

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

October 21, 2016

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

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

OCTOBER 21, 2016
8:30 A.M.

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
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
MS. KELLY McLAUGHLIN	Public School Program Advisor

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. JENNIFER DAVIS	ADE Deputy General Counsel
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Arkansas Department of Education
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning. The October 21st meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education and ask you to please silence all electronic devices. The Charter Authorizing Panel oversees the authorization, renewal, revision, and revocation of charters. As chair, my goal is to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing. I'll ask that each person speaking please state your name and title for the record. Continue to speak clearly into the microphone. You may have to get a-hold of it and move it; that's okay. Get close to it. That benefits not only the Panel but the audience, but also the viewing audience. So we are live-streaming; the meeting will be recorded and posted on the Arkansas Department of Ed. website. So if you get away from the microphone it is very difficult -- I know because I watch these videos; it is very difficult for the viewing audience to hear what you're saying. This meeting will also have a transcript and the transcript will be posted on the ADE website.

So good morning to all and welcome.

1 A-1: HEARING OF DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
2 APPLICATION: HOT SPRINGS JUNIOR ACADEMY

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. McLaughlin, you are
4 recognized for Action Item 1.

5 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Kelly
6 McLaughlin, ADE Charter Office. For Action Item 1 we
7 have Hot Springs Junior Academy. They will be
8 representing their district conversion application
9 today. And to begin Dr. Mike Hernandez,
10 superintendent, will be presenting.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If all persons speaking on
12 behalf of Hot Springs Junior Academy will stand and
13 raise your right hand and any persons speaking in
14 opposition do the same. Do you swear or affirm that
15 the testimony you're about to give shall be the
16 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

17 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Hernandez, good
19 morning and you are recognized.

20 SUPT. HERNANDEZ: Morning. I really appreciate
21 the opportunity to come speak on a Friday. I wasn't
22 looking forward to wearing blue jeans today to work,
23 but I put on my suit to come talk to you guys. You
24 know, we're real excited about the opportunity to
25 tackle what we see as a big issue across Arkansas,

1 and especially in our school district, being the
2 middle school and the middle school concept and how
3 we, you know, engage kids and then try to get them
4 excited about learning and moving them towards a
5 pathway of trying to think about careers. Our
6 community -- you know -- this year we opened up the
7 high school, Hot Springs World Class High School,
8 which is our conversion charter, that has the academy
9 approach. And so this is the next step in our
10 process of opening the middle school that kind of
11 gets kids ready and acclimated in their understanding
12 of what the possibilities are for them. You know,
13 our community has really jumped behind us on this.
14 You know, this was one of our big selling points is
15 we went for a millage increase this year and, you
16 know, the community spoke to us loud and clear that
17 they're excited about what we're doing, you know, by
18 passing a 4.4 mill increase to help us better
19 construct our schools and get kids prepared for our
20 community. You know, we're real excited about being
21 able to do this and the presentation that you're
22 about to hear from our illustrious staff is going to
23 be something that I hope wows and encourages you to
24 give us a positive vote for this. Thank you.

25 DR. NEHUS: Stephanie Nehus, associate

1 superintendent of Learning Services, Hot Springs
2 School District. Thank you for allowing us to
3 present this morning, and we'll begin our
4 presentation at this time. As Dr. Hernandez stated
5 -- let me go back to the beginning -- we did look at
6 our community and it was very loud and clear as we
7 began the process a year ago, here in front of you
8 for Hot Springs World Class High School, that our
9 business community needed our students to be prepared
10 to enter the workforce upon graduation. And we
11 looked at that data and saw that 67% of our students
12 were not leaving our high school and going to
13 college, and so that leaves them in our community
14 needing to be prepared to go directly to work. And
15 so that's why we started this process with our high
16 school. But knowing that we have four magnet
17 elementary schools, three of those achieving schools,
18 we knew that where we were losing our kids was as
19 they were getting older, which is typical in the
20 education field. And so as we continued to review
21 our data and we looked at this 7th grade ACT Aspire
22 information, we see that when you're looking at our
23 students ready for that next step, in English it
24 looks like they're doing great. But then when you
25 look at writing, reading, science and math we are not

1 where we need to be -- and in fact, too many -- a
2 quarter of our students are not proficient. And so
3 we realize that we have been a Needs Improvement
4 Focus school at our middle school. We did hit the
5 Year One based on PARCC scores, but we all know that
6 those scores were typically low across the state.
7 When we're looking again at ACT Aspire for our 8th
8 grade the data is still very clear; English,
9 amazingly, we have 67% of our students who were ready
10 but when you look at all of the other subgroups --
11 writing, reading, science and math -- math
12 specifically, you're looking at 19%. That's of
13 concern to us. And so we need to do something
14 different to make sure we're making our learning
15 relevant for our students.

16 Another piece of data that we used was NWEA. I
17 know that this is a little bit hard to read, and the
18 point I wanted to stress here is this is the
19 percentage of our students that were three or more
20 years below grade placement in math on the left.
21 English Language Arts on the right. This isn't
22 including those students who are two or more years,
23 or even one or more year. So we see that we made
24 progress from the fall of 2015 to the spring of 2016,
25 and, you know, did see that decline, but we're still

1 talking about almost a fourth of our students who are
2 three or more years below grade level. And so we
3 have an area that we've got to address.

4 Looking at the research -- improving teaching
5 and curricula to make school more relevant and
6 engaging is what is noted in research. We've got to
7 enhance that connection between school and work. And
8 so we want to come at this with that whole child
9 approach and with that project based learning, that
10 career/community connection. We took a look at our
11 Kuder Career Interest Assessment results at the
12 middle school, and as our goal is, you know, no
13 longer is our goal to get 100% of our students to
14 college; it's to get 100% of our students ready for a
15 career, whether that involves college or whether that
16 involves workforce or even just leaving us. And so
17 at the middle school level we saw that the top four
18 areas were human services, education and training,
19 arts/audio/video technology communications, and then
20 the health science. And we saw that this matched --
21 these were the career academies that we came forth
22 with last year for our high school and this is our
23 starting point this year; you know, liberal studies,
24 education and healthcare, business and technology,
25 industrial technologies -- those match. Our students

1 are showing at that middle level that their interests
2 are in those areas and so now we feel that it's
3 important that we have some flexibility to be able to
4 really start embedding that younger, 7th grade, when
5 they come to us so that when they go to the high
6 school and select an academy they're totally prepared
7 and have an idea of exactly what they're interested
8 in and what they want to pursue.

9 So we began with a steering committee and we did
10 try to be representative of our school district, our
11 community, our parents, and we followed a timeline of
12 events. And the thing I want to note here is that we
13 started in September of 2015, and that was before we
14 were even authorized as the high school charter,
15 because we knew we had a bigger plan and that we were
16 going to start at the high school because we wanted
17 to do everything we could to get those students who
18 were right there ready to leave us prepared, but that
19 we also knew that the middle school was going to be
20 important for building those foundations for our
21 kids.

22 And so I'm going to turn it over to our middle
23 school principal to talk to you about our
24 innovations.

25 MS. LENOX: Natasha Lenox, Hot Springs Middle

1 School principal. Now as we talk about moving into
2 -- transitioning to a conversion charter, there are a
3 lot of innovations that we looked at and feel would
4 definitely fit into our areas of needs. We would
5 like to look at career exploration; we would like to
6 integrate that into our core curriculum. We would
7 like to incorporate those career competencies into
8 the content of the core classes. We will use our
9 career certified teacher; we would use her to push
10 into those classrooms to make sure that all of those
11 competencies are addressed within the core
12 curriculum. We would like to have an enrichment or
13 exploration period where students can choose classes
14 or choose areas that they are interested in and meet
15 twice weekly for 45 minutes and improve those areas
16 and learn more about coding or robotics or
17 photography or writing books or cooking. We would
18 like for those students that are also -- those highly
19 motivated students, we would like to provide them
20 opportunities to do independent study or independent
21 learning. We would also like for them to have the
22 opportunities to complete some of those prerequisite
23 classes as they move from middle school to high
24 school. We also want to look at those careers that
25 are tied to their areas of exploration and bring in

1 the community so that they can enhance those learning
2 opportunities. For instance, if they're cooking,
3 we'd like to bring in our chefs from Chartwell's and
4 provide some of those hands-on learning experiences.

5 We'd also like to partner with APSRC through our
6 Summit -- their Summit Personalized Learning
7 opportunity to differentiate instruction, provide
8 students -- provide opportunities for students to
9 move through at their own pace their learning. With
10 our MYP units of instructions and their assessments,
11 we can upload that into their curriculum and to their
12 base curriculum -- use their base curriculum or
13 upload our MYP units into the curriculum, which is
14 where we are -- which is what we are going to do.
15 And the students are going to also be responsible for
16 tracking their own progress, which is a little
17 different than the traditional where the teacher is
18 usually responsible for the progress of the students.
19 Students are going to have some of that
20 responsibility also.

21 We would like to also incorporate an advisory or
22 mentoring part of the day. We would like to use
23 Steven Covey's "Leader in Me" and start each day with
24 each student meeting with their mentor. We would
25 like to assign these students based on their chosen

1 career pathways and we're going to look at their
2 Kuder, we're going to look at their independent
3 interest surveys that we're going to provide for
4 them, and the students will be matched with a
5 particular teacher. By the end of this, between 7th
6 and 12th grade, as we lay the foundation and
7 transition into high school, they will have a six-
8 year electronic portfolio plan. The student also has
9 the ability to change mentors as their interest
10 changes.

11 The last innovation is the project based
12 learning. We're going to partner with the Buck
13 Institute and they're going to provide professional
14 development opportunities. We are going to provide
15 students an extended period of time to investigate
16 and respond to authentic and engaging questions,
17 problems and challenges, and that's going to provide
18 opportunities for our students to connect with the
19 community and it's also going to provide that real
20 world experience, which is relevant for our students
21 today.

22 DR. NEHUS: And so we've shown here just kind of
23 what a sample student's schedule would look like and
24 the pieces I've highlighted here is that they would
25 have a period zero, an advisory/mentorship period,

1 that would meet every day. And they would have a
2 block that would be an exploration/enrichment that
3 would take place two times a week.

4 A sample teacher's schedule, again highlighting
5 they would be mentors with our students; so being an
6 expert in an area. Also something I want to
7 highlight is that they do get a conference period
8 every day of the week. In addition to that, they get
9 a meeting time, teachers do, three days a week and
10 then they would have that exploration/enrichment the
11 other two days a week. And so we provide our
12 teachers a lot of time for professional learning and
13 professional growth and collaboration.

14 And so we've asked for five waivers as we come
15 before you today:

16 The class size I want to stress we're not
17 wanting to be any more than 35 students per class, or
18 185 in a day, and that is strictly for that
19 exploration period. Students are taking on an
20 exploration period; they're going to be taking on an
21 additional group of kids, which will push those
22 numbers up.

23 Teacher certification is an area. Again, that
24 kind of relates to our career courses and our health
25 and safety course waiver that we're asking for. And

1 I want to stress here, we're not asking to not teach
2 the career standards. We want to incorporate them
3 across all areas. And we do understand the embedding
4 process, but you have to pick one course to embed
5 those into. We want it to be across all core courses
6 and we don't want to limit to one 45-minute period of
7 learning about careers. We know that integration is
8 that best practice across the middle grades and we
9 want that exploration and enrichment for our
10 students, which most of our students are coming from
11 poverty; we know we've got to make those -- that's a
12 key piece for us.

13 We do have a partnership with Henderson to
14 provide college and career coach at our middle school
15 beginning next year, bridging, again, that gap
16 between school and community. And training our
17 teachers to become career experts is going to be a
18 key focus for us.

19 We want true response to intervention for our
20 school. We want it to be a living, breathing
21 entrepreneurial feel. If things are not working,
22 we'll come back and ask for things to help us make it
23 fit for our kids and our teachers. And we know that
24 the purpose of this process is to be open-ended and
25 to really have that opportunity to be flexible.

1 We ask for that seat-time waiver strictly
2 because we are going to have these exploration
3 periods and so that traditional six-hour
4 instructional time, you know, may look differently on
5 those Tuesdays and Thursdays when kids are going out
6 to explore, while we would probably say that that
7 would still be great instruction.

8 But that's why we're asking for those waivers.

9 And so we want to end with just a video, a video
10 of support from our teachers, our students, and our
11 community.

12 (WHEREUPON, a video was shown. This video may
13 be accessed on the ADE website.)

14 DR. NEHUS: And we thank you for your time.
15 That ends our presentation.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

17 Ms. Davis, is there anyone here to speak in
18 opposition or provide public comment?

19 MS. DAVIS: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. You have five
21 additional minutes for closure.

22 DR. NEHUS: I think we're good.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. We'll get
24 started with questions then. Panel? Ms. Pfeffer.

25 MS. PFEFFER: Good morning.

1 DR. NEHUS: Good morning.

2 MS. PFEFFER: Just a couple of things. Number
3 one, I do -- seeing the schedule, it was interesting.
4 And I do like the -- I think that the extended time
5 for the planning is definitely valuable for teachers
6 and it's going to make a big difference, as you said,
7 in some of the training that they're going to need to
8 do and the collaboration.

9 So, just a couple of short questions. The first
10 one, as students are assigned to the mentor teacher
11 how is that -- how are those assignments going to be
12 made? Is it going to be based on student interests
13 and teacher expertise or --

14 DR. NEHUS: We do plan that. We want to, again,
15 provide professional development to our teachers so
16 that our teachers can share with us what their
17 interests are, where their expertise lie. And then
18 as we do the Kuder Interest Assessment for our
19 students -- and we're also planning to create just
20 kind of an internal survey for students, as well, so
21 that we can match them. And we do plan to match
22 them, the mentors, with the students based on those
23 interests.

24 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

25 SUPT. HERNANDEZ: I didn't get to touch your

1 elbow, our little secret thing to switch out.
2 Another thing that we probably didn't come across --
3 maybe in the application, but not in the presentation
4 -- is that we're still planning on, with the
5 embedding of -- or total embedding of our career
6 we'll still have our career teacher that will also
7 work as kind of that mentor to bridge the gap. One
8 of the things that we also did this year, we
9 partnered with Henderson State University and the
10 Department of Higher Ed., that we're a pilot school
11 for this new kind of career coach model. And so this
12 person is supposed to act as kind of the liaison
13 between the college and the business community and
14 our teachers to kind of make sure that our staff that
15 are serving in these mentor roles really get to
16 understand -- you know -- if I'm in the this pocket,
17 and say it's aerospace or it's computers or whatever,
18 that they really start to understand that and have
19 resources, that we're not just saying, "Hey, you're
20 in a mentor class," and they kind of sit in a room
21 and not do anything. And so that's one of the things
22 we're trying to add to make sure teachers are
23 prepared.

24 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And then my other question
25 is just with the waiver request for licensure. And

1 you alluded to it in your presentation but just from
2 reading the application I'm not exactly clear on how
3 expansive the waiver request is. So if you could
4 articulate that?

5 DR. NEHUS: Sure. We originally -- and what
6 we've placed in the application is because of the
7 careers, wanting to incorporate those across all
8 areas -- obviously the teachers will not be certified
9 in careers. And we also asked for the health and
10 safety because we felt like that was another area
11 that we could incorporate across, which would open
12 student schedules for that time for the exploration
13 period. Again, our teachers would not be certified
14 necessarily to teach health. We will still have
15 physical education teachers who would be providing
16 those supports to all of our teachers. So that's
17 where we were coming with the teacher licensure. It
18 could be a situation where there's other things we
19 want to start incorporating that they might possibly
20 not, but that's our focus area is for that careers
21 and that health and safety piece.

22 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And that does help. And so
23 I think my only thought -- and this was after
24 reflecting yesterday -- so, in essence, you're asking
25 for a waiver from licensure. Your intent is to use

1 it in these ways, but you would have the flexibility
2 if you wanted to hire somebody, you know, for that
3 grade level to teach math or social studies that
4 wouldn't be licensed. So, in essence, that's what --
5 you're asking for the full spectrum of licensure
6 waivers?

7 DR. NEHUS: We are asking for that full
8 spectrum. We're always going to put highly qualified
9 teachers in the classroom; that's our ultimate goal.
10 And -- but, obviously, you all know we're in a
11 teacher shortage issue and so obviously there could
12 be opportunities for us where that might be needed.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

14 DR. NEHUS: So we are asking for the spectrum.

15 MS. PFEFFER: And the reason why I was asking
16 for that, because it occurred to me last night that
17 if I had a question reading the application then --
18 and I know these applications are shared with faculty
19 and with parents and communities -- I started
20 thinking about is it clear to them as well that they
21 could be this expansive.

22 DR. NEHUS: Sure.

23 MS. PFEFFER: So my only thought is just to make
24 sure that when you go back that there are those
25 ongoing conversations --

1 DR. NEHUS: Sure.

2 MS. PFEFFER: -- because it definitely does
3 change things sometimes for people, sometimes for
4 parents and colleagues when you have people side-by-
5 side and all of a sudden they realize, you know,
6 "Well, I thought this is what we did, but we really
7 can do that." So I think my only --

8 DR. NEHUS: Sure.

9 MS. PFEFFER: -- request would just be to make
10 sure that that is communicated and -- but I
11 appreciate the explanation. Thank you.

12 DR. NEHUS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

14 MS. SMITH: Kind of following up on Ms. Pfeffer
15 with the waivers on health and safety, I get the
16 waivers on the career and technical as far as career
17 orientation. It sounds like a lot of that is going
18 to be covered in exploration --

19 DR. NEHUS: Correct.

20 MS. SMITH: -- as far as career goes. And then
21 --

22 DR. NEHUS: And in the core areas. And we are
23 planning to incorporate those standards --

24 MS. SMITH: In all those areas.

25 DR. NEHUS: -- into all units, into all the

1 different classes.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. And then the keyboarding
3 being pushed down -- I mean, we've seen -- that's
4 pretty normal.

5 DR. NEHUS: And we have worked -- I spoke with
6 Kathy Turner at the Department of Career Education
7 and shared with her what our thoughts were and our
8 vision -- and, of course, they still have concerns
9 with us asking for that career waiver. But we talked
10 about that key code, which is a new course that they
11 have available, and so we really are looking at
12 incorporating that into our 7th grade, again, so that
13 we'd have that keyboarding and the coding requirement
14 covered there. And then, as Dr. Hernandez said, we
15 still have our career teacher, so then that teacher
16 would be able to push in and help insure that all
17 those standards are being covered. Yes.

18 MS. SMITH: So tell me a little bit more then
19 about the health and safety aspect of it and what
20 does it really look -- I mean, so if I'm a 7th or 8th
21 grader in your school, what am I getting as far as
22 physical education and health and safety curriculum?

23 DR. NEHUS: They would be getting the physical
24 education requirement.

25 MS. SMITH: Okay.

1 DR. NEHUS: That would be in their schedule.
2 The health piece is what we would incorporate
3 primarily into science, but we would incorporate that
4 -- I saw a great lesson just a few weeks ago where
5 the social studies class was doing a project that
6 required them to look at the food chain and talk
7 about all of those things, so they were doing a lot
8 of the health pieces in that class. And so that was
9 for us an opportunity to where students wouldn't have
10 to be assigned to that health class, but we could
11 incorporate those across the curriculum areas as well
12 and insure that we're getting those standards taught.
13 But it wouldn't be in a set class learning health at
14 this given place and time. And we also in our
15 application -- you know -- that's one of those
16 courses that we're hoping as we progress forward that
17 students who are excelling would have an opportunity
18 to get their high school credit, and we'll follow the
19 process to do that, of course, through --

20 MS. SMITH: So if you were asking for them to
21 get their high school credit as an 8th grader, would
22 that be a set class or would it still be an embedded
23 course?

24 DR. NEHUS: That would be a set class.

25 MS. SMITH: Okay. But most of the health

1 standards you're going to embed within your science
2 and then some in other ones?

3 DR. NEHUS: Yes.

4 MS. SMITH: But you guys will do the alignment
5 process with those standards?

6 DR. NEHUS: Correct. And we're going to -- and,
7 again, make sure we're utilizing our teachers who
8 teach that currently to insure we're getting those
9 standards covered. It just might be that we're
10 teaching a few of them in social studies, several of
11 them in science, some in math, some in Language Arts.

12 MS. SMITH: I mean, I think it's a smart way to
13 approach it. I guess my only caution would be that
14 somebody has to make sure that work is done, if
15 you're doing that.

16 DR. NEHUS: That's right.

17 MS. SMITH: And that somebody is looking at
18 those standards and making sure that someone is --
19 that they're being accounted for somewhere.

20 DR. NEHUS: Correct.

21 MS. SMITH: It's easy to say "well, we'll teach
22 this in science," when I have all my science to teach
23 and then now I have -- and a lot of them do go
24 together --

25 DR. NEHUS: Sure.

1 MS. SMITH: -- and they should -- I mean, the
2 more that we can integrate our subjects the better
3 well-rounded students we will have. We're not --

4 DR. NEHUS: Well, and we have put a huge focus
5 on curriculum and building curriculum units that are
6 livable, breathable documents and insuring that we
7 have instructional facilitators at all levels, that
8 I've really put a lot of expectations on them, that
9 "I expect you to insure that these curriculum units
10 are what our teachers need to be successful." And
11 then also that accountability piece, "I expect you to
12 be going in --

13 MS. SMITH: Right.

14 DR. NEHUS: " -- and observing." And we're
15 using that coach piece in BloomBoard for our
16 instructional facilitators to go in and coach
17 teachers and provide them feedback and insure that
18 those standards are being met.

19 MS. SMITH: Good. I think your elbow is being
20 touched.

21 SUPT. HERNANDEZ: Elbow touch, yeah. One thing
22 that may help -- it wasn't in the application just
23 because we didn't have our millage where it is, but
24 kind of our -- there's a larger plan at play here.
25 Currently, our middle school is configured as 7th and

1 8th grade and our high school is 9 through 12.
2 They're on separate campuses. Our new building
3 that'll be the 7 through 9 complex is actually going
4 to be built right next to our high school, so we'll
5 have one 7 through 12 campus. Part of that licensure
6 waiver request and where we might use that in the
7 future is that we have teachers that are certified 4-
8 8. Well, if we need them to help out in the 9th
9 grade classes, once 9th grade moves in and vice-
10 versa, we want to be able to do that to match with
11 our high school licensure waiver. The young lady's
12 comments in the video about "if I'm done with certain
13 classes why do I have to stay doing this schedule,"
14 and so by embedding those classes that we're trying
15 to do it allows us -- like she says, when she -- when
16 students get to 8th grade they might really start
17 getting a head-start on their high school curriculum;
18 that allows us with our partnership with National
19 Park College and Henderson to allow kids to start
20 taking lots of hours by the time they get in 10th,
21 11th and 12th grade and have flexibility for those
22 internships. So it kind of really gets down to a
23 point where we're purposefully trying to get a kid in
24 position to where they get a little bit of
25 flexibility later on in their schedule where we can

1 say, "What do you want to do? Let's design a plan,"
2 whether it be online type stuff, whether it be
3 internship and all those things. But we can't do
4 that if we have all these things that they have to
5 get done and block schedule that way. So that's kind
6 of the bigger picture, I guess, why we're doing some
7 of this.

8 MS. SMITH: And that does help. I also just
9 want to make a comment about -- I noticed in here a
10 couple of times where the question about the culture
11 of the school and changing the way the school is
12 viewed. And I know at one point I think we -- an
13 internal committee asked a question about how -- I do
14 think that's important. And so at this point --
15 because the school has been an IB school all along;
16 right?

17 DR. NEHUS: Correct.

18 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so what -- so that's not
19 worked or where it has worked but we're needing an
20 extra push? I mean, is that what the -- is that the
21 intent of changing to a charter?

22 DR. NEHUS: Yes. And we are; we're very proud.
23 We came forth last year. We're very proud to be a K-
24 12 IB district, the only one in the state. Of
25 course, at the elementary level we have one

1 elementary school that that is their magnet theme,
2 IB, so that's all they do. Then we go into our
3 intermediate, our middle and our high school, and IB
4 becomes -- because International Baccalaureate
5 organization doesn't allow you to have a school
6 within a school, which is what we had in the
7 inception.

8 MS. SMITH: Okay.

9 DR. NEHUS: So they required that we went to
10 whole school.

11 MS. SMITH: Okay.

12 DR. NEHUS: So then it goes from that group that
13 had IB K-4 to everybody is involved in the
14 International Baccalaureate programs in the middle
15 years 5-10. And then at the high school level in
16 grades 11 and 12 it goes back to where it's those
17 students who want to do that diploma program they can
18 do that. And then we added the IBCP, which is the
19 career related program, which is new, and we added
20 that last year. So then it kind of fades out again.
21 So, again, in this middle ground every child is
22 getting that IB curriculum and we think it's great.
23 I mean, it's great practices; it's great teaching.
24 But, again, not every child has been able to achieve
25 at the level of rigor that is there. And so we do

1 feel like we need a push. We, again, are seeing that
2 success at our elementary schools across the board.
3 Even beyond the one IB school, three of our four are
4 achieving. The fourth one is Needs Improvement, not
5 a Focus or Priority. But then we see that right
6 there in the middle ground where we go to those Needs
7 Improvement schools, and so we do feel like we need
8 something a little bit different to give that fresh
9 start. And we have a new building principal this
10 year at our middle school. I think anybody who walks
11 through the doors would see just a whole shift in the
12 culture and the change, and so I know we're going in
13 the right direction. Everyone is excited about this
14 possible opportunity. They see what's happening at
15 our high school and, you know, they're seeing that
16 whole process, and so yes.

17 MS. SMITH: Well, I like the idea that it's all
18 kids, not just the highest group of kids in your
19 school, and that you're pushing the bar for everybody
20 to achieve. So, thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning.

23 DR. NEHUS: Good morning.

24 DR. GOTCHER: And I might ask Ms. Lenox to come
25 up as well because I think I'd like to hear both.

1 The piece on accountability I'd like to explore just
2 a little bit. Having several years of experience in
3 middle school, I know the challenge of an advisory
4 period or the teaming -- in fact, some of the
5 scheduling pieces I'm looking at in your sample kind
6 of reminds me of the old middle school teaming
7 concept because of the exploration period, et cetera.
8 Anyway, I digress. Explain how the shift in the
9 ongoing accountability of the teachers -- because I
10 feel, as a former building principal, the success of
11 this is going to have to be strong engaged teachers
12 really looking at every individual child. I think
13 that's very important. So explain what are some of
14 the thoughts and plans of really -- you're going to
15 have a lot of encouragement, a lot of ongoing
16 encouragement for teachers to really be engaged in
17 this advisory mentorship. So can you explain some of
18 what your thoughts are and what some of the ongoing
19 things that could be going -- could happen to insure
20 good accountability?

21 MS. LENOX: Well, we've started some of the
22 processes this year in that -- with the instructional
23 facilitators getting into the classroom, looking at
24 what needs to be improved, in addition to myself and
25 my assistant principal. We're in the classrooms

1 more. We also do a lot of PD during the meeting
2 times with a focus. For the first nine weeks we
3 started with classroom management and it was led by
4 myself and the building principal and we would bring
5 in some of the teachers that did not have issues with
6 that particular skill and they would become the
7 experts and they would share their strategies. And
8 each nine weeks we have a different focus. This nine
9 weeks it's on engagement. So we want to make sure
10 that we as leaders of the school provide whatever it
11 is that our teachers need.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Good.

13 MS. LENOX: We do want to make sure that the
14 teachers are comfortable and that they're prepared,
15 and that's why we were willing to find time within
16 the school day so that they don't feel like it's
17 something extra that they have to do. We're
18 providing them the time to explore and learn before
19 they come before the students with whatever, you
20 know, they're assigned to do.

21 DR. NEHUS: And I'll just add to that. You
22 know, having the HSU career coach, that's going to be
23 a great piece and a great support.

24 DR. GOTCHER: That's good.

25 DR. NEHUS: We also have a career initiatives

1 director in our district who's here with us today,
2 Mr. Deardorff. He has worked hand-in-hand with our
3 high school and he's really working on those business
4 partnerships. And so our goal is by having that at
5 the zero-hour of the day that we're also going to get
6 those business partners in; so a lot of guest
7 speakers, a lot of collaboration there. And we did
8 that strategically before their workday starts, you
9 know, because lots of times you can't get them to
10 come during the middle of the day --

11 DR. GOTCHER: Right.

12 DR. NEHUS: -- because that's their prime
13 business time. And so that's another piece that we
14 really plan to be a support for our teachers.

15 DR. GOTCHER: And I do think it's wise having
16 that at period zero because it's a great way to start
17 the day and it also engages the schedule of your
18 business partners. Folks, I'm very encouraged. I
19 just think the ongoing accountability, the ongoing
20 encouragement of teachers, I think that will be a
21 great start because I think the kids will follow if
22 they can see the inspiration and the encouragement of
23 the teachers.

24 DR. NEHUS: I have to just brag on them just --

25 DR. GOTCHER: You may.

1 DR. NEHUS: Because I walked into the middle
2 school this week, 7:45, and Ms. Lenox and her
3 assistant principal, Ms. Newborn, had a whole coffee
4 bar/snack bar set up and the sign said Because You
5 Matter and every teacher had been provided an
6 opportunity to come down and get something. And so
7 they're setting that stage of support and
8 encouragement and, you know, just those little perks
9 --

10 DR. GOTCHER: When is that occurring? I'd like
11 to try to come visit then.

12 DR. NEHUS: No kidding. I lucked out. I walked
13 in; they were like, "You want a do-nut?" "Oh, I
14 would love one, but I'll pass." But, yeah, randomly.

15 DR. GOTCHER: That's great. You know, if they
16 feed them, they'll come.

17 DR. NEHUS: You're right.

18 DR. GOTCHER: That's right.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions from the
20 Panel?

21 I'll entertain a motion.

22 MS. DAVIS: Wait.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Oh, sorry, Ms. Davis.

24 MS. DAVIS: That's all right. I just had --

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I got carried away with no

1 questions.

2 MS. DAVIS: These are just for clarification.
3 They did ask for a waiver and, you know, my response
4 -- to go through the embedded course approval. So
5 any motion, if you are going to vote to approve this,
6 I just need clarification on whether or not -- and
7 that's really Ms. Smith, out of her area -- to allow
8 the waiver versus the embedded course for the career
9 and technical education and the health and safety.

10 MS. SMITH: I was satisfied with the answer --

11 MS. DAVIS: Okay.

12 MS. SMITH: -- that Dr. Nehus gave.

13 MS. DAVIS: And then also I just needed the
14 applicant to confirm that they were not requesting a
15 waiver of 6-17-302 and section 15.02 of the
16 Standards. That was for the principals.

17 SUPT. HERNANDEZ: We do rescind those in regards
18 to the principal certification.

19 MS. DAVIS: That was all.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Any
21 additional discussion? Then I'll accept a motion.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: I make a motion to approve.

23 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A motion has been made by
25 Dr. Saunders, seconded by Dr. Gotcher to approve the

1 Hot Springs Junior Academy. Any discussion?

2 All those in favor?

3 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

5 Congratulations. If you'll wait just a moment, we'll
6 have responses.

7 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

9 MR. LESTER: I voted to approve the plan. It's
10 a great plan for reaching the students at the middle
11 school level. The model provides high teacher
12 involvement through the advisory/mentoring time and
13 flexibility for personalized learning. I have no
14 concerns.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I voted for the
17 approval of the application. I feel this is an
18 excellent model towards a student-focused education
19 with a strong community partnership. I'm encouraged
20 by the high level of organization and accountability
21 demonstrated; mood change.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

23 MS. LIWO: I voted for. This is again another
24 application that there's just so much good to say
25 about, and I know that because I almost stood up to

1 raise my right hand and swear in as a witness. But I
2 just love how you guys are involving your teachers
3 and I love that you're getting to your students young
4 and giving them the opportunity to control their own
5 education and their own future.

6 DR. NEHUS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

8 MS. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion.
9 This charter builds upon a solid foundation already
10 in place in the district and will be good for all
11 kids. The district leadership is committed, focused
12 and visionary in their efforts to provide a great
13 model for education.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

15 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. I didn't have any
16 concerns. I thought it was a good collaboration of
17 local business and college to allow the Hot Springs
18 Junior Academy to help increase achievement for all
19 students.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor. I believe this
22 new approach provides flexibility to address the
23 needs of students.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And Ms. Smith.

25 MS. SMITH: I voted for. No concerns with the

1 request for converting the Hot Springs Middle School
2 to the Hot Springs Junior Academy. School leadership
3 was able to provide key information regarding
4 requested waivers and school plan.

5 Just on a side note: it was very clear what
6 waivers you were asking for and what you were -- why
7 you were asking for them and why you needed them. I
8 mean, that was clear to me, so that made it much
9 easier. But then on a note to everyone else just
10 listening, there's so much that you're doing in your
11 school than was even listed on there that doesn't
12 require a waiver or doesn't require a charter
13 conversion; it just requires people to work hard and
14 be innovative. And so to those things that you've
15 already started, keep going. So, thank you.

16 DR. NEHUS: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Dr.
18 Nehus.

19 DR. NEHUS: Thank you very much. We appreciate
20 it.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We look forward to hearing
22 great things from Hot Springs.

23 DR. NEHUS: Thank you very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll take a seven-minute
25 break.

1 (BREAK: 9:19-9:30 A.M.)

2 A-2: HEARING OF DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
3 APPLICATION: NORTH LITTLE ROCK CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, you're
5 recognized.

6 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The next
7 item you will hear is the district conversion charter
8 application from North Little Rock School District
9 and it's the Center of Excellence. To begin their
10 presentation we'll have the superintendent, Kelly
11 Rodgers.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All the representatives
13 from North Little Rock and anyone speaking in
14 opposition please stand and raise your right hand.
15 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're
16 about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth and
17 nothing but the truth?

18 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rodgers, you're
20 recognized.

21 SUPT. RODGERS: Good morning, and thank you.
22 Thank you for allowing us to present to you today.
23 We've been working on this application for over two
24 years with numerous partners and many of whom are
25 here today with us. From the North Little Rock

1 School District, I want to say thank-you for your
2 hard work and dedication to make the lives of
3 students better in Arkansas. As we begin our
4 presentation today, keep in mind that the success of
5 central Arkansas, all roads lead to the Center of
6 Excellence.

7 DR. STEWART: Good morning. My name is Dr. Beth
8 Stewart; I'm the deputy superintendent in North
9 Little Rock. The purpose of the North Little Rock
10 Center of Excellence is simple: we want to provide
11 equity and opportunities afforded to students in the
12 North Little Rock School District. We will do so by
13 providing the skills necessary for employment;
14 building a strong workforce in central Arkansas;
15 providing equitable opportunities for students who
16 have experienced generational poverty and have had no
17 hope. We plan to re-engage our disengaged youth and
18 give them the skills necessary to break the cycle of
19 poverty and be successful in the career of their
20 choice. Not only will we re-engage the disengaged,
21 we will simultaneously challenge and engage gifted
22 and talented students like never before, all the
23 while meeting the needs of local industry employers.
24 There may not be a more pivotal time in Arkansas to
25 provide skilled employees to our local industry. We

1 at North Little School District have recognized the
2 immediate need and are accepting the challenge to
3 produce the workforce of tomorrow.

4 MS. TOLAND: Christie Toland, Director of
5 College and Career Readiness. The application for
6 the Center of Excellence is truly a collaborative
7 work in which parents, students, teachers, industry
8 and business partners, community members, and
9 administrators have ongoing input. Numerous
10 presentations and opportunities for input were made
11 available over the past year-and-a-half.

12 Presentations made include North Little Rock Chamber
13 of Commerce membership, civic clubs, business and
14 industry partners, homeschool co-op, community
15 meetings in five different locations within our city,
16 our district administration, North Little Rock School
17 District board of education, North Little Rock High
18 School counseling staff, faculty presentations at
19 North Little Rock High School, North Little Rock
20 Academy, and North Little Rock Middle School, our
21 district PTA council, the Arkansas Department of
22 Career Education, the Arkansas School for the Deaf,
23 and institutions of higher education. They are our
24 true partners in this journey and you will find the
25 complete list of partners in those we have presented

1 to you since May 4, 2015 in your packets and an
2 additional letter of support. The voice of many can
3 be heard in this application.

4 Additionally, we have started promoting the
5 career pathways with our middle school students,
6 starting young, with our Career Connect program and
7 industry speaker week.

8 MR. ANDERSON: Henry Anderson, Director of
9 Testing and Data Analysis for North Little Rock
10 School District. The ACT composite for our freshman
11 class is about 21.5, with the non-core composite
12 being about 20.1. And so when we look at the ACT
13 World of Work map and we use those scores along with
14 Explore and Plan data from previous years, we see
15 that it's a Zone 5 or Area 5, and so that ties right
16 into those classes and those programs that we have
17 identified for the Center of Excellence. So it's all
18 based on the data, not only by the students and what
19 they want but what their data says and their ACT
20 testing.

21 MS. TOLAND: These are the career pathways that
22 are planned for the Center of Excellence. According
23 to local workforce investment areas, long-term
24 industry and occupational projections through the
25 year 2022, six of the top ten growing industries and

1 the top ten fastest growing industries fall within
2 the career pathways that have been chosen.
3 Additionally, in our industry review board meetings
4 partners indicated a shortage of skilled workers and
5 an anticipated increase in that shortage as
6 retirements increase over the next decade.

7 Student voice and choice are central to the
8 Center of Excellence. Students will be able to
9 choose the approach that works best for them. The
10 learning approaches the students can choose from are:
11 traditional, a teacher that works with a student to
12 facilitate the learning; blended, some direct teacher
13 instruction paired with some online learning
14 assignments; or digital, content is delivered through
15 virtual format, delivered either on campus or at the
16 student's preferred site, depending on their needs.

17 Personalized learning in its purest form focuses
18 on four areas: pace, place, path, and time. The
19 Center of Excellence, we use personalized learning in
20 that form. You will see how these four tenants are
21 used as we move through our presentation. We
22 understand that this will be a big shift in learning
23 for everyone. It is necessary for extensive training
24 for our students, teachers, and staff, as well as
25 parents and other stakeholders. A timeline for

1 training, should the Center of Excellence be approved
2 today, is included in your packets. We are dedicated
3 to supporting everyone through this transition
4 process. The Center of Excellence aims to prepare
5 students for careers, with the full understanding
6 that some careers will require college. With this in
7 mind, rigorous instruction in core and career classes
8 that embed life-skills are essential to the overall
9 preparation of students for their next step after
10 high school, whatever that may be. Our overarching
11 goal is to provide students the opportunity to obtain
12 as many skills, certifications, and credits possible
13 to increase their opportunities for success as
14 contributing adults.

15 DR. STEWART: The Center of Excellence is
16 student-centered, which means that student voice is
17 valued and utilized for the development of the Center
18 of Excellence, as well as learning improvements.
19 Student voice is seen throughout the programming in
20 the center. Students serve as leaders of their
21 personalized opportunity plan, or POP team, which
22 will be explained in detail a little later. They
23 manage to collaborate on their team projects; they
24 are the voice of personalized learning. The pace of
25 instruction depends on when the student masters the

1 content. The content is -- when the content is
2 mastered the student will move to the next skill.
3 Students also set their own schedule because we know
4 that learning does not happen just between 8:00 and
5 3:00 in a school building. Further, students control
6 their day in if they want to work on math one day,
7 they can, and English the next, it's okay. This
8 approach will assist students in managing time in
9 ways that work best for them but still meet the
10 expectations that are set before them. Students also
11 determine their path in that they determine what they
12 will do with their future and learning will be
13 relevant to their subject.

14 MR. ANDERSON: A recent survey of the students,
15 about 500, 550 students -- and we talked with them
16 about those tenants about being able to do
17 personalized learning, 59%, three out of five, are
18 saying that they would like to be able to learn at
19 their own pace, not be held back by that lock-step
20 mode of instruction; 63% of them said, "Hey, I'd like
21 to be able to learn somewhere where's it comfortable,
22 whether it be in a corner in the library, at home" --
23 wherever it is, that's their choice and what they
24 would like to do. However, 36.4% of the kids said,
25 "I need to learn -- or learning takes place when

1 there is a classroom and a teacher;" 59% of our kids
2 said, "Hey, I wish that time was not a constant and a
3 constraint, so I could do it when I felt like it; if
4 I'm not a morning person, then I could do it in the
5 afternoon; if I was a morning person, get it in the
6 morning and my afternoon is free." What we did find
7 in that survey also was that one out of five students
8 said, "I don't think learning can happen unless I
9 have an adult present;" 62% of them believe that they
10 can learn, it's their own responsibility to learn;
11 and 73%, almost three out of four, want to do
12 learning in a digital environment.

13 DR. STEWART: So as stated earlier, the Center
14 of Excellence will give students choice through a
15 multi-faceted approach. Students will choose which
16 setting works best for them. They're not limited to
17 just one approach. They can choose a combination of
18 approaches or change the approach if it's not working
19 for them. In a traditional setting, the school day
20 looks very similar to a traditional school schedule.
21 Having a choice in the modality is the difference in
22 a traditional setting. Pace and path is determined
23 by the teacher, but the place the skill is taught and
24 the time it takes for mastery could vary, being
25 determined by either the student as well as others

1 that are in the class. The blended model is a
2 combination of online digital learning and a
3 traditional setting. I believe we all recognize that
4 most colleges are using a blended model of learning.
5 Our model is set up somewhat like a college model,
6 with the exception of pace. Pace is determined by
7 how quickly or slowly content is mastered. In this
8 model, students with deficit skills may move slower
9 than those with advanced skills. Place and time are
10 determined by the teacher, with learning outside the
11 classroom being determined by the student. The path
12 is also determined by the teacher.

13 In the digital setting, we'll do so through a
14 state-approved digital platform. You'll notice in
15 our application that a specific provider was named
16 but in our response the language changed to a state-
17 approved digital format. This was done in order to
18 give flexibility in order to meet students' needs and
19 stay in compliance with the state. We recognize many
20 new digital providers could be added to the state
21 list as personalized learning becomes more
22 commonplace. We would ask that we be afforded the
23 option to allow our students the voice and choice
24 when or if a better platform is available to better
25 meet their needs. While a student will be learning

1 in the digital environment their POP team will be
2 monitoring their progress in order to determine if
3 any skills or additional supports are needed.
4 Teachers will be present to provide many lessons
5 based on additional skill support. As with blended
6 learning, most colleges now offer a digital path to
7 graduation and our model, again, is set up similar.
8 In this model students move at their own pace
9 throughout the curriculum as they achieve mastery.
10 Learning can happen at any place and at any time
11 based on the learner. Additionally, learning is
12 relevant to the learner because it is based on the
13 student's career path and interest.

14 Layers of support are present in the Center of
15 Excellence in order to help insure student success.
16 Before beginning the Center of Excellence, all
17 students will go through a two-week boot camp. The
18 boot camp will allow students to better determine
19 their career interests, as well as determine any
20 deficit skills. Students who are at a skills deficit
21 will be provided with intensive support to close any
22 gaps in literacy and math prior to the student
23 entering the Center of Excellence. Boot camp will
24 also allow for students to be exposed to a
25 personalized learning model and determine the mode of

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instruction that works best for them.

The POP team is made up of the student as the leader of the team, a parent or guardian, a teacher, a counselor, and an industry partner. The industry partner will serve as a consultant to the team and will attend at appropriate intervals. The team will also make sure that students are not going -- are not getting too far behind. If students struggle in the -- appropriate intervention will be -- that will be discussed and attempted in order to better support the student. For example, if one modality is not working for a student, such as digital learning, the student could be moved to a more traditional setting. In addition, support services that are offered to all students within the district with deficit areas will be available to the Center of Excellence students, including special education and English Language Learner programs. In the instance that a student is struggling and other supports have not assisted the student in being successful, then the student will enter a re-training phase. This phase involves additional supports that have not been offered through the POP team. These supports could include additional seminars with deficit areas, extra help, additional mentoring, and appropriate specialized

1 services. The COE model is a Tier 1 intervention and
2 would be considered a boot camp; a Tier 2 would be
3 re-training; and a Tier 3 would be any specialized
4 service that a student may need, such as ELL services
5 or special education services.

6 MS. TOLAND: We'll now take you through the
7 learning experiences of three students. Please note
8 the colors differentiating the different types of
9 classes as we move forward.

10 All freshmen and/or new students will attend a
11 two-week boot camp prior to the start of school to
12 help with the adjustment to the Center of Excellence,
13 determine path and skill levels. All freshmen have
14 the same core subject and credit requirements as
15 North Little Rock High School students upon entering
16 the Center of Excellence. The pace, path, time and
17 place in which these requirements are met and
18 exceeded are chosen by the student with the guidance
19 of the POP team. The examples above for the
20 traditional setting is based on a seven-period day.

21 As sophomores, you will immediately notice the
22 difference in the number of classes that are taken by
23 each student. If I can draw your attention to Jake,
24 Jake will be able to take all of these courses
25 because he is now in control of his schedule, which

1 makes time a variable instead of a constant or a
2 restraint.

3 As juniors, emphasis shifts from career
4 exploration to strong career planning. You will
5 notice with Jake he has remained at three credits
6 above minimum due to the fact that he is extremely
7 social and he has chosen to maximize that option and
8 his social calendar, while Aiden is five credits
9 ahead, has time to participate in an internship, and
10 still gets to participate in the full North Little
11 Rock High School experience and something that he
12 truly loves by getting the lead in the fall theater
13 production.

14 As seniors, all seniors have the same graduation
15 requirements as North Little Rock High School
16 students. Additionally, all seniors in the Center of
17 Excellence will participate in an exit interview
18 where they will present their career portfolios prior
19 to graduation. As you can see, all three students
20 are on-track to graduate on time and each student
21 will have certifications and an internship. Aiden,
22 however, has a couple of choices. Aiden has
23 completed all of his credits to graduate upon going
24 into his 12th grade year. He has the choice to
25 graduate early or he can participate in an

1 apprenticeship, which an apprenticeship is a paid
2 internship, but, very likely, he will choose to stay
3 at the Center of Excellence and obtain additional
4 certifications so that he can stay and finish his
5 senior year in the band and complete those theater
6 classes that he loves.

7 After graduating from the Center of Excellence,
8 we have several choices. They can enter a technical
9 certificate program or a program to earn additional
10 industry certification at a technical institution; go
11 straight to work; enroll in a two- or four-year
12 college program and be ahead because of the
13 concurrent credit that they have earned while in the
14 Center of Excellence; or join the military where all
15 of these skills are extremely useful. Ultimately,
16 students will have skills and certifications that
17 will provide them the opportunity to be successful in
18 whatever they decide to do.

19 The ultimate goal of the Center of Excellence is
20 to graduate students with skills necessary to be
21 successful and productive in our local workforce, in
22 whatever career they choose. The five-year academic
23 goals for the Center of Excellence are aggressive,
24 with target increases of 40% in math and reading and
25 20% increases in English and science. A goal for

1 industry certification was added to include initially
2 a 20% increase, but upon thinking -- considering that
3 throughout this process we increased that to 50% to
4 put a more rigorous goal in there.

5 The Industry Review Board is an essential piece
6 of program evaluation and accountability for the
7 Center of Excellence. In your packet you will see
8 additional goals -- or see the additional goal for
9 the industry certification. The Industry Review
10 Board is made up of business and industry partners,
11 representatives from higher education, the community,
12 and district administration and teachers. The
13 purpose of the board is to review program offerings
14 and provide feedback to insure the continued
15 relevance of the curriculum and instruction provided
16 in the Center of Excellence. While we understand the
17 importance of equality and equity and strive to
18 achieve those, the real difference in the Center of
19 Excellence is that we will change the story of
20 education and assist students in being liberated.

21 All of the waivers requested are essential for
22 us to provide students with the ability to exercise
23 their voice and choice through pace, place, time and
24 path. We are not requesting these waivers for the
25 purpose of diminishing any services to any students.

1 We are dedicated to working with every student to
2 insure that they will be able to access all
3 opportunities provided. Specifically, we have
4 assigned a district gifted and talented coordinator
5 to monitor and insure that GT students' needs are
6 met. We have district staff who will insure that
7 students' medical needs are taken care of. Our
8 students will have access to the North Little Rock
9 High School library to supplement the digital
10 resources provided in the Center of Excellence, as
11 needed.

12 While timing of students is a central part of
13 our programming, it is paramount that professional
14 development is based on a personalized learning model
15 as well so that teachers can better understand the
16 needs of students. In your packet you will find a PD
17 plan, a list of tours that have already been
18 conducted to assist in the building of this
19 application, as well as existing course approvals
20 that have been submitted and approved by the district
21 to the Department of Education, and Memorandums of
22 Understanding for UALR, Pulaski Technical College,
23 and Shorter College.

24 We have been building toward this model for
25 many, many years. Industry needs change very

1 rapidly. In order to be able to train students in
2 ways that will meet the quick and ever-changing pace
3 of innovations in industry, we must have the
4 flexibility afforded by a charter school setting and
5 waivers in order to keep up with and meet demands
6 that will ultimately give us the best chance for
7 producing a strong and prepared workforce.

8 DR. STEWART: Few have the resources and
9 capacity that North Little Rock School District can
10 provide, and I think that's one of our strongest
11 parts to this, besides our industry partners. We'll
12 conclude our presentation just as we began with the
13 statement that for the success of central Arkansas,
14 all roads leads to the Center of Excellence.

15 Before our closing remarks, Senator Jane English
16 is here and would like to speak on our behalf, if
17 that is okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Senator
19 English.

20 SENATOR ENGLISH: Good morning. Thank you. I
21 am Jane English, Senator, and I represent North
22 Little Rock and Sherwood, Jacksonville, and Maumelle,
23 and I can't tell you how excited I am about this
24 application. I think one of the things that you'll
25 hopefully have an opportunity to hear is the

1 relationship and the support that we have from the
2 business and industry in this area. I am excited by
3 so many of these good things; Hot Springs charter
4 application, by this application, and the new things
5 that are going on in the state. And we have an
6 opportunity here to really change the face of
7 Arkansas with a situation just like what we're
8 looking at right now today. Pulaski County needs a
9 boost and I know that this is going to be the boost
10 that Pulaski County needs for the future and give us
11 the spark that we really need to rebuild school
12 systems here in the state of Arkansas. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Senator English -- Senator --

15 SENATOR ENGLISH: Oh, I'm sorry.

16 DR. GOTCHER: No. I just wanted to say thank
17 you. Your support for career opportunities, of
18 support of student learning is always positive and
19 I'm always impressed with that. So I just want to
20 personally thank you for being here and supporting
21 our schools.

22 SENATOR ENGLISH: Well, this -- I can't tell you
23 how exciting all of this is to me --

24 DR. GOTCHER: It is.

25 SENATOR ENGLISH: -- because I really feel like

1 we have an opportunity across the state to change the
2 way we've done business in Arkansas, and provide
3 those opportunities for our young people and adults
4 to move forward and have greater incomes, be able to
5 have greater quality of life, be able to take care of
6 their families, and this is how we start. So thank
7 you very much.

8 DR. GOTCHER: You're welcome. We appreciate
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. And I also saw
11 Representative Lowery -- if you'd like to make a
12 comment?

13 REP. LOWERY: Sure. I'm Representative Mark
14 Lowery. I represent District 39, which is mostly
15 Maumelle but takes in some of the area of North
16 Little Rock. I would just echo everything that
17 Senator English said. I've heard some phrases
18 recently in discussions of some of our attempts to
19 realign higher education. The phrase that keeps
20 coming up is "Be Nimble." The small universities,
21 you know, they want to remain nimble, and I think
22 that's exactly what this proposal does; it allows
23 North Little Rock School District to be nimble, to be
24 able to respond immediately to the needs of the
25 community. And I think the other thing that can be

1 accentuated that I think -- I believe will be a model
2 throughout the state are the public/private
3 partnerships that are being forged here. And so I
4 just give my full-throated support for this effort.
5 Everything North Little Rock School District does is
6 always first class, and I think that this is -- this
7 would be another one of those examples. So thank you
8 for the opportunity to speak.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, sir.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Before you begin, Dr.
12 Stewart, on the public comment sheet I have a Kenneth
13 Calhoun.

14 MR. CALHOUN: Good morning and thank you. My
15 name is Kenneth Calhoun and I am the vice president
16 of customer relations for Truck Centers of Arkansas.
17 In addition, I serve in a seat on the board of
18 directors for the Technology and Maintenance Council
19 of the American Trucking Association. The industry
20 that I love is quite literally an industry that is
21 charged with delivering our nation's economy. It's
22 also an industry that employs one out of every 11
23 Arkansans, and one out of every 16 Americans.
24 However, we're also an industry that's in crisis.
25 Last week I attended a conference in Washington, DC,

1 and I learned that across the Daimler Trucks North
2 America Network, which is Freightliner Trucks Detroit
3 power-train products and Western Star products,
4 represented by roughly 1,000 rooftops, the average
5 age of our medium and heavy diesel technician is 47,
6 with a full third of those staring down the barrel of
7 retirement. The situation that we're in currently
8 with the trickle of applicants that we get from the
9 existing vocational system is frankly not adequate,
10 either in quantity of quality, to keep up with our
11 replacement needs, let alone our growth. We've
12 applied Band-Aids internally to try to compensate for
13 that. Even in my organization we have an apprentice
14 program where we take young people who just simply
15 have an interest and try to grow them into the
16 technicians that we need. However, even filling
17 those seats has become a challenge for us. Quite
18 frankly, the outlook for us has been rather bleak
19 until very recently. It's the efforts like the
20 Center of Excellence in North Little Rock, the
21 partnership between McKee Foods and the Gentry School
22 District, the Don Tyson School of Innovation where I
23 was asked to speak earlier this week that's finally
24 providing what we see as the light at the end of the
25 tunnel. We believe that the solution to this crisis

1 that we face will definitely be a partnership between
2 education and industry, and I can tell you that we
3 are absolutely committed to providing the time, the
4 current and relevant educational materials,
5 equipment, and, most importantly, career
6 opportunities for these young people coming through
7 these programs. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

9 Is there anyone here to speak in opposition?

10 Dr. Stewart, you have five additional minutes
11 for closure.

12 DR. STEWART: Yes. And we would like to yield
13 our five minutes to Kristi Barr from the Little Rock
14 Chamber of Commerce.

15 MS. BARR: Good morning. My name is Kristi
16 Barr; I'm the director of business retention and
17 expansion at the Little Rock Regional Chamber. I
18 would like to start the five minutes by reading to
19 you a statement from John Miller, who works at
20 Dassault Falcon Jet.

21 "Dear Panel, I fully intended to be present
22 today to speak to you but last-minute events are
23 preventing me from being here in person. So I have
24 asked Ms. Toland to convey to you my sentiments in my
25 place. I have spent the last 39 years in the

1 aerospace manufacturing sector, the last approximate
2 10 being in charge of training and educational
3 liaison for Dassault Falcon Jet. These last 10 years
4 have been by far the most interesting and rewarding
5 part of my career. In my capacity as educational
6 liaison, I have been privileged to partner with many
7 of our state's educators and schools with the goal of
8 introducing students, roughly grades 7 through post-
9 graduate, to the career opportunities that are
10 available to them in aerospace. In July of 2015, I
11 became involved with a group of folks interested in
12 creating a manufacturing emphasis in our public
13 school curriculum. This introduction led me to
14 membership on the Advanced Manufacturing Industry
15 Review Board, which provides input to the North
16 Little Rock School District manufacturing program.
17 While I was acutely aware of the lack of talent to
18 fill manufacturing jobs in aerospace, it was my
19 participation on this board that made me more aware
20 of similar talent shortages at neighboring
21 manufacturing firms in central Arkansas and other
22 regions of our state. Of course, you are also aware
23 that this same lack of regional manufacturing talent
24 makes our cities appear less desirable to many firms
25 who are looking for sites which are capable of

1 supporting the relocation and/or expansion of their
2 facilities. If our cities are to experience robust
3 growth, we absolutely must develop and support
4 academic plans that systematically deliver adequate
5 manufacturing talent. These plans must product
6 sustainable results for our existing industries but,
7 equally important, must clearly show prospective
8 industries who are looking for a home that we will
9 remain robust and viable producers in manufacturing
10 talent for many years to come. This program's
11 innovations inspired by essential industry partner
12 participation, such as personalized course delivery,
13 blended, traditional, and digital coursework,
14 continual teacher development, embedded soft skills
15 training, and team projects, to name a few, are
16 salient program features which catch the eye of any
17 industrialist looking for a robust source of
18 immediate and sustainable pipeline talent. Having
19 been a member of the Industrial Review Board from the
20 beginning, I am convinced that the proposal presented
21 to you today is based on the present and future needs
22 of our industries and contains the framework that
23 will insure this program's sustainability. I
24 therefore ask this Panel to approve the North Little
25 Rock Center of Excellence application. Best regards,

1 John Miller, Senior Manager, Training and Education
2 Liaison, Dassault Falcon Jet."

3 I would also like to add my comments as a member
4 of the Industry Review Board from the beginning, that
5 North Little Rock School District has been a superb
6 partner in our effort to create a talented workforce
7 pipeline. They have actually worked with us in
8 response to industry needs and we couldn't be more
9 supportive of this application. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

11 Ms. Boyd, yesterday, at the end of the Harrison
12 presentation, Mr. Stuckey from Pace Industries asked
13 for a complete list of the businesses that were
14 supporting our innovation schools, charter schools,
15 and so might just make note of that today; he was
16 very interested in networking with all of the other
17 industries that were supporting school districts.

18 MS. BOYD: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

19 Before you all start with your question-and-
20 answer period, I wanted to make some clarifications.
21 Some of the remaining concerns that the Internal
22 Review Committee had were addressed in the packet
23 that you guys received entitled Additional Materials
24 Submitted by the North Little Rock District. From
25 that, I went ahead and pulled out the sheet where

1 they outlined their goal for industry certification,
2 but all the other information is there. Then, also,
3 this is something new that I handed out that you're
4 seeing; it's the plan for professional development.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

6 MS. SMITH: Ms. Boyd, can I ask a question real
7 quick? Because this is one question I still had that
8 was on that sheet and maybe it was addressed and I
9 haven't seen it. So is this a charter within the
10 high school or is it the whole high school?

11 MS. BOYD: It's a charter within the high
12 school.

13 MS. SMITH: So the waivers that are being
14 requested are being asked only for that group of
15 students that are within that charter within that
16 larger high school?

17 MS. BOYD: That's correct.

18 MS. SMITH: Okay. That's the clarification I
19 needed. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right, Panel. Who
21 would like to start our questions -- or continue our
22 questions? Ms. Pfeffer.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. I think maybe, Ms. Stewart,
24 you can probably address this question -- or if not,
25 hand it off to the person. And I really appreciate

1 the professional development plan summary because it
2 helps me clearly see what your goals are and these
3 goals are right in line with what we are hoping --
4 you know -- our -- the state's vision for excellence
5 in education is for personalized student learning
6 opportunities, student-focused education. And we
7 realize that in order for educators to be able to
8 create those personalized competency-based
9 experiences the educators have to experience that, as
10 well. And that has not always been the case with the
11 way we've done professional development, so I know we
12 all are realizing the needs for educators to have
13 that capacity. But even just in looking at this
14 summary that you have, I'm just still not sure that
15 the waiver for professional development is actually
16 needed, and I'll explain my thinking and then let you
17 all respond. And if Legal needs to weigh in, we can.
18 Because within your charter, if you have unlicensed
19 people that are participating in the charter, then
20 they're not having to obtain professional development
21 hours for their licensure. So they're not having to
22 do that annual requirement in order to renew their
23 license, so you do have flexibility with them,
24 depending on what the district wishes to have them do
25 for employment. But for those within the charter who

1 are licensed, if the requirements are waived -- I'm
2 just trying to think through what might be some
3 unintended consequences down the road when it came
4 time for them to renew their license. Because even
5 though maybe it would be made clear to them you still
6 have to do some of these things for your license that
7 can be difficult for them to understand. And if
8 there's any crossover between what you would ask of
9 them -- so I guess I just -- when I look at this I
10 don't want to limit you in what you're asking to do
11 but I really think you can do all of this without the
12 waiver. So either my colleagues or some others may
13 want to weigh-in on that.

14 MS. SMITH: Yeah, I kind of thought the same
15 thing. Because you were asking about the technical
16 folks specifically on the one plan and then you went
17 back and asked for all of it, but what you put in
18 this plan over here I thought fit what our current
19 rules are. So what am I missing? Why do you need
20 the waiver versus -- I mean, what am I missing?

21 MS. TOLAND: We want to be able to micro-
22 credential our teachers, for them to be able to
23 demonstrate mastery, specifically of those items --
24 those topics that are on the rotation, with the
25 exception of ethics. Ethics is not on the rotation,

1 but we want to be sure that they can demonstrate
2 competency in that yearly. Also suicide prevention
3 and child maltreatment, we want to keep those also.
4 But the micro-credentialing is the key piece. If
5 they can demonstrate that they have mastered that,
6 then we want them to be able to move on to something
7 that they need assistance with or -- in one of those
8 categories within the plan.

9 DR. STEWART: So spending their time on not what
10 is already mastered but what is not mastered, whether
11 that be in an action research project that can help
12 students -- and we realize you can -- we can still do
13 that, but our issue is it's the seat time, if you
14 will, that is attached to that. So if I can
15 demonstrate mastery, then I can move on; I can say,
16 "Yes, I've got that piece," and now I can move to the
17 next thing. We are not asking for an hour decrease,
18 an hour -- to hourly. But North Little Rock requires
19 60 hours of professional development; we will -- the
20 Center of Excellence will operate under 60 hours of
21 professional development. But it is the mastery
22 within that and the seat time attached.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. But I think -- it almost
24 sounds -- with what you described, it almost sounds
25 like the waiver you would need would be from the

1 time, not from professional development itself. So
2 -- but if you're saying you're still going to adhere
3 to 60 hours, I don't know what you're asking the
4 waiver from because the law requires the hours and
5 you do have to have the certain types of professional
6 development. But even within the rotation -- I don't
7 know -- the amount of hours varies depending. So I
8 think that's just what I'm trying to figure out,
9 exactly what it is you are wanting to waive because
10 -- and maybe -- Stacy, help.

11 MS. SMITH: No. And this is a great
12 conversation because this is the direction we want to
13 go for all educators. We want to get to the point
14 where we're doing micro-credentialing. But when you
15 were talking about micro-credentialing and equating
16 it to time, that almost --

17 DR. STEWART: It's going to take them longer.

18 MS. SMITH: I mean, because if you're going
19 through professional development that is set to be
20 six hours but the teacher knows the content and can
21 show that she knows the content and she can get out
22 of there in two hours, then she's earned that. So --
23 but you're saying you're still going to hold them to
24 60 hours. So she's got to go find four more hours.

25 DR. STEWART: She's going to do something else

1 besides that one piece.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Stewart, I'm going to
3 have to ask you to get closer to the microphone.

4 DR. STEWART: Sorry.

5 MS. SMITH: So you're still holding her --

6 DR. STEWART: I don't usually have that problem.

7 MS. SMITH: So you're still holding her to the
8 60 hours?

9 DR. STEWART: We're still holding her to 60
10 hours. Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. SMITH: Okay. So, therefore, you're not --
12 you don't need a waiver for professional development
13 because you're still requiring the 60 hours. If you
14 were not going to require the 60 hours -- if you were
15 going to say "I'm going to replace micro-
16 credentialing -- we'll replace the hours with micro-
17 credentialing," then you would need the waiver. Do
18 you see what I'm -- do you see --

19 DR. STEWART: (Nodding head up and down.)

20 MS. SMITH: Okay.

21 MS. TOLAND: Okay. So even if we wanted to
22 waive the two-hour requirement for, let's say, child
23 maltreatment, we wouldn't need a waiver for that? We
24 just want them to be able to demonstrate mastery of
25 that and then move on and get their two hours maybe

1 in innovation or something like that.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. So instead of having two
3 hours of suicide prevention -- they had their suicide
4 prevention, they got through it in an hour, and they
5 went on from there?

6 DR. STEWART: Right.

7 MS. SMITH: And then child maltreatment, the
8 same way?

9 DR. STEWART: Right.

10 MS. SMITH: Well --

11 MS. PFEFFER: So you would not want to waive
12 what is required in the rotation either?

13 DR. STEWART: We would want to waive -- we would
14 want to waive the time requirement with that
15 particular rotation, if that makes sense.

16 MS. SMITH: I'm going to do some digging on PD
17 while y'all keep asking questions.

18 MS. TOLAND: So if the Panel did approve micro-
19 credentialing or a system of micro-credentialing for
20 the Center of Excellence, then we would need the
21 professional development waiver for that. Am I
22 correct?

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Micro-credentialing is
24 approved professional development.

25 MS. TOLAND: Okay.

1 DR. STEWART: But if they were micro-
2 credentialed and then -- I mean, if they're micro-
3 credentialed, they're micro-credentialed. So then
4 when that rotation came back up again would they not
5 need that?

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So there's not a micro-
7 credential for --

8 DR. STEWART: Right.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- the rotation --

10 DR. STEWART: Right.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- hours. We don't have
12 those available at this time.

13 MS. SMITH: See, this is where this is exciting
14 because now we're being innovative and we're all
15 having to try to figure this one out, so --

16 MS. PFEFFER: So as she's doing some research --
17 so my understanding of what you want to do is you
18 want to allow for personalized competency-based
19 professional development for the teachers in your
20 Center of Excellence?

21 DR. STEWART: Absolutely.

22 MS. PFEFFER: And those teachers would still
23 engage in professional development around any of the
24 required topics?

25 DR. STEWART: Absolutely.

1 MS. PFEFFER: It just might not look the same in
2 terms of very restrictive hours in order to complete
3 that?

4 DR. STEWART: Yes, ma'am.

5 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So I would be 100% in favor
6 of you doing that. So I think the question is do you
7 need a waiver from law or rule to do that.

8 MS. BOYD: Ms. Pfeffer, I think I recently did
9 some PD on the IDEAS thing. And the way it's set up
10 is that you don't necessarily have to -- if you --
11 you can already do that. You can the -- you can take
12 the quiz and if you answer all the questions, then
13 you don't have to sit for an extended time. So I'm
14 not clear that a waiver is required to get that part
15 done. Is that correct?

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I agree. So there is --
17 with Arkansas IDEAS, for example, we have a template
18 of expected -- expected user time to complete the
19 course. And then -- so they use a formula to make it
20 consistent with all of the courses. But I don't --
21 the point of professional development and the hours
22 has never been to sit there with a stopwatch.

23 MS. SMITH: Okay. So within our rules we do
24 have specific hours listed but we -- so we say child
25 maltreatment -- this is in rule. So child

1 maltreatment says "all educators shall obtain two
2 hours of professional development in" -- and then it
3 specifically lists for child maltreatment. Then it
4 goes to parent involvement -- and, of course, these
5 are rotating ones; it also says two hours; teen
6 suicide, two hours; and then Arkansas history, two
7 hours. So it does equate time to the PD.

8 MS. PFEFFER: That's in rule?

9 MS. SMITH: That's in rule, uh-huh, which we
10 could waive the rule for -- go ahead, Ms. Boyd.

11 MS. BOYD: I'm sorry. Just, again, the way I
12 interpret that -- and I don't know the way it's
13 interpreted, maybe Jennifer can help -- but it's
14 really -- it's two credit hours. Then that means
15 what we've been doing for everyone is not correct, if
16 you're doing it on IDEAS. Right?

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Well, once again, there's
18 a formula for -- there's a formula for all of those
19 courses, and so those courses -- there's like a word
20 count, a standard reading rate, amount of time it
21 would take to go through those things. It's very
22 closely adhered to.

23 MS. BOYD: Right.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So if you're a fast
25 reader, yes, you may get through it. If you have a

1 lot of background knowledge in it, yes, you may go
2 through it. But you do have to pass the assessment
3 with 80% mastery. But once again I'll bring back the
4 point, professional development is not about a stop-
5 watch.

6 MS. BOYD: Right.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's about what you
8 master, take away, and take to your classroom, which
9 I think is Dr. Stewart's point. So it's a sticky
10 area. I'm all for mastery. I'm ready -- I'm very,
11 very ready to move away from clock hours.

12 MS. PFEFFER: So would the appropriate waiver be
13 to waive any specific rule for clock hours tied to
14 the professional development? And so we would just
15 waive that part of the rule that would have the time
16 and allow the flexibility within the COE --

17 DR. STEWART: Sure.

18 MS. PFEFFER: -- for -- to align with the goal
19 for personalized competency-based learning for the
20 adults in the school?

21 DR. STEWART: I think that still gets us where
22 we want and need to go.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: For a state.

24 MS. PFEFFER: And so, Ms. Davis, legally, am I
25 creating you a headache?

1 MS. DAVIS: Well, I mean, one of the things to
2 consider for waiving the clock hours is, again, when
3 it comes down to their renewal of their license are
4 they going to have the number of clock hours
5 necessary to renew; so that's an issue. And keep in
6 mind, you know, I know licensure -- by far, you're
7 way more knowledgeable in that than I am, but there
8 are associated laws that sometimes go with some of
9 those rules. And I'm really hesitant to just right
10 now say yes, on the fly, "they only need subsection
11 X, Y and Z of a rule," without having an opportunity
12 to look at it at least a little more. You know, one
13 of the things is there are other statutes that deal
14 with, you know, like the teacher minimum salary, 6-
15 17-2402, that specifically says, you know, minimum
16 number of PD days that are tied into their contracts.
17 And I think that this is just an area that, you know,
18 we've not given any of these waivers before, and so
19 I'm really hesitant to just start kind of picking
20 through those things right now without really maybe
21 seeing a full big picture of how it's going to
22 affect. Also, because, you know, these -- you know
23 -- that's kind of where I'm at. You know, like the,
24 you know, the child maltreatment, some of those
25 things, teen suicide, those go back to certain

1 statutes. And, again, are we going to set people up
2 such that they might not have the hours necessary.

3 MS. PFEFFER: But I think in terms of renewing
4 the license what is considered by the Department is
5 whether or not the documentation indicates that they
6 have fulfilled the PD requirement.

7 MS. DAVIS: Right.

8 MS. PFEFFER: And so for these people -- and it
9 is kind of scary because there are unknowns. If a
10 teacher worked in the Center of Excellence say for
11 two years and then transferred somewhere else, they
12 would have this flexibility within the Center of
13 Excellence that they may not have going to another
14 district.

15 MS. DAVIS: Right.

16 MS. PFEFFER: But I think for those it would be
17 more about -- we would be granting the flexibility
18 for the district to go ahead and say, "They've met
19 that PD requirement; they've met the requirements for
20 their professional development for that year."

21 MS. DAVIS: Right.

22 MS. PFEFFER: And so with that documentation
23 then there wouldn't be a problem for the educator in
24 renewing the license. My concern is just if -- I
25 don't think the entire waiving professional

1 development is appropriate for what they're
2 describing here. And if we were to completely waive
3 all professional development based on the
4 application, that's where I think we would have much
5 greater issues. So --

6 MS. DAVIS: And I agree with that.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Yeah. So I just -- however we
8 need to make this work --

9 MS. DAVIS: Right. And what I would request is
10 that the applicant let us know specifically what is
11 it that's causing them issues in not -- rather than
12 me telling the applicant what's causing them issues
13 and not meeting what it is that they want to do; for
14 the applicant to let us know specifically what
15 sections, either in rule or law, that are causing the
16 issues, and then we can guide them from there.
17 Because, you know, they are going to know what their
18 intent and purpose is and what's causing the problems
19 currently for that. So I would request that from the
20 applicant and then we can review that from there.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. So I'll summarize
22 what I think I heard.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think -- what I think I
25 heard is that North Little Rock is asking to waive

1 professional development hours in lieu for mastery,
2 but that they would complete and achieve mastery of
3 all required PD annually?

4 MS. TOLAND: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Tripp, can you put that
6 into code?

7 MR. WALTER: Sure. Well, Tripp Walter, Staff
8 Attorney, and I'll -- pardon me -- APSRC. All I was
9 going to add is it seems to me that there's a
10 consensus among the Panel to be able to do what a
11 couple of you have already articulated. And I agree
12 with the concerns of the Panel about not wanting to
13 just -- and Ms. Davis -- to just go ahead and put
14 something in writing right now, but rather to try and
15 capture this. I would ask, if it's the Panel's
16 decision to grant the application and to grant this
17 waiver based on the terms you've talked about, that
18 whatever terminology you need to use to make you feel
19 comfortable -- conditionally grant it or whatever --
20 but if there is an intent to grant the flexibility
21 that they're asking for that the Panel articulate
22 that and include it as part of the motion and then
23 Ms. Davis -- and if I can be of assistance -- can
24 work out the specifics of what that actually looks
25 like.

1 MS. DAVIS: And I just confirmed with Alexandra
2 -- and I think that we would feel better to not grant
3 it and then they can come back with an amendment,
4 since their school wouldn't be starting until the
5 next school year and we would have time to entertain
6 an amendment to deal with their PD, rather than grant
7 it with so many conditions right here on the fly,
8 only -- I mean, my concern was just doing something
9 that we've never, ever done before on the fly at this
10 point.

11 MS. PFEFFER: So can I ask a question for you
12 all just to look at one particular part? If we look
13 at 6-17-709(b)(1) -- is that right?

14 MS. DAVIS: Uh-huh.

15 MS. SMITH: 6-17-709(b)(1).

16 MS. PFEFFER: And I don't know how specific we
17 normally get, but that almost seems to be the section
18 that is --

19 DR. STEWART: I want to make sure that you guys
20 know, we don't want this to be a deal-breaker for our
21 students. If we need to do something a little bit
22 and look at it further, then that's okay, because we
23 have a lot of industry that's very excited and a lot
24 of students and parents that are very excited. So we
25 will work however we need to work.

1 MS. SMITH: So just for your own peace of mind,
2 this isn't a deal-breaker; this is us having to work
3 through something that we've not had before. And so
4 we're up here passing and looking and digging, trying
5 to figure it out. So you're just seeing us in a work
6 session.

7 DR. STEWART: Well, let me tell you, it doesn't
8 make me sad to think that North Little Rock is going
9 to be the first at something. So that'll be fine.

10 MS. SMITH: So, yeah. Don't take this as us --
11 this is us trying to think this through.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Go ahead.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I feel comfortable with
14 what Ms. Davis is saying, that we need to get it
15 together. But I think what we want to do is while I
16 so strongly believe in moving away from hours --
17 hours does not mean you're capable of taking it into
18 the classroom -- I strongly want to move in that
19 direction. I also want to make sure that we are
20 cognizant of why these laws were put into place and
21 suicide prevention, prevention of child maltreatment.
22 That's critical. I mean, that's a number-one
23 priority. So what we don't want to do is send a
24 message that those things are not important, because
25 they are very important. So we need to balance

1 coming to a way to move to that level of mastery
2 without letting anyone short the process and not
3 prepare all adults to be in the company of children.

4 MS. TOLAND: Correct.

5 DR. GOTCHER: And I think I just want to add, I
6 think we need to be careful that we not legislate on
7 the fly, if you will. Because --

8 MS. PFEFFER: Good point.

9 DR. GOTCHER: -- while we completely agree with
10 our initiative and our strategic vision of student-
11 focused learning, we also agree that teachers need to
12 have personalized learning as well. And so as we
13 make that shift to mastery, Ms. Coffman, and that may
14 require some adjustment in law, while not removing
15 the original legislative intent of teachers needing
16 suicide prevention, maltreatment, all the other
17 things that our elected officials deem important, and
18 we do too -- but I think if we can make that shift
19 from a clock to a mastery. So, as you said, this is
20 not a deal-breaker for me personally; I'll speak for
21 myself. But I think we just need to have a wise
22 pause at this moment and we can still move forward
23 and do a deeper dive into what that will require in
24 possibly legislative session to make some
25 adjustments, if we can.

1 MS. PFEFFER: So, Panel, on just this one issue
2 here, if we feel like that what they have presented
3 in this summary -- if we feel like they could go
4 ahead and do that without having to have the waiver
5 at this time, we could give approval to move ahead
6 possibly with what's included in their summary. And
7 then if it becomes evident that there would need to
8 be some additional waivers from the professional
9 development law or rule, then that could be done at a
10 later time. Is that a possibility? Because I
11 honestly, as I read this summary, do feel like that
12 it would be within their -- they would be able to do
13 this anyway --

14 MS. DAVIS: Right.

15 MS. PFEFFER: -- you know, if they're
16 documenting that they're receiving the professional
17 development and using the micro-credentialing process
18 for it.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So to summarize again --
20 because we started this conversation yesterday, so
21 we're another day in and we've slept on it tonight,
22 so we're even more passionate about it today. A non-
23 licensed employee does not have to have professional
24 development to remain licensed, because they're not
25 licensed. They may need to do professional

1 development because North Little Rock School District
2 employer says; that's between you and them. A person
3 that has a license must have a number of professional
4 development hours at this time to relicense. And
5 yesterday, Ms. Pfeffer, you said persons with
6 certificates --

7 MS. PFEFFER: Technical permits --

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- technical permits --

9 MS. PFEFFER: -- which are approved by the
10 Department.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- also have to have
12 professional development to renew their technical
13 permit. So we don't want to do anything that
14 interferes with people maintaining license or
15 permits. So, Ms. Davis, your recommendation?

16 MS. DAVIS: I mean, I would recommend -- and I'm
17 not saying that what they want to do is not the way
18 that it should be done moving forward or have some
19 flexibility. But, you know, just in looking at the
20 6-17-709(b)(1), there's one, two, three -- at least
21 three other statutes that are affected just in the
22 four minutes that I looked, plus all the rules. And
23 I'm really just hesitant to make a decision today
24 that either may set them up for some kind of, you
25 know, trouble later on or set us up for some kind of

1 issue. But I would encourage them to come back and
2 explore this and either work with, you know, the
3 licensure unit, work with the professional
4 development unit, work with the charter unit, and
5 come back with a plan and request an amendment, so
6 that way they can implement this next year. Because,
7 you know, if it's something that you guys feel is a
8 good thing then I would want to encourage them to do
9 so. But I'm really hesitant that we make that
10 decision right now, putting it all together in
11 piecemeal, so --

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Stewart, are you
13 willing to rescind this waiver?

14 DR. STEWART: Yes, if we need to do that. I
15 would ask that we get on the record that we will
16 continue this conversation so that we can --

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'd like to put you on
18 the record saying that you'll help move this
19 conversation forward.

20 DR. STEWART: We will. We will help. Yeah,
21 we'll do it first. That's right.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: With the legislative
23 session coming up, now is the time.

24 DR. STEWART: Absolutely.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. So, officially, you

1 did rescind the professional development waiver?

2 DR. STEWART: Yes, ma'am.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

4 All right. Let's move on to the other topics.

5 MR. WALTER: I'm sorry, Madam Chair; may I just
6 get a point of clarification? I wanted to make sure
7 that I guess what Ms. Pfeffer's last comments were,
8 the consensus of the Panel, that the plan submitted
9 today appears to be okay without the need of the
10 waiver at this time and they're free to implement?

11 MS. PFEFFER: Uh-huh. (Nodding head up and
12 down.)

13 MR. WALTER: All right. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Questions about the other
15 parts of the plan and the waivers? That was just
16 question one.

17 So while they're searching for their other
18 questions, if a student takes the purely digital
19 route and they can take the courses anywhere, any
20 time, do you have a plan then to provide technology
21 for them wherever they go?

22 DR. STEWART: Yes. Yes. Short answer, yes.
23 Part of that plan, because they are North Little Rock
24 School District students they have access, if they
25 need to come to school. if those that are not

1 physically with us, if they are virtual or whatever
2 you want to call them at the time, if they do not
3 have the technology then we will be working with
4 those students to make sure that they have the access
5 that they need.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And talk to us a little
7 bit about cost of concurrent credit. What's your
8 plan to pay for that, subsidize that?

9 MS. TOLAND: We have different -- we have plans
10 for -- and other avenues of funding to support
11 students. Our ultimate goal is that no student will
12 be eliminated from participation based on need.
13 We're extremely dedicated to that, and through
14 scholarships and private donations, and even if other
15 funding were to come available, there would be no
16 cost to our students for that. Need will not be a
17 barrier in the Center of Excellence.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's the right answer.
19 Especially, you know, when you talk about poverty
20 students, the thing that limits poverty students is
21 money, transportation. I mean, those are the things
22 that, you know, are key limiting factors.

23 Ready?

24 MS. SMITH: Okay. I saw up in the plan where
25 you had a student who took the digital route and they

1 don't get on for three days or something, they get a
2 contact. Okay. So kind of talk to me more about the
3 safety-net of this platform where you have students
4 who are digital, you have some in traditional, you
5 have -- I mean, what's the safety-net to insure that
6 we're not -- someone is not falling through the
7 cracks on this? Because it's --

8 MS. TOLAND: The mentor within the personalized
9 opportunity plan team --

10 MS. SMITH: Okay.

11 MS. TOLAND: -- is the ultimate safety-net for
12 our students within the Center of Excellence. They
13 are a group -- and the student is a key member --
14 actually, the leading voice -- within that team. And
15 the mentor within that team, which would be a member
16 of our staff, teaching staff, would monitor that
17 student. And every single week -- of course, you
18 know, they will interact more than that, but once a
19 week they will interact specifically for the purpose
20 to do a check-up and monitor progress and they set
21 weekly goals together. And if they're not meeting
22 those goals, then immediately that's a red flag and
23 the team comes together, say, "Okay, is purely
24 digital the right modality for you to learn."

25 MS. SMITH: What percentage of your students do

1 you see participating within the Center of Excellence
2 on your campus?

3 MS. TOLAND: According to our student survey
4 that we administered, three out of four said that
5 they were interested in some type of digital
6 inclusion. I think that that's something that will
7 be a huge shift for our students and that's something
8 that -- especially right at the beginning, it'll be a
9 big adjustment. As they learn time management and
10 those personal skills, you know, to be able to
11 accomplish that, I would say, just from the survey,
12 we would probably have at least a quarter who would
13 want -- who would be interested.

14 MS. SMITH: And what are you guys able to take
15 on the first year, a quarter of your students within
16 the program?

17 DR. STEWART: We could. We could. You know, I
18 want to say this because I want to make sure that you
19 guys know the other piece to this that's going on.
20 Right now, our alternative learning environment
21 school, North Little Rock Academy, is operating under
22 a personalized learning plan, if you will. And what
23 we are seeing with them -- and we expect that we will
24 see about the same thing with our high school
25 students -- we had a lot of students initially say,

1 "Hey, I want to do it digitally; let me -- so I can
2 go as fast as I want to go." But what we have seen
3 is that many students now are coming to us and
4 saying, "That's not really working for me. I need to
5 move back to a traditional classroom," or "I need to
6 move into a blended classroom," which is the beauty
7 of it. Because now students are going, "You know
8 what, this isn't working for me," where, before, an
9 alternative school child would never have said that;
10 they would've just given up. So they are taking
11 ownership, which is exactly what we want them to do.

12 MS. SMITH: Because I'm trying to organize this
13 in my mind, this school within a school, but -- so
14 you had some of your schools [sic] within your
15 traditional North Little Rock school who may be part-
16 time in a traditional school and part-time within --

17 DR. STEWART: Sure.

18 MS. SMITH: -- the COE? And then you may have
19 some who are full-time within the Center of
20 Excellence?

21 DR. STEWART: Yes.

22 MS. SMITH: Am I seeing that right?

23 DR. STEWART: Yes. Because they still -- one of
24 the things that our partners said was that "we want
25 them to still be North Little Rock High School

1 graduates." They are still Charging Wildcats and
2 that has been central to this design the entire time.
3 If you think along the line of what Pea Ridge is
4 doing where they are going back and forth in between,
5 the difference for us will be that we're so large.
6 So I have more than one or two or three teachers
7 teaching English and math, so that affords us a
8 little more flexibility in being able for a student
9 that wants to take AP math to go over -- or AP Cal
10 and go -- to go over and take AP Cal. So it will be
11 a fluid situation.

12 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions?
14 Ms. Davis.

15 MS. DAVIS: Don't fall out of your chairs, but I
16 do not have any other questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. I think we've
18 checked all of our boxes. Any additional discussion?
19 Mr. Rodgers, final comment?

20 SUPT. RODGERS: I just want to point out that
21 also North Little Rock Chamber, they are here today
22 and they are also in support of this, along with the
23 Little Rock Chamber.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Bi-partisan
25 support or bi-river support.

1 SUPT. RODGERS: Bi-river support.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Bi-river support.

3 All right. Well, then I'll entertain a motion.

4 MS. PFEFFER: I make a motion that we approve

5 the North Little Rock Center of Excellence

6 application as --

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Negotiated.

8 MS. PFEFFER: -- negotiated.

9 MS. SMITH: Second.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by

11 Ms. Pfeiffer and seconded by Ms. Smith to approve.

12 Any discussion? All those in favor?

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That was sad. Try it

15 again. All those in favor?

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Any opposed?

18 Congratulations. If you'll give us a moment to give

19 you our response.

20 (A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I voted for the

23 application, to approve. I believe we are seeing the

24 future in this application. I also believe based

25 upon the testimony of our business partner that we're

1 going to be seeing crisis turning to opportunity with
2 these types of models in our state. I have no
3 concern with this model of student-focused learning
4 and opportunities for students.

5 DR. STEWART: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

7 MR. LESTER: I voted for. The plan I believe is
8 a great plan that allows the student to be highly
9 involved in their pace and path of learning. I have
10 no concerns with the knowledge that we continue
11 dialogue about the amendment request.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

13 MS. LIWO: I voted for. It's a great
14 opportunity for your students and clearly is going to
15 help out the industry as well.

16 DR. STEWART: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

18 MS. PFEFFER: This application represents great
19 partnerships between the school and the communities
20 and entities in the surrounding area. The
21 application represents new ways of teacher
22 development and we are excited to assist the district
23 to work through the messiness of any challenges to
24 make this work.

25 DR. STEWART: Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

2 MR. ROGERS: I voted for it. I thought it was
3 an innovative concept for students and teachers.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor of this. I
6 thought it was a -- provided great opportunities for
7 students to excel individually.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

9 MS. SMITH: I voted for it. No concerns
10 regarding the North Little Rock School District
11 converting part of their school to the Center of
12 Excellence. I want to encourage the large district
13 to continue to push for personalized learning for
14 students and teachers. Community and business
15 support is evident.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So congratulations. And
17 in closing remarks I'd say a couple of things. One
18 is I think it's exciting that students that determine
19 that they're not on the right path can quickly come
20 and change their path. The other thing is I hope
21 that as you work through this, that kids are as well
22 as trying to find what their career will be they may
23 be figuring out what their career is not.

24 DR. STEWART: Absolutely.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And which I'm learning

1 from the young adults around my life that that's very
2 important.

3 DR. STEWART: Uh-huh.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I just encourage you to
5 keep that open mind that I really see in your plan.
6 And, Ms. Stewart, I'll look forward to the follow-up
7 --

8 DR. STEWART: Absolutely.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- with Ms. Pfeffer and
10 Ms. Smith about professional development.

11 DR. STEWART: Absolutely.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's very exciting. So
13 thank you, North Little Rock, and congratulations.

14 DR. STEWART: Thank you.

15 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll take a seven-minute
17 break.

18 (BREAK: 10:44-10:55 A.M.)

19 A-3: HEARING OF DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
20 APPLICATION: PRAIRIE GROVE HIGH SCHOOL

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. McLaughlin, you're
22 recognized.

23 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. For
24 Action Item 3, we have Prairie Grove High School.
25 They will be presenting their district conversion

1 application. And Dr. -- the superintendent, Dr.
2 Allen Williams, will begin the presentation.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All those speaking on
4 behalf of Prairie Grove High School, if you'd please
5 stand, and anyone speaking in opposition please
6 stand; raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm
7 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the
8 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

9 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Williams,
11 you're recognized.

12 SUPT. WILLIAMS: First, I'd like to thank the
13 Panel for giving us this opportunity to come and
14 present about our conversion charter application. I
15 would like to introduce the folks that are here with
16 me today: Ron Bond, who's high school principal;
17 Mandy Bartholomew, who's a high school teacher; and
18 David Kellogg, who's assistant superintendent. We
19 may have one other party; we thought we were going to
20 be going on later and have a businessman that may
21 come in just a little bit late. He had a meeting
22 this morning and will be trying to get here, and his
23 name is Brad Smith.

24 The reasons -- our goals for today are to
25 identify our reasons why our school is pursuing the

1 district conversion charter and identify our initial
2 goals and objectives for a conversion charter. And
3 I'd like to start by telling you a little bit about
4 Prairie Grove, and you can see our district
5 demographics that are up on the screen. Prairie
6 Grove is a small town, a little under 5,000 people,
7 in northwest Arkansas. We're located about 10 miles
8 southwest of Fayetteville. It's a growing area. I
9 like to tell my friends it's the best kept secret in
10 the state of Arkansas. It's a great place to live
11 and I really enjoy it there. And we're growing.
12 This past -- or this current year we're setting a
13 record for the number of building permits that
14 Prairie Grove has ever issued, and so we think we
15 will see continued growth for sometime to come. You
16 can also see our high school demographics, which are
17 pretty similar. Our TAGG group of 43%, we mentioned
18 them in our application. Of course, that's made up
19 of our free and reduced lunch students, ELL, and
20 special education students.

21 And I'd like to touch on our district vision and
22 I'll just read that. Prairie Grove School District
23 with relentless intent and perseverance will champion
24 a K-12 learning community that is committed to
25 insuring all students graduate prepared for college,

1 career, and citizenship. And just some pictures
2 there, that's kindergarten graduation there, and then
3 we take them all the way through, and we're hoping to
4 get them prepared between those timeframes for what
5 comes later.

6 I'd like to tell you a little bit about where we
7 are now. Prairie Grove, just a little over a week
8 ago, we received notice that the StartClass, which I
9 knew nothing about but apparently is an organization
10 that rates colleges and schools across the country,
11 had selected Prairie Grove as their top high school
12 in the state of Arkansas. And they use a number of
13 criteria for that; it's not something you apply for.
14 But they look at student/teacher ratio, teacher
15 absences, things that go into the environment, exam
16 passage rate, discipline issues, your college
17 preparatory program and graduation and retention
18 rates as part of that. For several years now, we
19 have been recognized as one of the most rigorous high
20 schools in the state of Arkansas by The Washington
21 Post. This past year I think we came in at number
22 six and we were the second among comprehensive public
23 high schools in the state, I think behind Little Rock
24 Central. We have a high percentage of students that
25 participate in advanced placement programs. To give

1 you an idea, we graduated last year 140-some-odd
2 students and we gave 399 AP exams. You want us to
3 tell the whole truth: our application actually said
4 404 exams, and we counted one small group twice and I
5 apologize for that. But it's a lot of exams in any
6 event and close to 400 each of the past two years.
7 And we offer 11 AP classes and have about 416
8 students enrolled in those classes this year.

9 So our students have been doing those things and
10 at about an 80% rate; it's differed depending on the
11 classes, but have been pursuing some type of post-
12 graduate work. And so when you think about our
13 vision -- we talked about preparing for college and
14 career -- we feel like we've been doing a great job
15 with our college-bound students.

16 So you might ask why the conversion charter.
17 And in northwest Arkansas, it is a growing area; it's
18 a vibrant economy; it had a downturn like everybody
19 else a few years ago, but it has bounced back. The
20 Northwest Arkansas Business Council talks about a
21 less than 3% unemployment in the two-county area,
22 Benton and Washington Counties up there. And so
23 because of that there are a lot of choices that
24 people have when it comes to education. When they
25 move into the area, they're looking for educational

1 opportunities that will help their student whether
2 they're college-bound or not. And we hope the
3 conversion charter will give us some flexibility to
4 improve our offerings for those students that are
5 going directly to the workforce, in particular. And
6 we want to prepare our kids for the workforce as well
7 as we're preparing them for the college track, and we
8 want to make us a relevant choice for families that
9 come to northwest Arkansas.

10 In a nutshell, it's to better prepare students
11 for life after high school. All students need to be
12 prepared for the workforce, whether attending college
13 or another pathway, and to strive to insure that all
14 students graduate college and career ready. My
15 father was a lifelong educator and sometimes in a
16 gravelly voice he'd say, "I hope that all education
17 is vocational education at some point," and that was
18 the term they used in those days, but that led you to
19 something you could do to support yourself down the
20 road.

21 The outcomes that we'd like to see with our
22 charter include increasing the graduation rate with
23 the TAGG group, to offer workplace recognized
24 certifications -- and some examples would be OSHA
25 cards, CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant), PCA

1 (Patient Care Assistant) certificate, NCCER (which
2 are certificates that are recognized in the
3 construction industry), and other things along those
4 ways, that pathway.

5 Planned personalized pathways -- we're wanting
6 -- we've used CAP conferences for sometime but we're
7 wanting to do something that gets a little more
8 intensive that looks at particular pathways for kids
9 that we could start having personalized conversations
10 in developing a program for those students as they
11 work their way through high school.

12 Workplace readiness is defined by employers --
13 and that one, I think, it's kind of amazing when you
14 hear Randy Zook, the state chair -- the president of
15 the state Chamber of Commerce, talk, and he says,
16 "Employers, what do they need most?" He said, "They
17 need some pretty basic skills, and some of them are
18 that you show up every day, that you show up on time,
19 that you can pass a drug test, that you can get along
20 with others on the job." And so we tell our kids
21 this but I think bringing folks in from the
22 employment world that will tell them that will have a
23 greater impact with some of our students.

24 Work-based experiences for students -- and a big
25 one is making it more easily accessible to our

1 students in Prairie Grove. While we're in a
2 metropolitan area and there are some opportunities in
3 the area, like Northwest Technical Institute, it
4 takes a long time with the traffic to get up there.
5 And what we have found is our kids won't go to
6 programs that are very far away from our campus
7 because they want to feel a part of our school
8 culture. Most of our kids are involved in something.
9 We have a big music program, choir and band,
10 athletics, FFA and Agri, and most of our kids want to
11 be able to stay in touch with that, as well as have
12 these opportunities. So that's what we're trying to
13 do with our students.

14 Some of the innovations -- education and career
15 pathways, we're looking at trying to start with a
16 couple of building trades and design. This area,
17 there's a great need for workers in northwest
18 Arkansas, and so that's the reason for picking this.
19 And we have some business partners that have
20 connections to Prairie Grove that are willing to help
21 us with this, and an interest in that. The health
22 professions, we've mentioned. But we also have some
23 areas that we're currently doing and that we might
24 want to add down the road as money allows -- Project
25 Lead the Way and architecture and engineering -- and

1 there could be some great ways to cross some of those
2 courses in the construction. Because what -- some of
3 our kids are wanting to go into architecture; find
4 out -- or engineering -- people say, "Try to get you
5 some job experience where you know what it looks
6 like, not just on the blueprint but how it works out
7 there in the field." But we could in the future do
8 some college prep pathways with maybe major areas
9 involved, STEM perhaps being one, teacher prep. We
10 keep hearing that there's not as many teachers coming
11 through the pipeline as what there used to be, and so
12 that might be an area; of course, retail business and
13 marketing, and we're doing some things in that area
14 currently as well.

15 Partnerships with business and industry, to
16 allow them to help us select the curriculum that we
17 will teach in those classes. And NCCER offers a lot
18 of things but we've been talking with our partners
19 what are the ones that would be most beneficial to
20 our kids coming out of school that would help them on
21 the job and to have better wage jobs; help set those
22 academic goals and what training and skills are
23 needed in those areas.

24 Some of the partners that we've talked to,
25 Kimbel Mechanical Systems -- and they shared a letter

1 with you. Brad Smith of Kimbel Mechanical was hoping
2 to be here with our presentation. He was having to
3 be in Little Rock for a meeting this morning and is
4 tied up in that. We thought we might be going on at
5 1:00 and y'all have been moving pretty quick this
6 morning. So he may show up before we get done.

7 Pick-It Construction is a local construction company
8 in our area. Of course, we've talked with Northwest
9 Arkansas Community College and NTI; Coyle Enterprise
10 is a local builder; Walker Masonry is the premier
11 masonry company in northwest Arkansas, and, quite
12 frankly, probably the region, in masonry work. And
13 RN there in our area that also teaches at NTI that
14 lives in our community has taken a very active role.

15 The planned personalized pathways -- to really
16 get those individual plans of study and talk with
17 those students and parents about their individual
18 goals, we would like to set those up and put those
19 goals in front of them. But we also know that high
20 school is a time for exploration and sometimes it's
21 as important for a student to find out what they
22 don't want to do as it is what they want to do and
23 make those choices in high school -- and perhaps it's
24 not costing them money. So those would be very
25 flexible, but things that we are wanting to work with

1 with our students.

2 Flexibility in educational delivery -- virtual
3 courses -- we've been in contact with Virtual
4 Arkansas, Mike Lar in particular, and they are
5 developing some flex-paced courses and piloting some
6 of those this year, and he thinks they'll be coming
7 online with a lot of that next year. We like being
8 able to partner with Virtual Arkansas because we know
9 they follow the Arkansas standards and there's not an
10 issue with certifications of those teachers. But we
11 would use those courses as a way to maybe compact
12 time for some of our students so that they could fit
13 some workplace skills or opportunities into their
14 schedule as they get into their 11th and 12th grade
15 years. They wouldn't be bound by the traditional
16 master schedule. If they wanted to be involved in a
17 construction trades class but they wanted to take AP
18 Calculus and it was going to be a conflict, maybe we
19 could work something out there, or any other math
20 class for that matter.

21 Licensure -- that is one of the waivers that
22 we've asked for, thinking mostly in career and
23 technical classes, being able to bring in folks and
24 have those taught by field experts. And we've had a
25 couple of agri teachers that were getting certified

1 to teach NCCER and what we were finding out is
2 there's a little bit of a roadblock that they have to
3 be -- have something in the construction industry for
4 those hours to count if they teach those. Some
5 states have allowed Ag. teachers to be able to do
6 that, but maybe we could partner and one of our
7 partners provide a person that would come in and work
8 with our Ag. program and provide that, and that
9 person wouldn't be a regularly certified teacher, and
10 give us those opportunities.

11 Flexibility in educational delivery -- one thing
12 we asked for was a waiver on the numbers. We're not
13 concerned about teacher load. We would use the
14 current law that's in place; we're doing that, in
15 fact, this year. If a teacher has over 150 students,
16 if they're agreeable to that, we pay them
17 accordingly, as the law requires; but maybe being
18 able to offer -- to put a few more kids than 30 in a
19 class. And, again, our idea with that is that if it
20 was going to help a kid to be able to take that
21 class, and the class had 30 kids, the teacher could
22 take 31 or 32 and make it work out better for the
23 student's schedule. We're not looking to put, you
24 know, 50 kids in a class as a money-saving measure.
25 That's not our intent at all.

1 Embedded curriculum -- we're looking at those
2 through agreements and oral communication, possibly
3 physical education, and others, and currently working
4 through those.

5 Developing those character traits for the
6 workplace -- and I mentioned those earlier. We
7 currently have an internship program and we require
8 kids to take workplace readiness. But try to do a
9 little bit more with bringing people in from industry
10 and business to talk to our kids about what that
11 really means, and those workshops by business and
12 industry partners, and try to align that with what
13 they -- what's authentic on the jobsite: what do
14 folks get fired for on the jobsite; what creates
15 problems; what is a good worker, that you identify
16 those characteristics; say "this is somebody we think
17 could move ahead in our company," and make sure our
18 kids are well aware of that.

19 Our initial plan -- as you know, currently,
20 there's no guaranteed money for a conversion charter,
21 additional money, and we're planning on operating
22 this with funds that we currently have or will
23 generate as in our normal revenue streams from the
24 state and otherwise. So we're looking at starting
25 with two areas that would be added: the building

1 construction skilled trades, that would include
2 plumbing, electrical, HVAC, masonry, carpentry, maybe
3 some others; and the medical health professions,
4 looking at the Certified Nursing Assistant. In a
5 phone conversation of our principal with Kathy
6 Turner, had mentioned something even that some
7 schools are getting them further down the road
8 towards their LPN. And we'd be interested in seeing
9 what might could happen with that, but that's
10 something we're still researching. Those other areas
11 will be added as we had the interest, as the need is
12 present in northwest Arkansas for the workforce, and
13 as we could afford them, of course.

14 And that in a nutshell is what our program is
15 about. I was going to turn things over at this point
16 to Brad Smith -- Brad Smith, who is the CEO of Kimbel
17 Mechanical Systems, which is a company that started
18 in Springdale and is doing quite well and located in
19 several cities around the country. And they did
20 allow a letter to be passed out from him and since he
21 can't make it -- I don't want to read the letter to
22 you, but would just state that he makes pretty good
23 arguments from his standpoint about how this benefits
24 students, benefits the partnering company, benefits
25 the community, and benefits the State of Arkansas.

1 And I tell Brad when I see him, I don't want him to
2 speak too loudly because I'm almost afraid we might
3 lose some of our beginning teachers if he does.
4 Because if you look at what he says, a student could
5 leave high school and start an apprenticeship program
6 and make up to \$45,000 that first year out of high
7 school, take their classes that are required one
8 night a week; they allow them to pay for those \$20 a
9 paycheck, so you're never in debt; guarantee you a
10 job if you finish that in four years, your journeyman
11 license, making -- most of them start out at over
12 \$70,000 a year. Now I don't know about y'all but
13 when I was 21 or 22, if I could have no debt and be
14 making that kind of money I might've chose another
15 profession, although I have no regrets for the
16 profession that I've been in. But there are those
17 opportunities out there and I just think our kids
18 don't know enough about those, and so that's part of
19 what we're trying to accomplish.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, is there anyone
21 here to speak in opposition?

22 MS. DAVIS: No.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And looking at the
24 public comment sheet I see that all of the people
25 that signed in are employees of the district.

1 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So is there any additional
3 comment from your colleagues?

4 SUPT. WILLIAMS: I guess not at this time. They
5 may help with questions though.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Any closing
7 remarks?

8 SUPT. WILLIAMS: I would just like to say that
9 this is about bringing opportunity to our kids. And
10 we feel like we've done a great job in getting kids
11 prepared for college, but we want to offer
12 opportunities as close to our campus as possible in
13 some job pathways. And I'll tell you, we're looking
14 for opportunities any way we can find them. There is
15 a small co-op in northwest Arkansas, called the
16 Boston Mountain Educational Co-op, and it consists of
17 Elkins, Greenland, West Fork, Farmington, Prairie
18 Grove, and Lincoln. And we are looking at trying to
19 partner together and create some space on the
20 Farmington campus that NTI can move some of their
21 existing programs there. Farmington is only five or
22 six miles from our high school, but we would be
23 limited in numbers and most of those programs would
24 be things that would be other than what we're looking
25 at offering on our current campus. But we're looking

1 at all avenues to get these opportunities for our
2 students.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Panel, who
4 would like to start the questions? Ms. Smith, do you
5 want to dig into the PD?

6 MS. SMITH: Not yet.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, Ms. McLaughlin or Ms.
8 Boyd, either one, they've rescinded some of the
9 waiver requests?

10 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis?

12 MS. DAVIS: (Nodding head up and down.)

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you want to kind of go
14 over those with us?

15 MS. DAVIS: Sure. I'm not sure if y'all
16 received the general response. The only waivers that
17 they are requesting at this time is for the class
18 size and teaching load, section 10.02.5, and they had
19 already confirmed that they will be paying their
20 teachers. So no additional waivers are needed for
21 that. And they did confirm they understand about
22 special education size. They are requesting a waiver
23 of clock hours, section 14.03, and the licensure
24 waiver, so standard package. Did y'all get the one-
25 page general response?

1 MS. BOYD: It's in the beginning of the document
2 entitled Legal Review. It's probably the third or
3 fourth down on the list.

4 DR. GOTCHER: There it is.

5 MS. DAVIS: Okay. And I'm also told that they
6 also want to add the waivers of 6-16-102, sections
7 10.01.4 of the standards; 6-18-211; and the rules
8 governing mandatory attendance for students in grades
9 9 to 12. That kind of helps effectuate their
10 flexible days and those are all standard waivers that
11 have been granted many times.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

13 MS. PFEFFER: On the waiver for licensure
14 though, I do note where they had said that they're
15 only going to utilize the waivers for core academic
16 classes -- oh, you are not going to use the waivers
17 for core academic classes?

18 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Right. Would not be core
19 academic classes. And I will tell you, when we first
20 started we were thinking more of the technical
21 trades; however, when we had our public meeting we
22 had an attorney in the audience and said, "Well, what
23 if kids want to be an attorney? Could you bring a
24 lawyer in and talk about" -- but it would not be in
25 the core classes.

1 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, did you have
3 something initial to add?

4 MS. BOYD: Just that if you wanted to look at
5 the additional waivers that Ms. Davis outlined, there
6 at the end of the summary sheet on the Prairie Grove
7 application and then also it's number five in the
8 legal review.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

10 MS. PFEFFER: Only a couple of things that I
11 wanted to mention. Number one, something you said to
12 me really resonated where you -- you want to allow
13 for a flexible schedule to meet student needs and not
14 limit them to the constraints of a master schedule.
15 And I remember what that was like in -- you know --
16 do you -- are you in band or are you going to take an
17 AP class. And that is -- for schools your size I
18 know it's a struggle. So that -- I really appreciate
19 that and that helps too for us to understand why a
20 successful school does, I mean, need some of the
21 flexibility around this. So I do -- I really do
22 appreciate that.

23 In terms of the types of waivers you need,
24 something I thought about that we didn't maybe
25 articulate yesterday, through Career Ed. the State

1 Board does license career individuals with a
2 technical permit. And we probably need to do a
3 better job of distinguishing between those who are
4 licensed by the State Board of Education with a
5 technical permit and the technical professionals that
6 may be employed that aren't licensed by the State
7 Board but they have their own credentials and
8 licensing. So I think though the way you have your
9 application, with the waivers you have the
10 flexibility to hire them. So I think that's going to
11 help you as well.

12 But those were just two things that were on my
13 mind. And if you run into any questions or confusion
14 about, you know, if I'm employing this person and
15 does it fit within our waivers, just call our office
16 and we can definitely help with that.

17 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you have questions?

19 DR. GOTCHER: I do.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

21 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning, Dr. Williams. It is
22 still morning, yes. I asked this question earlier
23 with another applicant because I was intrigued by the
24 accountability piece, thinking of the student
25 accountability and the teacher accountability. So --

1 and maybe your high school principal could -- or one
2 of the principals could be involved in this question.
3 What is embedded? I'm looking through the slides
4 real quickly because I hate to ask a question that
5 you've already presented, but I'll just ask it. What
6 is embedded in the daily schedule that is the support
7 for the students with these multiple pathways that
8 potentially are available? I just always am
9 concerned about how we are keeping that ongoing
10 accountability -- but, more importantly, that ongoing
11 support for the students. So what is a master --
12 wrong word, Ms. Pfeffer -- what is the daily schedule
13 look like and where is that embedded piece for
14 support?

15 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Right. For some students the
16 daily schedule wouldn't look a whole lot different
17 from others; they would fit neatly into maybe a two-
18 hour block of one of these areas and their other
19 classes would fit well. But it could be that maybe
20 there are those conflicts in the master schedule and
21 they might have an hour where they go in and take a
22 flex-pace course through Virtual Arkansas and can get
23 a credit for a class that we're not offering that
24 hour, so that they're able to participate in one of
25 these work-based programs. That would be the most

1 common I think that would occur. Our plan is that as
2 that flex-base potentially grows, that whoever is
3 kind of overseeing that and those kids come in that
4 they would be one of our key people to make sure kids
5 are staying on their planned pathway --

6 DR. GOTCHER: Great.

7 SUPT. WILLIAMS: -- and help them see what
8 they're accomplishing. Also, you know, maybe they
9 can go in and complete three courses in two class
10 periods with the flex-pace. And most of those are
11 set up, in talking with Mike Lar, it's been a few
12 weeks but he said they think they will be fully able
13 to take part at night, from home and other times.
14 But it would be accessible at all times so kids could
15 do those things.

16 DR. GOTCHER: So I'm not hearing that there's an
17 embedded advisory time but it's just the instructor
18 or the -- there would just be some time in their
19 schedule, because it's a flexible schedule. Go
20 ahead.

21 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Yes. That would be it from
22 following that plan. Now within some of these
23 pathways our thought is we bring people in from the
24 workforce there to get to know our kids and talk
25 about what's happening out on the worksite before

1 they have the opportunities to see that, that they
2 would be able to offer some support as far as what do
3 they need to be doing, what are the employers looking
4 for. And, hopefully, that would help along those
5 lines. I don't know if that answers your question or
6 --

7 DR. GOTCHER: Sure. And I want to say this in
8 terms of encouragement. I would just make sure that
9 -- assuming this goes through -- and, of course, it
10 looks great -- I would just make sure that at some
11 point you would do a Needs Assessment and make sure
12 those kids feel they're supported -- and, more
13 importantly -- well, not more importantly than the
14 students -- but just as important that the teachers
15 -- or that the teachers feel that they are able to
16 provide that support. I'm concerned that if things
17 become too flexible that we might see a repeat of
18 losing kids and not feeling that support. So that's
19 just a thought that I'm having as a superintendent/
20 principal background. Just be willing to look at a
21 Needs Assessment to determine if kids do feel
22 supported and that teachers or instructors feel
23 they're in a position to support. Just my thoughts.

24 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Right. And I should say that,
25 you know, we're offering some online courses now and

1 we don't just open those up and say anybody that
2 wants to jump in can do it. We do those through
3 those CAP processes and it meets a need. And in this
4 case, that's the way we will try to handle it.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Good. Thank you, sir.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

7 MS. SMITH: Okay. I really don't have a
8 question so much as a comment. And this kind of goes
9 back to the whole idea of when is it a charter, when
10 is it Act 1240 waiver, when is it -- you know --
11 what's School of Innovation; I mean, what's the best
12 path to take. And I see that this is a path you have
13 to take to be able to do the flexible time with the
14 schedule and all that, but your school is already
15 doing some innovative things with the AP part and
16 being a very successful school. So when I look at
17 what -- the intent of charter -- you know -- you're
18 trying -- you're doing something new and innovative
19 and different.

20 DR. GOTCHER: Expanded opportunity.

21 MS. SMITH: And expanded opportunity. And I
22 realize the school has to go one of those paths to
23 expand that opportunity to get these waivers to be
24 able to meet the needs of that other career path
25 part, and I know the discussion here at the

1 Department and statewide is about frequent waivers we
2 see coming before us, how we make that available to
3 all schools so they don't have to go through this
4 process. And so I commend you for coming forward and
5 not waiting until everything changes and moving
6 forward to try to get some additional opportunities
7 for your students. I want to caution you to say I'm
8 proud of the fact of all the things you said about
9 your school, to brag about your school, and the
10 number of AP courses and getting those kids into that
11 advanced work for all kids. I think sometimes that's
12 the innovative approach that's needed. And I know
13 everybody is talking about career right now and
14 career pathways; don't shortchange the other in lieu
15 of going career also. I mean, I think there's a
16 balance, but don't shortchange the others. Because I
17 think what you are doing is pretty innovative.

18 SUPT. WILLIAMS: We appreciate that. And trust
19 me, that's been a part of our conversations is that
20 we don't want to harm what we're doing. And in some
21 cases there's a big crossover.

22 MS. SMITH: Right.

23 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Like I say, we've got the
24 Project Lead the Way, engineering, and we've got kids
25 that are taking the advanced math and advanced

1 sciences. But sometimes what they're hearing from
2 their colleges that they're applying to is, "Do you
3 have any hands-on experience?"

4 MS. SMITH: Right.

5 SUPT. WILLIAMS: "Have you seen how this
6 actually -- it's one thing to draw it up on paper,
7 but have you seen how it fits together on the jobsite
8 and can you really accomplish what you're trying to
9 do?" And so maybe some of those kids can cross over
10 and get that practical knowledge along with that.

11 MS. SMITH: Yeah. And I think it would be a
12 great thing for all kids in the state. So, anyway,
13 just good luck to you.

14 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Certainly, having built a
16 house I understand the power of geometry now.

17 So you made a couple of comments regarding when
18 you can afford it moving forward. So talk to us
19 about your fiscal responsibility.

20 SUPT. WILLIAMS: My responsibility with the
21 district, I basically am the -- in small districts,
22 am the finance person there. I have a background
23 with that for a few years; was the assistant
24 superintendent for business in Springdale for three
25 years before I went to Prairie Grove. I can tell

1 you, we're on very sound financial ground out there.
2 But as you know, those of you that have been
3 superintendents, you make sure you take care of this
4 year but you're always looking down the road at
5 what's going to happen in the future. And the reason
6 some of those caveats are there -- and I just think
7 -- you've told us to tell the truth; I think reading
8 a political comment, there may not be as much growth
9 in education funding down the road. I'm very
10 thankful that Arkansas didn't see cuts in education
11 and feel grateful for what we've done. But there may
12 not be as much growth there. And so as a small
13 school we're growing and I think over time we can add
14 more and more of these things. But we're just going
15 to have to be careful that we don't over-extend
16 ourselves as we go and that's the only reason that
17 some things may have to happen a little bit slower
18 than what we'd like. But we're in good shape. We
19 have some money in our building fund. Some of it is
20 obligated but we do have money if we needed to put a
21 shop building up or remodel an area we could
22 certainly do that without any trouble.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

24 Any additional comments?

25 Ms. Davis.

1 MS. DAVIS: Yeah, and I do not have any
2 additional comments. Calm down. But I don't have
3 anything.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Hearing none,
5 Panel, I will accept a motion.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I'd like to make a
7 motion that we approve the Prairie Grove High School
8 application.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A motion has been made by
11 Dr. Gotcher, seconded by Dr. Saunders to approve
12 Prairie Grove High School application. Any
13 discussion? All those in favor?

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?
16 Congratulations. If you'll wait just a moment, we'll
17 read our comments.

18 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

20 MR. LESTER: I voted for the amendment. The
21 model provides a great onsite opportunity for
22 students to prepare themselves to go directly into
23 the workforce or workforce related training. I have
24 no concern. One thing I did want to state is that I
25 appreciated on each one of your plans you also had a

1 plan for the future and that means a lot and that
2 you're already thinking ahead on those things. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

5 MS. PFEFFER: I voted -- wait a minute. Okay.
6 I voted in favor of the proposal. It allows a
7 flexible schedule for student needs, not limiting
8 students to the constraints of a master schedule in a
9 small district. It continues the work to promote
10 high standards for students but allows for
11 flexibility to engage in a career focus, enhance
12 current credit and internship opportunities.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I also voted for the
15 application. I have no concerns. Dr. Williams
16 presented a sound plan. I'm excited for the
17 opportunity for students. I would encourage a Needs
18 Assessment after one semester of implementation to
19 insure a student/teacher support is being observed.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

21 MS. LIWO: I voted for. I think it's a good
22 opportunity for your students. And I like the level
23 of involvement that business and industry will have
24 with your plan.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

1 MR. ROGERS: I voted for it. I didn't have any
2 concerns with it.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I voted in favor of it. I
5 believe it's a very exciting and new approach to try
6 to facilitate the individual needs of each student to
7 insure that they are successful in the workplace and
8 life, and not just in the areas of academia.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

10 MS. SMITH: I voted for. Prairie Grove School
11 District is meeting the needs of their students and
12 is using this process to offer more opportunities to
13 their students.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations.

15 SUPT. WILLIAMS: Thank you very much. And we'll
16 take your comments to heart, and the Needs Assessment
17 I think is a good idea, and we'll go to work. Thank
18 you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

20 Ms. Boyd, do we have any additional issues
21 before the Panel today?

22 MS. BOYD: No, ma'am, we do not.

23 CLOSING MISC. MATTERS

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I would like to take a
25 moment to thank Ms. Liwo for being on our Panel.

1 She's leaving us, and so we just want to say thank-
2 you for your great work.

3 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I've not officially
4 accepted her resignation.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Well, there's still
6 time.

7 I'll accept a motion to adjourn. Oh, Ms.
8 Pfeiffer has something.

9 MS. PFEFFER: Yeah. I know everybody is looking
10 at me like, okay; just real quick though. You know,
11 the last three days we've heard a lot of
12 presentations and the common themes that keep coming
13 back to us that we know are in the way of
14 personalized learning opportunities for students keep
15 coming back. And I just really want us to decide or
16 to really think about how do we move forward here
17 because if we truly believe that what we've heard in
18 recent applications really is moving us toward being
19 able to have student-focused education I just would
20 really encourage us to start thinking about how do we
21 remove those barriers so that all schools can do this
22 without having to go through a process necessarily.
23 I just -- so I really want us to start thinking about
24 what might be next steps. Because I think we could
25 all pretty much identify those key barriers right now

1 and in a responsible way, you know, being able to
2 move forward to saying, you know, if we're going to
3 meet our vision what do we need to start doing now so
4 that schools can start planning for that.

5 MS. SMITH: And kind of piggybacking on that a
6 little bit about the waivers, I'd like to see whether
7 it's our charter unit and APSRC, who's working with a
8 lot of the schools who are coming before us, and our
9 legal department -- I mean, either having some kind
10 of cheat-sheet or something to -- so I don't know
11 what we can do during -- and especially during the
12 legislative session when it's changing. Because, I
13 mean, I get confused even in here trying to look them
14 up and figure out what we're, you know -- thoughts?

15 MS. DAVIS: I had -- Alexandra and I had talked
16 about this and there wasn't time for these. But in
17 addition to the legal comments that you get that has
18 their rationale and their discussion, at least for
19 the renewal applications and beginning with that
20 cycle there will be, in addition to the legal
21 comments, like a one-page summary of all the waivers
22 that they have requested, the subject matter, and
23 whether or not -- like a little check-mark of whether
24 or not there's any remaining legal issue --

25 MS. SMITH: Okay.

1 MS. DAVIS: -- just so that way you can kind of
2 at a high level see what they're getting. And if you
3 have other suggestions on what you would like to see,
4 in addition to that, I am open to suggestions. But
5 there will be at least a summary of those included in
6 your next batch that you'll hear.

7 MS. SMITH: Well, and the notes that you guys
8 make in our packets about concerns, that's extremely
9 helpful. I mean, when you put your additional legal
10 concerns or concern about this or they need -- that's
11 extremely helpful. So I don't want you to think that
12 we haven't noticed that you do that, because you do.
13 I think it's on the front-end of schools that they're
14 not even sure; they know what they want to do but
15 they're not even sure --

16 MS. DAVIS: Sure.

17 MS. SMITH: -- what to look [sic], where to ask,
18 and I don't know how we can create some type of --
19 you know -- if you're looking at -- you know, you're
20 trying to waive the seat time piece of it, these are
21 all the ones you need and for the various reasons. I
22 mean, I don't know if there's some kind of cheat-
23 sheet or something we can --

24 MR. LESTER: A rubric.

25 MS. SMITH: Yeah, a rubric or -- I'll put Bobby

1 in charge of making that.

2 MR. LESTER: Thanks, pal.

3 MS. DAVIS: Right. Well, I know your
4 applications -- you know -- I've seen your packets
5 of, you know, 920 pages for you to read in your spare
6 time, but -- so there will be at least a summary
7 that's included and I will note if there's any
8 remaining issues just to kind of help you --

9 MS. SMITH: I was even trying to just make a
10 cheat-sheet for schools before they got to you, so it
11 would be helpful to you.

12 MS. DAVIS: Yeah. I have a cheat-sheet that I
13 use but, you know, the districts, you know, and the
14 applicants kind of do things -- everything is so
15 unique that there's some that go together and some
16 that don't. But, you know, we'll work through it.

17 MS. DAVIS: Okay. Thank you. And --

18 MS. BOYD: Also --

19 MS. DAVIS: Oh, go ahead.

20 MS. BOYD: -- I'd like to say too, we've made
21 some improvements on our waiver submission forms.
22 Some of the suggestions that Dr. Saunders has made
23 we've added to that, and we should see those in the
24 next amendment request process. And also during
25 workshop orientation, the application orientation, we

1 provide them with a list of commonly requested
2 waivers and what those include. So we're doing some
3 of that but, as Ms. Pfeffer said, with seeing these
4 common themes that are coming forward we'll revisit
5 that and see what we need to add to it.

6 MS. PFEFFER: Yes. Because I do worry that if
7 something is not clear in an application -- and even
8 though we negotiate it here and everybody feels good
9 about that, these applications that are reviewed by
10 faculty, by parents, by board members before they
11 come here, if we make changes or if through our
12 questions the district makes changes and agreed upon,
13 you could go back and those applications that are
14 sent to us, if they're changed, then back home, you
15 know, they may not actually know that, you know, how
16 extensive it has been. In a couple of my school
17 visits, I've encountered situations where the school
18 principal didn't fully understand the waivers that
19 they had. And so sometimes I think in our attempt to
20 assist and try to allow them as much flexibility, if
21 they're not real clear on the front-end exactly what
22 they've asked for or in the meeting not sure exactly
23 what they've gotten, there could be issues later. So
24 we just want to make sure that it's right from the
25 beginning and it's what they need. But, yeah, again,

1 I think we've got an opportunity now to really
2 eliminate those barriers that schools --

3 DR. GOTCHER: Agreed.

4 MS. PFEFFER: -- are telling us they're facing,
5 so --

6 DR. SAUNDERS: I think so. And I think along
7 the same lines that we've discussed earlier, if we
8 could just have somewhat -- some kind of question
9 over what specific parts of the law or rules are
10 holding you up instead of -- I feel many times we get
11 a shotgun approach of ask for everything and just
12 hope it falls within there because you might use it
13 sometime. But if we could ask specifics, that would
14 help us.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Another good point.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, I do want to say
17 thank you for the way that you're organizing the
18 information on BoardBook. It's very user-friendly.

19 MS. BOYD: Thank you. And we're always looking
20 for ways to be better. So if you guys have any
21 additional suggestions or anything specific, I'm
22 happy to talk with you after the hearing.

23 MS. SMITH: And how many new employees do you
24 have starting in the next couple of weeks?

25 MS. BOYD: I have one employee starting on

1 November 7th and I'm so excited about that. And then
2 we are still working on finalizing the agreement with
3 the second employee. So, essentially, the size of my
4 office is increasing by 66%, I think.

5 MS. SMITH: Hey, we'll take it.

6 MS. BOYD: Yeah. We definitely appreciate it.

7 DR. GOTCHER: We appreciate you, Ms. Boyd.

8 MS. BOYD: Thank you.

9 DR. GOTCHER: All right.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion to adjourn?

11 DR. GOTCHER: Let's let Ms. Liwo make that
12 motion.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

14 MS. LIWO: So moved.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Second?

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made and
18 seconded to adjourn. All those in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Meeting adjourned. Thank
21 you all.

22

23 (The meeting was adjourned at 11:44 a.m.)

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A-2: NLR CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-2: NLR CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

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A-3: PRAIRIE GROVE HIGH SCHOOL

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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