

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

December 15, 2016

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

DECEMBER 15, 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 Chairman/Deputy Commissioner
DR. ERIC SAUNDERS	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Administrative Services
MS. ANNETTE BARNES	Asst. Commissioner - Public School Accountability
MR. GREG ROGERS	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Admin. Services
MS. STACY SMITH	Asst. Commissioner - Learning Services
MR. BOBBY LESTER	Director of Federal Programs

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. ALEXANDRA BOYD	Public School Program Coordinator
MS. KELLY McLAUGHLIN	Public School Program Advisor
MS. VIRGINIA PERRY	Public School Program Advisor
MR. FREDDIE SCOTT	Learning Services Operations Mgr.

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. JENNIFER DAVIS	ADE Staff Attorney
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ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. The December 15, 2016 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education and ask that you please silence all electronic devices. The Charter Panel oversees the authorization, renewal, revision, and revocation of charters. The goal today will be to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing. I'll ask that each person speaking speak clearly into the microphone, state your name and title for the record. I'll ask that you continue to speak clearly into the microphone for the benefit of this panel, of the audience, but most importantly for the viewing audience. So if you step away from the microphone we'll redirect you back to that microphone so that the meeting can be heard by the live-streaming audience. This meeting is being recorded and will be posted on the Arkansas Department of Education website, and in addition to that a transcript of the meeting will be posted on the website.

Ms. Davis, if you will advise us of our hearing procedures.

MS. DAVIS: Hi, good morning. Jennifer Davis,

1 Staff Attorney for the Department. The procedures
2 you're going to follow today will be that all persons
3 wishing to provide testimony to you outside of
4 attorneys will need to be sworn in. The applicant
5 will have 20 minutes to make its presentation to you,
6 followed by 20 minutes collectively for any
7 opposition that there may be. The applicant will
8 then have an additional 5 minutes to make any kind of
9 closing statements or rebut any arguments that they
10 may want to make. You can ask any questions of the
11 applicant, the ADE staff, or anyone else here that
12 can provide assistance in making -- helping you make
13 your decision today. You may vote on it today or you
14 can take the matter under advisement. You do have a
15 Google doc that you can notate your reasons for your
16 vote so that way the applicant will have that. And
17 just as a reminder that a charter is a contract, so
18 anything that the applicant states today that differs
19 from their written materials, that they may agree to
20 that is different, does become part of any renewal
21 that you grant today.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Davis.

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

24 RENEWAL: LITTLE ROCK PREPARATORY ACADEMY

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Perry, you are

1 recognized for Action Item 1. Welcome to the Charter
2 Authorizing Panel.

3 MS. PERRY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am
4 Virginia Perry, Program Advisor with the Charter
5 Unit. The first item on our agenda this morning is
6 the Little Rock Preparatory Academy's renewal request
7 and we have Ms. Ary -- Adry -- I'm sorry -- Aryanna
8 Leonard with introductions.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'll ask that all patrons,
10 all participants with Little Rock Preparatory Academy
11 please stand and raise your right hand, and any
12 persons speaking in opposition. Do you swear or
13 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
14 be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
15 truth?

16 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. If you'll
18 state your name.

19 MS. LEONARD: My name is Aryanna Leonard and I'm
20 an 8th grader at Little Rock Preparatory Academy.
21 Thank you, Chair Coffman and Charter Authorizing
22 Panel Members, for hearing our renewal presentation
23 this morning. My name is Aryanna Leonard and I am a
24 student at Little Rock Preparatory Academy. I love
25 our school because it feels more like a family and

1 the teachers care about the students' education. I
2 am proud to say that I had the most academic growth
3 in my school on the NWEA MAP test. And now, without
4 further ado, I would like to introduce you to my
5 superintendent, Ms. Tina Long. Thank you.

6 SUPT. LONG: Thank you, Aryanna. Before we get
7 started on our presentation today, I would like to
8 introduce our longstanding board of trustees, our
9 executive management team, any parents or students
10 who are here today in support of Little Rock Prep;
11 please stand. Thank you.

12 Our mission at Little Rock Preparatory Academy
13 is to prepare students from underserved communities
14 for competitive college and advanced career by
15 insuring the mastery of core subjects and developing
16 the key behaviors for success in citizenship,
17 leadership, and communities and beyond. What sets us
18 apart is who we serve. So currently Little Rock
19 Preparatory Academy has 411 students in grades K-8 at
20 two different campuses. 90.3% of our students
21 qualify for either free or reduced lunch; however,
22 100% of our students are receiving free lunch due to
23 community eligibility. 89% of our students are
24 African American and 10% are Latino.

25 This map is of the Little Rock School District

1 and it represents our primary school families. Each
2 dot represents where a family resides. And this is
3 our middle school. We do have a transportation
4 system that brings students from central and
5 southwest Little Rock to and from the -- to and
6 between the campuses, and that's for the ease of
7 families that have siblings.

8 Many of our students are faced with very
9 difficult challenges. So the school has put in place
10 very intentional strategic programs to make sure that
11 all of our students can be successful regardless of
12 the challenges that life brings.

13 In the greater Little Rock area, we have a
14 growing number of low-income students and families.
15 So what we've done is specialize -- put in place
16 specialized features to insure that all of our
17 students can be successful, and we start with a 9-
18 hour school day, 200 academic days a year. We also
19 have an all-school RTI model, so that's a Response to
20 Intervention model. So in addition to teaching the
21 state standards for reading and for math, we have an
22 additional block for every student where students are
23 placed at their own performance level. And then from
24 there students can receive instruction and fill in
25 the gaps they need to be successful at grade level.

1 We also teach behavior just the same way that we
2 would teach reading and that we would teach math so
3 students are set up to be successful and actually
4 have all the key behaviors necessary to be successful
5 in school and then in college and in their futures.

6 Community involvement is a large part of who we
7 are and what we do. We believe really strongly that
8 it takes a village to raise a child and we're all
9 working together to do this. So the largest part of
10 our village is our families. Our families not only
11 support the school but support each other whenever a
12 child is in need. We've seen that happen time in and
13 time out again. We also have partnerships with UCA,
14 Philander Smith, and even the Arkansas Symphony. We
15 do have 12 different partners in the area that
16 support our Learning Pass program. These wraparound
17 services and partnerships are the bedrock of what
18 Little Rock Prep is.

19 This next slide is a diagram of Maslow's
20 Hierarchy of Needs and Maslow believes in order for a
21 student or anybody to reach the highest level they
22 have to have all of their basic levels below the
23 pyramid met. So what Little Rock Preparatory Academy
24 has done is they have strategically and intentionally
25 put in programs to insure that students can reach

1 every single level. This is our very intentional way
2 of teaching to the whole child. So starting at the
3 very bottom with our community eligibility program,
4 our uniform program, and our mental health services
5 that are pushed into our school, we have great
6 partnerships with those organizations that serve our
7 students. And then moving to safety, our longer day
8 is really key in that. When our families are working
9 our students don't have to go home to an empty home;
10 they're actually at school working under the
11 instruction of a very highly qualified teacher. And
12 then, of course, our team-based model.

13 I think when you hear from our families the
14 number-one thing that you'll hear is the love and
15 belonging. We have a very family-oriented
16 environment. The students do feel loved, they feel
17 success at the school, and we've intentionally done
18 that. So our entire behavior system is built on a
19 positive behavior reinforcement system versus a
20 punishment based system.

21 And then moving to esteem, we do have a mastery-
22 based learning program. So although we have a scope
23 and sequence and we do have standards that we follow,
24 students do not move through the scope and sequence
25 until they've mastered the previous skills before

1 they can move forward. Doing that allows students to
2 feel successful and not feel lost when they're
3 receiving instruction. We also integrate project-
4 based learning; we do that through the Buck
5 Institute. We also have very intentional team-based
6 teaching, team-based student learning.

7 Our students also participate in student-led
8 conferences, so they do that three times a year. Our
9 students keep their own portfolios, they manage their
10 own data, and they do self-reflections on their work.
11 And then reaching the highest level with our
12 character education, our graduate attributes, and our
13 leadership development program. So doing this and
14 following Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in a very
15 intentional way allows us to teach to the whole child
16 and also utilize all of our wraparound services in a
17 very intentional structured way.

18 Next we're going to have three students present
19 to you the data of our ACT Aspire. Now we have many
20 students that could've done this, but we selected
21 these three students because they're the highest
22 performing in their area. So I'm advising you to not
23 be wooed by their cuteness and to look at the actual
24 numbers because we're really proud of the achievement
25 that our students have.

1 MS. STEWART: Good morning. My name is Asia
2 Stewart. I am a 7th grader at Little Rock
3 Preparatory Academy. I'll be walking you through our
4 ACT Aspire student achievement in math compared to
5 similar schools in our area. Our 5th grade at school
6 is comparable to local schools, while our 7th and 8th
7 graders outperform all the local schools in
8 geographic proximity to us. (inaudible) success to
9 students, teachers, and a double block of math every
10 day. I am proud to announce that my score is
11 exceeding on the ACT Aspire math test.

12 Now Roderick Hicks will tell you about our ELA
13 scores.

14 MR. HICKS: Thank you, Asia, for the
15 introduction. This slide -- my name is Roderick
16 Hicks and I'm a 5th grader at -- I'm a 5th grader at
17 Little Rock Preparatory Academy. This slide
18 represents the ACT Aspire student achievement in ELA.
19 Our 7th grade scored higher than all but one similar
20 school, while our 6th and 8th grade scored higher
21 than all the similar schools in the area. We work
22 really hard in reading to integrate ELA in all of our
23 subjects. I am proud to announce that I scored
24 exceeding on the ACT Aspire student achievement in
25 ELA.

1 Now Jacob Radford will be telling you about the
2 ACT Aspire's student achievement in science.

3 MR. RADFORD: Thank you, Roger. My name is
4 Jacob Radford and I am a 7th grader at Little Rock
5 Preparatory Academy. This slide represents our ACT
6 Aspire student achievement in science compared to
7 local schools in our area. Our 6th and 7th grade
8 scored comparable to one local school and
9 outperformed all the others. Our 8th grade
10 outperformed all the schools in our area. I really
11 never got good grades in science; that was only
12 because I've never had the help and support that LRPA
13 has given me. And I am proud to report that I scored
14 college ready in all areas of the ACT Aspire test.
15 Thank you for allowing me to speak today. And now
16 I'll introduce to you Dr. Sarah McKenzie.

17 DR. MCKENZIE: I have clearly been sharing data
18 incorrectly all these years because that was
19 fantastic. So I'm here to talk about NWEA MAP data.
20 You guys know this assessment. The kids have their
21 own individualized growth projection. And the first
22 one is what percentage of students in each cohort met
23 or exceeded typical gains. And in this analysis I'm
24 looking at cohorts of students who've been at the
25 school for one year or two years consistently, or

1 three years or four years. 53% of students met or
2 exceeded their typical gains. Remember that 50% is
3 the national average. So while we say yes we want
4 100% of kids to make growth, with this assessment 50%
5 is really the target that we're looking for.

6 By cohort you can see that it's fairly
7 consistent across the cohorts one year to four year
8 in both reading and math. 34% of the lowest
9 performing students, those in the bottom third
10 nationally, made one-and-a-half times growth in
11 reading and 25% made one-and-a-half times in math.
12 Now those numbers might sound small to you, but if
13 you look on the bottom NWEA has come out with a
14 report about what percentage of kids by grade level
15 make that one-and-a-half times annual growth. And
16 you can see that LRPA's results are right in line
17 with the 5% to 38% of kids in the elementary grades
18 that make that one-and-a-half times annual growth.

19 So what percentage of that typical gain was made
20 by the students in each cohort? 97% of the typical
21 gain was made in reading and 100% of the typical gain
22 was made in math. 100% of the typical gain is what
23 we're looking for, in this case, because we're saying
24 the typical gain would be the target; we want the
25 school to meet 100% of that target. And you can see

1 that across the cohorts they get very, very close or
2 exceed in both content areas.

3 So how does this growth compare to national
4 student growth? This is when we're doing comparisons
5 to typical schools across the country, and LRPA was
6 better than 49% of similar schools' students in
7 reading and 59% of similar schools' students in math.
8 And we can look across the cohorts and see that math
9 is a little bit stronger than reading. But
10 essentially we've looked at the data three different
11 way: we've looked at individual students making
12 targets, we've looked at percent of targets made, and
13 we've looked at comparison to similar schools. And,
14 overall, they're nearing or exceeding their national
15 peers in academic growth in reading and math on NWEA
16 MAP. Thank you.

17 SUPT. LONG: Thank you, Dr. McKenzie.

18 So since we last came before you three years ago
19 requesting a charter renewal, a lot has changed. We
20 have a huge focus on the people in the school. We
21 have an amazing unconventional staff and they have
22 great hearts for what they're doing. So we realize
23 the greatest investment that we can make is in our
24 teaching team, so what we've done is put together a
25 structured program to insure that they continue to

1 grow and perfect their craft. So our teachers
2 participate in either a four- or two-week summer
3 training, depending if they're newly hired or
4 returning. We have professional development that
5 happens every Wednesday and the professional
6 development is specifically designed around the data
7 that's received from the previous observations that
8 our site level administrators are doing. We have
9 built into our calendar three daylong professional
10 development sessions. Half of those sessions are
11 data review, professional learning communities, in
12 which teachers then create maps from the next section
13 of the school year based upon the data that they are
14 receiving. Every teacher in our school is placed on
15 Track 1 of the TESS observations and we do that
16 intentionally so that our teachers can get continuous
17 feedback, frequent observations, and then support
18 with their professional growth plans. We do have a
19 multifaceted mentoring program, also utilizing the
20 state mentoring program as well as our own mentoring
21 program. And every administrator in our school has
22 committed to 25 classroom walk-throughs each week.

23 Our mission is what drives us. Every person in
24 our school is dedicated to serving our community. We
25 have created a positive behavior plan that really is

1 the backbone of what we do. Our team members are all
2 trained in lifting up and encouraging students to
3 strive for their best. The school culture is really
4 the center of what we do in our school. And any of
5 you who have visited the school are able to
6 immediately pick up on that and comment on it. Our
7 positive spirit and the heart of our students is what
8 establishes them for success and sets them up for
9 future success.

10 Over the last three years we've had a definite
11 renewed focus on data-driven instruction. It was a
12 little hard to swallow at first when we first started
13 doing it, but once the teachers saw the great results
14 that they were getting by looking very intentionally
15 at their student data we were able to shape
16 instruction and drive student achievement in a very
17 intentional way. So what we've done is we've built
18 in a formative assessment system; we've built in the
19 professional learning community where our teachers
20 are looking at the data and making decisions based on
21 their data; we have a computer adaptive learning
22 program; we've moved to administering the NWEA MAP
23 three times a year. We've also reconstructed our
24 daily schedule. So a lot of times in schools we have
25 all this data, we're very data rich, we want to do

1 these things, but we don't have the time in the day
2 to do it. So what we've done is created a second
3 block where our teachers specifically are designing
4 their instruction based off the data that they're
5 receiving. So it's our intervention or acceleration
6 block, depending upon where the students are. And we
7 have a new fully aligned scope and sequence with the
8 new college readiness standards that is -- has a
9 built-in test benchmark all the way along the
10 calendar.

11 Over the last three years we've definitely
12 increased our capacity with our executive management
13 team. So we've moved to taking a lot of the things
14 at the site level off the site level's plate, so
15 human capital, communications, and much of the back
16 office support, even leadership, facilities and
17 operations, and development. And the reason why
18 we've done that is we want the teachers and the
19 principals and the site level leadership to be able
20 to focus on the very most important thing they're
21 doing, which is educating our students, so we've
22 taken those extra back-office supports off their
23 plate. We collaborate and work with them, of course,
24 but it allowed them to have the freedom and the time
25 to not be buried in those types of tasks and really

1 focus on our students.

2 So, we understand that we are a public school
3 and that we must be very good stewards of our money.
4 So we've made great efforts in focusing on financial
5 -- our financial standing and our financials are
6 trending in the right direction.

7 So just to update the Panel on where we are, we
8 at Little Rock Prep did take a loan out with the
9 Self-Help Venture Fund for the relocation of our
10 elementary school several years back; that loan is
11 due to be paid off by the end of this fiscal year.
12 The second loan that Little Rock Prep had is with
13 Exalt Education, it was also for the relocation of
14 the elementary school, and that loan is also due to
15 be paid off at the end of this fiscal year.

16 This is our beautiful middle school. So thanks
17 to your approval of the relocation our students are
18 enjoying beautiful science labs, green space, an
19 amazing gymnasium, auditorium, spacious classrooms.
20 We feel really privileged to be here and our students
21 are really enjoying it.

22 And this is our historic primary school, a lot
23 of love happening in this building. We welcome you
24 to come any time -- we're on Spring Street -- and
25 watch our students' learning in action.

1 So to conclude our presentation today I'm going
2 to introduce to you Ms. Messiha.

3 MS. OTIS: Hello. My name is Messiha Otis. I'm
4 currently an 8th grader at Little Rock Preparatory
5 Academy. I have been attending LRPA since the 4th
6 grade. By going to LRPA I have grown mentally,
7 academically, and socially, but definitely not
8 height-wise. LRPA is one of the most family-oriented
9 schools you could attend. So on behalf of all of
10 LRPA supporters, we respectfully ask that you grant
11 our school a three-year charter. Thank you.

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

14 MS. DAVIS: There wasn't anyone that was signed
15 up. If they're opposition, they have not stated so.
16 But there are several public comments.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Dr. Long, you have
18 5 additional minutes for closure.

19 SUPT. LONG: I don't have anything additional.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Then we'll
22 begin the question-and-answer session. Okay. Ms.
23 Barnes, you look like you want to go first.

24 MS. BARNES: No. Excuse me. Not at this time.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith does.

1 MS. SMITH: Very good presentation; the kids did
2 a fabulous job.

3 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

4 MS. SMITH: Quick question about students that
5 stay within your school. I know they mentioned
6 something about your cohorts going through with NWEA.
7 So once students enroll in your school, are they
8 staying or do you have a lot of students transferring
9 out or what? So from year-to-year are your kids
10 staying with you or are you losing them?

11 SUPT. LONG: So we have had a high turnover
12 previously. The relocation I think is going to
13 drastically help with that. Many of the families in
14 previous years -- of course, we just started at this
15 new campus three months ago --

16 MS. SMITH: Right.

17 SUPT. LONG: -- have stated one of the main
18 reasons they were leaving is the amenities of a
19 traditional school. So we're really hoping that the
20 relocation will yield retention in the future.

21 MS. SMITH: Okay. My concerns are not around
22 the middle school; it's really more the elementary.
23 And I visited the school and was impressed by you and
24 your commitment and what you saw for the future of
25 the school. But I was disappointed in the quality of

1 instruction that I saw the day I visited, especially
2 in the primary grades. I saw incorrect phonics
3 instruction where we were actually teaching the wrong
4 sound connected to a letter and kids chanting the
5 wrong sound. I saw where you were using a direct
6 instruction program and students -- I didn't feel
7 like even the teachers were using the program -- like
8 maybe they -- I mean, I don't know if you had just
9 started; I think you had mentioned that it was
10 something that you were just getting going, which I
11 want to say I think you getting it going was probably
12 -- you saw that there was a deficit and your teachers
13 needed some support and you were bringing that in.
14 So, I mean, I -- I mean, I want to say -- I know I'm
15 saying one thing and saying another at the same time.

16 SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. SMITH: And you expressed that day that you
18 were bringing that in because you felt like there was
19 a need there.

20 SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am.

21 MS. SMITH: So I want to acknowledge that. But
22 I will say that when I left, as a former elementary
23 principal, I had concern for your students in
24 kindergarten, 1st, 2nd grade. And I went back to the
25 primary classrooms anywhere from two to three times

1 over the house that I was there. And the first part
2 of it, it was "we're kind of in transition." And I
3 kept going back thinking we'd get out of transition
4 and really get into instruction, and we were missing
5 the mark for pretty much the whole hour I was there.
6 And then in conversation further, you know, about --
7 just with Alex and you talking about "do you see an
8 improvement" -- and Ms. Alex did say, "Yes, I see an
9 improvement from the last visit" -- it concerned me
10 that that was improvement from the previous visit
11 because I thought we were a long ways from successful
12 instruction with students, especially in the area of
13 reading. So I had concern; I had some big concerns
14 as far as instruction and reading in primary grades.
15 So I need you to kind of address where you guys have
16 headed maybe since my visit and, you know, where you
17 think you're heading from there. Because when I look
18 at -- I pulled up your school improvement team report
19 that was presented to the State Board and just noting
20 that, you know, 1st and 2nd graders come in at the
21 beginning of the year 55% of them two or more years
22 below; 3rd and 4th grade are anywhere -- 75% of your
23 students are two or more years below. That requires
24 intensive reading instruction and intervention and we
25 have a long ways to go. So I need you to kind of

1 address some of that for me please.

2 SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am. So I concur with a lot
3 of what you said. I don't think that any of the
4 student achievement numbers from the primary school,
5 when we look at the data previously, are a
6 misinterpretation. There's a reason why the school
7 was put on academic distress. So recently taking the
8 position of superintendent, in May of last year, I
9 spent several months working with the teachers, as I
10 told you about, in professional learning communities,
11 looking at where the deficits are and looking at what
12 needed to happen. We put together an intervention
13 plan between the end of last year and this year; that
14 was to get us through that academic year to show
15 student achievement growth. That plan from the
16 winter test scores to the spring test scores for that
17 primary school was the highest that primary school
18 had ever seen in its history. That created a ton of
19 buy-in and we got a great group of teachers that
20 rallied around the new model moving forward, which is
21 a very data-driven instruction-based model.
22 Previously, the curriculum was not consistent and
23 each teacher was selecting their own. So as you had
24 alluded to, we did a curriculum adoption of a
25 research validated, very strong phonics-based

1 program. The teachers are recently implementing it;
2 they started implementing it this academic year. We
3 have seen great growth with student engagement counts
4 and rigor with our students just over the course of
5 three months. Absolutely, we understand that it's
6 going to be a long path; we're very aware of it; the
7 teachers are very aware of it. But what I can say is
8 the teachers who stayed with us -- and we had a few
9 who left -- but the teachers who stayed with us
10 during this transition are committed 100% to raising
11 the bar for our students. And we've had those very
12 direct conversations. It's been really hard; we've
13 had some tears, because everyone goes in with the
14 best of intentions. There's never a teacher there
15 that says, "I don't want my students to be
16 successful." They didn't have the tools ready and
17 the environment with the children coming in so far
18 behind to be able to address those needs, and now we
19 have a plan to do that.

20 MS. SMITH: You made a comment about anybody who
21 has visited your campus would "immediately see the
22 heart of our staff." And I do want to acknowledge
23 that I did see your commitment and I did see the
24 commitment of, you know, "we're all in this
25 together." I did see parent volunteers at the school

1 that were working when I was there. But big concerns
2 and you have a long ways to go with instruction in
3 those primary grades with reading and a lot of
4 professional development needs on the teachers that
5 were instructing. I walked away with some really big
6 concerns, and I don't want to -- I want to make sure
7 that that's said today, that there's a long ways to
8 go there if you want to truly see success within this
9 school going all the way up. Long ways to go.

10 SUPT. LONG: Yes. Well, I can say that we are
11 definitely committed to making that path and growth
12 for our students. And a lot of the background has
13 been spent on behavior management and classroom
14 management. That was kind of the first foundation
15 that we needed to hit when we started the year.
16 Teachers have definitely nailed that. They're
17 implementing the positive behavior plan with
18 fidelity. Engagement counts from the beginning of
19 the year went to 72% of the students engaged to over
20 95% of the students engaged in our classroom walk-
21 throughs every week. We're really proud of those
22 numbers, and now are moving to the next step of
23 rigor.

24 MS. SMITH: The other thing I want to note is I
25 did notice that there was an alignment between your

1 school improvement goals, working with the school
2 improvement team, and your goals within your charter
3 application. So I thought that was a good thing.

4 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Just to extend on what Ms.
6 Smith has asked, give us a little bit more about your
7 phonics program. What program did you select? How
8 long are you implementing it each day? What's your
9 time block of your literacy block?

10 SUPT. LONG: We have two different literacy
11 blocks: one is the intervention or phonics-based
12 block, performance grouping block, and we're using
13 Reading Mastery for that. Then we have a second
14 block which is our standard-based instruction block,
15 or our comprehension block, and that block is an
16 additional 60 minutes. In addition to that, we have
17 another 60 minutes of simply language or writing
18 instruction, depending upon the grade level of the
19 child. So that's how the three literacy blocks are
20 built out. For our science and our global studies
21 scope and sequence, what we've done is we've
22 integrated ELA standards throughout every subject
23 throughout the day. So really we're teaching ELA all
24 day long, but those are the three main dedicated ELA
25 blocks.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And the phonics program
2 you selected?

3 SUPT. LONG: Reading Mastery.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Reading Mastery. Okay.
5 Dr. Saunders.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Continuing on what Ms.
7 Smith was saying and with your presentation on the
8 NWEA scores -- and you mentioned losing the students
9 from time to time as far as moving out or going other
10 places. And that can have a large effect on those
11 NWEA scores, especially when you're looking at growth
12 over multiple years, because then you're no longer
13 looking at all the students; you're only looking at
14 those that have that consistent time within your
15 buildings. And so trying to compare to similar
16 populations, looking at your performance on the ACT
17 Aspire --

18 SUPT. LONG: Yes.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: -- I think we have to also
20 address, you know, the two letter grades of F and D
21 on the last letter grade assignment. And looking on
22 ACT Aspire -- specifically I'm looking at grades 3
23 through 7, literacy and math; so there's essentially
24 10 categories there -- and in comparison to the state
25 and Little Rock, Pulaski County, and North Little

1 Rock, in grades 3 through 7, so eight of those
2 categories -- you were the lowest in every one of
3 those. Substantially in 5th grade literacy, for
4 example, where most of the others were 40% or above,
5 you're scoring at 10.64%. So I wanted to just give
6 you the opportunity to address that. That's my big
7 concern.

8 SUPT. LONG: It's our concern too, and it's what
9 we're charged with and it's what our mission is, is
10 to serve students who are coming in behind from a
11 traditional school. So if you look at the 2016 ESEA
12 report and you look at the subgroups of our students,
13 specifically African American subgroups since 89% of
14 our students are, we're fairly comparable to the
15 district in ELA and we're outperforming in math. So
16 we recognize that with our population, especially
17 coming from low income schools or low income areas --
18 and they're transferring because -- for a reason; if
19 they would've been doing well at their school they
20 wouldn't have left. So they are leaving their
21 traditional school to come to us because they are
22 significantly behind, and so we're well aware of
23 that. What we're charged with is making gains at
24 exponential rates; right? We can't make a year at a
25 time; we have to make a year-and-a-half, two year

1 gains every single year in order to keep our kids --
2 to get our kids up to grade level. So, yeah, we
3 definitely have a lot of work to do.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning, Superintendent Long.

6 SUPT. LONG: Good morning.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Very impressed with the
8 presentation --

9 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

10 DR. GOTCHER: -- and I always envy anybody that
11 has to follow the beautiful students that you have.
12 It was a fantastic presentation and it matched what I
13 saw last week in my visit and my previous visits as
14 well. I want to speak beyond the data.

15 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

16 DR. GOTCHER: When I look at a school I like to
17 look at a systems approach, an organizational
18 approach, a culture and climate approach. I
19 highlighted a few things that you said in your
20 presentation or the beautiful students had said. Who
21 you serve sets you apart and that's evident by the
22 shift in the mission statement. And I'm not sure
23 when the original mission statement was established,
24 but the significant changes from the original to the
25 current, the underserved communities -- not just

1 college because I think we all recognize that we've
2 moved beyond just preparing kids for college; we're
3 preparing kids for post-secondary or post-high
4 school; what does it look like in advanced careers.
5 I appreciate those two words in your new mission
6 statement. And the other piece of citizenship and
7 leadership in the community -- and I have a question
8 on that later, if I don't get too long. I love the
9 fact that you teach behavior the same way you teach
10 academics because the way that we prepare kids for
11 the workforce is beyond content. It's not a surprise
12 that we continue to have businesses say, "We want
13 kids to be able to get along well with others before
14 we want kids to just be great at a particular craft."
15 But I'm also challenged hearing some of my colleagues
16 and hearing or reading some of the data. As a good
17 school guy, I want to be able to look at that as
18 well. So when I am challenged I go back and look at
19 the legislative intent of what a charter school is
20 all about. And so when I read phrases like "expanded
21 learning experiences, identified as low achieving,"
22 when I read phrases "meeting measurable student
23 achievement standards" -- and the number one
24 legislative intent of charters is to improve student
25 learning. And I must say in my 18 months on this

1 panel those definitions read differently -- or those
2 phrases read differently to me as I begin to see the
3 statewide approach instead of just a local district
4 approach, as my experience brought me before it
5 brought me to this place. So while I recognize there
6 are challenges I also see the wraparound services,
7 the fulfillment of a current mission. And like Ms.
8 Smith said, there is a long -- it's a long way; it's
9 a long journey. And so I want us to not ignore the
10 comments and the real data because if we are making
11 true data-driven decisions it's got to be at the
12 front of your admin meetings, of your teacher
13 meetings, PLCs. But I'm also very encouraged. And
14 when I saw kids in that gym at the new campus, they
15 don't want to leave the gym; they don't want to go
16 outside. They are so excited about having a new
17 learning culture and seeing that auditorium and
18 seeing -- anyway, I could go on and on about my
19 experience there. So I want to encourage you, but I
20 think you of all people know the reality of the data
21 that sits before you.

22 SUPT. LONG: Yes, sir.

23 DR. GOTCHER: So let me go into a question, and
24 I want to ask two specific questions: What are your
25 partnerships with the area schools look like? And

1 how are those 8th graders being transitioned into
2 their next step? Because I think that's real
3 important for me. So talk just a moment about your
4 partnerships with the area schools beyond 8th grade.

5 SUPT. LONG: Yes, absolutely. So we do have
6 partnerships. Our board of directors has identified
7 schools that they think would be best for our
8 students to go into, or programs. Those schools come
9 in and have parent meetings in our school to talk
10 about future programs for high school and how to get
11 the children into those programs and what the
12 application process looks like. So even just last
13 week one of the first meetings that came was -- LISA
14 Academy came to our school and presented to our
15 parents. So we have partnerships with not only
16 charter schools but also traditional public schools
17 as well coming in and setting our kids up to
18 transition into 8th grade appropriately. Because we
19 have newly adopted the Reading Mastery direct
20 instruction program, as we have indicated, we have a
21 lot of professional development to do on this very
22 detailed program with a lot of nuances. So we've
23 identified the closest school to us that does that
24 same program and it's in Hope, Arkansas. So we have
25 a partnership with the Clinton School in Hope,

1 Arkansas. Our teachers, December 5th and 6th, first
2 week of December, went to Hope, did observations in
3 their classrooms, worked with their development team
4 on their new integration. They have received a grant
5 and are receiving professional development from the
6 National Institute of Direct Instruction. So their
7 coaches are coming in and doing two-day workshops,
8 things like that, and our teachers are participating
9 in those workshops, our lead teachers, and then
10 disseminating the information down. So I think that
11 partnership is going to be very fruitful as well, as
12 far as professional development. So those are the
13 two major things that we've done this academic year
14 with local high schools. But as I had mentioned
15 earlier, a lot of the partnerships that we have are
16 around colleges, schools of ed. coming in, teachers
17 tutoring programs. Even we had a work study program
18 and there was a recent teacher I'm thinking at our
19 primary school who her major was accounting. Sorry
20 accountants, but she changed her major to elementary
21 ed. after doing her work study for two months in our
22 school. So we feel really good about those types of
23 partnerships as well.

24 DR. GOTCHER: Madam, one more question and then
25 I'll stop. And I might be a little bold and maybe

1 ask you -- I will let you pick or maybe the students
2 will be happy -- the bottom part of the mission
3 statement about citizenship and leadership, how do
4 the kids feel they're being prepared for citizenship
5 and leadership in the communities?

6 SUPT. LONG: Well, I think that's an appropriate
7 question, absolutely, for any of the children.

8 DR. GOTCHER: And I'm curious if anybody would
9 be bold enough to answer, because I know that's so
10 important. And I'll ask it again for Ms. -- that's
11 Ms. Messiha, is it not? Do you want me to ask the
12 question again, Ms. Messiha?

13 MS. OTIS: Please. Yes, please.

14 DR. GOTCHER: All right. When you think about
15 yourself as a student, Ms. Messiha, and you think
16 about being a good citizen and being a good leader in
17 your community, how is Little Rock Prep preparing you
18 to be an awesome citizen and awesome leader in your
19 community?

20 MS. OTIS: Okay. Some of the 7th graders and
21 some -- well, all of the 8th graders must do
22 community service. And I feel like community service
23 helps us build relationships with different
24 organizations and things so that when we're out in
25 the real world we can go back to those organizations

1 and we can also put that on different -- like our
2 resume and stuff and we can use it in the future, so
3 --

4 DR. GOTCHER: Very good. I love the phrase
5 "relationship" and I think you used the word
6 "partnership" as well. But yeah, good. And the
7 community service, it's a great thing. Do you find
8 that your peers enjoy that or do you find that they
9 struggle with that?

10 MS. OTIS: They enjoy it. A lot of times we
11 like to do stuff together as an 8th grade class. So
12 when -- like one of our partnerships, which is First
13 Tee, a lot of us go to First Tee and we build
14 relationships with the coaches and things.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Great.

16 MS. OTIS: And we go and we're volunteers; we
17 volunteer every Wednesday, so --

18 DR. GOTCHER: Good. Ms. Messiha, thank you very
19 much. I appreciate your answer, Ma'am.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions?

21 MS. SMITH: I have a question for the
22 researcher.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

24 MS. SMITH: Dr. McKenzie, quick question. This
25 is curiosity here. So when you were doing your data

1 with your cohorts --

2 DR. McKENZIE: Yes.

3 MS. SMITH: Okay, those students that had been
4 there one year, two years, three years --

5 DR. McKENZIE: Yes.

6 MS. SMITH: -- and you were basing their growth
7 piece, is that growth -- does it start every -- each
8 year does it start new again, like they take their
9 first assessment at the beginning of the year in
10 September? Are you looking at ongoing growth from
11 the very first time they took NWEA, so if they'd been
12 there three years, all the way to the third year or
13 does it start new ever year?

14 DR. McKENZIE: That's such an excellent
15 question. So growth is always from one time point to
16 a second time point within a year. You can do spring
17 to spring or fall to spring. So this was fall to
18 spring growth from year one, the growth target, plus
19 fall to spring growth from year two. So, yes, it was
20 cumulative but it was based on each of those fall-to-
21 spring time points.

22 MS. SMITH: Okay. And within NWEA alone, when
23 you have that -- so groups of kids that you're
24 assessing, so they assessed and you have their spring
25 score, and then they assess again in the fall for the

1 new year. How much of a drop are we seeing in summer
2 loss or -- and I'm just -- I've been at schools where
3 we gave MAP testing and NWEA and just the emphasis we
4 put on it in the fall to the spring. And so I'm just
5 asking what type of drop do we normally see in those
6 scores for those students or do we not see one?

7 DR. McKENZIE: I didn't look at it specifically
8 for Little Rock Prep, but I can. Typically, students
9 from more challenging populations have a greater drop
10 over the summer than students who may spend their
11 summer doing more educationally enriching
12 opportunities. But I can't speak to that
13 specifically in this case. I did not see anything
14 unusual in the growth patterns for students that
15 would indicate that fall scores were exceptionally
16 depressed for the group of students as a whole --

17 MS. SMITH: Okay.

18 DR. McKENZIE: -- leading to some sort of
19 concern about lack of validity of the fall
20 assessments.

21 MS. SMITH: Okay. Okay. So is it an acceptable
22 assessment point to go from spring to spring -- or
23 not spring -- fall to -- no, spring scores at one
24 year to spring of the next year, a full year?

25 DR. McKENZIE: They do have growth norms for

1 spring to spring. I choose to use fall to spring
2 specifically for the reason that we can't control the
3 environments that kids are in over the summer. We
4 can only -- I think it's more fair to teachers and to
5 the school to measure the educational impact from
6 fall to spring when --

7 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: The overhead screen at
8 the back of the room started to unwind down.)

9 DR. McKENZIE: That freaked me out a little bit.
10 From fall to spring, when the school is having an
11 impact on those students, instead of holding them
12 responsible for spring to spring where for three of
13 those months they don't have any direct impact with
14 the students.

15 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

16 DR. McKENZIE: You're welcome.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Can I follow-up on that? And it
18 might help -- is there a way we could get the slide
19 that had the year's growth across multiple years?

20 DR. McKENZIE: The percent meeting expected
21 growth?

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. You had I think one year,
23 two years.

24 DR. McKENZIE: Yeah.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: If we could get that -- is there

1 a way we could get that slide up?

2 DR. McKENZIE: Sure. Do you want me to flip
3 through?

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Please. I just had a question on
5 that one.

6 DR. McKENZIE: Was this the one? All of the
7 analyses are cohort based. Yes.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. And that would help. And
9 so I guess my question is: as I referenced earlier,
10 when we're looking at one year, two year, three year,
11 or four year, how many kids are we looking at per
12 grade level in these cohorts in this study?

13 DR. McKENZIE: So that's an excellent question.
14 The four-year cohort includes 60 students and it's
15 only limited to those kids that started at LRPA in
16 the first year and were in grades K through 5. Those
17 are the only kids that can be included in that
18 cohort.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I'm sorry. So 60 students
20 spanning how many grades?

21 DR. McKENZIE: 60 students that began K, 1, 2,
22 3, 4, 5 in the first year of LRPA -- right?

23 DR. SAUNDERS: So is that one cohort of
24 students?

25 DR. McKENZIE: That's the only cohort that's

1 eligible to stay for four years because the school
2 has only been open that long. Does that make sense?
3 So in order to have stayed for all four years you had
4 to have started the first year and not gotten up to
5 8th grade that where you had to leave.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. Okay. Let me rephrase it.
7 Because I'm looking at the average class size grade
8 enrollment is between 50 and 60, roughly. And so,
9 you know, I'm trying to understand how that cohort
10 could have 60 unless it's spanning multiple grades.

11 DR. McKENZIE: Oh. It spans multiple grades.
12 It's any kids that started in the first year and have
13 stayed for four whole years.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: So, for example, of a 6th grade
15 group, say this year's 6th grade, that number may be
16 reflective of --

17 DR. McKENZIE: 9% of those kids.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: 9%?

19 DR. McKENZIE: Yes.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

21 DR. McKENZIE: So the kids who stayed K through
22 3 made up 26% of this group and -- but it's pretty
23 well represented across all the grade levels, except
24 for the kids that were -- started in 5th grade in the
25 first year and then went 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th. A very

1 small percentage of those kids stayed for all four
2 years. So there's 60 in that four-year group, but
3 it's a limited group; not everyone could be in that
4 group. And there's 82 in the three-year group,
5 there's 123 in the two-year group, and then there's
6 363 in the one-year group. Now any kid that started
7 in 8th grade at any point could only be in the one-
8 year group, right, because they have to leave. So
9 about -- I think it was about 28% of the kids who
10 were eligible to stay for four years did and about
11 32% of the kids that were eligible to stay for three
12 years did; 57% of the kids who were eligible to stay
13 for two years did. So the retention rates are sort
14 of increasing as the cohorts go through.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. McKenzie, for
16 clarification, when you say "expected growth" --

17 DR. McKENZIE: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- clarify that for us.

19 DR. McKENZIE: So each student when they take
20 the test, the MAP test in the fall, has a typical
21 growth target or an expected growth target.

22 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: The overhead screen in
23 the back of the room begins to unwind downward
24 again.)

25 DR. McKENZIE: It may be --

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CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Hang on just a minute.

(COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: The overhead screen in the back of the room is raised.)

DR. McKENZIE: Depending on the score that the student receives and the grade level and the content area in which they've been tested, they have a typical or expected growth to make by the spring. So those numbers aren't numbers that are just made up, like we want 100% to, you know, be proficient; that's based on these huge nationally representative norming samples from NWEA. So even for students who start really high they have a growth target of two or three points maybe, maybe five, depending on the content area. And students who start well below grade level still have an individualized growth target of typical growth that may be four or seven or fifteen points, depending on the content area. And that's not saying that that's going to get them to grade level necessarily. What that target is is saying four students in this humongous multiyear national sample that started at this point in the fall in this grade and this content area, typically they grew 15 points or 7 points or 8 points or whatever it is, so we can use that as a measure of saying a typical kid grew this much. That's the target, at least to have kids

1 meet that target, but it is an average growth. So in
2 an average school 50% of kids are going to meet that
3 target, which is sort of a hard thing to wrap our
4 head around. But when we're comparing to national
5 growth targets we -- you know -- it's not like where
6 100% of our kids are going to make exceptional
7 growth.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is that calculated on age
9 or grade level?

10 DR. McKENZIE: It's calculated on grade level.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And performance at the
12 time?

13 DR. McKENZIE: And performance at the time and
14 content area. Yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I want to follow-up
16 with one more question on that. So I know you've
17 looked at this with many schools.

18 DR. McKENZIE: Yes, ma'am.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: What relationship do you
20 see to this data to the data on state assessments?
21 So if we're following these kids and we're seeing
22 this expected growth, are we seeing that transfer to
23 state assessments?

24 DR. McKENZIE: Well, we've had some slight
25 changes to the state assessment system over the past

1 couple of years. NWEA is highly predictive of
2 performance on any state assessment. So once you
3 reach a certain level of performance on the old
4 Arkansas test that was the 33rd percentile nationally
5 for certain grades -- on others it's the 60th -- once
6 you reach that point you're highly likely to be
7 proficient on the ACT Aspire or the PARCC or the
8 benchmark. Growth is only relevant to that
9 proficiency once you get to that point, so it's sort
10 of that growth to that 60th percentile and then
11 you'll be proficient, likely, on the ACT Aspire or
12 the PARCC. In terms of below that, they're
13 correlated but not perfectly because, you know, the
14 ACT Aspire has a big writing component that the MAP
15 doesn't have. But it is a good indicator of overall
16 academic performance and if kids are likely to be
17 proficient on the ACT Aspire or the PARCC or
18 whatever, ACT, whatever assessment it is that we're
19 looking at. Did that answer your question?

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. And of the students
21 that were in that four-year cohort did you see
22 similar responses to the various assessments? Did
23 you see that they were meeting proficiency, the
24 students that you expected to?

25 DR. MCKENZIE: I actually did not look at the

1 data in connection with the ACT Aspire. I just
2 looked at the NWEA MAP growth in and of itself. But
3 that's something I can look at as a follow-up, if
4 you'd like.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have a little bit of
6 concern in that are the -- do the educators have an
7 accurate view or accurate milestones to what the end-
8 result is desired to be? And so I'm not making a
9 judgment on this interim assessment; I'm just saying,
10 you know, are we setting them up to be successful or
11 have we given them a false hope?

12 SUPT. LONG: I wanted to let you know that
13 question is a very good question and we've considered
14 that question as well. So we're using three
15 different benchmark assessments -- this is one of
16 three -- so that our teachers make sure that they're
17 getting a well-rounded view of not just teaching to a
18 test but making sure our students actually know the
19 standards that they need to know. So in addition to
20 NWEA MAP we're using the ACT Aspire interim
21 assessments and we're using the Illuminate benchmark
22 assessments.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Perfect answer. Thank
24 you. Ms. Barnes.

25 MS. BARNES: Good morning and thank you all for

1 the presentation as well as the responsiveness. You
2 know, I know that you have -- as a charter you've
3 been before either the Panel here or the State Board
4 a number of times for a number of reasons. And
5 there's no question that there's pride in the school.
6 There is no question that you serve a challenged
7 population, but we also have a challenged population
8 throughout the state in various places, particularly
9 here. So I reviewed the mission and I looked at the
10 information that has been presented. I appreciate
11 Dr. McKenzie's explanations, and like my colleagues I
12 have great concerns. Because while I do -- I have
13 not been to the elementary, but I'm very concerned
14 about the elementary. When I looked at the previous
15 public school rating for the primary and for the
16 middle grades, and I looked at where achievement
17 should have been expected for the growth for the
18 challenge points and whether -- and the scatterplot
19 as to where we are with respect to other districts
20 and schools in the state, and we're very low. Now at
21 middle school, yes, we are above in math and I think
22 you talked about that. And so there are so many
23 components here but I'm not hearing a different
24 portrait. Like I said, I have not been to the
25 primary; I did go to the previous location with the

1 middle grades and I have not been to the new
2 location. I know that it takes time. But when I
3 also consider that we're discussing achievement and
4 comparisons with schools around us I don't know how
5 much time we need to get there. There have been so
6 many transitions. I don't know -- you know, I don't
7 even know if you can make me comfortable with how
8 much time -- one year, two year, three year --
9 because my focus of course, as everyone else's, is
10 children and whether we are moving forward, whether
11 we're hovering, whether we're losing ground. And
12 it's very critical in that primary grade, as well as
13 being prepared to move forward into graduation and
14 then beyond.

15 I think I'm talking out-loud to help myself. I
16 hope you all can bear with me with this. Because I
17 recognize the passion and the relationship, and the
18 children are very articulate in knowing where they
19 are and where they want to be and I know that the
20 community service is a critical component. I'm still
21 in contact with the young lady that just recently
22 graduated from your school and she's just like she
23 was when I met her at the school one day. So I know
24 that you're putting in the work; I know that you're
25 putting in the necessary time and effort. I just

1 don't see what I was looking for today from when you
2 came before us and we took no action on the priority
3 status. I may -- it may come; I may hear it more
4 because I think that -- you know -- I think that the
5 work is being put in. But I also think that when I
6 look at this whole perspective, not just -- and
7 that's unfortunate that I'm saying it right now --
8 not just Little Rock Prep but all schools and all
9 children and all challenged populations -- what's
10 different? That's what I need to know. What are you
11 doing that would make me without a shadow of a doubt
12 say -- hey, I know why children are there; I know why
13 people want their children there, you know, as
14 opposed to the surrounding schools, because I know
15 that everyone is struggling academically, with
16 attendance, with discipline, and I know that you have
17 found some pieces that fit together. But I need you
18 to help me understand what you're doing that's so
19 different that's going to move beyond where all
20 children are right now. Can you help me just a
21 little?

22 SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. BARNES: I apologize.

24 SUPT. LONG: No, don't. I really appreciate --
25 I really appreciate your question. I previously was

1 running -- helping run -- co-running a network of six
2 schools in a different state that were extremely high
3 achieving. In that state they do a one-to-five
4 rating system and there were 19 Level 5 schools, and
5 our schools held four of those 19 spots, which would
6 be similar to your A to F. So I'm very familiar with
7 what high achieving schools look like, and believe
8 me, I want our students to get there and I feel like
9 we have a clear path to get there. We're meeting our
10 kids where they're at and we're taking it one step at
11 a time and building them up and getting them there.
12 And we're doing it by building the children up
13 inside, not by a compliance-driven -- compliance
14 environment, "you will do it because we say you'll do
15 it;" but we're motivating the children to do it
16 because they want to do it, because they need to take
17 that with them when they leave us and there isn't a
18 teacher over the top of them telling them that they
19 need to do it.

20 We also are grappling with the same thing that
21 you're grappling, which is why we respectfully and
22 conservatively asked for a three-year charter. We
23 talked a lot about asking for a longer charter, but
24 we thought the three-year charter was appropriate
25 considering where we are scoring. We think three

1 years is a minimum to show us that we can get the
2 gains that we need and you can see the track record
3 and you can see us, but not an extensive amount of
4 time to where you have to worry about us, where we're
5 performing.

6 So I think the biggest thing is looking at the
7 individual child, and every single child in the
8 school has transferred to us for one reason or
9 another. No one has zoned them to come to us;
10 they've all come to us because they wanted to. You
11 can go into every individual story of children who
12 were -- and I'm thinking of kids literally that are
13 in our school this year who've experienced domestic
14 violence, rape, bullying, homelessness; those are
15 things we've experienced this year. And each of
16 those children have transferred to us because our
17 school is fulfilling something that they weren't
18 getting somewhere else, and those children and those
19 families are happy and they feel safe and they're
20 thriving. And that's what's important to us is every
21 individual child, making sure that wherever that mark
22 is for them, whatever that deficit that they're
23 receiving that they have for whatever reason, that
24 we're making sure to fill that deficit for them. And
25 I'm confident that with the academic structure we put

1 in place and the children feeling that love and
2 safety that they will get there because they're
3 extremely intelligent and they want to get there.
4 That's why they've transferred to us.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. --

6 MS. BARNES: I appreciate the sincerity and the
7 honesty; I appreciate the fact that you're looking at
8 one child at a time, meeting children where they are.
9 And what I'm looking for and forward to is the
10 personalization of the learning environment so that
11 children can be successful --

12 SUPT. LONG: Yes.

13 MS. BARNES: -- not just in the protection of
14 Little Rock Prep, but be successful wherever they go,
15 wherever they are.

16 SUPT. LONG: Exactly. Exactly.

17 MS. BARNES: And so I appreciate the passion,
18 again, and I appreciate the response because it's an
19 honest response.

20 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

21 MS. BARNES: And I thank you for that and thank
22 you all for your indulgence. I just -- I'm one of
23 these complicated people and I have to process
24 differently. So thank you. For now, that's what I
25 have.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

2 MS. SMITH: I just kind of wanted to respond a
3 little bit to what you said. I agree, their needs
4 have to be met and kids need to feel safe at school
5 and you're dealing with a population of students that
6 have had -- you mentioned some very specific trauma.
7 And we -- you're right; all schools need to be
8 providing that. But we cannot love our students into
9 ignorance; we have to also provide them with the
10 academics and qualified instructors that can teach
11 them. And you're right, we have to give an
12 environment and a setting in which kids come to and
13 feel safe, and I do believe that you're 100%
14 committed to that. In our visit, when I visited your
15 school you did have a plan. Reading Mastery was just
16 beginning, but there was evidence that we had to have
17 a lot of professional development and training with
18 the teachers. They can love them all day, but that
19 will not make them readers and they have to be
20 readers. And it's not about -- I mean, really to me
21 it's not about me looking on here and saying, "Oh,
22 you met your growth." I want a kid to be able to
23 graduate from your school and be able to read because
24 they had instruction that enabled them to be able to
25 read. So you're right, the environment has to be

1 there; but we also have to have that academic piece,
2 because that's what we're about in schools too.

3 SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. SMITH: So I cannot encourage you enough to
5 stay with your plan on academics.

6 SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. SMITH: But especially the preparation of
8 the teachers. Because a lot of your -- if I say this
9 wrong, correct me please -- a lot of your primary
10 teachers did not have a teaching license. Is that
11 correct?

12 SUPT. LONG: That is correct.

13 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so they're already
14 starting off a little bit behind. Okay. Teaching
15 reading, it's rocket science; I mean, it's not easy.
16 It's not easy and not anybody can do it. Just
17 because we all attended school and we all can read
18 doesn't mean everyone can teach reading. It is
19 difficult. And so we have a lot of teachers in those
20 primary grades who do not have a background in
21 instruction for reading and we've got to -- you've
22 got to have a plan to go in with huge wraparound
23 services of getting those teachers ready.

24 SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. SMITH: So I just kind of wanted to --

1 SUPT. LONG: And that plan is in place.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. I tell you, I struggle
5 here because there are so many things that go, you
6 know, into a decision that just cannot be
7 articulated. I mean, we could be here for days, so
8 many factors. And, you know, I think, you know, on
9 one side students that attend your school are there
10 by choice by the parents. They choose to put their
11 students there. And with that, you know, frame of
12 mind, I also have to look at are the parents informed
13 of the school's progress or lack thereof. And so --

14 SUPT. LONG: Absolutely. Absolutely. We sent
15 all of the notices home when we're supposed to. We
16 have parent meetings every single month. When we had
17 a curriculum adoption we had a large parent meeting,
18 bringing everyone in, showing them why. We keep
19 quarterly Dashboards that we present at the parent
20 meetings on exactly where we're at and what we're
21 doing with our kids. So absolutely.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: And on that same vein, I look at
23 -- and I know you have a waiver from 1 through 7,
24 sections 1 through 7 on website requirements, but
25 there are other requirements you do not have a waiver

1 from. And looking on your website -- for example,
2 one of the requirements is the academic distress
3 status and plan to get off of that, and I could not
4 find that on the website. I found many documents
5 that are from 12-13, was the most recent ones in
6 certain categories. Some of them are from 16-17.
7 But I think there's a lot of data in there or a lot
8 of information that should be updated and be very
9 transparent that is not there that is required. So
10 even -- there should even be more information than
11 what's required, in my opinion, just from any school
12 --

13 SUPT. LONG: Okay.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: -- on the transparency.

15 SUPT. LONG: Absolutely.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions?
17 Mr. Rogers.

18 MR. ROGERS: I don't have any questions. I just
19 wanted to say that I did go to your middle school
20 too, and I appreciate you having me down there.

21 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

22 MR. ROGERS: And during the presentation, I know
23 that the fiscal side has gotten better, paying off
24 the loans responsibly. The day that we met, when we
25 talked about it you were getting those paid off

1 because that was a big thing that y'all waned to do.
2 And also to see your unrestricted fund balance
3 increasing --

4 SUPT. LONG: Thank you.

5 MR. ROGERS: -- to make that, you're being more
6 fiscally responsible and doing what you need to do,
7 but still knowing that you still have to pay the
8 bills, and I appreciated that. And also some of the
9 other things we just talked about with some of the
10 internal controls that I saw that were lacking at
11 Little Rock Prep when we met also that day, and y'all
12 have addressed those. So I just wanted to say that I
13 appreciate what you've done on the fiscal side of it.
14 And the academic side is not mine, so I just stay
15 over here on the money side. But when I was at your
16 school I enjoyed the visit there and it is an
17 impressive campus. And one of the things that I was
18 impressed with was your students. They were
19 engaging; they were more polite than I probably was
20 at that age and that was impressive to me. They were
21 well-mannered; they worked well with the teachers.
22 And for math class they were -- we were in, that was
23 real impressive how your teacher had your students
24 engaged in that class and how they all wanted to be a
25 part of it. So I really don't have a question; I

1 just wanted to say thank-you for having me out that
2 day.

3 SUPT. LONG: Thank you; I appreciate it. And I
4 definitely attribute that to Mr. Yarberry and his
5 team. He's worked very, very hard on the financial
6 side and I think that really helps having someone
7 dedicated to that.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have a number of people
9 that have signed up for public comment. There is
10 three minutes per person. Let me get my clock set
11 here. And the first one is McKenzie Wright.

12 MS. WRIGHT: Good morning everyone. I would
13 just like to say, just sitting here listening to you
14 guys from a parent point of view we don't do numbers.
15 Okay? And you're a parent; we don't do numbers.
16 That is strictly why you're in this position. But
17 what we do is -- I've been with this school since
18 2010. I have three children; they are in 7th grade
19 and my twin boys are in 5th grade. We left this
20 school this year and I regretted it, my children
21 regretted it. I went to public school; I went to
22 three public schools. And the transition -- to try
23 to -- the reason I moved from this school is because
24 they moved. I cannot take my kids from another part
25 of town to another part of town; that is an

1 inconvenience to me. So what I did was move closer
2 to the school, and that's what a lot of us parents
3 did. We followed what we know and a lot of parents
4 did move. But I have been at this school -- and the
5 reason I came to this school -- I was on the waiting
6 list for six months at McDermott Elementary. I came
7 to this school back in 2010 because when we did the
8 interview -- when you walk into this school and you
9 do the preliminary interview -- my boys saw a
10 kindergartner when they were in kindergarten -- they
11 saw a kindergartner reading in front of the classroom
12 like he was in college, and they said, "I want to do
13 that," because they weren't getting it in public
14 schools. So the reason I am here at this school is
15 not only that they're teachers and they're parents;
16 we're family. If you go into anywhere, just like a
17 job, your workplace, you have coworkers that you hang
18 with; you have coworkers you just don't too much like
19 to deal with, so you stay away from them. The same
20 is here. If I can go into a school and you know me
21 on a first-name basis and I don't have to worry about
22 being inconvenienced and 25,000 calls from other
23 schools because my child has done this or there's a
24 misunderstanding, I know it's going to be taken care
25 of and I don't have to worry about that. I love Dr.

1 Hinton; he's the reason why I am at this school. And
2 Ms. Rogers, I love you too. She's the reason we came
3 back. My students begged -- my children begged me to
4 go back to LRPA because of the unorganized [sic] of
5 the public schools. And I realized that that's not
6 where I wanted to be anyway, so I moved to be back to
7 where home is for us. So when you talk about numbers
8 and what is this school -- what do they have, it's
9 family. I look at these parents and I see them; I've
10 been with them; they're my family. That's what it
11 is. And so with numbers, when you have things that
12 change -- we've lost a lot of teachers, yes. But
13 just like it takes a village to raise a child, the
14 same with these teachers. If they come in and
15 they're not certified to be there, they're going to
16 jack up the whole process. That's the way I feel.
17 So, therefore, we had a lot of teachers that left.
18 They shouldn't have been there. They shouldn't be
19 there. And if that is your job to get us teachers in
20 there who are supposed to be there for these children
21 and they know what they're doing our numbers will go
22 through the roof. It will go through the roof -- and
23 if we get some good lunch going for them. That was
24 from my kids; they wanted me to say that. But bottom
25 line is I wanted to let you guys know that there's

1 more to it than numbers. And, yes, we can get there.
2 It takes a village; it takes us at home to start.
3 And that's what you need to look at is that we choose
4 to take -- we choose to come every morning and pick
5 our kids up every evening. There's no buses that
6 helps do that. We choose this. We choose this. Our
7 children choose this. And you can see that from
8 these children right here. We've been here. I've
9 been here. It's 2016, about to be 2017, and I made
10 the worst choice by leaving just for a few months,
11 and I'm back. And if you take this away -- think
12 about all the other schools that are closing, because
13 that's where I just came from. All the other schools
14 that are closing, what are we going to do? What are
15 we going to do? Home-school? Then we're really
16 going to be messed up.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Wright.

18 MS. WRIGHT: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm apologizing upfront
20 for the name I'm about to butcher: Shenaqua --

21 MS. GENERAC: Shenequa.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Shenequa. Close. I
23 apologize, Ms. Shenequa. And if you would say your
24 last name when you get to the microphone that would
25 be helpful as well.

1 MS. GENERAC: Good morning.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll get the
3 microphone up really close to you. Thank you.

4 MS. GENERAC: My name is Shenequa Generac [ps]
5 and my daughter Venay [ps] has attended Little Rock
6 Prep since kindergarten; she's now in the 3rd grade.
7 Since beginning Little Rock Prep she's learned to
8 display more self-control and independence, has
9 developed a better social skill and confidence, and
10 has developed a love for school and education. I
11 believe that a lot of this can be attributed to
12 Little Rock Prep, as well as her home life. From
13 kindergarten through 3rd grade my daughter has
14 flourished in subjects such as reading and math. I
15 know you all have talked about numbers of reading and
16 math, but my daughter is an awesome reader. She
17 reads almost a book a day and she consistently scores
18 above her goals on those standardized tests. I
19 appreciate the staff at Little Rock Prep for that;
20 students are receiving the help that they need, if
21 needed, as well as insuring that students that are
22 consistently scoring above and working above their
23 grade level are not held back. The school offers
24 programs to help enhance them socially and
25 emotionally, such as the arts outreach program. My

1 daughter recently made a Christmas wreath pillow in
2 arts outreach that, of course, people have been
3 offering to buy, but she's not selling it. Also,
4 because the classrooms are named after universities
5 the students are learning about different colleges
6 and universities, and my student, my daughter has
7 told me she will be attending Harvard. I don't know
8 how we're going to pay for it, but she will be
9 attending Harvard. And I know that my child will do
10 extremely well. I know that she is going to achieve
11 and she's going to be a success, and I know that this
12 charter school has a lot to do with that. This
13 charter school has made her into the student that she
14 is. She is bright; she is articulate; and she is
15 very outgoing, and I can attribute a lot of that to
16 Little Rock Prep. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Antoria
18 Harrison.

19 MS. HARRISON: Good morning. My name is Antoria
20 Harrison and I have a son in the 1st grade at Little
21 Rock Prep. When I decided to move him from another
22 public school in Little Rock, he was actually in
23 kindergarten and I actually decided to put him in a
24 private school. Well, going into his 1st grade year,
25 of course, private school was still an option but I

1 just wanted something that was I guess just a little
2 less expensive but still gave him the same quality
3 education. So that's when I started doing my
4 research and I came across Little Rock Prep. I'm
5 very familiar with some of the other families that
6 also decided to have students there, so I was like,
7 okay, why not give them a shot. Hands-down the best
8 decision I've ever made for my son. A lot of the
9 things that I agree with there go along with my own
10 educational philosophy. You know, education is not
11 only developing them, you know, to be competitive
12 academically when it comes to college and things like
13 that, but just developing him, you know, as a whole
14 child. They address all needs. You know, I want him
15 to be a good well-rounded citizen in the community; I
16 want him to give back, not only now but even when he
17 becomes an adult. Truly, Little Rock Preparatory
18 Academy has become a staple in this community and I
19 can't be happier to call myself, my entire family,
20 you know, part of this family as well. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Tish Bogard.

22 MS. BOGARD: Good morning. My name is Tisa
23 Bogard. I have a son that's currently -- is at
24 Little Rock Prep; he's been there since the 6th
25 grade. I actually took him out of public school; he

1 has attended Pulaski Heights. Since he's been there
2 his whole attitude has changed; his grades has went
3 up. And school starts at 7:30. The funny thing is,
4 at 7:00 he's in the car, "I'm ready to go, I'm ready
5 to go. Somebody is going to be there." He is so
6 excited about getting up, going to school. I have a
7 personal relationship with all of his teachers, his
8 principal Ms. Rogers. They have been a great access
9 in my son's life and he's growing. I love the
10 school. I find myself participating more, which when
11 he was in public school I never signed up for PTA, I
12 never went to any of the school functions. But when
13 I go in there it's nice to hear somebody say, "Hey,
14 Ms. Bogard, how are you?" Because they know you,
15 they get to know you; they get to know your family as
16 well. And I like smallness because they get that
17 individual attention that they need. And when he was
18 in public school, it's a different teacher calling
19 about a grade. Half of them didn't even know, you
20 know, his name hardly or what was going on. But it's
21 small-knit there and I like that. And I had even
22 asked, I said, "Well, why y'all hadn't thought about
23 getting a high school?" You know, but I really,
24 really do enjoy the way my son when he comes home he
25 can talk about what he done in school or this is

1 what's going on or he knows the school calendar for
2 the fiscal year and everything. So this has really
3 been a blessing for me and him. So I enjoy him being
4 there; I love it; I love Ms. Rogers; I love all the
5 teachers -- and I do. The school makes us feel like
6 a family and it's a blessing.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

8 MS. BOGARD: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Matthews, last name is
10 Matthews.

11 MS. MATTHEWS: This is Sheree Lawson Matthews.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Oh, that's an H. Okay.

13 MS. MATTHEWS: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sorry.

15 MS. MATTHEWS: My handwriting isn't the best; I
16 didn't go to Little Rock Prep. I have two students;
17 I have an 8th grader and a 6th grader, and they've
18 been there since the doors opened. And I've seen the
19 school go from having no technology, us as parents,
20 and I've been active in the parent and teacher --
21 Helping Students program, which is equivalent to PTA,
22 since day one, and they've grown a lot. They've
23 grown a lot. True, they do need some help at the
24 primary school. My son just came from the primary
25 school and a lot of teachers -- you know --

1 especially his teacher followed him from kindergarten
2 to 4th grade, and they are really passionate about
3 it. We've had a big turnover but the teachers that
4 are there, I think they're there for the right
5 reasons. We do need a lot of help. But the
6 students, you know, they're appreciative of every
7 little thing. You know, it's not -- they don't take
8 it for granted that they have computers now, whereas,
9 you know, they could've always had computers. But
10 then also, like they said, there's always something
11 going on. The culture there, it's always something;
12 you know, we've got games this weekend, we've got
13 science fair coming up and they're excited about
14 doing that. They're like, "Oh, I've got science
15 fair." Used to be, I didn't want to do science fair;
16 I just didn't want to do it. But these kids, I mean,
17 they're excited; they want to work together; they
18 want to stay later after school; they want to go
19 early. You know, "I've got to go help Miss Such-and-
20 Such do this, and if I do this I can go to the Good
21 Citizenship party," and they have all these
22 incentives for the good things that they do. But
23 then they also -- you know, as I stop by the school
24 on a regular basis, some of the children that, you
25 know, are having a bad day it's not, you know, that

1 harsh approach; it's more about trying to figure out
2 what really happened and hearing their side of
3 things. And I think it is a student-based school.
4 And I just want to encourage the teachers; y'all are
5 doing a good job and I hope we are able to stay in
6 the swing of things for a little while longer to get
7 it right because I think we're going in the right
8 direction. We've come a long, long way in the time
9 I've been there, and that's been since the doors have
10 opened. And I appreciate Dr. Hinton and Ms. Rogers,
11 who was a teacher when we first started going there,
12 and now she's an awesome principal at the middle
13 school. So thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Valerie
15 Childs.

16 MS. CHILDS: Good morning.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning.

18 MS. CHILDS: Goodness, a lot of information was
19 going on this morning. So mine isn't going to be so
20 formal. I'm going to keep it kind of simple. My
21 name is Valerie Childs and I'm happy to be here this
22 morning. Currently, I have three children that
23 attend LRPA. My son attends Prep Primary and my
24 daughters, ages 12 and 10, attend Prep Middle. I'm
25 like many of the parents at LRPA; I too am a single

1 parent. Just a little bit about myself: I served 15
2 years in the United States Army Reserve. I'm a
3 graduate of UALR and I have over 20 years of
4 experience working with the underprivileged youth and
5 adults in this state. And I also serve on the past
6 board or the parents' advisory board. So I kind of
7 know a little bit about how your environment can
8 affect your performance, so I appreciate the passion
9 of the school and kind of zeroing in on that. But
10 I'm a little bit off what I wrote; I just wanted to
11 add real quick that it takes time to figure out --
12 I'm pretty sure that a lot of these teachers and
13 principals and staff when they got into this they
14 didn't expect to have to deal with so many emotional
15 issues with the children. And so not that education
16 took a backseat, but in order for a kid to be able to
17 perform at their best they have to be mentally
18 stable. And so I appreciate the staff for wanting to
19 do that.

20 Back to my letter. Last year was my first year
21 of attendance for me and my family at LRPA.
22 Previously, my children attended a private Christian
23 school, and then home-schooling, and then traditional
24 public school. And needless to say, the experiences
25 were all different. On the surface, LRPA seemed to

1 be the best fit for my family. The school hours were
2 longer and the staff seemed very accessible and
3 approachable, and I appreciated that. Still, I kind
4 of felt like, you know, maybe my kids didn't need to
5 be there. It didn't take me long after being there
6 to see that there were issues with the other
7 students. But -- I'm trying to stay focused just a
8 little bit, so you just have to excuse me. I want to
9 kind of skip to a personal experience, just kind of
10 skip to it, and then I'll get back to what I need to
11 say.

12 Last year my daughter had a conflict of
13 personalities with another student, and the staff
14 stepped in. And in public school, because I'd been
15 there, usually they go right to in-school suspension,
16 then they go to one to two days, three to four days,
17 and the kids are out at home, parents have to miss
18 school [sic]; the kids really don't learn a real
19 lesson about, you know, whatever they've done. But I
20 talked with the staff and I was surprised that they
21 were willing to sit down with the students all
22 together and then get all the parents involved and
23 figure out the issue, and it was a pretty tough
24 situation between the other child and my daughter. A
25 couple of weeks ago -- I want to read the letter that

1 my daughter brought home from this student that she
2 had the issue with last year. This was this year, a
3 couple of weeks ago. It says, "Dear Grace" -- I'm
4 reading my daughter's name -- "Dear Grace, you used
5 to be my enemy, but things have changed and you are
6 now my friend and I love you. And just like all of
7 my friends, you are very sweet and you are very
8 funny. Love" -- the other child's name and she put a
9 little heart on it. You know, and just saying that
10 to say that what they're doing at LRPA you do not get
11 at public school, which is a chance to be that better
12 person that you intended to be or that life intended
13 for you to be in the first place. Everybody can be
14 educated, but not every person gets the opportunity
15 to be a better person. That chance has to be given
16 to you. And many of these kids have had that chance
17 snatched away from them or maybe it just wasn't ever
18 there in the first place. So given that, yes,
19 there's a lot of work that needs to be done. I did
20 make the choice to keep my children there. I have
21 seen the numbers; I was aware. I've seen the methods
22 that the teachers use, but they use the methods that
23 they use for that reason. I heard one of the other
24 parents say that it's a whole child approach, and
25 that's what it takes. And it's going to take more

1 time to do that. So I really -- it's my hope that
2 you guys will renew the charter at LRPA to give them
3 a chance. They've figured out what to do for the
4 child emotionally and mentally, and now it's time to
5 get down to the nitty-gritty of the education, and
6 that's what we need that extra time for.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Childs.

8 MS. CHILDS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Waneesha Smith [ps]. Just
10 to remind you, you have three minutes.

11 MS. SMITH: I wasn't trying to sign up, but I
12 can speak. My son is in kindergarten at Little Rock
13 PA, and I searched and searched; we actually got
14 accepted into LISA Academy three weeks after school
15 had started, but he had already formed a relationship
16 with everyone there and I didn't want to move him.
17 But I was afraid -- because he didn't go to Head
18 Start or he didn't do like the early learning; he had
19 -- he was at a developmental clinic; he was at Little
20 Rock -- UAMS Kids First because he had speech
21 problems, physical problems; he had to get therapy
22 for all of it. So it was my concern that in public
23 school they would move him too fast or they wouldn't
24 understand him, because he doesn't talk very well and
25 then he gets frustrated when other kids can talk very

1 well or they can't understand him. So he gets
2 frustrated and then he has these temper tantrums.
3 And I was afraid that if he goes to public school,
4 you know, they would just kind of kick him out --
5 because I didn't even know they kicked kindergartners
6 out, but one of my cousins got kicked out. I was
7 like I didn't even know that was a thing. But they
8 too -- and I was afraid -- I cried and cried and
9 cried; I was like, Oh, God, I've got a kindergartner;
10 what am I going to do? I'm young, I'm still in
11 school myself; I'm an education major. So it was
12 really important for me to get him somewhere --
13 because we study; when I study he studies; when I'm
14 doing my homework he does his homework. And on day
15 two I picked him up; they knew his name. They were
16 like, "Oh, that's Daylon's [ps] mom." And I was
17 like, Man, he must be bad if they know his name on
18 the second day. And I was like -- when they know
19 kids' names that's bad, you know; they must have
20 problems with him. Granted, they do. Daylon can be
21 a handful, but Mr. Hinton -- Mr. Euell and Ms.
22 Osborne, they can handle that kid with ease, like I
23 can't even handle him that way. They were like,
24 "Well, what do you do when he acts like this?" I'm
25 like, "I don't -- he doesn't act like this at home."

1 But it goes back into the emotional part of it
2 because I noticed that when other things were
3 happening at home he would act out in school, and
4 then when they would get better at home he would get
5 better at school. And they would just call me or
6 would text me, Ms. Osborne, or I'll text her at like
7 9:00 at night; I'm like, "I'm sorry, I don't know
8 what to do, but we've got to get his work done." And
9 they're so patient with him. Now like I said, I'm an
10 education major, so those numbers do have to get up.
11 But for a kindergartner coming from maybe daycare or
12 a developmental clinic, like my son done, or just
13 from home, because some people don't go to daycare,
14 they have to figure out how to transition them. And
15 nine hours -- he's at school longer than I'm at work,
16 which I love because I drop him off. I work downtown
17 in the Regions Building; I go to work and then I pick
18 him up. It wasn't a hassle as much as it would've
19 been if he was getting out at 2:00 and I'm having to
20 find somebody to get him or pay for a daycare or --
21 and not everybody gets assistance; not everybody is,
22 you know, povertized [sic]. So daycares are
23 expensive and I don't have to worry about that. When
24 he gets out of school -- I get off at 4:15; I pick
25 him up at 4:30; we go home. I drop him off, I go to

1 work. He's at -- like I say, he's at school longer
2 than I'm at work, and I love that because it didn't
3 put an extra burden on myself being a single mom
4 having to find another daycare, having to find
5 somewhere that's going to do his homework for him,
6 having to find somewhere that -- my son has to grow
7 an attachment to somebody, and that's his thing with
8 Ms. Osborne and Me. Euell and Mr. Hinton. When he
9 gets upset he asks for them specifically. Because
10 like when the substitutes come in, I know it's going
11 to be a problem. Oh, it's a substitute today, Daylon
12 is going to be a problem, because he grows that
13 attachment with the people and they have that
14 relationship at Little Rock PA and I love it. I tell
15 everybody -- my mom's like, "Well, are you going to
16 try to get him into LISA?" I was like, "No, he can
17 stay where he is." So I really hope that y'all do
18 renew the charter for new parents like me and young
19 parents like me who are still learning, because
20 they're helping me along that way as well. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Smith. And
23 welcome to the education profession. Rhonda Lewis.

24 MS. LEWIS: Good morning. I'm Rhonda Lewis. My
25 intend was not to speak today; I just came for

1 support. But I'll start off with a little about
2 myself, specifically because I heard questions about
3 numbers and are parents aware. I moved to Arkansas
4 in 2010, three years prior to my children. My son is
5 now in Fayetteville attempting college; my daughter
6 is in 4th grade at Little Rock Prep. And I did look
7 at websites; I looked at numbers. For three years
8 prior to my daughter moving here, because I knew she
9 was coming after my son graduated -- and I come from
10 a background -- I was educated in private school for
11 elementary, went to one of the top high schools in
12 the country in Chicago, so that was important to me.
13 And when I looked across-the-board in Little Rock and
14 North Little Rock none of the schools compared, so I
15 had to find another reason in the choice that I made.
16 And I came to Little Rock Prep the first time working
17 for a printer company; so I just came working and I
18 liked the environment. Once my daughter -- when the
19 years came closer and I started to look at schools, I
20 applied at the magnet schools, I applied at most of
21 the charter schools; I wasn't going to do a private
22 school, first, because I couldn't afford it and,
23 secondly, because I don't think it's necessary to pay
24 for education. And I was satisfied with Little Rock
25 Prep. She didn't get in; she spent two days at the

1 neighborhood school. She didn't get in. And today,
2 I cannot get her out of Little Rock Prep. I get
3 acceptance calls every year since; she doesn't want
4 to go anywhere. I attempted to move; she was like,
5 "Well, can I finish this year first? I attended out
6 of state." So it's more about the numbers are
7 important when you look across the board, when you're
8 looking at funding, when you're looking at grants,
9 when you're looking at the big picture. But for my
10 child the choice is Little Rock Prep. I don't want
11 to go home and have to tell her that she won't be
12 able to go to junior high, because we've already
13 talked about it. My second year here I asked as well
14 about high school. Because what it doesn't do for
15 numbers what it does is the support. I choose
16 charter schools for my children because I know the
17 parents have chose it, so I know they're more
18 invested; we're more invested. And I understand and
19 I feel that the school does as well. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

21 Panel Members, are there any additional
22 questions or comments or -- Ms. Barnes.

23 UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm a parent and I
24 want to say something.

25 MS. DAVIS: Did you sign up for public comment?

1 UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER: Oh, I don't know. I
2 just came. I just signed my name.

3 MS. DAVIS: You did sign-in?

4 UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. My last name is
5 Smith; it's Cassidy Smith.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm sorry; I don't have
7 you on the list.

8 MS. DAVIS: Is that on the second page?

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No.

10 MS. DAVIS: Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I've answered all --

12 MS. DAVIS: So then at this point then the Board
13 would have to vote on whether or not they want to
14 take additional public comment.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

16 MS. BARNES: When you say "additional comments,"
17 are we talking about Ms. Smith's comment or
18 additional comments?

19 MS. DAVIS: Additional public comments from Ms.
20 Smith or anyone else who at this point may wish to
21 speak that did not originally sign in.

22 DR. GOTCHER: I don't have any reason to have
23 additional comments, Board. I'm satisfied with the
24 comments thus far. How do my colleagues feel? How
25 do my colleagues feel? Is that a vote that we need

1 to do, Ms. Davis, or is it just --

2 MS. BARNES: Yes, I think she is saying that we
3 would have to vote to --

4 MS. DAVIS: You would have to vote.

5 MS. BARNES: -- to accept or receive additional
6 comments.

7 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

8 MS. BARNES: I have no problems with this
9 person, but I didn't want to go into a whole 'nother
10 public --

11 MS. DAVIS: Right.

12 MS. BARNES: -- comment period. That's the
13 reason I asked.

14 MS. DAVIS: Right. And you can vote to accept
15 this parent's, or public comment, and not after that,
16 so --

17 DR. GOTCHER: I move to not receive any further
18 comments at this time.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion fails for lack of a
20 second.

21 MS. BARNES: I'd like to offer a motion to
22 accept Ms. Smith's public comments and then close
23 comments following her.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Second that.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All those in favor?

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(MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

DR. GOTCHER: No.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

MS. SMITH: I really appreciate that.

MS. DAVIS: State your name.

MS. SMITH: My name is Cassidy Smith. My daughter is Colese Anderson [ps] and she attends Little Rock Prep elementary. She's in the 1st grade. We came from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, after the storm. The school in Baton Rouge found Little Rock Prep for us. They researched all the other schools, the elementary, and she attended the charter school there. They sent us to Little Rock Prep. And I know you guys -- I don't know nothing about numbers; I know my cell phone number and my social security number. But my daughter's teacher, she sent me my daughter's score through my text message and that's what I wanted to -- because I know y'all like numbers -- she said, "Colese just scored a 173 on her MAP math test." She said, "162 is a beginning score for 1st grade. She needs to score 174 in winter. She is ahead in math." My daughter don't like math. I didn't even know she liked math. But that right there, I didn't even know what MAP math test was or

1 -- they didn't do that in Baton Rouge, so I didn't
2 know nothing about it. And that right there had kind
3 of opened up my ears and opened up my heart with what
4 Little Rock Prep Elementary is doing. So she needs
5 it, I need it, we all need it. That's it. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

8 Ms. Davis, are there any remaining issues
9 regarding this requested renewal?

10 MS. DAVIS: No, there's no issues. But I did
11 want to point out and I meant to say something
12 earlier on the waivers that are currently granted to
13 the charter is the ADE Rules Governing Parental
14 Notification of an Assignment of a Non-Licensed
15 Teacher to Teach Class More than 30 Days, those rules
16 are no longer in existence of the standalone rule;
17 they are included in the teacher licensure rules,
18 which this charter does have. So that essentially
19 will be rescinded from the charter, but it's obsolete
20 anyways.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

22 MS. DAVIS: That was it.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. What is the
24 will of the Panel?

25 MS. BARNES: I suppose I should be the one to

1 speak; right? I asked Ms. Long to try to convince me
2 and I guess I should've asked the patrons, parents
3 because I recognize again where we are and I
4 understand what we're asking for, and that's what I
5 needed to know. So are we at a point where we're
6 looking for a motion?

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is the Panel ready?

8 MS. BARNES: Huh?

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is the Panel ready for a
10 motion?

11 MR. ROGERS: I just wanted to ask one question

12 --

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

14 MR. ROGERS: -- about the school nurse.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

16 MR. ROGERS: Because in the reply back -- I
17 mean, it says you do supply health services for all
18 your students but you're wanting a waiver from it.
19 And I just wanted to get it on record that -- how you
20 do provide those medical services.

21 SUPT. LONG: We contract out. So we have a
22 certified nurse come in and do all of the different
23 required services, BMI, vision, hearing, medication
24 training, all of those things.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions?

1 Any additional discussion?

2 Ms. Barnes, I believe we're ready for a motion.

3 MS. BARNES: Okay. Prior to my comment -- I
4 mean, my motion, my final comment is: one, I
5 appreciate the presentation of the open enrollment
6 public charter school. And I wanted to say that
7 because I think sometimes we fail to recognize that
8 because you're not a traditional public school that
9 you're not a public school, and you are. You're an
10 open enrollment public -- you're a public charter
11 school, so you are part of the public school system.
12 I want you to -- and I want you to embrace that; I
13 need you to embrace that because we are public school
14 educators and we are part of the public school system
15 as well. And that's why we talk about numbers. But
16 we recognize also the need for relationship. We
17 recognize everything that you talked about. And as
18 far as the emotional stability of a child, it is
19 extremely important. I've worked with psychiatric
20 teenagers and youth in the past, and I've worked in
21 the public school system, and I've been here. But my
22 focus is children. I am gravely concerned about
23 sustainability but I recognize that your request in
24 line with your mission is that you be given some
25 time, and you asked for three years. You do have

1 academic statuses that require you to be in
2 consistent connection with our specialists.

3 And so that being said, and in the spirit of
4 integrity of process for me, I am going to move that
5 the Panel accepts and grants the request for a three-
6 year renewal.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A motion has been made by
9 Ms. Barnes, seconded by Dr. Gotcher to approve the
10 renewal for LISA Academy for three years. Sorry,
11 wrong one. Number two on the agenda, I was just
12 moving -- I've got so many notes I'm down to line
13 two. Let me try again. Ms. Barnes has made a
14 motion, seconded by Dr. Gotcher to approve a three-
15 year renewal for Little Rock Preparatory Academy.
16 And, Ms. Davis --

17 MS. DAVIS: I'm just marking the notes down.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

19 MS. DAVIS: Yeah. I did move closer because I
20 thought, did she say that wrong? And I thought maybe
21 I just --

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: She did.

23 MS. DAVIS: --- didn't hear back there or if you
24 were trying to expedite it.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I was. Discussion?

1 MS. SMITH: I just want to comment that
2 Superintendent Long started last year and made
3 changes last year that I think made direct impact to
4 the middle school with the principal and they've had
5 some success there. I do think that she's expressed
6 today that she does have plans with the primary
7 school, which is where my concern lies. So the fact
8 that you have a plan and that you have shown that
9 you've implemented a plan and made improvements
10 elsewhere gives me, you know, pause to say that this
11 is something probably that time is needed, but an
12 area that we need to watch extremely close.

13 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, sir.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Agreeing with Ms. Smith,
16 Superintendent Long -- I have much confidence in her.
17 And I also feel that this Panel has made it
18 abundantly clear that the priority is the primary
19 level. And I think it's bold to ask for a three-year
20 when you could've asked for much more, and I felt
21 that was very positive in your leadership that you're
22 a realist, that you also have high expectations. And
23 so personally I trust that you will make sure that
24 the priority is given to the primary grades and
25 making sure that literacy, as well as the other

1 academics -- but so much emphasis on literacy at this
2 point.

3 SUPT. LONG: Yes, sir. Our team won't let you
4 down.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional discussion?
6 Dr. Saunders.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: I do. I think I had a question.
8 I don't know if it's for Legal or the Panel, and it's
9 going back to the intent on the charter schools in
10 the law. And when you look at the intent there are
11 six different ones and the first one is "improve
12 student learning." But the one that I have a
13 question on is number six, and it's "hold the schools
14 established under this chapter accountable for
15 meeting measurable student achievement standards."
16 And I don't know if that's a question for Legal. Is
17 that our responsibility as a Panel or is that the
18 responsibility, would you say, for the State Board?

19 MS. DAVIS: I don't think that maybe you guys
20 would work opposite of each other. I think it would
21 probably be both your responsibilities because you
22 initially do review these applications and you
23 probably review them, you know, in-depth, plus, you
24 know, with most of you being former educators a lot
25 of the understanding may be slightly different. And

1 so I think that it would be both your responsibility
2 as an authorizing panel as well as the State Board's
3 responsibility to review or not review your decisions
4 and work in conjunction with one another.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: As part of that, could we have a
6 motion to recommend probationary status?

7 DR. GOTCHER: They're already a priority school;
8 correct?

9 MS. DAVIS: Yeah. I mean --

10 DR. GOTCHER: And academic distress.

11 MS. SMITH: Well, I guess my question would be:
12 why wouldn't we have done that for other schools that
13 have come before us that are -- I mean, that have
14 been priority since 2012? We had one of those
15 yesterday. And so that's kind of --

16 MS. BARNES: I would respectfully, again, state
17 that, as stated in my motion, since they already have
18 accountability statuses that they will be in close
19 connection. In order not to create a housekeeping
20 conversation at this time, I would rather we move
21 forward as-is and then we can as a Panel have work
22 sessions that address the statement that was just
23 made since we are in day-three of our hearings.

24 MS. BOYD: Just to add, we've had this
25 discussion before -- or you all have had this

1 discussion before. And previously I think what we
2 came -- or what you guys came to agreement upon is
3 that probationary status for this school or this
4 charter, which has schools that are already receiving
5 intensive support from School Improvement, really
6 doesn't add anything to the charter or the oversight
7 of the charter.

8 MS. SMITH: So even if we give the renewal and
9 if we chose to independently do site visits or
10 whatever and we still had concerns and did not see
11 that there was improvement being made in the areas
12 that we had concerns, we could call them in back at
13 any time and -- right?

14 MS. BOYD: That's correct.

15 MS. SMITH: Okay.

16 MS. DAVIS: And, I mean, the only other thing I
17 would say is doing a probation in conjunction with
18 the renewal, you can do a probation; but, you know,
19 there is a hearing that is required for the applicant
20 and the school to have probationary status that they
21 have to be notified, they have to have certain, you
22 know, information. And so I would be hesitant to do
23 them in one because they weren't notified today that
24 they may or may not have been placed on probationary
25 status in addition to the renewal. And they would be

1 different and I would be hesitant that they would not
2 get the opportunity to be prepared for that.

3 MR. ROGERS: Would it be better or something if
4 we asked for all those on academic priority status or
5 something to have a report brought to us for all the
6 charter schools that are on that? And that way,
7 we're looking at all of them kind of on the same
8 page?

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The State Board is already
10 doing that.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah, I was going to say -- is
12 that duplication of --

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's duplication.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah. I wouldn't be in favor of
15 that personally.

16 MS. SMITH: I personally would say that as a
17 Charter Authorizing Panel we need to continue to
18 monitor what's happening with the reports being given
19 to the State Board on school improvement. And if at
20 some point we see a report that's being given that
21 we're not satisfied with then that's where maybe we
22 then move to, you know, talk about probationary
23 status and going on those steps, if we see that. But
24 I think just asking them to come back to us to
25 report, it's just a duplicate of -- I want them in

1 their building teaching reading and not to come back
2 and for us to have another report made for us. I
3 mean, there was a report that went to the State Board
4 meeting last Friday or Thursday, or whatever date
5 that was. I mean, there was a report online with
6 their goals and actions that School Improvement -- I
7 think Ms. White worked on. And so I think asking for
8 a duplicate report is just a duplicate report, a busy
9 work, when we need to be focusing on something that's
10 going to directly impact students in the classroom.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional discussion?
12 Let me try that motion again. Ms. Barnes has made a
13 motion to approve the Little Rock Preparatory Academy
14 renewal for three years, seconded by Dr. Gotcher.
15 All those in favor?

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? Motion
18 carries.

19 SUPT. LONG: Thank you very much. We appreciate
20 it on behalf of all our families and our staff.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you will wait
22 patiently, we will give you a written -- as we write
23 our responses we'll give you a quick summary.

24 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

1 MS. BARNES: Yes. I voted in favor of the
2 motion. While I have concerns, I believe the request
3 for time is appropriate to the needs as stated and
4 addressed in the revised mission.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

6 DR. GOTCHER: I too voted for the approval of
7 the renewal request. Literacy concerns are primary
8 for me; however, there is much hope for the future in
9 leadership and in improved performance. I would
10 encourage this academy to continue to fulfill your
11 new mission and let it guide every student decision.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

13 MR. LESTER: I voted for the renewal. While I
14 believe there is much work to be done in academics, I
15 also believe it would be detrimental to the education
16 process to terminate the charter at this time. I am
17 encouraged with the new vision and the administration
18 and community involvement.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

20 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion. Along with
21 everybody else, there are strong concerns regarding
22 the academic deficiency of the students of Little
23 Rock Prep. But I think the three-year cycle is
24 enough time to show that the changes they'll make
25 will have a positive influence.

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CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor of it. I think a major change is needed to turn around the academics. It appears the social and emotional needs of the children are being addressed, and academics need to follow.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

MS. SMITH: I voted for the three-year renewal. However, we need to closely monitor the progress of the primary school. Evidence of improvements at the middle school allowed me to vote for the motion.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Long, I'm reminded of professional development that we all participated in and that our State Board members participated in with a national charter authorizing organization. That organization is very adamant that schools in academic distress should -- charter schools in academic distress should be shut down; they just shouldn't happen. However, every one of those schools represents children. So we have to make a decision based best on those children, not on a national recommendation. So I think what you've heard today is a very strong "we believe you can turn this around, but we want it turned around."

SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So good luck to you.
2 There are a lot of people pulling for you, so if you
3 don't reach out and ask for help from all those
4 people that are pulling for you then it'll be a
5 different conversation in the future.

6 SUPT. LONG: Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So we're encouraged by
8 you. There, of course, is the next step in the
9 process of going before the State Board and there's
10 also a state accountability process that's ongoing
11 right now as we're looking at -- under ESSA as we're
12 developing a state accountability system. And you
13 see that from a different lens than possibly some
14 other schools may see, so it's very important that
15 you, your staff, your parents are involved in that
16 process in that your voice is heard in there as well.
17 Because this is a state accountability system for
18 schools that address all children, so we encourage
19 you to be a part of that as well.

20 SUPT. LONG: I would love that. That would be
21 wonderful.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

23 I'm assuming we need a nice break and then we'll
24 get to LISA Academy.

25 (BREAK: 10:32 - 10:47 A.M.)

1 A-2: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW: LISA
2 ACADEMY

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Perry, you are
4 recognized for Action Item 2.

5 MS. PERRY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The next
6 item on today's agenda is LISA Academy's renewal
7 request. And we have Superintendent Atnan Ekin to
8 begin the presentation.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I've been trying to get to
10 LISA Academy for some while, sometime now.

11 If all the representatives from LISA Academy
12 would please stand and raise your right hand and
13 anyone speaking in opposition. Do you swear or
14 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
15 be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
16 truth?

17 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Let me get
19 myself situated. Good morning.

20 SUPT. EKIN: Good morning, dear Panel Members.
21 I am Atnan Ekin, superintendent of LISA Academy
22 Public Charter Schools. I have been holding this
23 position for six years. I would like to thank you
24 for holding the hearing for our renewal application.
25 Now I would like to invite our middle school

1 principal, Ms. Baroni, to make the presentation for
2 the application. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

4 MS. BARONI: Good morning, Panel Members and
5 Madam Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning.

7 MS. BARONI: Thank you for the opportunity to
8 come before you this morning. It's my honor to
9 present on behalf of LISA Academy a request for our
10 charter renewal this morning.

11 I'd like to start with the history of our school
12 just to give a little background. LISA Academy
13 opened in the fall of 2004 at 21 Corporate Hill
14 Drive, serving approximately 300 6th through 8th
15 grade students. At that time we had an enrollment
16 cap of 600. Our first class graduated in 2009. In
17 2011, we opened a new high school building after
18 considerable growth and adding grades each year. We
19 increased our cap to 800 with 6th through 12th grade
20 at that time. LISA West now serves about 725
21 students at our LISA West campus at 21 and 23
22 Corporate Hill Drive.

23 LISA North opened in 2008 in Sherwood, serving
24 about 300 students in grade K through 12, and they
25 now serve approximately 780 students, still K through

1 12, and they're all in one building at that location.

2 In 2014, both the west and the north schools
3 combined to form one charter system. So since that
4 time we've operated under one charter agreement.

5 Our newest addition, which we're very excited
6 about, is our Chenal campus which is at Westhaven
7 Drive in Little Rock. And at that campus we're now
8 serving approximately 540 K through 6th grade
9 students. Overall, we now serve on both sides of the
10 river approximately 2,041 students, so we're happy
11 with the growth and happy with what we've been doing
12 over the years.

13 Our mission from the beginning is the same. We
14 have not changed our mission; we've stuck to the same
15 mission. And our mission is: to provide an
16 academically rigorous college preparatory program in
17 partnership with students, families, and the
18 community, and to guide all students in gaining
19 knowledge, skills, and the attitude necessary to
20 direct their lives, improve a diverse society, and
21 excel in a changing world by providing them with
22 dynamic resource rich learning environments.

23 Our school is founded with the four pillars of
24 learn, innovate, support and achieve. We believe
25 that it's important that all students will learn. We

1 believe that it's important to provide innovative
2 educational experiences for students. We believe in
3 the support of the triad of the school, the parents,
4 and the student. And with all of those we believe
5 that our students will continue to achieve and be
6 successful academically.

7 What makes LISA Academy successful, I believe,
8 is grounded in several different areas. We plan for
9 academic success for all of our students. We also
10 prepare all of our students for college and career.
11 We embed STEM across the board with everything that
12 we do. We involve parents. We embrace the diversity
13 that is a crucial part of who we are. And we believe
14 in collaborating and sharing with others to make us
15 all better. Some of our academic success is
16 highlighted in our most recent test scores with ACT
17 Aspire. As you can see from this data, our students
18 are performing significantly above the state, both
19 with the general student population and with our TAGG
20 student population. We're above the state
21 considerably in the ELA area, math area, and with the
22 graduation rate. Also represented here is the ACT
23 Aspire science results. We're fairing well and
24 performing above the state and the nation in more
25 cases.

1 Some highlights of our academic awards that are
2 things outside of just the data on the test scores
3 include being recognized as top-performing schools.
4 We had two schools recognized last year; had multiple
5 schools over the years. Our Math Counts have been
6 state champions for multiple years and were again
7 last year. Our science fair students have achieved
8 55 regional and state awards. Our science Olympiad
9 and science quiz bowl teams were both state champions
10 and went on to national competitions. We've had a
11 first place in region in our robotics. Our quiz bowl
12 at the high school and junior high levels have done
13 well with second place at the high school; our junior
14 high was been state champions for two years. We've
15 also had the county spelling bee for several years.
16 Math competition, we've had top awards, including
17 fourth place in the state. We've had the regional
18 history bee champion as well. Destination
19 Imagination team has won three first places in the
20 northern tournament. Our TEAMS team won first place
21 in their division and first place in the 9th and 10th
22 grade. We've had multiple years' recognition as an
23 NCEA Higher Performing School by ACT. We've had
24 multiyear winners in the foreign language
25 competition. We've had BroadCom national

1 semifinalists and even a finalist in that
2 competition. And we've had multiple students publish
3 in the ACTELA Anthology.

4 At the heart of what we do, our academic success
5 begins with our data-driven instruction. We believe
6 that everything that we do in terms of assessment and
7 reviewing what's going on has to feed back into the
8 classroom and into intervention for our students.
9 Our teachers receive the data in a timely fashion and
10 then they're trained to use that data to drive their
11 instruction at the classroom level. We provide
12 instructional facilitators in the math and English
13 area, and we have academic assistant principals who
14 are constantly monitoring and guiding the use of that
15 data with our teachers so that teachers can then work
16 with students. And our students actually have their
17 own goal sheets; they review those and modify those
18 and monitor their own goals and set new goals to push
19 themselves forward.

20 Also, academic success requires that we provide
21 intervention strategies for our students who come to
22 us underprepared or needing additional attention. We
23 provide that in several ways. One is individualized
24 instruction. We have an extensive afterschool
25 tutoring program. We offer Saturday camps for

1 English and math once a month for our students. We
2 have spring break tutoring in camps. We have insight
3 classes that are actually pullouts from our regular
4 schedule of math and English. Our math and English
5 courses are double-blocked so that that provides that
6 time for those additional insight pullouts for
7 students who are struggling or who are still below
8 level. We also provide multiple online student-paced
9 platforms where students work on enrichment and
10 intervention strategies in the lab times provided in
11 those math and English classes. And we provide the
12 technology needed for our students in the classroom
13 with Chromebooks that they use while they're in
14 school.

15 Our academic success also involves student
16 engagement beyond the classroom. We have science
17 fair participation for all of our middle school
18 students. We have multiple academic competition
19 teams. We have sports. We also provide lots of
20 other extracurricular programs for our students so
21 that they can achieve and become the whole people
22 that we want them to be beyond graduation. Some of
23 the extracurricular programs that we offer are listed
24 here. I won't read all of those to you because there
25 are way too many of them, everything from archery to

1 yoga and lots of things in between. And those are
2 different at different schools. Our teachers are
3 involved in that and we -- some of these programs are
4 crafted around what our teachers have a particular
5 interest in. We had a Pinterest club one year. We
6 have running clubs, lots of things that are of
7 personal interest to the teachers and to the students
8 so they can engage after school.

9 We believe that college and career preparation
10 is critical for our students. We've had over 95%
11 college acceptance rate over the 12-plus years we've
12 been in existence. We have a 100% graduation rate
13 for our students. LISA West and LISA North high
14 schools were named this past year as Washington
15 Post's number one and number two most challenging
16 high schools in the state of Arkansas. We're very
17 proud of that accomplishment and we take that very
18 seriously. Our students have been accepted to
19 multiple competitive schools, both inside and outside
20 the state, and have been given many awards in terms
21 of scholarships to help them be successful beyond
22 high school. Our college and career preparation
23 involves, first and foremost, rigorous academic
24 course offerings and an honors track for students who
25 want to push beyond just what's expected. We have

1 currently 306 high school students enrolled in AP and
2 pre-AP courses; that's 67% of our total high school
3 student enrollment. We also have the College Board
4 AP Scholars program and I believe that our school was
5 the first one in the area to offer that program
6 through the College Board. We have the College
7 Readiness and Leadership program, which is an
8 enrichment program to help students with that
9 preparation and rigor that they're going to face in
10 college. We require 100 volunteer hours for
11 graduation of all of our high school students. And
12 we provide one-on-one college guidance counseling
13 using Naviance, which is an online system that
14 monitors and tracks students' progress toward getting
15 all of their applications and recommendations and all
16 of that ready for college.

17 We also believe that STEM is important. We
18 start with the exploration level. We offer
19 LearningBlade, which is a STEM career exploration; we
20 have that online program that we use in our career
21 orientation and our science classes. We've had some
22 of our students participate in Girls of Promise to
23 explore coding careers and what's out there for them
24 in the future. We have Project Lead the Way Launch
25 that we use in our elementary school. We also

1 provide a Space Camp trip each year for elementary
2 students where they can go and see real science at
3 work in space exploration. All of our middle school
4 students, as I mentioned, participate in science fair
5 projects each year. We sponsor a STEM Festival,
6 which we're going into our third year with that; it's
7 an annual event that's open to the entire state where
8 students prepare and demonstrate STEM related
9 projects. Our STEM Festival is going into the third
10 year, which we'll be having our third STEM Festival
11 on March 3rd. We invite you all to come and see
12 that; it's an exciting time. Last year, we had over
13 3,000 students and teachers from across the state
14 involved in that. It's great because you can see the
15 kids' eyes light up when they see science really
16 working, and it's also exciting to see our own
17 students demonstrating that. Our students are
18 becoming teachers and learning more by being
19 teachers. This is just a list of the public schools
20 that we know were at the last STEM Festival and we
21 hope that there will be a longer list of this next
22 year.

23 Our STEM curriculum is also at the heart of our
24 STEM focus. 48.6% of our high school students are
25 enrolled in those pre-AP and AP STEM based courses.

1 As I mentioned, we have the Project Lead the Way
2 Launch in our elementary schools now and we're
3 planning to implement the Gateway program for our
4 middle school students next year. We have --

5 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Ms. Friedman changed
6 out the speaker's microphone.)

7 MS. FRIEDMAN: Sorry. Sorry.

8 MS. BARONI: Could y'all hear me all that time
9 or are y'all just smiling, "Whatever she's saying,"
10 wonk-wonk-wonk-wonk. Okay.

11 We also have project-based learning that we
12 offer across our curriculum, not only in our math and
13 science classes but that's also used in our social
14 studies and English classes. Our students have been
15 doing that recently and it's so exciting to walk into
16 classrooms, seeing the kids in their groups with
17 their Chromebooks and they're preparing PowerPoint
18 presentations so one day they can do this. But
19 they're getting ready for real world, exploring
20 problems, coming up with solutions, and then learning
21 how to present and communicate those solutions.

22 Wow, that did it, didn't it? There we go.

23 We also have STEM Scopes, which is an online
24 NGSS science curriculum that we're using in our
25 science classrooms. And we're very excited about

1 that and can implement that with the use of our
2 Chromebooks in our science classrooms. We also have
3 participated in multiple STEM competitions, the
4 science fair, we have robotics teams; we participate
5 in science quiz bowl and the science Olympiads. We
6 have coding activities and that's actually growing
7 some this year; we're adding more coding kinds of
8 opportunities for our students. We know that's
9 important. We're very excited about the Governor's
10 support of multiple programs in that area. We have
11 Math Counts, Math Kangaroo. We're actually the state
12 host for the Math Kangaroo competition for the state
13 of Arkansas. We have TEAMS competitions; Destination
14 Imagination; and a new thing we've added this year is
15 our solar car competition team which is going to a
16 national competition; we'll be the first team from
17 Arkansas that's participating in this competition
18 this year, so it'll be exciting to see if our kids
19 come up with a car that works. I may buy one to save
20 on gas.

21 We also believe that parental involvement is
22 critical to what we do every day with our students.
23 We've got to have that teamwork, to involve the
24 parents and guardians in what we're doing with our
25 students. We do home visits; yes, we do. We go into

1 homes, we meet with the families, we get to know
2 them, and we want to bring them into what's happening
3 with their students in the schools. We also do other
4 activities, like Doughnuts with Dads, Muffins with
5 Moms, Cookies with Grandparents, and potluck dinners
6 -- anything we can do to reach out and bring our
7 families into what's going on with our school. We
8 started last year and continued this year a
9 Thanksgiving Dinner that we host for our intervention
10 families, one of the most rewarding things I think
11 we've ever done where we're inviting families in.
12 We're not -- I tell them all, "We're not selling you
13 anything, we're not asking you for anything; we just
14 want you to come and get to know us; we want to
15 celebrate what your students are doing and the
16 achievements they're reaching." And we want to bring
17 those families in and incorporate them into what
18 we're doing. We have Watch D.O.G. Dads, parent-
19 teacher communications, which -- multiple things, but
20 a weekly newsletter; we have an open door policy; we
21 invite parents to come in and shadow their kids in
22 schools; we have homeroom picnics in the spring, open
23 houses; and we also, of course, have parent-teacher
24 conferences. But that parent involvement is so
25 important. One of the things we offer that's rather

1 unique is our own online database system where
2 parents can access all of their student's information
3 on their computer or through an app on their phones.
4 They can see what's going on with their kid realtime.
5 They can see discipline, attendance, assignments,
6 homework, and monitor all that through their phones
7 or their desktop computers.

8 Another very important thing that I've come to
9 love about our school is our diversity. LISA Academy
10 has been recognized as the most racially diverse
11 school in the state of Arkansas by the Public School
12 Review in 2016. We really celebrate the diversity
13 among our students and we're always embracing new
14 pieces of that each year. Some of the things we do
15 to celebrate that -- some of you may have been
16 involved or seen our annual foreign language
17 festival, which we put on every year. We hosted it
18 at actually Pulaski Academy this year because they've
19 got a great room to do that. And our students come
20 and celebrate and compete. We have food; we have
21 celebrations and presentations and talent; and it's
22 just a wonderful time for us all to come together and
23 see the diversity and embrace that. We also have
24 Black History Month programs. We have multicultural
25 festivals at the school levels. We have Hispanic

1 Parent Night programs where we invite our Spanish-
2 speaking families in for particular targeted programs
3 for them; Native American presentations; and all of
4 that is part of who we are, and we want to fully
5 embrace that and include the diversity of all of our
6 student population.

7 You can see some of our numbers here, our
8 diversity. We're very proud of that. This is broken
9 down by school. One thing of particular note, I
10 think, is that our new school, LISA Chenal, the
11 elementary school, our minority population there is
12 the strongest of any of our schools; we're at 86.5%
13 there. Our free-and-reduced population is also the
14 greatest there at 56.7%. We're happy with that. We
15 recruited a lot to bring in applications from those
16 populations, and we're happy with the success we've
17 had there and with the families that have jumped
18 onboard to grasp the education that we offer. Also,
19 our diversity has increased over the years. We have
20 grown in both our free-and-reduced population and our
21 minority population. You can see the chart there; I
22 think it speaks for itself. There's been steady
23 growth over the last five years in both of those
24 populations.

25 We also believe that collaborating and sharing

1 is important. It's important to what we do. When we
2 find something that works, we want to share it and be
3 open and be transparent about that. We've been a
4 part of a pilot of the Arkansas Circles program which
5 helps special education students develop personal
6 plans for the transition beyond high school. Ms.
7 Angela Lairson, who's here today, has been a very
8 critical part of that and helping to share that with
9 other schools, and has recently started a
10 collaboration with Little Rock School District,
11 working with showing them what we've done and
12 bringing them onboard with working with the Circles
13 program. We also provided a workshop for sharing
14 best practices. We've sponsored a math tournament
15 where we've invited students in from across the
16 state, had over 800 kids there last year for that.
17 Our North Little Rock campus has worked with North
18 Little Rock School District to collaborate on some
19 things and actually has a meeting next week, I
20 believe -- yeah, Monday -- to meet with them again to
21 share and visit with them, sharing some practices
22 that perhaps they can share between the two schools.
23 We've also had folks come from Helena-West Helena who
24 have observed what we're doing. And we're sharing --
25 we're very free to share what we're doing, what works

1 and what doesn't work, and we're happy to share that
2 so that others can learn from our successes and from
3 our mistakes.

4 With over 12 years of success LISA Academy
5 requests that our charter be renewed for 13 years,
6 which is an odd number, I know. But we are also
7 asking our current waivers be continued with just a
8 few minor adjustments that you've seen in our
9 application packet. The 13 renewal we believe will
10 provide assurance to all of our students, from
11 kindergarten on, that they can continue in our school
12 system and complete their education with LISA
13 Academy. We really appreciate the support that we've
14 gotten from the Department of Ed. and we want to
15 honor that and we want to continue to provide quality
16 education to all of the students that come through
17 our doors. And we appreciate your attention and time
18 this morning. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You certainly win the
20 timing award today.

21 MS. BARONI: I figured out how to use my slides.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Anyone to speak in
23 opposition?

24 MS. PERRY: No, ma'am.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Baroni, you have five

1 additional minutes.

2 MS. BARONI: Just a quick mention, we passed out
3 a handout to you guys that we feel like may address
4 -- there was one letter of opposition, and we felt
5 like we wanted to provide some data for you that
6 addresses that specifically. We certainly are open
7 to questions about any of that, but I won't speak to
8 it other than to say I think we've provided data that
9 addresses that opposition.

10 (WHEREUPON, A-1 Exhibit One (1) was marked for
11 identification and entered into evidence.)

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And, Ms. Boyd, you did
13 send us the letter from Pulaski County?

14 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Ms. Smith.

16 MS. SMITH: Just some comments. I did attend
17 your STEM festival last year and was impressed with
18 the number of students that were there and the
19 projects. So I look forward to showing up at that
20 event again this year. Also, I know that when you
21 were here before with the Chenal expansion, lots of
22 questions about where you were going, the diversity,
23 what students you would be serving. So thank you for
24 that, including that information within your
25 presentation.

1 MS. BARONI: You're welcome.

2 MS. SMITH: And I want to commend that you are
3 going after all students --

4 MS. BARONI: Yes, ma'am.

5 MS. SMITH: -- and serving all students and
6 celebrating the diversity of your school.

7 MS. BARONI: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. Piggybacking on what Ms.
10 Smith said, from last year to this year, looking at
11 October 1, your low socioeconomic status has
12 increased. So that's I think a reflection of that.
13 And looking at four years it has increased every
14 single year. So just want to point that out.

15 My questions had to deal with the waivers. I
16 wanted to jump into some of those. Could you
17 describe why the waivers on library media -- why you
18 would need those?

19 MS. BARONI: In general, a couple of things is
20 we have a library; we provide a lot of what
21 traditional libraries provide at the classroom level.
22 We have classroom libraries in all of our ELA
23 classrooms so that students can actually get that
24 material in the classroom. And so we're not
25 providing the person, the staff member for that

1 library like traditional public schools have done.
2 We do have all the resources, and I mentioned the
3 Chromebooks. We're using a lot of online platforms.
4 And I'm sure all of you have seen the transition; the
5 traditional library is not exactly what it used to
6 be. There's more that's online now. We're trying to
7 push that into the classroom level and we feel like
8 that's reaching our students a lot better. We have a
9 reading program. As a matter of fact, if you've been
10 to our school you'll see by all of our teachers and
11 administrators what we're currently reading, and we
12 push those books and materials into the classroom
13 level through both hardbound, softbound books and
14 through the Chromebooks. So we're asking for that
15 waiver so that we don't have to have the traditional
16 library with a library media specialist in that
17 place; that we're providing all of the same kinds of
18 resources that the students need.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: What about the class size?

20 MS. BARONI: The class size waiver?

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah, on grades 7 through 12.

22 MS. BARONI: Yeah. Do you want to speak to
23 that, Mr. Bogrek? He's done most of our research.

24 MR. BOGREK: On class size we are not going to
25 increase the number of students in each class. We

1 are asking for this waiver for like PE, art and music
2 classes so we have flexibility for scheduling.
3 Because these classes are once a week and then a
4 teacher -- for example, the limit is 150. So we are
5 asking for an additional 25 per day, you know, for a
6 teacher to see.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I think these are -- are
8 these separate -- there's one that's class size and
9 there's one addressing the compensation on 150. Are
10 those still the same thing? Are we looking at the
11 150 number?

12 MR. BOGREK: Yes.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Is that what we're looking at?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Before we move on to Mr.
15 Walter -- if you will come back to the microphone and
16 state your name and title for the record.

17 MR. BOGREK: My name is Fatih Bogrek, assistant
18 superintendent for LISA Academy.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Walter.

20 MR. WALTER: Thank you, Madam Chair, Members of
21 the Panel. Tripp Walter, Staff Attorney, Arkansas
22 Public School Resource Center. Yes, Dr. Saunders
23 kind of beat me to the punch; that's why I was --
24 those two, as you indicated, are interrelated. And
25 as Mr. Bogrek said, although number two, waiver

1 number two is stated class size, as he said it's not
2 a class size waiver but actually a teaching load for
3 the 150, as you indicated. And tied in with that is
4 the waiver request number five which is addressed
5 teaching load on 6-17-812. So as he indicated, they
6 want to utilize the teaching load waiver only as
7 necessary in those areas that he indicated, and then
8 also ask for the complimentary waiver of 6-7-812
9 [sic] so they can account for individuals who would
10 be teaching increased loads within their usual
11 compensation schedule and not have to pay so-to-speak
12 extra.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So, okay. So just to
14 clarify though, the classes in other areas would not
15 be above 30 in those grades?

16 MR. WALTER: That's correct.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: It's not addressing that?

18 MR. WALTER: Yes, sir. That's correct.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And how do you intend to
20 take advantage of the flexibility with clock hours on
21 the Carnegie unit, the 120?

22 MR. BOGREK: LISA Academy offers some online
23 courses for credit recovery. So we would like to
24 have the flexibility to, you know, have a waiver
25 from, you know, hours -- hours for credit, because

1 some students they need the computation of
2 traditional requirements. So we offer some online
3 courses. This is why we are asking for these
4 waivers.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you have an idea of a minimum
6 amount of time for a student to get a credit, of what
7 that could be?

8 MR. BOGREK: (inaudible) arts per year for one
9 credit. We do for our on-site, you know, classes for
10 these. But we are asking this waiver for our online
11 courses, for example, if they failed in a course and
12 take like from an online provider. That would be why
13 they have just some assignments they do, they don't
14 have seating requirements. So this is why we're
15 asking for this waiver, for some online courses.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: I understand that. And I guess
17 on an extreme case -- and I just look at this --
18 could a kid log-in and within an hour get a credit
19 for a course? So what would be a probably perfect
20 scenario minimum?

21 MR. BOGREK: Yeah. To be valued they have
22 assignments that I can tell you is toward the arts,
23 you know, for half-credit they need to do some, you
24 know, work and then they need to get -- so it
25 changes, you know.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah.

2 MR. BOGREK: It changes from provider to
3 provider.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah.

5 MR. WALTER: Good afternoon, Chairman. Dr.
6 Saunders, I visited with LISA administration to get
7 some clarity on that, and they've indicated to me
8 that the most advanced student or students ever had
9 the shortest amount of time has been eight weeks.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

11 MR. WALTER: So it's not something where they're
12 trying to say it's 10 or 20 hours and they'll check
13 the box for that student.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

15 MS. SMITH: Just to kind of piggyback on that
16 too, so courses that are those online courses that
17 are courses that ADE has approved, we've cross-
18 checked those courses; they're on our course approval
19 list on online for digital providers; they've been
20 cross-checked against the standards approved in the
21 state. And so what we've set forth as expected
22 standards to be taught are what those courses are, so
23 --

24 DR. SAUNDERS: I have one more. It's a little
25 shift of the gears. I notice you are looking at

1 rescinding the waiver on parental notification on the
2 non-licensed teachers. Correct?

3 MS. DAVIS: That was one that I recommended as a
4 rescission because those rules are no longer in
5 effect; those rules have been incorporated into the
6 teacher -- the educator licensure rule.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Okay.

8 MS. DAVIS: So they're just obsolete, so it's
9 just an attempt to clean-up the waiver list.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you have an idea of what --
11 and this was my question on that. But what percent
12 of your staff are licensed?

13 MR. BOGREK: Last time we checked, around 60% of
14 our teachers there are licensed.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

16 MR. BOGREK: Around 60. Yeah, and all AQT.
17 They are, you know, meeting all AQT.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Right.

19 MR. BOGREK: About 60% that are licensed.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Are any that are not licensed
21 currently working towards licensure?

22 MS. BARONI: Yes, many.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Many. Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Additional questions? Ms.
25 Barnes.

1 MS. BARNES: Yeah. I just wanted to ask a quick
2 question because -- and thank you --

3 MS. BARONI: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. BARNES: -- for the additional information.
5 But when I was reviewing the accountability ESEA
6 accountability status reports, with respect to math,
7 high school level, and we intentionally -- because of
8 the transition here we intentionally in the Division
9 of Public School Accountability put the percentages
10 and then the state average. And, of course, state
11 averages is what it is because it is a combination of
12 all districts. So I was trying to determine -- here
13 you put both -- is this a combination of both of your
14 high schools' percentage? Because --

15 MS. BARONI: That includes LISA West and LISA
16 North.

17 MS. BARNES: Yeah. Because, I mean, I was
18 concerned because I was like well I didn't see that
19 percentage being that high, not only at -- all
20 students or TAGG or any individual subgroup. It does
21 not exceed the state average in any of those
22 categories for math. And so I was -- I just needed
23 to be clear --

24 MS. BARONI: Are you speaking for specific
25 schools?

1 MS. BARNES: I'm speaking for the individual
2 two.

3 MS. BARONI: Okay.

4 MS. BARNES: The individual high schools.

5 MS. BARONI: Okay.

6 MS. BARNES: Because, you know, when I look at
7 it -- I look at performance at each school. There's
8 no doubt that you're doing work. That's not what I
9 was saying. I'm just -- I needed to be clear as to
10 --

11 MR. BOGREK: Let me give some additions about
12 that. So for state average, you know, in the high
13 school the average is all together 3rd through 10th.
14 So it's around 43, you know, in the state average in
15 math. But usually in Arkansas high schools the math
16 averages are low and ours has been higher, but I need
17 to check. But, yeah, this would just be for all
18 over, all the data.

19 MS. BARNES: Yes, sir. And thank you. And that
20 being said, I'm simply asking what is LISA Academy
21 doing differently to address this low performance in
22 math at the high school level?

23 DR. DURAND: I'm Dr. Kevin Durand; I'm the Dean
24 of Academics at LISA West and the district testing
25 coordinator. Let me say something really quickly

1 about the ESEA report and that, for example, with
2 mathematics the 43.35%, for example, for all
3 students, you'll notice it says for the state.
4 You'll notice it says that the state average percent
5 achieved is 43.35%. Right?

6 MS. BARNES: Yes. In math, all students.

7 DR. DURAND: Right. Now if you'll notice that's
8 also the case when you -- if you look at, for
9 example, the middle school. If you look at, for
10 example, the elementary school, all students, once
11 again you'll see 43.35%. That's because that number
12 takes into account 3rd grade through 10th grade,
13 every student that takes the test. If you look, for
14 example, at merely grade 9 for the state of Arkansas,
15 the number is 27.12%, while LISA Academy's district
16 number is 38.7%, so it's higher than the state in
17 terms of in grade 9. Grade 10, if you look at grade
18 10 it's 20.44% for the state and 27.91% for LISA
19 Academy. So that's just a -- so it's a little
20 misleading in terms of the state reported average
21 because that's a 3 through 10 as opposed to just the
22 high school. But to get to your -- to get to the
23 more important question relative to the lower math
24 scores -- right -- it's always important to clear up
25 the data because my data heart likes things to be

1 clear; right? But within mathematics there are
2 several things that we're doing at LISA Academy,
3 among them we use, for example, the NWEA, as you
4 heard from Little Rock Prep that they use as well.
5 One of the things that we do is in our high schools
6 we block seven hours for our math students, whereas
7 most schools have, you know, the five periods during
8 the week that they have math; ours have seven. And
9 we take those two other hours for targeted
10 interventions. We use the NWEA MAP test because it
11 gives us an understanding of the conceptual mastery
12 of students. It tells us exactly which concepts
13 they're failing to truly have mastered. And so then
14 we target those within those two -- we call them lab
15 hours, so the math lab hours -- and those are both
16 remedial in those places where they're clearly below
17 where they need to be, below proficiency, but they're
18 also used for enhancement for those students who are,
19 for example, right there on the cusp, either slightly
20 above the cut-line for proficiency or slightly below.
21 So it's not strictly remedial, but it's taking those
22 students and providing them with the resources to get
23 them to where they're solidly proficient as opposed
24 to right on the border. We meet with each of our
25 math teachers, both our math facilitator and myself,

1 our Dean of Academics at North, and we sit down with
2 those teachers and we go over their NWEA scores, we
3 go over their ACT Aspire interim scores in the
4 office; we look student by student through the class.
5 We see how they've tracked from one year to the next,
6 from one test to the next. We look at their
7 conceptual understandings, and we then talk about how
8 we can create lesson planning to address those
9 deficits particularly so that we have those students
10 who are improving. We then have those same sorts of
11 meetings to discuss who needs to be in tutoring, who
12 needs to be coming to the Saturday camps. Then we
13 interact with parents to make sure that we get those
14 kids to Saturday camps, to tutoring, so that we can
15 not just in those two hours of lab hours but also in
16 afterschool tutoring and Saturday camps begin to
17 address the places where our students have those
18 deficits. And we have shown some growth, and
19 obviously those things are working somewhat because
20 as we see our NWEA numbers, especially with, for
21 example, our TAGG group, increasing each year, and
22 obviously our students scoring reasonably well in
23 terms of the ACT Aspire last year and then on the
24 interims that we've had so far this year.

25 MS. BARNES: Okay. So back to --

1 DR. DURAND: Okay.

2 MS. BARNES: Just so I can --

3 DR. DURAND: Sure.

4 MS. BARNES: -- be sure that I'm clear, my
5 question had to do with what were you doing and you
6 just -- you went through what you're doing to address
7 the less than appropriate --

8 DR. DURAND: Right.

9 MS. BARNES: -- performance in math.

10 DR. DURAND: Sure.

11 MS. BARNES: Okay. So that's my question. I
12 was simply asking what are you doing differently.

13 DR. DURAND: Oh, what are we doing -- well, one
14 of the things that we're doing differently is the
15 intensity and the -- of our data-driven instruction.
16 We're talking about each and every student,
17 individualized education plans for each and every
18 student, not just the AIPs that are required, right,
19 which have some test scores and maybe list a couple
20 of things that we're going to be doing. But then
21 with each one of those students we talk about this
22 student is having trouble with numbered operations,
23 so what are we going to do to take this student who's
24 having some difficulty in numbered operations, as
25 opposed to this student who may have the same score

1 but the deficit is in algebra or the deficit is in
2 statistics and probability? And how are we taking
3 those particular conceptual difficulties, concept
4 mastery issues and addressing those individual
5 students? So it has to do not just with the test
6 scores, but also the grain size of our interventions.

7 MS. BARNES: Okay. Thank you. And, you know,
8 just to be clear, my role and goal in asking the
9 question is that it is the same question I asked
10 previously. And so I just needed to know what you
11 were doing differently.

12 DR. DURAND: Thank you.

13 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: No.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
17 or comments? Ms. Smith?

18 MS. SMITH: Just kind of following up on that, I
19 would encourage you guys to go back and look at
20 vertical alignment, especially within your algebra
21 strands. That's where we're seeing kind of a trend
22 statewide in areas of math. So I would just look at
23 your curriculum vertical alignment for all your kids,
24 especially in that area. That's something our math
25 specialists have been kind of trying to work on from

1 a state view too.

2 MS. BARONI: And this is just one note, I know
3 we mentioned this came up some when we were looking
4 at opening our new campus. But there's a very
5 different group of students we're dealing with on the
6 west campus from 8th grade to 9th grade. We have
7 traditionally been a choice for a lot of high
8 performing students at middle school and a lot of
9 those high performing students leave us and go to
10 Little Rock Central High School at the 9th grade
11 level. So when we actually have our high school
12 group at the west campus it's a different kind of
13 make-up than our middle school. So we look at the
14 growth in that area a little differently because we
15 don't have any -- we don't have the underpinning of
16 all of those students who are maybe more naturally
17 motivated and parentally motivated. The students
18 that we keep are the ones that need more intensive
19 support most frequently and we want to do a good job
20 with those. But we can't expect them to, bam, be
21 top-of-the-line students immediately but we want to
22 see that steady growth with those kids, and that's
23 what we're focusing on there.

24 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

25 MR. ROGERS: I just have a question for the

1 Charter Unit. Have we ever granted a renewal longer
2 than 10 years?

3 MS. BOYD: From what I know, the longest renewal
4 you -- the Authorizer, I'm not sure if it was you
5 guys or the State Board, that has granted has been 10
6 years. And that has been to KIPP and I believe to
7 Academics Plus.

8 SUPT. EKIN: (inaudible)

9 MS. BOYD: Maybe we should've asked them. But
10 10 years -- 10 years, as far as I know -- am I right,
11 10 years?

12 SUPT. EKIN: Right.

13 MS. BOYD: -- has been the longest. Yes. I'm
14 going to leave it there; I'm not going to give you my
15 opinion.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Is there a limit in rule or law
17 on that?

18 MS. BOYD: The law states 20 years. So you can
19 give up to 20 years.

20 MR. ROGERS: But our precedence has been, for
21 even high performing charter schools, is -- 10 years
22 is the farthest we've gone out?

23 MS. BOYD: I'm not sure that anyone has asked
24 for more than 10 years either.

25 DR. GOTCHER: However, Madam Chair, this is the

1 first time that I've understood that a number has
2 been chosen based upon a complete student-focused
3 decision, so -- for that kindergartner that's
4 approaching, so --

5 MS. BARONI: If I may, Madam Chair, address
6 that, one of the things that we think is important in
7 that is that we have very deliberately worked to
8 change our demographics while still showing growth.
9 And we believe that we've done that and have a track
10 record of that of several years of showing that even
11 with changing demographics we are still helping those
12 students grow, and will continue to do that with
13 whatever group of students that we have. The longer
14 renewal also helps us a lot in terms of guaranteeing
15 that for the students that they can complete with our
16 system, because parents are carefully choosing where
17 they send their children to school. It also gives us
18 some leverage in terms of negotiating contracts;
19 people see that you have given us the confidence of a
20 13-year renewal and that helps us to negotiate better
21 financial agreements with contractors and things like
22 that. So we know that as a charter school we're
23 subject to being called in at any moment if we veer
24 off the track. But we feel like the 13 years can
25 give that assurance to both families and to potential

1 contracting entities that we need to deal with to run
2 the schools.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Additional conversation?

4 MS. SMITH: So one thing I'd like to encourage
5 the Panel to think about is the purpose of this is
6 renewal of them being a school. We have avenues in
7 process already; if they get into academic problems,
8 we have School Improvement and we have avenues for
9 them to take. I mean, it's the idea of coming before
10 us every time, saying, "Do we get to be a school?"
11 We can call them in any time. I mean, if we have --
12 so just my own thoughts, if we've got schools who are
13 performing, they've not had -- I mean, yes, but I'd
14 like to see their math scores a little bit higher --
15 yeah, I would. But overall, I don't have overall
16 concerns about it. I think, you know, do they show
17 that they're aware and cognizant of their data and
18 making improvements in students? And have they done
19 what we've asked them to do as far as going after a
20 diverse population, increasing their free-and-
21 reduced? They have. We have the authority, again,
22 as a charter at any time if we see a big concern to
23 call somebody back in. So it's the idea of are we
24 granting them permission to be a school. So, I mean,
25 I think when we reduce the years it's a formality of

1 them coming to us and saying, "Do we get to be a
2 school again?" But we have the -- because, I mean --
3 so we think of them truly as a public school; they're
4 a public school. We don't ask our districts to come
5 in every 10 years saying "do we get to be a public
6 school." We call them in through School Improvement
7 if they're not performing and if there are concerns,
8 we have steps that we take. So I think if we have
9 established a charter school that is doing what
10 they're supposed to be doing, they have a record in
11 years to show that they're doing what we've asked
12 them to do, and they've responded as we've asked them
13 to respond, I don't see the need in shortening the
14 years. If anything, I wish they would've probably
15 come and said 20 years and then if there's something
16 that goes on in there we say, "Let's talk; you need
17 to come back to us." But to just say come back to be
18 a formality of do we have to be a school, I mean, I
19 think that's where I -- and I realize that the
20 longest we've done is 10 but --

21 MR. ROGERS: But you could say that for all the
22 charters that we do. I mean, to your argument,
23 you're saying they should all come in here and ask
24 for 20 if we can call them up any time they're not
25 doing anything right.

1 MS. SMITH: It's their job to come and ask us
2 for their years. So if KIPP asked us for 10 and we
3 gave them 10, we gave them what they asked for. If
4 they're asking us for 13 today, and they've -- if
5 they would've come in and asked for 20 today, we'd be
6 discussing 20 right now. So it's their job to
7 request the number of years, and the law permits them
8 to come and ask for 20. So we've never established
9 as a charter it should be 10 or it should be 8 or it
10 should be 3. Through practice we've said three years
11 for these schools that we've seen academic problems
12 with.

13 DR. GOTCHER: I agree.

14 MS. SMITH: We've said -- we've taken them from
15 five to three. That's kind of been a practice that
16 we've done. But for a school that has solid
17 performance we've generally granted them what they
18 ask for, not based on -- so today they're asking for
19 13, so the conversation is do we go with 13.

20 MR. ROGERS: Have we ever -- has a school ever
21 asked for 20 and we knocked it down to 10? Because I
22 think we have. I think there have been schools. I
23 think there were a couple of them that -- I remember
24 that because --

25 MS. BOYD: I'm not sure. So the information

1 that I have is limited to when I've been here and
2 then what's in writing. So what's in writing is what
3 they were granted and not what they asked for. I can
4 go back and check applications. I didn't misspeak
5 earlier, but eStem did ask for 13 years and was
6 granted 10.

7 MR. ROGERS: So then that's kind of where I was
8 kind of -- that we've had higher performing schools
9 -- and I'm not saying that they're not performing,
10 but they have just combined a school; they just
11 opened a new school. There are a lot of changes
12 going on with them right now. And to break
13 precedence on this school when we haven't with the
14 other ones, I don't -- I'm just not comfortable with
15 that. I understand you are; I'm just not.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: I'll say I think Dr. Gotcher was
17 right in this is probably the most sensible request
18 for time, other than just a denomination of five or
19 ten, that is academic and student focused. And so I
20 am comfortable with it.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Durand, you had signed
22 up for public comment.

23 DR. DURAND: I was under the impression I needed
24 to sign that for this, so --

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you. Ms.

1 Barnes.

2 MS. BARNES: Oh, I just have a comment. And my
3 comment is strictly, again, just being Ms. Barnes --
4 I think everybody has pretty much grown accustomed to
5 that -- and it is not a question in my mind about
6 performance growth and work that's being done. My
7 concerns probably are aligned with Mr. Rogers in that
8 the length of time is what I'm grappling with, simply
9 because of the continued discourse and strain that
10 you -- that's evident in the area. And so I'm trying
11 not to hold your school hostage to the deliberations
12 or collaborative efforts for finding a resolution
13 that meets everyone's needs. And I need to make that
14 a very public comment. Because I think sometimes we
15 get caught up in what's happening and fail to see
16 what has the potential to happen. So, again, I'm
17 stating that I'm uncomfortable with the number of
18 years. I'm not uncomfortable with the fact that your
19 school is meeting needs; you are responding. But
20 there are other schools that are responding as well,
21 and maybe not in all of the areas, but for me there
22 are so many nuances here involved. And I'm concerned
23 about children always. I know that you are too, just
24 as any other school. So that's why I'm making a
25 public statement that should my vote not go in

1 accordance it is not with respect to the conversation
2 and giving due diligence to children number of
3 avenues and venues to learn the way they can learn.
4 But I'm also looking at where we are today and what
5 we're looking for and how well we're performing or
6 outperforming, or providing quality education across
7 the board or the absence of it. So I need to state
8 that, no, I'm not comfortable with the length of
9 time. I am comfortable with allowing schools to
10 continue to perform and the rest of it's just the way
11 it is today. And so I needed to state that.

12 MS. SMITH: So based on earlier in the week
13 voting and a charter that we voted on that was pretty
14 split, I felt like at the end of the vote that the
15 vote wasn't against the charter, even though it may
16 be perceived that way. Because it was I think four-
17 three, when it was really about votes against; we
18 just disagreed on years. And so not to send a mixed
19 message I think as a panel -- I mean, what are you
20 guys comfortable with? I mean, so you've expressed
21 that you're not comfortable with 13 but you'd be
22 comfortable with 10. I mean, does anybody -- I mean,
23 Ms. Barnes, are you comfortable with 10 or is that
24 still exceeding? I mean, where is the comfortable
25 spot? So I hate to --

1 MR. ROGERS: The reason that I went with 10 is
2 because of the precedence we've set with other
3 schools that are performing as well or a lot better
4 than LISA in the state. Other schools have come back
5 in before with their student-focused learning and we
6 as a panel were not comfortable with going past the
7 10 at that time.

8 MS. SMITH: Right.

9 MR. ROGERS: And so trying to hold to, as you
10 said, consistency, I know where we are, how we have
11 been voting. And I'm not saying -- and along with
12 what Ms. Barnes was saying, however the vote goes
13 it's not that I'm saying that I don't believe in what
14 LISA is doing.

15 MS. SMITH: Right. That's the point I'm making.
16 Earlier when I voted no this week, I mean, it's been
17 perceived that I --

18 MR. ROGERS: Right.

19 MS. SMITH: You know, when really it was maybe
20 the motion piece. And so now it looks like a very
21 split decision in how that's interpreted, and so I
22 think -- you know -- I think this is an opportunity
23 for us to talk in a public forum, in front of
24 everyone, for us to -- I mean, because, you know, if
25 I were to make a motion for 13 years and it comes out

1 three people vote no and four people vote yes it
2 looks like we're not for the things that the school
3 is doing.

4 MR. ROGERS: Correct.

5 MS. SMITH: And that may not be the case, when
6 if the motion was 10 or 5 it would've been unanimous.
7 And so this is where I think we get to have this
8 conversation in an open forum to say, "So let's make
9 a motion that really" -- I mean, I don't know. I
10 think it just concerns me when we make motions and
11 we're split but it's not necessarily that we were --

12 DR. GOTCHER: Right.

13 MS. SMITH: -- against, but we were -- it was a
14 technicality.

15 MR. ROGERS: And I think I agree, and it helps
16 to explain why we voted against certain motions.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Right.

18 MR. ROGERS: But it's not that I -- I just --
19 I'm uncomfortable with -- I feel like in midstream
20 changing course for what we've done for other schools
21 that have been here, which is not -- I do not -- as
22 Ms. Barnes -- I do not want it to be a reflection on
23 what I believe LISA is doing. I just -- on top of
24 the precedence we've already set, there have been a
25 lot of changes in the past two years with LISA and

1 that adds to my being uncomfortable with going past
2 what we've already set a precedence for, for other
3 schools that are having changes and performing well
4 in the state.

5 DR. GOTCHER: May I, Madam Chair? I grappled
6 with this about six months ago when the first
7 question of time and renewals came up, or maybe it
8 was longer. Some things I have to consider -- and I
9 want to encourage my fellow panel members to think --
10 we will see in the future more applications, more
11 renewals, and we have systems in place that hold all
12 schools accountable, the 237 plus the charters that
13 are in our state. We have systems in place. So
14 whether the number is 13 or the statutory limit of
15 20, in my opinion the longer the better because we
16 have effective systems in place. So just because
17 we've always done something, in my opinion, Mr.
18 Rogers, doesn't mean that we can't lead differently.
19 But we have to think about the effectiveness of our
20 time as a panel while we have systems in place that
21 monitor and do a darn good job of taking care of our
22 schools. So, and I also love the fact that schools
23 come in with their number. Our previous action item,
24 I thought it was quite bold that they chose the
25 number of three. They could've easily picked the

1 number of 20 and I think it would've been a deal-
2 breaker for this panel. So I want to honor the
3 request -- in my opinion, honor the request of the
4 applicants, but knowing -- thinking down the road
5 we're going to have to think differently or we're
6 going to be sitting in these chairs for a long, long
7 time, because we are putting systems in place that
8 will elongate our time as panel members. And that's
9 not simply -- it's not necessarily needed since we
10 have systems in place, as I said.

11 MS. BARONI: Madam Chair?

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. BARONI: May I speak?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, please do.

15 MS. BARONI: Just to address some of the
16 concerns Mr. Rogers expressed about the changes -- if
17 you'll look back in our history, we've been changing
18 since we started. We've experienced huge growth,
19 huge changes, opening new buildings, opening new
20 campuses, and we've sustained our growth trajectory
21 through that. I understand that concern and I
22 respect that, but I think we have learned how to
23 navigate through the changes and we have learned to
24 develop systems that will sustain that through those
25 changes. I understand your hesitation to do

1 something different, but we're charged to be
2 innovative. So Haas Hall got the first 10-year;
3 we're shooting for the first 13-year, and we feel
4 like we've got a good track record. If you want to
5 take a shot at it, we might be a good bet for doing
6 the 13.

7 MR. ROGERS: I would just like to say to your
8 argument --

9 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, sir.

10 MR. ROGERS: -- the systems are in place, so why
11 don't we give them all 20 years?

12 DR. GOTCHER: Exactly.

13 MR. ROGERS: Because, I mean, then -- because
14 the systems -- I mean, because if that's what we're
15 going to look at then, I mean -- but to what you just
16 said, you're uncomfortable with the last charter
17 getting -- you said it would've been a deal-breaker
18 for you. But the same systems that are in place to
19 hold them -- we're just -- I'm just looking for a
20 little consistency in holding all the charters to the
21 same.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Sure.

23 MR. ROGERS: And I feel like we're stepping away
24 from that and I have a problem with that.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Understood, my friend.

1 MR. ROGERS: And we can probably argue about it
2 all day long and I'm sure we'd all enjoy it, but --

3 MR. LESTER: No.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis has said no.

5 MS. DAVIS: No.

6 MR. ROGERS: But that's -- anyway, I'll leave it
7 alone. I feel like I'm beating a dead horse, but --

8 DR. GOTCHER: You're fine.

9 MR. ROGERS: That's just where I'm coming from
10 with it.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: I'd just like to make a motion at
13 the proper time.

14 MS. SMITH: Information: KIPP did get 10 years,
15 eStem did get 10 years. eStem came and asked for 13
16 years for one of the -- for the one class of
17 kindergartners going all the way through, but they
18 were only given 10.

19 DR. GOTCHER: What time was -- what year was
20 that, or do you have it?

21 MS. SMITH: I don't have the year.

22 DR. GOTCHER: I thought it was in front of you.
23 Sorry. That's okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd.

25 MS. BOYD: I'd also just like for you guys to

1 take into account that LISA has been in operation for
2 12 years now. I don't know if that helps or hurts
3 your decision-making process.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Okay.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: I'll make --

6 MS. DAVIS: Wait. Wait one second.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

8 MS. DAVIS: I just want to point out on the
9 waiver sheet there was a typographical error.
10 Obviously, it wasn't a big deal because you guys
11 didn't point it out. But under the library media
12 specialist, that first statute should be 6-25-103,
13 not 23. That was just my fat fingers.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And you have no additional
15 issues?

16 MS. DAVIS: I do not.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. I'm ready for
18 a motion.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: I make a motion to approve the
20 application as presented.

21 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Discussion? Any
23 additional -- let me rephrase: any additional
24 discussion?

25 Dr. Saunders has made a motion to approve the

1 renewal for LISA Academy for 13 years; Dr. Gotcher
2 seconded that motion. All those in favor?

3 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

5 MR. ROGERS: No.

6 MS. BARNES: No.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let the record show that
8 Ms. Barnes and Mr. Rogers opposed. Motion carries.

9 MS. BARONI: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll give us --

11 MR. BOGREK: Thank you very much also. Today is
12 Ms. Baroni's birthday, so you present a great
13 birthday gift to Ms. Baroni. Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Well, happy, happy
15 birthday.

16 SUPT. EKIN: Thank you so much. We appreciate
17 your support and encouragement. We will not let you
18 down. We will do our best to keep on high achieving
19 and provide the best education to our kids in
20 Arkansas. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

22 SUPT. EKIN: And happy birthday to Ms. Baroni.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I will just say, while
24 they're filling out their paperwork, I appreciate how
25 your school reaches out to other schools.

1 SUPT. EKIN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And I think that's a
3 question our State Board often asks and we usually
4 ask, but we didn't have to ask you today because we
5 know that you are collaborators.

6 SUPT. EKIN: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So we appreciate that.

8 SUPT. EKIN: Thank you so much.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's always good for
10 everyone.

11 SUPT. EKIN: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

13 MS. BARNES: Yes. I did not vote in favor of
14 the motion. And I believe I stated it earlier, but
15 given the continued conversations regarding
16 collaborative efforts and resolutions to meet the
17 needs of all children. Additionally, the school
18 personnel has stated that they are now serving a
19 different type of student and I am considering the
20 fact that that is a way of public education today and
21 will continue to be. And so for those reason, I did
22 not support the motion today.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

24 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the renewal as
25 presented. I have no concerns with this campus and

1 support fully their vision for the future.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

3 MR. LESTER: I voted for the renewal. The
4 charter has been consistent with offering a quality
5 education. I have no concerns at this time.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

7 MR. ROGERS: I voted no, although it's not a
8 reflection on how I think about LISA's performance;
9 I'm just uncomfortable with the decision going to 13
10 years.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted for it. I thought LISA
13 has a proven track record of success and their
14 demographics continue to evolve to reflect the
15 surrounding area.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And Ms. Smith.

17 MS. SMITH: I voted for. No concerns. The
18 school has demonstrated 12 years of educational
19 consistency, financial responsibility, and service to
20 students.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations. Your
22 next step is to take this before the State Board.
23 And as I have encouraged every school that has been
24 before us the past three days, I encourage you to be
25 part of the voice in our state accountability plan

1 through ESSA. So encourage your parents, encourage
2 your community to be engaged in that process. Thank
3 you.

4 A-3: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
5 AMENDMENT: OZARK MONTESSORI ACADEMY

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Panel Members, we have one
7 amendment from Ozark Montessori. Is that correct,
8 Ms. Perry?

9 MS. PERRY: Yes, Madam Chair, it is. The last
10 item on the agenda is an amendment request from Ozark
11 Montessori and we have Dr. Silano here to present.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So what is the will of the
13 Panel? A very short break?

14 We'll take a very short break and then we will
15 hear Action Item 3.

16 DR. SILANO: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

18 (BREAK: 11:50 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Perry, you're
20 recognized for Action Item 3.

21 MS. PERRY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The last
22 item on the agenda is Ozark Montessori Academy and
23 they have an amendment request. And we have Dr.
24 Silano here to do the presentation.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If all the representatives

1 from Ozark Montessori Academy will stand and raise
2 their hand; anyone speaking in opposition. Do you
3 swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to
4 give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing
5 but the truth?

6 DR. SILANO: I do.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. You're
8 recognized, Ms. Silano -- Dr. Silano.

9 DR. SILANO: Hello. This is kind of -- some of
10 this is just real housekeeping business as far as our
11 bylaws. Ozark -- oh, did -- I didn't really
12 introduce myself. I'm Christi Silano, the founder
13 and director of Ozark Education and the principal of
14 Ozark Montessori Academy. So some of this, as far as
15 our bylaws, since the bylaws are in our charter we
16 wanted you to be aware of recent changes in the
17 language of our bylaws, and so the first one is the
18 language of a description of the role of the
19 president of our school board. In the original
20 language of our bylaws it said, "The president shall
21 be the chief executive officer of Ozark Education."
22 Frankly, you know, not being an attorney, not really
23 having a whole lot of help in the origin of our
24 nonprofit -- this would've been in the spring of 2013
25 when I was just forming the 501(c)(3) -- I'm not sure

1 where I got this language. But recently we had some
2 board training from a nationally known charter board
3 professional development trainer, Dr. Brian
4 Carpenter, and he was really wonderful. He came to
5 our school and actually did an analysis of our bylaws
6 and all of our minutes and that kind of thing. And
7 he recommended that we take that out of the language
8 that "the president shall be the chief executive
9 officer," because that puts our board member in a
10 position of liability as far as the management of the
11 school. And so the new language would read, in the
12 second paragraph on the first page, "The president
13 shall serve as chairman of the board and for the
14 oversight" -- I'm kind of skipping ahead -- "for the
15 oversight of its business and affairs. He shall
16 preside at the meeting of the board, have full and
17 equal vote," et cetera, et cetera. So, most of that
18 language in that paragraph has not changed. The
19 primary change there is that the president shall no
20 longer be the chief executive officer but shall serve
21 in a capacity as chairman of the actual school board.

22 Now the second section I found a big typo, and I
23 must've been in a hurry when I put this together, so
24 you should've received a little addendum that was
25 just passed out. So for part -- and that's for

1 change number two. So the current language, it says,
2 "The Vice President shall have duties." That was a
3 copy-and-paste mistake on my part. It should
4 actually be in reference to the position of
5 Treasurer. So if you look on the new one that I gave
6 you, it says "The Treasurer, as Chief Financial
7 Officer of Ozark Education, shall have oversight."
8 That's the current language. So, once again, Dr.
9 Carpenter recommended your treasurer, just being a
10 volunteer board member from the public, does not want
11 the liability of being the Chief Financial Officer
12 responsible for financial decisions made by the
13 administration. So the new language is actually
14 correct on the original one I sent you, but the
15 Treasurer shall be the chair of the Ozark Education
16 Financial oversight committee, reviewing the budget,
17 et cetera, et cetera.

18 And then the third change to our bylaws is
19 actually -- has to do with parent membership on our
20 board of trustees. So in my research I found that it
21 is helpful to have more community involvement in your
22 school board than simply -- parent membership
23 involvement on a school board can lend itself to
24 sometimes to conflict of interest as the parent tends
25 to vote for their specific interests of their own

1 children. So in the original language I had written
2 "no more than one parent of an enrolled student may
3 serve as a trustee." And, again, in -- just in the
4 course of our -- the growth and the evolution of our
5 organization, our board felt comfortable to add a
6 second parent member, drawing from the talent of our
7 school community. And so they voted to -- they made
8 a motion and voted to change it to two parents of
9 enrolled students may serve as -- on the board of
10 trustees.

11 Are there any questions about changes to our
12 bylaws? These changes have been adopted by the
13 board.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let me quickly ask: is
15 there anyone to speak in opposition? I take it
16 silence is a no. Ms. Boyd, I can see your head.

17 MS. BOYD: No, ma'am.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

19 MS. BOYD: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Are you finished
21 with your presentation?

22 DR. SILANO: I'm finished with the bylaws part
23 of it. So now I'd like to address a couple of
24 changes to our actual charter operations.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let's go ahead and do that

1 and then we'll come back with our questions.

2 DR. SILANO: Okay. All right. Great. So on
3 the next page at the top, in bold, it says Charter
4 Changes. The first one -- excuse me -- has to do
5 with a change of our formative assessment product
6 from the Star 360 to the iReady. An explanation of
7 why we chose the Star 360: I had been working in
8 traditional public schools for seven years prior to
9 founding a charter and so I'm familiar with some of
10 the different products that were out there and had
11 worked with MAPS. And I came to the conclusion that
12 in a Montessori environment, because it is an
13 individualized curriculum, that we should also have
14 an option for a more individualized formative
15 assessment product. And so we chose Star 360 because
16 students, according to their need, they could take it
17 -- you know, you can take it every week. There are
18 just many, many multiple opportunities for students
19 to take the test. You can have a computer set up in
20 the classroom and the teacher can assign the student
21 to take a formative assessment in time; so in that
22 regard Star 360 was useful. But we found a product
23 that we liked better that we wanted to use this year
24 that is similar insofar as that you can use it as
25 often as you please throughout the school year, but

1 it also has some added elements that we liked as far
2 as its reports. So in use with our Response to
3 Intervention programming, the iReady program actually
4 has a more prescriptive -- it has the diagnostics;
5 you can do frequent diagnostic but it also has a
6 prescriptive aspect to it. So it actually -- if you
7 look at it -- I've provided an example in the back
8 here so you can see that it actually tells the
9 teacher some of the individual skills that each child
10 needs. And because our Montessori curriculum is so
11 individualized, those teachers are tracking the
12 individual progress of every single student. And so
13 with the iReady program they not only will prescribe
14 the particular skills that each child is needing but
15 it also provides grouping. So it groups your child,
16 your students into small groups that can work
17 together and it also provides some paper-and-pencil
18 materials that teachers can use for remediation. So
19 they've been very happy with it.

20 I have to apologize, so I don't know if I'm
21 going to get a slap on the hand or what here, but we
22 -- in a perfect world we would've asked for this
23 change back in July, before the school year started.
24 But it wasn't actually -- we were unhappy with Star,
25 we knew we didn't want to go to MAPS, and it wasn't

1 until August at a conference that we came across
2 iReady at a vendor booth. And so it was a quick
3 change and so here we are already into the school
4 year. But I will say having piloted both of these
5 products we're much happier with the iReady product
6 than with the Star product.

7 Then the other change to our charter -- and this
8 is the last change today -- has to do with our
9 financial audit requirement. Again, being pretty new
10 to, you know, running a school, the business end of a
11 school, I relied on the coaching and the mentorship
12 of people who I met in the community and networked
13 with. And so with our original charter application,
14 which was actually back in 2013 -- our first charter
15 application was denied by the Authorizing Panel --
16 but that charter I had the assistance of our founding
17 treasurer who had connections in the -- with CPAs,
18 accountants in the community. And they told us that,
19 "Oh, what you want to do is you want to get a private
20 CPA firm to do your audit," and so we took that
21 advice and we put that in our charter application.
22 Well -- and we had a quote for a price that was in
23 our original budget of \$8,000. But when the actual
24 time came to start to plan for our first audit we
25 discovered the price was over double of that and that

1 in fact most, if not all, charter schools -- now the
2 trend in Arkansas is to use the Legislative Audit,
3 and people seem happy with that. And I think for the
4 Panel's sake when you look at those audits you're
5 comparing apples to apples as far as what to expect
6 in the audit. So it made sense to us that there was
7 this free option available that was going to help us
8 financially and maybe would make more sense for
9 everybody.

10 So I think that's it. Any questions?

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Just a point of
12 clarification, back on your formative assessments you
13 plan to also use ACT Aspire?

14 DR. SILANO: Oh, yes. I didn't mention that.
15 We do, so -- as a means of preparation, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Smith.

17 MS. SMITH: So this may be the Charter Unit or
18 even Ms. Davis or even any of the panel members here.
19 So I appreciate the information about the change of
20 formative assessment, and I understand that. But
21 unless it's directly tied to their goals -- and so,
22 is it? I mean, do they -- why does she need our
23 permission to --

24 DR. SILANO: It is actually tied to our goals.

25 MS. SMITH: So it is directly tied to the goals?

1 DR. SILANO: Yes.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. That's --

3 DR. SILANO: The Star assessments are supposed
4 to show one year growth for every student per year.

5 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so you're going to
6 replace that goal, so that's what we're -- so we're
7 changing our goals?

8 MS. BOYD: Changing the instrument for
9 assessment to show achievement in the goals.

10 MS. SMITH: So if it wasn't tied to the goals
11 she wouldn't need to come before us asking for this?

12 MS. BOYD: Right. And the main thing that's
13 clear that she has to ask you for is the change in
14 auditor. It says that in the application and other
15 documents, that if they're going to change their
16 auditor it has to be approved by the Authorizer. And
17 so in having this discussion and talking to the
18 applicant about -- or the charter, sorry, about other
19 changes that were taking place we felt it was
20 appropriate to go ahead and bring those other details
21 forward.

22 MS. SMITH: Okay. And I do appreciate the
23 information and keeping us aware, but I don't want us
24 to get in a situation where we're up here debating or
25 grilling a person on choices they're making as a

1 local public school, but we -- I mean, their
2 formative assessment choice is their formative
3 assessment choice; we don't determine that. But it
4 is linked to their goals and so I can see updating
5 it. I mean, I get that. But I just -- I don't want
6 us to be voting on amendments that --

7 DR. GOTCHER: That's really a local decision.

8 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

9 MS. BOYD: Right. So that really comes into
10 play with the changes in the bylaws. That part is
11 the part that does not necessarily need to be
12 approved by you guys. But the change in the auditor
13 does and because the assessment is tied to their
14 goals that are approved and that we're going to
15 measure them on when it comes time for renewal, those
16 are the two things that need to be really addressed.

17 MS. SMITH: Yeah. So just a comment: I
18 personally have no concerns with it. I think you
19 probably are getting a lot more information with
20 iReady than you had with Star, just in my knowledge
21 of different assessment systems. So I do not have
22 any concerns on that. Anything determining an
23 auditor, money, I'm going to let them do that.

24 DR. GOTCHER: Next?

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

1 DR. GOTCHER: Hello, Dr. Silano.

2 DR. SILANO: Hello.

3 DR. GOTCHER: Just a question I had after you
4 presented your bylaws, who did you say provided the
5 technical assistance? I had no issue with anything.
6 I just was curious who provided the technical
7 assistance for you, or did you say?

8 DR. SILANO: Dr. Brian Carpenter.

9 DR. GOTCHER: And he's with?

10 DR. SILANO: He was actually a speaker at APSRC
11 training and he just consults with charter school
12 boards across the country. And we really enjoyed
13 him.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Wonderful.

15 DR. SILANO: Yes.

16 DR. GOTCHER: And have you already talked to
17 Leg-Audit? I know there was a time --

18 DR. SILANO: Yes.

19 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Good.

20 DR. SILANO: They have penciled us in, but they
21 didn't want to put it in ink until they had your
22 okay.

23 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. And I knew there was a time
24 constraint at one time. Maybe Mr. Rogers can address
25 that. There were some districts that had the

1 independent audits that were moving towards the Leg-
2 Audit and there was a concern of capacity. And I
3 just wanted to make sure we didn't make the changes
4 and then they didn't have the capacity to take on one
5 more entity. But I don't think it's really --

6 DR. SILANO: Yeah. We've spoken with them
7 several times.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Good.

9 DR. SILANO: They've said we'll be at the end of
10 the list, in March or later, but they're on there.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Good. Maybe Mr. Rogers has a
12 comment on that. But thank you, that's all I have.

13 DR. SILANO: All right.

14 MR. ROGERS: I mean, more schools have gone --
15 have asked for Leg-Audit because of some of the
16 things that she mentioned, because of the formality
17 of everybody having -- of using Leg-Audit and also
18 because the Department of Ed. pays for using Leg-
19 Audit. But there is a problem with capacity. So if
20 you have been in discussion, you're on their list,
21 then they should be able to get to them.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions? Ms.
23 Smith.

24 MS. SMITH: So on the goals, I guess, Charter
25 Unit, you guys will just work with the school to

1 update the goal with the new formative assessment --

2 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am. That's correct.

3 MS. SMITH: -- because that's part of the
4 application?

5 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so we just need that goal
7 -- I mean, I don't want to wait until it's renewal
8 time and then -- what was it supposed to be? I guess
9 we just need to establish that.

10 MS. BOYD: Yeah. We'll update those documents
11 as soon -- we update everything after State Board.

12 MS. SMITH: Okay.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions or
14 comments?

15 I'm ready for a motion.

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

17 MS. SMITH: Second.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders has made a
19 motion; Ms. Smith has seconded that motion to approve
20 the amendments presented to us from Ozark Montessori
21 Academy. Any discussion?

22 All those in favor?

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? Motion
25 carries.

1 DR. SILANO: Thank you.

2 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

4 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the amendments. No
5 concerns presented and support their continued
6 success.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

8 MR. LESTER: I voted for the amendments. I have
9 no concerns with the amendments.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

11 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. Just like everybody
12 else, no concerns.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor. I have no
15 concerns.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

17 MS. SMITH: For. No concerns.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

19 MS. BARNES: I voted for. No concerns with the
20 amendment as presented.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Dr.
22 Silano. We appreciate your transparency.

23 Are there any additional issues before the Panel
24 today? Ms. Davis?

25 MS. DAVIS: No, I have nothing.

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CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd?

MS. BOYD: I just wanted to prepare you all that we're working on changes and updates to the application and we'll put those on the agenda for your meeting date in January.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any issues from Panel Members?

Then I'll accept a motion to adjourn.

DR. SAUNDERS: So moved.

MS. SMITH: Second.

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

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Meeting is adjourned.
Thank you everyone.

(The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.)

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A-1: LITTLE ROCK PREPARATORY ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-2: LISA ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-3: OZARK MONTESSORI ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas State Department of Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on December 15, 2016, that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

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

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

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: December 31, 2016.

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

§	92:24;93:2,10,11,21; 94:9,12;96:7;106:9, 18;109:4,13;113:18; 114:22;119:20; 120:19;121:2;141:1; 144:5,22;145:1,14; 157:21;160:24; 161:24;162:24	acknowledge (2) 21:21;24:22	26:16;55:16;76:21; 77:14,16,18,19,23; 78:5;81:25;82:1; 85:5;89:11;98:22; 99:6;110:1;113:5; 117:24;118:4; 124:16;128:3; 140:14,23,23;158:23	114:20 advice (1) 151:21 advise (1) 3:23 advisement (1) 4:14 advising (1) 10:22 Advisor (1) 5:4 advisory (1) 68:6 affairs (1) 146:15 affect (1) 68:8 affirm (3) 5:13;93:14;145:3 AFFIRMATIVELY (2) 5:16;93:17 afford (1) 75:22 afraid (3) 71:17;72:3,8 African (2) 6:24;28:13 afternoon (1) 116:5 afterschool (2) 98:24;122:16 again (22) 8:13;34:10,12; 36:8,25;41:24;51:18; 81:3;83:13;86:16; 89:12;97:6;108:20; 110:20;120:11; 128:21;129:2;132:3, 16;147:8;148:3; 151:9 against (5) 116:20;133:15,17; 135:13,16 age (2) 43:8;56:20 agenda (6) 5:5;83:11;93:6; 144:10,22;159:4 ages (1) 67:24 ago (5) 14:18;20:15;69:25; 70:3;136:6 agree (5) 4:19;52:3;63:9; 130:13;135:15 Agreeing (1) 84:15 agreement (2) 87:2;95:4 agreements (1) 127:21 ahead (4)
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