 state; as we know, every student has to take
3 economics. And so we're so proud that we were part
4 of that on the front-end. We do standards-based
5 math, particularly Singapore and CGI-infused in our
6 elementary level. We have a Noble Impact program,
7 which I'm going to tell you more about in a second,
8 which I think is one of the most impressive things
9 and innovative things that we've done. In terms of
10 instruction, we use the daily five and the café
11 literacy model in our K-8 literacy classrooms. We do
12 hands-on science every year starting at kindergarten.
13 Those kids have not only science instruction but they
14 go to science lab every week. We've infused
15 economics across the curriculum and we also are
16 piloting a digital learning management system this
17 year called Its Learning where our students and
18 teachers can interact digitally. Students can submit
19 assignments, they can go and get resources,
20 communicate back and forth between the classroom so
21 that the learning can extend beyond the walls of the
22 school.

23 In terms of teacher and leader development and
24 support, another thing we're very proud of is our
25 STEM residency program. You know, we hear so much

1 talk of the difficulty finding math and science
2 teachers. As a charter school we're no different.
3 We all face that struggle. And so we decided that we
4 wanted to try and create our own program, grow our
5 own, and so we started this program three years ago;
6 it's very small but we're finding graduates who have
7 a math or a science degree or a STEM field who are
8 interested in teaching but have no training. They
9 spend an entire year in an emersion program on our
10 campus learning the art of teaching. They have the
11 content, now we want you to learn the art of
12 teaching. And so we're very proud of the work with
13 Ms. Pfeffer and others at the Department that that's
14 now recognized as an alternative licensure pathway.
15 So we believe this has something that has legs to
16 extend beyond just our doors and to other charters
17 but other traditional districts as well. So we love
18 to work with other districts in sharing our
19 experience with that residency program.

20 Our future leaders are participating in the
21 APSRC Charter Leadership Initiative and we offer in
22 addition 90-plus hours of professional development
23 every year. We're not reducing the PD that we offer
24 to teachers, even though we know that as a state
25 we've reduced the requirement. We're not going to

1 change from our requirements that teachers are having
2 quality PD.

3 I mentioned the Noble Impact program and let me
4 tell you a little more about that, and we actually
5 have some students here from Noble Impact.
6 Basically, this is a program that is where public
7 service and entrepreneurship intersect. It's in
8 partnership with the Clinton School of Public Service
9 and Noble Impact, which is a local nonprofit
10 organization. And so what these students are doing
11 is they're actually working to own the learning, and
12 the ways that they're owning the learning -- our
13 students -- when we first started this three years
14 ago, they participated in a startup weekend. I don't
15 know if you know about that; it's a fast-paced
16 starting -- coming up with an idea, starting a
17 business, pitching it, and you can win competitions.
18 Our students felt like high school students needed to
19 be participating, so they created and facilitated
20 their own high school startup weekend for students
21 all across the state. They did it at the Clinton
22 School; incredibly successful event. But even beyond
23 just the concept of entrepreneurship, these students
24 have ideas about how to fix education. And so they
25 said, "We really want to talk about the problems not

1 only that they might see in our school or in our
2 city, but in education in general. So they created
3 and facilitated what they called an Innovate to
4 Educate event, i2e, where all the students in groups
5 found educational problems or issues and pitched
6 solutions -- and I'm telling you, these kids have so
7 many great ideas. We're looking at how we implement
8 their ideas because there's just so much power in it.
9 Students are participating in internships; they're
10 serving as mentors. As you can see, our high school
11 students are now formally mentoring students in K-8
12 as we've moved this Noble concept down into the
13 elementary and the middle schools. And we even have
14 students starting their own businesses. And the way
15 that this could impact other schools -- we feel so
16 strongly about this -- is we're working with ACE now;
17 they came and visited us; they've done a lot of
18 studying; they're working on how we make this a
19 formal program of study so that it can then be
20 offered to other schools around the state, similar to
21 the way that the East grew organically in Greenbrier
22 and is now, of course, international. We see this as
23 having potential as we're now getting that program of
24 study formalized.

25 So those are kind of our innovative things that

1 we're doing, but we also feel like it's important
2 that we not only innovate within our own doors but we
3 share these ideas. So we regularly welcome visitors
4 who come; they've come to talk to us about our MAP
5 testing, the daily five curriculum, how to start a
6 charter school. We often just visit with
7 administrators from different school districts.
8 We've even -- we're proud to be part of Governor
9 Hutchinson's kickoff for his computer science
10 initiative just a few weeks ago.

11 Beyond that, we're partnering with the city of
12 Little Rock and the Arkansas Natural Resources
13 Commission to revamp Main Street in a more
14 environmental and green way. We're part of the
15 downtown community. Main Street is just behind our
16 campuses, and so we feel like it's very valuable for
17 our students to feel like they're giving back to the
18 downtown area. We regularly advocate through
19 different television shows, speeches, conferences on
20 behalf of students. This is a new one that's just
21 started this year: we're partnership with the
22 University of Arkansas at Fayetteville; they're
23 looking at revamping their ed. leadership programs
24 for school directors and school principals and we're
25 partnering with them on solutions to how to totally

1 revamp the way that we train future school leaders
2 and aspiring school leaders.

3 And, finally, our students advocate. This isn't
4 just an adult thing. Clearly, our students are very
5 involved. Here are two of our graduates who
6 identified problems and came to the legislature,
7 frankly, and advocated. Jackson Fitzgibbon had
8 qualified for Governor's Distinguished Scholarship
9 but the funding wasn't there, so he went and met with
10 Joyce -- Senator Joyce Elliott, pictured there, and
11 others; they got the funding. Mary Catherine Keller
12 pushed for the dyslexia initiative. As you all know,
13 we now have a requirement that we screen students
14 early, provide resources and support. Mary Catherine
15 Keller was one of the student advocates and activists
16 who really pushed that through.

17 But perhaps the biggest piece of information
18 that we think shows that we're ready to grow and we
19 can handle the growth is this large volume of people
20 who are interested in our schools. So as of February
21 1st, which was two weeks ago, and we just closed our
22 open enrollment period earlier this week -- as of
23 February 1st, we had 3566 students on our
24 applications for grades K-6, we have 1854 students
25 who have applied for grades 7-9, and we have 990

1 students who've applied for grades 10-12. So in
2 total, as of February 1st -- and this number has
3 actually grown since then -- we have 6410 students
4 who are going to be going into our lottery pool,
5 which we'll be running our random anonymous lotteries
6 in the next few weeks. So we think that's, you know,
7 impressive, given that we serve 1462 students that we
8 have probably four times that who are interested in
9 applying. And even most recently, we have been at
10 about 4500 to 4800 for several years on this list and
11 it stayed consistently there. We've had more than
12 1800 applicants just since we announced in August
13 this potential partnership with UALR. And so a lot
14 of these are -- some of these have been on our list
15 for a number of years but more than a fourth of them
16 are just recent applicants within the past three to
17 four months who are expressing an interest in what
18 we're doing in our schools.

19 Just to give you a picture of where these
20 students are, there's where we're currently located
21 at 3rd and Louisiana in downtown Little Rock. Here's
22 UALR and here's the proposed Shall Street location,
23 just on the east side of Interstate 30. When you
24 look at the -- we just pulled this data by Zip Code
25 to show you. 72204, around UALR, is almost 800

1 students in our applicant pool; almost 700 in the 09
2 Zip Code; almost 500 from 06; and almost 400 from 05.
3 So there's a huge opportunity here around the UALR
4 campus to engage more students and more families that
5 are already in our applicant pool. And as we work
6 our way downtown and across the river into North
7 Little Rock you'll see hundreds and thousands of
8 students -- sorry -- who are also interested. And so
9 this just gives you a sampling that we know -- the
10 locations we've chosen are strategic and they're
11 based on data, but they also are supported by the
12 interest from families that live in these areas and
13 have told us they would like to attend our school.

14 So I want to give you our charter amendment
15 request just in a summary. You have this
16 information. The first thing we're asking for is to
17 increase our enrollment capacity from 1462 students
18 to 3844. That's going to be rolled out over time;
19 it's not immediate; we won't be growing that fast in
20 one year. It actually grows that way over about an
21 eight to ten year period of time. We're asking to
22 relocate our high school from its current location to
23 the UALR campus and serve grades 10 through 12,
24 starting in the 2017-18 school year. By doing that
25 we would also ask to restructure our current

1 elementary and middle schools, which are located in
2 the Arkansas Gazette Building downtown, into an
3 elementary and junior high, using those two
4 facilities. The elementary would serve K-6; the
5 junior high would serve 7-9. And the following year
6 we'd like to open an additional campus at 400 Shall
7 Street which would be the 18-19 school year, and this
8 would also serve elementary students and junior high
9 students.

10 Here are our anticipated outcomes. We believe
11 there are so many positives that can come from this,
12 not only for our students and the potential students
13 we can serve but frankly for education in our
14 community and in our state. This will be a unique K-
15 16 partnership between a public charter school and a
16 public university. We haven't found anywhere else in
17 the country where a public charter school and public
18 university have partnered in this way. I know we'll
19 create a pipeline, we think, for improving STEM
20 education but also for helping improve our economy.
21 We feel very strongly about the economy of Arkansas
22 needs to grow and it needs -- we need more STEM
23 literate people. We'll also obviously serve larger
24 portions of students currently on our wait list. But
25 as you know, we have 6400; we're only asking for the

1 potential to serve about 2400 more, so it's really
2 not even half of the students on the list. UALR may
3 see an increase in enrollment because our students
4 will be on their campus taking concurrent classes as
5 they currently do but also taking UALR university-
6 based courses and then hopefully, once they've had
7 that experience, continuing their studies there after
8 graduation. But many of our students will also have
9 the opportunity to not only obtain a high school
10 diploma but they'll also have the opportunity to
11 obtain an associate degree from UALR simultaneously.
12 This is something that the provost and others at UALR
13 feel very strongly about, is making sure these
14 students have the opportunity to be dually enrolled
15 and to complete not only high school but have a UALR
16 transcript with at least an associates degree.

17 We believe that having our high school students
18 on an actual college campus will only enhance the
19 college-ready preparation experience. As I said, we
20 now have four classes of students in college. We
21 feel good about the feedback that we're receiving on
22 their readiness. But we just think this takes it to
23 another level to have the students actually on a
24 college campus. There's going to be some great
25 financial efficiencies for both sides as we share

1 facilities, share some resources. We've been working
2 to identify operating expenses and other costs that
3 can frankly come down because we'll be using UALR's
4 resources and some of the buildings that they already
5 currently use and some of their -- the operational
6 programs they already have in place.

7 We think this will be a living laboratory,
8 which, again, as we said, our faculty, our students
9 will be working with UALR faculty and students. We
10 want to study best practices. We want to develop
11 experimental approaches, innovative approaches, and
12 really enhance this K-16 pipeline so that the higher
13 ed. will be in direct conversation with the K-12.
14 And we believe that it will enhance our curriculum
15 because with this collaboration we'll have access to
16 UALR faculty, graduate students, adjunct. We just
17 think that the program they have going and the STEM
18 fields are so strong that we want to be a part of
19 that.

20 And then, finally, this is -- again, as we said,
21 it's not just about what we can do for our students
22 but how do we impact education on a grander scale.
23 And so we believe that this partnership with UALR is
24 going to offer an opportunity that we haven't had
25 before, which is to have someone else in the

1 community who sees the work that's being done and has
2 the credibility and the -- I'm sorry; my timer is
3 going off too -- has the credibility to share these
4 ideas with other districts across the region and
5 across the state. We think this is how we get a
6 pipeline going now of opening lines of communication
7 that have frankly been very difficult in the past
8 eight years with traditional districts.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Bacon. Is
10 there anyone here to speak in opposition? Ms.
11 Kohler, you're recognized.

12 MS. KOHLER: Good morning.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Was she sworn in? Yes.

14 MS. KOHLER: Yeah, I did. I'm Kathy Kohler,
15 president of Little Rock Education Association, which
16 represents the employees of Little Rock School
17 District but more importantly I am a parent of a
18 proud 3rd grader in Little Rock public schools.
19 There are just a couple of things that I would like
20 to say in opposition.

21 The first is that while we welcome what Mr.
22 Bacon -- a lot of what he shared up there, as I was
23 keeping count -- and it went by very quickly -- I
24 only found two things in his innovative approaches
25 that are not currently being done in Little Rock

1 School District. And according to the law, as I
2 understand it, there has to be appreciable difference
3 between what is occurring in the district currently,
4 the district that it's located, and what they're
5 doing. I also noticed early on in the demographic
6 diversity chart that he in no way showed the
7 diversity -- the range of diversity in Little Rock
8 School District as it is currently configured, as
9 opposed to their configuration. We are at
10 approximately, I believe, over 70% at least minority
11 student population. We have above the state average
12 of special needs students. We have CBI students. I
13 don't believe they have a CBI classroom. So there
14 are other factors that we believe that need to be
15 told in this story. And I want to point out that on
16 the elementary school we have an A-rated school by
17 this Department, Carver, that -- I'm not great at
18 miles so, y'all, I could have driven it, okay, but
19 let's be real, I have trouble even pushing the button
20 when it comes to mileage; I know some people will
21 understand that. But Carver is not very far from the
22 proposed site for the elementary school. It is an A-
23 rated school by the Arkansas Department of Education
24 and it currently has open seats. If you look at the
25 population chart that Mr. Bacon shared, if you look

1 at 72202 there was a woefully low number of
2 applicants from that zone. The reason is, it's
3 located -- those are located by the airport, by
4 Heifer International, by the Clinton Library. There
5 are not -- there's not new development going on
6 there. So to open a charter school, I thought -- my
7 understanding had always been -- or maybe I'm missing
8 something -- that it had to be like there was an
9 actual need in that area. There is a school, a high-
10 performing school already available for families to
11 select from in that area. So I would ask you to
12 consider the location of the elementary school.

13 The last thing I'm going to address is something
14 that is highly personal to me. I have a Master's
15 degree. I am nationally board certified and renewed
16 nationally board certified, and I really have a
17 problem with some of eStem's waivers as an educator,
18 and when I shared them with other people. But I have
19 a larger problem and it's based on something that a
20 Nobel prize winning economist has pointed out time
21 and time again, Joseph Stiglitz, who won the Nobel
22 prize in 2001, which is that one of the problems is
23 that often when parents are making decisions -- and I
24 of all people -- I'm a product of parochial schools;
25 I graduated from Mount St. Mary. I'm very proud of

1 the education I received based on my parents and my
2 religious belief. However, I chose Little Rock
3 public schools to educate my own children because I
4 wanted them to be exposed to diversity and
5 opportunity they could not get in a parochial school.
6 But that said, when you have waiver applications,
7 which include a line in which you will not have to
8 inform parents that their child's teacher is not
9 certified, that is deeply troubling to me. That puts
10 them on a different level than the rest of us.
11 Parents, when they make choice, should be fully
12 educated and there should be a mandate that they have
13 to tell parents that they do not have a library media
14 specialist, nor a library media center. I'm a
15 library media specialist. I can tell you the
16 difference and the importance of having that three to
17 five point jump in literacy scores if you have one.
18 But they have exemptions to all kinds of things,
19 including the qualifications and responsibilities,
20 teacher certification, teacher fair dismissal, the
21 definition of a teacher. I don't know about you, but
22 I've been a teacher for a long time. I don't know
23 when the definition would have changed. The
24 examination of teachers' contracts, the rule -- the
25 ADE rules governing highly qualified teachers -- I am

1 deeply concerned that parents are not made fully
2 aware of who is instructing their children at eStem
3 if they are granted a waiver where they do not have
4 to share that information. Mr. Bacon showed they
5 have five nationally board certified teachers. I
6 know that we have at least 170. I'll put our 170 up
7 any day.

8 So, in conclusion, I would just like to say that
9 there are so many factors that enter into this
10 decision. But the most important factor is what is
11 best for our children and the children who live in
12 our city. And I want to conclude with this following
13 quote: "Walk wisely; there are little feet behind you
14 following every step." I would tell you that until
15 those little feet's parents have been given all the
16 information and made aware that -- of all of the
17 consequences of the decision that are made that you
18 are on the precipice of causing Little Rock School
19 District to come to a point in which we will have no
20 opportunity to be successful. And with that, I am
21 done. Thank you so much.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Kohler. Is
23 there anyone else to speak in opposition?

24 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Bacon, you have 5

1 minutes rebuttal.

2 MR. BACON: Well, there's so much there to work
3 with but what I really wanted to do first was attract
4 your attention to the packet that we gave you. There
5 were several misinterpretations, I think, in some
6 information you received from Mr. Kurrus, the
7 superintendent, in a letter that we --

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm sorry to interrupt,
9 but --

10 MR. BACON: -- in a letter that we found in the
11 packet, in the agenda that we weren't privy to in
12 advance. And so if you look at Exhibit One (1) it
13 kind of refutes this concept that we're taking so
14 many white students from the Little Rock School
15 District. Exhibit One (1) shows that since the year
16 before we opened until present there are 1700 fewer
17 white students in the Little Rock School District
18 than there were at that point in time, and we only
19 have 298 which students who came to us from Little
20 Rock School District that are currently enrolled.
21 We're not the reason that white students had left
22 Little Rock School District. Little Rock School
23 District has lost 2700 black students from 07-08
24 until 15-16. We only have 407 of those students. So
25 this concept that somehow eStem even as we grow is

1 going to -- is taking this huge pool and has had this
2 huge impact on Little Rock School District
3 demographics is just not true. And the concept that
4 was brought up here, as I pointed out, we're an open-
5 enrollment public charter school. We reflect
6 perfectly the diversity of the community we serve.
7 Little Rock School District does not. That's
8 something to talk to them about. But from our
9 perspective we are serving the community that we've
10 been asked to serve.

11 Exhibit Two (2), there was a comment made by Mr.
12 Kurrus that this was a huge public investment being
13 made into eStem. If you look at Exhibit Two (2),
14 you'll see from your own ADE files last year eStem
15 spent \$7900 per child. Little Rock School District
16 spent \$13,700. It's about a 60% increase of the
17 amount of money per child that Little Rock spends
18 over us. So the huge investment is being made, but I
19 would ask you to look at where that investment is
20 being made.

21 If you would go to Exhibit Four (4), there were
22 some comparisons made on data. As Dr. Duncan
23 mentioned earlier, Education Week has kind of put a
24 little bit of a wet blanket on this concept of
25 comparing students who took paper-and-pencil versus

1 computerized testing. I provided that article for
2 you. It's from Education Week and they make it clear
3 that there is a difference and you really can't make
4 a valid comparison. So there's really no way to
5 compare the last year of data between Little Rock and
6 us, but if you go back historically you will see that
7 the black students, TAGG students, disadvantaged
8 students would kill it compared to Little Rock, North
9 Little Rock, Pulaski County, and I have numbers and
10 we can go through those later.

11 And, finally, Exhibit Six (6) addresses special
12 ed. It was commented that Little Rock School
13 District serves almost twice the population of --
14 their percentage of special ed. Little Rock School
15 District was 11.7%, according to ADE records; we're
16 7.7%. That's a difference but it certainly isn't
17 twice.

18 So I just wanted to make those points known.
19 And I'm sure we'll get into some of the other issues
20 that were brought about by Ms. Kohler. But I want to
21 close on a very positive note. I told you about
22 Noble, told you about the impact we're having. We
23 have two of our seniors here who are Noble students.
24 They've been with us since the day we opened eight
25 years ago. And I'd like Jordan Young and Sydney

1 Brazil to close for us, to just give you a little bit
2 about their experience.

3 MS. BRAZIL: Hi, my name is Sydney Brazil.

4 MR. YOUNG: I'm Jordan Young. It's a pleasure
5 to meet you.

6 MS. BRAZIL: So I started going to eStem when I
7 was in 5th grade, which was in 2008. I moved from a
8 really small school. My parents both work in the
9 metropolitan area, and they decided that they wanted
10 something new in education for us. So they decided
11 to move me and my brother to eStem. Starting eStem,
12 it was awesome for me. I've got a lot of positive
13 relationships with my teachers, which was what I was
14 afraid of. Moving from a smaller school where I had
15 about 28 people in my class, I was worried that
16 moving to a bigger school I wouldn't have the same
17 one-on-one relationship with my teacher. But because
18 of those relationships and that support, starting the
19 Noble Impact program when I was a sophomore in high
20 school I started my own business called The Whole
21 Thing, which became an LLC. I have regular meetings
22 with the admin. of our school, including Mr. Bacon,
23 who has constantly supported me through my endeavors
24 in business. And because of that I'm now looking at
25 going to a school internationally, in Germany, in the

1 city of Freiburg, called the University of Freiburg,
2 which is a huge medical research center in their
3 country. And when I go there I hope to pursue a
4 degree in either political science or environmental
5 studies in hopes of working on legislation for better
6 environmental policies in our country, as well as the
7 world.

8 MR. YOUNG: Likewise, I came to eStem in 2008,
9 5th grade. I'm currently a senior at eStem and it's
10 been nothing but opportunity thus far. This year,
11 I'm an apprentice to a local professional photography
12 through Noble and eStem's partnership. And every day
13 I get to see what I might be doing for the rest of my
14 life. I've been accepted at Colorado College; I'll
15 probably be attending there next year. And it's just
16 been -- it's been an opportunity just back and forth,
17 and I just appreciate the experience thus far.

18 MS. BRAZIL: In having a little brother, I think
19 that the UALR campus will be an extremely big
20 opportunity for him as far as college goes because
21 he's someone who's interested in video games and
22 coding and not necessarily your typical academic
23 path. So I'm hoping that for him being able to go to
24 UALR or just being exposed to the eStem Noble Impact
25 programs that are so heavily rooted in our school,

1 he'll be able to learn about coding and, therefore,
2 be able to start programming things in high school or
3 middle school, whichever one he gets to learning
4 first. But hopefully that he'll be able to learn
5 things now so that when he is an adult or he is
6 moving into higher education he'll already have
7 skills that he could, you know, move forward in and
8 have a business or have a (inaudible) or start a
9 video game then. So thank you for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

11 MR. BACON: Do we have any more time or are we
12 -- is that 5 minutes?

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

15 Panel, we're ready for questions. Ms. Davis,
16 let's start with an issue that Mr. Bacon raised about
17 information that he didn't know about. Can we start
18 there?

19 MS. DAVIS: And I think the only issue is the --
20 whether or not he received the letter in opposition
21 from Mr. Kurrus. And they did receive -- I mean,
22 they did receive it. I think it was we received it
23 on -- whatever the last day was to submit. Ms. Boyd
24 can probably tell you the exact date.

25 MS. BOYD: Madam Chair, when we created the

1 packets that go live to the public that's when we
2 made eStem aware. We -- I sent them an email that
3 said "this is your day that you'll appear before the
4 Panel," and then attached was the same packet that we
5 uploaded to the web. I didn't specifically state
6 that there was opposition in the packet, but the
7 packet was available for them to check and see what
8 all was in it that I reflected their inputs
9 correctly.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And then today we
11 all received a copy of, I guess, a memo from the
12 Public Education Foundation of Little Rock.

13 MS. DAVIS: If you've received it -- I have not
14 received a copy and I was unaware of it, so I would
15 think maybe the school may be unaware of that as
16 well.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. It was laying on
18 our desk.

19 MS. BOYD: I'm sorry, Madam Chair; that's my
20 mistake. I was handed the copies to hand to you all
21 and the copies you have are the only copies that
22 there are. So I didn't have extras to hand to my
23 team, to legal team, or to eStem.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

25 MR. BACON: Madam Chair, if I could, the only

1 reason I brought that one up was the documents that
2 we were required to submit we had deadlines well in
3 advance and we were required to copy superintendents
4 on any of our amendment requests, the same way we
5 would any other documents we send. We happily do
6 that. We really had to dig and just happened to find
7 the letter of opposition that had been submitted at
8 the very last minute. It would be, you know,
9 respectful in our minds if the communication had to
10 go both ways moving forward.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Duly noted. All right. I
12 just wanted to get it all out, get it all out on the
13 table.

14 Okay. Questions? Dr. Saunders is ready and you
15 are recognized.

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

17 MR. BACON: I'm all right. Thank you.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Good. I want to back-up first
19 and talk about some of the things that we've already
20 discussed and go for perhaps some clarification. But
21 I want you to have the opportunity to address many
22 things. First of all, in the data that I'm looking
23 at, the data reported to the state, in looking at the
24 demographic comparisons between yourself, Little
25 Rock, and Pulaski County, I think that it -- just

1 roughly looking at it, I think it's very safe to say
2 that you have similar demographics in regards to race
3 compared to Pulaski County.

4 MR. BACON: It's almost exactly the same in
5 white and black percentages --

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah.

7 MR. BACON: -- based on the deseg analysis.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: But there is a difference between
9 the black category for eStem and Little Rock School
10 District, as well as white; 20% more in the Little
11 Rock School District for black and about 25% less
12 white in the Little Rock School District.

13 MR. BACON: Yes.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: So, would you like to comment?

15 MR. BACON: Yes.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

17 MR. BACON: Yes. As I said, we're an open-
18 enrollment public charter school. We're a random
19 anonymous lottery. Any student who lives, frankly,
20 in the state of Arkansas can apply, but the
21 preponderance of our students do come from central
22 Arkansas, and we reflect the community of Little
23 Rock. The question should not be why does our
24 population not look like Little Rock School District.
25 The question should be why does Little Rock School

1 District's population not look like the city of
2 Little Rock. And as I shared with you all in one of
3 our exhibits there, the number of white students
4 who've left them and are actually enrolled at our
5 school is so small in comparison to the changes that
6 they've seen in the past nine years. So I think that
7 there's something else going on in our community, and
8 certainly I think we need to look at that and figure
9 that out. But I would say, you know, when we first
10 applied for a charter there actually was a request to
11 do a weighted lottery so that we could seek students
12 from disadvantaged backgrounds and others, but our
13 law doesn't allow for that; the state law doesn't
14 allow for a weighted for an open-enrollment charter.
15 And so we've been running a random anonymous lottery
16 process since that time.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And looking at other
18 student demographics, in particular special
19 education, eStem 7.4% special ed. students as opposed
20 to around 12%, 11.7% in Little Rock and 13.4% in
21 Pulaski County. Do you want to --

22 MR. BACON: Well, certainly, you know, we're not
23 able to ask those types of questions when we seek
24 applicants. We don't know if a student is from a
25 disadvantaged background, if they have a special

1 need. That would be illegal. We would never do that
2 because the process is random and anonymous and so we
3 take the students who come to us. And one of the
4 things we've noticed over time -- and I think there
5 was a lot of, you know, probably discussion early on.
6 I've even heard that myself about, you know, do
7 charters take special ed. kids, and I think that
8 reputation was kind of out there in the community.
9 But one of the things we've seen and since we've been
10 in existence a steady incline, until about the last
11 two to three years when we stabilized at 1462
12 students -- a steady incline of that percentage in
13 the number of special ed. students that we serve. So
14 serving, you know, that 7.7%, I just can run you
15 through some things about special ed. That means we
16 have five fulltime special ed. teachers, five FTEs
17 for special ed. We also have four fulltime special
18 ed. paraprofessionals. We do all of our therapy
19 services through contracts with Pediatric Therapy;
20 we've worked with Easter Seals. And for the first
21 time we've actually hired a fulltime LEA supervisor.
22 In the past we were participants in the APSRC special
23 ed. consortium, so we shared an LEA supervisor. But
24 we're committed to serving our students, every
25 student to the best of our ability. And so we've

1 invested this year in making that a fulltime FTE on
2 our staff. So we're providing a continuum of
3 services for any student who needs it, whatever
4 issues they may bring to us. We have an extensive
5 RTI program where they meet regularly to identify
6 needs on the front-end so that we can perhaps keep
7 students out of special ed., so that we can find out
8 if there are other issues and work with those
9 students. It's just -- it's an important thing to us
10 that we serve every student who comes to our door.
11 And we can't ask those questions in advance; we can
12 only -- you know -- we find out demographic
13 information once they've been notified that they've
14 been admitted and they fill out their registration
15 paperwork. And so I would say, you know, once I
16 think we got over the initial misunderstanding in the
17 community that this idea that charter schools didn't
18 serve special needs students, I think you'll see that
19 our population has grown and has been consistent the
20 past few years at about just under 8% of the
21 population. And I would again say -- I don't have
22 the statistic in front of me, but I've always heard
23 about 10 to 11 percent of the general population of
24 Americans have some sort of identified special need;
25 it may even be closer to 10. So we're not that far

1 out of line with the population of students that we
2 would serve.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: And I know this is probably
4 overlapping on some of your response, but another
5 demographic was the poverty rate that I have for
6 eStem at 31% as compared to Little Rock at 75% and
7 Pulaski County at 57%.

8 MR. BACON: Right. There are a whole lot of
9 people who have means in this community, Little Rock
10 and the county, who've chosen to take their kids to
11 private schools. If you look at the numbers of
12 private school students, I know it's over 10,000,
13 somewhere between 10,000 and 12,000, 13,000 students
14 in private schools. Those are affluent people coming
15 out of the Little Rock School District, and perhaps
16 Pulaski County and North Little Rock districts, and
17 they're going somewhere. So what I would say that
18 it's probably powerful that we represent and reflect
19 the demographics of the community. I know that I
20 read in my census data when I pulled the racial data,
21 I think it's somewhere between 15 and 18 percent of
22 the city of Little Rock is classified as below what
23 we would call the poverty index. That would probably
24 roughly equate to students who maybe qualify for free
25 lunch, not reduced. And so if you took and looked at

1 our free lunch, as opposed to this combined free and
2 reduced, it's going to be very similar to the poverty
3 index in our community.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: The poverty index is at a
5 different level than the free, so --

6 MR. BACON: Right. That's why I'm saying I'm
7 not -- that's why I wouldn't compare free and reduced
8 lunch to poverty index, but trying to make a more
9 direct comparison by removing those reduced, going
10 down into students who qualify. It's going to be
11 much more comparable to the community. But that
12 reads the narrative that our schools in our community
13 -- our public schools in our community are not
14 serving the entirety of our public community. We
15 have so many students and families who have opted
16 out, home-schooling, private schools, for years
17 families were leaving the city and going to some of
18 the bedroom communities -- we think it's a powerful
19 message that we've been consistently serving these
20 students. We reflect the demographics of the
21 community through a random anonymous process; it's an
22 open-enrollment process. And the fact that we have
23 more than four times the number of students that we
24 currently serve -- actually, it's closer to five
25 times -- who are sitting on a waiting list begging

1 for an opportunity to come to our school should be a
2 powerful message. And as we showed you in the
3 demographics of the Zip Codes, if you know Little
4 Rock you know primarily where white people live and
5 where black people live and Hispanic people live; you
6 know where neighborhoods and Zip Codes that are going
7 to show you who has affluence and who doesn't. And
8 so one of the things that we wanted to make the point
9 was that people who are in this pool asking us to
10 offer them a seat, asking us to provide more
11 opportunities, the preponderance of those students
12 come from those areas and those Zip Codes.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: And using that information -- and
14 I want to give you a chance to respond to, you know,
15 so many things that are said and give you the
16 opportunity there, and, you know, things that we hear
17 on our end as well, such as with charter schools --
18 for a student to enroll in a charter school there are
19 many factors -- and I say factors. One argument is
20 parents have to be knowledgeable about the process in
21 order to enroll their child; parents have to be
22 familiar with what's available, have access to that,
23 as well as possibly the lack of transportation
24 provided in some cases as opposed to others. And
25 because of those you see different demographics in

1 charter schools sometimes as opposed to in the school
2 districts in which the charter school resides.

3 MR. BACON: Okay.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: So I'll turn it over --

5 MR. BACON: Let me hit on both of those. And so
6 this concept about parents being knowledgeable,
7 certainly in order to get in our applicant pool a
8 parent has to at least know, have enough awareness to
9 know that we exist, that -- you know -- what the
10 process is. And so we work really hard, particularly
11 when we opened and as we've expanded, to make sure
12 that we're getting information out into all facets
13 and aspects of the community, which I think is
14 reflected in that applicant pool. You can see
15 there's no one in the city of Little Rock or in
16 Pulaski County, frankly, that doesn't -- I mean,
17 there are -- all of those areas have students who are
18 interested, so the word is getting out. So that's
19 one thing I think is important.

20 I think it's also important -- Ms. Kohler
21 mentioned Carver Elementary being in close proximity.
22 Carver Elementary is a magnet school, full-on magnet
23 school. Students must also apply to go to that
24 school, as they do to the original six stipulation
25 magnet schools in Little Rock, as well as specialty

1 schools. I was a principal at two of those. At
2 Dunbar Middle School we had a gifted and talented and
3 international studies specialty. Students applied
4 for that program. Same way at Hall High School; we
5 had a university studies specialty program. So
6 Little Rock School District has been very happy to
7 encourage parents to make choices. They've had
8 exclusive opportunities where you have to know when
9 to apply for the magnet school, you have to know, you
10 know, what your options are. And so I think it's a
11 little disingenuous to make the point that as a
12 charter school somehow we're not doing that and they
13 are because they have all of these same environments.

14 The issue of transportation -- we provide a bus
15 pass through Rock Region Metro to any student who
16 requests it. And in the past we've had as many as
17 almost 200 of our students who were using that
18 transportation on a daily basis. I think this year
19 it's a little lower than that; it's somewhere in the
20 150 to 160 range. Little Rock School District also
21 has something called a Transfer with No
22 Transportation. So for years now white students from
23 West Little Rock and other places that didn't want to
24 go to Forest Heights and Hall made what's called a
25 TNT to transfer to Pulaski Heights Middle School, and

1 the school district did not provide transportation.
2 No one seems to have a problem with that. What we're
3 saying is we actually do provide transportation for
4 every student, if they request it, and we make sure
5 they know it's available. That's why we've picked
6 these locations. Our current location is about three
7 blocks from the central depot for Rock Region Metro.
8 Shall Street is at the end of the trolley line and
9 also well served by Rock Region Metro. I've stood in
10 front of that building and counted how frequently the
11 buses go by. UALR -- completely effectively served
12 by public transportation. So many students, college
13 students and others are using transportation there.
14 So to date, we have not had in eight years that I've
15 been with this organization that I know of one family
16 say "we'd love to come to your school but we can't
17 because of transportation." They know that we have
18 this available; they know that we're willing to work
19 with them, and I just think that we need to really
20 have an honest conversation. If we're going to talk
21 about do charters provide transportation, yes, we do.
22 Does Little Rock School District and others provide
23 transportation for every child? No, they don't.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: One last question, if I may.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Before you go on,

1 I'm going to ask you please hold the microphone --

2 MR. BACON: I'm sorry. I'm sorry; that's my
3 mistake.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Right there at
5 the chin. Keep it at the chin.

6 MR. BACON: I keep tilting my head back. I'll
7 go down.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

9 MR. BACON: Okay. I'll turn this way.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Just one last one right here for
11 now. Do parents and/or potential applicants -- do
12 they have -- is there public access to your waivers
13 prior to signing up for the lottery?

14 MR. BACON: All of our information is on our
15 website.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

17 MR. BACON: All of that information, all of the
18 state required reports, our charters are out there.
19 And, you know, I think some of the waivers that were
20 discussed earlier are waivers that have been in
21 existence, frankly, for eight years. Those aren't
22 waivers that we're requesting now; those are things
23 that were approved in 2007, in December, and
24 reapproved in 2013 when we were renewed. So, I mean,
25 we're late to the party on having that discussion.

1 Those are waivers that exist.

2 But one thing I think that's important about the
3 waivers, in particular related to this teacher
4 certification piece, you all know -- every one of you
5 have worked in public schools and administrative
6 capacities in this district. It is difficult to find
7 highly qualified, fully certified teachers for
8 certain areas -- special ed., math, science at the
9 secondary level. In the past we've had -- you even
10 have a list of areas where -- you know -- distressed
11 or high need areas where -- I can't think of the
12 terminology, but there's a list of areas where it's
13 very difficult and you even give some flexibility.
14 And so we're proud to say -- I pulled the statistics
15 -- just at present we currently have almost 80% --
16 let me pull it, I can tell you -- 80% exactly of our
17 teachers and non-teachers who are in a certified
18 position are fully certified for the area they're
19 teaching; 100% of our teachers this year met the HQT
20 requirements. Now we all know ESEA I think does away
21 with HQT or federal requirement, but 100% of our
22 teachers meet the HQT requirement this year. I think
23 it's a good thing that we're looking for innovative
24 ways to bring in new people who have content
25 knowledge. That's why we developed the STEM

1 residency program. If you have content knowledge, we
2 believe we can help you learn the art of teaching.
3 And so I think those waivers are extremely valuable
4 and I think that having a quality teacher in the
5 classroom, regardless of whether they've participated
6 in a formal or alternative certification, or even
7 beginning a pathway -- and I would go further to say
8 so our STEM residents have had a full year of
9 experiences before we ever put them in the classroom
10 to teach on their own. There are other alternative
11 pathways I know that exist in the state which involve
12 a very small sliver of time, maybe a two-week -- you
13 know -- maybe it's a smaller, even, period, and then
14 we throw them to the wolves. As I shared -- when I
15 said about being at Dunbar and Hall, I was an
16 administrator and a teacher in Little Rock School
17 District for 14 years. I know the struggle. I know
18 the struggle in this community. I know the struggle
19 to find high quality teachers for every area. And so
20 I think it's a blessing that we have some
21 flexibility, that we look at alternative ways to
22 approach who we put in the classroom but that we have
23 a high bar of expectation that they have content and
24 that they've been prepared effectively to be able to
25 walk in that classroom because that's the only way

1 that we're going to move our students forward.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

4 MS. BARNES: Good morning. Yeah, it's still
5 morning.

6 MR. BACON: Right. Is it?

7 MS. BARNES: Okay. Good morning. Good to see
8 you. Thank you for being here, Mr. Bacon.

9 MR. BACON: Thank you.

10 MS. BARNES: I just have a couple of quick
11 questions that -- you know -- actually, I think I may
12 be asking you for information that is just useful
13 information for anyone.

14 MR. BACON: Absolutely.

15 MS. BARNES: I was looking at -- I have two
16 questions, I think. I was looking at performance
17 reports and reviewing some things. And, again, I
18 applaud the presentation and all of the
19 accomplishments.

20 MR. BACON: Thank you.

21 MS. BARNES: What strategies are you putting in
22 place to address the gap at the middle school?

23 MR. BACON: Yes.

24 MS. BARNES: I did note that you're obviously
25 addressing the gap. At the elementary you were

1 awarded three points for a smaller gap and then an
2 even smaller gap at the high school.

3 MR. BACON: Right.

4 MS. BARNES: You were awarded six points.

5 MR. BACON: Right.

6 MS. BARNES: But at the middle school you -- the
7 school, middle school lost six points --

8 MR. BACON: Right. Right.

9 MS. BARNES: -- because of the large gap. So I
10 guess my question is, one, what are you -- what are
11 your strategies that you have put in place --

12 MR. BACON: Yes.

13 MS. BARNES: -- to address that gap? And then,
14 secondly, math performance -- I know -- and we've all
15 talked about PARCC. It was a more rigorous exam from
16 what we had been accustomed to because of the change
17 in Next Generation assessments. And we -- you know
18 -- we made some adjustments for that at the state
19 level with respect to AMOs and making those as
20 approachable as possible. But I did note that we
21 didn't do so well with our math at all. And so I was
22 just wondering what you attributed that to?

23 MR. BACON: Okay. Let me -- and you may want to
24 get your lunch because I know you had to see if it
25 was afternoon yet, because this is going to be an

1 extended answer, but I think it's worthy of that and
2 I think it's worthy of discussion.

3 In terms of strategies, one of the things that
4 you have to know about our organization -- so, you
5 know, we started -- I mean, we opened the doors with
6 850 students in grades K-9. The fact that I'm
7 standing here today is probably a testament to good
8 luck and blessing because I would never have
9 recommended to another charter school to start with
10 that large of a number of students and that diverse
11 of a grade grouping and try and do that. From day-
12 one we were in a growth mode, adding students each
13 year for grades, and then we -- when we outgrew our
14 space. So one of the things that we never had the
15 opportunity to truly do I think completely
16 effectively was a K-12 full alignment. We had great
17 teachers; they had great ideas and we were aligning
18 to the Common -- to the Arkansas standards what they
19 needed to teach, but we had not had the opportunity
20 to take a breath and look at -- yeah, there, now I
21 hear myself -- how the K-12 alignment could be done
22 to make sure that it was seamless. And so one of the
23 things that in middle school we've suffered from is
24 kind of a transition. So we -- and I didn't write
25 the charter and I know -- I kind of know why it was

1 done. But when we first started elementary was
2 considered K-4 and middle school was grades 5-8 and
3 then high school 9-12, where most schools are making
4 the transition at 6th grade. And frankly in a past
5 life many schools made a transition to secondary at
6 7th grade. K-6 was a traditional elementary
7 environment. Around here, I think most people
8 transition at 6th grade; they switch from junior high
9 to middle school, when I was first teaching, frankly.
10 And so 5th and 6th grade has been a transition point
11 and that really feeds into our middle school some
12 difficulties in making sure that we're properly
13 preparing our kids for higher level learning. Now,
14 over time we saw a pattern of success there up until
15 the PARCC. If you go back to the ESEA, the Arkansas
16 standards based on benchmark, we were seeing
17 tremendous growth and we were seeing tremendous
18 performance. We got to a pretty good threshold of
19 middle school math performance. Now let's stop
20 there. This primarily is a math discussion.
21 Literacy, we've had some great success. Okay. So
22 this is primarily a math discussion. I don't want to
23 get lost, but literacy is a success story. So one of
24 the things was this transition which we've looked at
25 how we treat 5th and 6th grade because from the

1 beginning we've treated it as more of a secondary.
2 Our 3rd and 4th grade -- our K-2 classes have one
3 teacher primarily for the day and then they go to a
4 wheel or a related arts elective course and have
5 things like that. 3rd and 4th grade made the
6 decision that they would really have a partner
7 teacher, so there's about a two-and-a-half hour
8 math/science block, a two-and-a-half hour
9 literacy/social studies block. So instead of having
10 one teacher all day, now they have two teachers who
11 kind of specialize, one on the math/science side and
12 one on the language arts and social studies. 5th
13 grade, since we treated it as middle school and as a
14 transition, we've really treated it as a transition
15 to secondary and so those students then transition
16 to, frankly, five core content teachers. So we've
17 gone from one to two to now five. I would say based
18 on review of data, and particularly as we transition
19 to PARCC, one of the things that I've seen is that
20 that doesn't seem to be the right fit for our
21 students. We really need to look at our 5th and
22 perhaps 6th grade as more of a transitional from
23 upper elementary, rather than a transition of lower
24 secondary. And so that's one of the reason why our
25 request involves a restructuring of a K-6 and a 7-9

1 because we really want to treat 5th and 6th grade,
2 not so much as a secondary level, because that hasn't
3 shown to get those great gains and results we wanted.
4 So that's one of the things that we're looking at is
5 how we restructure.

6 In terms of looking at gaps and identifying
7 students, we study data. We use NWEA data; we've
8 been using it since day-one. We've taken it three
9 times a year for the past few years; in the past we
10 took it four times a year. It's a formative data
11 point. I'm proud to say -- let's go back to
12 innovation and impacting education -- when we -- when
13 I was hired in February -- January of 2008, one of
14 the things on my task list was -- it says that we're
15 supposed to do something called an NWEA assessment.
16 Never heard of it, had no idea what to do. Made a
17 phone call, found out -- oh, yeah, yeah; you call
18 this person; there are only about three or four
19 schools in the state, most of them are charters,
20 small charters that have tried using NWEA data. We
21 went all in because it was in our charter. It was
22 decided that this would be important and it was
23 formative data. So we have been doing NWEA as a
24 formative tool from day-one and I'm proud to say that
25 I just found out there are now 75 districts in the

1 state using NWEA assessments. And I would say that
2 the fact that eStem was out there in front as one of
3 the biggest charters using NWEA from day-one,
4 sharing, as I showed you, with other districts, I
5 think that we've been a trailblazer in the use of
6 NWEA data and I think we've contributed to the number
7 of schools using it. But the NWEA data is so good
8 about giving us progress, growth, individual
9 students, tied to standard. We've just transitioned
10 that test from the Arkansas standard over to -- they
11 say it's now, you know, the Common Core standard.
12 Well, of course, in Arkansas, we don't do the Common
13 Core standard; we do the Arkansas state standards
14 based on Common Core, which are about to be
15 transitioned to some other standard. As you all
16 know, we've had teachers on the math, literacy and
17 English Language Arts and science -- work groups that
18 have been trying to adjust how the curriculum needs
19 to be adjusted. So I say all that to say this: my
20 fear is when we start -- we are wrapping ourselves in
21 a ball about how to get a criterion reference
22 assessment. We had one, the Arkansas benchmark based
23 on the Arkansas standards, and we decided it wasn't
24 rigorous enough. Well, now where we are is we moved
25 to teach Arkansas -- teach Common Core standards

1 elementary to middle then high for three years; we
2 assess based on the old Arkansas standards. I think
3 that our teachers probably got very comfortable that
4 they knew how to teach to the Arkansas standards and
5 they were getting good results. I think that we
6 didn't transition as effectively to PARCC as we
7 should have. And I think that's probably why -- or
8 to Common Core -- and I think that's why we saw a
9 bigger dip on our PARCC than we would have liked.
10 But as you know, so now what we're doing is we're
11 taking ACT Aspire, which is not based on Common Core;
12 it's actually based on the ACT college and career
13 readiness benchmarks and standards. We're losing
14 time to Common Core and then the next thing we'll do
15 is ACT Aspire based on a new Arkansas standard. So
16 we're not going to have a true criterion reference
17 assessment. So what we need to be able to do is
18 figure out how to best play the game you all are
19 asking us to play to meet the ACT Aspire requirements
20 -- and we're doing our best. We are working hard on
21 alignment to the Common Core state standard and ACT.
22 But I think that it's going to take some time for
23 everyone as we see this transition. I think we're in
24 a very difficult place to look at data. So what we
25 fall back on is when we had a criterion reference

1 assessment and we had a state standard that we were
2 consistent with for a number of years we saw the
3 progress that we needed to see and we were able to
4 really fill in the smaller gaps that we had with
5 students who just were not getting there in secondary
6 math. That's a crisis everywhere. It was a crisis
7 in my years in Little Rock School District; it's a
8 crisis today. If you look at all the performance
9 statewide, nationwide, secondary math is a crisis.
10 We want to be the people who help find the solutions
11 and share those solutions with everyone else. That's
12 why we have to be as flexible as we can in trying new
13 things, like the STEM residency program, to bring in
14 new ideas, new approaches. That's why we worked with
15 Singapore Math. It was in our charter. We're still
16 doing it, but we realized that it wasn't really
17 perfectly aligned to what we needed to do. So we've
18 done the -- you know -- more of aligned to the state
19 standards, and now we've brought in CGI Math in
20 elementary school. And if you look at our 3rd grade
21 math scores, which that's the foundation even on
22 PARCC -- when I pull and triand the list of schools,
23 I think our elementary math in 3rd grade may have
24 been in the top 10 or 12 schools in the state. It's
25 impressive. We know how to get it done. So what we

1 have to do is take that; we use our RTI program,
2 responsive intervention, where we look at data; we
3 look at data regularly on every kid; we identify
4 who's not making progress, whether it's through NWEA
5 growth -- they're not growing as we think they
6 should, whether it's based on these, you know,
7 criterion referenced or other formative assessments,
8 and then we see where are the gaps and we do our best
9 to fill those in through RTI, through intervention.
10 We do an afterschool tutoring program in the high
11 school, targeted assistance. We have all sorts of
12 intervention going on starting with kindergarten, 1st
13 grade. If we identify a kid who's not progressing
14 the way we think they should, we go back and we look
15 at it. We actually did the ACT Aspire interim
16 assessment. I don't know how many districts in the
17 state just completed that one. But since it came
18 online we felt it was important to have as much data
19 as possible, so we did the ACT interim assessment.
20 And, Ms. Barnes, believe me, I'm so relieved to see a
21 different number than what I saw for secondary math
22 on the PARCC because we're seeing a much higher level
23 of performance. So what do I attribute that to? I
24 told you, pack your lunch. So what do I attribute
25 that to?

1 MS. BARNES: That's okay. That's okay. I'm
2 just glad that -- I wanted to be sure that we were on
3 the same page --

4 MR. BACON: We're on it.

5 MS. BARNES: -- in math --

6 MR. BACON: We're on it.

7 MS. BARNES: -- because I was more concerned
8 about the secondary math.

9 MR. BACON: Yes. And so here's the other piece;
10 I'll wrap that up. So we -- as I said, we realized
11 about a year-and-a-half ago we were not truly aligned
12 the way we needed to be, particularly as we move
13 through new standards. Our teachers, you know, did
14 not have those tools. So we brought in a director of
15 teaching and learning last year, now has transitioned
16 to what we call a chief academic officer. We've
17 always had a math and literacy coach, for about four
18 years, but they were primarily elementary because
19 we're thinking let's get that foundation, let's build
20 the foundation. Well, we need secondary math help.
21 So, finally, this is the first year we actually have
22 a secondary math person who's taught at middle and
23 high school levels, higher level math, who's working
24 with all of our teachers with a primary focus on
25 assisting those secondary, 6th, 7th, 8th grade and

1 up, math teachers to make sure that they understand
2 the standards, they understand instruction, and they
3 have the modeling and the tools and the support and
4 the professional development to get there. I just
5 think it's one of those things that probably will
6 take more time than any of us want to give it and I'm
7 so frustrated that we don't -- you know -- that we
8 didn't -- we don't know the solution today, because I
9 want it solved today. But I do think we have things
10 in place, we have people in place, we have support in
11 place; we're aligning our framework. I think, as I
12 mentioned, the digital portal which allows students
13 so that beyond the classroom they can access
14 materials, resources related to the class, they can
15 access their teachers and communicate, they can
16 share, they can turn in assignments, they can get
17 feedback, teachers can put information out there. I
18 think it's a great tool and I think it's going to pay
19 off for us in the long-run.

20 MS. BARNES: Thank you. And, you know, I
21 prefaced it with it was probably more of a
22 conversation because --

23 MR. BACON: Right.

24 MS. BARNES: -- everyone is struggling --

25 MR. BACON: Right.

1 MS. BARNES: -- with these same areas,
2 especially at the middle level.

3 MR. BACON: Right.

4 MS. BARNES: This panel has heard quite a few
5 presentations over the last three days regarding
6 middle level learning.

7 MR. BACON: Right.

8 MS. BARNES: And so that's what I wanted to know
9 because I recognize all that you are talking about --

10 MR. BACON: Right.

11 MS. BARNES: -- and you have pointed out all of
12 the right things to do. You know, I'm a little older
13 than I look -- I was fishing for a compliment -- so
14 --

15 MR. BACON: So that's 22, right?

16 MS. BARNES: Well, what I was going to say is I
17 learned sometime ago, you know, because things do
18 change and because assessments change, because the
19 measurements change, if we teach -- if you teach me
20 to drive a Volkswagen, I'll only drive a Volkswagen.
21 If you teach me to drive a standard --

22 MR. BACON: Right.

23 MS. BARNES: -- transmission, I can drive a
24 Ferrari or any other car.

25 MR. BACON: Right.

1 MS. BARNES: So I think what I'm simply saying
2 is I wanted to hear what things you were doing to --

3 MR. BACON: Right.

4 MS. BARNES: -- move into the children
5 performing despite the transition.

6 MR. BACON: The challenges.

7 MS. BARNES: Because the challenges will always
8 be there.

9 MR. BACON: Right.

10 MS. BARNES: And I appreciate the conversation
11 --

12 MR. BACON: Right.

13 MS. BARNES: -- because you did point out
14 numerous things --

15 MR. BACON: Right.

16 MS. BARNES: -- that --

17 MR. BACON: Right.

18 MS. BARNES: -- the school is doing.

19 MR. BACON: And the other thing I didn't
20 mention, I just thought of, is we've also invested in
21 a Carnegie product which is for secondary math which
22 gives us some more hands-on resources for our
23 teachers and students to use, which we think,
24 particularly for closing those gaps, you know,
25 finding students who maybe don't even have the

1 foundation that they need. And that's one of the
2 down-sides, you know, to -- one of the things that
3 happens in our school, and it will change over time
4 if approved for this amendment, is we take on about
5 25 or 30 new 5th graders every year because that's
6 the transition point, just the way that the charter
7 was written. And so we're finding that students are
8 so far behind and we have to work and work and work
9 to catch up. And so, you know, that's one of the
10 things that is really contributing to our secondary
11 struggle is that we've got to, you know, assess about
12 -- not quite a third, maybe 25, 20 percent of our
13 incoming 5th grade and we've been treating them at
14 secondary kind of assuming, Well, we know what you
15 had because we know what we did in 3rd and 4th grade
16 and it was great. Well, so that's part of this idea
17 looking forward, how do we restructure it to better
18 serve all kids.

19 MS. BARNES: Thank you so much.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Before we move on, I'm
21 going to give you a point of clarification and allow
22 you to clarify. The Department and the State Board
23 are not playing a game.

24 MR. BACON: I'm sorry.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I'll let you clarify

1 that for the record.

2 MR. BACON: That was very insulting and I
3 apologize. I get on a roll. Not a game. It's -- it
4 is looking -- I mean, I am so proud of the work that
5 the state has done to raise the bar and to say, you
6 know, we expect the highest level of expectation for
7 our kids. The problem we're running into is let's
8 stop moving the target and I think we all agree on
9 that as a state. We want to find a target and we
10 want to set that bar high and we want to provide the
11 resources, the support and the tools for teachers to
12 help kids get there.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm going to give you
14 another point of clarification. I don't think the
15 targets will ever be set permanently --

16 MR. BACON: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- because as a nation we
18 are constantly growing. And so, in education we have
19 to grow as well. So I'd just like to keep the
20 conversation at that --

21 MR. BACON: Right.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- professional level and
23 not let the public think that --

24 MR. BACON: Certainly not.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- that's what's going on.

1 MR. BACON: I apologize for that. I applaud the
2 efforts that you all are doing to raise the bar for
3 instruction and for our curriculum frameworks and for
4 assessments. I actually think the ACT Aspire is
5 perhaps one of the wisest things we've done as a
6 state because we talk so much about college readiness
7 and in this area of the country. And, frankly, I
8 think across the country the ACT assessment is the
9 bar, the most used bar for are you college ready. So
10 aligning to that says to me that we are looking at
11 the right things and we are aligning our expectations
12 to what we should be aligning them to, and I think
13 that's incredible.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

15 MR. BACON: But certainly, no offense and I
16 apologize.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

18 MS. PFEFFER: I'll leave my cough drop out for a
19 minute. I have two areas I want to touch on. The
20 first is teacher retention, and you've mentioned a
21 couple of different times about a teacher residency
22 program. So in addition to that, I also want to
23 touch on the partnership with UALR and that may be
24 part of the teacher retention because particularly at
25 the high school it seems to be where you've had the

1 highest rate of teacher turnover. So can you talk
2 just a little bit more about your efforts --

3 MR. BACON: Yes.

4 MS. PFEFFER: -- with teacher retention and --

5 MR. BACON: Yes. And as I said earlier, it is a
6 struggle because we do an extended day and an
7 extended year. We feel like we have a very high
8 level expectation for ourselves and our teachers and
9 our students, and so always looking to make sure
10 we're providing the highest quality of instruction,
11 the best teacher we can in every classroom. And so I
12 was just pulling some statistics in looking at where
13 teachers go when they leave us. Frankly, the
14 majority of the teachers who've left us in the last
15 couple of years either moved out of state or frankly
16 are no longer teaching. So I'm not sure what that
17 says. But we -- I can tell you this year one of the
18 things that really contributed to turnover that was
19 higher than we would've liked to have seen, we had
20 seven faculty members who had either a spouse or
21 significant other who graduated from UAMS, through
22 one of their programs, and was assigned a residency
23 out of state. And so those people, you know, because
24 of family situations and economic situations left us.
25 I think, you know, as a state we've got to figure out

1 how do we make sure that we don't have a brain-drain;
2 how do we keep those people; how do we keep the
3 people who graduate from UAMS in-state so that
4 they're doing their residencies here and they stay
5 in-state so that we don't lose a teacher because that
6 was such a sad thing to see, that we had so many who,
7 you know, left the state for those purposes. But
8 teacher retention is definitely something that we are
9 looking at and we've got to figure out. That's why
10 we're looking at this STEM residency program for
11 expansion to be able to try and -- we figure if we
12 grow our own and their in an immersion program with
13 us, they understand the culture of our school and the
14 expectations and they know, you know, what we're
15 looking for. And so I think that over time we're
16 going to see that. You know, moving forward, as we
17 expand, yes, we're going to need more teachers; we're
18 going to need more high quality teachers, and so
19 we're going to need to grow some of our own but we're
20 going to have to go out and find them and I think
21 that's where this flexibility for some alternative
22 approaches is really going to come into play.

23 And what was your second question?

24 MS. PFEFFER: Thank you for that. And so the
25 second area is your partnership --

1 MR. BACON: Yes. Yes. Yes.

2 MS. PFEFFER: -- with UALR and --

3 MR. BACON: And I think the Chancellor may have
4 had to leave. Yeah, he had to leave. I apologize; I
5 should have introduced him. He had another meeting
6 to go to. But as I shared with you all kind of an
7 outline of what we see as expectations and outcomes,
8 one of the great things to us is, you know, not only
9 will our students hopefully have the opportunity to
10 enroll in some college courses taught by college
11 professors and instructors, but there's this great
12 opportunity (a) for us to work with their college of
13 education so that our teachers can get some intensive
14 support and development, but we also can work with
15 them on what is -- what kind of skills and what does
16 it look like for students, you know, who are going to
17 be walking out of your doors and walking into a
18 classroom in the city of Little Rock. So I think
19 that partnership is going to help both sides as far
20 as the expectations for training and preparation, but
21 also an opportunity for recruitment. But beyond
22 that, you know, the adjunct faculty they have, the
23 instructors -- particularly at the secondary level,
24 there are so many people walking around the UALR
25 campus who have graduate degrees and content

1 knowledge; they've got people teaching these college
2 levels physics and high level courses who we want to
3 use their brains; we want to use their knowledge and
4 their content, and we think it's going to give us a
5 whole 'nother pool of people to either instruct
6 classes or as an adjunct or provide support to
7 teachers who need that content pickup.

8 MS. PFEFFER: So will -- okay. So I think I'm
9 hearing two things. Number one, there will be
10 opportunities for students to enroll in the college
11 courses for concurrent credit?

12 MR. BACON: Yes.

13 MS. PFEFFER: But then there's also the
14 opportunity for you all to utilize college
15 instructors to teach some courses where maybe they
16 would be the best fit?

17 MR. BACON: Yes.

18 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So in thinking of the
19 opportunities for students, will economically
20 disadvantaged students have an opportunity -- will
21 there -- do you have any resources and support for
22 them so that they will have opportunities the same --

23 MR. BACON: Yes.

24 MS. PFEFFER: -- as others?

25 MR. BACON: Yes. I mean, that's our point. We

1 want -- and UALR is invested in making this
2 accessible to -- they would love it if every child
3 who is in our high school had the opportunity to walk
4 out the door with an associate's degree. And so
5 we're working with them on what that looks like to
6 make sure that we have those opportunities. That's
7 why some of the waivers we asked for are kind of a
8 flexible -- flexibility in the day, so that students
9 -- you know -- if they're going to take three or four
10 of our classes and one or two of UALR college
11 classes, we need to be able to have a day that looks
12 similar to what a college schedule looks like. Their
13 calendar is a little different than what ours is
14 perhaps, and so we definitely want to make sure that
15 there's no barrier to any child in our high school
16 who wants to take -- sorry, every time I move it --
17 that wants to take those courses having that
18 opportunity.

19 MS. PFEFFER: So part of your concurrent
20 agreement, you're discussing financial assistance --

21 MR. BACON: Yes. Yes.

22 MS. PFEFFER: -- for economically disadvantaged
23 students?

24 MR. BACON: Yes. Because at present, you know,
25 UALR and other universities do great concurrent

1 credit programs. We do that on our campus now and
2 those students I think pay us like -- maybe it's
3 \$50.00 a course. So we're working with them on what
4 that needs to look like when we're on their campus,
5 working through those details.

6 MS. PFEFFER: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Good morning. Thank you for
9 --

10 MR. BACON: Good morning.

11 DR. GOTCHER: -- your obvious passion and great
12 leadership for your kids.

13 MR. BACON: I'm glad the passion is coming
14 through.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah, it is. It certainly is.

16 MR. BACON: Sometimes to a fault.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Quick question: does the potential
18 moving of students to UALR, does that have any impact
19 on their transportation? These bus passes, that
20 would not be an issue at all?

21 MR. BACON: No. No.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Good.

23 MR. BACON: And that's one of the reasons, as we
24 said, we've already -- we've been in communication
25 with Jared Gardner at Rock Region Metro for years.

1 But, yes, we will continue to offer that opportunity
2 and it's very well -- excuse me -- well accessed by
3 and easily accessible through multiple routes that go
4 throughout the city. And Rock Region has even
5 communicated with us in the past, as we've been
6 looking at sites, that if they needed to change some
7 routes and add a stop or two that they'd be willing
8 to work with us to talk about how do we approach if
9 we need -- you know -- if we need some more support.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Sure. And just kind of speaking
11 as a dad here, I'm not sure how the transportation --
12 with a larger campus like UALR, just concerned about
13 some students and their travel to classes and so-
14 forth.

15 MR. BACON: Right.

16 DR. GOTCHER: It's just a dad concern.

17 MR. BACON: Right.

18 DR. GOTCHER: Please humor me and --

19 MR. BACON: Yeah. I'm a dad of a 9th grader --

20 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah.

21 MR. BACON: -- who's excited about the possible
22 opportunity to be over there in a couple of years.
23 And so we definitely -- you know -- from a
24 transportation perspective, but just from the
25 entirety of being on a college campus, you know,

1 these are 10th, 11th, 12th graders, so they're closer
2 to college age, but they're still in our care and
3 teenagers. You know, we've been in communication
4 with UALR; they've been incredibly supportive. I've
5 been in communication with their security team.
6 They're already training. I guess she's -- I don't
7 know, I'll call her the sheriff -- I don't know what
8 her official title is -- they're actually -- she's
9 already identified a couple of her security personnel
10 that she's really sending them through some training
11 on working with younger students, perhaps 16, 17, 18
12 year olds, as opposed to some of the older students
13 on campus. So we think that we've got plans for how
14 we make sure that this is as smooth of a transition
15 as possible and that our students can focus on
16 teaching and learning.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Very good. Thank you for that.
18 Secondly, I guess one of the things that I'm quite
19 curious about, reading all the things that have
20 emerged through letters of support and letters of
21 opposition, one thing that I've not seen, I've not --
22 I took just a glance at the document that was
23 presented to us from your institution. One of the
24 things I feel is absent, and maybe you can enlighten
25 me -- and certainly I can have this conversation with

1 Mr. Kurrus, if the time is right -- but what
2 collaborative efforts have the -- are there any
3 collaborative efforts of Little Rock and eStem
4 working together, sharing of resources? What
5 conversations have occurred?

6 MR. BACON: I can tell you it's been pretty
7 limited. Over the years we've reached out. We have
8 had -- with past superintendents we've had
9 administrative teams -- I think one of the slides,
10 Dr. Morris Holmes, when he was there, we met several
11 times with their higher level administration; they
12 came through; we shared ideas. We've been in contact
13 with some of their curriculum and instructional
14 people over the years. Since Baker has been on the
15 job I think he's got enough on his plate that he
16 hasn't, until now, really even worried about what
17 we're doing. And so we really haven't had an
18 opportunity to sit down and talk about how we marry
19 that moving forward and support each other. But
20 we're open and we're willing and we're ready. That's
21 why, you know, we certainly with our STEM residency,
22 working with Ms. Pfeffer's department, working with
23 ACE on the Noble Impact curriculum, anything that we
24 feel like we can develop we want it to be so that
25 other people can access it.

1 Another thing that I think is incredible -- and
2 I don't know how many people have accessed it -- but,
3 you know, was the passage of legislation in the last
4 session that says that any school district,
5 traditional district that loses one child to a
6 charter can apply for the same waivers that charter
7 has.

8 DR. GOTCHER: I saw that Little Rock requested a
9 list of your waivers.

10 MR. BACON: Yes.

11 DR. GOTCHER: I saw that in your brief.

12 MR. BACON: We sent them everything we had.
13 I've had some communication with higher level
14 administrators there about what we've done from a
15 waiver perspective. I don't know if they've applied
16 for anything at this point, but I think that has the
17 potential to say clearly as a state our leadership
18 has decided that flexibility in some of this is worth
19 looking at, because we now have it in the law that
20 not only charters but traditional districts -- so I
21 think that's a mark of success for charters. But I
22 also think communicating with people how it plays out
23 and how it works so that they can understand, you
24 know, because there may be a fear from a traditional
25 perspective. As I said, 14 years, Little Rock School

1 District. I certainly want -- I think one of the
2 things we can do is perhaps bridge some of those
3 concerns about what a waiver means and what happens
4 in light of a waiver. Perhaps that would be
5 something that could be a helpful communication tool,
6 as I'm just sitting here thinking about your
7 question, so that we could discuss, you know, what
8 that looks like. Because I know some districts
9 around the state are applying for those similar
10 waivers. I know it will be interesting to see.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Very good. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

13 MS. SMITH: First, I also want to acknowledge
14 your passion and acknowledge that yesterday I said to
15 a school, "No one will know your story unless you
16 tell it" --

17 MR. BACON: Right.

18 MS. SMITH: -- and you do a very good job
19 telling your story. And so I do acknowledge the
20 accomplishments you have, and your graduates and your
21 students that spoke today did a nice job.

22 MR. BACON: Thank you.

23 MS. SMITH: One question that I do have: if I
24 were looking consistently at your reports that you've
25 given on testing, if there is an area that leaps out

1 every once in awhile, consistently throughout, it is
2 your economically disadvantaged population.
3 Elementary didn't meet their AMO in ELA or math;
4 middle school didn't meet it in math; high school
5 didn't meet it in math. That is a smaller portion of
6 your student population.

7 MR. BACON: Right. Right.

8 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so when we talk about the
9 reflection within the Little Rock district or we talk
10 about the reflection within your district alone in
11 serving that population of students, if that
12 population were to grow are you guys prepared to be
13 able to serve those needs of those students? And
14 what would your school --

15 MR. BACON: Right.

16 MS. SMITH: What kind of conversations have
17 y'all had in-house --

18 MR. BACON: Right. Oh, absolutely.

19 MS. SMITH: -- about serving that population
20 now?

21 MR. BACON: Absolutely. And so that's what --
22 why we've spent -- you know -- we've invested the
23 resources and the support and the personnel to have a
24 solid instructional management team to make sure that
25 we are looking at that. Because, as I said, you

1 know, we have changed and we continue to change our
2 standards. We want to make sure that we're
3 constantly on the ball so that our teachers are
4 teaching to that standard, to the highest level for
5 all kids. And so that's something that I think is
6 really important. I was just going through, you know
7 -- and as the question about special ed. came up and
8 I was going through our 2015 ESEA reports and looking
9 at the TAGG group, in the elementary school a fourth
10 of our TAGG group was special ed. kids; the middle
11 school it was almost a third; in the high school it
12 was a fifth. And so that's something that we really
13 have to focus on is how are we making sure that those
14 students, in spite of any, you know, IEP plan, you
15 know, and with the use of the IEP plan and whatever
16 the disability is, how are we helping those students
17 succeed as well. And so we're really trying to dig
18 deep into the data because I'm not pleased with our
19 2015 PARCC reports. I can tell you that. That's why
20 we've been examining the NWEA this year so heavily.
21 That's why we took the ACT Aspire to see are we going
22 to see something different, and we have. And that's
23 why, you know, we've gone back to look, you know,
24 historically and examining how we did for the three
25 years prior when we had the Arkansas standards and

1 the Arkansas benchmarks. And in spite of, as Ms.
2 Barnes said, a few small gaps, and particularly in
3 the middle school a gap in math, we're finding that,
4 you know, we were seeing success with all students.
5 But we've got to see how we do that as we move into
6 the new realm of ACT Aspire and the new -- you know
7 --- new alignment of standards. But it's having the
8 support team in place, which I believe we have now;
9 it's having strong leadership, which I believe we
10 have; and it's making sure that we use, as we said,
11 that 90-plus hours of professional development so
12 that we support our teachers so that they know -- we
13 give them resources but we also give them examples of
14 what good teaching looks like for every kid. So it
15 can't just be a one-size-fits-all; that's been in our
16 mission from day-one, and we've looked at it from,
17 you know, our vision of serving our students in an
18 individualized approach. I mean, that's something
19 we've talked about from the day we opened, and we've
20 got to make sure that we're focusing there. And
21 that's the difficulty of a transition to me is making
22 sure that we keep a high bar for all students but we
23 do look at every child and make sure, you know, that
24 they're growing. And so in spite of these, you know,
25 PARCC scores, which we weren't pleased with -- I

1 mean, you know, there are things that -- other
2 factors that you look at and so -- you know -- I'm on
3 the student growth committee and Ms. Pfeffer probably
4 doesn't want me bringing this out, but the value-
5 added -- you know -- they're doing the value-added,
6 which is going to be on the report card. And so I
7 just have been looking at our value-added reports,
8 what kind of impact are our teachers having on where
9 we would have expected these students to perform.
10 And even in our high school the value-added map is
11 about negligible; it's about -- they're performing
12 about where their past history would have shown they
13 would perform, with a few exceptions, on the algebra
14 test. And even in the middle school we're seeing
15 that our students are performing. Math is a little
16 lower than we would have expected; literacy is a
17 little higher than we would have expected. So we're
18 kind of performing -- you know -- what it tells me is
19 our students are moving at about what we would've
20 expected. My expectation is higher than that. My
21 expectation is that we don't just do what -- you know
22 -- they don't do what we thought they would've done,
23 but they actually do better. And that's what we're
24 committed to doing as we move forward, whatever
25 students we serve, the current students we serve

1 today and any students that we serve in the future,
2 is how do we use the data; how do we make sure we've
3 got the right leadership; how do we make sure we make
4 good hiring decisions and support good teachers and
5 support good teaching and learning; how do we
6 continue to look for new approaches, which is why we
7 brought in the Carnegie math for secondary, which is
8 why, you know, we've been really focusing heavily on
9 CGI at the elementary level. Because we're seeing
10 approaches that other districts have used in the
11 state and across the country that are working and
12 that we want to make sure that we're providing our
13 teachers with all those tools.

14 MS. SMITH: Just a final comment. You yourself
15 have worked in a district --

16 MR. BACON: Yes.

17 MS. SMITH: -- with a large socioeconomic
18 challenge and then have moved to a school where you
19 don't have that. And you probably yourself have
20 recognized the fact that those students disappear in
21 the classroom at times when you put them with a large
22 group that are not disadvantaged.

23 MR. BACON: Right.

24 MS. SMITH: And so I want to encourage you to
25 continue to -- because it's not public information

1 who's disadvantaged and who's not --

2 MR. BACON: Right.

3 MS. SMITH: -- in your setting.

4 MR. BACON: Right.

5 MS. SMITH: But I want to highly encourage you
6 or someone in your -- to take note and watch because
7 those students go home to a different setting than
8 what some of your other students do and they have a
9 tendency to disappear in schools that have a low
10 disadvantaged population.

11 MR. BACON: Right.

12 MS. SMITH: So just some encouraging words
13 there.

14 MR. BACON: Right. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: I do want to compliment you on
17 the idea of the marriage with the college campus, for
18 the inception of that. I think that's an interesting
19 way to look at things and trying to think a little
20 different than perhaps how we have done things in the
21 past. I do have some questions about that, in
22 particular what about students not going to college;
23 what is your emphasis and focus on support for them?

24 MR. BACON: Well, so we -- the nice thing that I
25 think is probably one of the things that stands out

1 about our school is, you know, we have made it clear
2 that we want every student who wants to go to college
3 to have that opportunity. And, frankly, most of our
4 students after having spent time with us decide that
5 is a pathway they want to go on, as you saw the
6 statistics. But we certainly have students who, you
7 know, have decided that college may not be for them
8 or maybe college not at this time and so we've really
9 worked hard to figure out how do we provide
10 opportunities. That's why I'm so proud of this Noble
11 Impact program. There's no bar to get into Noble
12 Impact to say I have a certain GPA or I have a
13 certain background. Anyone who wants to participate
14 has that opportunity and we're allowing these
15 students to get into internships. That's the power
16 of this piece for me is if you're not going to
17 college you're going to work. And so if you're going
18 to work I want you to have some opportunities to
19 understand not only the skills that are required for
20 a job you're going into but all the soft skills that
21 are required for any job to be able to function in
22 this economy. And so we really hope by growing this
23 Noble program and making it a more formal program
24 through the framework that, you know, we'll be able
25 to include more internships in that. You know, some

1 of the -- I don't know -- Jordan talked I think about
2 his internship with a local photographer. That's --
3 you know -- you don't have to have a college degree
4 to be a photographer, but you certainly have to have
5 a skill set and you have to have a work ethic and you
6 have to have, you know, a development of a craft.
7 And so we certainly look at that as a possibility.
8 How do we make sure that every kid has an opportunity
9 to understand what comes next? Since most of them
10 are looking at college we certainly push, you know,
11 as hard as we can on college preparedness. I've even
12 got some ACT data if we want to get into it -- or AP
13 data, I'm sorry, if we want to get into it. But
14 basically I think it's going to be through those
15 internships and through opportunities where we
16 identify those students and help support them in
17 making career decisions.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. What about the physical
19 presence on the college campus? In particular, how
20 are students physically separated from the college
21 students?

22 MR. BACON: So what we're planning to do right
23 now -- Larson Hall is a building on UALR's campus
24 which was one of the first buildings that was
25 actually there, and it is actually closed right now.

1 They're not using it at all. And so what this
2 project will entail is renovating Larson Hall,
3 actually -- I think they're going to add -- I think
4 may double the size of it, frankly. So we'll have
5 Larson Hall as our base for classrooms,
6 administrative offices and such. We will as we work
7 through this partnership identify those opportunities
8 for students to go out and take college classes.
9 Some of them, you know, have access to the catalog of
10 courses that UALR offers, you know, if they have met
11 their requirements to be admitted and all of those
12 things. And as we grow over time they've offered to
13 allow us to use some other space in the adjoining
14 building to Larson, which is Ross Hall, which is a
15 classroom space. And so we would have to be very
16 specific in placement of what classes would go there,
17 who would be in that building; it'll be adjoining to
18 our campus but it would be a multi-use facility.
19 We're going to use some of the other facilities,
20 hopefully, the gym, the auditorium, some of those
21 other auxiliary facilities. And so our students will
22 engage with UALR students and I'm excited about that.
23 I don't want it to be just a closed off "our students
24 are here and everything is going on around them." So
25 we're working real hard with the leadership at UALR,

1 with the security at UALR, with the different
2 departments and the colleges just to make sure that
3 all of the different pieces are in place before we
4 move one child onto that campus, that we know how to
5 provide a safe and secure environment with the
6 structure that's necessary but also with the
7 flexibility to allow our students to engage in these
8 incredible opportunities.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Looking at the PARCC
10 results and I think looking at that -- and I know
11 that you addressed part of that earlier, saying not
12 to look at those. I think it is important to look at
13 those. I think it's important to look at -- I think
14 it's safe to say that you did achieve higher than the
15 Pulaski County School District in both categories,
16 looking at district-wide. I think that the results
17 comparing to Little Rock School District were about
18 the same. And I understand what you were saying
19 about the pencil test versus the computer test;
20 however, you know, one of the arguments with that is
21 that perhaps computer skills and students' ability to
22 use a computer could have been part of the
23 explanatory variable in that effect. Being an eStem
24 school I do not see that as being a possible variable
25 that could have affected your students' performance.

1 MR. BACON: Yeah. I don't think it's a lack of
2 understanding of how to use a computer because our
3 students take the NWEA assessments on computer. What
4 I read in the Education Week analysis was that it's
5 -- frankly, there are some distinctions in the test.
6 There's not a technology enhanced piece. There are
7 different ways that you take the test and, frankly,
8 enough data there that makes me believe that there
9 are just differences. So that's why we just said
10 it's a difficult comparison to make. I pulled the
11 comparisons for African American students, for
12 disadvantaged students, for TAGG students, math and
13 literacy in comparison to the three districts in the
14 area just based on PARCC. And while we're not real
15 pleased with where we are, we certainly, you know,
16 find ourselves, for African American students, higher
17 than Little Rock -- than North Little Rock, Pulaski
18 County. Little Rock is a bit higher. Disadvantaged
19 were higher than North Little Rock, Pulaski County in
20 literacy; we're a little below Pulaski County in
21 math, and we're above them for TAGG for literacy and
22 a little below Pulaski County for math. But we're
23 right there at a very similar range when you compare
24 like students. You know, I'm real proud of our
25 graduation rate which has stayed in the high 96 to 98

1 percent range. Two years ago, our TAGG graduation
2 rate was actually higher than our all-student
3 graduation rate. So, you know, we looked at the
4 chart, the report card chart to see how many bonus
5 points do we get when the gap is a positive on behalf
6 of the TAGG students. I don't think that happens
7 very often, Ms. Barnes. And so we were real proud of
8 that. But, so we certainly use data but, you know, I
9 don't look at overall data and say how do we do in
10 comparison to others because we're all different.
11 But I like to look at specific subsets of students
12 who are similar and see do we do. And I feel like
13 even in spite of what we've talked about with some
14 secondary math challenges, I mean, I think that we're
15 about where the value-added set our students would
16 have performed and we're about where the other
17 districts are. Historically, we've been much higher
18 than that for African American, TAGG and
19 disadvantaged groups. And I think that's what gives
20 me confidence that as we move forward toward this ACT
21 Aspire, I believe we'll be taking the ACT Aspire for
22 a number of years now. I think we all knew, you
23 know, PARCC was in transition but I have full
24 confidence that ACT Aspire is here to stay for the
25 short-term at least so that we'll have longitudinal

1 data. I believe that with a standard that we know
2 what it is and with the testing mechanism that stays
3 consistent we will see the same patterns that we've
4 seen historically when we had that.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: A couple more questions. How --
6 I know you do not have this number, so I'm not trying
7 to put you on the spot, but if you can estimate --
8 and I'm back on the transportation. I understand
9 that you're using the Metro bus service. How many of
10 your students below 5th grade would you say utilize
11 the bus service?

12 MR. BACON: I don't have that broken down. Oh,
13 yes, I do. Yes, I do. Yes, I do.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

15 MR. BACON: Sorry.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: That's okay.

17 MR. BACON: I do.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: I didn't expect you to have it.

19 MS. BACON: All right. Here it is. Let's see.
20 So the last time -- I think this would've been at
21 present we had no kindergartners, one 1st grader, no
22 2nd, three 3rd, and then it really starts to pick up
23 at 4th. One of the things we found is that the
24 youngest kids who do ride it the parents generally
25 are putting them on there with a sibling. We have

1 made it known we're happy to put someone on a bus if
2 someone has a concern about, you know, putting their
3 kid on a city bus without supervision. We have -- in
4 the last three years we have had this many incidents
5 --

6 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Mr. Bacon is indicating
7 zero with his fingers.)

8 MR. BACON: -- reported to us from the bus --
9 from our parents, our students, or from the bus
10 company of any problems with our children on the bus
11 or anyone, you know, approaching them or in any way
12 there being a negative experience. So I think it's a
13 great tool. I think, you know, certainly the
14 secondary level is where we see it being used the
15 most and I would anticipate that will continue at
16 UALR as well. But, you know, we -- when I was a
17 parent of a kindergartner I wanted to drop my kid off
18 at the front door, regardless, and so I think most
19 people feel strongly that way. And a lot of the
20 families, you know, that we serve -- and, obviously,
21 I think Ms. Kohler said it, there aren't a lot of
22 people who live downtown and around the downtown
23 financial area or on the Shall Street side, but there
24 are a lot of people who come downtown. And so I
25 think that's why the number of students that are on

1 our -- in our applicant pool and have expressed an
2 interest incoming, they're going to get there whether
3 they bring them or whether they know we provide --
4 we're going to provide that transportation which is
5 accessible.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Well, I think that brings up a
7 point that I know as -- I can understand the parents'
8 concern about putting an extremely young child on a
9 bus. And so it almost to me makes me wonder if for
10 those students, especially alone -- let me say that
11 -- for those students in the younger grades is the --
12 those applying for that only those families that have
13 the means financially and time-wise to be able to
14 transport their child to school?

15 MR. BACON: You could make that case; I would
16 say that the people who are applying, it's a cross-
17 section of the population. And I would say most of
18 the elementary parents that I know love to take their
19 kids to school. And so I don't think it's that -- I
20 wouldn't -- I wouldn't place it on that. I would say
21 in moving forward what we probably will do -- when we
22 started, when we did this in the beginning, we would
23 let parents know, you know, where parents -- where a
24 group was, that if they wanted to ride the bus
25 together -- we have all that information and we would

1 show you there's a bus that picks up here. And we
2 did in the very beginning have a couple of times
3 where parents said, "Can someone ride the bus?" And
4 we had people ride the bus. But that hasn't been a
5 request recently, but it's definitely something that
6 I think we should continue to look into and make some
7 assessments on.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: I do think you've had a history
9 of performance and I'm excited about some of the
10 ideas that you have. I will tell you I do have a
11 concern, and my main concern is with the possibility
12 for expansion of the population of the free and
13 reduced students. And that is a big concern that I
14 have right now, that it would be more reflective or
15 closer to other districts in the area. So I'll turn
16 it over.

17 MR. BACON: And I think that's one of the things
18 about moving into UALR, in particular, is we're
19 moving -- you know -- you can either build schools
20 and have people bring -- get to them or you can take
21 schools to people. And that's what we thought the
22 UALR thing is a way for us to see, moving a school
23 into more of a neighborhood which is definitely -- I
24 think someone referred to it as a high dollar
25 residential -- it is not; it never has been, and

1 won't be. I think that it's important that -- you
2 know -- to see do we attract more of an economically
3 disadvantaged population. I think we will. I think
4 that those -- you know -- when you look at
5 neighborhoods and you take a school into a
6 neighborhood and you fight to let people know that
7 school is there and to know what's available to them,
8 I think that we'll see those numbers increase,
9 particularly in that location, as we move forward.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: If I understand the amendment
11 request correctly, is the increase in enrollment to
12 occur over time?

13 MR. BACON: Yes.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: So much each year?

15 MR. BACON: Yes. And let me find my page.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: So do you think that you would
17 have strategies that you have not used in the past,
18 whether it be transportation, whether it be whatever
19 -- I don't think that there's just one variable there
20 -- that may attract more free and reduced students to
21 attend your school?

22 MR. BACON: Oh, certainly. We've already been
23 in contact with university district neighborhoods.
24 We've had students and myself attend the National
25 Night Out over in the university district

1 neighborhoods. I've spoken to that group of leaders
2 and we've talked with them about strategies -- door-
3 to-door, you know, door hangers, whatever it takes to
4 get out; just like we're running a political
5 campaign, get out there and make sure that people in
6 the community know what's moving into their community
7 and how to access it so that people will --
8 certainly, I mean, we already have a huge pool of
9 families that live in that area that are on our list
10 at present. But I think that we can continue to work
11 hard to get as much diversity as possible.

12 And let me go back to the -- yes, and so you
13 asked -- I pulled the sheet. So, yes, it is growth
14 over time. We actually don't reach the 3844 until
15 the 26-27 school year. It would go from 1462 next
16 year to 1924 in the 17-18 school year, and then it
17 grows to 2950 the following year as we open that
18 Shall Street campus, and then it's very slow; it's
19 about 100 to 200 kids a year after that.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you have any specific numbers
21 or plans on growth for your free and reduced
22 population?

23 MR. BACON: I mean, our -- we have, in talking
24 with some supporters and funders -- and we set a goal
25 of new students enrolling in our schools through this

1 expansion project -- a goal of about 50% free and
2 reduced of new students coming in. That's the goal
3 that we're going to shoot for. But, again, we don't
4 know; when they apply and when we run the lottery and
5 they get a place, we have no idea whether a student
6 is coming in disadvantaged or not. We can only do
7 our best to improve the pool and make sure that we
8 have as many families from areas that historically,
9 you know, would indicate that. But, I mean, it's an
10 open-enrollment process. I can't ask that question.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: I fully understand that and I'm
12 not, you know, pushing for selection based upon that
13 criteria. But I think what I'm saying is make sure
14 that all the possible conditions support those
15 students so that it would have at least --

16 MR. BACON: Absolutely.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: -- a 50% --

18 MR. BACON: Absolutely.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: -- criteria.

20 MR. BACON: Right. And that's, as I said, by
21 looking at location and looking at, you know, a
22 targeted recruitment strategy, working with
23 neighborhood associations, working with, you know,
24 community resources, I think that we'll meet our
25 goal.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have several questions.
2 First, Kimberly, if you would pull their PowerPoint
3 back up and go to slide 27. Mr. Bacon, I want to
4 kind of walk through a timeline and talk to you about
5 that enrollment increase.

6 MR. BACON: Where am I looking?

7 DR. GOTCHER: It's not up yet.

8 MR. BACON: Okay.

9 MS. FRIEDMAN: Is that it, Deb? Which slide?

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: 27. Is that 27 on yours?

11 MS. FRIEDMAN: It's hard for me to see.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Oh, you can't see. Let me
13 see where it is in relation to that one. Three more
14 -- three slides ahead.

15 MR. BACON: Are you talking about the amendment
16 request list?

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

18 MR. BACON: Yes. Sorry. There are a whole
19 bunch of fly-ins on that. It's going to take you a
20 minute to get there. Sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm very visual. I'm
22 visual, so it helps me to -- right here, right here.
23 Okay. So as we put that up for everyone to see, I've
24 kind of mapped out what I think the timeline is and I
25 want to kind of go through it with you. So we're

1 running in the 15-16 school year.

2 MR. BACON: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And moving into
4 next school year that would be the time that you
5 would be putting all of your amendments into place.
6 And would you have any enrollment increase at that
7 time?

8 MR. BACON: In 16-17?

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

10 MR. BACON: No.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No --

12 MR. BACON: We'll be renovating and doing
13 construction projects. We will ramp up, so, with our
14 STEM residency program because we want to have some
15 teachers prepared for the next year when we take on
16 these students. So we will have some changes going
17 on that year, but there won't be a new student added
18 in 16-17.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And your current
20 enrollment is --

21 MR. BACON: 1462.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And you don't have any
23 space for more students where you are currently?

24 MR. BACON: No.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

1 MR. BACON: We are maxed out really in our
2 current structure with those two facilities the way
3 we are.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. In 17-18, that's
5 when you would -- your plan is to relocate to the
6 newly renovated UALR campus?

7 MR. BACON: Yes. 17-18, grades 10-12 would move
8 to UALR; grades K-6 would restructure in the current
9 Gazette Building; and grades 7-9 would be across the
10 street. We have taking on 462 new students --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Stop. Stop. Back-
12 up and repeat that to me again.

13 UNKNOWN LADY IN THE AUDIENCE: Well, it's in the
14 original application --

15 MR. BACON: Okay.

16 UNKNOWN LADY: -- on the budget sheet that they
17 have that.

18 MR. BACON: Well, that just gives you the
19 overall numbers but not in terms of a breakdown.
20 But, yeah, the budget sheet at the very top has the
21 number of new students each year.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I want you to come back
23 and put it --

24 MR. BACON: Yes.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- into a timeline. So go

1 back and start that statement again.

2 MR. BACON: Okay. So in '17-18, we would move
3 grades 10-12 to high school. We currently serve
4 about 375 kids in those grades. Our plan is to move
5 those students over and hopefully add about maybe 25
6 students in grades 11 and 12, if possible.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Into the current downtown
8 building?

9 MR. BACON: No, no, no. That will be at UALR.
10 10-12 moves to UALR, totally moves, and we're able to
11 add a few seats but not a lot. Okay. So by moving
12 10-12 out, we now only have K-9 in the two buildings
13 we use. So what we're going to do is restructure and
14 have K-6 in the Gazette Building on one side of the
15 street, 7-9 in the Federal Reserve Building on the
16 other side of the street. And so by moving out those
17 450 or, you know, 375, 400 students we'll be able to
18 replace them with new students in grades K-9 into the
19 current facilities. Does that make sense?

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, in other words --

21 MR. BACON: So we have 1462 at 3rd and Louisiana
22 now; pull out 10-12, which is about 375 kids, move
23 them over; now we replace those kids with K-9
24 students in the current locations. Right?

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Uh-huh.

1 MR. BACON: And then we'll add a few in the high
2 school, the 10-12, at UALR that year. So the
3 preponderance of the 462 students are going to come
4 from K-9 students off the waiting list in the pool
5 who are going to fill in the space that's available
6 to serve, you know, 1460-plus students downtown.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

8 MR. BACON: And that space becomes available
9 because we move 10-12 out.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And then, in 18-19
11 --

12 MR. BACON: So in 18-19, we open the Shall
13 Street campus -- and I somehow don't have that chart
14 in front of me with the breakdown. But we'll open it
15 I think with students in all grades but our middle
16 school grades will be smaller than what the maximum
17 capacity eventually will be. Here it is. Look at
18 that. Thank you, Sharon. So we'll open with grades
19 K-9 in the 18-19 school year, but we won't open at
20 capacity in the junior high grades. We'll open with
21 probably about 100 kids per grade, growing to
22 eventually 150. But, so by doing that we're adding
23 about 1,000 kids and then we'll still have a few more
24 that will come into the high school as we start --
25 this feeder pattern starts to grow. So the high

1 school will be the slowest to grow because we're
2 going to have to bring in more kids in the K-9
3 environment to feed that high school. So these two
4 schools will feed it over time.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: What will be the maximum
6 capacity at the high school?

7 MR. BACON: The maximum capacity at the high
8 school when everything is in place would be 1125
9 students.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And in your breakdown in
11 the two buildings and Shall Street would be K-6 and
12 7-9. Is that correct?

13 MR. BACON: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: What would be the maximum
15 capacity at K-6?

16 MR. BACON: Okay. 795.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And --

18 MR. BACON: 450.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm sorry?

20 MR. BACON: And 450 on the junior high side;
21 1245 on that entire campus.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So long-range --

23 MR. BACON: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- if the maximum capacity
25 at K-6 is 795, the maximum capacity of 7-9 is 450,

1 and then your maximum capacity of high school would
2 be 1,125, then your anticipating long-term that a lot
3 of students would come into your system at high
4 school?

5 MR. BACON: In the short-run that's why we're
6 not growing the high school as much. We will try and
7 take on some more because we'll have capacity over
8 there and we want to be efficient. But long-term the
9 plan is that these two K-9s are growing and feeding
10 the preponderance of the kids. The 375 for grade
11 average in the high school -- frankly, to fill that
12 with our own students we have to open another K-9,
13 smaller one, that would feed into that. We'll be
14 sending I think 175 or so from the downtown campus,
15 150 from the Shall Street campus. So at maximum
16 capacity we're sending about 325 per grade of in-
17 house kids, which does allow us the opportunity to
18 offer this high school experience, this unique high
19 school experience to about 50 kids when we're at full
20 capacity of these buildings from the outside. But
21 over time we'll just be taking on smaller numbers
22 until these two buildings are at full capacity and
23 feeding that full number. Does that make any sense?

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And what will happen to
25 the two downtown buildings?

1 MR. BACON: So they will stay in operation and
2 in that 17-18 school year, when 10-12 moves out to
3 UALR, now we have students in K-9 -- we'll
4 restructure K-6 on one side of the street, 7-9 on the
5 other, and we'll be able to take on more kids in each
6 grade to replace the space that's been -- you know --
7 to fill the space that's been created by moving high
8 school students out of that facility.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But in 18-19?

10 MR. BACON: That's in 17-18.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Right. But in 18-19, when
12 you move to Shall Street what will happen?

13 MR. BACON: We're not moving. It's a new
14 campus. In 18-19 --

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You will continue to have
16 students --

17 MR. BACON: So after 17-18, those two buildings
18 at present are pretty consistent in the number of
19 students served, maybe a little over time as we --

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

21 MR. BACON: -- are trying to fill. But,
22 generally, yeah, those will be what they're going to
23 be in 17-18. And then the new campus is -- and we're
24 phasing this because, I mean, at one point we had it
25 on the table to do all of this at once. And so we're

1 phasing it because we want to make sure we make that
2 transition properly to get UALR up and running and
3 then we'll open a second campus similar to our
4 current K-9. But the students will stay where they
5 are; new students will have an opportunity to come
6 on-board.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. That was very
8 helpful.

9 MR. BACON: I'm glad it was for you because --

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Well, because when I read
11 through it I didn't catch that the downtown building
12 was going -- that you were going to have two
13 elementary campuses --

14 MR. BACON: Yes. Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- and two --

16 MR. BACON: Two.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- middle school/junior
18 high campuses.

19 MR. BACON: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Questions, comments?

21 Ms. Davis, do you have any remaining issues
22 regarding this amendment? And, Ms. Davis, I've had a
23 request for you to speak into the microphone also.

24 MS. DAVIS: Okay. Can you hear me? Okay. I
25 had one issue on the waivers. They did request four

1 waivers, one of them being the waiver of 6-18-211,
2 the full day attendance. And in order to effectuate
3 that they are going to need a waiver of the rules
4 governing the mandatory attendance for students in
5 grades 9-12. So I need them to confirm that they
6 want to add that one, as well.

7 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, staff attorney,
8 Arkansas Public School Resource Center on behalf of
9 eStem. We'll agree to that addition.

10 MS. DAVIS: And that was it. That was the only
11 issue I had.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any further discussion by
13 panel members before a motion? Then I'll accept a
14 motion.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: I've got a long one. It might
16 help if you'd turn to Exhibit One (1).

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's a motion or a --

18 DR. SAUNDERS: It's a motion.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: This would help I think looking
21 at Exhibit One (1). And my motion would be to
22 approve the amendment on the conditions of the
23 enrollment cap increasing each year as articulated in
24 Exhibit One (1). If you'll look up about the fifth
25 variable from the bottom, it says increase by year --

1 I'm on this page; I'm sorry. It lists specific
2 numbers. Yes. And with the increase each year being
3 dependent upon meeting the pre-determined targets on
4 the free and reduced population beginning with 30% in
5 17-18 and increasing by 2% each year --

6 MS. DAVIS: You can't do that.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: I can't?

8 MS. DAVIS: It's open-enrollment, so you can't
9 make the decision on who's going to get in based on
10 your free and reduced lunch.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm not doing it based upon --
12 I'm doing it based upon the student population, not
13 the lottery results.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You can't.

15 MS. DAVIS: You can't do it.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Not the lottery determination?

17 MS. DAVIS: Huh-uh.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sorry.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Then I defer.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But you can do the -- you
22 can ask for the Exhibit One (1) increase, enrollment
23 increase.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Well, but it has free and reduced
25 information on there as well. Correct? I'm looking

1 at second from the bottom.

2 MR. BACON: I'm getting yelled at here; I don't
3 know what's going on. Right. Our take on that was
4 that we have no way to control free and reduced. And
5 so what we've shown you there is an anticipated
6 enrollment increase year-by-year based on the
7 projections we've made for how many new students that
8 we anticipate serving, reaching to that final
9 eventually, you know, 2382 total new students.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Would you restate your
11 motion, or did you rescind the motion?

12 DR. SAUNDERS: I rescinded.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I'm marking you off
14 then. Let's try again. Motion?

15 MS. SMITH: Okay. I'm going to probably need
16 some assistance though here. All right. So the
17 exact motion is they're asking to expand their
18 enrollment. Correct? So I make a motion to allow
19 eStem to expand their enrollment to the -- what was
20 it -- 3,844, adding a new campus. Also, allowing
21 their high school students to move to the UALR campus
22 and accepting their full day attendance waiver.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: There are many other
24 waivers.

25 MS. SMITH: There were -- okay. And do I need

1 to list those specifically?

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No.

3 MS. SMITH: To accept their waivers that -- as
4 they have submitted.

5 MS. DAVIS: Can you just clarify? I mean,
6 because they had a lot. So is there anything that
7 you're not --

8 MS. SMITH: No, I was -- no, I was putting forth
9 that they could -- we would accept all amendments as
10 requested.

11 MS. DAVIS: Okay. Thank you.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Is that different than their
13 amendment request?

14 MS. SMITH: No changes.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

16 MS. PFEFFER: So, clarification: there's been a
17 motion made to accept eStem's amendment to their
18 charter. Correct?

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. With the
20 clarification that Tripp Walter made.

21 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. I'll second that motion and
22 I'd like discussion, if that's okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go right ahead.

24 MS. PFEFFER: I'm going to second that motion.
25 I've listened -- I've thought about this for a long

1 time, ever since the application has come forth.
2 It's really agonizing because I've listened to both
3 sides, I've read the paper; I know it's a very
4 emotionally charged issue. But I also -- in thinking
5 about the Little Rock School District, we want the
6 Little Rock School District to be successful. When I
7 look at the application some of the things that have
8 helped me today is this is going to be phased in over
9 time. Locations, I think, will encourage more
10 economic diversity. I think that it is a very unique
11 and wonderful opportunity for high school students
12 and it's aligned with goals of helping to know that
13 students are going to be prepared for their future.
14 I think the gradual phase-in also gives some time for
15 the Little Rock School District to -- as they're
16 getting a foothold to be thinking about some
17 innovations and things that can be done there, as
18 well. And we would encourage partnerships and
19 provide support that's needed. So I wanted to say
20 all that with my second.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other discussion?

22 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, Ms. Coffman. Ms. Pfeffer, I
23 also have agonized for days regarding our decision.
24 And I know this: each day when I wake up I have the
25 privilege of wearing the hat as an employee of the

1 Department of Education, but there are times like
2 today I wear the hat of a Charter Authorizing Panel
3 member. But the hat that I always wear is that of a
4 father and an educator who advocates for the best
5 interest of all the children in the state of
6 Arkansas. Further, when one considers the vast
7 opportunities afforded in law and in rules and regs
8 all educational entities have the opportunity to form
9 innovative, creative waiver rich programs for their
10 kids, regardless of their differences. And what
11 encourages me is that there are examples in our
12 state, there are examples in our nation where
13 traditionals and publics have come together -- excuse
14 me -- traditionals and charters have come together,
15 working for the best interest of the kids, talking
16 about the best interest of kids. And this mixed
17 market blended approach to education can only happen
18 when the polarizing rhetoric stops and we move
19 towards what is best for the kids in our state.
20 Thank you.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: I agree with what was said. And
22 this is a tough one for me. I will vote in favor of
23 it. And it's just because as I expressed my concern
24 with free and reduced population, and I want to see
25 that increased and that is my main reservation. And,

1 you know, I do not like the ideas -- I think it's
2 been portrayed that perhaps support of one is always
3 hurting another. I think that we need to be careful
4 with that. I think that we can support both entities
5 in the endeavor because we are ultimately, as Dr.
6 Gotcher pointed out, here for kids and individual
7 kids. And this is definitely in my time here been
8 one of the toughest decisions I've had to make. And
9 I encourage you in your endeavors, and that's all I
10 want to say for now.

11 MS. SMITH: Can I make a comment?

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, go ahead.

13 MS. SMITH: Yesterday, I was accused of being
14 quiet on the microphone and I've never been accused
15 of being quiet, so I've got to make a statement now.
16 One thing, I do want to echo what Ms. Pfeffer said; I
17 also want to echo what Dr. Saunders said. Probably
18 the biggest concern to me was the disadvantaged
19 student population that's being served. I do
20 recognize that you follow a lottery process and that
21 you are open with that, so I acknowledge that. But I
22 would like to see that population be increased and I
23 think it's something that would add to your school.
24 I don't think increasing the disadvantaged population
25 to your school would harm you in any way, especially

1 if you are being diligent in your efforts to serve
2 that population. Again, I want to applaud your two
3 students that spoke today; they were very articulate,
4 and I wanted to recognize them. But I wanted to echo
5 the previous comments.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, I need you. I
7 have failed to ask for public comment from the people
8 on my list. Would it be all right if I stop and do
9 that now before we take a vote?

10 MS. DAVIS: Uh-huh.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you. Eugene
12 Levy.

13 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Maybe I did better than I
15 thought. John Adams.

16 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. With that
18 opportunity checked off, any further discussion?
19 Then we have a motion by Ms. Smith to approve all
20 waivers and a second by Ms. Pfeffer. All those in
21 favor of the motion? Whoa.

22 MS. DAVIS: Motion to approve the amendment.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Pardon?

24 MS. DAVIS: You said waivers.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sorry. To approve the

1 amendment.

2 DR. GOTCHER: Good catch.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. There's been a
4 motion by Ms. Smith to approve the amendments and a
5 second by Ms. Pfeffer. All those in favor of the
6 motion?

7 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

9 MS. BARNES: Aye.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. The motion has
11 passed.

12 And if you'll wait just a moment we'll give a
13 written response.

14 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

16 MS. BARNES: Yes. I voted against the motion to
17 approve the amendments. And while I do echo my
18 colleagues and I am in favor of what is best for
19 students, I am at a loss in this situation. The
20 complexity of issues involved in this request are too
21 far-reaching with unknown and unintended potential
22 consequences for me to comfortably make a decision at
23 this time.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

25 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the motion to approve.

1 This expansion creates opportunity, most importantly,
2 for kids and their academic success. But
3 furthermore, it creates an opportunity for dialogue
4 and collaboration among school leaders, business
5 leaders to see how to best serve all the kids in
6 Pulaski County.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

8 MR. LESTER: I'm not ready yet.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I'll come back to
10 you.

11 MR. LESTER: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

13 MS. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion.
14 The charter seeks to expand and provide new
15 opportunities for its students. The locations for
16 the expansion will provide opportunities for a more
17 diverse population. Current efforts show innovative
18 practices and multiple community partnerships and
19 outreach endeavors designed to promote student
20 success. The timeline for the expansion allows for
21 this in a responsible manner.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

23 MR. ROGERS: I voted in favor of the amendment.
24 It was a tough decision to make which way to go, but
25 as evidenced by the waiting list and the things that

1 they are doing, the innovative approaches they are,
2 and the chance to work at UALR was some of the things
3 that I looked at that I decided to vote for it.
4 Because with a 6,000-person waiting list obviously
5 the people are wanting to have those kind of
6 decisions to where they can go. And so that's
7 ultimately why I did it with the waiting list and
8 obviously people are wanting choices.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I voted in favor of this.
11 I believe this will provide an opportunity for more
12 students to be able to take advantage of these new
13 opportunities.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

15 MS. SMITH: I voted in favor to approve the
16 amendment based on a well thought out strategic plan
17 for expansion and academic support. I do have
18 concerns regarding disadvantaged students' enrollment
19 numbers in current growth measures that I encourage
20 the school to watch.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

22 MR. LESTER: I echo what Mr. Rogers said, that
23 there's a need there as you see with the waiting
24 list. I thought the proposed plan was well thought
25 out; it provides the opportunities for students. I

1 believe the charter needs to continue to monitor and
2 act accordingly on the issues that could arise in the
3 charter, in the population that they serve.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.
5 Congratulations, Mr. Bacon. Just a point of
6 clarification, I think what you've heard today is
7 that we encourage you to go into our high-need
8 neighborhoods and to make sure that parents are aware
9 of opportunities. I think every kindergarten, 1st
10 grade parent struggles with the idea of putting any
11 child on any bus, but I know all of my friends have
12 when it's come that time to put their child on a
13 school bus. So I would assume that many parents
14 don't even know about your offer to have an adult on
15 the bus with them or to have a group of kids meet
16 together and ride. So I know that you do a really
17 excellent job of communicating because I read your
18 email blast letters that you send out, so I know you
19 will find a way to get that information out to the
20 public. And we look forward to some new buildings
21 and some exciting data coming forth.

22 MR. BACON: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

24 This group stands in recess until 1:00.

25 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:20 - 1:04 P.M.)

1 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Panel Member Jennifer
2 Liwo returned to the meeting.)

3 A-4: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
4 AMENDMENT: FUTURE SCHOOL OF FORT SMITH

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

7 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Request for
8 Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Amendment:
9 Future School of Fort Smith. The Charter Authorizing
10 Panel approved the application for Future School of
11 Fort Smith on October 14, 2015. The charter is
12 approved to serve students in grades 10-12 with a
13 maximum enrollment of 450, beginning in the 2016-17
14 school year. Representatives of the Future School
15 are appearing before the Charter Authorizing Panel to
16 request an amendment to the charter.

17 The first person we'll have to present on behalf
18 of the charter is Trish Flanagan.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If all representatives
20 from the Future School of Fort Smith and anyone
21 speaking in opposition please stand to receive the
22 oath. Do you swear or affirm the testimony you're
23 about to give shall be the truth, the whole and
24 nothing but the truth?

25 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Flanagan, you're
2 recognized.

3 MS. FLANAGAN: Good afternoon. It's great to
4 see you guys. I thought this might be an issue for
5 me, as well, so I'm going to see if this works. Does
6 this work?

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You're welcome to take it
8 off the stand if you want to. If you keep it at
9 about your chin --

10 MS. FLANAGAN: Okay. I used to be a reggae
11 singer, so this is old hat. Let's try it this way.
12 Okay.

13 Well, we've got so many great things to report
14 to you all, so thank you again for your vote of
15 confidence. It's really set us on the right path. I
16 think to get started, before we go into the great
17 news of our permanent facility that's come literally
18 from the heavens, just to tell you a few great things
19 that are happening right now in Fort Smith. Our
20 youth advisory council, which is about 10 students
21 from Fort Smith -- some of them are already
22 registered with us and some of them have been with us
23 since day-one advising us on what students want and
24 need in a high school education, are now becoming
25 more organized. And tomorrow they're launching their

1 first totally student design barbeque where they've
2 enlisted the help of their friends that have dance
3 groups and so-on and so-forth to -- they've gotten
4 donations. They called me and said, "Who do we make
5 the checks out to?" And I said, "Thank goodness, we
6 have our 501(c)(3) status." So that's been really
7 fun. And our partnerships are expanding in the ways
8 that we expected but always is very exciting to tell
9 you about. The Clinton School of Public Service,
10 which is one of our big partners, we have two
11 capstone graduate students doing their capstone
12 thesis projects with us; one is putting together a
13 community garden program for the students to
14 integrate their internships into that; another
15 student is building an empathy curriculum and she's
16 actually working with teachers from Little Rock and
17 from Fort Smith districts to kind of pilot that and
18 look at what that looks like. So we're excited and
19 we just spoke to their education policy class
20 yesterday, to about 10 other students that all have
21 ideas now too helping us. So our goals of being
22 thought leaders in what's happening and sharing this
23 with all students is certainly underway.

24 Also in Fort Smith partnerships are forging
25 forward with the regional art museum, the symphony

1 around internships. We met with the director of the
2 Fort Smith symphony and he's very excited about the
3 opportunity for our students to do internships where
4 they compose their own music and then perform. He's
5 showed us where that's happening, and right now the
6 program he's looking at is only in New York City.
7 So, really fun cool things happening. And then,
8 finally, on Monday we had another unprecedented
9 positive sign of collaboration with the local school
10 district where at their study session they gave us
11 preliminary approval to meet with parents at their
12 parent/teacher conferences for the 9th graders, again
13 so that we can access students who really need this
14 model. It was awe inspiring, to be honest, to see
15 that happen. So we're excited.

16 And what we're here today to tell you all about
17 is -- and to kind of run through our new progress and
18 plans for the building and see if we can get this
19 approved -- is a new building. Actually, it's not a
20 new building; it's actually a historic community
21 center in downtown Fort Smith, right there. It has
22 served as a Girls, Inc. building, sort of a rec
23 center; there's a gymnasium; there's a pool. What's
24 really awesome about this building is that we looked
25 at this about six months ago and we walked through it

1 and said, "There's no way it can be ready in time,"
2 and we didn't want to put students at risk for that.
3 So we kept looking, kept looking. But what I loved
4 about it was that it's one of the places in town
5 where people from all different backgrounds and parts
6 of the town have a shared positive experience. I
7 mean, running into people at different -- you know --
8 in different generations, from different backgrounds,
9 "Oh, I took swim lessons there;" "Oh, I had camp
10 there." And so it really aligns with our core
11 philosophy of bringing the community together. It is
12 also -- just a few notes, pieces to note -- it's on
13 an entire city block. The city owned it. They -- it
14 was sitting vacant for about 10 years, and -- well,
15 I'll get to the next slide to show you. What made
16 this possible for us was a few -- I guess I would say
17 about a month ago -- and this is where I say it
18 literally fell from heaven -- our real estate agent
19 called and said, "I just was told that there is a
20 10,000 square foot almost-new modular school building
21 10 minutes outside of town that's sitting there for
22 sale." And it was originally purchased by the Joplin
23 School District after the tornado. And so I ran out
24 there with Brandon and we checked it out and it's
25 perfect. It's turnkey solution; it's ready to go,

1 and it allows us to accommodate 150 students very
2 comfortably on the property downtown. What we're
3 also going to do for this first year is renovate the
4 gymnasium that you see there, that main piece of the
5 building behind the tree. And we were adamant and
6 really lucked out on this and this is why this is the
7 ideal situation, because we needed a gymnasium. We
8 knew we needed a place where kids could come together
9 where, like we said, our community partners could
10 have classes and programs. We have confirmation with
11 the Adult Education Center to provide free GED and
12 ESL classes on our site. So this allows us to do
13 exactly what we wanted to do, which was to be a
14 center for the community and serve our students from
15 all walks of life.

16 You can see there the inside of the modular
17 classroom. That's sort of a standard picture but
18 that's actually the kind of classroom I taught in on
19 the Mexican border, so it looks like home. But
20 that's what the inside of those buildings look like.

21 And then this is just a -- to give you a
22 synopsis of the long-term planning and why we're so
23 excited about this is this property allows us to
24 permanently move in and call this place, this
25 location home. So you'll see we're already looking

1 with -- working with an architect right now on what
2 the full scale of development will look like for the
3 building. And that blue piece is the gymnasium in
4 phase one that will be ready in the fall, by the time
5 we open up. And we'll have bathrooms in there and
6 administrative offices and a reception area for
7 families. And then you can see we kind of build-out
8 from there. So we have passed the -- been approved
9 by the Historic Commission, city commission, which we
10 thought was going to be a large hurdle because of the
11 modular units not looking like a historic building at
12 all. But as it turns out they were as excited as we
13 were about the mission behind this, so that's --
14 we're approved with that. We're just working through
15 some more processes within the city to get full
16 approval.

17 And so we're just very excited that this
18 happened because it allows us to fulfill our mission
19 in a much more powerful way. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is there anyone to speak
21 in opposition?

22 (A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I noticed Mr. Cox is
24 signed up for public comment. Is there any --

25 MS. FLANAGAN: I think he's just here in case

1 you have questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. You have 5
3 additional minutes. Any additional things?

4 MS. FLANAGAN: I think that -- I knew you were
5 going to say that again. I think, you know, this is
6 just so exciting for me and for all of us because the
7 look on the faces in the community that, as we know,
8 has been divided at very recent times from one thing
9 to the next and also what, you know, just communities
10 face in general in talking about certain parts of
11 town being where certain people live, et cetera, et
12 cetera. That's the heart of our mission, which is
13 that that's no longer going to be a thing. And so
14 the look on people's faces, you know, African
15 American women in their 60s, you know, Caucasian men
16 in their 30s, all saying, "Yeah, I roller-skated on
17 that, you know, right in front of there, right in
18 front of that building." So we just knew that it was
19 going to be a powerful move and the fact that it just
20 literally opened up is really -- really what we're
21 about, which is the community pulling together.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. We'll open up
23 for questions, and I'm going to start with a
24 question. When I -- I've been out visiting charter
25 schools recently with Ms. Boyd and we've -- I've

1 seen, you know, a lot of great things. But one thing
2 that strikes me at some of them is I go into them and
3 they look like the traditional school looked 10 or 15
4 or 20 years ago. What's the inside of your building
5 going -- what are those classrooms going to look
6 like? Will you kind of draw us a visual of -- a
7 mind-visual of what we're going to see in these
8 classrooms?

9 MS. FLANAGAN: Sure. Yeah. I mean, that's
10 exactly what our thinking of it is as well. Just to
11 give a brief visual, we've had a lot of other things
12 coming up so we haven't been able to sit down and
13 kind of flesh out what three years down the road
14 looks like. But as an example of how our building
15 aligns with our model is we want to have when we
16 actually build our classrooms very large rooms with a
17 divider that you can move back and forth. So that
18 when you have cross-curricular classes, science and
19 math working together, teachers working together to
20 do projects, English and social studies, that they
21 can easily adjust the building for that. We've got
22 folks in the community that are really excited about
23 this; they're very artistic; they're already coming
24 up with ideas on how things can look, and a lot of
25 them -- and in some cases are interested in funding

1 that. So, you know, we're looking at other models
2 like, you know, what does the Google office look like
3 where you've got like, you know, reading sort of
4 areas and lounge kind of areas where you can have
5 conversations; so building the space around our core
6 philosophy of project-based learning and of
7 relationship building.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'll encourage you to
9 visit Cross County. Cross County High School has
10 really thought about that and purchased modular
11 furniture so that they can move around; the kids can
12 move around to really interact on those projects
13 successfully. And so they have some really
14 impressive facilities.

15 MS. FLANAGAN: Great. Great.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Dr. Saunders,
17 you're recognized.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Good afternoon. What are the
19 changes in the budget and the finances with this?

20 MS. FLANAGAN: Brandon has been doing such a
21 huge favor for us in kind of leading this
22 conversation.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll state your name
24 and title.

25 MR. COX: Brandon Cox, president of Future

1 School board. From a budget standpoint we did
2 include the 38, 39 hundred range; we left that in the
3 budget. But the first year we're looking at around
4 \$1550 for the building and \$1600 for the modular, so
5 == and we're not going to have to purchase the
6 modular. We're going to lease it. So everything is
7 a net positive. We over-indexed to the extremely
8 conservative side, left it the way it was, and it
9 looks like everything is going to work out where we
10 can lease modulars, lease the building. So it's
11 good.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

13 MR. COX: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: How long do you plan to
15 keep the modular?

16 MS. FLANAGAN: We have approval right now for
17 five years, is it?

18 MR. COX: Yes.

19 MS. FLANAGAN: So, but I think we're
20 anticipating needing them maybe -- I would say two to
21 three years.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

23 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Thank you for being here.

24 Just a couple of follow-up questions regarding the
25 finances. I'm encouraged to see the people

1 transportation to the monthly bus passes and I
2 noticed it's going to go up almost double the next
3 year. Explain that. And, secondly, is \$7,000 of
4 maintenance and repairs annually sufficient enough
5 for a building that may need some upkeep?

6 MS. FLANAGAN: So I'll just address the
7 transportation first. I believe -- so it's about
8 \$52,000 for every one-fifty, a hundred and fifty
9 students.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Three-fifty per student --

11 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah.

12 DR. GOTCHER: -- according to the chart. Yes.

13 MS. FLANAGAN: For the bus pass.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, ma'am.

15 MS. FLANAGAN: And then it doubles because -- I
16 mean, I'm thinking of my math right now. But it
17 doubles because we want to make sure that all
18 students have -- we have it budgeted for everyone --

19 DR. GOTCHER: You bet.

20 MS. FLANAGAN: -- if it's a hundred percent.

21 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. And I have no idea if this
22 is expensive or not, but that seems high. Is that a
23 negotiated price? Is that the -- just a --

24 MS. FLANAGAN: That was, I mean, to cover our
25 bases. So I've started talking -- I started talking

1 to the Department of Transportation locally about a
2 year ago, when we were first looking at buildings and
3 said, you know, transportation is key to make us
4 accessible. So we basically said, "What is the
5 standard rate," without talking about discounts or
6 anything, and it's \$350 a year for 12 months.

7 DR. GOTCHER: And certainly I understand a
8 budget is a plan.

9 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah.

10 DR. GOTCHER: So I'd love for you to beat that
11 plan a bunch, and so --

12 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah.

13 DR. GOTCHER: Anyway, so -- and then as far as
14 the \$7,000 annual for maintenance and repairs, do you
15 see any immediate repair needs?

16 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. I mean, I think -- I don't
17 know if we -- we can talk about renovations. We do
18 have a surplus, a pretty large surplus for that very
19 purpose in revenues.

20 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah. If you're satisfied with
21 that, I'm satisfied. I'm just making sure that --

22 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah.

23 DR. GOTCHER: You guys know the building
24 obviously, so all right. Those are just some minor
25 pieces I had. Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: When the building is
2 completed after all of the phases, what would be the
3 total capacity?

4 MS. FLANAGAN: 450. Yeah, that's what we've
5 started with to make sure that we'll accommodate all
6 450 students.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
8 or comments? Ms. Pfeffer.

9 MS. PFEFFER: And you may have covered this and
10 I missed it, but the location of this in relation to
11 where you initially thought you were going to be, can
12 you give a description? And will that impact in any
13 way the students who could -- will that make a
14 difference, you know, based on what we approved in
15 the original charter and the accessibility? Do you
16 have concerns? And I know we've talked about the bus
17 passes to provide transportation. But can you just
18 talk about that for a minute?

19 MS. FLANAGAN: Sure. It's still the north side
20 of town and it is I think about two miles away from
21 our original site. So it's in the same neighborhood,
22 more or less.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions? Ms.
24 Davis, do you have any remaining issues regarding
25 this amendment?

1 MS. DAVIS: No.

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

3 DR. SAUNDERS: I move to accept the amendment.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
6 Dr. Saunders and seconded by Dr. Gotcher to accept
7 the amendment. Any discussion? All those in favor
8 of the motion?

9 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? The motion
11 has passed.

12 If you'll give us just a moment, we'll give you
13 -- read our written responses.

14 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Flanagan, while
16 they're working, I would encourage you to take a lot
17 of pictures; take a lot of pictures to kind of mark
18 the change of the building over time.

19 MS. FLANAGAN: Sure.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: As a historical building,
21 it's easy to forget what it used to look like.

22 MS. FLANAGAN: Right.

23 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

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

1 have no concerns regarding adverse impact, and I see
2 this as an opportunity toward a successful opening of
3 the charter.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

5 DR. GOTCHER: I also voted for the amendment. I
6 feel this is a great opportunity. I think you used
7 the phrase "handed down from up above," so that's
8 great for you and the kids. And I see no concerns
9 regarding this amendment.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

11 MR. LESTER: I voted for the amendment. I have
12 no concerns. It's a great opportunity and location
13 in the community.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

15 MS. LIWO: I voted for the amendment. I didn't
16 have any concerns with the amendment request.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

18 MS. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion
19 because I have no concerns.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

21 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. Just like everybody
22 else, not any concerns with it.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. I voted for it. I think
25 it allows the district to be located where they see

1 the need.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

3 MS. SMITH: No concern regarding the new
4 facilities. I believe the new facilities will assist
5 you in meeting the educational goals.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Ms.
7 Flanagan.

8 MS. FLANAGAN: Thanks very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We look forward to a
10 successful opening.

11 MS. FLANAGAN: Thanks.

12 A-5: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
13 AMENDMENT: HAAS HALL ACADEMY, FAYETTEVILLE

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, I understand
15 that action item 5 has been withdrawn?

16 MS. BOYD: That's correct, Madam Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then we'll move to -- do
18 we -- we don't need a break yet, do we? It's from my
19 PD days.

20 A-6: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
21 AMENDMENT: KIPP DELTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BLYTHEVILLE

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then we'll move to action
23 item 6.

24 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Request for
25 Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Amendment: KIPP

1 Delta Public Schools, the Blytheville campus. The
2 State Board of Education approved the amendment
3 request on November 9, 2009 for KIPP Delta Public
4 Schools to add a Blytheville campus. The campus is
5 approved to serve students in grades K-12 with a
6 maximum enrollment of 810. Representatives of the
7 KIPP -- of KIPP Delta are appearing before the
8 Charter Authorizing Panel to request an amendment to
9 the current charter. From KIPP we'll have Anna
10 Millham, who is the managing director of operations,
11 to start off their presentation.

12 MS. MILLHAM: Good afternoon, Members of the
13 Panel.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Hold on. I'm running down
15 my list. I need all the representatives from KIPP
16 Delta Public Schools/Blytheville and anyone speaking
17 in opposition to please stand to receive the oath.
18 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're
19 about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth and
20 nothing but the truth?

21 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Millham,
23 you're recognized.

24 MS. MILLHAM: Okay.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And get very close to the

1 microphone.

2 MS. MILLHAM: Okay. Good afternoon, Members of
3 the Panel. My name is Anna Millham and I'm the
4 managing director of operations for KIPP Delta Public
5 Schools. As we stated, this afternoon I have our
6 chief operating officer, Janelle Jenkins, with us and
7 our project manager, Chinton Desai. Scott Shirey,
8 our executive director, apologizes for not being able
9 to make it today, and in your packet you will see a
10 letter of support from him. Thank you for your time
11 this afternoon as we present our charter amendment
12 request.

13 Currently, KIPP-Blytheville has two schools on
14 one campus at 1200 Byrum Road. We have our 4th
15 through 8th grade middle school, Blytheville College
16 Preparatory School, and our 9th and 10th grade and
17 growing high school, KIPP Blytheville Collegiate High
18 School, all on one campus with 364 students. Our
19 mission at KIPP-Blytheville is to provide
20 opportunities for all students to pursue their
21 passions, develop expertise in what they care most
22 about, and use their knowledge to exercise
23 responsibility in their community, country and world,
24 and to help them move to and through college.

25 Our request this afternoon is two-fold. We are

1 asking for approval -- we are asking for approval to
2 establish a new campus for our growing community and
3 our student population, as well as for approval to
4 reconfigure our grade span for our existing schools
5 in Blytheville.

6 As we move through our request, I do want to
7 speak to the demographics of the students who we
8 teach for both schools. As you can see, for both our
9 middle and high school our free and reduced meal
10 population last year was greater than the average
11 across the state of Arkansas. This year, like the
12 local public school in Blytheville, our KIPP Delta --
13 KIPP Delta is a community eligibility school, meaning
14 that 100% of our students we serve eat for free. Not
15 included up here, I want to do -- also share that
16 regionally 11% of our students receive special
17 education services, and in Blytheville 13% of our
18 students receive special education services. We have
19 a regional special education director who is helping
20 us improve our efforts in this area, as well as team
21 at Blytheville of teachers working there. As you can
22 see, we are serving the students -- the highest need
23 students in our area.

24 Next, I want to talk to you about our academics.
25 We have a lot to celebrate regarding the progress our

1 students are making in their goal of to and through
2 college. Over the last three years we've seen our
3 students in Blytheville outperform our local district
4 in 33 of the 40 tested areas in the state
5 assessments. That's 83% of the time. And as a
6 region we have nearly 80% of our alumni persisting to
7 and through college. And we know that historically
8 only about 10% of students from low-income families
9 make it to and through college, so we're pretty
10 excited about those numbers. In Blytheville, we
11 don't have graduating seniors yet. We have our first
12 graduating class in 2018, so they're in 10th grade
13 right now. But we're very confident that we are
14 doing great work to get our students to that same
15 number. Right now we're simply at capacity at our
16 current campus.

17 So that brings us to our first request:
18 establish a new campus. The central campus located
19 at 1124 Moultrie Road provides our students and staff
20 with the needed space and facilities to be able to
21 work and learn. We had an opportunity to purchase
22 central campus from the local district and after
23 reviewing this, we found this to be an opportunity
24 that just made sense. There's 63,000 square feet, 29
25 classroom, a kitchen, a gym, and auditorium, a stage,

1 a media center, and a lot of green space for our
2 students. This is all important aspects of a school
3 campus that we see. And then at the purchase price
4 and renovation costs of \$45.00 a square foot we saw
5 this as a fiscally responsible decision. So this is
6 the campus that we're asking to move to and to
7 establish a new campus for KIPP. It's a couple miles
8 north of our current campus and we're really excited
9 about this opportunity.

10 To put this into -- yeah, here's -- to put this
11 into context, the purchase price of that central
12 campus was \$806,000. If we put that money into
13 expanding at our current campus using the modular
14 technology that we have, with that amount of money we
15 would only be afforded about four to six classrooms.
16 And so this slide speaks for itself. Right now, the
17 red box that you see would be what we would be able
18 to add to our current 1200 Byrum campus.

19 So that's our first request is to establish a
20 new campus at the central -- establish a new campus
21 at our central campus.

22 Moving on to our second request: to reconfigure
23 our grades at our -- between our two schools that are
24 right now on the Byrum Road. So if our first request
25 is granted to establish a new campus, our second

1 request is to move our grade configuration from LEA
2 705 -- right now, it's the KBCPS, which is serving
3 4th through 8th grades; we're asking to move 4th
4 through 6th grade to the middle school, KBCPS, at
5 1124 Moultrie. And then we're also asking to move
6 our high school to a 7th through 12th model, which
7 right now for the next school year will just be 7th
8 through 11th until our students grow up into seniors.

9 So, quite simply, those are our two requests.
10 We're asking to establish a new campus and then
11 reconfigure our grade spans if that first request is
12 granted. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do we have anyone to speak
14 in opposition?

15 (A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You have 5 additional
17 minutes.

18 MS. MILLHAM: I'll yield those 5 minutes.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Panel, questions?

20 DR. SAUNDERS: I do, but it'll be a couple of
21 minutes.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

23 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So the purchase price of the
24 building is going to be \$806,000?

25 MS. MILLHAM: Yes.

1 MR. ROGERS: And then \$2,000,000 in renovations
2 is I think what you said?

3 MS. MILLHAM: (Nodding head up and down.)

4 MR. ROGERS: Do you -- how much do you have in
5 your building fund right now?

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Please state your name and
7 title.

8 MS. JENKINS: Janelle Jenkins, chief operating
9 officer, KIPP Delta Public Schools. So at the
10 present moment we've -- we have funded the purchase
11 price. We've received a grant from the Walton Family
12 Foundation for \$1.3 million to also assist with
13 future renovations.

14 MR. ROGERS: So that's the grant that you got,
15 the one-point -- how much?

16 MS. JENKINS: \$1.3.

17 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So that's going to take care
18 of the purchase price?

19 MS. JENKINS: And so we've been approved for
20 \$1.3 or \$3.3 total, if we're expecting the second
21 phase, but we haven't received formal approval for
22 that. So we have the funds. And we're also applying
23 for a USDA loan and we're pretty far in the process
24 for that as well.

25 MR. ROGERS: And then in your budget you have a

1 redemption of principle and it looks like you spent
2 -- it was budgeted at \$314,000 but you spent
3 \$600,000. What is that?

4 MS. JENKINS: I'd have to pull -- I'd have to
5 get back to you on that and review the financial
6 model. But I can get that to the Board shortly.

7 MR. ROGERS: Okay. That's all. Thank you.
8 That's all I have right now.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Caught me too soon. Looking at
11 your performance and it looks -- and I'm just
12 referencing PARCC from last year and those
13 performance results. And it looks like English
14 Language Arts, there was good achievement in that
15 direction; however, the mathematics, a lot of concern
16 there, and if you could address that?

17 MS. MILLHAM: Absolutely. We are as a region
18 addressing reading on a -- as a -- on a regional
19 basis. We're putting -- making a big push for
20 reading. So we're aware and we are working towards
21 improving our high pitch in our lessons for our
22 reading -- or for our math teachers. So we've got a
23 region-wide curriculum called Eureka Math that all of
24 our teachers are working -- our math teachers are
25 working on and they're attending professional

1 development. And we've started some content team
2 groups for the math teachers to work and really
3 dissect their lesson plans and increase their pushes
4 for their students. So we are working towards that.
5 We're working towards the improvement in our math
6 curriculum.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Any particular reason why you
8 feel the scores in math were so low? Have you been
9 able to identify a root cause of that?

10 MS. MILLHAM: I don't know that I would be able
11 to speak to that.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

13 MS. MILLHAM: I'm sorry.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. You also identified in
15 your presentation comparison with a local district.
16 Tell me what do you do that's different compared to
17 them? I mean, what -- a sales pitch, I guess, is
18 what I'm asking.

19 MS. MILLHAM: Right. So our -- it's
20 interesting, we were just talking about this. We
21 really believe competition is good and we think that
22 holding our expectations really high with our
23 students for their performance, everything from their
24 character in their classrooms to their academics. We
25 really push our academics and push our high

1 expectations. So we see -- we are actually seeing
2 the local district improve and also start to give
3 feedback to our teachers. One of the things for our
4 teachers that we do that is different is that we
5 commit to weekly observation and feedback from our
6 school director, So we have really strong leadership
7 at our campus right now and between our two schools
8 where we're pushing our teachers and then also giving
9 our feedback to our students. We're constantly
10 checking in. We push that for our teachers to have
11 the personal connection with the students, as well,
12 so we have committed teachers to communicate with our
13 parents. We have a requirement that our teachers are
14 available before and after school until 9:00 p.m. so
15 that students can call and ask for help on homework,
16 and it happens quite frequently where our teachers
17 are working those longer hours. One of our pillars
18 at KIPP is more time, so we require longer hours and,
19 you know, our waiver does have that where we have
20 more time in the classroom. So we're bringing kids
21 in on Saturdays -- our students in on Saturdays.
22 We're bringing them in during summer school to really
23 increase more time in the classroom so that they can
24 continue to learn. And we're trying to fight that
25 summer learning loss, as well.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
3 or comments? Ms. Davis, are there any remaining
4 issues regarding the requested amendment?

5 MS. DAVIS: No, there's not.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

7 MS. BARNES: (Shaking head from side to side.)

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

9 MS. BARNES: Question.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

11 MS. BARNES: Mr. Rogers, did you need your
12 information before we move forward?

13 MR. ROGERS: Since she explained she got --
14 they're getting the Walton grant for the purchase, I
15 feel a little bit better about where they are on the
16 financial side of it. So I'm okay with it. I just
17 -- looking over the budget it's kind of hard to
18 follow your budget because if you look at it there's
19 kind of -- you're doing some expenditures in places
20 where the budget isn't put into, so there's a lot of
21 -- looks like in places a lot of over-budgets. I
22 know that if we just kind of get a little better on
23 where we're actually spending -- doing the
24 expenditures on your budget it will be a little bit
25 easier to kind of track and see what actually we're

1 doing with it. But on the retention of principle
2 it's just -- it just -- I'm assuming that's for
3 payment of some kind of loan and it just kind of
4 jumped up \$300,000 in one year. So that's the only
5 reason why I was wondering.

6 MS. JENKINS: And another thing we're doing
7 between the USDA loan and the Walton Family
8 Foundation, what the USDA loan is allowing us to do
9 is to refinance a lot of our principle. What that
10 will do, it will increase our debt serve. So the
11 \$666,000 is representative of the debt service
12 associated with refinancing some existing loans at
13 better rates.

14 MR. ROGERS: Okay. That makes sense. Okay.

15 MS. JENKINS: Thank you for your patience.

16 MS. BARNES: Madam Chair, I move that we accept
17 the amendment request as written.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
20 Ms. Barnes and seconded by Dr. Saunders to accept the
21 amendments. Any discussion? All those in favor?

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? The motion
24 is passed.

25 If you'll give us just a moment.

1 MS. JENKINS: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: While they're writing,
3 I'll make the same offer to you. As you begin to
4 purchase furniture for your school, I would encourage
5 you to visit Cross County.

6 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

8 MS. BARNES: Yes. I voted to approve the
9 requested amendments because I have no concerns
10 regarding the amendment to relocate and I believe
11 that the reconfiguration of grades may prove
12 beneficial to the academic process.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

14 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the amendment to
15 approve the request. I feel the relocation and the
16 reconfiguration will benefit kids and families. No
17 concerns.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

19 MR. LESTER: I voted for the amendments. I have
20 no concerns with the requested amendments.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

22 MS. LIWO: I voted for. I didn't have any
23 concerns.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

25 MS. PFEFFER: I didn't have any concerns with

1 the requested amendment. And I also think it's a
2 good example of partnership with the Blytheville
3 School District to be repurposing the facility.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

5 MR. ROGERS: I didn't have any concerns with the
6 request for the student population to have a new
7 building.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor. I think this
10 gives the school the flexibility. They need to
11 respond to their students.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

13 MS. SMITH: No concern regarding the amendments.
14 The new facility will assist the school in serving
15 students.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you and
17 congratulations. And for the record -- Ms. Pfeffer,
18 thank you for reminding me -- we did have a
19 conversation yesterday with the superintendent of
20 Blytheville Public Schools and we appreciate the
21 collaboration that goes on between the charter and
22 traditional and district conversion school. So I
23 think you're really trying to serve the needs of the
24 Blytheville patrons and we encourage you to continue
25 that conversation and to be a model for others.

1 MS. MILLHAM: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

3 MS. MILLHAM: Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Now are you ready for a
5 break? Yes, we will take a short break.

6 (BREAK: 1:42-1:52 P.M.)

7 A-7: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
8 AMENDMENTS: LISA ACADEMY

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, you're
10 recognized for action item 7.

11 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Request for
12 Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Amendments:
13 LISA Academy. On January 12, 2004, the State Board
14 of Education approved the application for LISA
15 Academy, and on November 5, 2007, the State Board
16 approved the application for LISA Academy-North
17 Little Rock. On January 15, 2014, the authorizer
18 approved -- excuse me -- the authorizer -- authorizer
19 -- yeah -- approved the merger of the two charters
20 through the amendment process. The charter is
21 approved to serve students in grades K-12 with a
22 maximum enrollment of 1500. Representatives of LISA
23 Academy are appearing before the Charter Authorizing
24 Panel to request amendments to the current charter.

25 Madam Chair, the first one to present on behalf

1 of LISA Academy will be Atnan Ekin, who is the
2 superintendent.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If all representatives
4 from LISA Academy and anyone speaking in opposition,
5 including everyone that's signed up for public
6 comment, will stand, raise your right hand. Do you
7 swear or affirm the testimony you're about to give
8 shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
9 the truth?

10 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Ekin,
12 you're recognized. Speak clearly into that
13 microphone. Thank you.

14 SUPT. EKIN: Good afternoon, dear panel members.
15 I am Atnan Ekin, superintendent of LISA Academy. I
16 would like to thank you for holding this hearing for
17 the LISA Academy amendment application. Now I would
18 like to invite LISA Academy middle school principal
19 Luanne Baroni to present the application. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Please give us your name
21 and title for the record.

22 MS. BARONI: My name is Luanne Baroni; I am the
23 middle school principal at LISA Academy West.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And speak close to the
25 microphone.

1 MS. BARONI: I'm a former performer, so I think
2 I'll be okay with a mic, so --

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The issue is not with us;
4 it's with the visual audience.

5 MS. BARONI: We've been watching digitally, so
6 -- yes. And I'm also vertically challenged, so it
7 works for me. Thank you, Panel, for hanging in there
8 today. I know you've had a long day; you've heard a
9 lot of things today. And we are happy to be here
10 today to present to you. I'm happy to speak on
11 behalf of LISA Academy and would like to present to
12 you the amendment that we'd like to request, and
13 hopefully I'll get the technology right in the
14 process. First of all -- button to the right. Got
15 it. Okay.

16 Currently, LISA Academy has two campuses; we
17 have one campus in Sherwood and one in West Little
18 Rock. We serve a total of 1,500 students. The north
19 campus has K-12, serving 700 students, and the west
20 campus has 6-12, serving 800 students. In support of
21 our request I'd like to go over just exactly -- first
22 of all, exactly what we're asking for today. I know
23 that's been confusing at some point, so I'm going to
24 try to be clear. And we do have good math scores, as
25 you'll see later, but our numbering messed up on the

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slide.

So there are four separate things we are asking for. Number one would be adding the new elementary campus in West Little Rock, serving grades K-6 at 12200 Westhaven Drive. The second thing we're asking for is changing the grade levels at our current west campus, currently 6-12; we're asking to change that to 7-12. And we're asking to increase the enrollment cap of LISA Academy from 1,500 to 2,100 students for the entire charter. We're asking that all of our current waivers would also be applicable to the new campus.

In support of our request I'd like to discuss some of the benefits that we believe would be realized with the amendment approval. LISA Academy is and has always been a preparatory charter school with a STEM focus. Before the word STEM was popular, we were doing STEM things with our students.

LISA is requesting to complete our west campus vision by adding an elementary school in West Little Rock. The new LISA Elementary in West Little Rock would utilize the successful system that we have implemented in North Little Rock with our elementary campus there. And we would like to implement some of the following educational innovations that we already

1 have in place and would like to continue at the new
2 K-6 campus.

3 We have STEM-focused education, as I mentioned.
4 LISA provides rigorous STEM education to all of the
5 students so that they'll be prepared to compete in
6 the world of STEM that we live in these days. Some
7 of the practices that we have used and have found
8 successful are the Project Lead the Way STEM
9 instruction. Our north campus uses the Project Lead
10 the Way Launch Program with the elementary students.
11 They have afterschool programs beginning with
12 kindergarten. The students are involved in coding,
13 robotics, and other engineering type activities. We
14 have STEM applications where we allow students to go
15 and see STEM careers at work in the community. The
16 5th grade students even go to space camp each year as
17 a part of that STEM exploration. We invite STEM
18 professionals to come on our campus to share with our
19 students what they do in their everyday careers
20 involved in the STEM field.

21 We also have integrated technology that we use
22 throughout the day with all of our students. We have
23 Chromebooks and iPads. Students use that for both
24 coding and for weekly technology classes and other
25 applications in regular classrooms.

1 We believe in data driven instruction. We've
2 implemented that on all of our campuses. The data is
3 analyzed by teachers and instructional coaches and
4 administrators, and we use that to improve the
5 classroom instruction.

6 We provide reinforcement for students to help in
7 their weak areas and we track student growth
8 throughout the year. We have differentiated
9 instruction. We use data to place students in
10 learning groups that will best meet their needs. We
11 correlate student achievement. We look at where
12 students have particular weaknesses or strengths,
13 group those students together, and then work with
14 those students in the classroom so that we're doing
15 vertical alignment within our curriculum.

16 We have targeted professional development. We
17 annually train our teachers and part of our
18 professional development is training them how to use
19 the data that we have. We also provide
20 administrative support. Our team leaders and
21 administrators learn how to interpret data and use
22 that so that it can be implemented with impact in the
23 classroom.

24 We have some strategies that we've used for many
25 years and we've found them to be successful. We're

1 always looking at those and trying to improve them.
2 And some of the strategies that we've found to be
3 successful is using the data to differentiate
4 instruction for all students. We've used NWEA MAP
5 for six years; we administer those tests three times
6 per year so that we can track students' growth and
7 implement interventions. We use small group
8 instruction and pull-out tutoring for students. One
9 of the unique things that we do on our west campus is
10 we schedule 10 periods of math, 10 periods of English
11 weekly for all of our students. Two or three of
12 those, depending on the content area, are used as lab
13 times where students are either in a small group with
14 intervention or they're doing intervention or
15 enrichment in the regular classroom with smaller
16 groups. Our afterschool tutoring program has been in
17 place for the entire existence of our campus. We
18 tutor our students in math and English after school
19 to help them in areas where they're weak. We also
20 provide Saturday camps where we do intervention for
21 students who are struggling or need to grow some to
22 be on grade level. We actually have a math camp
23 tomorrow. I'll be there doing math with our kids
24 tomorrow. We also provide holiday practice packets
25 for our students for the ones who will actually look

1 at them. It's good practice to keep their brains
2 going during those breaks.

3 We also have leveled curriculum, particularly
4 in our elementary school. At north campus we use the
5 data and the teachers create targeted lessons to
6 address the strengths and weaknesses of each student.
7 And in addition to these general interventions, we
8 use quite a few online programs for our students
9 through McGraw-Hill. We use ALEKS online math
10 support; we use Mathspace; we use MobyMax, i-Ready,
11 No Red Ink, and use ELA, are some of the programs
12 that we use with our Chromebooks and in our
13 classrooms.

14 Our school culture we feel is an important
15 benefit that we provide for our students. We believe
16 that providing a stronger academic background at the
17 elementary level will better prepare our students for
18 college. We've got to start early with interventions
19 for students if we want them to be ready for college
20 when that day comes.

21 We have strong parental involvement on our
22 campuses. One of the unique features that we have is
23 a dynamic live database where parents can track their
24 student's discipline, grades, attendance in a live
25 fashion. It's not an upload once-a-week; it's live

1 dynamic, which is sometimes interesting when parents
2 see something when someone makes a mistake. We also
3 use ClassDojo; we use email and other traditional
4 communication methods. With our elementary school we
5 have a lot of interactive programs with parents,
6 Donuts with Dads, Muffins with Mom, and even
7 grandparent programs where we bring them to the
8 campus and get them involved in what's going on with
9 the students.

10 We have foreign language classes beginning with
11 the upper elementary, 4th and 5th grade level. We
12 have multi-cultural celebrations to celebrate the
13 diversity of our student body. The elementary K-5
14 students have an annual World Fest event where the
15 students prepare projects, present those on different
16 cultures and different countries. We also have a
17 joint annual language festival and multicultural
18 celebration where all of our campuses come together;
19 students present musical, poems, and other
20 presentations that are presented in kind of like a
21 science fair but it's a cultural presentation. So we
22 really embrace the multicultural nature of our
23 campuses.

24 Students make connections through guided inquiry
25 in the classroom and students work in learning groups

1 and our teachers work with them to teach them how to
2 review and reflect on their experiences and learn
3 from what they've done in these learning groups in
4 the classroom.

5 One of the things that we hope to accomplish
6 with the new campus in moving the 6th grade there is
7 to have a 6th grade academy. This 6th grade academy
8 would be a focus transitional period for 6th grade
9 students. As we're all aware, 6th graders have a
10 tough time sometimes adjusting to middle school, and
11 with changing classes, opening lockers, all those
12 things that hit in 6th grade. We feel like offering
13 that on the top end of the elementary piece will
14 allow us to better work with those students and build
15 some good habits for them before they hit the rigors
16 of the more stringent academics and all of the moving
17 around and dealing with just logistical issues that
18 hit in middle school.

19 We will continue to offer our accelerated
20 academic programs that we currently have. We'll
21 continue with the STEM and project-based learning.
22 We'll provide the same academic interventions for
23 that campus. We also want to implement a more
24 intense study skills preparation for those students
25 because we find now as we get students in 6th grade

1 very few of them know how to study. So we want to
2 imbed some things in our curriculum that will help
3 the students with that. We will continue with our
4 character education that we already offer to our
5 middle school students, teaching them about making
6 choices, about getting along with others, about
7 communication and other skills that they'll need in
8 the real world.

9 We believe that there's a demand for an
10 elementary school in our system. The parents in the
11 west Little Rock community are seeking alternative
12 education. With 20 private schools within the
13 proposed area, they have a combined enrollment of
14 8,242 students; 18 of those private schools -- of
15 those 20 private schools have elementary in their
16 educational systems. In addition, another 1,924
17 classified as home school in the same proposed
18 community. Therefore, we believe a public school
19 option to those families is inevitable.

20 We looked into the demand among our current
21 families, which is one of the things that has been
22 the impetus for us moving forward with this proposal.
23 We polled our current parents and guardians and we
24 found that siblings of currently enrolled students
25 did have a desire in being enrolled in a unified

1 system. As you can see in that graphic, we had a
2 response from 271 parents who were interested in
3 enrolling siblings in an elementary campus if we open
4 it. Also, on the survey we found that 81% of the
5 parents we surveyed said that they would be likely to
6 send their students to the elementary school if we
7 opened that. Also, in the survey we found that 78%
8 of the participants think that keeping their students
9 in a unified system is important for their education.
10 Also, we found 86% of the parents and guardians are
11 supportive of a charter school option over a private
12 school option. You've heard earlier today about the
13 private school piece of it and we know anecdotally
14 and by -- I've been there for -- this is my 11th
15 year; I know that we have drawn a lot of students
16 from private into the public sector coming into our
17 schools. We've also drawn a lot of students from
18 home school. So we believe that there is a demand
19 and that there are parents who are interested in
20 having that public school option.

21 Some of the benefits that we would see as a
22 school: we believe our west middle school, the one
23 that I'm in charge of, we believe that we would
24 benefit from seeing the continuity of our educational
25 programs beginning with kindergarten so that our

1 students would be better prepared for the rigor that
2 they hit in 6th grade. We also believe that moving
3 the 6th grade students from the current west campus
4 will allow us to open up to enroll more of the 7th
5 and 8th grade students who are on the waiting list.
6 We typically don't enroll very many new 7th and 8th
7 graders because we load in at 6th grade on our campus
8 and we have very few seats that open up each year.
9 Moving the 6th grade also to the new location would
10 provide the opportunity for us to try the 6th grade
11 academy approach to do that transitional year for our
12 students.

13 Also, one thing I want to mention you may or may
14 not be aware, our west campus has a cap that's
15 imposed by city ordinance of 800 students. So for us
16 to do anything in terms of growth there we have to
17 move somebody out to move other students in. So that
18 is a city ordinance on that property that we can only
19 have 800 students.

20 Some of the benefits that we think we would reap
21 for our current high school on the west campus: we
22 have about 330 students there. We've steadily grown
23 in our high school over the last five years. Our
24 high school and our middle school have been ranked
25 repeatedly as top performing schools in the state.

1 We believe that moving some of the students from that
2 campus would also allow us to open up a broader high
3 school offering for our students who choose to stay
4 with us through high school. Moving the 6th grade
5 would open up some room for more growth in the high
6 school area. And some of the benefits that we
7 believe our high school would reap would be offering
8 more advanced placement courses. We currently have
9 14; we want to expand that to even more for our high
10 school students, expand our elective offerings. We
11 also would like to expand our sports and more
12 afterschool and other kinds of extracurricular
13 activities. It would also give us more dedicated
14 building space for the high school. And an important
15 thing I think would be that our teachers could focus
16 more on a more narrow grade range than they do
17 currently. We have some teachers who teach in middle
18 school and high school currently. This would allow
19 our high school teachers to focus more on just high
20 school.

21 The location that we're looking at on Westhaven
22 Drive is conveniently located near I-430 and I-630,
23 as you can see from the map. It's also convenient
24 for parents of our current campus, which is important
25 to us because we know we have a big demand for

1 siblings. It's 1.7 miles from our current campus, so
2 it would be convenient for parents dropping kids off
3 at both places. Also, the location has
4 accessibility, as you can see here, near Bowman and
5 Chanel. It's also close to Sonic which is good for
6 Happy Hour in the afternoon for our teachers. They
7 get perks here and there.

8 As you may have heard, the current tenant at
9 this location has filed a lawsuit against the owner
10 claiming the right to remain at the location. LISA
11 Academy is not a party to this lawsuit, but we're
12 working with the landowner so that we can work out
13 this dispute currently. You have a copy of the lease
14 which we believe is an enforceable lease. And our
15 attorney is here today, so if you have questions in
16 the question time we'll be happy to address those
17 with you. We have met with the city of Little Rock;
18 we have also met with surrounding business owners in
19 that area to look at traffic and how we would get
20 students in and out. I'm happy to say that we have
21 come to an agreement with the city of Little Rock.
22 We received approval from them yesterday on the
23 traffic plan that we've developed and they believe
24 that it is a workable traffic plan. It would not
25 cause disruption to the surrounding businesses or

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traffic flow.

Our justification for the cap increase -- in this graphic you can take a look at our demographics. There's been a lot of talk about demographics lately. We believe that our demographics fairly represent the community in which we operate. Our largest population is black students. We have a 58% minority population on our west campus. Our total north and west campus have a 55% -- a little over 55% minority. We also have over 40% -- 44.5% free and reduced. I'm going to address a little more about that later. But we feel like we fairly represent the community that we live in and think that we're offering a good alternative for families who would like to make an alternative choice in schools.

There's a big demand for seats at our school, as you can see from our current waiting list. These numbers were done at the due-date of the presentation. They've actually gone up and we're a little under 2700 total right now. Our deadline today -- is today for our enrollment for next year. So there is a demand. As you can see, the highest demand is at the elementary and middle school level. That's where we typically have the most applications.

With the approval of this amendment our

1 tentative plan in terms of enrollment at the new
2 location -- the first year, whether it be this year
3 or in future years, which I'll address in a minute --
4 our current plan is the first year to move -- if we
5 move our 6th grade there we would have around 180,
6 185 6th graders there the first year with 365 K-5
7 students there. We would not go to our full cap that
8 first year but we would like to gradually grow to
9 that in the next year or the next two years to grow
10 to our cap on that and make the adjustments at our
11 west campus with that growth in the 6th grade.

12 Some important things that I think it's valid to
13 consider before you make your final decision on our
14 amendment is to take a look at some other important
15 factors. There's been a lot in the news about who we
16 are and what students we have, and I'd like to point
17 out some important pieces of data, if I may. Our per
18 pupil spending currently for LISA Academy is \$7,045
19 per student. So we're spending a lot less per pupil
20 than the larger districts in the area and even the
21 state. We -- I jokingly tell teachers when I
22 interview them that we're a lean, mean education
23 machine; you may wear more than one hat, and we have
24 to come up with some ways to economize to be able to
25 do this. And I think we've done a very effective job

1 of that.

2 We'll take a look at our overall proficiency on
3 PARCC. We began Common Core before we were required
4 to, which was a decision we had to make which
5 probably affected our benchmark scores for a year or
6 two. But we feel very happy about our PARCC scores
7 right now that we came in pretty strong on those last
8 year. As you can see from this graphic, we're in
9 good shape on PARCC scores. I would like to see 80s
10 and 90s across the state on this but I know that's
11 going to take time for all of us to adjust to a new
12 curriculum. And hopefully with the ACT Aspire we
13 will all see some growth for our students.

14 One of the things that we did when we had our
15 renewal at our west campus some years back is begin
16 some recruitment efforts, which we feel like have
17 paid off. We've had some gradual growth in our free
18 and reduced numbers; that has been steadily growing.
19 Our minority population has been steadily growing.
20 As you heard earlier from eStem, we can only build
21 the pool of applicants; we can't decide who's going
22 to actually come out in that lottery. But we feel
23 like our efforts have made a different in our
24 applicant pool and we've also had success with some
25 students from these categories. And as we all know,

1 word of mouth goes a long way to recruiting other
2 students in and we feel like that's having an impact
3 on our growth in these areas.

4 Another important thing I think to look at is
5 our TAGG proficiency. Our TAGG groups have done
6 quite well on the PARCC exam. They're not where we
7 want them to be. I don't think anyone in the state
8 could say we were where we wanted to be on that, but
9 we're doing well with that. Our students are growing
10 and that's the bottom line.

11 Conclusion -- I hear the bell, right? In
12 conclusion, the benefits can't be achieved without
13 the amendment that we're asking for. And we believe
14 that creating this new campus will create a much
15 stronger opportunity for educational benefit for LISA
16 Academy and for parents in the area. We ask that the
17 Charter Authorizing Panel approve our request with
18 the flexibility to open the proposed elementary
19 campus either for the 2016-17 fall or for the
20 following year, the 2017-18 school year. If
21 approved, LISA Academy will notify parents and the
22 Department by June 1st of this year, 2016, of the
23 planned opening date for the campus. So thank you
24 for your time.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is there anyone here to

1 speak in opposition? You have 20 minutes.

2 MR. SHANNON: I'm not here to speak in
3 opposition. I did sign up to -- my name is Mike
4 Shannon and I represent ITT Educational Services and
5 we're the entity that believes it has a claim to be
6 involved -- or to possess the building and we've
7 filed a lawsuit. Really, I'm just here to answer any
8 questions that the Panel may have with regard to
9 those claims.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. You have 5
11 additional minutes.

12 MS. JOHNSON: Good afternoon. I'm Bonnie
13 Johnson and I'm general counsel for LISA Academy.
14 I'm also here if you have any questions about the
15 lawsuit. I would say a few things. LISA is not a
16 party to this lawsuit. We believe that we have an
17 enforceable lease on the property and I think you
18 have a copy of it. Nobody is alleging that LISA did
19 anything wrong; it's purely a dispute between the
20 current tenant and the owner. We all -- everybody
21 involved wants a quick resolution of this situation
22 and we have a trial set -- they have a trial set, I
23 should say, for March 21st. The landlord -- the
24 owner has filed a motion to dismiss. The landlord
25 believes LISA has an enforceable lease and will have

1 access to the property. We hope to get it resolved
2 soon and we will certainly keep the Department
3 informed. And any other questions that you have I'll
4 be happy to answer them.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Gotcher.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, just a clarification. Ms.
7 Baroni, was that the reason that you made a statement
8 either this year --

9 MS. BARONI: Yes, that was the statement about
10 --

11 DR. GOTCHER: -- or the next, because of the --

12 MS. BARONI: And the reason, the thinking on
13 that is if it's still in dispute we don't want to
14 leave parents and families hanging. So we want to
15 make a decision early so that parents can make plans
16 for the school year. We don't want to say --

17 DR. GOTCHER: Absolutely.

18 MS. BARONI: -- we're going to find out in July
19 and then spring it on parents. So we feel like it
20 would be cleaner to say if it's not clarified, it's
21 not settled we'll make the call June 1st. And that's
22 why we would like the flexibility, if approved, to
23 either open this fall if the land dispute is solved
24 or the following fall if we have to wait and resolve
25 it later.

1 DR. GOTCHER: And based upon what their lead
2 counsel said, Mr. Shannon, do you have anything to
3 add to that regarding a quick resolution, thinking of
4 the kids in mind?

5 MR. SHANNON: Your Honor, it's -- Your Honor;
6 I'm sorry. Dr. Gotcher, it's just -- if I call you
7 Court too, I apologize.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: He liked Your Honor.

9 MR. SHANNON: I'm sure he did. I'm sure he did.

10 DR. GOTCHER: No, that's --

11 MR. SHANNON: We -- there is a hearing currently
12 set for March 21st. And they are correct; we do want
13 to get a quick resolution of it. I don't know
14 whether there would be any appeal involved after
15 that, so -- but the parties are discussing. And the
16 issue to be determined at the hearing will be whether
17 or not my client has the right to possess this
18 building after June 1, 2016, for another five-year
19 term.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And your client is?

21 MR. SHANNON: ITT Educational Services and we're
22 the current occupant of that building.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And is that the -- did
24 that used to be a movie theater?

25 MR. SHANNON: It did.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

2 MR. SHANNON: That's the only time I've been in
3 that building is when it --

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Me, too.

5 MR. SHANNON: -- was a movie theater.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And has there been
7 renovation, I'm assuming? Are there really great
8 screens still left in there?

9 MR. SHANNON: No. I don't -- I've not been in
10 it since it was -- so I don't know.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

12 MR. SHANNON: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Questions?

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Open for question time.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Question time.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Right.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: I have questions concerning
19 demographics. I know I saw your slides and
20 everything else but looking at some detailed
21 information a few things stand out to me, first of
22 all that the -- in comparison to the Little Rock
23 School District there are about 30% less percentile
24 points less black students. Correct?

25 MS. BARONI: That seems reasonable. I'm not

1 looking at the same numbers you're looking at.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I have about 65% for the
3 Little Rock School District as opposed to 37 for
4 LISA.

5 MS. BARONI: That seems reasonable. Yes.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And give me just a second.
7 I also have special education students in the Little
8 Rock School District is 11.73 and in LISA 6.56?

9 MS. BARONI: Yes.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: And then the last one that stands
11 out to me concerns the free and reduced students; at
12 LISA 41% and Little Rock 75%?

13 MS. BARONI: Uh-huh.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And that's a concern to
15 me. I feel responsible for every student in the
16 state --

17 MS. BARONI: Us too.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: -- and I want to make sure every
19 student has the opportunity. I think that you all
20 have some very good scores; I commend you on that.

21 MS. BARONI: Thank you.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: And I want all students to have
23 the opportunity to do it and I want to make sure that
24 nothing stands in their way.

25 MS. BARONI: Right.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: So I want to give you the
2 opportunity to just address the discrepancies in the
3 demographics. I did look at your historic free and
4 reduced population. It has increased I think every
5 single year --

6 MS. BARONI: Yes, sir.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: -- and so I do commend you for
8 that. But I'm concerned about, you know, how to
9 continue to close that gap just in the percentage of
10 students that come.

11 MS. BARONI: Right. And I think those are all
12 obvious and fair questions, and thank you for
13 bringing them up. One of the things that we looked
14 at when looking at our data was the special education
15 because, as Mr. Bacon mentioned, sometimes charters
16 get the rap that we don't serve special education
17 students -- but in fact, we do. We just don't know
18 if they're special education until we get them. One
19 of -- an interesting fact that I don't know if you
20 have access to this data but our special ed.
21 population has grown from 59 students in the 2013-14
22 year to actually 101 now. This was Cycle 3. Cycle
23 4, there was one more that came in. So we have
24 considerably grown in that area. And I have my
25 director of federal programs here today because I

1 wanted to be sure to address those concerns if they
2 came up. We offer services the whole spectrum for
3 special education, everything from self-contained to
4 inclusion and everything in between. We offer all of
5 the -- we contract out speech, occupational therapy
6 and vision specialists and hearing specialists. So
7 we offer all of those services to any student we get
8 who has those needs. And thus far, we have met every
9 need of every student who's come to us with special
10 needs and we have every intention of adding services
11 if they're needed for any more students that come to
12 us through our lottery. And, you know, as you
13 mentioned, our growth in the free and reduced lunch
14 group and the minority has been steady growth. I
15 don't have that button that I can push and make it
16 grow quickly. One thing that may impact that is we
17 tend to get a lot of siblings at our school. We get
18 -- you know -- we've had one family I think with six
19 or seven kids in the same family. So the
20 demographics of all those students are exactly the
21 same because they come from the same family. So when
22 we have pods of students moving through it's going to
23 take time for that, but we are committed to growing
24 in both of those areas and want to serve those
25 students.

1 We also offer free bus passes to any students
2 with the city transportation. There is a bus
3 location for middle and high school students right on
4 the corner from Corporate Hill Drive, so students can
5 walk on the sidewalk to our campus. My understanding
6 is they can't ride the bus unless they're 12 years
7 old or older as a child. But, you know, if that's an
8 option we would look at that for elementary and
9 provide something there.

10 Our north campus provides -- works in
11 cooperation with a lot of the local daycare centers
12 to provide that transportation before and after
13 school. Our west campus has actually started an
14 initiative this year with Second Baptist Church which
15 has an afterschool program. We're trying to look
16 into the community to find ways to provide
17 transportation and before and after school programs
18 for our students. By the way, our campus opens to
19 students at 7:00 in the morning and our afterschool
20 program goes until 5:30. So we are providing a place
21 for those kids before and after school.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Is that a 21 CCLC program?

23 MS. BARONI: No. It's just a program that we're
24 offering.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Just something you do as part of

1 --

2 MS. BARONI: Yes, just --

3 DR. SAUNDERS: -- what you see as --

4 MS. BARONI: Just for parents because we know
5 that we have parents who work. And we used to offer
6 it until 5:00 but we found a need to go to 5:30, so
7 we have an afterschool program. It's a very minimal
8 cost. Students can work on homework. We also have a
9 lot of clubs that a lot of our kids are involved in.
10 But that's a supervised afterschool care program that
11 we have.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And I commend you for
13 taking that step. And so I assume it's self-pay, you
14 pay for it --

15 MS. BARONI: Yes.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: -- just within your --

17 MS. BARONI: We do.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: I commend you for that. Thank
19 you.

20 MS. BARONI: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

22 MR. LESTER: I want to piggyback on economically
23 disadvantaged. I was looking at your -- at this
24 point you are Targeted Assisted in your buildings.

25 MS. BARONI: Uh-huh. Yes, sir.

1 MR. LESTER: And you have reached that 40% --

2 MS. BARONI: Yes, sir.

3 MR. LESTER: -- threshold. Do you see looking
4 at serving these kids with those supplemental
5 resources school-wide, because that's where you are
6 at this point? Do you have a plan for that?

7 MS. BARONI: I'll have to --

8 SUPT. EKIN: We do have a plan.

9 MS. BARONI: We do. I'm asking our
10 superintendent. I don't have the advantage of being
11 the full director of the whole ship, so sometimes I
12 have to ask. But we do have a plan to move in that
13 direction. Yes, sir.

14 MR. LESTER: Okay. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

16 MS. LIWO: I may have missed this. I just want
17 to go back to the lawsuit for a minute. The motion
18 to dismiss, that's being heard before March 21st or
19 --

20 MS. BARONI: On March 21st.

21 MS. LIWO: On March 21st. Okay. I don't know,
22 I guess you are the one to answer this. But what is
23 your plan if ITT is successful with regard to the
24 lawsuit?

25 SUPT. EKIN: Come back with another location.

1 MS. BARONI: Yeah. We've discussed that because
2 this has been a recent development. We have
3 discussed the option of coming back with another
4 location to present for approval if that location
5 doesn't pan out. But as we said, we feel like we
6 have a strong case to have an enforceable lease on
7 this, so we feel pretty strongly that we may come
8 through with this. But we would like the
9 flexibility, if we don't have that answer in time to
10 tell parents, you know, to have the option to start
11 it next year if we can work that out.

12 MS. LIWO: Do you have a backup location in mind
13 right now?

14 MS. BARONI: We do not right now.

15 MS. LIWO: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

17 MS. PFEFFER: So I just want to be sure I'm
18 clear. Will you walk me through -- you have the
19 north campus and the west campus.

20 MS. BARONI: Uh-huh.

21 MS. PFEFFER: But how many schools do you have
22 at each location?

23 MS. BARONI: At the north campus we have
24 elementary, middle and high school.

25 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

1 MS. BARONI: They're all contained in one
2 building at that location. At the west campus we
3 have middle and high school that are almost separated
4 into two buildings. We do share some space between
5 the middle and high school for a gym and art and
6 music.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. That helps me.

8 MS. BARONI: Okay.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher, do you have
10 any?

11 DR. GOTCHER: No.

12 MS. SMITH: Where exactly is the north campus
13 located?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sherwood area.

15 MS. BARONI: It's in Sherwood. What's the
16 actual address? It's on Landers, 5410 Landers.

17 MS. SMITH: Okay.

18 MS. BARONI: Used to be a Best Buy.

19 MS. SMITH: Okay. Good. Excellent. Okay.
20 First off, I do want to note that I do think 40-
21 something percent of your students being economically
22 disadvantaged actually shows that you have actively
23 tried to make sure that --

24 MS. BARONI: Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. SMITH: -- you've had a very open lottery

1 system in getting kids in to have that high of a
2 percentage. So I think -- so --

3 MS. BARONI: Thank you.

4 MS. SMITH: -- good job there. I mean, I do
5 recognize that. Here's my question: moving the
6 location to West Little Rock in the area that you
7 had, that kind of seems to be more higher-end as far
8 as neighborhoods and accessibility from -- even just
9 from the other side of the interstate. That's kind
10 of pulling in the more older, traditional
11 neighborhoods on this side. Do you feel like that
12 the location change will cause the work that you've
13 done in that area to change a little? And I know I'm
14 asking you to forecast the future.

15 MS. BARONI: My crystal ball doesn't tell me.
16 But we are located in west Little Rock, 1.7 miles
17 from that location now. We have made a lot of
18 headway in pulling students who are more in southwest
19 Little Rock. I think this campus is actually a
20 little more convenient, you know, right off of the
21 interstate there, right off Shackleford. So I think
22 it shouldn't be a detriment in terms of just
23 location. Our intent is not to go out and grab the
24 Don Roberts and Terry students. They are in great
25 schools. They don't need to go somewhere else. It's

1 to open up, first of all, for the siblings of our
2 students who are begging for an alternative for the
3 elementary, and then to open that up to whoever. I
4 think you've got some maps of our recruitment area
5 and, you know, we were going to put pins on
6 something, but they're just -- they're all over the
7 place. We don't just draw from west Little Rock.
8 Yes, some people come to us because it's convenient
9 but we draw from a much broader area and we really
10 have tried to focus on recruiting more of those
11 students by just getting more -- them getting more
12 familiar with us. So we hope that that trend will
13 continue and we're going to continue making those
14 efforts.

15 MS. SMITH: Thank you for your answer.

16 MS. BARONI: You're welcome.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions? Ms.
18 Barnes.

19 MS. BARNES: Good afternoon. Thank you, and
20 thank you all for being here. I have pretty much the
21 same kind of question. In looking at your gap at
22 your middle school and not meeting the targets -- I'm
23 looking at your grade; I'm looking at the
24 demographics as well. But I guess my question is
25 with respect to that gap you lost three points and it

1 looks like the special ed. population you didn't have
2 any of the 26 students that were tested that
3 achieved.

4 MS. BARONI: Right.

5 MS. BARNES: So I guess my question is: what's
6 going on to try to close that gap between your TAGG
7 and non-TAGG? And special ed. makes up part of that
8 and the economically disadvantaged and then English
9 learners. I'm sharing the same -- a similar concern
10 with respect to the needs of the students being met
11 in this building and the differences a little bit in
12 the achievement, and then if we move to west Little
13 Rock how does that look. What are you doing -- or
14 what is the charter doing at the middle school, the
15 702 -- LEA number 702, because I know you have more
16 than one.

17 MS. BARONI: Right.

18 MS. BARNES: Okay. So what are we doing at the
19 other middle school?

20 MS. BARONI: Well, one of the things we've done
21 that I mentioned in the presentation is some of our
22 intervention programs. We have -- we've always,
23 since I began working at the school 11 years ago,
24 have had afterschool tutoring programs for students.
25 We have expanded that so much more now with our --

1 one of the primary things we've done in the last two
2 years is double-booking our English and math. So we
3 have 10 periods weekly for all of our middle school
4 English and math students. We have what we call
5 insight teachers who work as interventionists with
6 students who are really struggling. They're pulled
7 out of the regular classroom. Those teachers work
8 with them on foundational skills. At the west campus
9 -- and I taught 6th grade math for a number of years,
10 so here's one of the things I beat my head against
11 the wall -- I would get kids in my class who could do
12 calculus; I would get kids who couldn't add and
13 subtract. And when you start at 6th grade you've got
14 to take them wherever they are and try to get them
15 somewhere. So we've really expanded our intervention
16 programs. We have that intervention during the day
17 because we found out that after school kids are tired
18 and it's better if we can do some of that
19 intervention embedded in the school day. We're also
20 trying to really make some -- ramp up our efforts
21 with getting those parents more engaged because so
22 often the parents of the students who are struggling
23 are struggling themselves. So we're trying to come
24 up with ways to put tools in those parents' hands.
25 We actually threw a big party, actually, for our

1 intervention students for Thanksgiving. All of our
2 teachers brought food; we fed them; we wanted to
3 embrace them and just say we want you to be involved
4 in the school. We know that it takes more than
5 giving you a work packet of problems; it takes
6 embracing the family, it takes bringing all of them
7 onboard. So we're doing things to try to do that.
8 But in terms of curriculum, I think often two maths
9 per days, two Englishes per day, and doing those
10 targeted interventions we are seeing that help our
11 students. And we're tracking them also through the
12 NWEA so that we're seeing that growth three times per
13 year. And our students, I believe, were in the 58th
14 for fall to fall, are showing a year or more growth;
15 52 in reading. So what we're doing with our testing
16 and our data is we're trying to look really at
17 individual students and really work with individual
18 teachers and individual students. Our math growth
19 fall to spring was actually -- math was 73.5% of our
20 students showed a year's growth and reading 68.38.
21 So I think we're showing growth when we get them at
22 6th grade. We get them at all different levels,
23 which is one of the reasons we feel like having an
24 elementary component could help with that if we get
25 those kids earlier and do those earlier

1 interventions.

2 MS. BARNES: Okay. And, you know, and I
3 appreciate that because I did note some of the
4 growth. It also concerns me when I see that we're
5 not meeting our targets at any point in one school
6 and then in another school we're doing, you know, so-
7 so, and then -- that always gets my attention. But
8 then the other piece I just -- this is just a
9 question. Over at north, at the middle school, I
10 noted it appeared that in your percent tested -- you
11 were testing your students but five -- you did not
12 meet your targets, so there are five white students
13 --

14 MS. BARONI: There's a quick answer to that.

15 MS. BARNES: Okay.

16 MS. BARONI: That was a reporting issue.

17 MS. BARNES: The same five --

18 MS. BARONI: No. It was a reporting issue. The
19 more advanced students who were taking Algebra 1 end-
20 of-course and geometry were not counted in those
21 numbers, so --

22 MS. BARNES: Okay. So that's for English --

23 MS. BARONI: It's been corrected. It was
24 submitted as a correction.

25 MS. BARNES: But is that for English and math?

1 MR. BOGREK: Just for the math. My name is
2 Fatih Bogrek, LISA North principal. Just involved
3 the math because 7th grade students they took two
4 Algebra 1 --

5 MS. BARNES: Right.

6 MR. BOGREK: -- so they are reported twice, like
7 7th grade --

8 MS. BARNES: Okay.

9 MR. BOGREK: It was corrected in the newly
10 released ESEA so they are now achieving.

11 MS. BARNES: Okay. So I noted though that there
12 were five students, five white students in math and
13 five white students difference in English Language
14 Arts. So I was just really trying to determine did
15 five students -- because they would've had to be non-
16 mobile. So did they leave? Are they the same five?

17 MR. BOGREK: We need to investigate that because
18 I don't know which white students. But I know that,
19 you know, PARCC has two different, you know,
20 assessments, the EOY and PBA.

21 MS. BARNES: Yes.

22 MR. BOGREK: So some students, they --

23 MS. BARNES: Yes. But that would've been
24 accounted for.

25 MR. BOGREK: Yeah. If they missed the second

1 one it may have been counted as, you know --

2 MS. BARNES: And we would've accounted for them
3 if they only took the PBA or if they only took the
4 EOY. I was just trying to determine since it was a
5 consistent number five white students and I just
6 wanted --

7 MR. BOGREK: We had parent issues last year;
8 also we had some complication with the Department of
9 Education about some parents, they want (inaudible)
10 from testing because of PARCC, and we had issues from
11 the Department of Education. We had a few parent
12 issues about that, about that result.

13 MS. BARNES: No problem. I just asked because I
14 was interested in whether or not --

15 MR. BOGREK: Okay. Also --

16 MS. BARNES: -- 95% had tested, and if not why
17 did just five students --

18 MR. BOGREK: Also, I would like to maybe add one
19 point to Ms. Baroni's comment about, you know, middle
20 school gap. You know, in the middle school, like
21 about 180 6th graders, they are new to the system.
22 So it takes time to, you know, move them up. At 9th
23 grade this gap is very low which is, you know, TAGG
24 and all students.

25 MS. BARNES: I know. That's why I was asking.

1 MR. BOGREK: Thank you.

2 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

3 MS. BARONI: Thank you, Mr. Bogrek.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

5 MS. PFEFFER: I'm looking at slide 23. I think
6 -- I don't know if we can pull it back up, but it's
7 the distribution, the proposed distribution of
8 students.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Kimberly, can we see slide
10 23, please?

11 MS. PFEFFER: Yeah, I think if you go back about
12 four slides from that. One more. There you go.
13 Okay. So I'm trying to just get an idea of -- you
14 have a total of 1500 students right now at both
15 campuses.

16 MS. BARONI: Yes, that's correct.

17 MS. PFEFFER: And -- or that's your enrollment
18 cap. And so if this is approved you would be looking
19 at adding -- you're wanting to have a maximum of
20 2100. Correct?

21 MS. BARONI: Uh-huh.

22 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So walk me back through how
23 many you are hoping to increase at each campus -- or
24 is the whole increase for the west campus?

25 MS. BARONI: It's west campus.

1 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So your north campus
2 numbers you're not looking at adding any students?

3 MS. BARONI: No. We're just --

4 MS. PFEFFER: You're just wanting to add the
5 elementary --

6 MS. BARONI: We're just making adjustments on
7 the west campus.

8 MS. PFEFFER: -- to do that there. Okay. And I
9 think my concern again just goes to two things: the
10 building -- and I know I may be more concerned than I
11 need to be but it really -- it's hard for me to
12 approve knowing that -- I mean, we're just maybe a
13 month away from actually knowing whether this
14 building is going to be available, first of all. And
15 then I think the second thing -- and I'm glad that
16 Stacy asked it because she asked it so well about,
17 you know, the area itself. I'm not sure how much it
18 lends to, you know, an increase in enrollment that
19 would have a diverse population. So, you know, I
20 think those two things together cause me question.
21 But the main thing is just if we don't have a
22 building and we tell parents, "Well, we're going to
23 wait at least another year but we don't have an idea
24 of where that building would be," and this whole
25 proposal really is built around having an elementary

1 school in west Little Rock to add to your campus. So
2 I just feel like we'd be coming back to a complete --
3 it would be like starting over again if the building
4 deal did not work out and it wouldn't be just as
5 simple as just a different location. Those are my
6 thoughts and concerns, so --

7 MS. BARONI: We understand and --

8 MS. PFEFFER: -- and there may need to be a
9 discussion.

10 MS. BARONI: We, you know, understand that's a
11 serious concern. It's a concern to us, but we do
12 feel pretty strongly that we will be able to get it
13 resolved. We're all working to come up with a
14 resolution. On our end of that, if we are able to
15 get it resolved and we have no amendment approval,
16 you know, then we can't move forward with this and
17 probably can't have that location. So our dilemma is
18 getting some sort of contingent approval with the
19 idea based on whether or not we can get that
20 location. If we can't get that location, then we're
21 willing to look for another one and come back and
22 say, "Hey, what about this?" You know, we don't
23 assume that if you approve it we can just go throw up
24 a school anywhere. We know it would have to be
25 approved by this group.

1 MS. PFEFFER: But I guess part of me just
2 thinks, well, is this -- is the timing right to go
3 ahead and move forward with this or should we hit the
4 pause button and wait and see. Those are my
5 thoughts. So, thank you though.

6 MS. BARONI: And by the way, we invite any of
7 you to come visit our campuses. I've been listening
8 about people visiting campuses and I don't think any
9 of you have visited us. So please come visit us
10 sometime.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Well, they've been in
12 Priority.

13 MS. BARONI: I know. But we'd like to invite
14 you --

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So don't wish that on
16 yourself.

17 MS. BARONI: No. Just a visit sometime when
18 you're passing through the area.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think our Commissioner
20 is scheduled for a visit soon.

21 MS. BARONI: Good.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

23 MR. LESTER: I guess this is for Legal. Is
24 there a timeframe from where you can ask for an
25 amendment this year? Does it end in April or March?

1 MS. BOYD: So charters can only ask for
2 amendments in February and October, unless they get a
3 waiver from the Commissioner. So it's possible that
4 they could ask to come back. You guys are scheduled
5 to have a meeting in April on the 20th and in May on
6 the 18th. So they could ask for a request from the
7 Commissioner to get a waiver from the February and
8 October limitation and they could come back to you
9 then, if approved by the Commissioner.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But I think the issue is
11 if this is resolved March 21st they could move
12 forward much faster with their communication with
13 parents. Is that correct?

14 MS. BARONI: That's correct.

15 MS. JOHNSON: That's what I would ask is if we
16 could get a contingent approval -- well, the way we
17 look at it, any approval to increase a cap moving
18 into a new property is always in some sense
19 conditional because something could happen to that
20 property before you move in. So we're essentially in
21 that same mode right now. We would like an approval
22 that if we do get it resolved before your next
23 meeting we can go ahead and tell the parents and
24 start making plans.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis -- Ms. Davis, we

1 need you again.

2 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So can you clarify for us
4 that if this location falls through, if -- then do
5 the other changes, like the cap increase, does all
6 that still apply but we're just waiting for a
7 location or does all of it go away and start over?

8 MS. DAVIS: Well, it kind of depends on how you
9 approve that.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

11 MS. DAVIS: So if you just blanket approve all
12 of it, then even if the building location does not
13 work out then they would still have the cap and the
14 waivers and all that other kind of stuff. Some of it
15 might be kind of moot because they may not have the
16 space or the availability to do it anyway. But, like
17 I say, if it falls through then they would have to
18 come back at another time and request another
19 amendment then. If you want to approve the amendment
20 for the location and then do the other ones
21 contingent on the location, you could do that as
22 well.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. That's very
24 helpful. Any other questions or comments? I have a
25 question.

1 MS. BARONI: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Talk to us about any
3 partnership you have with Little Rock School
4 District. Have you reached out to them, any
5 communication?

6 MS. BARONI: We have done one major event a few
7 years ago. We hosted a conference sharing best
8 practices, invited other schools and Little Rock
9 School District. We have not had enthusiastic
10 participation from Little Rock School District, but
11 we have from other school districts across the state.
12 As you know, there are lots of things going on in
13 Little Rock and, unfortunately, they're polarizing.
14 We would like to work with Little Rock School
15 District to learn from them and for them to share
16 what we've found that's successful. We're totally
17 open to that conversation. We actually hosted a math
18 competition a couple of Saturdays ago and drew
19 students from all over the state, some from the
20 Little Rock area. But we find that more people
21 outside of Little Rock are more willing to come and
22 shake hands and work with us than sometimes right
23 here in the city of Little Rock. But we're certainly
24 open to that.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

1 MR. BOGREK: I would like to also add the STEM
2 Festival is coming up next Friday. We invited all
3 the public schools in the, you know, state, and so
4 far we have over 2,000 interested from other schools.
5 They will come and, you know, present their projects
6 or visit our projects. So it's going to be next
7 Friday. So we try to cooperate with other public
8 schools to increase, you know, our interaction with
9 other, you know, opportunities, practices. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I encourage you to reach
12 out to the leadership. There's new leadership at
13 Little Rock and so I encourage you to reach out to
14 them.

15 MR. BOGREK: We will definitely take on to do
16 that.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

18 MR. BOGREK: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
20 or comments? Ms. Davis, do you have any issues,
21 remaining issues regarding the amendment request?

22 MS. DAVIS: I do not.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
24 or discussion by the Panel? I'll accept a motion
25 from anyone except Dr. Saunders.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: And his squeaky mike.

2 DR. GOTCHER: His noisy mike.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: I make a motion to accept the --
4 is it amendment?

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Accept the amendment
7 contingent upon the proposed location being --

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Approved.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: -- approved. Yeah. It would be
10 --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Available.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Available, yeah.

13 DR. GOTCHER: And as was mentioned before, is
14 that necessary since every facility is contingent
15 upon -- I mean, it's okay to keep it in, I would
16 guess. I wouldn't --

17 MS. DAVIS: I think what's probably more
18 contingent is the enrollment cap that would be
19 contingent on it, I mean, if that's how you --

20 DR. GOTCHER: Yes.

21 MS. DAVIS: -- want to do it. But if they don't
22 have the space, they don't have the space. But I
23 think it's more the enrollment cap that's contingent.
24 Because the other amendments as well are contingent
25 on if they don't have the location, then they don't

1 need additional waivers for a new location. So I
2 think it's more the enrollment cap that might be
3 contingent.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is that your intention,
6 Dr. Gotcher -- I mean, Dr. Saunders?

7 MS. BARONI: Madam Chair?

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

9 MS. BARONI: If -- we're willing to come back;
10 if the location we find out is not going to be
11 available, we're more than willing to come back in
12 April. You know, if we find another location that
13 might be appropriate we're more than willing to come
14 back and put that before you for your consideration
15 at that time, so --

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Can we -- may be for Legal. Can
17 we put that as part of our procedures that if that
18 location is not available that they would be allowed
19 to automatically come back to us for that adjustment?

20 MS. DAVIS: To come back for the adjustment of
21 an alternate location?

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

23 MS. DAVIS: Well, they would have to come back
24 for an amendment for an alternate location anyway
25 because, according to the rules, you'd have to have

1 an amendment request.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: I think my understanding was it
3 requires Commissioner approval, so it would not be
4 our decision. It would require a waiver from the
5 Commissioner. Correct?

6 MS. DAVIS: No. That they could -- can they do
7 automatic? No, I think -- yeah, the Commissioner
8 would have to approve that. If that's what the rules
9 say, they would have to -- he would have to waive
10 that.

11 MR. ROGERS: That's if we don't do anything
12 right now?

13 MS. DAVIS: Well, no. Okay. Well, if you don't
14 do anything right now and the building works out,
15 then they would have to come back --

16 MR. ROGERS: Right.

17 MS. DAVIS: -- and have to have Commissioner
18 approval to come back at another time. If you vote
19 for this and the building falls through, then they
20 would still have to -- and they had another location
21 in mind, they would have to get Commissioner approval
22 to come back at an alternate time anyway. So if you
23 want them to come back in another month, they're
24 going to have to have Commissioner approval. And
25 just -- and, you know, you type up your reasons for

1 your votes; you can always suggest -- if you want
2 them to come back, for whichever reason, that you can
3 suggest that you would appreciate the Commissioner
4 allowing that, but it would be up to the
5 Commissioner.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Dr. Saunders, as it
7 stands you have approved the amendments contingent
8 upon the approved location. Is that where you stand?

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is there a second to that
11 motion?

12 MR. ROGERS: I will second it.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders has made a
14 motion to approve the amendments contingent upon the
15 location being approved, seconded by Mr. Rogers. Any
16 discussion?

17 MS. LIWO: I just want to clarify --

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

19 MS. LIWO: -- for myself. Sorry. So if the
20 location is not approved -- with this motion if the
21 location is not approved, then --

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then LISA comes back and
23 we start over.

24 MS. LIWO: Then the cap amendment, that's not
25 approved either. Correct?

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's correct.

2 MR. ROGERS: Right.

3 MS. LIWO: Okay. Okay.

4 MS. DAVIS: Right. Yeah. The building being
5 available, so -- and just for clarification for LISA,
6 this -- your vote -- your motion is that if they're
7 approved and things worked out and the building is
8 available that they could start this year or have the
9 flexibility to start next year, according to whatever
10 their needs would be. Because I think that's what
11 they asked. Are you -- is that okay?

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's my understanding.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

14 MS. DAVIS: Okay. They just wanted
15 clarification on that so that way they were sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you for that. We
17 want to make sure we're clear. Any other discussion?

18 MS. SMITH: Just a comment again. The fact that
19 they are over 40% serving disadvantaged students I
20 think is a plus. I do have a little bit of concern
21 about location, but at this point they've given me no
22 reason to think that they're not actively trying to
23 serve all students through their process, so --

24 DR. SAUNDERS: And I do want to address that,
25 that as I mentioned earlier I do have the concern

1 with the free and reduced population, as well as some
2 of the others. And I do not know if that needs the
3 simple remedy of targeting geographically your
4 recruiting area or door-knocking in certain
5 neighborhoods for the free and reduced population.
6 And as mentioned earlier today, with the
7 transportation, if that could be a possible fix for
8 that. So I just want to -- but I am encouraged
9 because, as we stated, I've seen your numbers
10 increase over time and I hope that continues to do
11 so.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any further discussion?
13 So let me restate what you're voting on. Dr.
14 Saunders made a motion, seconded by Mr. Rogers to
15 approve all amendments contingent upon the location
16 being available and that you could proceed this year
17 or next school year, however that fits your timeline.
18 All those in favor?

19 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

21 MS. BARNES: Aye.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes is opposed.

23 Any other? Motion passed.

24 If you'll take a moment to write your reasons.

25 (A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE)

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

2 MS. BARNES: Yes. I voted against the motion to
3 approve the amendments at this time because my
4 concern is with the gaps and the location of the new
5 campus remain unresolved for me. While I'm in favor
6 of the grade reconfiguration, again, the complexity
7 of the issues involved in this request are too far
8 reaching with unknown and/or unintended potential
9 consequences for me to comfortably make a favorable
10 decision.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

12 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the amendment, to
13 approve the amendment. Because of LISA Academy's
14 high academic performance I support the amendment.
15 However, my caution is that the new location does not
16 negatively affect some of the students' ability to
17 attend this campus.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

19 MR. LESTER: I voted for the amendment. This
20 will open up opportunity to serve more students. The
21 charter has continued to increase the number of
22 economically deprived students; however, I believe
23 they should continue to recruit for that population.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

25 MS. LIWO: I voted for. Really, it was the

1 contingency that swayed me over.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

3 MS. PFEFFER: I did vote in favor of the motion.
4 The charter demonstrates an openness to educate all
5 students from a diverse population. And having that
6 better understanding that they're seeking to open an
7 elementary campus that would feed into their already
8 existing middle and high school campuses I can see
9 the importance in that. We've had several charters
10 over the last several days that have talked about how
11 much more successful they are with students that
12 they've had over a number of years. And I think that
13 having that early stability all the way through can
14 even help close those gaps that we see.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

16 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the amendment to
17 approve -- to approve the amendment because LISA
18 Academy is a high-performing charter and this will
19 allow them to address the community waiting list if
20 -- contingent on the availability of the building.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I think that by increasing
23 their cap it will allow more students the option to
24 attend their school of choice. And I would continue
25 to encourage the school to work to continue the

1 increase in free and reduced students.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

3 MS. SMITH: I voted in favor. The school has a
4 record of academic success and serving a diverse
5 student population.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations to LISA
7 Academy. And I hope that you understand that our
8 reservation in putting that contingency on there is
9 if you -- if it falls through and there's a new
10 location we figure -- we probably think there's a lot
11 of new things to consider. But no matter what
12 happens I still encourage you to reach out to the
13 Little Rock School District and become a partner with
14 that district for this community.

15 SUPT. EKIN: Definitely. We'll cooperate with
16 the Little Rock School District. Thank you all for
17 your cooperation and understanding. Thank you so
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

20 CLOSING COMMENTS

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Before we close, Ms. Boyd,
22 do you have a few additional comments?

23 MS. BOYD: Yes, Madam Chair, if you'll indulge
24 me for a few minutes. I just want to acknowledge how
25 big of an undertaking this week was. Some of our

1 panel weeks have been marathons, but I feel like this
2 was a marathon of a marathon. And I just want to
3 take the time to thank everyone who has helped us
4 pull this off. We have worked with a number of
5 people who sit in all of your divisions and we really
6 appreciate their help. In the charter office, Alyse
7 Mattox, Sharon Rodgers, and, of course, Mary Perry
8 are doing great work in helping and supporting all of
9 us to pull this off. In legal, Jennifer Davis has
10 started working with charter schools and she's taken
11 it on with zeal and we really appreciate that, and
12 the support of Kendra Clay. Our internal review
13 committee consists of Patti Martin, Mary Katherine
14 Klein, Kristin Hobson, Rhonda Dickey, and Roy
15 Causbie. We spend many, many hours together going
16 over the application to figure out what you need to
17 hear more from applicants so that all of our charter
18 schools will be successful in serving students across
19 the state. School improvement is always helping us,
20 Dr. Wilde, Dr. Toni and Chante'le' Williams. The
21 data center, I feel like I call Linda Jenkins about
22 once a week and she's always happy to help me; Connie
23 Alford. Also, Renee Austin-Banks helps us with
24 student data as well. Doug in the Commissioner's
25 office is always willing to lend a hand. And then,

1 of course, the communications team, Kim Friedman,
2 Bobbie, Dean Kaminar -- I call him Dean Kaminar
3 because he used to be my principal when I went to
4 AMSMA -- and Gayle. And then, of course, Ms. Joyce
5 and everyone who's been helping out at the front
6 desk. I know we've stressed everybody a little bit
7 this week trying to get this pulled off. But if I
8 left anyone out just know that I very much thank you
9 -- our friends at APSRC who help our charters to get
10 prepared for this. We really appreciate everybody's
11 help and everybody's interest in doing what's best
12 for the students of Arkansas. So thank you very
13 much.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Well said.

15 MS. SMITH: Come back up for a second because,
16 first, I want everyone to know that I'm so proud that
17 this young lady is in my unit and no one else can
18 have her. And if you thought she was stressed out
19 before the week started, it never showed. You're a
20 class act. 1,177 pages were provided that you had to
21 go through; outstanding, outstanding work. And your
22 work that you do impacts students all across
23 Arkansas. So thank you.

24 MS. BOYD: Thank you. And, again, I just want
25 to stress it wouldn't be possible without the help of

1 everyone, including our charter leaders who are
2 definitely interested in helping and doing what's
3 best for our students.

4 MS. SMITH: Okay. That's when you say, "Thank
5 you, Ms. Smith."

6 MS. BOYD: Thank you.

7 MS. SMITH: That was your compliment to take.
8 That was your compliment to take.

9 DR. GOTCHER: And, Madam Chair, I have one more
10 motion.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

12 [APPLAUSE]

13 DR. GOTCHER: I just had one more motion to
14 make. I'd like to make a motion that Ms. Boyd take
15 the rest of the day off. I need a second.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Second, of course.

17 Thank you to everyone who participated today.
18 We appreciate your professionalism and we do
19 appreciate your collaboration -- let me re-stress
20 that -- collaboration for the benefit of children.
21 Thank you for all that participated and I will accept
22 a motion to adjourn, Dr. Saunders.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: So moved.

24 MS. BARNES: Second.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Barnes.

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All those in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

(The meeting was adjourned at 3:03 p.m.)

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A-1: QUEST MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PINE BLUFF
EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-3: eSTEM PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-3: eSTEM PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

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A-6: KIPP DELTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS - BLYTHEVILLE

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-7: LISA ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-7: LISA ACADEMY

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

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A-7: LISA ACADEMY

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