

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

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*February 18, 2015*

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*Sharon Hill Court Reporting  
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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

#4 CAPITOL MALL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201

February 18, 2015

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

Mr. Mike Hernandez	Chairman/Deputy Commissioner
Dr. Debbie Jones	Vice Chair/Asst. Commissioner of Learning Services
Ms. Ivy Pfeffer	Asst. Commissioner-HR/Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
Ms. Annette Barnes	Asst. Commissioner-Public School Accountability
Dr. Eric Saunders	Asst. Commissioner-Fiscal & Administrative Services
Dr. Cody Decker	Asst. Commissioner-Research & Technology
Ms. Deborah Coffman	Chief of Staff

ALSO APPEARING:

Ms. Cindy Hogue	Director, Charter/Home Schools
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ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

Mr. Jeremy Lasiter	ADE General Counsel
Ms. Kendra Clay	ADE Attorney Specialist
Ms. Lori Freno	ADE Deputy General Counsel

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I will call this meeting to order. The first item I see on the agenda is a work session. I believe we're going to do that at the end?

MS. HOGUE: Yes, we are.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. The next item is the Chair's report. At this time I don't have anything to report other than welcome; I apologize for the bad weather this morning but there wasn't anything I could do about it.

CONSENT AGENDA

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We'll move on to the Consent Agenda. The Consent Agenda item is for the minutes and we'll entertain a motion. Have you had a chance to read those minutes?

MS. COFFMAN: Mr. Chair, I've already sent some just minor corrections to Sky.

DR. SAUNDERS: I move to accept the minutes with those corrections.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Motion to accept the minutes with the changes sent by Ms. Coffman.

DR. JONES: I'll second that.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Second. All in favor say "aye."

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(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

A-1: CONSIDERATION OF FOUNTAIN LAKE CHARTER SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL  
- REQUIREMENT TO REPORT ON PROGRESS

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: The next action item is item A-1 and I'll have -- Ms. Hogue, if you want to describe kind of the process there, and Ms. Clay may need to help you with that one.

MS. HOGUE: In November, y'all approved the charter for Fountain Lake but you also had a stipulation that they would need to come back in the spring and do a report on the progress they had made in their preparations. Then it went to the State Board, and the State Board decided they didn't want to review it; they upheld your decision, but that decision would include them coming back to report to y'all in the spring on progress they've made. So what we're here today is for y'all to decide if you want to continue with that report or what you heard the State Board -- will that do. So that's why you're here, but Ms. Clay can explain to you --

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, is that pretty accurate? We will just need a motion whether or not to have them come back and do the report in the spring or to just accept the report given at the

1 State Board meeting?

2 MS. CLAY: That's correct. A motion to either  
3 keep that requirement as a part of their charter or  
4 remove the requirement would be appropriate.

5 MS. PFEFFER: And I think I was probably the one  
6 at the beginning that made the motion, that we didn't  
7 have enough information to feel comfortable. But  
8 after they came to the State Board meeting they  
9 answered all of my questions and I think, you know,  
10 they were very thorough. So I would make a motion  
11 that we not require them to come back in the spring,  
12 and I feel like they've given us all the information  
13 that we need.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You've heard the motion.  
15 Is there a second?

16 DR. JONES: I'll second that.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and  
18 a second. Any questions or discussion? All those in  
19 favor say "aye."

20 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed? Motion  
22 passes.

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

24 AMENDMENT: HAAS HALL ACADEMY, FAYETTEVILLE

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Ms. Hogue, we'll

1 move on to item A-2, the open-enrollment amendment  
2 for Haas Hall.

3 MS. HOGUE: Haas Hall was approved to start a  
4 new charter. In the meantime, they've asked for an  
5 amendment for their old charter to move to a new  
6 location. They're also asking for an amendment to  
7 add a grade level. And here to speak for it is Dr.  
8 Marty -- Martin Schoppmeyer.

9 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Good morning, Chair and Panel.  
10 Today, I am --

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do we need to swear in?

12 MS. CLAY: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Do you want to go  
14 over procedures, Kendra? Sorry.

15 PROCEDURES

16 MS. CLAY: Okay. You all have several different  
17 items on your agenda today. You've got amendment  
18 requests from open-enrollment charters and you also  
19 have renewal requests from open-enrollment and  
20 conversion charters. Luckily, the procedures are  
21 going to be the same for all of these and so I'll go  
22 over those to remind you-all and remind the people in  
23 the room.

24 All persons with the exception of attorneys that  
25 are representing either party will need to be sworn

1 in. The applicant or in this case the current  
2 charter holder will have 20 minutes to present its  
3 case for approval of the proposed amendment or  
4 renewal of their application. Parties opposed will  
5 then have 20 minutes, and then the charter holder  
6 will have 5 minutes for rebuttal. At that point you  
7 all can ask questions, have discussion. And then you  
8 may vote today; you may take a matter under  
9 advisement and table it till a later date; you can  
10 send the charter holder back for technical assistance  
11 from the Department. And if you do choose to deny  
12 either an amendment request or a renewal application,  
13 although your rules don't require it, I would ask  
14 that you would give your reasons. That will help the  
15 State Board facilitate whether or not they want to  
16 review the decision if we have those reasons stated  
17 on the record and we can provide those to them. So  
18 it will be the same procedure for all of the hearings  
19 today. Do you-all have any questions?

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: No questions? Okay.

21 A-2: HAAS HALL (Continuing)

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Schoppmeyer, if we've  
23 got people in the audience here to speak for or  
24 against the charter application, if you would please  
25 let me -- raise your hand, right hand; let me swear

1           you in. Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth,  
2           the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

3                    (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

4                    CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, sir. Okay.

5                    DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Mr. Chairman and Members of  
6           the Charter Authorizing Panel, I'm here today to  
7           request that our Fayetteville campus have the ability  
8           to move, add a 7th grade, and increase our enrollment  
9           cap from 320 to 400 scholars.

10                   MR. HENRY: Good morning. I'm Mark Henry. I'm  
11           working with Haas Hall Academy.

12                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Henry, were you sworn  
13           in a second ago?

14                   MS. HOGUE: He's their lawyer.

15                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Oh, you are. Okay.

16                   MR. HENRY: Yeah. I'm counsel.

17                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

18                   MR. HENRY: So relative to the move, in your  
19           packet you'll see it's one mile away from where it is  
20           now. And if you're familiar with Fayetteville,  
21           downtown Fayetteville, the present location is on a  
22           busy thoroughfare; it's a four-lane with a turn lane.  
23           About 30,000 cars --

24                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Excuse me. Could you speak  
25           into the mic? I think we're recording some, so that

1 way we can hear you. Thank you.

2 MR. HENRY: I didn't want to over -- blow it  
3 out. Okay. So the current location has about 30,000  
4 cars on a busy four-lane, with a turn lane as well.  
5 It's near a turn light with a shopping center. The  
6 aerial depictions that I've provided you in the  
7 packet show it's an extremely congested place. Haas  
8 Hall has an opportunity to move one mile to the north  
9 and it's still a -- it's a very convenient location.  
10 In fact, it's near the 540 exchange -- or the Highway  
11 49 exchange, making it very easy. It's also  
12 protected by two red lights. And from the aerial  
13 you'll see it's not on the main road anymore; it's on  
14 a side road. High visibility, but quite a bit of  
15 exclusivity and traffic flow is much more regulated.  
16 The location is larger. The proposed landlord is  
17 willing to build it out to all current  
18 specifications. Right now, they're a bowling ally.  
19 They'd like to move it to a -- it's former dress shop  
20 called the Colony Shop; it's a big square. So with a  
21 big square you can do a whole lot more than having to  
22 build over bowling lanes. Because this also depends  
23 upon expanding to the 7th grade, we're still in early  
24 negotiations -- not early negotiations -- they have  
25 -- in your packet you'll see that the landlord is

1 completely ready, willing and able to go forward with  
2 the budget we've set for the proposed rent and all  
3 the work, budget with the addition of 7th grade  
4 students. Why 7th grade? Fayetteville, one-third of  
5 all students in the 7th grade in Fayetteville due to  
6 restructuring are going to move. Yeah, one-third of  
7 all students in Fayetteville Public School District  
8 -- that's a convenience factor that's not necessarily  
9 the prime reason for moving. The companion reason is  
10 that Bentonville proved last year or early this year  
11 -- it's also a 7th to 12th. In terms of curriculum,  
12 preparing curriculum, in terms of interchange of  
13 parity among the two campuses, the 7th through 12th  
14 makes sense for Fayetteville as well.

15 Haas Hall-Fayetteville is not asking for any  
16 waivers relative to the inclusion of the 7th grade.  
17 We'll respect all current requirements; not asking  
18 for any changes other than to just carry forward,  
19 understanding that adding 7th grade is another grade,  
20 but we would like to talk about the 7th grade.

21 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: I think it's important to note  
22 the proposed location is right near the trail system,  
23 so scholars can ride their bikes to school. Some of  
24 them do now, but it's not near as convenient as it  
25 would be. Also, the University of Arkansas has a

1 location right up the road on the same street so our  
2 scholars can take classes up there too. It's a new  
3 campus they just installed.

4 MR. HENRY: Could you address the 7th grade  
5 curriculum?

6 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Sure. We're going to follow  
7 all the rules and regulations, certainly all the  
8 frameworks, Common Core, all that stuff; we already  
9 to do it for Benton County and we'd like to do it in  
10 Fayetteville, Washington County, as well -- a true  
11 replication of what we have going on at both schools.

12 MR. HENRY: Any questions?

13 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Do you have any questions of  
14 me?

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Is there anybody here -- is  
16 there anybody here to speak against -- or anybody  
17 else to speak for? I'm sorry. Nobody here to speak  
18 against. Dr. Schoppmeyer, is that all of your  
19 presentation for today?

20 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Yes, sir.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We'll move over to  
22 questions from the Panel. Do we have questions? Dr.  
23 Saunders.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: I've got some probably procedural  
25 questions for our staff and it concerns -- if I'm

1 understanding this -- if you could just explain to  
2 me, on the -- renewal is for 20 years, what that  
3 whole process is. Is there a timeframe in between  
4 there for reporting progress?

5 MS. CLAY: Haas Hall is just asking for an  
6 amendment request. They're not one of your renewals  
7 today. So they're just asking for an amendment to  
8 their current charter, which is currently through --  
9 okay, he thinks they're in year-three of a ten-year.  
10 They still have all of their reporting requirements  
11 that any traditional school and charter school has.  
12 But just so we're clear on this particular agenda  
13 item, it's just an amendment request.

14 Now if you want me to talk about length of time  
15 on the renewals I can go ahead and do that too.  
16 Later in the agenda, when the renewals come, open-  
17 enrollment can be renewed up to 20 years. You don't  
18 have to do the full 20 years; it's in your discretion  
19 to pick the timeframe. And conversion charter  
20 schools can be renewed for up to five years. Again,  
21 you don't have to do the full five years, but you can  
22 do a maximum of five years. But that will be on the  
23 actual renewal request, not the amendment request.  
24 Does that make sense?

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, it does.

1 MS. CLAY: Okay.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I have a follow-up question  
4 to that. On their -- on your -- if you're in year-  
5 three this current year, this term lease of seven  
6 years, that lines up with the end of your charter?

7 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: That's correct. Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Any other questions  
9 from the panel members?

10 DR. JONES: Yes, I have a question.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Jones.

12 DR. JONES: Good morning.

13 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Good morning, Ma'am.

14 DR. JONES: Can you speak specifically to me  
15 about the lottery for these 7th grade students, when  
16 will it be held, where will it be held --

17 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Great.

18 DR. JONES: -- how it's advertised and so-forth?

19 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Excellent. We just had a  
20 lottery and it was audited by the State Department  
21 last week and -- well, with snow days I think it was  
22 last week. We're going to advertise in the paper  
23 that we're going to have the 7th grade, a full page,  
24 in all types of papers. We'll probably do it in the  
25 month of April, allowing people to sign-up and also

1 allowing people to come and shadow and those kinds of  
2 things to get an idea what the school is like. So  
3 that's how we'll do it. We'll advertise in papers  
4 and social media, things like that, get people  
5 interested in coming into 7th grade. Yes, ma'am.

6 DR. JONES: Okay. Can you speak to me where you  
7 hold the official lottery?

8 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Where we hold it was in my  
9 office.

10 DR. JONES: Also, can you speak to me about your  
11 waiting list? Do you have a waiting list? How do  
12 you communicate with parents if they're on the  
13 waiting list and so-forth?

14 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: We -- typically what happens,  
15 everybody knew we were going to hold the lottery just  
16 two weeks ago -- yeah, last Friday -- and so we call  
17 people that are on the -- that were pulled to fill up  
18 our spots. And so other people call as well; they  
19 want to know did their scholar get in and we'll tell  
20 them where they are on the list and whether or not  
21 they get in, those types of things. So there are  
22 times when the scholars don't get in and we have to  
23 -- people will turn us down; they'll say, "Can we  
24 have a day or two to think about it," that kind of  
25 thing. So, yeah. As far as a waiting list goes, it

1 will only be drawn once the lottery is drawn for 7th  
2 grade. Is that what you're asking specifically for?

3 DR. JONES: Okay. On the waiting list issue --

4 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Yes.

5 DR. JONES: -- do you communicate with the  
6 parents if they're in or out or do you wait for them  
7 to call you?

8 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: No. We -- well, we  
9 communicate with the ones that get in and let them  
10 know. But it's an interesting phenomenon; people  
11 call the school all the time to see if their scholar  
12 is in, because they want to know "where am I on the  
13 list," that kind of thing, "do I have a chance." So  
14 we communicate with parents who call us. Yes.

15 DR. JONES: Okay.

16 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: We don't just call them cold.  
17 No.

18 DR. JONES: For clarity, those that do not get  
19 in do not get a phone call from you?

20 DR. SCHOLLMEYER: We don't call people cold.  
21 No.

22 DR. JONES: Okay.

23 DR. SCHOLLMEYER: But it's -- I'd be happy to do  
24 that, if that's what you want.

25 DR. JONES: Another question I have: do you

1 still have in place a required interview for those  
2 students that are applying to be in your school?

3 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: It's not an interview. What  
4 it is is we ask that a scholar shadow for a day or  
5 part of a day and then a parent or somebody come in  
6 and take a tour of the school. And typically it's  
7 given by someone, a staff member, at the institution.  
8 I don't do them very often; I have somebody else who  
9 does them for me. So we give a quick tour of the  
10 school, answer any questions they have about the  
11 school, the lottery is explained during that time,  
12 when the lottery is going to be pulled. Certainly,  
13 they knew when the lottery was going to be pulled.  
14 And then the scholar has an opportunity to say, "I  
15 like this" or "I don't like this type of  
16 environment." It's a block schedule, four 90-minute  
17 classes a day that lasts a semester. And we don't  
18 have a lot of windows and so that's an issue for  
19 some, is that we don't have many windows.

20 DR. JONES: Okay. Just for clarity, because I  
21 think with the new charter last time --

22 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Yes.

23 DR. JONES: -- I think you communicated that a  
24 student sits down with you to have a discussion in  
25 the process. And for clarity on the record --

1 DR. SCHOPPMEYER: Yes.

2 DR. JONES: -- that is not a part of your  
3 process?

4 DR. SCHOPPMEYER: A student doesn't sit down  
5 with me, ever. I never talk to the student; I talk  
6 to the parents. I don't get involved with the  
7 scholar. The scholar gets dropped off. Their  
8 parents -- they all get together and they're talked  
9 to by one my staff members about the shadow day, what  
10 to expect. They're paired up with some -- a scholar  
11 to shadow, and that's all. I don't have anything to  
12 do with it. I don't -- that's not my thing.  
13 Sometimes when we have parents that come in for a  
14 tour I will give a tour if I'm available; if I'm not  
15 available, staff members can do it. So there are a  
16 number of people that give tours; it's not just me.

17 DR. JONES: Okay.

18 DR. SCHOPPMEYER: My day is pretty full.

19 DR. JONES: Just for clarity, is there a sit-  
20 down discussion with parents prior to acceptance in  
21 the school?

22 DR. SCHOPPMEYER: A sit-down discussion with  
23 parents prior to acceptance in the school?

24 DR. JONES: With you?

25 DR. SCHOPPMEYER: There have been, in some

1 cases, yes. If I give a tour and they want to sit  
2 down, we'll sit down and I'll talk about the  
3 institution. We don't talk about grades, we don't  
4 talk about anything. We just -- we strictly talk  
5 about the institution and what to expect; we're a  
6 college preparatory institution, we're an accelerated  
7 school. We do everything here by the semester, not  
8 by the calendar year. Everything is done by academic  
9 ability, not by grade level. So those are the kinds  
10 of things that need to be expressed to the parents so  
11 they understand, "Oh, okay, this is the type of  
12 school it is."

13 DR. JONES: Is that a required part of the  
14 application process?

15 DR. SCHOLLMEYER: Is it a required part? If  
16 it's geographically -- if you can do it because you  
17 live in the area, yes; if you're applying from  
18 overseas, no. We like to have them come in because  
19 that way we know that they're real people, that they  
20 want to come to Haas Hall. I can't build a budget on  
21 superfluous numbers, so I don't want to get in  
22 trouble fiscally. I want to make sure when people  
23 come they -- they're scholar shadows and they come in  
24 and say, "Hey, we've seen your school." They may  
25 turn us down nonetheless; at least we know they're

1 real people and they've seen the school. Because  
2 there's a lot of misconception about what Haas Hall  
3 Academy is and we try to clarify that with everybody  
4 that walks in the front door.

5 DR. JONES: Okay. I can speak to on federal  
6 guidance with charters the effort is to be inclusive  
7 of all races and populations.

8 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Yes.

9 DR. JONES: I think that practice of having a  
10 required sit-down prior to that student's admittance  
11 in the schools might be interpreted to be prohibitive  
12 for some races. And that's a part of the application  
13 process I'm not comfortable with.

14 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Okay. It's not a sit-down.  
15 What happens is it's a tour. So if you don't want me  
16 to give tours, that's fine; I don't have a problem  
17 with that.

18 DR. JONES: The tour I'm comfortable with.

19 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: We don't have a sit-down of  
20 any type. I might sit down, I might -- someone might  
21 come in my office and we'll sit down for a few  
22 minutes and I'll say, "Let's take the tour." And  
23 we'll talk about that, we'll talk about their day and  
24 we'll talk about my day while we wait for their  
25 husband or wife to show up. But that's what happens.

1           It's not any kind of interrogation or anything like  
2           that. It's strictly a "let's take that tour and see  
3           what the school is about," and I answer any questions  
4           they have. We'll walk around and they see we have  
5           sports, they see we have art, they see we have many  
6           programs that they're not aware of that we would  
7           have.

8           DR. JONES: Okay. I need you to -- I need to  
9           hear you say that a sit-down interview, discussion  
10          with parents or the students is not a required part  
11          of the application process.

12          DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: There is no sit-down interview  
13          with students and there is no sit-down interview,  
14          quote/unquote, with parents. What that is is merely  
15          a time where there's an opportunity for someone to  
16          shadow. Right? Their scholar is going to -- the  
17          parents are going to take a tour; they may come in my  
18          office and sit down for a few minutes before we get  
19          ready and class-change, things like that, but there's  
20          no -- you don't have to come in and sit down and  
21          we're going to talk about life. No, that doesn't  
22          happen. Sometimes it does. Sometimes people want to  
23          sit down and look at my office and see the things I  
24          have in there, but it's all above-board. It's all --  
25          this is about Haas Hall; we want to make sure they do

1 understand what the school is for and what it's  
2 about; we're a college-bound institution.

3 DR. JONES: It's the "quote/unquote" part that  
4 makes me have some need for clarity.

5 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Well, I don't mean that to be  
6 -- well, I say "parent," it could be any kind of  
7 parent; it could be any combination thereof. But we  
8 don't have any type of -- I'm not really sure where  
9 you're trying to go, because I don't see where what  
10 we're doing -- except for the fact that when someone  
11 comes in they may sit down for a few minutes before  
12 we take a tour. Again, I don't provide tours as much  
13 as I used to, so I probably haven't

14 MRS. SCHOPPEMEYER: Maybe three.

15 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Maybe three. And we've had a  
16 little over 300 people shadow.

17 DR. JONES: The tour part, the orientation part,  
18 not a concern. I've said that.

19 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Yeah. I guess I'm not  
20 understanding what you're asking, and I apologize.

21 DR. JONES: I'm asking is it a required part of  
22 the application process that parents or students sit  
23 down with you --

24 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: No.

25 DR. JONES: -- prior to they commit to this

1 school?

2 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: No, it is not.

3 DR. JONES: Thank you.

4 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: You're very welcome.

5 DR. JONES: I have a follow-up question.

6 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Sure.

7 DR. JONES: I know that taking the ACT is a  
8 required part of this school.

9 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Yes.

10 DR. JONES: Will that be required for these 7th  
11 graders?

12 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: No, no, no. They don't start  
13 taking it till the 9th grade.

14 DR. JONES: Okay. Do you have advertised  
15 anywhere on your website that if a family cannot  
16 afford those fees for the ACT that will be provided  
17 for them?

18 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: I think there are many places  
19 where we say that "if it produces a financial  
20 hardship for you, you can talk to Mrs. Barton or my  
21 self or to my mother." We do those kinds of things  
22 all the time. We pay for those tests.

23 DR. JONES: I know many times it may be practice

24 --

25 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Sure.

1 DR. JONES: -- but with many families they will  
2 never ask.

3 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: They get told in orientation  
4 that we'll do that kind of thing. It's not -- we  
5 don't -- I mean, we try to be as accessible as  
6 humanly possible.

7 DR. JONES: That's what we have to insure --

8 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Right.

9 DR. JONES: -- is that it's accessible --

10 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Yes, ma'am.

11 DR. JONES: -- to all populations.

12 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Sure.

13 DR. JONES: So what I will look for is follow-up  
14 documentation that it's either in your orientation  
15 information --

16 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Oh, yeah.

17 DR. JONES: -- that you clarify --

18 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Sure.

19 DR. JONES: -- the fee.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions from  
21 panel members? Ivy, did you have a question?

22 MS. PFEFFER: I do have a question.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ivy, do you have a  
24 question?

25 MS. PFEFFER: I do.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

2 MS. PFEFFER: Yes. I think I was of the same  
3 understanding that Dr. Jones was that an interview  
4 was a required part of the process. So I guess that  
5 was something that I misunderstood when we had the  
6 Bentonville charter approved. So just a couple of  
7 questions from that, now that I'm understanding it's  
8 not a required part but a parent may choose to come  
9 to learn more about the school. So I guess my  
10 question would be: have you ever or would you put in  
11 place a practice that if I wanted to come but, you  
12 know, I work and I can only come after hours or I can  
13 only come on a Saturday but I wanted to be part of  
14 that face-to-face conversation, what allowances would  
15 be made for that? And, you know, how are you --  
16 well, go ahead on that.

17 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: That's a great question.  
18 Certainly, I'm the first one at work every day and  
19 the last one to leave. So if a parent needs to meet  
20 at 6:00, that's fine. If they need to meet on the  
21 weekends -- we do it during Christmas holiday; we'll  
22 do it during the summertime. We're there during the  
23 summer; we don't close. So people will drive up and  
24 they'll come in and say, "Hey, what about Haas Hall"  
25 and want to take a tour. It's unfortunate that the

1 scholars are not there so they can see what's going  
2 on but at least they can see the facility. But,  
3 yeah, we'll do whatever we need to do.

4 MS. PFEFFER: And then just another follow-up to  
5 the advertising. I know you mentioned advertising in  
6 the paper and on the website and things like that.  
7 Have you given any consideration of how you might  
8 advertise to reach diverse populations in that area?  
9 Because not everybody is going to read, you know, the  
10 daily newspaper and things like that. So what might  
11 be some other ways that you might reach out to those  
12 diverse populations? And, you know, for those  
13 students whose parents may -- because of their work  
14 or things like that may not be as in-tune to this  
15 opportunity?

16 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Sure. Well, we could  
17 certainly do information sessions; we've done those  
18 before, in the past, where we have people -- open  
19 houses with people coming in, looking at the school.  
20 We can advertise in different types of papers, not  
21 necessarily the northwest Arkansas media, newspapers,  
22 but other papers as well. And we've done radio  
23 before; we've done television before. They're just  
24 very costly. But we can certainly put it in the  
25 bilingual paper too. We're ready to do that, as

1 well.

2 MS. PFEFFER: I think with -- you know -- when  
3 you have such a high population of Hispanics that  
4 would definitely be a way to reach into another part  
5 of the community.

6 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: I agree with you. Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Not trying to just rehash  
9 everything but trying to understand it.

10 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Yes.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Is it possible for a student that  
12 lives in the northwest Arkansas area to apply -- and  
13 the application, is that online or -- where is the  
14 application?

15 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: It's online but they can come  
16 into the school and we'll help them do it online on  
17 my computer. It's nice to have them all in the same  
18 location, so they're all in the same pile.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And so then the stack of  
20 applications is then taken -- or a list, for lack of  
21 a better word -- is it filtered in any way with any  
22 criteria, academic performance, or any --

23 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Gosh, no. I would have no  
24 idea about that because a scholar will be accepted --  
25 the ones that were just accepted this past week or

1 will be accepted I won't even receive their  
2 transcripts until September or late August, and  
3 school starts August the 6th or 8th for us. So we  
4 don't get that information.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: So if a student applies is it  
6 then possible for them to be selected for admittance  
7 based on just the application or --

8 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: Uh-huh.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm sorry?

10 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: That's the way it should be.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. That's my question. Or,  
12 does it require parental attendance at some point  
13 prior to the selection process?

14 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: We like to have our scholars  
15 shadow so they can determine if they like the  
16 academic atmosphere. Again, it's kind of a good idea  
17 for parents to be able to take a tour and see if it's  
18 a good fit for them because they're trusting us with  
19 their scholar for six hours-plus a day. So, does  
20 that answer your question?

21 DR. SAUNDERS: So the answer is yes, it does  
22 require the parental attendance. Correct? No?

23 DR. SCHOPPEMEYER: It doesn't. No.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: No. Okay. Thank you.

25 MR. HENRY: I think part of the problem from our

1           standpoint is the definition of "interview." Now  
2           clearly you have an understanding of "interview" that  
3           is inconsistent with how my client sees it as well.  
4           He sees the interview, that word, as being the  
5           parents come in and ask any questions and tour the  
6           facility. That was a part of the -- you know -- the  
7           State audited the application process; there's no  
8           notes accompanying any of the applications. When you  
9           fill it out online it prints a form. Those forms are  
10          collated and randomly assigned numbers and the  
11          number-generator spits out the ranking order of all  
12          of those numbers. So there's no compilation of notes  
13          or huddle-down and who we want. The audit was -- you  
14          know -- not audit -- I guess every charter school's  
15          lottery process was witnessed this year, according to  
16          the person who came. And I don't know that there's  
17          any more arms-length way of doing it than to allow an  
18          online application, filling out the bare essentials,  
19          not asking their grades, not seeing your transcripts,  
20          not huddling down and ranking priorities. But a  
21          random number is assigned, a random number picked;  
22          state auditor would receive the list and the priority  
23          ranked, as she left, and she had full access to the  
24          stack of rather generic applications, as the  
25          information of which is derived directly from the

1 internet application, filled out by the student or  
2 the parent of the student. So the reason why all  
3 parents had not been called upon that day and said,  
4 "Here's -- I'm sorry, your student did not get in" is  
5 because there are people who leave or move or -- and  
6 it would be rather imprudent to call number 66 on the  
7 list and say, "You didn't get in," only to realize  
8 next week that you are down to 66 because that  
9 previous parent or the child declined to attend that  
10 fall. So their practice is to call the first 55 --  
11 well, 55 is the number this year to get into the 8th  
12 grade -- call them, wait several days, tally it up,  
13 and continue to move down the list. And, you know,  
14 northwest Arkansas, or any community, is rather small  
15 for the fact that once you make calls everybody  
16 really calls Haas Hall a lot. So it's not a matter  
17 of refusing to talk to people who aren't in; it's a  
18 matter of going down the list and not having to re-  
19 call students and say, "We told you you weren't in;  
20 actually, you are in." So that's been their  
21 practice. And if you would like to suggest any  
22 changes, we'd be happy to call everybody on the  
23 waiting list within that first week and publish that  
24 on the website so that there's clarity and  
25 understanding, we're happy to do that. I mean, the

1 points you're bringing up make sense, especially if I  
2 were in the role of a parent who didn't know because  
3 you're wanting to make plans. So, thank you for  
4 that.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Jones, do you have a  
6 follow-up question?

7 DR. JONES: Along that line, I think you do need  
8 a process there for notifying all parents, both that  
9 were in and were not in. And clarify for me if this  
10 is your procedure: once you have selected your class,  
11 you've filled your classes, you have a waiting list  
12 and you go down that waiting list and you offer each  
13 one, in order, a position in the school. And before  
14 you, say, for example, accept an outside caller, you  
15 go with your list in order?

16 MR. HENRY: Absolutely. When the lottery is  
17 drawn we go with the order established on that. As  
18 for the next year's drawing, that list is gone. It's  
19 a new draw the next successive calendar year, if  
20 that's what you're asking.

21 DR. JONES: That's what I was asking. I have  
22 one question, if you can clarify the 7th grade  
23 classes that will be offered and specifically address  
24 those that will be worth high school credit?

25 DR. SCHOPPEYER: There will be no 7th grade

1 classes worth high school credit. So we'll offer  
2 English, 7th grade math, all the courses that are  
3 required. I mean, we have a lot of stuff printed off  
4 that work already that we're working on now the  
5 Bentonville campus, but it will not be for high  
6 school credit certainly.

7 DR. JONES: Thank you.

8 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Sure.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I just want to I guess -- I  
11 can't speak for other members of the board, but I  
12 guess my concern and what it boils down to is in the  
13 process why the -- you know -- looking at simply the  
14 results of the demographics of the student population  
15 does not appear to be reflective of the students  
16 within the geographical area, in particular with ESL  
17 students, special ed. students. And if it's a purely  
18 random process, you know, which as you described it  
19 does appear to be, you know, why aren't we getting  
20 these continued results? And my concern on another  
21 side of that, just to veer off for just a second, is  
22 on the financial end on -- if those populations did  
23 increase, I know on the budget there are not  
24 particular areas to service those particular ones,  
25 although with some of those additional funding does

1 follow. So, you know, some of the questions, such as  
2 who do you advertise to, how do you advertise -- in  
3 other words, is the diverse populations, are they  
4 being reached for their applications so that they can  
5 be representative of the overall student population?

6 MR. HENRY: Doctor, relative to your first  
7 statement, why do the demographics at Haas Hall not  
8 fit neatly within the demographics of the entire  
9 population -- we first have to recognize that this is  
10 a college prep accelerated system that is not -- that  
11 is dependent upon the student or the parent making an  
12 application specifically to this school. So we  
13 recognize and we see the importance of advertising to  
14 the less served or the demographic that may not be  
15 English speaking language [sic]. And Dr. Schoppmeyer  
16 indicated that he will advertise in bilingual papers.  
17 I don't know how to encourage students across the  
18 entire spectrum to come to this school without --  
19 other than just simply say, "Haas Hall is ranked near  
20 the top in the state. Please come and apply," with a  
21 blanket advertisement. And it's a good idea to put  
22 it in a bilingual, and it was a part of the  
23 Bentonville process. They've indicated that, as  
24 well. Springdale does have a high Hispanic  
25 population and it is well served by both English and

1 bilingual newspapers. And that's what they will do  
2 certainly relative to 7th grade and also going  
3 forward from here on is to make that -- because how  
4 do I stop your questions? I show you the ads. And  
5 we're going to make those changes and hopefully  
6 you'll be satisfied. The lottery, the audit for all  
7 charter schools, hopefully that will satisfy  
8 questions as well. I'm glad that the State came by  
9 and watched the random number-generator; I even  
10 offered for her to push the button. And that helps  
11 solve our problems when there's clear communication  
12 and that we adopt your ideas. So bilingual, yes,  
13 full newspaper ads -- we've done that as well. If  
14 radio is something that you think is a good idea,  
15 we'll consider that, budget permitting.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Jones.

17 DR. JONES: Can you share the most recent  
18 demographics of your lottery, please?

19 MR. HENRY: I don't -- we -- I don't have that  
20 information. We just obtained it and we're still  
21 assembling that class, calling down the list. So it  
22 would be irresponsible for me to guess whether or not  
23 a name is -- I'm sorry, I don't have that data; it  
24 just occurred. Maybe the State would know in  
25 processing that information, but I don't have any way

1 to know. I don't even know the male/female ratio.  
2 We haven't analyzed that number. We just are calling  
3 the numbers. But we'd be happy to provide you with  
4 that once it's available.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any further questions from  
6 the Panel? Ms. Pfeffer.

7 MS. PFEFFER: My question is about the addition  
8 of 7th grade.

9 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. PFEFFER: You're looking at increasing your  
11 number by how many students? Was it --

12 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Well, 80.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Eighty. Okay. And that would be  
14 the 7th grade class. Is that where the increase  
15 would be? Is that where your -- or am I --

16 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Well, in the budget I gave  
17 you, I think I was looking at having about 40 or 50  
18 7th graders.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Okay. I may not be on that  
20 page. And I'm looking here, one of your reasons for  
21 this request is the reconfiguration of students  
22 within the Fayetteville Public School system. And I  
23 guess my question goes to, you know, the impact, you  
24 know -- you know -- it looks like that the  
25 superintendent would receive notification of your

1 request.

2 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. PFEFFER: But we don't have anything from  
4 Fayetteville Public Schools. Is that correct?

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: (Shaking head from side to  
6 side.)

7 MR. HENRY: No objections to this proposal.

8 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

9 MR. HENRY: And it's a convenient time to do it  
10 but it's certainly not the singular motivation of why  
11 we're doing it.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Well, you also mentioned it  
13 aligns with the --

14 MR. HENRY: It does.

15 MS. PFEFFER: -- with the approval on the  
16 Bentonville --

17 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: That is correct. Yes, ma'am.

18 MS. PFEFFER: And then to follow-up, you said  
19 that you would not be requesting any additional  
20 waivers?

21 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: That is correct.

22 MS. PFEFFER: Okay, so the waivers that you have  
23 right now. And I guess this might be for the Panel  
24 here. With the addition of 7th grade, do you have  
25 any concerns regarding curriculum or anything or

1 course offerings? You indicated there would be no  
2 course offerings for credit at the 7th grade level.

3 DR. SCHOPPMEYER: For high school, that's  
4 correct.

5 MS. PFEFFER: For high school credit. Yes.

6 DR. SCHOPPMEYER: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. I just wanted to make sure  
8 that we didn't see that there had been -- okay.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions, Panel  
10 Members? Okay. Not seeing any questions, I will  
11 entertain a motion.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: I make a motion to accept their  
13 proposed amendment.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We have a -- I can't even  
15 talk. We have a motion from Dr. Saunders to approve  
16 the amended -- both amendments. Is that correct?

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Both amendments as  
19 proposed.

20 DR. DECKER: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Second by Mr. Decker. All  
22 those say "aye".

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed? Motion  
25 carries. Thank you, Dr. Schoppmeyer.

1 DR. SCHOPPMAYER: Thank you very much.

2 A-3: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL  
3 AMENDMENT: KIPP DELTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, FORREST CITY

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Ms. Hogue,  
5 we'll move on to item A-3, Request for Open-  
6 Enrollment Charter Amendment for KIPP Delta, Forrest  
7 City.

8 MS. HOGUE: Yes. They were approved -- their  
9 charter was approved in October of 2014. In the  
10 meantime, they've requested an amendment as far as  
11 the location for their new charter in Forrest City.  
12 Mr. Scott Shirey will be speaking for the school.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay, Mr. Shirey. We'll go  
14 ahead -- if there's people here that are here to  
15 speak for the charter or against the charter  
16 amendment, if you would, stand and raise your right  
17 hand to be sworn in.

18 MS. HOGUE: I think Mr. Shirey is it.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Do you  
20 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
21 and nothing but the truth?

22 MR. SHIREY: I do.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, sir. You may  
24 begin.

25 MR. SHIREY: Thank you. I think they're booting

1 up a PowerPoint; we'll give that a second. Good  
2 morning, everyone. Thank you for hearing -- at the  
3 last Authorizing Panel we had proposed an original  
4 location, which you can see on the screen here. It  
5 actually was between modular and it was an empty  
6 warehouse. We were looking at about 39,000 square  
7 feet, 20 classrooms, 16 of which would have been  
8 modular. Basically, it was an old Pepsi warehouse  
9 building, 20,000 square feet. We thought it was the  
10 best possible location at the time. As we dug more  
11 into it with our engineers and architects, it really  
12 became cost-prohibitive pretty quickly. We were  
13 looking at a lease price of \$80,000 a year, which we  
14 could manage, but then it estimated renovations which  
15 were approaching two million dollars. And again it  
16 would've -- it was not a building for sale; it  
17 would've been a lease, which of course would have put  
18 us in a precarious position. We didn't want to put  
19 in so many capital improvements in something we  
20 didn't own. There were other details which came to  
21 light. And Forrest City actually had a lot of rain;  
22 there was sediment left on the warehouse floor, which  
23 of course then water ran into it. Not a problem if  
24 you're running a warehouse; a big problem if you have  
25 a school there. So we started looking at alternate

1 sites, had conversations with our board, and we think  
2 the best decision at this time is to incubate.  
3 There's a Catholic church which has a fellowship hall  
4 and a parking lot behind it, so it has office space,  
5 it has multipurpose space, and then we'll move in  
6 modular classrooms behind that on the parking lot.  
7 The lease price would go from \$80,000 a year to just  
8 over \$15,000 a year, \$2.00 a square foot, much less  
9 space, and then basically a two-year total price of  
10 around \$500,000, so around 1.6 less than we were  
11 anticipating on spending. Again, it's an incubation  
12 space, so we would have to come back. What we want  
13 to do is make sure we don't outrun our resources; we  
14 want to make sure we're fiscally responsible. In  
15 summation, saving on cost of the lease more than 60k;  
16 cost of renovations, more than \$60 a square foot;  
17 saving on modular; and then reducing the total  
18 construction by potentially up to \$2 million. And we  
19 want to make sure, again, we're responsible. And  
20 then the last just piece is it is reflective; you can  
21 see the changes I just described reflected in the  
22 proposed budget that we originally submitted. So  
23 I'll be happy to take questions.

24 One other thing just to point out, of course,  
25 while we're going to use the Catholic church there's

1 no religious affiliation with that organization. And  
2 they've signed a copy of the lease; we have not yet  
3 signed it because we don't know if we have  
4 authorization yet. I'll be happy to take any  
5 questions on that.

6 I should -- the last part I should mention, I  
7 guess, is location. The Catholic church is right on  
8 the main drag, on Division Street, in Forrest City,  
9 so it's central to town. The old location was just  
10 north of the interstate, a little bit outside of  
11 town, but again within about three miles of each  
12 other. Any questions?

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Does that conclude your  
14 presentation?

15 MR. SHIREY: Yes, sir.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Is there anybody  
17 here in addition to speak for the charter amendment?  
18 Anybody to speak against the charter amendment?  
19 Okay. Seeing none, we would -- I will turn questions  
20 over to panel members.

21 DR. JONES: Good morning.

22 MR. SHIREY: Good morning.

23 DR. JONES: Do you intend to expand the cap of  
24 your charter?

25 MR. SHIREY: Right now we have approval of

1 grades 5 through 8. We think it will -- we'd like to  
2 be able to serve those students through high school  
3 at some point.

4 DR. JONES: Uh-huh.

5 MR. SHIREY: But -- so potentially we would grow  
6 out to a K-12 system over that. But we're patient on  
7 doing that, and there's lots of different models so  
8 -- which is why we only asked for 5 through 8  
9 initially, starting with 5th grade and growing one  
10 grade at a time. If we think it's prudent to add a  
11 high school or elementary school, we'll come back to  
12 the board. And there's no -- to be clear, there's no  
13 additional cap request with this amendment change.

14 DR. JONES: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions, Panel  
16 Members? Mr. Shirey, I've got a question. So I just  
17 want to make sure I understand, you've got a building  
18 that you're leasing that was 20,000 square feet, now  
19 going to 7 -- roughly a little over 7,000 square feet  
20 in the current proposed new site?

21 MR. SHIREY: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Is that correct? Okay.  
23 For grades 5 through 8 you have an overall cap of 400  
24 students?

25 MR. SHIREY: Yes.

1                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ:  Initially, in your past  
2                   application you have approximately 170 that you're  
3                   anticipating having in the first year of operation.  
4                   Is that still a good --

5                   MR. SHIREY:  It would be close to 85.

6                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ:  Okay.

7                   MR. SHIREY:  That should be true in the first  
8                   application too.  We're just serving 5th grade this  
9                   coming fall.

10                  CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ:  So do you still -- do you  
11                  feel like this is going to be -- how long do you  
12                  anticipate this space is going to be good for you?

13                  MR. SHIREY:  We think we can use this space for  
14                  two years.  So, again, with the 7,000 square feet we  
15                  have office, multipurpose; we'll bring in four  
16                  modular classrooms in year-one, which will be enough  
17                  to service those 5th grade students.  There is space  
18                  to roll in an additional four modular classrooms,  
19                  which would give us eight, enabling us to serve 5th  
20                  and 6th grade.  And during that two-year period we  
21                  would want to find the right location, hopefully with  
22                  the right financing structure.  Again, we just didn't  
23                  feel it was prudent to put in a \$2 million capital  
24                  investment out of the gate.  In looking at the  
25                  infrastructure there, it was just a lot more money

1 and putting that type of capital investment into  
2 something we didn't own we didn't feel like was the  
3 most responsible course. So, again, we're seeing  
4 this as a two-year incubation space and then  
5 hopefully we'll -- then we'll have the student demand  
6 and a track record of success and get some financial  
7 opportunities and be able to get a better, more  
8 permanent space over time.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do you feel like the space  
10 is adequate enough for the food service program and  
11 then also for things like PE and that -- is it  
12 suitable for those?

13 MR. SHIREY: Absolutely. There's a great --  
14 part of the reason we liked this too, compared to the  
15 original space, there's a nice loop-around for buses;  
16 there's field space behind; there's -- in the  
17 fellowship hall -- there's a large fellowship hall  
18 which we could have all 85 students in there; there's  
19 also just a small kitchen space, as you would find in  
20 a typical fellowship hall, which should serve us just  
21 fine for providing food.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions from  
23 Panel Members? Okay. Not seeing any questions, I  
24 will entertain a motion.

25 MS. PFEFFER: I move to approve the amendment

1 for the new location.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We have a motion to approve  
3 the amendment.

4 DR. JONES: I second that motion.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Second from Dr. Jones. Any  
6 discussion? Okay. We have a motion and a second.  
7 All in favor say "aye."

8 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed? Motion  
10 passes. Thank you, Mr. Shirey.

11 MR. SHIREY: Thank you. Appreciate it.

12 A-4: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL  
13 AMENDMENT: NORTHWEST ARKANSAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Next one, item A-4  
15 is a Request for Northwest -- an amendment for  
16 Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy. Ms. Hogue.

17 MS. HOGUE: I don't believe there's anybody  
18 here.

19 MR. BRADBERRY: They're online.

20 MS. HOGUE: They're online and so they will be  
21 here on conference call and it is the superintendent  
22 of Responsive Ed of Arkansas. And they are  
23 requesting an amendment to -- actually, they're  
24 requesting an amendment to their charter they just  
25 received in the fall.

1 MS. BLEDSOE: They're rescinding a waiver of the  
2 38. It never went to the State Board; it was just  
3 the Panel.

4 MS. HOGUE: They actually received -- asked for  
5 a waiver and they're rescinding that waiver, is what  
6 they're doing.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, before we get  
8 started, I wanted to get a little clarification on  
9 that. What I understood that I read was that they  
10 had asked for a waiver because they're starting this  
11 year with K-9 and they were told that they didn't  
12 need a waiver of the 38. I know they're going to  
13 stair-step up, which I know we've done that with  
14 several charters. So what's the reasoning there?

15 MS. CLAY: They did request the waiver which is  
16 a pretty common waiver when you're phasing in grades.  
17 When our Standards Assurance Unit looked at it, they  
18 said that the way it was structured that you don't  
19 really need the waiver to do that as long as by the  
20 time you reach the 12th grade you've got the 38  
21 units. So while I don't think it's incorrect to have  
22 the waiver, they don't have to. They went on with  
23 their standards review and now they're just coming  
24 back to you for clean-up to actually rescind the  
25 waiver since -- with guidance from our Standards Unit

1 they were told that they don't actually need that  
2 waiver to phase-in like they're planning on doing.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do you agree with that  
4 assessment that the waiver is no longer needed?

5 MS. CLAY: I would certainly defer to our  
6 Standards Unit on that. If they say that it's not  
7 needed, then it's not needed, because they're the  
8 ones that would actually be doing their review. And  
9 if they understand what's happening and wouldn't cite  
10 the school for not having the 38, then they would not  
11 need the waiver.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. So I guess  
13 we'll hear their part. I don't know about swearing  
14 them in, but if there's anybody here to speak for or  
15 against, if you would raise your right hand -- if  
16 you're on the phone there, if you would, raise your  
17 right hand. Do you swear to tell -- or affirm to  
18 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the  
19 truth?

20 DR. WIMBERLEY: Yes.

21 MR. BRADBERRY: Could you announce yourself for  
22 the Chair, please?

23 DR. WIMBERLEY: Yes. My name is Alan Wimberley.  
24 I am the superintendent for Responsive Ed./Arkansas,  
25 and we've got -- Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy

1 is one of our schools.

2 MR. BRADBERRY: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Mr. Wimberley,  
4 you're recognized to present.

5 DR. WIMBERLEY: All right. And this is just a  
6 request for the Panel to rescind the waiver that we  
7 had previously been approved for, just to make sure  
8 that everything is clean. And we just felt like it  
9 was best for us to do that.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Is there anything  
11 else, Mr. Wimberley?

12 DR. WIMBERLEY: No, I don't think so. We  
13 appreciate the Panel's consideration of that. They  
14 were very gracious to approve the waiver previously  
15 and we did provide a lot of information to the Panel  
16 at that time about our capacity to provide those  
17 courses in the future. But in consultation  
18 afterwards and working with different entities we  
19 realized that the waiver really wasn't needed, so we  
20 felt like it was best to come and ask you to rescind  
21 -- we wanted to rescind that waiver. And that's  
22 really all that -- for that.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Is there anybody  
24 else to speak for the amendment or against the  
25 amendment? Okay. Seeing none, I will take questions

1 from Panel Members. No questions. I will entertain  
2 a motion.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: I'll make the motion to accept  
4 their amendment.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I have a motion from Dr.  
6 Saunders.

7 DR. DECKER: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Second from Dr. Decker.  
9 Any discussion? All in favor say "aye."

10 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed? Motion  
12 passes. Thank you, Mr. Wimberley.

13 DR. WIMBERLEY: Thank you very much. I  
14 appreciate your time.

15 A-5: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL  
16 AMENDMENT: OZARK MONTESSORI ACADEMY

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Moving on to  
18 item A-5, charter amendment for Ozark Montessori  
19 Academy.

20 MS. HOGUE: This is our last one requesting an  
21 amendment before we start the requests for renewals.  
22 They also were approved in the fall and are  
23 requesting for a new location for their charter  
24 school, and we have Dr. Christi Silano speaking. Is  
25 anybody else speaking too or just --

1 DR. SILANO: Ms. Nichols, if she's needed.

2 MS. HOGUE: And there's nobody here -- we've  
3 gotten no word of opposition.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Those that are here to  
5 speak in favor of the amendment or against the  
6 amendment would you please stand, raise your right  
7 hand. Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
8 whole truth and nothing but the truth?

9 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Dr. Silano, you  
11 are recognized.

12 DR. SILANO: Good morning. Ozark Montessori  
13 Academy is here this morning to request a change in  
14 address. The address that was approved in October is  
15 adequate to meet our needs for two years, but the new  
16 address provides the following benefits: number one,  
17 a five-year lease, which would be the length of our  
18 charter; more centrally located and in the diverse  
19 neighborhood we have targeted to serve; room for  
20 growth to our maximum enrollment, slightly above  
21 that, if needed; and more customized to meet our  
22 needs, including more security, a fenced play area,  
23 administrative space, privacy, and many other  
24 amenities, including cafeteria space, gymnasium  
25 space, auditorium space. The building is the

1 original First Baptist Church of downtown Springdale.  
2 Currently, it's being used by a rehabilitation for  
3 veterans and they're ready to move out. A local  
4 investor, who's very supportive of our mission, is on  
5 deck ready to close escrow tomorrow and start  
6 construction renovation tomorrow, pending the Panel's  
7 decision today.

8 I'm just going to walk you through the  
9 documentation. You have a folder here; it's all in  
10 order, so I'm just going to walk you through piece by  
11 piece. The first document you'll see is our original  
12 Facilities Utilization Agreement with the Jones  
13 Trust, which is the Jones Center in Springdale, the  
14 community center. As you can see, it's a two-year  
15 term for 8,500 square feet for two years at \$13.70 a  
16 square foot. That was approved by this Panel in  
17 October. The second page you'll see is a letter from  
18 the Jones Center administrator releasing Ozark  
19 Montessori Academy from any obligation to pay,  
20 releasing us from that original agreement. But in  
21 addition, should there be a delay in construction the  
22 Jones Center is willing to accommodate us by  
23 providing classroom and administrative space if we  
24 need an extra semester or an extra year, or however  
25 long we need, if there should be any troubles with

1 the renovation; that's our back-up plan. And then  
2 you see the next document is our original budget that  
3 was approved and you'll see with the Jones Center  
4 arrangement that we had there was a zero dollar  
5 amount for maintenance and operation because that was  
6 included in the price of the lease. And so I just  
7 gave you those three pages from the original budget;  
8 you can see our net revenue of \$80,000 after -- with  
9 that original price breakdown. Then the next page  
10 you'll see with the little yellow tab on it is the  
11 map which, I apologize, it is a poor copy. I know  
12 Sky Bledsoe brought some better copies if you need  
13 those. But basically you can see our current  
14 location at the Jones Center up in the upper right  
15 and then you'll see the new location of 301 Holcomb  
16 Street, which is 1.2 miles away, which is deeper into  
17 downtown. The Jones Center is more on the outskirts  
18 of downtown. So as you can see, it runs right --  
19 it's right along Spring Creek, so on the backside of  
20 the parking lot there is a creek site access for  
21 outdoor education. The Razorback greenway trail is  
22 also being approved along that creek, which would  
23 allow our students to do outdoor education, such as  
24 bike riding, and it's just a -- it's a nice little  
25 neighborhood. It's two doors down from the fire

1 department, so we would feel very safe there, in  
2 addition to the new sprinkler system that will be put  
3 in. So we're really happy with that location. The  
4 next page with the green tab is the new lease  
5 agreement and this would be with the new owners and  
6 as you can see, it's 45,000 square feet. They do not  
7 want to charge us more than 12% of our school  
8 revenue, which is in line with the lower end of what  
9 charter schools across the country pay for a  
10 facility, and the terms of this agreement are  
11 contingent upon your decision today. And then the  
12 next page shows our five-year lease schedule,  
13 starting out the first year at a low of .7 -- or 7%,  
14 7-1/2% of our revenue -- so \$60,000, which is almost  
15 half of the price of our original Jones Center  
16 agreement. The reason for that is we would have to  
17 incur maintenance and custodial costs. So when you  
18 go to our new budget, which is the next document,  
19 you'll see that we actually come out a couple of  
20 thousand dollars ahead of our bottom line in the  
21 first year. But we do -- over the five years it  
22 averages out to 12% of our net revenue. And then the  
23 final document in the packet is the zoning that was  
24 approved last month by our city. Our mayor and our  
25 city council are very, very excited about us too

1 renovating and moving into this building. They think  
2 it's going to be a wonderful addition to the  
3 Springdale downtown renewal that's happening.  
4 They're very excited that this older building, which  
5 has become dilapidated, is going to be completely  
6 remodeled at a \$5 million renovation cost and it's  
7 going to be given new life and good use. So they are  
8 very happy to change that zoning to an institutional  
9 zoning for us. So I welcome your questions.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Anybody else here to speak  
11 in favor of the amendment? Is there anybody here to  
12 speak opposed to the amendment? All right. Not  
13 seeing any, I will entertain questions from Panel  
14 Members. Dr. Saunders, you're recognized.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Good morning.

16 DR. SILANO: Good morning.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: I have some questions on  
18 finances, as I'm trying to look through some of the  
19 documentation that I have. So if I start with some  
20 that you referenced, if I wanted to look at this  
21 sheet here --

22 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Dr. Saunders is holding  
23 up the "Five Year Facility Lease Schedule of  
24 Payments" sheet.)

25 DR. SILANO: Yes.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And it's showing a total  
2 revenue for the school of \$801,000 for the first  
3 year.

4 DR. SILANO: Okay. Let me find my copy. Okay.  
5 Yes.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: And then if I look back and I get  
7 into the new budget, just right behind it three or  
8 four pages, and I go down to the total expenditures,  
9 the expenditures are \$1.1 million for that year. Is  
10 that correct?

11 DR. SILANO: That's what it says. Yes.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Can you tell me why the  
13 expenditures would be roughly \$250,000 more than the  
14 revenue?

15 DR. SILANO: Yes. Thank you for pointing that  
16 out. In our original budget, there was included the  
17 \$220,000 Walton grant, Walton Family Foundation  
18 grant, so we pulled that out. So the actual revenue  
19 here is just based on foundation funds. So, yeah, I  
20 guess I should've given you the original first page  
21 -- and I have a copy with me if you would like to see  
22 it. But if you look at the section that says  
23 Revenue, I didn't count any additional grants, any  
24 federal money, any school lunch money, any -- we just  
25 went with our actual foundation funds money to get

1 that \$801,000 number.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And then following up on  
3 that, I understand the \$220,000 is a one-time --

4 DR. SILANO: Yes.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: -- amount. Correct?

6 DR. SILANO: Yeah. That's why we did that.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: And then if you follow the same  
8 line of thinking, in the next year it's showing  
9 foundation funding (PD, ELL, et cetera) at \$1.2  
10 million and the expenditures go up to \$1.487 million,  
11 which would be --

12 DR. SILANO: Again, yeah --

13 DR. SAUNDERS: -- another \$250,000. It would be  
14 roughly the same amount of difference, only it would  
15 not have the \$220,000 one-time payment in that  
16 amount.

17 DR. SILANO: Well, in our second year we have  
18 180 students; so our first year is 120 students, then  
19 it goes up to 180. So you apply the foundation funds  
20 but we also again took off the federal funding.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: So the school lunch deficit, for  
22 lack of a better term, would be in the federal funds?

23 DR. SILANO: Right, the school lunch fund.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do you still have further  
25 questions, Dr. Saunders, or --

1 DR. SAUNDERS: I will. I just need a minute or  
2 two.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Then we'll move  
4 over to other questions from Panel Members. Ms.  
5 Pfeffer.

6 MS. PFEFFER: Well, I guess this is along the  
7 same lines Dr. Saunders was asking. Should your  
8 enrollment numbers not meet your goals each year, and  
9 so that could affect your -- well, that will affect  
10 your budget. And with that increasing amount for the  
11 lease, what would be -- you know -- is there a  
12 contingency plan? What would be the potential there?

13 DR. SILANO: Well, this -- well, I have a couple  
14 of answers to that. First of all, this is not --  
15 we've not signed any kind of agreement to this. The  
16 agreement is 12% of our revenue. So if we have fewer  
17 students and our revenue goes down, our lease amount  
18 goes down. But the other, you know, point I'd want  
19 to make is like as of this morning we have 235  
20 applicants for 120 seats and our lottery isn't until  
21 April 15th. So we're not expecting that, at least  
22 not this year.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And then you mentioned that  
24 there would be \$5 million of renovations to the  
25 facility?

1 DR. SILANO: Yes.

2 MS. PFEFFER: Is that correct?

3 DR. SILANO: The leaseholder --

4 MS. PFEFFER: The leaseholder has agreed to do  
5 that?

6 DR. SILANO: Yes.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders, do you have a  
9 question?

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Could I reference -- I'm  
11 not sure what page number you may have; it would be  
12 the budget summary years 1 through 10 from EdTech.  
13 It looks something like this.

14 DR. SILANO: From our original application?

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

16 DR. SILANO: That was the support document.  
17 Yes.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

19 DR. SILANO: You may reference that, yes.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And I'm still on the same  
21 topic. And as I'm looking at that on year 16-17, it  
22 shows the projection on the revenue; it includes  
23 federal revenues, other state revenues, which is not  
24 included specifically on that one. It does show the  
25 expenditures or revenues as being at \$1.4 million --

1           \$1.413. And in referencing the latest application  
2           that we were just discussing, the expenditures are  
3           projected to be \$1.487, I believe. Let me look.  
4           Yes, \$1.487 million. So, you know, I'm concerned.  
5           Are these numbers still valid?

6           DR. SILANO: No, sir.

7           DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

8           DR. SILANO: We currently are working with Chris  
9           Bell from Complete Consulting, who has worked with a  
10          lot of other charter schools in Arkansas. Our  
11          previous consultant was out of New York City and was  
12          unfamiliar with Arkansas, you know, charter finance.  
13          And so Mr. Bell has, you know, helped us to sort of  
14          re-work our whole financial system to get more  
15          accurate numbers. So we actually are not working  
16          with that projection at this time; it was based on  
17          some faulty assumptions.

18          CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Let me try to see if I can  
19          clarify some of this. What I think I understand you  
20          to say, Dr. Silano, is that when we were presented  
21          this application originally there were some revenue  
22          and expenses that were put in. And based on that, in  
23          this new amended application we see expenditures that  
24          exceed the amount of expenditures that were  
25          originally presented. And we have questioned now

1           whether or not the revenue -- I don't know that  
2           there's been -- there hasn't been new updates to the  
3           revenue streams and so what we're seeing is that your  
4           expenditures are simply more than -- you're basically  
5           spending more than you're bringing in, is what it  
6           appears to be. And so if you could help us to  
7           understand that or clarify some of that --

8           DR. SILANO: Sure.

9           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- I think that would help.

10          DR. SILANO: Sure.

11          MS. NICHOLS: In our original application, we  
12          put everything in the application that we needed to  
13          cover. And since we did get approved to get the  
14          federal start-up grant, a lot of those expenditures  
15          that you're seeing in there are going to be moved to  
16          the federal start-up grant. So -- well, we're  
17          planning on that. And we're going to move a lot of  
18          our expenditures that are in this charter grant  
19          application over to the federal start-up grant as  
20          soon as we're allowed to do that. So that will bring  
21          our expenditures down and then we have to use the  
22          foundation funds and our private donation of the  
23          \$220,000 from Walton Family Foundation.

24          CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: It was referenced in some  
25          of the material that there was some question about

1 the Walton money. And so is that an unknown at this  
2 time whether or not you will be receiving that?

3 MS. NICHOLS: We've already received that.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. There kind of  
5 -- there seemed like there was some question in the  
6 wording. The other concern that I think I have is  
7 that you referenced in years one and two that your  
8 lease is 12%, but then there's a reference to in  
9 years three through five that it increases by about  
10 \$140,000 as far as the lease part. Is that correct?

11 MS. NICHOLS: Yes. If you'll notice in the  
12 first couple of years, years one and two, it's less  
13 than 12%. Since our enrollment is going to start out  
14 low and then we're going to increase each year  
15 they're allowing us -- the anonymous investors are  
16 allowing us to start at lower than 12% of our income  
17 and kind of increase it. Over the five years it will  
18 be an average of our -- of 12% of our income.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Another question I had, and  
20 this is in reference to the material you presented  
21 today -- in your original budget, as far as for  
22 electricity and gas on an 8,570 square foot building,  
23 you had electricity and gas budgeted at \$27,000. And  
24 then now I understand that you're moving into a  
25 45,000 square foot building and you have budgeted

1           around between \$30,000 and \$40,000 for year-one and  
2           year-two. Does that seem -- do those numbers seem  
3           accurate to you?

4           DR. SILANO: So in the original budget where we  
5           have the \$27,000 -- you're talking about year-two?

6           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, ma'am.

7           DR. SILANO: Okay. That was -- those were  
8           numbers that were pulled up on the premise that we  
9           might be moving after the first year, not knowing  
10          really where we were going at that time. If we had  
11          stayed at the Jones Center for the full two years we  
12          would not have incurred any maintenance or utilities.  
13          So that was basically a safety-net of numbers that we  
14          threw in there based on the square footage that we  
15          were expecting to need. The new numbers are based on  
16          -- for the new budget are based on, number one, we're  
17          getting energy efficient HVAC put in and LED  
18          lighting. But also we just took the previous  
19          lessor's or tenant's utility bills from the past  
20          years and then actually added 25% to those. And they  
21          used the building 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365  
22          days a year. So just to be extra conservative we  
23          bumped those numbers up, even though we actually  
24          expect them to go down based on the energy efficient  
25          renovation.

1                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Any other  
2 questions from Panel Members? No further questions,  
3 I will entertain a motion.

4                   DR. DECKER: Mr. Chair, I move to accept the  
5 amendment as presented.

6                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We have a motion to accept  
7 the amendment as presented.

8                   MS. PFEFFER: Second.

9                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We have a motion and a  
10 second to accept the amendment. Any discussion?

11                  DR. SAUNDERS: I do want to express -- I do have  
12 concerns over finances and, you know, I would like to  
13 see at some point -- I'm not opposed to voting for  
14 your amendment, but I would like to see -- I think,  
15 in my opinion, there are a lot of blanks, a lot of  
16 unknowns, and it's coming down pretty close at the  
17 very end on each year and years in the future. I'd  
18 like to see some of those blanks filled in, you know,  
19 especially when we're dealing with finances. And,  
20 you know, many times the finances can dictate whether  
21 or not a school can remain open in future years and  
22 that concerns the students going to that school, so  
23 it's very important that those things be addressed.  
24 And I would like -- I'm not opposed to voting in  
25 favor of the amendment today, but I'd like to see a

1 follow-up with more prescriptive finances in here.

2 DR. SILANO: And thank you for that. We can  
3 absolutely provide that information. Unfortunately,  
4 Mr. Bell, who is really providing a lot of support  
5 through this process, was unable to be here today;  
6 he's at an out-of-state meeting. But he is working  
7 with us to develop a five-year plan, and beyond, to  
8 make sure that we have a very tight plan with a  
9 contingency budget as well. So I can provide that to  
10 you as soon as you need it.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, I have a question  
12 for you. Hearing what I think I've heard here today,  
13 the initial report was given to us that the finances  
14 were incorrect. Is that a fair statement?

15 DR. SILANO: They were based on assumptions that  
16 may have been somewhat misinformed.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Incorrect -- we'll  
18 use that term. From what I think I'm hearing from  
19 Dr. Saunders, would it be appropriate -- or what  
20 would be the appropriateness of trying to get them to  
21 send us an updated financial report? Because I  
22 understand we've already approved the charter. As  
23 far as from the budget perspective, this move in the  
24 first two years doesn't change that much. But I  
25 think we need the accurate information going forward

1 to make determinations if this is still going to be a  
2 good way or path forward. I don't know what we can  
3 do at this point other than request kind of a  
4 financial summary of revenues and expenditures. Does  
5 that need to be part of the motion or can that just  
6 be a request?

7 MS. CLAY: If you want it to be a report or  
8 additional information that you all receive as a  
9 panel, then it will need to be part of the motion and  
10 we'll bring it to you however often you want it. If  
11 you want it quarterly, yearly, that would be  
12 something to be included in the motion as well.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders, would it  
14 satisfy you to have just a report at the next meeting  
15 of maybe a five-year revenue and expenditure report  
16 detailed similar to the manner that they presented  
17 before? I know they've presented a ten-year, but a  
18 five-year would probably suffice due to the length of  
19 the charter.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. And then just make sure it  
21 was detailed, five years, at the next meeting.  
22 Absolutely.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. And we can work with  
24 the Charter Office to get that. Dr. Decker, would  
25 you be amenable to amending your motion?

1 DR. DECKER: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So your motion would be to  
3 approve the charter to include the five-year  
4 financial report at the next meeting?

5 DR. DECKER: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. And we need a second  
7 to that motion. Ms. Pfeffer seconded?

8 MS. PFEFFER: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Is that proper, Ms. Clay,  
10 or am I just messing this up horribly?

11 MS. CLAY: It's proper.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So we have a motion and a  
13 second. All in favor say "aye."

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All those opposed? Motion  
16 passes. Thank you, Dr. Silano.

17 A-6: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

18 RENEWAL: ACADEMICS PLUS CHARTER SCHOOL

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: It looks like we're on item  
20 A-6, renewal for Academics Plus Charter School.

21 MS. HOGUE: Yes. They were given a charter in  
22 February 2001, and now they're coming to ask for a  
23 20-year renewal. They will be represented by Mr. Rob  
24 McGill and he'll introduce anybody else speaking for  
25 them. And they do have opposition from Pulaski

1 County, and Dr. Jerry Guess will be speaking for them  
2 and he'll introduce anybody else too.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. All those that  
4 are here to speak for or against the charter renewal  
5 application, if you would stand, raise your right  
6 hand? That's a lot. Do you swear or affirm to tell  
7 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

8 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Mr. McGill,  
10 you're recognized.

11 MR. MCGILL: Thank you. Thank you for having us  
12 here today. First, I'll be doing the introduction to  
13 get us started and I have two principals who I'll  
14 introduce in a minute that will give you some  
15 information specific to their schools; then I have  
16 two parents who want to speak; and then I'll follow-  
17 up at the very end also. I do want to recognize  
18 several people in the audience: Mayor Mike Watson,  
19 Alderman Preston Lewis, and Representative Mark  
20 Lowery are all here. Is there anyone else I missed?  
21 A couple of others I was expecting but they may be  
22 here later.

23 First of all, APCS -- we're very proud that we  
24 are an achieving school and we're also a Reward  
25 school. Both the elementary and the high school are

1 both Reward schools this year, putting us in the top  
2 20% in the state. We've had several recognitions  
3 from the OEP for most improved and also our  
4 elementary school is top 25% of the top 25 in  
5 literacy of about 900-and-something elementary  
6 schools. We're very proud of that. And then our  
7 high school is also in the top 12 in Arkansas on end-  
8 of-course biology. So we're doing a lot of good  
9 things and very proud of the results that we're  
10 getting.

11 Our last renewal was in 2012 and at that time we  
12 had several goals; we had seven goals. And at this  
13 point we are absolutely meeting five of those seven  
14 and we are working toward the other two at this  
15 point. The two that we're working towards are --  
16 that we're progressing towards is meeting 70% of our  
17 students making NWEA growth. This was a lofty goal,  
18 I would say if you look at -- the national average is  
19 50% and we said 70%. We're still working towards  
20 that and we want to hit that, but at this time we're  
21 at 59% of our students at the elementary level -- or  
22 in literacy we're at 59% meeting the goal and 61% in  
23 math. So we're doing very well. We just missed our  
24 actual goal that we set. We were short on that part,  
25 but there's no doubt we're making improvements

1 throughout.

2 At this time I'd like to be followed by Ms.  
3 Diane Gross, elementary principal of Academics Plus.

4 MS. GROSS: Good morning. Thank you for this  
5 opportunity to share a few highlights about our  
6 elementary school. I want to start out with a visual  
7 of student achievement over the span of the current  
8 charter. And on this slide and the next we see their  
9 achievement compared to the state in the stripe.  
10 This achievement is directly related to the dedicated  
11 educators who've purposely chosen to serve at  
12 Academics Plus. These dedicated educators are  
13 required to participate in 90 hours of professional  
14 development each year and are able to do so because  
15 of relationships established with several co-ops, the  
16 Arkansas Public School Resource Center, and the ADE  
17 itself. After the end of school last year, all  
18 elementary school teachers came and met together for  
19 five days of professional development in order to  
20 create literacy pacing guides, units of study, and  
21 lesson plans that they've been utilizing this year.  
22 At the end of this school year we'll continue our  
23 work by joining with the high school teachers for  
24 five days in order to work on K-12 curriculum  
25 mapping. Additionally, teachers meet three

1           afternoons each week after school. Two afternoons  
2           are spent in grade level teams to prepare lessons and  
3           analyze data in order to prepare for identifying  
4           students' needs; on the third afternoon teachers meet  
5           as a whole in order to address issues pertinent to  
6           the learning program. They often take on the role of  
7           peer teacher in order to guide the learning of all,  
8           subjects like PARCC testing. We've been to recent  
9           professional development at Arch Ford for resources.  
10          We also are beginning to look at conferencing, having  
11          the students run a conference with the parents. So  
12          we're looking at that as well as guidance in TESS and  
13          being distinguished teachers.

14                 Academics Plus educators are driven by data.  
15          State-mandated assessments are analyzed by the  
16          administration and teachers to determine where  
17          instruction should be strengthened. The NWEA MAP is  
18          an online assessment given multiple times a year.  
19          The data is desegregated to determine individual  
20          student needs and those results allow teachers to  
21          groom students for intervention and goal-set for the  
22          future. Literacy assessments and progress monitoring  
23          take place all year long in order for teachers to  
24          provide each student with an individual learning  
25          plan. And teachers use formative and summative

1 assessments within their classrooms to gauge what  
2 students know and are able to do in order to re-  
3 teach, remediate or move forward. One of the intents  
4 of the charter is to allow teachers more autonomy and  
5 decision-making opportunities at the site level. At  
6 APCS we have dedicated, experienced teachers. I  
7 asked them; there's over 500 years of experience in  
8 our charter and they've been allowed to embody  
9 innovation. For instance, teachers believe in  
10 intervention and enrichment programs and doing all  
11 that it could or should, and so last year they  
12 modified it in order to be more effective.

13 Therefore, we revamped and students are being  
14 affected by intervention when needed and flexible  
15 groupings or one-on-one. And the enrichment program,  
16 it allows students to participate in new activities  
17 and competitions. Last year, our Destination  
18 Imagination team won first and fourth place at  
19 regional and it was the first time that those  
20 students have participated. This year I have two or  
21 three teams, I'm pretty sure. Many of our students  
22 have achieved recognition in other extracurricular  
23 activities through theater and a writing award.

24 I want to thank you again for this opportunity  
25 to share with you some of the reasons I think

1 Academics Plus Charter School has been able to  
2 continue to be a success. And at this time I would  
3 turn the presentation over to my colleague, Ms.  
4 Kimberly Willis, our high school principal.

5 MS. WILLIS: Good morning, Authorizing Panel.  
6 Thank you again for the opportunity to come before  
7 you. Hello, I'm Kimberly Willis, APCS High School  
8 principal. I want to start with our slide  
9 highlighting some of the accolades mentioned  
10 previously in our renewal application. Here we show  
11 high school EOC data, state information in the gray  
12 and black stripe there, which show that we either  
13 matched or exceeded 2014 state data but still showing  
14 improvement for all subjects. Our next slide: our  
15 AMO showed 14% gains for all students and 21% gains  
16 for our TAGG group in math, but here we show the  
17 gains for our AMO in literacy. The next slide: I  
18 know that in our middle school math there has been a  
19 great opportunity for growth and our efforts have  
20 been rewarded. Our 7th grade benchmark data shows  
21 23% gains and in our 8th grade math 25% gains within  
22 our two-year comparison. With as much improvement as  
23 we experienced, we missed being achieving in math for  
24 the high school by just a little over one-tenth of a  
25 point with our TAGG group. We were so very close.

1 Next slide: to address our achievement gap let me  
2 start by saying yes, we do have high expectations for  
3 all students but we want to be sure to meet every  
4 student where they are to bridge the gap to  
5 achievement. We address students who need academic  
6 support by creating reinforcements for them in class  
7 and in additional class time. Specifically,  
8 addressing our 10% achievement gap in math we have a  
9 math foundations class. This class is taught by our  
10 math department chair to assist students who need  
11 academic support; students take this class in  
12 addition to their required math class. Our math  
13 department works collaboratively to insure the  
14 interventions are supported by not only the math  
15 foundations teacher but also their regular math  
16 foundations, their math class teacher. This same  
17 class exists in literacy for high school students,  
18 both the writing foundations and core teacher  
19 creating an environment that bridges the gap between  
20 student ability and mastery of literacy standards.  
21 Also, we provide remediation and tutoring before  
22 school and for an hour after school. Core teachers  
23 and remediation core teachers see data from  
24 assessments in class for these test items and  
25 additional practice items to re-teach this content.

1 Students also participate in a grade recovery  
2 program. Grade recovery allows the students who pass  
3 a course with an average score of 90% or below to  
4 retake that course. The grade of a class taken the  
5 second time then replaces the original grade. This  
6 not only encourages students to help their grade-  
7 point average but it assists students who need  
8 additional time for mastery. Students who fail a  
9 class are given the opportunity for credit recovery  
10 by enrolling in the failed class during the next  
11 semester or year, or taking the digital class in a  
12 digital environment. Because we understand the time  
13 and attention given to create academic support is  
14 equally important to creating an environment of  
15 enrichment, the high school offers an array of clubs  
16 and activities and some of them are shown here.

17 I want to tell you how we have not only achieved  
18 these accomplishments but how we will continue to  
19 progress. As we continue to improve academics for  
20 all students, we insure that students are actively  
21 engaged in not only rigorous instruction but  
22 instruction that is developmentally appropriate.  
23 Yes, we do strive for mastery of all core subjects  
24 but we also want to gain conceptual understanding of  
25 all content by infusing project-based learning and

1 cross curricular learning into instruction. Our  
2 determination is that students will gain a deeper  
3 understanding of key concepts and how to relate to  
4 the real world. To provide a true model of  
5 differentiated instruction, teachers conduct both  
6 formative and summative assessments that include pre-  
7 and post-tests throughout the school year. Teachers  
8 analyze this data to streamline instructional best  
9 practices. These instructional best strategies  
10 include: the workshop model, which allows teachers to  
11 access the different ranges of how students learn;  
12 Marzano's "Nine Instructional Strategies" are also  
13 interchangeably used to direct student learning; and  
14 teachers also use guided notes to increase student  
15 engagement during whole group lecture.

16 We are a college preparatory school. We work to  
17 prepare students for college by developing 21st  
18 century skills through different means. We have a  
19 remediation program for core subjects that has  
20 rendered positive data-driven results. So to address  
21 the opportunity for growth with our ACT scores, we  
22 decided to follow the same model to better prepare  
23 students for the ACT. Core teachers host ACT  
24 preparation study after school weekly. Students have  
25 expressed interest and have shown improvement with

1 this preparation course model this year. To be  
2 hyper-vigilant and even more aggressive, insuring  
3 that students are prepared for the test and for  
4 higher ed., core teachers are creating a model for  
5 the APCS workshop that implements research methods  
6 that improve test scores. This year, APCS offers six  
7 on-campus concurrent credits and eight AP courses.  
8 The 2014 graduating class, for instance, graduated  
9 with a grand total of 315 college credits and one  
10 graduate who graduated, in particular, earned 31  
11 college credits free of charge while attending high  
12 school. Additionally, we have an APCS faculty member  
13 who facilitates five digital classes a day for  
14 students. Currently, there are 132 classes taken by  
15 students. Not only do we offer more fields of study  
16 with students by expanding our master schedule, but  
17 we are exposing students to classes that are  
18 synonymous to expectations of the college structure.  
19 By having higher expectations for all students, we  
20 require 25 credits for graduates compared to the 22  
21 required by the state. Of these credits, students  
22 must have successful completion of at least two  
23 concurrent or AP courses.

24 As we have created a culture where students have  
25 more autonomy in their achievement, we also equally

1 invest and engage our parents and staff. We want  
2 them to fully be involved in the process by creating  
3 an environment for learning. We're dedicated to  
4 fully implementing and reinforcing our parental  
5 involvement plan and supporting high-functioning  
6 models of professional development and learning  
7 communities for teachers. Our expectations do not  
8 just apply to students but also to teachers. In the  
9 90 hours of required professional development,  
10 teachers include eight professional development days  
11 in the summer that we spend for the development of  
12 both vertical and horizontal alignment K-12. Teacher  
13 department teams also use these hours to monitor and  
14 analyze the effectiveness of their instruction.

15 We are so proud of our students and the hard  
16 work they perform in everything they do. Here are  
17 just some of the accolades for APCS students.

18 This concludes my high school portion of the  
19 presentation. I will be followed by our executive  
20 director Mr. Rob McGill. Thank you so much.

21 MR. MCGILL: At this time I have a couple of  
22 parents who would like to come to speak, and first  
23 I'd like to introduce Ms. Robin Cook.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Good morning, Ms. Cook.

25 MS. COOK: Good morning. My son Jonathan is 10

1 years old and he's in the fourth grade at Academics  
2 Plus and he has high-functioning autism. While in  
3 elementary at Pulaski County he was very unhappy and  
4 did not want to go to school at all. We took him to  
5 Academics Plus in March of the 2nd grade and he loves  
6 school. In fact, he cries on days that there is no  
7 school because he misses one of his teachers so  
8 badly. She even comes -- like for Christmas break or  
9 Thanksgiving break, she will meet Jonathan to have  
10 breakfast with him because he misses her so much. I  
11 believe that Pulaski County made their hiring  
12 decisions based on the number of students rather than  
13 their IEP needs. Jonathan's teacher at his  
14 elementary was split between either two or three  
15 schools and he rarely got his total of 300 minutes.  
16 After going to Academics Plus, they increased him to  
17 600 minutes and then a second time to 900 minutes.  
18 So he sees his resource teacher 900 minutes a week  
19 and then he also has OT and speech on top of that.  
20 Prior to his transfer, his Iowa test score was in the  
21 second percentile. At Academics Plus, they took him  
22 through the profile program and he scored proficient.  
23 So we're very happy with the school and we want to  
24 stay there as long as we can. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Ms. Cook. Mr.

1           McGill, you have about five minutes.

2                   MR. MCGILL: Next up I have Ms. Donna Green.

3                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Welcome, Ms. Green.

4                   MS. GREEN: Good morning. I stand before you as  
5 a proud parent of a 7th and 9th grader. We have been  
6 at Academics Plus for five years. We too came from  
7 Pulaski County School District. While at Academics  
8 Plus, within those five years there was some  
9 challenges where there was some transportation issues  
10 with my children. We lived outside of the Maumelle  
11 area. With Mr. McGill, as well as the principal and  
12 administrative staff, they worked with me and  
13 provided my kids with transportation through the  
14 Central Arkansas Transit. I know that there are  
15 buses that are provided through different school  
16 systems, but as a parent who grew up in a small town  
17 I believe the closeness and the attentiveness of the  
18 Academics Plus Charter School administration and  
19 teachers are excellent. We had an incident with my  
20 daughter also where she decided she was upset with  
21 something that happened and she decided -- it was  
22 personal and she decided to -- you know -- decided to  
23 possibly run away. Well, with the administrative  
24 staff, they spoke to her, they helped her. My kids  
25 look up to them. I trust them and if I'm not around

1 then I can send my kids to one of them to speak to  
2 them. So as a parent I would want my children to  
3 continue at Academics Plus and I speak highly of  
4 them.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

6 MR. MCGILL: I want to introduce Mr. Tripp  
7 Walter also, please.

8 MR. WALTER: Good morning, Panel.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Welcome.

10 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, staff attorney,  
11 Arkansas Public School Resource Center. I won't take  
12 much time. I just wanted to make the Panel aware  
13 that we are proud to have Academics Plus as one of  
14 our members. I am here obviously and several other  
15 members of our staff are here in support. Mr. Smith,  
16 our executive director, had to be at the legislature  
17 for a committee meeting today. He's in full support.  
18 I may have some comments, direct comments for you  
19 later based on the way that everything unfolds but  
20 I'm here to answer any questions that the Panel may  
21 have of me and of our staff. Again, I just wanted to  
22 take a brief moment now to indicate how proud we are  
23 of Academics Plus and how fully we support them.  
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

1 MR. MCGILL: Next up, the next slide is a list  
2 of monitorings that we've had through our  
3 accountability. We're proud to say that we have gone  
4 through the monitorings and done very well. The one  
5 thing in the food service program that they  
6 recommended is basically we need a new facility and  
7 that's something that we're working on. This next  
8 year we're going to build a cafeteria. We have that  
9 in the plans, with 16 classrooms also. So the  
10 cafeteria will be much more accessible to the  
11 students, but right now we're doing the best we can.  
12 Also, we have 465 students on the waiting list for  
13 next year and that list is growing. And we have our  
14 lottery on March 3rd and I'll welcome any of you to  
15 come visit; we'd be proud to have you there. And  
16 then 127 of those students are kindergarten students  
17 and right now we have 100 slots for kindergarten. I  
18 wouldn't doubt that going up. In the last three  
19 weeks is when they're going to apply. So we're  
20 excited about it and looking very forward to this  
21 coming year. We are requesting 20 years for our  
22 renewal and also we need to increase our cap, and we  
23 respectfully do so and hope that we can answer any of  
24 your questions today to make this successful.

25 I do have -- if time allows, Mayor Watson from

1           Maumelle would like to speak and also Representative  
2           Lowery would like to speak concerning this renewal.

3           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: There will be five minutes  
4           at the end, but we'll go ahead and let Representative  
5           Lowery and your mayor speak. They can go ahead.

6           MR. MCGILL: Thank you.

7           MAYOR WATSON: I'm Mike Watson, mayor of  
8           Maumelle. Thank you for allowing me to be before  
9           this board. I just want to take you back 15 short  
10          years. Fifteen years ago we had one elementary  
11          school in Maumelle; no other school. Right after  
12          that, the charter school got their charter; they  
13          opened up their school, opened up in a progression.  
14          They went -- now they go K through 12th grade. Since  
15          that time Pulaski County Special School District has  
16          also made an investment in Maumelle and constructed  
17          the Maumelle Middle School and Maumelle High School,  
18          which we're very proud of. We're proud of all of our  
19          schools in Maumelle. The problem was prior to 15  
20          years ago the school of choice in Maumelle was a  
21          private school; they went out to the private schools  
22          in the area. And so now we have a choice in Maumelle  
23          of two different public schools and we're very proud  
24          of that choice. I can relate to what Ms. Cook said  
25          earlier. The young man that lives next door to me

1 was a special needs student; he enrolled in Maumelle  
2 Middle School after attending an elementary school in  
3 Little Rock. He did not -- they did not reach his  
4 needs; the class was a little overwhelming for him.  
5 He enrolled at the charter school and is now doing  
6 great. I had to go over last week and help him tie a  
7 tie because his dad was out of town and he had to get  
8 his band picture made. So not only is he excelling  
9 in academics, he's excelling in extracurricular  
10 activities. And so that's what we like about  
11 Maumelle is we've got school choice, two public  
12 schools in Maumelle. The Maumelle City Council  
13 passed a resolution in December of last year in  
14 support of this application before this board for a  
15 20-year renewal and also an increased enrollment. As  
16 you can see, with 465 students on the waiting list  
17 they do need to be able to grow their school. We  
18 also -- Mr. McGill referenced the building program  
19 that's going on at the charter school. They Planning  
20 Commission approved, in January, the construction of  
21 16 classrooms and the cafeteria and the City Council  
22 approved the conditional use permit in February to  
23 allow that to move forward. So as soon as they can  
24 get their funding in place they can expand that. And  
25 so we're very proud of our schools in Maumelle and we

1 would offer that y'all approve this charter that's  
2 being asked for by the Academics Plus Charter School.  
3 Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Representative  
5 Lowery, welcome.

6 REPRESENTATIVE LOWERY: Thank you. Good  
7 morning. Thank you for the opportunity to come and  
8 visit with you. I'm in between committee  
9 presentations right now, so I appreciate you  
10 squeezing me in. I represent the Maumelle area,  
11 District 39, but that also includes Marche, Morgan,  
12 Oak Grove. I met Ms. Cook back in 2012, and I'm so  
13 glad to hear that her son is flourishing at Academics  
14 Plus. One of the things that I would want to  
15 emphasize is that as state representative for that  
16 area I'm proud of all of our schools. I'm proud of  
17 Pulaski County School District, the successes that  
18 they are experiencing with the elementary school  
19 there, Maumelle Middle, Maumelle High School. I'm  
20 certainly also excited by the opportunity that is  
21 additionally offered by Academics Plus and the  
22 success that they've had. I was very proud to be  
23 part of the check presentation on the Reward school  
24 or the high achieving Reward school program. I have  
25 I believe -- and as many of you know, I serve on the

1 Education Committee and education is just one of my  
2 real high priorities of interest. I'm actually back  
3 in a previous life; I worked for the Pulaski County  
4 School District, had the privilege of working under  
5 Superintendent Bobby Lester, so I have a great  
6 affinity for Pulaski County and seeing it succeed,  
7 and I think that they are succeeding. But I think  
8 the critical issue that needs to be recognized is  
9 that Pulaski County School District can flourish, can  
10 thrive in Maumelle cooperatively with Academics Plus.  
11 It affords choice for the students. I think that  
12 there is a great potential for a symbiotic  
13 relationship between the school district and the  
14 charter. Many of you remember when Academics Plus  
15 requested their enrollment cap increase, that one of  
16 the issues that was raised was whether they were  
17 becoming diverse enough. And, of course, the numbers  
18 that were presented was that Academics Plus at that  
19 point actually had a higher percentage of minority  
20 students than Maumelle proper. One of the things  
21 that we were -- Senator English, Senator Sanders and  
22 myself were able to do was to sponsor a GIF  
23 application to allow Academics Plus to receive a bus  
24 so that they could create a transportation plan to go  
25 out into some of the outlying areas -- Marche,

1 Palarm, Oak Grove -- to be able to become more  
2 diverse. And I know that they've progressively  
3 pursued that program. I think that the numbers speak  
4 for themselves. I know that a lot of data has been  
5 collected by the Pulaski County School District in  
6 preparing their opposition, and obviously there are  
7 probably going to be some holes that they're going to  
8 point to. But what I would ask you to please  
9 strongly consider is to not let the perfect become  
10 the enemy of the good. They are achieving; Academics  
11 Plus is achieving. There are areas that they  
12 recognize that they still have further to go, as do  
13 most of our schools. And I would just ask that you  
14 give extra consideration to the progress that they  
15 have made and believe that that progress would  
16 continue if you allow them to continue on with the  
17 approval of their extension and also the approval of  
18 their enrollment cap increase. So thank you very  
19 much for your time. I appreciate your consideration.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. All right. Is  
21 there anybody here to speak in opposition? Dr.  
22 Guess, we gave them 26 minutes, so we'll give you the  
23 same time if you need it.

24 DR. GUESS: Thank you very much. I am Jerry  
25 Guess, the superintendent of the Pulaski County

1 Special School District. I am one of three here to  
2 present our opposition to this proposal. I'm going  
3 to introduce Sam Jones, who is attorney for the  
4 district who has a presentation that he will direct;  
5 Dr. Clowers is also here to help provide some  
6 information. So I'll turn this over to Sam and we'll  
7 go forward.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Good morning, Mr. Jones.

9 MR. JONES: Good morning. Thank you very much.  
10 It was a nice skate-in from Ferndale this morning.  
11 Let me tell you why in the case of Academics Plus  
12 y'all have a particularly hard job, and it's because  
13 of this: the issue y'all have to drill down to and  
14 pass is not whether Academics Plus is achieving or is  
15 a good school or is a pleasant, comfortable place to  
16 be. Charters, as we know, under Arkansas law are to  
17 be earned; they're not given out as a matter of  
18 right. They came along after traditional public  
19 schools and the concept was and remains that they  
20 would be given certain freedoms and granted certain  
21 waivers to develop and deploy innovative, non-  
22 traditional instructive techniques and strategies  
23 that would result in extraordinary results, not just  
24 achieving results. And one thing we did this go-  
25 round was -- and again, they carry the burden of

1           persuading you that they comply with the law and that  
2           they have earned the charter and that they have done  
3           what they promised to do that should persuade you  
4           they should keep their charter or have an enrollment  
5           increase or whatever they ask for. They promised  
6           from the beginning -- and I requested from them and  
7           received -- it's on file in here somewhere, but I  
8           think everybody has received a copy of their original  
9           charter request from 2000. There, they set out the  
10          same vision statement that they have today -- and now  
11          you all require that the vision statement in a  
12          charter application be part of the charter  
13          application -- and that is, their goal is to be the  
14          most successful college preparatory school in the  
15          country. Not just to simply be an achieving school  
16          or a comfortable place to be, but that they promised  
17          15 years ago to be the most successful college  
18          preparatory school in the country. And Dr. Robert  
19          Clowers is here and I think it's important that we  
20          drill a little deeper into what I think really gets  
21          at a measure of how well or not how well they're  
22          approaching that goal, and that is to look at recent  
23          ACT results. We submitted those -- I hope they got  
24          passed out -- as Exhibit One (1) to our submission on  
25          February 11. It's the ACT letter that Academics Plus

1 received and we obtained from them pursuant to the  
2 Arkansas Freedom of Information Act. I will invite  
3 Dr. Clowers in a few minutes to address that more  
4 fully, as well as to address Exhibit Two (2) to that  
5 presentation which is where he took comparable school  
6 districts, if you want to compare them, with the same  
7 type of enrollment but different poverty levels --  
8 and Academics Plus has a very low poverty level. And  
9 the conclusion, from looking at data that we have  
10 available from the ADE, is they're doing fine but  
11 they're not doing any better than a comparable school  
12 district in Arkansas when one considers poverty. And  
13 that's why I said this is tough because, you know,  
14 you can bring parent after parent up here and say, "I  
15 like the school" -- but again, that is not the test.  
16 The test is whether or not they're keeping their  
17 promises upon which they were granted a charter to  
18 begin with. I have -- and I'm not an educator; I'm  
19 just a lawyer but I've been involved in educational  
20 issues for a long, long time. I don't see anywhere  
21 in the current application that there's any  
22 description of the kind of innovative instructional  
23 techniques that the charter law envisioned. I don't  
24 see anything that's calculated the result of  
25 extraordinary student gain and growth. I understand

1           it's still a law and that is the basis for granting  
2           charter schools the right to innovate and operate  
3           under relaxed rules. And again, it's not just a  
4           question of under those circumstances can they be  
5           pretty good; I think the test is can they be  
6           extraordinary. And we submit to you based on all the  
7           evidence, mainly their own, that they've done nothing  
8           extraordinary to continue the right to have a charter  
9           granted by the State of Arkansas. Again, referring  
10          to the ACT results, it appears to us, unless we're  
11          misinterpreting -- I don't think we are -- that  
12          students at APCS are not currently college ready  
13          based on the measures that the ACT may allow, except  
14          for English composition, which I think there was a  
15          reference made to that. In the four analyses the ACT  
16          did, only 14% of the students graduating from  
17          Academics Plus are college ready in the four  
18          categories reported. Now those are not PCSSD  
19          numbers. PCSSD seems to be always the one that has  
20          to get up and point out where Academics Plus is not  
21          meeting its promises that it made. If we go back  
22          again to the original application, Academics Plus  
23          explained that -- I think it's got the oldest charter  
24          in Arkansas -- explained that a charter school is a  
25          form of public school but it's waived from some of

1 the restrictive laws that govern traditional public  
2 schools. This allows a charter school more  
3 flexibility to implement creative and innovative  
4 programs and policies. In return for this freedom,  
5 the charter school is held more accountable for  
6 student success and they are expected to produce  
7 better results. Then I submit to you that while  
8 they're doing fine if you look on them as a  
9 traditional public school operating under traditional  
10 rules, which they are -- they're operating under  
11 relaxed rules -- you know, they'd be fine. But --  
12 and again, that's why I say the job of this committee  
13 is a tough one because you're held to the task of  
14 looking back and saying, "But have they done that  
15 which they promised to do and that prompted our  
16 predecessors to grant them a charter in the first  
17 place?"

18 A few stray things, then I'd like to turn it  
19 over to Dr. Clowers to discuss some of their bar  
20 graphs and charts a little more fully. There was a  
21 reference made to the achievement gap. One of the  
22 things we know from looking at their own data is they  
23 promised this in 2000; they promised that they would  
24 work toward the goal of eliminating gaps in test  
25 scores that may exist between white and black

1 students -- not white and other minority students,  
2 but white and black students. What we do know is  
3 Academics Plus does not now nor has it ever enrolled  
4 a sufficient number of African American students to  
5 constitute a subgroup, as you all understand that  
6 concept. So to this day we do not have a reliable  
7 way of knowing what they're doing, particularly if  
8 it's innovative or extraordinary, to attack the  
9 achievement gap. That's a goal of the ADE and I'm  
10 sure of this committee. Back 15 years ago, they said  
11 to assist in the recruitment of black students from  
12 Little Rock PCS -- that's Pulaski Charter School --  
13 has contracted with Eduteam International, Inc., a  
14 minority educational consulting firm. There's no  
15 mention of whatever Eduteam, Inc. was in any recent  
16 filings that I've been involved in in the last four  
17 or five years by Academics Plus. They also talked  
18 about this core knowledge sequence back 15 years ago;  
19 I'm not sure what that is, if it was innovative. It  
20 hasn't been mentioned by them in the last four or  
21 five years as anything they're trying to do. They  
22 also promised 15 years ago they would borrow from the  
23 KIPP school model because KIPP enjoyed such success  
24 in attacking the achievement gap. There's been no  
25 mention of anything about KIPP in the last four or

1 five years. They promised 15 years ago that they  
2 were going to have school till 5:00 p.m. That  
3 extended school day appears to have vanished; they  
4 now let school out at 3:15, as I understand it.

5 I'll end with just a few stray statistics taken  
6 from their own data that they furnished us in the  
7 Freedom of Information Act request. They transport  
8 11 children in the morning and 13 in the afternoon on  
9 their bus. Now the previous State Board, before  
10 y'all were created, had been after them and after  
11 them and after them, "When are you going to provide  
12 the transportation that you promised?" "Well, we're  
13 working on it, we're working on it." Now they've got  
14 11 kids in the morning. They also said, "We're going  
15 to use Central Arkansas Transit." The data they gave  
16 us showed that no more than 7 students avail  
17 themselves of Central Arkansas Transit bus passes to  
18 attend Academics Plus. And in their financial  
19 information, their pie chart, which is part of their  
20 application -- it is on their website -- they  
21 apparently don't even have enough expenditures for  
22 transportation and special education services to even  
23 form a tiny sliver of that pie chart.

24 Now, again, I think your task is hard because if  
25 you simply view Academics Plus in isolation without

1 any particular legal criteria or historical promises  
2 against which to measure it you'd say, "Well, they're  
3 doing -- they're just doing fine." But that wasn't  
4 what they were supposed to do; that's not what they  
5 were created to do. They promised to be the most  
6 highly successful college preparatory school in the  
7 country. That's the standard they set for  
8 themselves, the standard they promised to meet, and  
9 the promise they made to the State of Arkansas. And  
10 we don't argue with or question many, if any, of the  
11 data and awards and recognition that they've set  
12 forth here today. But what we do question, and which  
13 I think they have made no showing of, is that they  
14 have failed miserably in keeping the promises they  
15 made that warranted the granting of a charter in the  
16 first place. With the additional time I'd like to  
17 yield to Dr. Clowers and Dr. Guess.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You have about 13 minutes.

19 DR. CLOWERS: Good morning. I'd like to know if  
20 everyone has a copy of this; it's the ACT report.  
21 All right. What I want to do initially is just walk  
22 you through some of this data. Academics Plus set  
23 high expectations, high expectations for the product  
24 that graduate and leave Academics Plus. This ties in  
25 to being a college preparatory school. I need to

1 point out some things that I see are problematic with  
2 that vision, problematic with the priorities of math  
3 and literacy that they have in their documentation,  
4 and I'll walk you through some of this. You can see  
5 maybe what I've been looking at the last several  
6 weeks, priorities made and priorities not met. If we  
7 just look at Table 1, for example, there's five years  
8 of data, 2010 through the latest, 2014, that gives  
9 the average ACT reports in four different areas and  
10 also a composite area. If I look at Academics Plus  
11 over these five years, for each of those areas --  
12 English, math, reading, science, and then also a  
13 composite -- for every one of those, compared to  
14 2010, they've actually gone down a little bit. If  
15 you wanted to graph those it would be kind of a flat  
16 line or maybe just showing a little bit of downward  
17 slope, but for a prep school I would expect much,  
18 much higher results than what we're seeing there.  
19 One thing that just jumps out at me, if you look at  
20 the composite score it was 20.7 back in 2010; now  
21 it's 19.9 in 2014. That's just a slight decline but  
22 for me that spells out that a lot of these graduates  
23 at Academics Plus are going to be taking remediation  
24 classes when they get to college. It's below 20 this  
25 time, 19.9, but that's a problem if your product is

1 going to be students coming out of a top preparatory  
2 school. It's not working; it's just not working.  
3 Also, look at the 19.9 average composite. That's  
4 going to be problematic if these students wanted to  
5 apply for one of the Academic Challenge scholarships.  
6 It's just not going to happen from looking at this  
7 data provided to me by Academics Plus. Having said  
8 that, I want to go into a little more detail. Look  
9 at Figure 1; this one has the bar charts and graphs.  
10 Two-thirds of their students, based on the latest  
11 results, apparently are college ready for English  
12 composition. That's still a third that are not ready  
13 and very possibly will have to take some sort of  
14 remediation at the college level. If I look at  
15 college algebra -- and my background was in math -- I  
16 see that only 19% of their students were college  
17 ready; 80% will probably need some sort of  
18 remediation at whichever college they attend. I'm  
19 more familiar with the ones in Arkansas, but that's  
20 -- come on, guys -- 14%, and they're a college prep.  
21 They should be blowing it out toward the top.  
22 College science 48%, meaning, you know, half just are  
23 not college ready in science. Biology 26%, so that  
24 means three-fourths are not ready, college ready for  
25 biology. And then looking at the composite, and Mr.

1 Jones referred to that, 14% of the students met  
2 college readiness in all the four subject areas --  
3 14.1. That's just low, guys. I wanted to point that  
4 out. Another thing, there's another sheet that's got  
5 a couple of scatter plots at the very bottom of it.  
6 Do you have those? What I did, I went and pulled  
7 data from public school districts in the state of  
8 Arkansas that had roughly 600 to 800 students  
9 enrolled, which would be comparable, a good mirror of  
10 Academics Plus, and then I looked at the poverty  
11 rates of these schools, including Academics Plus. I  
12 took out Lisa Academy, and there was Benton County  
13 School of Arts; I took them out because those two  
14 were charters. I just wanted to compare Academics  
15 Plus with their peer public school districts. So I'm  
16 looking at the poverty rate and the percent  
17 proficient or advanced. Like I said, I'm a math  
18 person so I graphed those out and the correlation was  
19 anywhere -- at Academics Plus, it was like .78 in the  
20 behavioral sciences; a .8 is strong. That's a strong  
21 correlation. And actually the correlation was a  
22 little higher than I might've thought going into  
23 this. What this is saying is that given the number  
24 of students and how you classify yourself as poverty  
25 or not, it just fits right in with the other schools.

1           It's just a textbook class, a function, linear  
2           function; the slope is, you know, roughly .33, and  
3           when I took Academics Plus out of it it was like .34.  
4           Based on the poverty index, and they have the lowest  
5           compared to their peers, it's very easy to predict  
6           where they would fall on the line as far as what you  
7           might expect on proficiency or advanced. A  
8           preparatory school should've just knocked your socks  
9           off as far as the proficiency. Just like with the  
10          ACT scores, they should've been much higher there.  
11          So this, as a math person, just jumps out at me. It  
12          looks like based on the poverty rate you can somewhat  
13          easily predict where the school might fall. And that  
14          line at the bottom of the page, Academics Plus just  
15          simply falls right in with the plot of the others. I  
16          will note that Salem School District actually did  
17          better than Academics Plus and their -- let's see --  
18          their poverty rate is 65% or 66%, so it's not always  
19          the poverty rate. You have the priorities and vision  
20          and the promises made by Academics Plus; I'll just  
21          have to tell you they're just not meeting the mark.  
22          I would be reluctant to send my child there for a  
23          prep school if the composite scores and the other  
24          stuff there is coming out that low. There's not a  
25          service being done as far as preparation for college.

1           Those are my remarks.

2                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You have five minutes left,  
3           Dr. Guess.

4                   DR. GUESS: There are a lot of different issues  
5           -- well, let me say this before I get started. Now  
6           I'm not a lawyer and Mr. Jones said he was an  
7           attorney, not an educator. This is my 38th year, so  
8           I'm not a lawyer but I've been in the business I  
9           guess longer than anybody in here, but perhaps Dr.  
10          Henry, so I know a little bit about what we're  
11          talking about here. And what we're doing -- and  
12          again, Sam started this out wonderfully by saying  
13          that this is really the responsibility of this  
14          charter school to demonstrate their stellar  
15          performance. It is not an equal comparison between  
16          these two student bodies; that's been discussed here.  
17          Let me point out what I mean. There are a lot of  
18          variables in our business that affect performance,  
19          but perhaps no variable is any greater than free and  
20          reduced lunch. PCSSD has 61% of our student  
21          population on free and reduced lunch. We spend about  
22          \$8.25 million a year providing food services for our  
23          kids. Another issue I think that's important is the  
24          issue of transportation. Mr. McGill mentioned to me  
25          earlier that they're on two-hour delay today.

1 They're on a two-hour delay because their students  
2 can get to school with private transportation. All  
3 the districts in Pulaski County are out of school  
4 today because we run significant buses every day to  
5 get our kids to school. As a matter of fact, we do  
6 23,000 miles a day, we do \$13 million a year, we  
7 transport 11,000 kids a day, indicating that our  
8 student body is unable to get to school without  
9 public transportation provided by the schools and  
10 indicating again something about the students that we  
11 serve. There's been mention made here of special  
12 education services. I think it's also important to  
13 point out that we serve 2200 students a day in  
14 special education services. And even though you've  
15 heard examples of stellar performance in Academics  
16 Plus, which I'm sure is true, we all must meet the  
17 responsibilities of IDEA. So every day our 2200 kids  
18 are served by special education and we provide those  
19 services to the very best of our ability and in  
20 compliance with IDEA. As a matter of fact, we spend  
21 about \$16 million a year on special education  
22 services. Our populations are quite different. And  
23 if you look at the performance of Academics Plus  
24 Charter School and you look at the performance of  
25 Pulaski County Special School District and the

1 challenges that we face, I think that you have to  
2 conclude that students in PCSSD are getting a  
3 remarkable opportunity. All of the things that were  
4 mentioned by the elementary and secondary principals  
5 are great programs and great services; they are  
6 things that we all do in education. They talked  
7 about CGI and effective literacy and curriculum  
8 mapping and clubs and organizations and math  
9 foundation courses and all sorts of other things that  
10 were offered as examples of the program innovation at  
11 Academics Plus; those are things that we do at PCSSD;  
12 those are things that are done across the state by  
13 public schools everywhere. So the question has to  
14 be, again, as Mr. Jones asked, is this about equal  
15 service and is this about innovation coming from  
16 Academics Plus Charter School, and I don't believe it  
17 is. I think that the issue here again is, as has  
18 been mentioned earlier, choice and it is also about  
19 the different populations that are served by the  
20 schools in this debate today and the fact that PCSSD  
21 serves a diverse population of students, provides a  
22 quality opportunity for all their students, and there  
23 is no evidence that Academics Plus is in any way  
24 meeting innovative expectations that exceed what we  
25 do. Any questions of me?

1                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. You have about one  
2 minute left. Is there anything else you wanted to  
3 say?

4                   DR. GUESS: I think that's it. Thank you.

5                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you. Mr.  
6 McGill, you'll have five minutes for rebuttal.

7                   MR. WALTER: Members of the Panel, Tripp Walter  
8 again, staff attorney for the APSRC. If I may, I  
9 just wanted to take a couple of minutes and speak to  
10 you before Mr. McGill does, primarily to address the  
11 things that have been brought up in rebuttal by  
12 PCSSD. And as has been said before, and as you well  
13 know, I'm not an educator; I'm an attorney, so I will  
14 leave the academic pieces to Mr. McGill and his  
15 staff. There's been a lot of talk not only today but  
16 I think in previous appearances by Academics Plus in  
17 front of this body and the State Board of Education  
18 as to what criteria needs to be used to judge them.  
19 So I wanted to try and hopefully demystify and  
20 clarify that for the board. You, as you well know,  
21 have a process -- the Department has a process in  
22 handling applications and renewal applications based  
23 on a rubric that's been prepared. You have all the  
24 materials in front of you today that have been  
25 submitted from all sides to make that decision. And

1 one of the things I would put to you, as you go  
2 through the rubric and the evaluation process the  
3 Department has set up, I see a lot of full responses.  
4 So it seems to me that the things that the Department  
5 has felt important for you to consider, and  
6 ultimately the State Board to consider, Academics  
7 Plus seems to have passed those requirements.  
8 Another thing I want to hit on very briefly, trying  
9 to be conservative of time, is, again, as all of you  
10 well know, when Academics Plus -- or really other  
11 open-enrollment charters are here, especially for  
12 renewal, the word "innovative" gets used quite  
13 frequently. For those of you who are not aware, that  
14 language comes from Arkansas Code Annotated 6-23-102.  
15 There are six different indicia, if you will, for  
16 statements evidencing the legislative intent behind  
17 the charter school law. One of them, number three,  
18 says, "Encourage the use of different and innovative  
19 teaching methods." If you will indulge me, I'd like  
20 to advise you or remind you of some of the others:  
21 improve student learning; create new professional  
22 opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity  
23 to be responsible for the learning program at the  
24 school site; provide parents and pupils with expanded  
25 choices in the types of educational opportunities

1           that are available within the public school system;  
2           hold the schools established under this chapter  
3           accountable for meeting measurable student  
4           achievement standards. Okay. You have a rubric in  
5           place to judge Academics Plus and the other schools.  
6           You also have 6-23-105 of the statute which contains  
7           the four conditions that have to be met before a  
8           charter can be denied renewal. I put to you that  
9           those are the criteria to use and by an examination  
10          of those criteria I have no doubt that you will find  
11          that Academics Plus has met the criteria and deserves  
12          renewal.

13                 I also want to make a point too that I'm sure  
14          Mr. McGill will expand upon. As you well know,  
15          Academics Plus was before this Panel approximately a  
16          year ago -- I guess it was January of 2014 -- for a  
17          report. And as you well know, there were several  
18          things that were discussed in that report that have  
19          been brought up by PCSSD in its comments today, that  
20          is, minority student recruitment and population and  
21          transportation. Hopefully, you realize this already  
22          but if you haven't, I know you will by the end of Mr.  
23          McGill and his staff's presentation; I want to  
24          reiterate to you that Academics Plus has listened to  
25          what you said and has taken your words to heart. Mr.

1 McGill has information he can put before you that  
2 more explicitly describes the recruitment plan that  
3 has been utilized, the activeness with which he and  
4 his staff are out in the community seeking low income  
5 and persons of color to apply to Academics Plus,  
6 removing whatever barriers, if any, there may be to  
7 that. Number two, you've heard from families about  
8 special ed.; that was another thing the PCSSD  
9 mentioned, the likeness of the budget. You have in  
10 your materials how many special ed. students are  
11 being served. You've heard from one parent -- and I  
12 know Mr. McGill has further information about the  
13 quality of those services and how well that those  
14 students are doing and especially the transportation  
15 issue, which was a big concern I know of Dr. Walters  
16 at the time. That has been implemented; that has  
17 been implemented with fidelity; it's in place. So  
18 hold Academics Plus accountable by the proper  
19 criteria and it's clear to me that you will find that  
20 they have then exceeded their markers. And I will be  
21 glad to address any questions that you may have now  
22 or at a later time.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You have about a minute.

24 MR. MCGILL: Okay. Just a couple of things.  
25 The ACT scores, I do want to make you aware that

1           that's something we definitely are striving to  
2           improve. And I do want to also make you aware that  
3           100% of our students take the ACT in the 9th grade  
4           and the 11th grade that the school pays for. And if  
5           you look -- I don't know what the state numbers are,  
6           but if you look at Maumelle -- Pulaski County is  
7           probably somewhere in the 60%. So if you looked at  
8           -- took 40% of the students that didn't take the  
9           test, what would their scores be if they actually did  
10          take it? So I do want to bring that out. There's no  
11          doubt that we want to be better, we want to do  
12          better, and we're working towards that. And I think  
13          the ladies earlier described the processes for that.  
14          The 100 students that you gave us last year, the cap,  
15          let me tell you what we have on that. We have 28  
16          additional minority students that we're serving and  
17          15 additional special ed. students. We have 70  
18          special ed. students this year and we have 15 -- had  
19          55 last year. We're at -- 9% of our population is  
20          special ed., 13 African Americans, 5 Hispanics, 5  
21          Native Americans, 2 Asians, 2 Pacific Islanders --  
22          that's what we're serving now that we weren't serving  
23          last year because we increased our cap to 100.

24                   The vision statement mentioned -- the vision  
25                   statement has never been in a -- the mission

1 statement is required, not the vision. Okay? And  
2 the vision statement was developed with the Arkansas  
3 School Board Association, Cora Smith, in 2011, and  
4 that's where we want to go and I think we have been  
5 doing -- we are getting there step by step. First of  
6 all, we've got to be the best in our area; we're  
7 there. Next of all, we want to be the best in the  
8 state; we're in the top 20%. Next year we want to be  
9 in the top 10%. That's what we're working towards.  
10 And then we want to be in The Times and all these  
11 other papers and say we are there. We're not there  
12 yet, but it's a vision, it's our long-term vision;  
13 that's where we want to go. Do I have any more time?

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You've got time, so you  
15 might be able to answer some of our questions.

16 MR. MCGILL: I've got plenty of time for that.  
17 So I'll go ahead and leave it at that and answer any  
18 questions.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Mr. McGill.  
20 We'll now entertain questions from the Panel Members.  
21 Dr. Saunders.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Mr. McGill, I have a few  
23 questions; the first one may take some time to  
24 answer. And I'm looking at specifically the new  
25 waivers requested in the application, numbers one

1 through eight -- numbers one through eight. And I  
2 would just like if you could address each one of  
3 those and summarize for me why the waiver is needed  
4 and how that will directly affect student  
5 achievement.

6 MR. MCGILL: Okay. Concerning planning time,  
7 currently, the way I understand it, Arkansas law  
8 requires teachers to have planning time during the  
9 day, the school day when kids are there. But we also  
10 have planning time after school, so we're basically  
11 doubling up on their planning time to have it during  
12 the day and after school. We want as much planning  
13 time during the day but we need the flexibility.  
14 Let's say we have one period that maybe they want to  
15 get four planning times during the week and the other  
16 five after school. They'll still get that 45 minutes  
17 every day but some of it may be after school. We'd  
18 just like that flexibility. Does that make sense?

19 DR. SAUNDERS: It makes sense for flexibility.  
20 But how would it increase student achievement?

21 MR. MCGILL: Well, it helps -- it could help on  
22 budget numbers. If I -- depending on what we have --  
23 let's say we have -- I don't want to have to hire  
24 another teacher to be able to give two teachers an  
25 additional planning time or a planning time during

1           that time. So it affects the budget numbers is where  
2           it would come into effect.

3           DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. What about -- just going  
4           down the list --

5           MR. MCGILL: All right.

6           DR. SAUNDERS: -- class size?

7           MR. MCGILL: This is the same type of situation.  
8           We work hard to -- right now we go by 20 for  
9           kindergarten, 23 for 1st through 3rd grade, and so-  
10          on. But there are times that -- you know -- I think  
11          we even see in the legislature a bill has been  
12          introduced to allow schools some flexibility on that.  
13          We would like to have that flexibility as a charter  
14          school to possibly go over up to five students in the  
15          grade level and just for that flexibility to do that.  
16          There's not much evidence out there as far as -- that  
17          I have seen through my experience that the class size  
18          really makes a difference until you get really low.  
19          So whether you have 23 kids in a class or 24 kids,  
20          you know, the evidence is not there. So I don't  
21          think that's going to impact the education that the  
22          students are receiving. If you look at charters,  
23          there are some charter schools -- I went to MESA  
24          Charter School in Arizona; their class size is --  
25          they max them out at 30 in the middle school and

1 above, and they're one of the highest performing  
2 charter schools in the nation -- or schools in the  
3 nation. So that's kind of where we got the idea.  
4 And this would also be a budget thing. And there may  
5 be times -- we haven't had that right now but let's  
6 say we have 20 students in 2nd grade on the waiting  
7 list and no students in any other grade. That could  
8 happen; it hasn't happened in recent times. Well, if  
9 my 2nd grade is full we'd be able to fill it up to  
10 750 or 850, whatever my number is, if I might not  
11 have this waiver.

12 Okay. Duty-free lunch for certified personnel  
13 -- this is another thing that definitely we want the  
14 teachers to have their lunch, but -- if they need  
15 that time, but there's also sometimes that it's good  
16 for the teachers to actually be in the cafeteria with  
17 the kids; maybe they're eating their lunch at that  
18 time. Wouldn't want that every day, but if they were  
19 able to do that at times it -- they see what's going  
20 on in the cafeteria with the kids outside the  
21 classroom. I'll be honest with you, when teachers  
22 from Pulaski County no longer had to do recess duty  
23 they got out of touch with their kids because they  
24 saw -- they didn't know who the loner was that didn't  
25 interact with other kids. So this would give them an

1 opportunity to do that, that on -- at certain times  
2 be able to go in that cafeteria and see how the kids  
3 interact with each other without giving them another  
4 30-minute lunch after that.

5 Where are we at? Four, the presence of board  
6 members -- I've got a couple of board members who  
7 sometimes work out-of-state. All of our board  
8 members are elected except for -- well, six of our  
9 nine board members are elected, so they have to be  
10 parents so they're pretty much, you know, in Pulaski  
11 County, they live in the area. Then three are  
12 appointed by the city. So we don't have widespread  
13 board members like some do, but we do have some board  
14 members who work out-of-state and they cannot be a  
15 part of the quorum for the vote, according to law  
16 right now, unless we get this waiver, if they're out-  
17 of-state on their work. So we'd like for them to be  
18 able to Skype in or phone-conference in and be part  
19 of the meeting.

20 Let's see. Oh, number five, this is -- we're  
21 operating this way and I just found this law, then I  
22 said, "Look, we need to get a waiver for that,"  
23 because the board allows me the flexibility to hire  
24 and terminate staff. They have a waiver once that is  
25 completed, or an appeal; they can go to them after it

1 is complete, but I have the final say on the staff.  
2 And this would be able to clarify that that is --  
3 this law needs to be cleaned up to be able to do  
4 that.

5 Let's see. Reimbursements kindergarten through  
6 6th grade -- right now the law is \$500 for teachers.  
7 Well, we have PTO. It's one of our processes that if  
8 we get some sort of donations through the PTO then  
9 they give actually a part of that money straight back  
10 to the teacher. So this last year the kindergarten  
11 class itself had like \$1200 that they had -- the  
12 teachers had control of and that was just the class  
13 itself. And then you've got the kindergarten  
14 teachers had another \$300 or \$400 each that they had  
15 control of. This is something new that we've  
16 implemented. And if you've been an experienced  
17 teacher who's had \$500 a year for 20 years, what do  
18 you have? You have a classroom of junk, honestly,  
19 sometimes. I mean, they need to go in and throw that  
20 stuff away or use it, you know. But if they need it  
21 we definitely want them to have it; we do want them  
22 to have the materials and things that they have, but  
23 sometimes the law makes us really provide too much.  
24 And that's personally my opinion on that, but I think  
25 we've all seen it in the classrooms where teachers

1 have way too much stuff.

2 Let's see. Keyboarding -- all right. Well,  
3 this -- since PARCC has come along we decided that we  
4 have to have keyboarding down to 4th grade. So this  
5 year 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th and 8th grades are doing a  
6 semester of keyboarding. Well, with the waiver -- or  
7 we've got permission to do that through Career and  
8 Technical and -- but every year they're supposed to  
9 have another some sort of computer class up until the  
10 8th grade. Well, they have keyboarding; that's the  
11 standard. Why are we having to do four more years of  
12 some sort of computer coursework? Once they have  
13 keyboarding we think they should be finished with  
14 that. But any student that moves in -- let's say  
15 they move in in the 6th grade and have not had  
16 keyboarding we would definitely provide that up to  
17 the 8th grade. So that explains that.

18 Clock hours for units of credit -- our biggest  
19 thing right now is our digital coursework. If, you  
20 know, a student -- some digital classes are through  
21 Arkansas Virtual; they have the school year or the  
22 semester to finish that work. Well, there's other  
23 courses out there that you can take through APSRC and  
24 other vendors throughout the United States that it  
25 doesn't matter -- it's not time-sensitive other than

1           you're starting -- you have to finish it within a  
2           year. But if a student finishes a course -- let's  
3           say they -- we don't do -- most of our core courses  
4           are not done through this, but if they finish a  
5           course, let's say algebra I, in four months why can't  
6           they go in geometry after that's finished? Do we  
7           have to sit them in the chair during that period to  
8           just wait? So that's the main thing on that. We  
9           want to get these kids more exposed and that gives  
10          them more concurrent credit, more AP once they become  
11          10th, 11th and 12th graders, if we can get those  
12          things out of the way. And one of the things we're  
13          working on, we haven't really got this process -- I  
14          really can't explain how exactly it would work, but  
15          we would love to do project-based type -- we're doing  
16          that, but we don't have it to where -- I would like  
17          to be able to do project-based, kind of like what  
18          Warren does, where they accelerate the kids; once  
19          they finish those standards they go -- they move on  
20          to the next one. But I can't sit here and tell you  
21          exactly what that will look like now, but I would  
22          like to do that in the next couple of years. So, but  
23          the main emphasis at this point is on the digital  
24          learning for that waiver.

25                 Change of name -- actually, I think your legal

1 came back and said we didn't need to do this through  
2 the waiver process, so -- but there's a time when I  
3 think we're going to want to expand into different  
4 towns and Academics Plus Charter School will be the  
5 -- I don't know if you know this -- we're actually  
6 Pulaski Charter Schools, Inc. is our name, doing  
7 business as Academics Plus Charter School. But we  
8 would like to change that, get away from the Pulaski  
9 because we don't want to be seen as just Pulaski  
10 County; we want to be Academics Plus Charter School.  
11 And then our schools, such as this would be Maumelle  
12 Charter Elementary School, Maumelle Charter High  
13 School. If we go to another town it would be that  
14 town Charter Elementary School, Charter High School.  
15 So it would give them an identity with the overall  
16 Academics Plus Charter School, kind of like what  
17 PCSSD is, Pulaski County Special School District;  
18 then you have Jacksonville High School, Maumelle High  
19 School. So that's kind of where we're going with  
20 that.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Questions from Panel  
23 Members? Ms. Pfeffer.

24 MS. PFEFFER: Yes. Good morning.

25 MR. MCGILL: Good morning.

1 MS. PFEFFER: I want to ask a little more on  
2 your waiver for the 120 clock hours, waiving that.  
3 As you were talking, you are only wanting to waive  
4 that for digital courses. Is that correct?

5 MR. MCGILL: Well, I think at this point for you  
6 I think it -- just do it for digital. And then when  
7 we get a plan together that we can say "here's how  
8 it's going to work," then we'll come back to you and  
9 say, you know, "we're project-based and we'd like to  
10 condense it down."

11 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

12 MR. MCGILL: We can be specific on that if you  
13 want to at this point, but I don't think we're ready  
14 for the next steps.

15 MS. PFEFFER: Well, I would be more comfortable  
16 -- I'd like to kind of nail down the specifics there,  
17 because when you started talking about Warren and  
18 what they're doing --

19 MR. MCGILL: Yeah.

20 MS. PFEFFER: -- that's a big animal to --

21 MR. MCGILL: Right.

22 MS. PFEFFER: -- to be thinking through.

23 MR. MCGILL: I understand.

24 MS. PFEFFER: So if you're doing this for  
25 digital courses only -- right now you have students

1           utilizing different avenues for that. So I guess I'm  
2           just trying to think through how would that be  
3           managed and how it would give students -- are  
4           students at school when they do that? Are they --  
5           you know -- do they do that, you know, at night  
6           possibly and it's still part of their schedule? How  
7           would that look?

8           MS. WILLIS: So currently for our general  
9           classrooms our facilitator that's on faculty with us  
10          monitors their progress. And so what we do right now  
11          is weekly give them progress reports notifying the  
12          student and the parent of where they are, insuring  
13          that they are on pace with the course. And we also  
14          have communication with the actual teacher of record  
15          for that course to make sure that they are  
16          progressing as they should. Because of course most  
17          of the digital classes do allow up to a year to  
18          finish, unless it's a semester class.

19          MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So the digital learning  
20          coordinator is monitoring them. Those students are  
21          still taking those courses, not necessarily at school  
22          during the school day -- or they are?

23          MS. WILLIS: They are.

24          MS. PFEFFER: They are at school. Okay.

25          MS. WILLIS: They have up to five periods during

1 the school day and that's worked into their schedule.

2 MS. PFEFFER: That's worked into their schedule?

3 MS. WILLIS: Yes.

4 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

5 MS. WILLIS: And in addition to outside the  
6 classroom time, if they'd like.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

8 MR. MCGILL: Can I say -- the reason for that is  
9 our students, you know, they're just not mature  
10 enough sometimes to just go out and say, "Finish this  
11 course." So they're in the classroom; we've provided  
12 them a period for that. Each class that they have  
13 digitally they have a class period that we have a  
14 facilitator there that helps them time-manage mainly.  
15 That's their problem on digital courses is time  
16 management. So we -- you know -- now if we have a  
17 student that wants to take a simultaneous class --  
18 say they failed algebra 1 and they need more help,  
19 they could actually take an algebra 1 class at home  
20 through the digital learning and have two teachers  
21 now in algebra 1. So there's different ways of doing  
22 it, but the main thing we're doing is the -- we think  
23 that the students need the help in making sure they  
24 get their things done in a timely manner instead of  
25 waiting till the last two days to get everything

1 done. So that's why we have a facilitator in that  
2 process.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Jones.

4 DR. JONES: Do you intend to keep that class in  
5 place for the digital class? And if so, why do you  
6 need the waiver?

7 MR. MCGILL: Well, I just want to make sure  
8 nobody comes back and says that this student finished  
9 in three months, you know, or by the nine-weeks  
10 period and then we go to the next course and we have  
11 an issue of not being in the seat, seat time.

12 DR. JONES: Okay. Do you track -- do you keep  
13 up with the hours students spend within their virtual  
14 classes now?

15 MS. WILLIS: Yes, we do. Specifically, we  
16 utilize that tool when a student does not perform up  
17 to our standard. If they have less than 69% in any  
18 class, we go back through a log with that digital  
19 provider and see how many hours they've actually  
20 spent and then we go -- it's a case by case basis.  
21 If we question the amount of time that they spent in  
22 class, then we address that with the student and the  
23 parent.

24 DR. JONES: Okay. Can you address -- when I  
25 look at the demographics and I compare that with

1 Pulaski County Elementary and I compare it with  
2 Maumelle High School, truly there are far larger  
3 numbers of African American students. And I do have  
4 some concerns about the drop in the ACT scores. Tell  
5 me what specifically you're doing that's innovative  
6 or specifically to address some of those college and  
7 career readiness skills?

8 MS. WILLIS: Well, I will say -- I will speak to  
9 just the achievement gap and our ACT scores, which  
10 are a great concern for me as the administrator. And  
11 I spent so much time -- this is my second full year  
12 as an administrator for APCS -- looking at the data,  
13 but I excluded the most important factor in all of  
14 this: the student. So what we did this year is we  
15 surveyed students 8 through 12 on how they felt about  
16 the ACT test and why they feel like they didn't  
17 perform at their best and we learned a lot of  
18 information that we didn't have. Because, of course,  
19 the data helps us to confront things that we didn't  
20 know or maybe we didn't want to see, and some of the  
21 things that came back from the survey was quite  
22 surprising and things that we had not addressed.  
23 Test anxiety -- this is the one test that the  
24 students take in a different environment. We are not  
25 a testing center so they go outside of our school and

1 test with complete strangers and that brought about  
2 some anxieties for the students that we had not  
3 addressed. So now with our ACT preparation course  
4 that we're doing we are assimilating that testing  
5 environment thoroughly. A lot of the students  
6 expressed that they were not expecting to have to  
7 memorize a lot of the math formulas. So after my  
8 teachers and I did research we found that most  
9 students who improved their ACT scores or fared  
10 better take two higher level math courses above  
11 algebra 1. So that's why, you know, we have started  
12 the process where 6th graders are allowed to take  
13 algebra 1. So hopefully we will start to see a  
14 progression -- we will show progression in those  
15 students who are taking those high level math  
16 courses.

17 Another anxiety that the students expressed is  
18 that the science portion of the test, they just had  
19 no idea. So we did some research, my core teachers  
20 and my self, and we found out that students that tend  
21 to take physics score better with the ACT. Well, our  
22 ACT scores include 9th grade; they haven't had  
23 biology yet and most of the test questions that they  
24 had trouble with in our ACT preparation course we  
25 found that it was relative to biology and beyond. So

1 I think, and I know actually, I'm going to further  
2 develop it as we go throughout the year because we  
3 want to look at the data and see what the students  
4 have done with this progression course that we have  
5 in place. Right now, we have three students who have  
6 raised their ACT scores by three points so far and  
7 it's only been in place for about eight weeks. So I  
8 can only imagine what it will do throughout the year.

9 DR. JONES: One last question. The waiver where  
10 you requested to go above the teacher/student ratio  
11 -- and I know it's five students -- as I look back at  
12 your data, in your beginning years of the charter you  
13 had at least a 50% turnover in teachers. And so as I  
14 look at a lot of these waivers I see they directly  
15 hit home as far as school culture, maybe teacher  
16 morale. And while one or two students may not  
17 greatly affect a classroom, I have concerns that  
18 teacher morale may with all of these issues. And I  
19 have a concern with that particular waiver because,  
20 number one, if it's college prep the scores are not  
21 where they should be given the amount of time that  
22 you've had; and number two, I don't think you need to  
23 make your job more difficult at this point and I  
24 think it's making teachers' jobs more difficult in  
25 opening that up. And I just wanted to express that

1           that's my concern for making your class size larger  
2           at this point. And if you ask an English teacher,  
3           five kids is significant when you're grading English  
4           essays.

5           MR. MCGILL: Well, I do want to mention, you  
6           know, we did have some high turnover -- and,  
7           honestly, it was a needed turnover. And that's one  
8           of the things that's been innovative about Academics  
9           Plus is we were able to do that turnover because we  
10          had the waiver for Teacher Fair Dismissal Act. In  
11          any other school they'd still have some of those same  
12          teachers and it would not be good. We would not be  
13          seeing -- we would not be a Reward school right now  
14          if we had not had that waiver and been able to use  
15          it. And also earlier in one of the -- I think Dr.  
16          Guess said something about that we were making  
17          excuses for our math scores. We're not making any  
18          excuses for our math scores; there's no need to make  
19          excuses for our math scores. And the mention of our  
20          teachers and what you were talking about, I mean, in  
21          one sentence, they're hard to find; math teachers are  
22          hard to find. And that's one of the things we've  
23          been innovative too is we have hired the best  
24          teachers, not necessarily the certified teacher;  
25          they're HQT but they're not necessarily certified and

1           you've seen the jump in our scores this last year.  
2           Honestly, I'll get -- here's another one: she's not a  
3           certified principal but she is the best person I  
4           could find at the time and she is the right person  
5           for this job. That's innovative. I guarantee you I  
6           wouldn't have anybody else but her right now. Look  
7           at the scores in the last two years. She was there  
8           and she took over in March two years ago and then in  
9           a year's time got a Reward school. That's  
10          innovation. The people -- you can have all the  
11          waivers in the world you want to have, you can have  
12          the best program and mediocre people; you're going to  
13          have mediocre education, learning. You can have  
14          terrible curriculum, excellent teachers, and I  
15          guarantee you the students will learn. That is where  
16          it's at and that is -- our efforts have been in  
17          improving teachers. Now we want the curriculum to be  
18          good too, but definitely want to make the teachers  
19          better. But if you have excellent teachers and the  
20          turnover -- what we've had over the last five years  
21          has definitely improved the campus at Academics Plus  
22          -- and we've lost some good ones too, there's no  
23          doubt about it. Yeah, there are some I hate to see  
24          them leave. And I think that's a testament to our  
25          success too, because five, six years ago Bryant and

1 Conway would not have hired our teachers; we have to  
2 fight to keep them now. So I hate to fight them to  
3 keep them, but at the same time I know they're  
4 quality teachers and we're having to fight to keep  
5 them. So that's some of the innovation stuff. I  
6 mean, innovation, if you've got to come up with bells  
7 and whistles to be innovative it's probably not going  
8 to happen. Here's one of the things that's  
9 innovative: in 4th grade, I believe it's literacy, we  
10 got one student that was not proficient advanced,  
11 98%. We celebrated 98%. But then immediately after  
12 that celebration we said, "Figure out who that kid  
13 is, what that problem with that kid is. Fourth  
14 grade, you figure out what you didn't do to meet that  
15 student's needs; fifth grade, figure out what you're  
16 going to do to meet that student's needs so they'll  
17 be proficient next year." You know, it's drilling  
18 down to the kid. And you can ask -- you can ask her;  
19 every day I'm saying, "Where are these kids going to  
20 school? Where are they going to college next year?  
21 What's their ACT score?" Not every day, but often I  
22 ask her, "Where are we going to school?" And she has  
23 the answer. Her and her counselor are working with  
24 these students to get them enrolled in a school for  
25 next year, whether it's Arkansas Tech, Baylor,

1 Pulaski Tech -- somewhere, you know, to get them on  
2 the road to education. So it is absolutely the  
3 people that makes it innovative.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I know we've been talking a  
6 lot about these ACT scores. And do you look at any  
7 of the measures of college readiness besides the ACT  
8 -- for example, college retention rates -- among your  
9 graduates or any other kind of indicators?

10 MS. WILLIS: It's funny that you ask that  
11 because as he was talking about before, my counselor  
12 and I, Mrs. Redic, we decided to do something a  
13 little bit different this year. And we were -- I was  
14 catapulted into that because she went on maternity  
15 leave for 10 weeks and so I was left with my seniors.  
16 And I cursed that day originally, but now I'm so  
17 blessed to have that opportunity because I was able  
18 to look and talk to every single senior that I have  
19 and understand not what's going to get them to  
20 college -- because to be honest with you, that's no  
21 longer my concern; it's getting them through college.  
22 I need them to finish and then look to going on to  
23 graduate degrees. And we were just understanding,  
24 her and I, looking at the data from those students  
25 and talking with parents, why they don't tend to

1 finish. And to be honest with you, I'm looking at  
2 their study habits a little bit deeper and a little  
3 bit more. The reason why we surveyed from 8 through  
4 12 is because I really believe that a wonderful part  
5 of having our 6th graders part of the high school LEA  
6 is we need to start working on their -- those  
7 students and their portfolio as soon as they get in  
8 the door at 6th grade, and we're doing that. Right  
9 now I want to speak to this too about innovation,  
10 about getting them ready for higher ed. Part of the  
11 innovation -- because I've heard a lot about that  
12 today -- the innovative part about our school is I  
13 can walk outside my office door, walk right across  
14 the street into my superintendent's office, and say,  
15 "Mr. McGill, I want to do this." Because right now  
16 we're in talks about an afterschool program to  
17 address the diversity concerns that you all have and  
18 to address the issue of the gap. And he'll say,  
19 "Okay. Right it up, give me a proposal. Make it  
20 happen," and we'll talk about it. That's innovation.  
21 Because I came from the public sector for four years  
22 and I couldn't do that; I couldn't walk into my  
23 superintendent's office and throw out an idea for the  
24 entire school 6 through 12 and say, "This is what the  
25 students need." But I can do that. So it's a

1 comprehensive plan to get them ready. And the ACT  
2 preparation program, we had such success with the  
3 remediation and tutoring we're going to follow that  
4 same model with ACT and we're going to render  
5 positive results. I'm confident of that.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Pfeffer.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Another couple of I guess  
8 like big picture questions, I guess for Mr. McGill;  
9 this first one will be for you. In asking this I  
10 don't want it to sound like in any way -- I mean, I  
11 think everything you all talked about today shows  
12 your commitment to students and they have good  
13 opportunities. But I guess my question would be, and  
14 maybe just to summarize, what opportunities are  
15 students getting at Academics Plus that they would  
16 not get at one of the Pulaski County schools?

17 MR. MCGILL: Communication with parents is huge  
18 -- and not some meeting that you have and three  
19 parents show up. I'm talking about when a child kind  
20 of falls behind or a child is not doing well. What  
21 is it, three ways -- three forms of communication:  
22 phone, email -- but anyway, there's three forms of  
23 communication that the teachers are expected to  
24 communicate with the parent. If one doesn't work,  
25 they fall to the next one, and then getting that kid

1 and parent in for a conference and seeing where we  
2 need to go. Now we all say, "Well, that's what  
3 everybody does." Is it really? That's what  
4 everybody should do, but that's what we are actually  
5 doing and that is huge. It's the personal touch, I  
6 guess, that our teachers are providing and the  
7 dedication of them. Well, I'll give you my own  
8 example. My own son is in 2nd grade. He's been here  
9 three years. There's no reason for me to request a  
10 teacher or to say, "Miss Gross, here's who I want my  
11 son to be in." Because if I had to do that then why  
12 am I allowing that teacher to teach in there if I  
13 don't want my own son there? That's something you  
14 get, but I don't think that's what happened in  
15 schools I've been in in Pulaski County. I bet  
16 there's a weak one somewhere in there. Now all the  
17 teachers have strengths and weaknesses, but there's  
18 none -- there's not a teacher at that school today  
19 that I would not want my kids to have. I've got a  
20 7th grader there and 2nd grader there. That's  
21 something to -- you know -- just to come off the top  
22 of my head on a program that makes the world light up  
23 -- I mean, it's all about who's educating the kids  
24 and it's that touch of -- personal touch that they  
25 get. And there are excellent teachers in Pulaski

1 County; you know, I worked with them for years. I'm  
2 not trying to down them. But I'm just telling you  
3 when you come back to us it's all the way through K-  
4 12.

5 MS. PFEFFER: A follow-up. And I guess in -- I  
6 guess what I'm wrestling with in my mind is having a  
7 charter school -- and the things that Mr. Walter also  
8 added in, you know, that the charter school is to be  
9 providing improved student learning opportunities and  
10 improved opportunities for teachers. And I need you  
11 to address the parent opportunities there. So I  
12 guess for me trying to make a determination, you  
13 know, is it about that there's just -- this is just  
14 another option that's there but we're having -- if  
15 we're having a charter school there, you know, what's  
16 the reason and the rationale, you know, behind --

17 MR. MCGILL: I understand.

18 MS. PFEFFER: -- behind that? I guess that's  
19 what I'm trying to get my mind around, you know, what  
20 really is the reason to have this charter school  
21 there. And Dr. Guess may have answered your question  
22 in much the same way as far as -- you know -- I think  
23 -- and maybe I ought to ask Dr. Guess, you know. But  
24 most of the things that you mentioned, would he be  
25 able to show the same thing in the Pulaski County

1 Schools?

2 MR. MCGILL: I could also say this too, one of  
3 them is that teachers have authority in the  
4 curriculum or something -- it was one of those in  
5 that top six things. One of those, four years ago,  
6 three or four years ago the teachers came to the  
7 school board and said, "We want to do Investigations  
8 Math." And there was some concerns, you know,  
9 concerns with kind of the Common Core type stuff.  
10 But the board said yes to the teachers because it was  
11 -- they wanted to do it, they had the buy-in to it,  
12 and so they controlled that curriculum at that point;  
13 that, and then also like the afterschool tutoring. I  
14 mean, the teachers are definitely involved in the  
15 things that we're doing. That's it. Is there  
16 something else y'all want to add?

17 MS. GROSS: And I come from a traditional school  
18 background and I worked with a lot of teachers; I was  
19 a principal for five years. And we met once a week  
20 in a minutia type meeting where you talk about the  
21 bells ringing and there's going to be a fire drill  
22 and "please make sure your students are on time to  
23 lunch," those kinds of things, you know. And then  
24 when the time was over the union required they all  
25 got up and left whether I was done or they were done

1 in their learning. That doesn't happen in Academics  
2 Plus. And so when you're asked what's different,  
3 this is our leadership team. We're missing a couple;  
4 they had to stay back and make sure kids were safe.  
5 But we meet weekly, if not more often, and so there's  
6 that core leadership there. And teachers take on  
7 responsibility as well; you know, they're going out  
8 for professional development and bringing it in. And  
9 so when we have that one meeting where we're all  
10 together we don't talk about the bells and the fire  
11 drills; you know, we talk about the student-led  
12 conferencing; we talk about being a distinguished  
13 teacher and the TESS model; we talk about PARCC and  
14 resources. They do it. I'm at the back listening,  
15 learning with them, and they work very, very closely  
16 together. I never had that as a teacher where my  
17 grade level met together like that, that they were so  
18 tight. And I tell parents, "It's all about choice."  
19 The parents want their children here, and I know  
20 that, and so I work harder to make sure that everyone  
21 is getting what they need to learn. Teachers want to  
22 be there because they don't have to be there. Our  
23 teachers are quality, but they choose to work at  
24 Academics Plus. And if they don't have what we need  
25 in our program we have the choice to not have them

1           there. So I think it's all about choice in a lot of  
2           different ways. So I think the people are the  
3           difference.

4           MS. PFEFFER: Can I --

5           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Pfeffer.

6           MS. PFEFFER: May I ask Dr. Guess, if I could  
7           put him on the spot, I guess. So, Dr. Guess, kind of  
8           along this same -- you heard their responses as far  
9           as what's different about their school. And is there  
10          anything that you would want to add from a public  
11          school perspective?

12          DR. GUESS: Well, I think the public school is  
13          meeting expectations and standards that they've  
14          admitted they aren't meeting. This is the third  
15          year, I believe, that we've had -- we've met the  
16          expectations of the staff of the Standards regarding  
17          licensure. We don't have anyone that's violated  
18          those standards; our people are licensed and meet the  
19          expectations of the ADE. And to argue that  
20          communication is an innovation is not reasonable.  
21          Unfortunately, it's much like what Academics Plus is  
22          saying that what's normally expected is what is done  
23          and touted as something exceptional. It's not  
24          exceptional; it's a foundational issue. Those are  
25          things that we do in PCSSD, in the schools in

1           Maumelle and in the schools across the district --  
2           communication with parents, parent-teacher  
3           conferences, phone calls, connections through  
4           technology. This morning we Tweeted, Facebooked, and  
5           four or five other things that I'm not sure of  
6           regarding our day out of school. So I think we far  
7           exceed minimum expectations in communication. So if  
8           you argue that that's an innovative technique, we're  
9           way out front.

10           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions?

11           MR. MCGILL: Can I say --

12           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah.

13           MR. MCGILL: I do just want to make sure, you  
14           know -- I don't know all the reasons parents want  
15           their kids at our school, but we have 750 who have  
16           made the choice to do it and we have 465 that's  
17           making the choice to do it that aren't there yet. So  
18           that's 1200 parents in the community -- 1200 kids, so  
19           even double the parents that want their child to come  
20           to Academics Plus. And I don't know the reasons all  
21           of them do it; every one of them probably has a  
22           different reason. That's their reasons.

23           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Coffman.

24           MS. COFFMAN: I have several small questions,  
25           but my first one is for Ms. Gross. As the elementary

1 principal, are you comfortable with the waiver  
2 concerning the reimbursements for materials for  
3 teachers?

4 MS. GROSS: You know what, Ms. Coffman, we can  
5 have all the waivers in the world but we don't have  
6 to activate them. So I'm waiving -- I serve at the  
7 will of my superintendent. I also agree the culture  
8 is so important and I would want to discuss it more  
9 fully with him before implementing. But I do think  
10 -- they've never asked me for anything I haven't  
11 gotten them, my staff. I tell them, "You have not  
12 because you ask not." So, you know, I think our  
13 needs are definitely being met. The PTO is meeting  
14 their wants and desires, so I don't expect it to be  
15 an issue.

16 MS. COFFMAN: Mr. McGill, would you give me a  
17 quick little history lesson on Academics Plus? You  
18 received your charter in 2001?

19 MR. MCGILL: Right, 2001. And then there's  
20 probably others that can do better --

21 MS. COFFMAN: And what was the length of that  
22 charter?

23 MR. MCGILL: I think it was -- was it five  
24 years? Three years. And then there was another one  
25 -- well, you get up here; y'all know it better than I

1 do.

2 MR. SWEERE: Well, the original charter was  
3 granted in 2000; the school opened in 2001. Just so  
4 you know, I'm Jess Sweere; I'm the board chairman.  
5 So it was granted again --

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: If you would, sir, just  
7 come up to the microphone. Were you sworn in  
8 earlier?

9 MR. SWEERE: No, sir.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Let's go ahead and  
11 swear you in.

12 MR. MCGILL: The reason -- I started in 2010, so  
13 he can probably just give a better --

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: If you would, raise your  
15 right hand. Do you swear or affirm to tell the  
16 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

17 MR. SWEERE: Yes, I do.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. If you would,  
19 identify yourself.

20 MR. SWEERE: My name is Jess Sweere; I'm the  
21 board chairman at Academics Plus. I'm a parent there  
22 and have been involved since -- I believe I sent my  
23 oldest child there in 2005, maybe it was 2004 and  
24 '05, and served on -- I started on the board the  
25 following year and have been the board chair for

1 about six years, I think. So I lived in Maumelle  
2 when the school opened; that was my first year in  
3 town. And then, you know, so I wasn't aware of when  
4 their first renewal was, but I believe it would've  
5 been after three years because the original law  
6 provided us three years on a charter renewal. Then  
7 we had our second charter renewal around 2006-2007, I  
8 believe that was, and then that was I think for  
9 another three years. And then, so it was around the  
10 2009-2010 area and that's -- and this is all off the  
11 top of my head, you know. So we received another  
12 extension and then the last one we got was three  
13 years, which is the one that I remember the most  
14 because we'd asked for an extended charter and we got  
15 three years and we were required to provide an annual  
16 report. And, you know, I think to your original  
17 question, you want a history lesson. This school has  
18 a very checkered history. I don't think there's  
19 anybody who would deny that. The school made a lot  
20 of mistakes when it was initially started. Back then  
21 Maumelle had one high -- one elementary school. So  
22 after 6th grade your children went to Oak Grove for 7  
23 through 12, which has since been condemned, you know,  
24 and was a, you know, very poor facility then.  
25 Maumelle, you know, the city really started this

1 school from the city government, which was the board  
2 of directors back then, and it was started with 6th  
3 and 7th grades so parents would have an option with  
4 their kids coming out of Pine Forest, which Mr.  
5 McGill worked at, which was and still is an excellent  
6 school. After that, you know, the school was  
7 designed to grow and there was administrative  
8 problems. The original administrator was terminated  
9 and then a couple of administrators made some  
10 improvements, you know, over the years. And then,  
11 you know, when we brought Mr. McGill in -- I guess it  
12 was about four years?

13 MR. MCGILL: 2010.

14 MR. SWEERE: Yeah. So five years, six years  
15 now, the school has been on a really positive  
16 trajectory ever since then. So, you know, it may  
17 often get pointed out, "Well, your school has been  
18 around longer than anybody else." Well, what the  
19 school is now and what it was in 2001 is two  
20 completely different things. I mean, you know, we  
21 didn't have an elementary and so everybody we had was  
22 transient. And so when we added the elementary  
23 grades I think the school developed a tremendous  
24 amount of more stability and what you see now is  
25 those original elementary kids moving along and the

1 school is much better off. You know, we're taking in  
2 100 kindergartners; we're graduating approximately 30  
3 seniors, so the school has made a tremendous  
4 transition. And so I don't know if that exactly  
5 answers your question, but what we've seen from a  
6 charter perspective is from three years ago when we  
7 got our charter renewed for three years and an annual  
8 report, I think that was the appropriate thing. At  
9 the time we were all disappointed; we wanted a cap  
10 increase and we wanted to move faster. But what it  
11 did was -- we didn't receive a cap increase and I  
12 think that was probably the best thing that ever  
13 happened to the school was we were able to  
14 concentrate more on the students we had rather than  
15 "we're going to get more so we can get more money and  
16 do more things." It allowed us to concentrate on  
17 where is it we really need to be and what can we be  
18 if we focus on where we are now. And then, you know,  
19 you gave us the cap increase last year and we've been  
20 able to absorb that because we're on a much more  
21 solid foundation. You can see the leadership team we  
22 have here. And, you know, the transition of the  
23 school over the last -- well, in the five years since  
24 Mr. McGill took over has just been fantastic. And so  
25 we're in a position now and we're ready to take on

1 another hundred students. You know, I think we  
2 learned our lesson; we don't want to, you know, try  
3 to tackle the world and say, "Okay, let's be twice  
4 our size." I think we learned our lesson that we  
5 need to grow strategically, carefully, and from the  
6 lower grades up. And so, you know, the students come  
7 in, they learn our culture, and our school develops  
8 that culture over time.

9 So I don't know if that really answers your  
10 question but that's really what's going on there.  
11 And, you know, it's really been exciting to see,  
12 especially in the last five years, the transition  
13 we've made from really a school that Pulaski County  
14 Special School District had a lot of great arguments  
15 to get rid of. I don't think those are legitimate  
16 anymore. You know, we are a school that performs  
17 well and provides a legitimate choice for the parents  
18 in our community and that's -- to me, that's what  
19 it's really all about. Competition breeds  
20 performance and that's what our school is doing.  
21 When it was founded there wasn't a Maumelle High  
22 School, there wasn't a Maumelle Middle School. If it  
23 wasn't there I don't think there would -- there would  
24 be no schools. It's provided a better product for  
25 all the public school students in our community.

1 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you. I appreciate that. A  
2 couple more questions quickly. You mentioned your  
3 building project. When will that be complete so that  
4 students could move in?

5 MR. MCGILL: We'll begin this spring. We're  
6 trying to get interest rates locked in right now, and  
7 then we will open it in August of 2016. So we'll  
8 construct all next year and then open it the  
9 following year.

10 MS. COFFMAN: And my final question is based on  
11 that excellent history lesson. You had this  
12 incremental review process, three-year, three-year,  
13 whatever the renewal has been. Why now ask for 20,  
14 and what would 20 do for your organization?

15 MR. MCGILL: Well, every renewal is very time-  
16 consuming, I'll be honest with you; very time-  
17 consuming for our leadership. It's not just come up  
18 here; I mean, this is months of preparation. And  
19 from what I understand, at any point you see issues  
20 you can bring us in and discuss those at that point,  
21 so the renewal process is not necessary for us to be  
22 productive. The law does provide for 20 years.  
23 Currently, right now, we have a 25-year bond issue.  
24 So the bondholders would like to see us have longer  
25 renewals to be more permanent. And that's another

1 thing -- really, three years ago, I mean, it scared  
2 people to say, "Will the school even be around?" And  
3 we had to get them over that because, well, we're at  
4 three years. Well, does a parent really commit to a  
5 school if there's a possibility of being shutdown in  
6 three years? Even though a charter school, the  
7 possibility is that you could shut us down next month  
8 -- I understand that -- if you find cause. So I  
9 think the mechanism is there for you to hold us  
10 accountable but also give us the years to make us  
11 look like we're a permanent school that people can be  
12 confident and committed to, and especially the  
13 bondholders who we had to -- we can't get those great  
14 rates that other school districts get because we have  
15 to go through a 501(c)(3) and some of our bonds are  
16 not guaranteed. So those bondholders are really  
17 looking at that and it really concerned ADVA [ps]  
18 last year when we've only got three years, because  
19 they had just financed our first building that we --  
20 for \$5 million. Well, that scared them, you know;  
21 "Well, are they going to be shutdown?" And I have to  
22 answer all these questions. So a 20-year would give  
23 confidence for us that the State is confident in us.  
24 And, you know, I understand that may be the first  
25 time you've given a 20-year, but please make it more

1 than three, you know, if a 20-year is not something  
2 that you're willing to give at this point and aren't  
3 comfortable with. But I think it's only right; we're  
4 doing well, we're doing good with kids -- why  
5 wouldn't we ask for 20? Why wouldn't we ask for what  
6 the law allows?

7 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I'm looking at the existing  
10 waivers that you have and I don't know -- I have two  
11 different page numbers, 31 and 54. I'm not sure  
12 which one it would apply to. Going through the list  
13 of the waivers that currently exist, my first  
14 question would be: have you exercised all of those  
15 waivers?

16 MR. MCGILL: School year dates, yes, we start  
17 usually the first week of August. Length of  
18 director's term, is that like superintendent would be  
19 a three-year contract? I think it is. So, no.  
20 Director eligibility has been used in the past, not  
21 at this point. Election by zone, we have school  
22 board elections; so all those, yes, we're using  
23 because we do the election through our parents. The  
24 grading scale, yes, our elementary does a higher  
25 grading scale. Qualified teachers in every

1 classroom, yes, we do HQT, not necessarily certified.  
2 Alternative learning, we do not do alternative  
3 learning. Personnel policies, all that goes with  
4 Teacher Fair Dismissal Act; there's several of them  
5 that go in with that. Certification, same thing.  
6 Teacher licensure, all of that is the same. Teacher  
7 salary fund, that no longer exists. Gifted and  
8 talented, we don't have a gifted and talented  
9 program. Library, we use the public library that's  
10 right across the street from us, so we don't have our  
11 own library. So that's just running down off the top  
12 of my head. You know, there might be one or two that  
13 may not be used right now but they've most likely  
14 been used in the past.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And I heard you talk  
16 earlier -- I think you emphasized many times I think  
17 what you consider to be keys to your success are  
18 personnel -- in particular, teachers and staffing.

19 MR. MCGILL: Right.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: And I know you have a lot of  
21 flexibility on staffing within this with licensure,  
22 Fair Dismissal Act, other things. What percent would  
23 you say of your staff are licensed for their  
24 positions?

25 MR. MCGILL: Okay. At the elementary level it's

1 100%.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

3 MR. MCGILL: Because honestly they're prevalent.  
4 You know, we have a lot of elementary teachers to  
5 choose from, so most -- we have hired a few that have  
6 not been certified a few years back, but they have  
7 gained their certification since then. We encourage  
8 them to do that. At this point it's 50% at the high  
9 school. Is that right? Fifty-percent at the high  
10 school. Some of our electives -- like medical, we  
11 have a nurse that teaches the medical classes, you  
12 know. A couple of the math teachers have math  
13 degrees but not certification in math. So 50% at the  
14 high school and 100% at the elementary, and you can  
15 kind of see the correlation; we're a Reward school at  
16 both, so --

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Why do you think that waiver  
18 helps kids?

19 MR. MCGILL: Well, I'm not sure we could find  
20 some of the teachers that we have, especially in  
21 math. If we -- about four years ago, our salary  
22 schedule was low compared to the other districts and  
23 we're actually caught up and ahead of Pulaski County  
24 at this point. But our salary schedule was low; our  
25 expectations were higher because we had to work more

1 days, had to work an hour after the students left.  
2 So the competition was they would go somewhere else.  
3 With that waiver we were able to hire some of the  
4 teachers that we needed and not just -- not through  
5 those -- they would've been not filled or we'd had to  
6 adjust our salary schedules to be able to do it. But  
7 if you look at the little sheet that I have with the  
8 bar graph on how much funding we have, we're spending  
9 about \$7300 a student; other districts are spending  
10 up to -- Little Rock jumped to \$14,000. So we  
11 definitely do not have the money to say we're going  
12 to raise these salaries up to compete; sometimes it's  
13 the culture that gets them there. And it's also  
14 these waivers that helps us find other people that  
15 may not actually be qualified or certified to teach  
16 in another district but they can work for us. And  
17 it's just like anybody, until you get them there you  
18 don't know if they're going to be a good teacher or  
19 not, whether they have a piece of paper saying  
20 they're certified. We've hired good ones, we've  
21 hired not-so-good ones; both ways, certified,  
22 noncertified. But we take action when we need to on  
23 those.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Also, I think it's kind of been  
25 brought up and discussed a little bit, part of the

1 point, if you would, of charter schools is to serve  
2 as an environment to explore new ideas, innovative  
3 ideas and share successful practices, not just -- not  
4 to be viewed as a competition to other schools. So  
5 of those existing waivers which one of those do you  
6 think, two or three or whatever, do you think is key  
7 that you feel allows for success?

8 MR. MCGILL: The number one is the Teacher Fair  
9 Dismissal. It's the number one. I mean, it just is.  
10 And that's not only for teachers, but it's also in  
11 the principal realm. Two years ago, I had to do  
12 something with a principal and I was able to do that.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Decker.

15 DR. DECKER: My questions were answered. Thank  
16 you.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Jones.

18 DR. JONES: Has your school day changed as far  
19 as time requirement?

20 MR. MCGILL: We don't go to 5:00 anymore; that  
21 -- I mean, that, from what I understand, did not work  
22 because, I mean, you had to have teachers --  
23 actually, you had to -- what are you going to do with  
24 them for the two hours that the teachers are over  
25 eight hours? So that was difficult. Our time now is

1 we do 390 minutes of instruction, while I understand  
2 traditional schools are 360 minutes. So we're 30  
3 minutes more than the traditional schools and we're  
4 also five days more than traditional schools. That's  
5 what we're doing. We've done that for the last three  
6 years.

7 DR. JONES: Was that an amendment? Was it  
8 shared with the ADE?

9 MR. MCGILL: Well, in the last couple of  
10 charters, actual charters, it was not in there that  
11 we would have the extended day. The 2012 does not  
12 mention the extended day, for that to be there.

13 DR. JONES: Okay. If the 120 clock hours for  
14 class waiver were granted, do you have a plan in  
15 place for -- procedures for how much time kids would  
16 spend in a class? Say, for example, I wanted to  
17 finish a class this weekend and I finished all the  
18 exercises, would I be able to do that?

19 MR. MCGILL: Are you talking about on the  
20 digital?

21 DR. JONES: Yes.

22 MS. WILLIS: They have access to it on the  
23 weekend, but we would take an analysis of the entire  
24 class and the curriculum. For instance, we did have  
25 students that worked ahead in class when they had

1 that scheduled digital class; they would say, "Oh,  
2 I'm done," and we would say, "Move forward." We  
3 would never, you know, allow a student to sit  
4 stagnant even. And if the student happened to finish  
5 a class faster than what we think, and after talking  
6 with the teacher of record, and they said, "No, I  
7 think the student needs to prove themselves worthy,  
8 have mastered the content," then we would look at it.  
9 We haven't had a student that finished faster than  
10 expected though as far as not taking their time to  
11 learn the content. If we did, we'd have to do that  
12 on a case-by-case basis. But a weekend or a semester  
13 class finished in two weeks, no. Now, of course,  
14 when you have summer school -- and we have multiple  
15 digital providers -- those classes are accelerated  
16 for the purpose of finishing at your own pace and  
17 there would be a test-out period. For instance, we  
18 did have one student who finished their summer school  
19 work in one week, so what we did is we created with  
20 the core teacher a semester exam, if you will, for  
21 that class based on the content. And we expected the  
22 student to perform at a certain grade in order to  
23 move on to the next level.

24 DR. JONES: Okay. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions from

1 Panel Members?

2 MS. PFEFFER: I do.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Pfeffer.

4 MS. PFEFFER: I just want to clarify that I  
5 understand the request for the enrollment cap. You  
6 are asking for an increase of 100 students per year  
7 for the next -- up to -- going up to 1300. Right?

8 MR. MCGILL: That's right, except last year was  
9 150. That's right.

10 MS. PFEFFER: 150. Okay.

11 MR. MCGILL: Yes.

12 MS. PFEFFER: And can I ask Dr. Guess to speak  
13 to the impact on Pulaski County in light of changes  
14 in the desegregation funding and the Jacksonville  
15 School District, if that were to be granted for them  
16 to have that kind of increase over the next five or  
17 six years?

18 DR. GUESS: Can we bring in lunch, because this  
19 may take awhile.

20 MS. PFEFFER: Well, the short version, I guess.

21 DR. GUESS: It would be a continued significant  
22 decline. We have 900 students in the M-to-M program,  
23 transfers between districts, and we expect all 900 of  
24 those students will go away at the end of the -- in  
25 two more years transportation will be gone, so we'll

1           lose those kids. The Jacksonville detachment is  
2           somewhere around 4,000 students, so a significant  
3           issue there. Now let me say that I -- you know -- as  
4           a school superintendent who's dealt with declining  
5           enrollment all of my 17 years, you have to constantly  
6           make adjustments. So declining enrollment to me is a  
7           matter of the job. But the quality of the  
8           opportunity is what I'm here about, and the quality  
9           of PCSSD's program. And the things that you've heard  
10          here today regarding licensure and curriculum and the  
11          inability to find teachers, we don't make those  
12          excuses; we provide kids with those opportunities in  
13          a classroom and in a building with licensed  
14          individuals, and we believe strongly that that's our  
15          obligation. We provide a competitive scale to pay  
16          our people with and we work diligently to attract  
17          people from across the area and in the state and even  
18          out-of-state. So that's really what I'm talking  
19          about. The enrollment decline will be a significant  
20          issue, certainly. It would be one that would be  
21          devastating to the schools in that area to lose that  
22          many additional kids.

23                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Other questions? Mr.  
24                   McGill, I had a question on transportation.

25                   MR. MCGILL: Okay.

1                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: There were some numbers  
2                   thrown out earlier about the 11 students or so. Is  
3                   it still current that y'all have one school bus and  
4                   is that -- what's your -- is there -- what's your  
5                   plan going forward with transportation? And then I  
6                   have a question for Ms. Clay.

7                   MR. MCGILL: Okay. Well, we have three school  
8                   buses actually. One is broken down now and we're  
9                   buying another one; we're just about to purchase  
10                  another one. It should be on the campus in the next  
11                  two weeks. One of them is used daily for  
12                  transportation, morning and afternoon, and the other  
13                  two are used for field trips, ball games, this kind  
14                  of stuff. And actually the one we bought last year  
15                  is handicap accessible with a lift, so we wanted to  
16                  make sure if we did ever have a handicap -- we don't  
17                  have one right now that needs a lift, but if we had  
18                  one we would be accessible. As far as the  
19                  transportation, I think that number is going to go  
20                  up. Because if you remember, we did at our lottery  
21                  last year March 1st and I don't know exactly what  
22                  happened with the lottery but we were advertising it  
23                  as if we get the cap increase then we'll provide  
24                  transportation. Well, now we're providing the  
25                  transportation. In the last three weeks just in my

1 office I've heard two parents come in and said they  
2 didn't know anything else about it, but they said, "I  
3 see an Academics Plus bus in my neighborhood; how do  
4 I get signed up on that bus?" They don't go to our  
5 school yet; they filled out an application. This is  
6 the first year. And you can say you're going to  
7 provide transportation all you want to but until you  
8 actually do it, which we have done it, people don't  
9 know it's there and believe it's there. But when  
10 they see that Academics Plus bus driving down the  
11 street, going through their neighborhood, that gets  
12 them to asking questions. We have more students that  
13 live in this area but these are the ones that wanted  
14 the transportation. I didn't care if it was one  
15 student; we were going to provide a bus for that one  
16 student every day, knowing that it's just going to  
17 continually grow. And that's another thing: most  
18 likely, I will have another bus in the budget for  
19 next year because I'd like to get into -- we live in  
20 a -- or we have our school -- a lot of apartment  
21 complexes are right there next to it, but there are  
22 other complexes I'd like to be able to go to, and I'd  
23 like to have 50 kids riding the bus. I'll get  
24 another bus, we'll get on there, and we're going to  
25 provide transportation. Now from what I understand,

1 Pulaski County, once deseg goes away and all the M-  
2 to-M -- he may correct me, whatever -- but Maumelle  
3 High School and Maumelle Middle School is going to  
4 serve students in Maumelle and Oak Grove. That's  
5 their figure pattern; that's where they're going to  
6 provide transportation. The only place that we don't  
7 provide transportation that they will is Maumelle,  
8 because we will provide transportation in the  
9 outlying area all the way from Crystal Hill and  
10 around 365 through Palarm and Oak Grove. That's what  
11 we're committed to and we're going to do that. So  
12 that's the students that we want to make sure they  
13 come -- have the availability to us. So we're  
14 providing -- will be providing transportation to the  
15 same students Pulaski County will once deseg goes  
16 away, except for the City of Maumelle. I mean, that  
17 would be many buses I'd have to buy to do that.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Ms. Clay, this  
19 is -- I just need some clarification on the -- there  
20 was a stipulation -- I vaguely remember that -- last  
21 year about transportation. Is that something that we  
22 can even do as far as put a stipulation on a charter  
23 to provide transportation? I guess what I'm asking  
24 is -- I know that's kind of been the understanding,  
25 but if Mr. McGill said, "Hey, I ain't providing

1 transportation," is there much that we can -- that we  
2 have to say about that? I know that he's committed  
3 to. I'm just asking what our ground rules are as far  
4 as --

5 MS. CLAY: Well, if he's committed -- if they've  
6 committed to do X, like provide transportation, then  
7 that will become part of their charter. So the  
8 charter will include testimony here today, in  
9 addition to whatever is written in the packet before  
10 you. So, yes, it's something that you can hold them  
11 to. The thing that you probably couldn't hold them  
12 to or -- and I don't know if it was them or a  
13 different charter in the past, but specific  
14 percentages of enrollment. Because they're an open-  
15 enrollment charter school, they've got to accept who  
16 comes to them with the stipulation of the lottery.  
17 So those get a little bit trickier. But as far as if  
18 he's agreeing to provide transportation, then that  
19 becomes part of the actual charter which is a  
20 contract between you and the charter school. Does  
21 that answer your question?

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes. I just wanted to be  
23 careful about the -- you know -- I know we have this  
24 one but not to my knowledge do we have any other kind  
25 of requirements or charter agreements with

1 transportation being included in it. And so I just  
2 wanted to make sure that we were okay with doing that  
3 here and there.

4 MS. CLAY: Yes. That's, you know, basically  
5 just any other part of the charter, how their  
6 education program is going to look.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you.

8 MR. MCGILL: Can I clarify then?

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, sir.

10 MR. MCGILL: It sounds like I'm making a verbal  
11 contract. No, I'm good with that. So Palarm -- I  
12 said Crystal Hill; we don't actually serve right now  
13 Crystal Hill. But across the interstate from Crystal  
14 Hill, from there up to Settlement Road, is Oak Grove,  
15 Marche', Morgan and Palarm. Those are the  
16 communities I'm talking about on the 365 corridor, up  
17 to the county line, up to Faulkner County line.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Longitude, latitude,  
19 are you going to give those?

20 MR. MCGILL: Yeah, and all that.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Nobody can  
22 accuse us of not being thorough. So I will -- I  
23 don't see any more questions from Panel Members, so I  
24 will entertain a motion.

25 DR. JONES: I'll take a stab at it. I will make

1 a motion for a five-year renewal with the removal of  
2 two waivers that they have asked for, and that would  
3 be the 120 clock hours at this time and the student-  
4 teacher ratio. This motion also includes the  
5 increased cap that they have asked for.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Let me -- Ms. Clay, now we  
7 can't motion to amend their application; that's  
8 something that they're going to have to agree to  
9 rescind or modify those waivers. Is that correct?

10 MS. CLAY: They would have to agree to those  
11 stipulations if they want to move forward with their  
12 renewal.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Otherwise, it's just a  
14 straight up or down approve the application as-is or  
15 deny?

16 MS. CLAY: That's correct.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you. Do you  
18 want to pull that motion?

19 MS. CLAY: I think the motion is appropriate.  
20 You may just want to have discussion with Academics  
21 Plus whether they're agreeable to those stipulations  
22 in the motion.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

24 MS. CLAY: Does that make sense?

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

1 MS. CLAY: Okay.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. McGill, do you want to  
3 comment on those?

4 MR. MCGILL: I appreciate a lot of that. That's  
5 good. I would really like to have a 10-year if we  
6 could. I don't know if that would be -- with the  
7 performance that our students are doing. That would  
8 go a long way with our constituents. And just  
9 discussing -- I'm not saying no to what you're  
10 saying; I'd like to just discuss it, if we can  
11 discuss.

12 DR. JONES: I do have --

13 MR. MCGILL: I understand your concerns.

14 DR. JONES: I completely understand. I  
15 understand your request. My concern is that after  
16 high school level you have some Needs Improvement;  
17 it's not across the board achieving schools. And so  
18 that's my concern with giving the 10-year renewal.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So are you agreeable to  
20 pull the waivers that are --

21 MR. MCGILL: No. I'm fine with that. Okay.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So the motion is to  
23 approve the charter application with the cap  
24 enrollment for five years, with the removal --  
25 agreement of removal of the waivers of 120 clock

1 hours and -- what was the other one? Class size. So  
2 that is the motion. Is there a second?

3 DR. DECKER: Seconded.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and  
5 a second. Any discussion?

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I would entertain the  
7 thought -- and I don't know the proper way to go  
8 about this. But I believe that the hours, the 120  
9 hour waiver, I think that's a good waiver and I would  
10 entertain that motion to I guess leave that one back  
11 in and possibly look at it separate and look at a  
12 possible cap on the class size.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. I believe we've got  
14 a motion and a second. Now would this be -- Ms.  
15 Clay, we need some help with this one. Would this be  
16 considered if he was going to make a substitute  
17 motion -- or I don't -- I guess he's already agreed  
18 to pull that waiver.

19 MR. MCGILL: I can put it back in.

20 MS. CLAY: He just said he can put it back in.  
21 You can handle it one of two ways. You can either go  
22 ahead and vote on the motion that's already been  
23 seconded, or Dr. Jones could agree to amend her  
24 motion to reflect what Dr. Saunders had said. So  
25 that would be my suggestion, one of those two

1 options.

2 MR. MCGILL: And I would be good either way, so

3 --

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And just for clarification,  
5 the -- I know we had a discussion about the 120 clock  
6 hours. And what I thought I heard you say earlier  
7 was that it would be a commitment just for the  
8 digital classes and not the other classes --

9 MR. MCGILL: That's right.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- at this point.

11 MR. MCGILL: Yes, that's correct.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I don't know if that gives  
13 any clarity to some of that.

14 MS. PFEFFER: Well, can I make sure I understand  
15 it too, that it basically would just be if a student  
16 finished early they would continue a new course --

17 MR. MCGILL: Right.

18 MS. PFEFFER: -- or it would be evaluated to see  
19 if they really had mastered it. So it's not that  
20 they wouldn't be doing anything; they would actually  
21 have an opportunity to gain another credit. Am I  
22 correct in that?

23 MR. MCGILL: Right. They would go to the next  
24 course to get another credit. We just don't want to  
25 be out of standards compliance.

1           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Before we get all jumbled  
2 up, Dr. Jones, would you be agreeable to amend your  
3 motion to -- if he would ask for the waiver, just to  
4 include 120 clock hours for purposes of digital  
5 courses?

6           DR. JONES: I will amend the waiver [sic]. And  
7 it's really a student concern that this digital --  
8 the digital classes can quickly get out of hand and  
9 it can cause student harm. Because as a student they  
10 can work through a class, get it finished and retain  
11 nothing. And so I will amend the waiver with the  
12 understanding that the Charter Authorization be  
13 provided the information on who does not keep record  
14 of the student time spent in the class and they will  
15 check-up, follow-up with that and keep track of that.  
16 And should they have concerns it can be brought to  
17 the Board later. So, yes, I will amend the motion to  
18 include that.

19           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Pfeffer.

20           MS. PFEFFER: Dr. Saunders, you also -- did you  
21 have a -- in your recommendation or question on the  
22 motion, were you looking at the enrollment as well or  
23 was it just --

24           DR. SAUNDERS: Well, on the class size, I mean,  
25 I was trying to stay somewhat consistent. I think

1 I've heard consistent arguments from other entities  
2 for the waiver of class size that we've granted to  
3 others this year. And to kind of stay consistent  
4 with that, as mentioned there's, you know,  
5 legislation out there that does allow some  
6 flexibility. And so perhaps on this waiver I assume  
7 that this waiver is requesting for more flexibility  
8 than what's currently allowed and with the recent  
9 law, although I'm sure your application was filed  
10 prior to the law.

11 MR. MCGILL: Correct.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: And so is there a cap to the  
13 amount of flexibility on the class size that you're  
14 asking for?

15 MR. MCGILL: Five.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Five.

17 MR. MCGILL: Five students. Yes.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Five students. I'm okay with the  
19 flexibility of it being up to five, as long as  
20 there's a cap on the top of that, just me personally.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So, and that's up to  
22 you. We can take the motion as-is, vote it up or  
23 down, or you can agree to amend that.

24 DR. JONES: Take the motion as it is. I don't  
25 want to back off that amendment.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So you've heard the  
2 motion and a second by Mr. Decker. All in favor say  
3 "aye."

4 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: There was a chorus of  
5 ayes by Dr. Jones, Ms. Pfeffer, and Dr. Decker.)

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

7 DR. SAUNDERS: No.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Did you vote?

9 MS. COFFMAN: I haven't made up my mind yet. It  
10 was too fast. I'm going with "aye."

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we have four ayes  
12 and one nay, so the motion passes. Thank you, Mr.  
13 McGill.

14 MR. MCGILL: Can we have the reason for the nay,  
15 please?

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I believe -- is that -- do  
17 we have to give the reason for the nay?

18 MS. CLAY: You don't have to.

19 MR. MCGILL: Okay. I thought --

20 MS. CLAY: You only have to if it's denied. It  
21 might be helpful for the State Board because I know  
22 that that's something that they really then key in on  
23 when they're looking at whether or not to review,  
24 what the reasons were for that negative vote, but  
25 your rules don't require it. So if the "no" vote

1 doesn't want to, then you certainly don't have to.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: I'll be glad to speak to that.  
3 My "no" vote was not against Academics Plus, but I  
4 think it was for the -- I was looking more to allow  
5 the waiver on the class size and also I was  
6 interested in extending the amount of time. Because  
7 I know for financial documents and security the  
8 amount of time with the granted waiver does play into  
9 factor there. So that's what I was looking at.

10 MR. MCGILL: Thank you very much.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Okay. I've got  
12 12:06. Instead of taking a break, I think we  
13 probably just need to take lunch. We'll start back  
14 at 1:00. Thank you.

15 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:06 P.M. TO 1:05 P.M.)

16 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Panel Member Annette  
17 Barnes arrived for the afternoon session.)

18 A-7: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

19 RENEWAL: ARKANSAS ARTS ACADEMY

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Next is A-7, Arkansas Arts  
21 Academy.

22 MS. HOGUE: Yes. They received their initial  
23 charter in February 2001. At that time they were the  
24 Benton County Schools of the Arts and now they're  
25 here -- and they're a K-12 and are requesting a

1 renewal for 20 years. Ms. Mary Ley will be speaking  
2 for them and she will introduce the others too.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Those that are going to be  
4 speaking in favor of the application and those who  
5 would be speaking opposed, if you would, stand and  
6 raise your right hand to be sworn in. All right. Do  
7 you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
8 truth and nothing but the truth?

9 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. All right. You  
11 have 20 minutes. You may proceed.

12 MS. LEY: I'm Mary Ley; I'm the CEO of Arkansas  
13 Arts Academy, and I'm excited about introducing my  
14 team. This is Barb Padgett, our lead principal;  
15 Beverly White, our CFO; and Dr. Galen Havner, he is  
16 our advisor and mentor with the Walton Family  
17 Foundation and Crystal Bridges Museum of American  
18 Art.

19 So we've been so excited about what's going on  
20 in our school that we've been dying to come here and  
21 have an audience to share it with you today. You  
22 know, everybody across the country talks about their  
23 school and what they're doing. You better buckle up  
24 because we've been growing at a fast pace and we're  
25 really excited about the results. We are and have

1           become the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art  
2           partner school. And not anywhere else in the nation  
3           is a school with full partnership with a school and  
4           museum. Museums have schools that go to the museum  
5           and participate in programs but we are actually a  
6           true partner with a major national museum. It is  
7           raising our bar even higher than what the state of  
8           Arkansas will raise because when you're with a  
9           national museum that's the way our school has to  
10          perform also. So we are really excited about what  
11          has come.

12                        So what does it mean to be a Crystal Bridges  
13          Museum of American Art partnership school? So as you  
14          see, we actually integrate the art into our lessons  
15          to come up with real, rich lessons. So, for example,  
16          the painting you see here now is called "War News  
17          from Mexico." It was done I believe in 1840,  
18          something like that, and so when you look at that  
19          painting and you show it to an English class you will  
20          say to the students, "Shape is a really important  
21          element in art. What is the predominant shape of  
22          this painting?" And then kids do the student wave,  
23          and they'll say, "It's a square." "You're right,  
24          it's a square. So look inside the square. What do  
25          you see?" And you'll keep driving the instruction;

1           you'll keep driving and you'll finally get that it's  
2           Caucasian men. That's what the older kids will say;  
3           the younger kids will say "white men." And they'll  
4           be reading a newspaper and you'll get all those  
5           details. So all white men are in the square, yes.  
6           "Look outside the square and what do you see?" And  
7           they'll wave their hand but they'll look for a while.  
8           And you can't see on this picture, and I  
9           unfortunately can't see it on the slide, "Well,  
10          there's a woman there." She's to the right but you  
11          can't hardly see her. And they'll say, "Well, is she  
12          inside the square?" "No, no, no, she's outside the  
13          square." And, "Why couldn't we see her right away?"  
14          "Because she's in the shadows." So look again  
15          outside the square and then fortunately I think you  
16          can see it maybe in your handout; there's an African  
17          American family. "Are they inside the square?" "No,  
18          they are outside the square." And, "What color are  
19          the clothes of the American -- African American  
20          family?" "They are red, white and blue." "Well, how  
21          do you feel to be inside the square? How do you feel  
22          to be outside the square? That is your English  
23          prompt today, to write how you feel to be inside the  
24          square and how you feel to be outside the square." I  
25          created this PowerPoint sometime in January and then

1 two weeks ago a second grade class went to the museum  
2 on an African American History Month tour of art that  
3 influenced America and the black movement. And when  
4 you look at the transPARENT newspaper -- that's the  
5 museum newsletter we send home to parents every two  
6 weeks; you have a copy of that, it says transPARENT  
7 on it. If you look on the back page, you'll see a  
8 student there that happened to be on that tour and he  
9 was actually the only African American young man in  
10 that class. And when the group of students went on  
11 to the next piece of art he became missing. So our  
12 curriculum specialist went to look for him and he was  
13 back at this painting and he took that picture you'll  
14 see on that flipside of that handout. And when he  
15 went back over and said -- and he asked him, he said,  
16 "Why did you leave the group?" He goes, "I just  
17 needed to be closer to this painting." That's the  
18 kind of impact our partnership is having. You know,  
19 other English teachers when school starts are going  
20 to say, "What did you do this summer?" We're going  
21 to bring a piece of art and make the kids think more  
22 critically than they've ever thought before.

23 What else is it about a partnership school  
24 that's making our art school charter school unique is  
25 that we have two art curriculum specialists and they

1 make sure that every teacher has pacing guides and  
2 lessons that match our core curriculum, which in our  
3 state we're doing right now. And then they will take  
4 those lessons and then they will go to the museum and  
5 work with the art educators at the museum and come up  
6 with lessons that are complimentary to each lesson,  
7 each grade throughout the year. And then another  
8 thing we can do, on the next slide, that's been  
9 really powerful and something that we're really  
10 excited about is we have family night at Crystal  
11 Bridges; we had six the first semester. And we  
12 wanted those for multiple reasons, but the main  
13 reason we wanted them is to start the conversation.  
14 Because of technology -- click, click, click, click,  
15 click, like this -- because of fast food, because  
16 parents are working more hours to give everybody the  
17 technology they need, because of the fast pace we're  
18 living this life, the faster Mary talks, we need to  
19 stop and have conversation. And we feel like that's  
20 something that will add to our school, and it has by  
21 ways that you just can't even believe. So we've had  
22 over 566 family members come to these evenings at the  
23 museum. They're for our students and our parents  
24 only. And then we pick a particular gallery that we  
25 will do our study in; we meet in educational rooms

1 and we go up to the gallery and with five educators  
2 from Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art that are  
3 wandering through the gallery. And when they see a  
4 child and a parent studying a piece of art they'll  
5 walk over and tell them the story behind the art.  
6 For example, the new show that just was concluded,  
7 called A Study of Art Show, there was a painting of a  
8 bull that was all in black and white. And one of the  
9 kids was looking at that and the parent was looking  
10 at it; one of the educators went over there and said,  
11 "Did you know that that painting is actually smoke  
12 from a birthday candle? The parent had the painting  
13 upside-down and created it with smoke from a birthday  
14 candle." It makes kids think of what's possible.  
15 And do you think when the parents went home that  
16 child didn't think, "Hey, can you believe they made  
17 that bull out of smoke from a birthday candle?" So  
18 that's another amazing thing about our partnership.

19 What else are we beyond Crystal Bridges? We are  
20 a performing school and we -- oh, I forgot the slide,  
21 excuse me; I get excited. So we perform in dance, we  
22 perform in theater, we perform in guitar, we perform  
23 in multiple music venues, we are visual artists; our  
24 students perform. But we perform more than just  
25 through the arts; we perform academically. And just

1 to give you more facts than the facts that we're  
2 giving you, I gave you a handout today from the  
3 University of Arkansas who's put some points together  
4 to show you how that we keep progressing above the  
5 state level year-for-year, according to our GPA. But  
6 if you look under Academic Performance, some of the  
7 things we're proud of is in 2014 algebra 1 our 8th  
8 and 9th grade students were seventh in the state and  
9 11th grade literacy was second in the state. We have  
10 a 90% graduation -- 95% graduation rate. Our average  
11 scholarship last year was \$39,000 each, 238 school  
12 districts; end-of-course biology second highest  
13 scores in the state of Arkansas, and we can go on and  
14 on and you saw the data when we sent in our packet.  
15 So let's go to the next slide -- oops, next slide,  
16 I'm sorry -- and that is a typical senior student at  
17 our school. They have -- like this particular  
18 student's name is Matt; so he has been in the dance  
19 company three years, the theater company for three  
20 years, he has an ACT score of 28, a GPA -- by the  
21 way, that was based on more like high advanced  
22 classes -- of 3.81; he's been -- it's not on there  
23 but he's also been accepted at Penn State, Arkansas  
24 Governor's School. But we also have had a student  
25 this year interviewed by Harvard; we have a student

1 with the highest scholarship you can get, a \$60,000,  
2 who is going to Vassar; we have a student going to  
3 Purdue; and we have another major scholarship at  
4 George Washington University, and they're just now  
5 starting to come in. And so we're very proud of the  
6 achievement of all of our students. If you get a kid  
7 that can perform on stage and you can get a kid that  
8 can perform academically, that kid is going to change  
9 the world because they're not afraid. When you've  
10 got a kid that can perform night after night in front  
11 of 500 kids and parents and the community members  
12 you've got a kid that will change the world. They  
13 learn not to be -- they're fearless. Two weeks ago,  
14 we had a Woodstock concert; it was amazing. We had a  
15 young student out there and he was playing Jimi  
16 Hendrix and he had learned to take the guitar and do  
17 the windmill, and he got so excited he really did a  
18 lot of windmill. We had a lot of energy coming off  
19 that stage. But, you know, that's the kind of  
20 excitement in all the community. We had two women  
21 that were there that had actually been to Woodstock  
22 and they couldn't quit cheering loud enough. It was  
23 crazy cool.

24 So what I'd like to say is our mascot is the  
25 penguin and we like to make cartoons of him in his

1 tuxedo. We have formal concerts beyond Woodstock in  
2 our tuxedos and our black and white, but we teach our  
3 kids how to think in color. This is a global world,  
4 a small world, and you need an arts school where kids  
5 think in color, where they think about the hues and  
6 intensity and the brightness and that everybody needs  
7 to think different and the world is no longer black  
8 and white or gray; we need kids to think in color.  
9 Arkansas is becoming an economically successful art  
10 state. In just the area we live alone, running \$45  
11 million worth of jobs; two years ago with bringing  
12 the museum in in our little area \$45 million in jobs  
13 in the economic division. We need an arts school.

14 So let me see where I'm at. I'm sorry. Okay.  
15 We also -- our school values diversity. I wouldn't  
16 hire a K-8 principal this year until I found a  
17 diverse candidate, and she's been amazing. We hired  
18 a diverse instruction facilitator -- I couldn't think  
19 of that for a minute -- and she's amazing. We  
20 recruited her all the way from California, but  
21 luckily her husband works in the area too so we kind  
22 of benefitted from him. But we grabbed her as soon  
23 as we could. We network with University of Arkansas.  
24 I work closely with the Walmart global office of  
25 diversity. I take advantage of the businesses and

1 the corporations in our community to elevate what  
2 we're doing. And I go to all their functions to  
3 bring their speakers in and get to know them and get  
4 advantages for our students that way. We purposely  
5 have art shows at the gallery, like I said, that  
6 honors different cultures. We personally select  
7 music and theater productions and dance styles and  
8 visual art lessons that represent multiple cultures.  
9 And at both campuses, with bilingual staff to answer  
10 all of our needs and encourage more Hispanic  
11 population to come to our school, we have done a  
12 pretty good job this year. Last year, we were 79.3%  
13 white; already this year we're at 75.9% white, and as  
14 we reach out to other schools we're going to continue  
15 that. We also reach out to Ozark Transport for  
16 pickup and with designing pickup. We have a new  
17 school bus which we're designing pickup points with  
18 that. And we have a new bike trail that reaches all  
19 the trails in the community and we have 60 new bikes  
20 to teach kids how to ride bikes so we have more kids  
21 biking to school when they can. So we're trying to  
22 do all we can to bring up our diversity.

23 It's also a school that welcomes -- it's a  
24 school that welcomes all students. We are proud of  
25 our special ed. program. We have a special ed.

1 director who is very sensitive about IEP's and  
2 working -- making sure discipline is fair, that it  
3 aligns with any special ed. child using their IEP to  
4 drive the correct discipline. We make sure that they  
5 have the means to succeed. We have -- I don't think  
6 too many schools can say that out of 9 seniors with  
7 special education we have 5 that will be attending  
8 college. We're very proud of that statistic.

9 So, furthermore, we also value wellness. I'm a  
10 big fitness freak and I don't think I'd be up here  
11 today if I didn't learn to run years and years ago.  
12 I learned to run from kids challenging me to do it,  
13 and I say as long as I can outrun them I'm going to  
14 stay in education. So I think after a long stressful  
15 day you need to find a way to detox and build and  
16 have new ideas. If you want kids to be successful,  
17 we need to make kids healthy. All the best ideas I  
18 have come in my head through working out and I want  
19 the kids to have that same kind of power. So we have  
20 a new wellness course that we just raised the money  
21 for and we also have a new competitive archery team.  
22 Both of those sports, mountain biking and archery,  
23 take focus and we want to teach our kids focus.

24 We also value financial accountability. I have  
25 the greatest, the best financial CFO you can ask for.

1 She's hard on me; man, her favorite word is no, no,  
2 and no. But I like it because that way I know that  
3 she's protecting me and protecting who we are. We  
4 had a perfect financial audit this year, a perfect  
5 one, and we are very proud of that. We have a  
6 million dollars always in our account; actually, she  
7 has a little more than a million right now. And  
8 then, furthermore, I don't ever like money to be an  
9 obstacle. I don't want to be a charter school that  
10 whines because we're a poor charter school. I never  
11 want to say we're poor to anything, because I think  
12 we're great at everything and I won't let that -- I  
13 don't like people that are whiners. So we raise our  
14 own money when we need things and up to this point  
15 we've raised \$1,047,294 this year to run the  
16 programming that we want to run. And then we also  
17 have -- Dr. Havner has been great at putting a new  
18 board -- we have a new 501(c)(3) foundation that we  
19 just started and in the last couple of weeks we've  
20 raised \$11,000 for that because we want to learn to  
21 be self-sufficient.

22 So where are we now? Why do I have the nerve to  
23 ask you for 20 years? Because for one thing Crystal  
24 Bridges isn't going away. We're sharing educational  
25 department resources and they are going to ask more

1 of me than you've ever asked of me. We are going to  
2 continue to be top-notch because that's the agreement  
3 that we have with them. Secondly, just like the  
4 other gentleman said, we have an old church in the  
5 town in Rogers. Rogers is getting ready to go  
6 through a major transformation just like the town of  
7 Bentonville, and we want to be a part of that  
8 transformation. And I'm ready to raise funding to  
9 have our school like a cool creative art school and  
10 it's a lot easier to get investors when you have a  
11 longer term commitment. And also the state asks you  
12 to fill out a form saying what are you doing to hire  
13 more diverse and highly qualified staff, and it helps  
14 when they don't have to -- when I have four great big  
15 wonderful districts around me and they have the  
16 advantage of that I need to have equal advantage to  
17 get the highly qualified for our school. And I'm  
18 going to be philosophical with you; everybody says I  
19 shouldn't be philosophical with you; everybody says  
20 data, data, data, data. Well, we have data but, you  
21 know what, successful educators are philosophical and  
22 I'm going to be that way with you for a minute  
23 because, you know, being on a three-year renewal --  
24 we're the second oldest charter in the state with  
25 amazing opportunities right now -- makes you feel

1           like you're kind of in a foster situation. It means  
2           you've given us a roof overhead and you're feeding us  
3           but you're not quite saying we're the Arkansas  
4           Department of Education school. You're not quite  
5           saying that. I want to be adopted. I want to be  
6           adopted. There's a reason we are Arkansas Arts  
7           Academy; we're proud of our state. We have promised  
8           Crystal Bridges we're going to be a nationally  
9           recognized state in two years. Look at what we've  
10          done in six months; we are going to do it. And if we  
11          want to have that pride and dignity then we need to  
12          be adopted just like any other person would want to  
13          be. You have the power to take away anything you do,  
14          have the power to let us keep going at this national  
15          high aggressive level, 'cause we're going to do it.  
16          Okay. We're ready for questions.

17                 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You have about three  
18          minutes. Anybody else here to speak for the charter?  
19          Anybody here to speak against the charter  
20          application? Not seeing any, we'll turn it over to  
21          questions from Panel Members. Dr. Decker.

22                 DR. DECKER: Thank you for the presentation,  
23          certainly appreciate the enthusiasm and your  
24          application, what's in it. Speaking of the data --

25                 MS. LEY: Yeah.

1 DR. DECKER: -- when we look at the reports you  
2 note that for both literacy and mathematics it needs  
3 improvement and several of the groups, they are quite  
4 close to meeting AMO's. But nonetheless, I'd like to  
5 just hear from you --

6 MS. LEY: Sure.

7 DR. DECKER: -- the specific strategies for math  
8 and literacy and what you're planning to do to  
9 address those areas.

10 MS. LEY: And we are doing it, partly by having  
11 good curriculum coordinators but we also brought in  
12 AIMS. We're really proud of the state AIMS program,  
13 the Arkansas division for math and science. They are  
14 working with our teachers every Friday in a block of  
15 time, math teachers. We are doing more vertical  
16 alignment. And within -- we have -- we also have an  
17 A-Plus school that has given us some intense  
18 professional development this year. But I'm going to  
19 tell you that the major decision we need to make --  
20 because I've been with this district now six months  
21 and high school is there; the high school is grand  
22 slam, like wow. It's like going to -- I don't know,  
23 you probably aren't old enough, but when I was a kid  
24 I was into the Fame school. Well, it's the Fame  
25 school. It's just like when our kids are going to

1 produce a play you feel like you've been in New York  
2 or you've been on that TV show. It's an "ahhh"  
3 feeling. You go to our K-8, it's a little -- it's  
4 not there, but it will be there. And I'm going to  
5 tell you how we're getting there. I just made -- we  
6 have a great new principal, but she's new -- and when  
7 you're new -- and I mean new to being a principal.  
8 She's brought the love and the passion, but sometimes  
9 you need more than that to -- for one thing, it  
10 lacked expectations and those teachers have been  
11 given expectations. It lacked not only just  
12 philosophical expectations; it lacked structure,  
13 "your lesson plans are due here, your grades need to  
14 be posted here, your vertical alignment needs to be  
15 met on your planning period," and we have that now.  
16 And the way we have it is I made -- I don't know if I  
17 made her -- well, maybe made her -- but I brought in  
18 -- this was -- Dr. Havner helped me with this; as we  
19 -- because we have to watch our funding too and you  
20 just can't hire lots of people to fix everything, but  
21 we didn't need to because we have now retitled her to  
22 the lead -- and she was the principal of the high  
23 school; she's now the lead principal. Because a lot  
24 of this happened in the history of Arkansas Arts  
25 Academy; it used to be two different institutions and

1           then gelled as one. Well, they became one but they  
2           hadn't gelled as one. So we had this great  
3           discipline in one and we didn't have it in the other.  
4           And now with her leading the way it has the same  
5           discipline, only better, because now the teachers are  
6           actually meeting between the two campuses and  
7           aligning those vertical alignments and expectations.  
8           Also, we got the blessing and the funding to buy each  
9           student an iPad. And the importance of the iPad is  
10          that we couldn't afford new textbooks and we were two  
11          or three years behind on certain textbooks because  
12          that's a pretty expensive thing. So now with the  
13          gift of the iPad-per-child we're also making sure  
14          that we have the most current textbooks loaded in on  
15          the iPads and that gets us up to the needs we met  
16          through our curriculum. And, Barb, do you want to  
17          add to all these things?

18                 MS. PADGETT: I'm Barb Padgett and I'm the very  
19          proud principal of -- lead principal of K-12. Some  
20          things I have to say to you -- I've waited since 2011  
21          to say this to some of you -- and you're new, so you  
22          don't know me and you don't know my phone calls about  
23          AYP and how can you say a high school is Needs  
24          Improvement math, Ladies and Gentlemen, when we're  
25          seventh highest scores in the state in algebra and

1 tenth highest in the state in geometry? How can you  
2 say we're a Needs Improvement school? Because our  
3 test scores were so high to begin with that we shot  
4 ourselves in the foot every year. Had I known what I  
5 know now things might have been done differently.  
6 But we are Needs Improvement in math and part of the  
7 Needs Improvement will -- the work that we'll be  
8 doing starts in kindergarten. We had raised Common  
9 Core standards before we had to. But we also have  
10 not had vertical alignment; we have not had  
11 kindergarten teachers talking to 9th grade teachers  
12 about math and expectations; we also did not have a  
13 common curriculum that spanned the K through 8  
14 school. So with improvements in curriculum, with the  
15 iPads -- technology is wonderful if you put it to the  
16 right use. And what we're doing is using the iPads  
17 right now in our core classes for skills enrichment  
18 and also putting -- beginning to put textbooks. But  
19 we have a ways to go as far as our scores in the K-8,  
20 but I assure you -- I had the luxury when I came here  
21 to start -- by the way, just so you know, I am the  
22 oldest charter school director still employed as a  
23 charter school director. I've been doing this nine  
24 years, so I have been before you many times, some not  
25 so good times and some very good times, like now.

1 But we know we have a ways to go academically with  
2 our test scores and we're going to put those  
3 procedures in place so that we can be not only  
4 performing academically high in the high school but  
5 we can go down to the K-8 so that the type of  
6 students -- we're getting a 9-12; it's dependent on  
7 what K-8 does. So we have a lot of plans to restore  
8 confidence in our curriculum K-8 and also to move  
9 forward as we figure out what it is we're trying to  
10 hit as far as state standards. And we look forward  
11 to knowing what those state standards will be at some  
12 point.

13 MS. LEY: And one other thing I'd like to say is  
14 we receive funding to travel and next week Barb and I  
15 are actually flying to the Denver Art School, which  
16 is considered one of the best in the nation, and then  
17 we're going to Santa Fe and seeing the New Mexico  
18 Charter Arts School; it's considered to be one of the  
19 best in the nation. And then Dr. Havner and another  
20 curriculum specialist is going to New Orleans to see  
21 their best schools. So we're going to get the ideas  
22 from the other successful schools to pattern in our  
23 own institution. So we're not missing a beat. We've  
24 never had a curriculum specialist before; that's  
25 changing things. And, you know, we do have the

1 education team at Crystal Bridges that's helping us.  
2 We have -- oh, we have more partners. We have --  
3 University of Arkansas Architect and Design is a  
4 partner; we're doing great things with it. And we  
5 also have Trike Theater and we also have Walton Arts  
6 Center. And so, but AIMS has been amazing on our  
7 math and science this year. That's been really  
8 great.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Jones.

10 DR. JONES: I will concur with Ms. Padgett about  
11 the high school performance because you have the  
12 secondary piece of data. The ACT scores, they're  
13 increasing. Certainly, you're living to your vision  
14 with the arts center and all other programs. The  
15 concern is, as you pointed out, the elementary test  
16 scores. And it's not just the scores themselves or  
17 just the label of Needs Improvement. I just looked  
18 at the surrounding first six elementary schools in  
19 Springdale -- first seven, I compared them. Six of  
20 those elementaries are superior math and all seven  
21 are superior in literacy, and some by large margins.  
22 Tell me specifically what you're doing in your  
23 elementary schools to improve scores, to improve  
24 performance, reading and math specifically?

25 MS. PADGETT: I wish you would ask me more about

1 the high school. Let me tell you one thing about the  
2 high school though. We have tested every student on  
3 SAT in the 11th grade, every student, including SPED  
4 students. I had the luxury of hiring my own staff  
5 when I came here. The staff that we have at the K-8  
6 has not had consistent leadership. They have not had  
7 a curriculum specialist; they have not had a nerd who  
8 looks at data with breakfast. I mean, it's -- I took  
9 my masters comps in statistics; I mean, you know,  
10 that takes a real nerd to do things like that. But  
11 they haven't had some of the -- they haven't had a  
12 cheerleader. They have had six different principals  
13 in their tenure. The high school has put up with me  
14 for almost nine years, nine years beginning next  
15 month. So expectations, high expectations, lesson  
16 plans being turned in, someone who's actually looking  
17 at the lesson plans and saying, "You're off-base  
18 here, here and here; we need to ramp it up in this  
19 area and this area," especially in math. We  
20 unfortunately -- I wish I could tell you we had had a  
21 consistent cohesive math program; we have not.  
22 Everybody has been doing their own thing at K-8 for  
23 the last five years and that has been a leadership  
24 issue. We have good teachers; they need direction.  
25 So not only are we using AIMS in the high school,

1 we're also using AIMS in the middle school areas.  
2 Our teachers are doing CGI and starting to -- for a  
3 long time we didn't do any professional development  
4 because professional development for us costs a lot  
5 of money, I'll be honest. So CGI -- I wish that I  
6 could be more forthcoming about what we're going to  
7 do. I've only been doing this for two weeks, so I  
8 really don't know the data. I know that we're not  
9 performing and I know that we have to make some  
10 immediate changes and those changes may also involve  
11 personnel changes.

12 MS. LEY: And to talk a little bit more about  
13 that, we have -- really using the TESS and really for  
14 the first time making them write personal growth  
15 plans -- for some, they didn't even do that last  
16 year; they're writing them this year. And we are  
17 evaluating them by three evaluators this year, each  
18 teacher. And to be honest with you, there will be  
19 changes in the spring.

20 DR. JONES: Can you tell me what plan you have  
21 for students that are behind in reading or math at  
22 the early grades, not high school?

23 MS. PADGETT: Absolutely. Kids that we identify  
24 as behind are -- that's one of the things we're  
25 learning with our parents and things like that. We

1 have to have ways that parents can help these  
2 children at home also. School is not just, you know,  
3 8:00 to 3:00. So we are instituting ways to help  
4 parents help the kids at home, although we do have a  
5 lot of parents that think that that's primarily our  
6 job. There will be curriculum changes; I don't know  
7 what those are and I don't know for sure which way  
8 we're going with curriculum right now. We have  
9 started team meetings every week. We have started  
10 vertical -- well, we were supposed to start vertical  
11 alignment on Monday; we had a professional  
12 development day. So I don't know. I will be  
13 perfectly honest, I don't know which way I'm going  
14 but I know that I'm going to get there. I'm not the  
15 most popular person on campus right now because I  
16 have high expectations, although some people welcome  
17 it. Some people welcome it, but we've got a whole  
18 culture to change. As far as specifics --

19 MS. LEY: We have made changes in January and  
20 already -- in some staffing, and already it's been a  
21 huge, huge change in those three areas. So we're in  
22 a mode to study what's going on there and then we're  
23 in a mode to make the changes that are needed. And  
24 we do kind of know -- well, we do know that change is  
25 needed but I don't think right now -- well, we're

1 going to ask you to trust us because I don't think  
2 it's something I can just share openly at this point.  
3 But we are going to make some major transitions this  
4 year.

5 MS. PADGETT: I have been out of elementary  
6 school since -- for about 10 years, so I've got a lot  
7 of re-learning to do.

8 MS. LEY: But the commonsense is there.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Barnes, do you have a  
10 question?

11 MS. BARNES: It's pretty much along the same  
12 lines. When Dr. Decker asked the question I was just  
13 going to wait to see what conversation was going to  
14 occur regarding the elementary school. I am one of  
15 the probably only people, maybe a few people, who is  
16 very familiar with the school, the inception of it; I  
17 was here when the school was formed. I did the first  
18 monitoring of the school, so I applaud you very much  
19 with the direction that you have been going. I had  
20 already taken a look and noticed that there was a  
21 declining trend at the elementary school with regards  
22 to math and literacy performance, so I am greatly  
23 concerned since it is the foundation pieces. I hear  
24 you sharing a lot of things and I understand the  
25 dilemma that you have with respect to speaking to us,

1 but I have not heard anything specific that is going  
2 to help me continue with the 20-year request, not  
3 having the elementary administration here to speak to  
4 it, and understanding that you've already identified  
5 a large turnover a number of years. The alignment  
6 piece bothers me a bit, you know, that there has not  
7 been any real work to take a look at where we are  
8 here at the high school -- because the performance is  
9 -- it speaks well for itself -- and then back-  
10 tracking that down to see where the gaps are. So I  
11 just needed to verbalize that because I am fully  
12 aware of your school and everything that's been  
13 happening and the changes that have been made and the  
14 areas that you've worked very hard to correct. So I  
15 do appreciate that you are driven to do that.

16 MS. LEY: Well, it will happen. And even our  
17 library needs to be stronger. I mean, it's just not  
18 one thing; it's a -- there's been -- and, honestly, I  
19 don't know what happened because I wasn't there. But  
20 in the last two or three years it just seems like the  
21 staff there on a whole learned to be -- like on a  
22 scale from 1 to 10 they were satisfied with being  
23 average. And when you're satisfied with being  
24 average sometimes then it makes you perform below  
25 average. And there just wasn't -- you know -- they

1 don't need a canned program, like we're bringing this  
2 in to teach English, we're bringing in this to teach  
3 math. It doesn't need to be a fancy canned thing we  
4 buy; it needs to be a -- it's a business, and there  
5 wasn't any business like "when you get to work be  
6 sure to do bell-to-bell instruction, be sure you have  
7 your plans in on Friday, be sure you have two grades  
8 posted per week." Nobody was doing any of that. And  
9 so even -- there was no even great art programming  
10 because -- I'm passion about the arts, as you can  
11 already see, and when I first -- the day I started  
12 there, there wasn't a sink for the art teacher. And  
13 I'm like, "How could she teach art without a sink?"  
14 So the first thing I did was get her a sink. You  
15 know, it was like it was just a school that was built  
16 with a charter that wasn't living its vision, and now  
17 we have sinks and art supplies and world drumming and  
18 a new theater program and a partnership with Trike to  
19 have summer theater there and spring break theater  
20 there. So it's like we're really giving it new  
21 birth. It's not just -- it's not a little of this  
22 and a little of that; it's a complete change of  
23 making commonsense leadership, business expectations.  
24 And some of the teachers are hungry for it and are  
25 keeping it going and they'll be elevated and excited

1 and say, "All right." And some will have to choose  
2 something else. So it's really -- we're running --  
3 we have new business owners; there's a new sheriff in  
4 town, and that's what we're taking care of.

5 MS. PADGETT: And just to address Ms. Barnes  
6 again, because I do know you have a history with us.  
7 These are not new ideas that I haven't put forward  
8 the last five years to try to do -- to require the  
9 excellence at the K-8 that we required at the high  
10 school. So it wasn't a new idea; it fell on deaf  
11 ears. But with good, new leadership and energy we  
12 are going to excel at a higher level than we have  
13 before and we will make the high school even better,  
14 K-8.

15 DR. HAVNER: I think you're concerned about some  
16 of the elementary initiatives that will take place.  
17 I was elementary principal for --

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Excuse me.

19 DR. HAVNER: Galen Havner.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Were you sworn in  
21 initially?

22 DR. HAVNER: Yes.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Thank  
24 you, sir.

25 DR. HAVNER: I was an elementary principal for

1           37 years, so I did have some experience and part of  
2           what I'm to do is to advise them. I think what --  
3           the advice I've been giving Barb and the others is  
4           kind of going back to the basics. They have to get  
5           their curriculum lined up; we've all talked about  
6           that. One of the advantages is we now have iPads.  
7           One of the disadvantages at that school was they did  
8           not have a lot of material and we will overcome that  
9           through a lot of technology. They will have the up-  
10          to-date resources they need because they'll be able  
11          to get them through technology. We will use some  
12          tricks that we used in Central Park when I was there,  
13          and the trick is that when I look at you and I look  
14          at you and I look at you as a teacher our whole team  
15          could tell you within a point or two what your test  
16          scores were on your last assessment, where the  
17          remediation needed to take place, where we needed to  
18          let you go further. You cannot get achievement out  
19          of kids until you know where each individual kid is.  
20          They're not a group, they're not a clump; they are  
21          individuals. You individually have to raise the  
22          scores and that can be done very easily. A lot of it  
23          is just training teachers on how to do that and we're  
24          going to provide that. And a lot of it also is -- I  
25          was HR director the last three years in Bentonville

1 and my whole thing there was the right people in the  
2 right place at the right time, and that's what we  
3 have to get to. Barb has the right people in the  
4 right place. If she could pay them better and they  
5 knew they were going to be there forever, they would  
6 be there forever. They are going to stay. We have  
7 to get that in the K-8 and we're working towards it.  
8 We know we have the availability of qualified people;  
9 they're out there. We now have I think the  
10 credibility to attract them and we need the  
11 sustainability to keep them. But we do have a plan.  
12 A lot of it is get the people to know what they're  
13 doing, doing it, and getting each kid raised  
14 individually.

15 MS. LEY: If I -- can I answer one more thing?  
16 It goes back to the 20 years. When we have this  
17 great partnership and the great people like Dr.  
18 Havner helping us -- you know -- he's a Blue Ribbon  
19 principal; he's got out back to lead us away -- you  
20 know -- lead us in the right direction. The 20 years  
21 says that we're on our way, that we are doing it,  
22 that we are a national level school, we're getting  
23 there. And if we keep getting the little renewal  
24 pockets -- and I don't mind giving you a report every  
25 year, I don't mind that; I'll give you one every six

1 months where we're improving. It's just we need  
2 that.

3 MS. PADGETT: One of the things I want to  
4 address is data again. My high school teachers think  
5 that that's mostly all I think about. And for the  
6 most part you don't want to know necessarily all the  
7 good things that we've done maybe artistically, but  
8 you want to see results academically. One of the  
9 things that we have instituted at the high school is  
10 we desegregate data on every student. We're doing  
11 that in the elementary now. We're using NWEA MAP  
12 testing. We are going in-depth now. You know, I  
13 think the teachers just thought all they had to do  
14 was go in and give a test and get the data and go  
15 from there. But they're being taught things like  
16 data desegregation. Some of these teachers don't  
17 even know what that means, what the term means.  
18 We're also using value-added assessments because  
19 those teachers that are forthcoming and want so much  
20 for their students and want them to perform  
21 academically, you know, sometimes feel really bad  
22 when they get test scores and they're not what they  
23 think they should be. So we're teaching them now  
24 also about value-added assessment and how to use --  
25 we've got resources that I would have given anything

1 for 15 years ago when I began as an administrator.  
2 We've got the reports; we've got the data. We just  
3 had not spent enough time K-8 on how to use that  
4 data, what we can do with that data, what that data  
5 will teach us, what components of math we're missing,  
6 what we're missing -- you know -- maybe we're not  
7 teaching Roman numerals because everybody thinks  
8 everybody else is doing it. So with data  
9 desegregation, with vertical alignment, with looking  
10 at new curriculum, with doing enrichment with iPads,  
11 in addition to the rote practice that you get from  
12 math IXL, using IXL again, Study Island -- we're  
13 using technology but it's technology that we haven't  
14 spent enough time letting our teachers now why we're  
15 doing it and how we're going to do it and how we're  
16 going to use the data. So a lot of what you -- I  
17 think what I want you to know is we have the data, we  
18 have the programs; we just haven't known how to use  
19 it, and that's what I'm working on primarily right  
20 now with the teachers at the K-8.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Starting on your  
23 application, on the new waivers requested, I'd like  
24 to go through each one of these --

25 MS. LEY: Sure.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: -- and specifically would like to  
2 know how that would affect student achievement. And  
3 now I want to begin with number one, and I think I'll  
4 have some clarification on number one as well, but  
5 I'll just turn that over to you.

6 MS. LEY: So with the digital instructional  
7 materials -- that's the one you're reading to.  
8 Right?

9 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm looking -- mine says Planned  
10 Instructional Day.

11 MS. LEY: Section 10, with increasing digital  
12 instructional materials and devices for students,  
13 yes.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

15 MS. LEY: Okay. We have received a grant for  
16 some digital learning and one thing it's more  
17 important at the high school than any level for that,  
18 and the reason why is -- and it's pretty much like  
19 you already went through with the other schools  
20 before me today. But we have students that come in  
21 sometimes their junior year and they need one more  
22 credit, like in -- they might have one year of French  
23 and we only have Spanish, so they need a second year  
24 in French to go to college and that gives them a  
25 chance to take another digital class. And we would

1 do it just like they were saying earlier where if we  
2 had -- it would be put in their schedule during the  
3 day to get the different classes that we can't offer  
4 sometimes that they need to finish their graduation  
5 requirements.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: So if I'm understanding that  
7 correctly, you're not asking for a waiver from the  
8 planned instructional day, but rather from the  
9 Carnegie unit? Or am I misunderstanding that?

10 MS. PADGETT: We are asking for a waiver from  
11 the planned instructional day, much the same as  
12 Academics Plus.

13 MS. LEY: I'm sorry. I thought that was the  
14 same thing.

15 MS. PADGETT: But as the high school principal I  
16 can tell you that I would be glad to step down on  
17 this waiver because my kids will be doing their  
18 digital learning and instruction within the eight-  
19 period block schedule at the high school. However,  
20 we do have the issue that Academics Plus brought up  
21 about the fact that some kids complete these classes  
22 at a higher -- I mean, faster than others. So that's  
23 the issue with the seat time.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So let me back-up. I need  
25 some clarification. Are you asking for less than six

1 hours a day of instructional time?

2 MS. PADGETT: No, we are not. As a matter of  
3 fact, we have more than that. We are not asking for  
4 that.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So you will have a minimum  
6 of six hours per day of instructional time?

7 MS. PADGETT: We have -- yes, we have three now  
8 at the high school.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think the concern -- Ms.  
10 Clay, if you could, what we're I think grappling with  
11 is that -- is this waiver the actual waiver that they  
12 need or do they -- I know there are some other  
13 waivers in addition to that to be able to accomplish  
14 what they're trying to do.

15 MS. CLAY: From what they've just said today --  
16 okay, let me just start first -- they did ask for a  
17 waiver of the planned instructional day which is the  
18 six hours, and which we said, "If you're going to ask  
19 for that, then you also need the mandatory attendance  
20 requirements waived as well." What they've said  
21 today is that they do not want a waiver of the  
22 planned instructional day; they just want a waiver of  
23 the clock hours. So if that's the case, it's not  
24 like they're rescinding waiver number one on your  
25 waiver sheet and just looking at waiver number two

1 which is the clock hours, which is similar to what  
2 Academics Plus brought to you earlier today.  
3 Sometimes they go hand-in-hand just depending on how  
4 the school is structuring it, but they don't always  
5 have to.

6 MS. PADGETT: Correct. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Ley, does that --

8 MS. LEY: Yes.

9 MS. PADGETT: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Not Clay, but Ley.

11 MS. PADGETT: That's exactly --

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So will you be agreeable to  
13 pulling waiver request one in reference to the --

14 MS. PADGETT: Please.

15 MS. LEY: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- planned instructional  
17 day? Now the question on waiver two, my  
18 understanding that this waiver too would just be for  
19 digital courses --

20 MS. LEY: Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- only?

22 MS. LEY: Yes. Only.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

24 MS. LEY: For sure. We don't want it for  
25 anything else but digital learning.

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Thank you. Dr.  
2 Saunders?

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Could you --

4 MS. LEY: On the third one?

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. Yeah. Go down to number  
6 three on the oral communication, please.

7 MS. LEY: Well, we just feel like we can do the  
8 oral communication with our English language courses  
9 simultaneously. We don't feel like we need two  
10 separate courses. Those mesh well together.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. How does that benefit the  
12 student?

13 MS. LEY: Well, it just gives them another spot  
14 to take an additional credit, another math course or  
15 another more higher AP course or something like that.  
16 We feel like that's a primary course that can be done  
17 well in that course, and that gives them something to  
18 take more difficult later.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Barnes, let me clarify.  
21 Is that going to need to go through the process of  
22 being an embedded course?

23 MS. BARNES: Well, actually, I was wondering if  
24 they even needed to request the waiver and instead  
25 address it through the embedded courses that have

1 already been approved.

2 MS. LEY: That's fine with us.

3 MS. BARNES: I mean, based on --

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Jones.

5 MS. BARNES: -- what you're saying, that's what  
6 I was wondering.

7 DR. JONES: We are recommending that you go  
8 through -- you don't need a waiver.

9 MS. LEY: Okay.

10 DR. JONES: Go through the embedded process  
11 because that's the only way for us to insure that the  
12 student has a correct transcript with both courses.  
13 Should they move off and it not be done correctly,  
14 the other school may never record World Comp or  
15 English Language Arts. So you need to go just  
16 through embedded course approval that's available to  
17 all schools.

18 MS. LEY: We're more than happy to do that.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So are you agreeable to  
20 pull the waiver request for oral communication and  
21 then also go through the embedded process?

22 MS. LEY: Yes. We're really happy with all the  
23 waivers we've already had. We just need one to work  
24 on new digital learning, the digital courses.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Other questions?

1 Dr. Saunders.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. If I could have you look on  
3 Section 4, Test Data, of your application --

4 MS. LEY: What page?

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Look at page 12 and 33.

6 MS. LEY: Okay. I'm on page 12 now.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: I have two different page  
8 numbers; that's why I said 12 and 33, so --

9 MS. LEY: Okay.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: But it starts off with the  
11 heading of Section 4, Test Data. And looking at the  
12 comparisons between you and Rogers, and we brought  
13 this up earlier, in many years of existence, you  
14 know, of the charter school it does not appear just  
15 looking at this data that it's outperforming the  
16 local district in any way with the waivers that have  
17 been granted. And I'm looking through all the  
18 different categories on here and you can find high  
19 points, you can find some low points. So, I mean,  
20 there's kind of a mix. But I think overall it would  
21 be fair to say that it's not outperforming. I just  
22 wanted you to address that, if you would?

23 MS. LEY: Well, we don't disagree. It's kind of  
24 what we've been addressing with the K-8 situation.

25 And to be honest with you, right prior to the testing

1 of the school last year the principal actually walked  
2 out on the school; we didn't have a principal in that  
3 school. So, and then the superintendent was on his  
4 way out. So I think it's hard to -- there was some  
5 pain there caused by some administration dysfunction.  
6 So if your principal walks out on your staff in --  
7 what was it, January?

8 MS. WHITE: November.

9 MS. LEY: November. And I think those were  
10 separate from that, not from the waivers.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: And if I'm looking at this  
12 correctly, this is showing from 2011 to 2013.

13 MS. PADGETT: We concur with what you're saying  
14 that the scores are not where they need to be.  
15 Neither one of us have had -- they're not where they  
16 need to be.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

18 MS. PADGETT: And it will be up to us to insure  
19 that they are from this point on. I could go back  
20 and give you a litany of reasons but I don't feel  
21 comfortable with doing that. So we recognize that  
22 the scores are not where they need to be and we are  
23 addressing it.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Let me do a follow-up in  
25 that same section while we're right there. If you

1           could, just look at page 15 concerning graduation  
2           rates. And, I mean, it looks to me like you have had  
3           a substantial increase in graduation rates, not just  
4           all students but also within -- with disadvantaged  
5           students. What did you do?

6                   MS. PADGETT: A lot of things. For one thing, I  
7           stopped putting -- now I'm being honest -- foreign  
8           exchange students in the 12th grade. They go into  
9           12th grade anymore because they did not graduate and  
10          that sometimes can affect your graduation rates, or  
11          putting them in the 9th grade. Actually, putting  
12          them in the 9th grade, when they came to our school,  
13          and then they would leave. But that's not really  
14          what it is. What it is is we have done professional  
15          development on the professional development on  
16          retention of students, and each student at our school  
17          has an advisor and they start with them when they're  
18          freshmen and they follow all the way through. So  
19          knowing the kids, knowing their expectations, knowing  
20          our expectations for them. And just -- I went to  
21          some houses and I brought them back to school and  
22          it's the relationship; it's the relationship between  
23          the adults in their lives and the kids. They want  
24          more than anything else to keep from disappointing me  
25          and my staff, so by keeping up with them, by advising

1           them on a daily basis, by talking about -- I check  
2           absentees every day -- every day. So if a student is  
3           absent more than a couple of days in a row I'm going  
4           to know why and where. We've had to be creative with  
5           creative scheduling for kids to help them get  
6           through. You know, sometimes they dig a hole for  
7           themselves and it's hard for them to come out. We  
8           require 27 credits for graduation, which is more than  
9           any of the other high schools in the area. So we  
10          have had to be creative with scheduling to make sure  
11          that they're successful. They sometimes leave if  
12          they don't feel that someone cares and there's not  
13          some measure of accountability -- and believe me, at  
14          our school they're accountable. So that, and  
15          learning where to put different students when they  
16          enter our school now. And learning actually the  
17          state regs for graduation rates was a big help too,  
18          I'll admit.

19                 DR. SAUNDERS: Well, those are very good scores.  
20                 I just want to commend you on that.

21                 MS. LEY: Thank you.

22                 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Other questions from Panel  
23                 Members? Ms. Pfeffer.

24                 MS. PFEFFER: Along the lines of the student  
25                 retention rate, I noticed that from your data here

1           that your African American students are more likely  
2           to leave the charter than your other students. And  
3           it looks like, you know, the greatest percentage they  
4           go back to the traditional public school. So do you  
5           -- as those students leave do you have any  
6           information or data on, you know, why they're leaving  
7           and you have, you know, essentially more students  
8           leaving and, you know, what are some things that  
9           maybe they're not getting and the reason why they  
10          leave?

11                   MS. LEY: Well, sometimes they leave in junior  
12                   high because of sports and that's why we're bringing  
13                   in the mountain biking and the -- we'll have the  
14                   first high school professional mountain biking team  
15                   next year. And we didn't have anything in middle  
16                   school to attract students that like to be active and  
17                   busy. And we have great sporting programs in  
18                   Bentonville, so it's hard to compete with those  
19                   sometimes.

20                   MS. PFEFFER: So they're more likely to leave in  
21                   that middle school transition than when they're in  
22                   the high school grades?

23                   MS. LEY: Correct. Once they're in the high  
24                   school we've done pretty well with keeping everybody,  
25                   but junior high is our tough challenge.

1 MS. PFEFFER: And can I ask one more question?  
2 I notice on your original waivers one of them was the  
3 waiver from teacher licensure. But it seems like in  
4 your most recent school report card 100% of your  
5 teachers are completely certified or licensed?

6 MS. LEY: No, that's not true, especially in the  
7 elementary but all the core teachers are.

8 MS. PADGETT: The core teachers are; the others  
9 are -- my art teacher is in dance, guitar, and  
10 theater are highly qualified but they are not  
11 licensed.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And -- okay. So that was  
13 from the 2012-13 performance report, so -- but your  
14 core academic teachers are all licensed?

15 MS. PADGETT: Yes.

16 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

17 MS. PADGETT: With the exception of one NTL  
18 right now, which is provisional but --

19 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. All right. And just as a  
20 side note, those teachers may want to look at a  
21 technical certificate. That would be something that  
22 they may want to do that would give them --

23 MS. PADGETT: Right. Both our theater and our  
24 dance program are career ed., so technical  
25 certification is what we're working toward right now

1 because we've got two new teachers. We did have the  
2 technical certifications before this.

3 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions? Ms.  
5 Coffman.

6 MS. COFFMAN: Your charter was approved in 2001.  
7 Can you kind of give me a timeline of the renewals?  
8 Have they been three-year renewals each time?

9 MS. LEY: I believe so. Isn't that correct?

10 MS. PADGETT: Yes. They have been three years  
11 each time, beginning with -- in 2007, we opened the  
12 high school up under a different charter. So we came  
13 back in 2009-10 and started the process of merging  
14 both schools. So since that time we've had three  
15 years. Yes.

16 MS. COFFMAN: And I did want to commend you on  
17 your arts wraparound program. It sounds super  
18 exciting.

19 MS. LEY: It's great. And it will bring up  
20 scores too when you start getting kids to think like  
21 that. When you get -- you start empowering the  
22 students to feel like they're that important, that  
23 they are that -- that they belong to that museum,  
24 that's pretty powerful. We do science things on the  
25 trails. They have a new distance learning program

1 coming out; our students get to be the first to use  
2 it. That's pretty exciting. So, you know, just to  
3 get them to feel like they are part of -- they were  
4 used as a documentary the other day and the new  
5 Arkansas arts teacher was on and they felt -- you  
6 know -- and to have the arts really going again --  
7 you know -- the people we hired in January are  
8 theater and choir teachers, and get them to -- you  
9 know -- the performance has something to do with  
10 academic excellence, and they weren't performing and  
11 now they're performing again. So that's another way  
12 we're bringing it up.

13 MS. COFFMAN: So it sounds to me like you really  
14 have a plan --

15 MS. LEY: Yes, we have plans.

16 MS. COFFMAN: -- for the arts wraparound. Math  
17 and literacy excite me just as much as the arts do.

18 MS. LEY: It does us too.

19 MS. COFFMAN: So I'm interested in do you have a  
20 written plan for improving your math and literacy  
21 performance?

22 MS. LEY: Well, we are writing it now. But  
23 AIMS, that's why AIMS has been coming every Friday to  
24 not only -- they are helping us write it, they are  
25 helping us have the professional development we need,

1 and they're helping us to decide what materials to  
2 buy for next year. Because like right now we have  
3 one math teacher with one book and another math  
4 teacher with another book. They're helping us choose  
5 the curriculum. So we have them there just to write  
6 that plan, to help us develop it. And then with  
7 literacy one of our new curriculum arts specialists  
8 is also the literacy teacher that was second in the  
9 state last year and he's meeting with each teacher  
10 right now in the K-8 to see what they're doing and  
11 what they've done, and then we're writing that plan  
12 and we'll have it written by the end of the year for  
13 next year. We're in a mode right now where we're  
14 trying to make everything great this year but we know  
15 we won't get it there till next year when we unroll  
16 it.

17 MS. COFFMAN: That is the value of a written  
18 plan.

19 MS. LEY: We could not have gotten them -- we  
20 are very written plan people. We write the  
21 objectives, we write the outcomes, we write the  
22 outputs. We would not have gotten the partnership  
23 with Crystal Bridges without a well written plan. We  
24 would have not gotten the million dollars or \$800,000  
25 from the Walton Family without a well written plan

1           that has specific outcomes and outputs. And I would  
2           not have gotten this job without a well written plan  
3           to get it. So I left a job that actually paid better  
4           and was in a bigger district because I believe in  
5           this vision and I believe in what this school can do  
6           and I think Arkansas is ready for it. Dr. Havner was  
7           even involved with an art school in Little Rock and  
8           we believe the state needs this school. So none of  
9           this would be happening -- we can't be working with  
10          the caliber of people we are asking to invest or do  
11          anything without a plan.

12                   MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

13                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

14                   DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. In looking at the original  
15          waivers for the charter, have all of these been  
16          exercised? I know that you have not been there very  
17          long, so --

18                   MS. LEY: No. That was asked earlier. Do you  
19          want to go ahead and say that? She thought they've  
20          all been --

21                   DR. SAUNDERS: My question, you know, really is  
22          leaning towards are they all needed? Do we need to  
23          clean that up at this point? Are they essential?

24                   MS. PADGETT: School days we're using -- we use  
25          grading scale; the exemption we have not used because

1 we have used traditional grading scales; highly  
2 qualified teachers, we are; we do not have the  
3 alternative learning environment; we do use the  
4 waiver from duty-free lunch; written personnel  
5 policy, salary schedule, we do use that but we modify  
6 it because we do have a personnel policy committee  
7 made up of teachers; written grievance procedure,  
8 certification, the rest of them we have used except  
9 for -- and I didn't really realize this was in here  
10 for today, school discipline act, corporal  
11 punishment; we have a step discipline program but we  
12 do not use that extensively. But the rest of them we  
13 do except for -- but the teacher salary fund, that  
14 one I don't know now.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. What about the grading  
16 scale that you referenced, the second one? Did you  
17 say that you do not use that?

18 MS. PADGETT: We use a -- at the elementary we  
19 do. We use that but we don't at the high school.  
20 I'm sorry. Sometimes --

21 DR. SAUNDERS: That's okay.

22 MS. PADGETT: -- I talk in high schoolese and I  
23 apologize for that, and I'm learning.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: No, that's quite all right. Of  
25 those, do you think with your experience there --

1           you've been there 9 years? Is that what you said,  
2           correct?

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

4                   DR. SAUNDERS: All right. Which of those are  
5           the most effective?

6                   MS. PADGETT: If you're asking me in the  
7           position I'm in right now, probably the most  
8           effective is going to be the waiver from Teacher Fair  
9           Dismissal Act.

10                  DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

11                  CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Walter.

12                  MR. WALTER: Thank you. I just wanted to  
13           briefly address Dr. Saunders, if I may, on a couple  
14           of them that Ms. Padgett talked about: the student  
15           discipline act and the personnel policies. I know  
16           one of the big concerns on discipline has  
17           traditionally been with the authorizer is there a  
18           process in place. If the charter school has a waiver  
19           from the requirements from state law, is there a  
20           solid discipline plan in place alternatively that  
21           provides due process and provides appeals all the way  
22           up the system to the Board. And it's my  
23           understanding --

24                  MS. PADGETT: Yes.

25                  MR. WALTER: -- that's what Arkansas Arts

1 Academy has. So the waiver here I would say is kind  
2 of in form only. It certainly meets the mandates of  
3 the state requirement and perhaps exceeds; it's just  
4 perhaps not in that form. The same thing with  
5 personnel policies to go along with an at-will type  
6 employment system; they do have their own version so-  
7 to-speak but it may -- it's probably not exactly to  
8 the letter of what is contained in state law. So  
9 it's my opinion that's why they have and would like  
10 the Panel agrees to continue with those just for  
11 those specific purposes.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I have a follow-up. You  
14 were talking about the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act  
15 possibly being the most effective. How often would  
16 you say that's been used? How frequent? If you  
17 could, put a number to it.

18 MS. PADGETT: Two times.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: A year?

20 MS. PADGETT: No.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Oh, two times over your course of  
22 9 years?

23 MS. PADGETT: (Nodding head up and down.)

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And on that -- on this --  
25 I know you referenced earlier that you have a waiver

1 on the teacher evaluations and I believe someone  
2 referenced TESS. Correct?

3 MS. PADGETT: We've been using TESS --

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

5 MS. PADGETT: -- for the last -- well, at the  
6 high school level since it came out. But we are not  
7 using -- I mean, we use TESS and are continuing to do  
8 so.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. That's all I have.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions from  
11 Panel Members? Okay. No further questions, I will  
12 entertain a motion.

13 MS. COFFMAN: I make a motion that we renew the  
14 charter with the changes that were made on the  
15 amendments for three years.

16 DR. JONES: I'll second that motion.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. You've heard the  
18 motion to renew the charter application for three  
19 years with the waivers that were amended during the  
20 meeting and we have a second. Any discussion?

21 MS. PFEFFER: I guess my -- I guess, you know, I  
22 question the three years. Are you -- I know there  
23 was concern -- there's a little bit of concern about  
24 the elementary and the plan, you know, and they've  
25 acknowledged that they're in the process, especially

1 at the elementary level developing a plan. So I  
2 guess I was just curious as to the three years rather  
3 than do a five-year would be my question.

4 MS. COFFMAN: I mean, I'd be fine with making it  
5 one year except for, you know, you need to give them  
6 enough time to make change. But I just don't feel  
7 confident without a written plan for a very long  
8 application process -- you know, for that process to  
9 be much longer. If I felt more confident -- even  
10 though their scores are high, but the turnover, the  
11 changes, I think they could come back in three years  
12 and show us really dramatic results and then ask for,  
13 you know, 10 or 20 years at that time and we could  
14 make a totally different decision. But I feel good  
15 about the arts but I just need to see a plan.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm okay. I'm comfortable with  
17 three years; however, I think I would like to see  
18 something possibly in the fall, a report, a written  
19 plan coming back after they have staffing at the  
20 elementary and district-wide on what they're going to  
21 do and how they're going to do it.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do you have a timeline in  
23 mind with that?

24 DR. SAUNDERS: One of our fall meetings. I  
25 would do it probably -- we don't meet in September,

1 do we? October?

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: October would be our first  
3 meeting. Is that right, Ms. Clay?

4 MS. CLAY: I believe so.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm okay with that. It gives  
6 them a chance to get into the school year without  
7 rushing a plan just to have a plan to say you have  
8 one; I'd rather have something that's meaningful and  
9 effective.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Mr. Decker. Dr. Decker.

11 DR. DECKER: Assuming this is the route that it  
12 goes, at that follow-up report would they then have a  
13 chance to request a longer extension or would it  
14 still be in two years they would be in front of us  
15 again?

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, if they were to  
17 come back and give a report that's not in the same  
18 timeframe as amendments. I guess it could be. But  
19 is that a possibility?

20 MS. CLAY: So you're asking if they came back  
21 and gave a report if then you all could grant them a  
22 different time period for the charter?

23 DR. DECKER: Well, I'll give some background on  
24 my request, my question. There's been several  
25 statements made concerning the sustainability,

1 continuity, being able to recruit and retain and then  
2 also seek investors for it. And just looking at  
3 decisions of this panel I would have entertained a  
4 potentially longer renewal than what was proposed to  
5 it. But if there's that opportunity for the group to  
6 request an extension in the future, I would be more  
7 than amenable to the proposal.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, you may have to  
9 help me with this because I was not a Roberts Rules  
10 of Order person. But what I'm hearing is there may  
11 be some potential for a substitute motion. Can you  
12 walk us through that process if there were to be one?

13 MS. CLAY: I wish I was a Roberts Rules of Order  
14 person too. A substitute motion can just take the  
15 place of the original motion and then you'll just  
16 need a second on the substitute and vote on that.  
17 Now we're not talking about -- just so we're clear  
18 because this comes on the heels -- as Dr. Decker  
19 said, we're not talking about a substitute motion at  
20 a subsequent meeting. Correct? Because that --

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: What I was potentially  
22 hearing is maybe a substitute motion for a longer  
23 timeframe.

24 MS. CLAY: At today's meeting?

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

1 MS. CLAY: Okay. So, yes. You can do a  
2 substitute motion or the original person who made the  
3 motion can modify their motion.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And that would -- if that  
5 was motioned and seconded and then a vote was taken,  
6 that would basically supersede the original motion?

7 MS. CLAY: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: That's how I kind of  
9 understand that.

10 MS. CLAY: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Okay. Any more  
12 discussion?

13 DR. JONES: Yes. I support the original motion  
14 because when we come back and have a report, which is  
15 a reasonable request, you won't have any type of TESS  
16 data to support that the actions put in place are  
17 effective. A three-year time period is a reasonable  
18 time to allow for changes and assessment, but right  
19 now a renewal beyond that period is saying that we  
20 can send these schools to this charter school when  
21 they have basically all other surrounding public  
22 schools in the school district are outperforming them  
23 in math and literacy. And so I would only consider  
24 the three-year renewal at this point until we have a  
25 plan in place and until we have some evidence that

1 we're showing increased improvements for the  
2 students.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Is there -- Ms. Pfeffer?

4 MS. PFEFFER: I guess my question would be then  
5 the purpose of them coming back in the fall. As Dr.  
6 Jones said, there won't be any data at that time.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

8 MS. PFEFFER: All there would be is just the  
9 written plan. I guess I'm just wondering the purpose  
10 of bringing them back in the fall if at that time  
11 there would not be any change in the number of years  
12 that were approved. It's just -- I'm wondering, you  
13 know, if that's something that we do need to do or if  
14 we need to wait until there's data and then bring  
15 them back even at a subsequent time if we saw that  
16 there was an issue.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think we can do that at  
18 any time whenever there's data, no matter what the  
19 years are. Dr. Saunders.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: I think just the idea of the  
21 report in the fall is to be proactive and to try to  
22 make sure that the charter is being proactive with  
23 students for this next school year and there is a  
24 plan in place. I'm not confident that I'm hearing  
25 today an exact plan or a method on exactly what

1 direction it's going. And I understand that some of  
2 those decisions still have yet to be made.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any further discussion?  
4 Ms. Coffman.

5 MS. COFFMAN: I would feel comfortable even  
6 having that report as part of the consent agenda. I  
7 just want to read it just for my peace of mind.

8 MS. BARNES: So I'm having -- I'm a little  
9 conflicted, of course, because I initially would have  
10 made a motion as well for at least a five-year  
11 period. But I also have -- and, you know, I shared  
12 my concern in the very beginning with respect to the  
13 request for 20 years because of all of the same  
14 issues that we're all talking about. And then along  
15 with Ms. Pfeffer I began to question then why would  
16 we ask them to come back before us if we're not  
17 looking at the potential of increasing that. And  
18 since there would be no data I'm having -- I'm trying  
19 to reconcile that. So I guess based on what Ms.  
20 Coffman just said, you know, maybe a report sent in  
21 but I'm concerned that then we're piling on some  
22 areas or some things that would in my mind become a  
23 little cumbersome. I won't say unnecessary, but it  
24 probably feels unnecessary to the recipients. And I  
25 want to respect their time and the work that they're

1 doing. At the same time I also want to be sure that  
2 the decisions that we make here today give a clear  
3 message that we do support the arts and academics in  
4 that we are comfortable with the school continuing  
5 with the mission that its on. So I'm willing to  
6 support us sticking with the three years but not  
7 requesting that they come in to give us a report if  
8 we're only going to review that report anyway.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So let me go back. The  
10 original motion was for three years with the adjusted  
11 amendments. And now we're talking about a consent  
12 report, just a report about what their progress is,  
13 and we have a motion and a second. And so we're at a  
14 point now where we either need to vote or if there  
15 needs to be a substitute motion. No other substitute  
16 motions being made? So all in favor of the motion  
17 say "aye."

18 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

19 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: All Panel Members voted  
20 "aye," except for Ms. Barnes did not vote.)

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All opposed? Did everybody  
22 vote?

23 MS. BARNES: No, I didn't vote because I was  
24 trying to be sure -- I didn't know if the report was  
25 a part of the initial --

1                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think the -- what I  
2 understand is this report would come on a consent  
3 agenda item next time.

4                   MS. BARNES: Okay. In that case --

5                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

6                   MS. PFEFFER: We changed it -- I'm sorry. Okay.  
7 I thought we were changing it.

8                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Let's make sure we've got a  
9 clear motion.

10                  MS. PFEFFER: Yeah. I thought we were with the  
11 original motion.

12                  CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So the motion right  
13 now that was motioned was for a three-year renewal  
14 with the adjustments made for the amendments as  
15 presented during the meeting and at the next meeting  
16 to have a consent agenda item with a report -- or in  
17 the fall, I'm sorry -- in the fall, October meeting,  
18 to have a consent agenda item that is a report  
19 basically of how they're addressing the issues that  
20 we have questions on. And we'll work through the  
21 Charter Office to get those questions clarified.

22                  MS. CLAY: One thing that -- you can certainly  
23 work through the charter office later to get those  
24 questions clarified. If you already know what they  
25 are today -- I think we talked a little bit about

1 what we'd like to see in the report -- if we can go  
2 ahead and get that so they know what they're looking  
3 for and working toward, now would be an appropriate  
4 time. And if you have something that comes up later  
5 that can certainly be added through the Charter  
6 Office.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, on the -- do they  
8 -- because their application was for 20 years, do  
9 they have to agree for the three years or can we just  
10 do that?

11 MS. CLAY: Technically, they have to agree if  
12 they want to continue with their charter school, but  
13 you also have the authority to define the terms. So  
14 we don't have to have them on the record saying "I  
15 agree to that," but their agreement is assumed by  
16 wanting to continue to have their school.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Is everybody clear  
18 on the motion now? Okay. So all in favor say "aye."

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed? Okay. Motion  
21 passes. Thank you.

22 All right. We're going to move on to our next  
23 agenda item, a request for renewal for Arkansas  
24 Virtual Academy. Ms. Hogue.

25 MS. HOGUE: Before we do leave it, can we get an

1 idea of the list of things you're talking about in  
2 the report so we can make sure that we can get to  
3 them?

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Was there some  
5 specific items that y'all had now or do you want to  
6 email it to Ms. Hogue and let them know?

7 DR. JONES: I can email or -- some of the  
8 specific items -- we need specifically within  
9 literacy what is the curriculum plan, what do they do  
10 for students that are not achieving, how do they  
11 measure that, is that through DIBELS, what type of  
12 assessments do they give; and the same thing with  
13 math, what is the curriculum they're using. And I  
14 sense they were mainly secondary and art people; we  
15 could give you -- you have elementary background --  
16 elementary expertise in math and literacy to assist  
17 them and we can help them find that assistance.

18 MS. BLEDSOE: That's fine. I can include that  
19 information in the Division letter that we send out  
20 tomorrow. That will be helpful.

21 MS. COFFMAN: Ms. Hogue, I was looking for the  
22 same vigor and planning that went into the art plan.  
23 I'm looking for that in math and literacy.

24 MS. HOGUE: Okay.

25 A-8: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

1 RENEWAL: ARKANSAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY

2 MS. HOGUE: Okay. Arkansas Virtual Academy is  
3 here requesting for a five-year renewal of their  
4 charter. They received their charter in 2003 for K-  
5 12 with an enrollment of 500. But that's what  
6 they're here to ask for, a five-year renewal. And we  
7 have Dr. Sides and he will introduce anybody who is  
8 speaking for him too. Do we have any opposition?  
9 I've not heard of any opposition, so it's just Dr.  
10 Sides.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. All right.  
12 Anybody here that's going to speak for or against the  
13 charter renewal, if you would stand and raise your  
14 right hand to be sworn in. Okay. Do you swear or  
15 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
16 but the truth?

17 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Dr. Sides,  
19 you're recognized. You have 20 minutes.

20 DR. SIDES: Thank you. The presentation, is  
21 that loaded?

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We won't count this against  
23 your time.

24 DR. SIDES: Good afternoon, Chairman, Members of  
25 the Board. My name is Scott Sides; I'm head of

1 school at Arkansas Virtual Academy. And we are  
2 thankful for the opportunity to present our renewal  
3 to you today. Arkansas Virtual Academy is a fully  
4 online public charter school. And when I take the  
5 list of open-enrollment public charter schools that  
6 are on the Department of Education's website and then  
7 place them on a map we see the concentration that you  
8 see on the PowerPoint there. Where there would be  
9 seven counties within the state of Arkansas we would  
10 be represented by an open-enrollment public charter  
11 school choice. For those other 69 counties, in  
12 addition to those seven, we represent the only  
13 possible choice at this time if for those 69 counties  
14 if choice would be important for those individuals.  
15 So when we look at who we're currently serving, we  
16 have students enrolled who are in 71 of 75 total  
17 counties statewide -- so for many counties where  
18 there is no additional open-enrollment choice. If  
19 you believe that that is important for those  
20 counties, then I hope that you would believe that we  
21 also are important and then it becomes a conversation  
22 of academics and how we work to continuously improve  
23 for our students to be the best fully virtual school  
24 that we could possibly be. When we think about this  
25 school and its value proposition and how our school

1 is different and why it's important, we offer the  
2 opportunity for some families to mitigate health  
3 risks for their students should they choose to serve  
4 as learning coach at home, partnering with our  
5 teachers. For a student who has very severe  
6 allergies, where they may be managing that sort of  
7 thing in the traditional setting, we provide an  
8 opportunity for them to be more focused on academic  
9 things and the health risk side of this is certainly  
10 important. We have greater -- we can provide  
11 additional flexibility for students in the event that  
12 they may be experiencing life-changing illness. I  
13 can tell you one student that comes to mind was  
14 having heart surgery; they were learning with us in  
15 advance of that heart surgery; they successfully had  
16 the heart surgery, and then they were leaning with us  
17 after that had been completed and recovery and those  
18 sorts of things. So I do think that that makes this  
19 open-enrollment charter school, the value proposition  
20 of it, different than some. For a parent who seeks  
21 great involvement in their student's life, in their  
22 student's learning, that is a good thing that we  
23 would want to encourage. But we as the school must  
24 support that and foster those relationships in  
25 helping them to be successful. For students who may

1 be experiencing intense bullying, where parents may  
2 have concerns of safety, we can assist in that.  
3 Perhaps it's for a temporary period of time; maybe  
4 it's one grade level. I think that recently we've  
5 seen statistics on bullying nationwide and also for  
6 our state and many students will come to this school  
7 and come to virtual schools because of issues of  
8 bullying. So if we are able to assist in that way  
9 and to help them through this school, through this  
10 open-enrollment statewide school, we should stand  
11 together to do that. It's going to be very  
12 efficient. I think when we think long-term about  
13 this model, as you explore it, as you evaluate its  
14 merits and decide what's good and where our  
15 challenges are and those things, this can be  
16 incredibly efficient because you -- as we move toward  
17 distance increasingly, and as we find that school  
18 districts are providing online classes for their  
19 students, you then take out -- you can approach  
20 efficiency differently when you think about long bus  
21 rides, you think about 30, 40 minutes in one  
22 direction in rural areas. And so I would bring  
23 before the committee that the virtual model provides  
24 an opportunity for great efficiency and that's  
25 something that we should be looking toward. We can

1 support many talents in our students. If we have a  
2 student who is Olympic hopeful we can build a  
3 schedule to support that, the uniqueness of, look at  
4 the student, what they need to do. We can  
5 accommodate a wide range of student learning. And if  
6 there -- amongst all things, perhaps the great power  
7 of this model is how we do have the opportunity to  
8 individualize for students. We don't always do it  
9 perfectly. We're working to get better at this. We  
10 have an individualized plan for every one of our  
11 students. But how we tailor this education in  
12 accordance with Common Core state standards, in  
13 accordance with Standards for Accreditation for the  
14 state, and all these things, how we can tailor to the  
15 unique experience for one student at a time, therein  
16 lies the tremendous potential and power, I think, of  
17 the virtual model.

18 Research will tell us that when parents are  
19 involved students will be more likely to achieve.  
20 And this is a model, as you all know, that leverages  
21 that relationship under the guidance, under the  
22 direction, with the direct instruction of certified  
23 and highly qualified teachers, and where students are  
24 active users of technology each day in their learning  
25 also in conjunction with print materials that they

1 will be using. Every student, as I said, in the  
2 school has an individualized learning plan, an  
3 academic plan. Planning is focused -- can be focused  
4 on the needs of every enrolled student. So you  
5 really can on a one-person basis identify what is it  
6 exactly that this one child needs and how do we  
7 tailor this day to meet the needs of the student in  
8 their learning. Students will come to us for many  
9 reasons. We'll have -- students who will be deeply  
10 struggling academically will come; we'll have some  
11 students who will come who may be advanced, and there  
12 is a wide gamut of students who we serve at about 67%  
13 free and reduced lunch and about 14% special  
14 education currently. And then we offer a solution  
15 that works for any 1 or 10 or 100 or 500 students or  
16 1000. That has to be, in my view -- and I'm not the  
17 Panel -- the fundamental consideration of what it is  
18 that we're called to do.

19 This is our eighth year. As an open-enrollment  
20 public charter school, we were first established in  
21 2002 as part of the federal grants and branded as  
22 Arkansas Virtual School, then re-branded as Arkansas  
23 Virtual Academy, assuming a charter in 2007-2008. It  
24 was a five-year charter. We're currently in the  
25 final year of a three-year charter as we come before

1           you now. We're fully accredited by the Arkansas  
2           Department of Education. All of our financial audits  
3           during this contract period have had no findings.  
4           We're substantially compliant as it relates to  
5           special education and our service, in accordance with  
6           IDEA.

7                     And as I come before you today I know that there  
8           are many things that we'll need to talk about  
9           together. I'm telling you that coming before the  
10          State Board maybe a year-and-a-half ago on just sort  
11          of a series of reportings that we were doing, one of  
12          the board members said, "Scott, it would be great if  
13          you could also talk about your challenges instead of  
14          just the things that you believe that you do very  
15          well." So I'm here to talk to you about some  
16          challenges that we faced in our current contractual  
17          period. This has been a period during which, as you  
18          all know, we've expanded by more than 200%. We  
19          needed to prepare teachers in that context of 200%  
20          growth. We were preparing for an unknown enrollment  
21          even into the school year, which was very  
22          challenging. Expanding then to provide the first  
23          fully online virtual high school, which we've done  
24          during this school year, serving now grades 9 and 10,  
25          and proposing also to serve grade 11 this coming

1 school year, and grade 12 in the year which would be  
2 subsequent to that. One of the challenges of a  
3 virtual school is how we foster long and enduring  
4 relationships with families, and you certainly see  
5 that in the renewal packet itself. It's challenging.  
6 We define ourselves really in terms of our  
7 effectiveness with our ability to be successful there  
8 and we certainly have to be more successful there.  
9 But as our students are with us and grow with us,  
10 they grow in this model and they've become better at  
11 it. So the degree to which we are able to have  
12 longstanding members of this learning community and  
13 to build that statewide community more completely as  
14 what is really a new school -- I mean, really with  
15 that 200% growth we sort of hit reset. So that will  
16 be very important for us. When we look at school  
17 year 13-14 -- so I'm talking to you about the  
18 challenges that we have faced and that you have  
19 observed; 2013-2014, coming into that school year we  
20 had a very small team of teachers; we were a smaller  
21 school. We had two teachers who left to teach where  
22 their students were attending school, and who could  
23 ever blame them for that. We had another leave once  
24 the school year started, so there were three. We had  
25 teachers who moved into positions of leadership. So

1 at the end of the day we were in this very high  
2 growth context with four of what were now 29 teachers  
3 teaching in our school who had not had experience  
4 teaching virtually. So there's challenge in that.  
5 We celebrated that in this school year we returned 25  
6 of those 29 teachers to be with us for this school  
7 year. So I think that that marks a point where we  
8 began to set the foundation moving ahead. And the  
9 Arkansas Virtual Academy board of directors has made  
10 a determination that, assuming that the committee  
11 would approve, that our total enrollment would be  
12 2,000 and that we would have a known enrollment; we  
13 would know what we were hiring to. This would be  
14 grades K-11. And while there may be language that  
15 exists that says 3,000, the Arkansas Virtual Academy  
16 board of directors has taken action that they believe  
17 is going to make this school as successful as it can  
18 be, especially as we are able to predict our  
19 enrollment, hire to that, train to that, and those  
20 sorts of things. So we had -- we proposed then for  
21 this following school year, 2016-2017, to be grades  
22 K-11 serving about 380 students grades 9 to 11,  
23 serving about 1,620 students grades K-8. When we  
24 begin to talk about proficiencies and we see it in  
25 light of growth overall from 12-13, in April 2013, as

1 we knew the school was about to change and beginning  
2 to prepare for that we were about 68.8% proficient  
3 advanced for all students enrolled. And we were  
4 62.2% proficient advanced in terms of our Targeted  
5 Achievement Gap Group. And then moving then to that  
6 high growth year we observed a decline in scores in  
7 math of about 3% for all students and also the  
8 Targeted Achievement Gap Group. When we look at  
9 students who are with us over time, this is from 2014  
10 -- and the definitions here of less than one year  
11 would be basically the second day of school to April  
12 2014. And one year but less than two would be any  
13 time before the first day of school to basically the  
14 second year -- or the second day of school previous  
15 year. And the same logic would be used for two years  
16 but less than three, and three years or more. When  
17 we look at math over time for students who continue  
18 to be enrolled with us we do see a positive trend.  
19 You know, we found that for students enrolled with us  
20 less than one year in 2014 they were about 54%  
21 proficient or advanced in math. But then we observe  
22 over time that as they become involved in the school  
23 longer, and also the learning coach as well becomes  
24 involved in the school longer, we see a positive  
25 trend over time. One of the goals of the school was

1 that we would be, for students enrolled for two or  
2 more years, at or above the state average on norm-  
3 referenced percentile rank measure. And on the Iowa  
4 Test of Basic Skills, when we look at students -- now  
5 this is two -- this is percentage of students two  
6 years enrolled who were at or above the average state  
7 percentile rank, we find in 2011 that 54% of our  
8 students who have been enrolled for two years were --  
9 we find in 2012 that 51.9% of students were at or  
10 above on this norm-referenced measure through the  
11 Iowa Test of Basic Skills. We find in 2013 nearly  
12 52%, with 57% -- and that really doesn't factor the  
13 high growth because you're looking at two years in  
14 2014, so that 57% is counter-intuitive. When we look  
15 at a snapshot by grade level, again, it would be  
16 counter-intuitive if you were seeing that this were  
17 not a two-year -- a measure of students enrolled for  
18 two years.

19 So this is the breakdown by grade; these are the  
20 things that we explore together as we think about our  
21 academic program and think about the things that we  
22 should be keeping and changing. When we look at  
23 literacy, again, from 13 -- 2012-2013 to 2013-14 we  
24 in April of 2013 were 72.8% proficient advanced of  
25 all students; 65% proficient advanced for the TAGG.

1 In the prior year of our charter we were, you know,  
2 fully achieving in literacy. And then we see the  
3 impact of growth; 72% to 67.6%, a fall of roughly 5%  
4 both for all students and all the Targeted  
5 Achievement Gap Group. When we look at literacy over  
6 time for our students enrolled we find sort of a  
7 baseline -- again, this is 2014 and looking back  
8 using the same logic; 64% of students were proficient  
9 advanced; then one year enrolled but less than two,  
10 66% of those students; two years but less than three,  
11 69%; and three years or more, 72% of students  
12 proficient or advanced.

13 When we review the same look as we had for math,  
14 for both reading -- excuse me -- on the left side for  
15 language and then reading on the right side, the goal  
16 was that we would be at or above state performance  
17 for students of over two years or more. So we were  
18 just below that in 2011 for language at 49.5%, just  
19 below that in 2012 at 49.3%, and just below in '13 at  
20 49.6%. And then in 2014, 4.3% off. However, when  
21 you look at the reading outcomes it's very favorable,  
22 a very favorable outcome for our students; 70% were  
23 at or above state performance in '11; 70.7% in '12;  
24 66.9% (67% basically) in '13; and then 70% in 2014.  
25 And then we took the same snapshot to review by grade

1 what we have observed. And as the students become  
2 older in the school generally we see more positive --  
3 we see more favorable achievement for them,  
4 especially as they are established for some period of  
5 time enrolled within the school. For reading we see  
6 a very positive look; this is reflecting by grade and  
7 by year, and then showing basically the difference  
8 between our students who were two-year students and  
9 then the state national rank on the same assessment.  
10 I know that you will talk with me about scores.  
11 Within 20 minutes I'm trying to move through the  
12 presentation. So as --

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You have about 5 minutes  
14 left.

15 DR. SIDES: Thank you. As we look ahead, we  
16 think about the foundation that has now been set. We  
17 now have the high school up and running, having a  
18 semester now behind us. We now have teachers who  
19 really know how to do this. And I will tell you you  
20 can take a nationally board certified teacher who for  
21 14 years was very, very -- their reputation was very  
22 notable in their district and they really start over  
23 in some ways. It's a very different approach to what  
24 we're doing, how we remediate, what data we use for  
25 that purpose and so we build on a more -- a better

1 established foundation moving ahead. Our two  
2 administrators now have experience leading in this  
3 way. We have five who are test certified who are  
4 working with teachers in this regard. I'll say for  
5 Lisa Williams when I came on in 2010 she had preceded  
6 me by something like six years; she's been with the  
7 school for more than 10 years. And we have very able  
8 leadership as we work -- as the only virtual school  
9 in the state. Ninety-four percent (94%) of our  
10 teachers expressed an intent to return. That's very  
11 promising. It gives us, again, a great foundation to  
12 move ahead and a knowledge base with which to work.  
13 We are now content specific grades 5-11. And we had  
14 seen in grades 5 and 6 inconsistent performance, both  
15 in literacy and mathematics, and so we've moved  
16 content specificity into those lower grades where  
17 they do have multiple teachers and it is a bit more  
18 complex in terms of their schedule and the  
19 flexibilities. As you have more content specificity  
20 you give up some flexibility because then the  
21 schedule will be more static for those students. So  
22 it's a give-and-take but it was a decision that we  
23 believe was the right decision for student learning.  
24 We have brought on a truancy coordinator who keeps  
25 close watch to make sure that we don't have students

1 who are enrolled and are not attending the way that  
2 they should. And also a function of this role is to  
3 work with other districts so that if we have a  
4 student who is becoming -- well, we would work with  
5 the family if the student is becoming truant. If the  
6 student is truant, we would work with the district so  
7 that they're aware that we had a student enrolled who  
8 then became truant and that they would know that for  
9 their own -- for their work and for their local  
10 community. Something that I'm very excited about is  
11 our family academic support team. And that's the  
12 last point on the page, so we'll go ahead and just  
13 kind of do innovations and initiatives.

14 I will say to you, if you would hear me, that  
15 this is a creative model. This is -- there are  
16 innovative things about this and if that part of the  
17 law matters very much, which I know that it does, we  
18 are meeting those things. We're trying new things.  
19 We want to be the best; we want to be the best fully  
20 virtual school anywhere. I mean, really that is what  
21 we want to be. We want to make this state proud. We  
22 want to know that what we're doing here -- north,  
23 south, west, east -- as the state's only choice for  
24 69 counties, we want to know that our services are  
25 honorable, that what we're doing for kids every day

1 matters and that it's the right thing and that it's  
2 good. So I will say to you that steps to that are,  
3 first, become more stable. That's the truth. We  
4 must stabilize everything after seen this 200%  
5 growth. We have our teachers in place; we hire to  
6 what we need for this coming year. We have been  
7 training early; we have our students -- after the  
8 enrollment processes we have them in their seats  
9 early and we're working with them during the summer.  
10 And there is just great virtue, I believe, in the  
11 family academic support team which I'll come to.  
12 Again, individualized learning plans for every  
13 student, as I pointed out; a math offering for -- and  
14 so I know we'll talk about interventions -- a math  
15 offering that began in October -- that began October  
16 20, 2014 where students may just go in and meet the  
17 teacher who's waiting to work with them on whatever  
18 conceptually they need. This can be -- they can be  
19 sent from their math teacher or it can be because  
20 they know that they need help right now and maybe  
21 their teacher is teaching them another session. And  
22 so how we communicate this, how we have more people  
23 taking advantages of this opportunity -- we've had  
24 really 400 students -- in context, there are 1,660  
25 who have taken advantage of this since October 20th.

1           And then the family academic support team -- you know  
2           -- when you look at our withdrawals you'll certainly  
3           ask, "So what are you guys doing about this?" We are  
4           working, first, to help through family academic  
5           support -- the next slide -- to help families  
6           understand what this school is before they enroll.  
7           That's a critical, critical component about fostering  
8           strong and lasting relationships. They have to know  
9           what this means; they have to know what does a  
10          classroom look like, what does the teacher do, what  
11          to look for, what is my role as a learning coach,  
12          during what hours of the day must I be absolutely  
13          committed to this? Is there flexibility where I can  
14          move into the afternoon and still have the same power  
15          through this model? And these are things that we  
16          have to take those conversations very much head-on  
17          and help them know before they enroll and mitigate  
18          surprises. You can't fully know until you enroll.  
19          There will be things that they will learn after  
20          they've enrolled, but the degree to which we can take  
21          that out and be very transparent with all enrolling  
22          families in advance we want to do it. We see 1,300  
23          families on Tuesday night, Thursday night, Saturday  
24          morning sessions that we offer for every interested  
25          family. This is not a counseling. This is not a

1           counseling; "I think this is a good idea, this is a  
2           bad idea, this is -- let me tell you the truths of  
3           how this operates so that you can make the right  
4           decision for your family and for your student." And  
5           then we'll make it better. And during this year,  
6           during this enrollment cycle I want to have basically  
7           a K-4 opportunity because right now it's broad; it's  
8           "here's the classroom, here is what you can expect  
9           from teachers, here's what you're going to receive,  
10          here's how you can organize it," and it's a two-hour  
11          provision on Tuesday night, Thursday night, Saturday  
12          morning. But I want to make a K-4 and 5-8. The  
13          middle grades are very different from K-4. And then  
14          9-11, you know, what does this mean for my high  
15          school student, what are the commitments, how do we  
16          work this together. So there will be a team of six  
17          running the K-4 Tuesday night, Thursday night,  
18          Saturday morning; 5-8 Tuesday night, Thursday night,  
19          Saturday morning; 9-11 the same. I would hope that  
20          if you had two hours that you wanted to give to it  
21          that you might come and see and let us know what you  
22          believe should be added to it.

23                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Sides --

24                   DR. SIDES: Yes.

25                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- your time is up. But

1 I'll give you an additional 5 minutes after I check  
2 to make sure there's nobody in opposition here. Is  
3 there anything here to speak in opposition? No. Dr.  
4 Sides, you have an additional 5 minutes.

5 DR. SIDES: Okay. So, you know, those are  
6 important pieces, helping families be successful as  
7 soon as they arrive, having a team mobilized to do  
8 that and be proactive in that. We started -- we're  
9 beginning to ask a question; we probably should have  
10 asked the question all the time. But as we recognize  
11 that when a family tells us "this is not a good fit  
12 for us," then we really -- there's not a lot that we  
13 can do to change that. They make their decision and  
14 they're going to move. But what we need to do is  
15 find out "how do you -- how are these going for you  
16 right now," and go to them. "Are you struggling?"  
17 It's basically a five-question survey that we do  
18 right now; we do it on a biweekly basis; we'll do it  
19 on probably a tri-weekly basis so that we don't lose  
20 respondents in this. But just very simple, "Tell me  
21 your name and let us know if things are very, very  
22 good" -- and this is not the exact language --  
23 "things are going pretty well," and all the way down  
24 to "we are really struggling here." And we  
25 immediately mobilize to that through family academic

1 support. And we go to them and we spend -- if it  
2 takes -- as many days as it may take to try to help  
3 them work through whatever issues they may be facing  
4 as a new virtual learner especially, as a new learner  
5 coach especially, and making that transition. So  
6 we're working to be very proactive in that way. We  
7 absolutely must mitigate those withdrawal numbers and  
8 we're going to do every -- absolutely everything  
9 that's possible to address this.

10 As we look ahead, our goals that have been in  
11 the charter -- for example, 90% completion of  
12 literacy and mathematics -- those goals don't  
13 necessarily mean what they once did because this was  
14 originally an online school where teachers would  
15 support, guide, assist the process but there was less  
16 direct instruction. And now more all the time our  
17 teachers are teaching that same content that we  
18 deliver through the online school in an online web  
19 session to the student based on the student's need.  
20 So the idea that 90% of the completion in the online  
21 school, that's actually something that would be  
22 unhelpful moving ahead and that's why this goal has  
23 been not set forth as something that we would carry  
24 forward. Our students enrolled for two years really  
25 help us know best right now the outcomes that we're

1           observing. So the proposed goals include 2% for  
2           students enrolled two or more years, established on a  
3           baseline from Harcourt, some similar assessments that  
4           can be equated, but working to create a baseline from  
5           this school year, assessing Common Core State  
6           Standards, increasing by 2% each year. And so that's  
7           really designed -- that's the design of the goal for  
8           literacy and also for mathematics. We would have our  
9           students who are in the class of '18 who began with  
10          us in 9th grade earning an average of 5-1/2 course  
11          credits. So whatever it takes for us to do during  
12          the summer to make sure that these guys are on track  
13          for graduation, you know, we will -- we'll do  
14          whatever is required. And I'll tell you that  
15          students that enter this school at times are  
16          struggling, credit deficient, and in some cases, you  
17          know, this can be a last resort for some. So it is  
18          challenging if they come in credit deficient.  
19          However, that's our calling and we will work to bring  
20          them along to meet this goal of 5-1/2 credits and  
21          each year they're stronger. And then, finally, the  
22          satisfaction rate of our families must be very high.  
23          We're proposing that a satisfaction rate of 95%  
24          measured by an annual satisfaction survey would be  
25          very important in light of the withdrawal numbers.

1           So this is what we would propose. You know, we would  
2           hope that you would see merit in the model; we would  
3           hope that you would -- and certainly you're going to  
4           ask questions to know, but we would hope that you  
5           would see this as something that a number of people  
6           really need. And a lot of people don't just choose  
7           virtual learning because it seems like a logical next  
8           step. In a lot of cases they're choosing this school  
9           because they're trying to set something in order that  
10          has not been set in order for them. And I hope that  
11          you would find that to be honorable and meritorious,  
12          that we would be allowed to continue serving  
13          students.

14                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Okay. We'll  
15          now turn it over to the Panel for questions. Dr.  
16          Saunders.

17                   DR. SAUNDERS: All right. I want to start off  
18          with the new waiver requests. The vocal and  
19          instrumental music, you no longer seek that waiver.  
20          Is that correct?

21                   DR. SIDES: It was an issue of ensemble. The  
22          waiver request would purely flow from the ensemble  
23          portion of the standards. If that could be granted  
24          just from the ensemble standpoint, then that would be  
25          good. However, our remedy will be that as part of

1           these courses we assist where the family would find  
2           an ensemble in their local community and participate.  
3           But I will tell you, you know, there's tracking and  
4           challenge in that but we're up for whatever we need  
5           to up for.

6           DR. SAUNDERS: So if I'm reading this correctly,  
7           you would not have any new waivers. Correct?

8           DR. SIDES: That's correct.

9           DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

10          CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, we have a  
11          question for you. I know we have to kind of -- this  
12          is -- by being virtual it is a different animal. And  
13          so my question is: I understand the concern about not  
14          being able to assemble a group if they may be  
15          dispersed amongst the state. So is that a  
16          possibility to -- I know we're not allowed to -- we  
17          don't have the authority to grant that waiver, but is  
18          there a way for them to be able to accomplish this  
19          without getting cited by not teaching a specific  
20          standard within the course? Or do they need to Skype  
21          in and jam out in a garage session?

22          MS. CLAY: That might be the answer. You know,  
23          my thought on this is if it wouldn't meet the  
24          requirements of current courses that we have -- this  
25          may be -- Dr. Jones, you might be able to help me

1 with this -- is there a way for them to get some sort  
2 of course approval for a course that would not have  
3 the ensemble requirement? I mean, because I -- like  
4 he said, I understand what they're trying to do and  
5 the virtual nature makes it difficult, but also  
6 working with our current frameworks that are out  
7 there.

8 DR. JONES: I would have to check into that.  
9 For this specific course they'd have to go through  
10 curriculum instruction, as long as they teach the  
11 standards for the course selected. But my  
12 understanding from the waiver was that they were  
13 trying to waive all music. Was that not correct?

14 DR. SIDES: It's the ensemble piece.

15 DR. JONES: But it's not specific; the waiver is  
16 not specific.

17 DR. SIDES: Withdraw the request. That's  
18 correct.

19 DR. JONES: So ensemble is not the required  
20 piece. So would you be willing to remove that  
21 waiver?

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think the determination  
23 has been made that they're going to remove the  
24 waiver. But what the concern is is that there's a  
25 specific piece within the frameworks that asks them

1 to do ensemble --

2 DR. SIDES: That's correct.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- in a group setting. And  
4 because it's virtual they can't do that. So I would  
5 assume that we would have to have course approval to  
6 be able to approve that course minus that specific  
7 piece of the frameworks.

8 DR. SIDES: Okay.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think that's something  
10 that can be worked out.

11 DR. SIDES: Okay.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Saunders, do you  
13 have additional --

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Sure. Yes. I understand from  
15 your presentation earlier, I'm looking on Section 3  
16 of your application, page 8, concerning the student  
17 retention and showing that roughly 27% of all  
18 students left the charter. Is that correct?

19 DR. SIDES: That is correct.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And is that -- I assume  
21 that to be over what period of time?

22 DR. SIDES: This is considering all students  
23 during the three-year contractual period.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And you had talked about  
25 the two-hour orientation, if you would, or --

1 DR. SIDES: Yes.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: -- whatever. And I know that  
3 I've not previously talked with you once this year  
4 about that, but that's hopefully to address some of  
5 that. Anything else you're doing to address that  
6 number?

7 DR. SIDES: Just a couple of things, if I could.  
8 I think right now we have a tension between families  
9 that come to be a part of Arkansas Virtual Academy  
10 because of the great -- because of flexibility that  
11 they believe comes with the school. And then the  
12 other side of that is how we're doing more and more  
13 direct instruction all the time. And so basically  
14 there's tension between those two things, for  
15 especially our longstanding families, families that  
16 have been with us for a long time that basically say,  
17 "This school has now changed; this is not what we  
18 originally had and loved." And so in our work to  
19 have great -- have improved quality control, if you  
20 will, in some ways it can un-do our efforts. To  
21 answer you very specifically, I think that the first  
22 thing has got -- like I said earlier, it's got to be  
23 helping them know the model, its limits and the  
24 truths of the model. I think going into it from a  
25 school specific standpoint, helping them see their

1 academic schedule -- you know -- specifically, during  
2 what periods of time -- what times of day should they  
3 expect to be doing certain things, given that you can  
4 have multiple sessions. And then they -- and then if  
5 -- through formative assessment we find that  
6 remediation is needed, well, then we circle back  
7 around to remediate based on data. So those -- that  
8 in advance is going to be really important, finding  
9 out from them more quickly -- the survey that I  
10 mentioned to you, finding out from them more quickly  
11 if they're at a distance and feeling unsettled in  
12 school, questioning their choice, those sorts of  
13 things that family academic support goes to them  
14 right then. When you and I had spoken earlier in  
15 this year, that was not something that we had begun  
16 yet. I think that was something that we started  
17 around the time of the -- when we had written this.  
18 But we had 270 families that we had responded to as a  
19 result of that. So telling the full story in  
20 advance, providing -- going to them and -- knowing  
21 when they need us and going quickly to them, that's  
22 going to be important. And I think that they're at a  
23 distance; they are always going to be -- there's  
24 always going to be some level of withdrawal,  
25 especially when you can choose in or choose out. And

1 effective attachment, how we create an effective  
2 attachment with our families more than we're  
3 currently doing is also I think going to have impact.  
4 But I think it was -- one of our -- it will be a  
5 challenge that will define us, how well we control  
6 that. But I think it's always going to be part of a  
7 fully virtual model and it's something that we see,  
8 something that we observe. This is not isolated to  
9 this school; this is an issue of the fully virtual  
10 and distance arrangement, and we just have to do  
11 better than everyone else does at this and have our  
12 numbers be the highest that they can be given that  
13 we're always going to have some of this. I don't  
14 know what the target is, you know, or functioning  
15 optimally in this way what that percentage is. I  
16 don't know what that is. But I can tell you that we  
17 are going to function optimally in this way and then  
18 I will come report to you what that percentage is  
19 believed to be so that you can make the important  
20 decisions that you have.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Sides, this 46% that  
22 left the charter, is it because it's over a three-  
23 year period? Was there -- is it higher at this other  
24 end because of the quick growth that you had? Is  
25 there more kids that left because of that influx of

1 kids?

2 DR. SIDES: I would think so, you know,  
3 especially as we were all becoming newly acclimated  
4 to a new school, teachers included, learning, you  
5 know, how to teach effectively in this setting. And  
6 so, yes, certainly, the influx of growth. And also  
7 it's represented -- to your point, it's represented  
8 by -- much like the number in that growth moment as  
9 opposed to the numbers that preceded it and it was  
10 500 more in totality compared to the two years prior,  
11 if you will, because you have 500/500 and then about  
12 1500. So I think that it is inflated as a result of  
13 this.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And this may be more of a  
15 -- it will be a statement in the form of a question,  
16 maybe one of those "wouldn't you agree" questions.  
17 But just for context and clarity for our panel  
18 members, there was a cap that was set by the charter  
19 sometime ago that was 500 and then there was some,  
20 you know, special language that came about that  
21 increased your cap to 3000. It probably wasn't  
22 anticipated by anybody's part that rapid growth that  
23 happened. And, you know, it's kind of one of those  
24 things that if you don't have a strict plan in place  
25 -- it seemed like there was some steady progress

1           being made in academics and then this new influx of  
2           kids that you weren't prepared to handle happened.  
3           It seemed that scores -- you know -- you're having to  
4           play catch-up and plan. So it seems like you're  
5           coming back for a cap increase, or a cap decrease, in  
6           essence, to 2000 to try to stabilize and build from  
7           there, which the natural progression of increasing  
8           your cap is you only increase it when you're ready to  
9           increase it, not just open the floodgates and let  
10          kids in.

11           DR. SIDES: Yes.

12           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Wouldn't you agree?

13           DR. SIDES: I would agree. Yes.

14           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

15           DR. SIDES: I think that -- and more importantly  
16          than my agreement would be that the Arkansas Virtual  
17          Academy board of directors certainly agrees and has  
18          taken action in this regard.

19           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you. Other  
20          questions? Ms. Pfeffer.

21           MS. PFEFFER: I was looking at the student  
22          retention chart as well. Do you have a breakdown of  
23          the grade levels? And do you know if certain grade  
24          levels had more students who left rather than others?  
25          You know, is it more likely that the elementary

1 students are leaving or high school or -- well, and I  
2 know you only go through -- grade 9 and 10, just  
3 added that. But is there -- does it seem to be more  
4 challenging for any particular grade, I guess?

5 DR. SIDES: Yes, ma'am. Grades 9 through 11  
6 wouldn't have been in this report.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Right.

8 DR. SIDES: So it would be the K-8 population.  
9 And how that breaks down by grade level, I could  
10 provide you that information. But to go on record  
11 right now saying -- I shouldn't.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

13 DR. SIDES: But I can provide you that  
14 information.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Jones.

16 DR. JONES: Good afternoon. I looked at data in  
17 more of a traditional sense for proficient advanced  
18 by yearly reporting because it's impossible for us to  
19 tell over a two-year time period the sample size, how  
20 many students you speak of.

21 DR. SIDES: Yes, ma'am.

22 DR. JONES: And so when I reflect on this data  
23 as compared to the state average -- and that's all  
24 kids, so you're going -- it's a diverse population,  
25 not extremely high test scores. For example, 3rd

1 grade literacy, the state average is 76% and your  
2 school is 58%. For math the state average is 84%;  
3 your school is 71%; 4th grade, 83% for the state, 59%  
4 for your school. And so I see these huge gaps and  
5 lack of performance. Do you think that the scores  
6 that you report -- and I know that you probably know  
7 what they are -- do you think they're indicative of  
8 an effective school?

9 DR. SIDES: Do I think the scores that we report  
10 are indicative of an effective school? Our scores  
11 historically have been at the state average. I think  
12 there are a lot of things that go into a good school  
13 and how we serve students in totality, as opposed to,  
14 you know, one distinct measure, while that measure I  
15 understand to be quite important. I think it's  
16 challenging for our students when they come in to  
17 sites statewide where they will test, where they will  
18 not have been probably acclimated. Because we  
19 would've had to ask them, you know, to drive 35  
20 minutes to become acclimated to that site was a  
21 challenge. I think that there are -- I think that  
22 operating statewide in a virtual school is  
23 challenging and that logistical piece of it may not  
24 entirely tell a tale. Now historically, because we  
25 have been at the state average and because we were

1 exceeding it even in earlier years, this model can  
2 work. We're just in a trying time where we're trying  
3 to figure out how to basically distinguish who needs  
4 what between direct instruction and between greater  
5 flexibility and freedom so we don't lose the students  
6 who are coming in and who may perform quite well --  
7 just to say it, may perform quite well but come for  
8 the flexibility and freedom. We ultimately drive  
9 them through a more rigid instructional approach  
10 because you guys have seen this nationally, you've  
11 seen the challenges; you've seen the challenges these  
12 schools face. And as you do more and more to have  
13 quality control sometimes you un-do some things that  
14 were working really well. And striking that balance  
15 for who needs what more completely -- yes, we have  
16 individualized learning plans for every student and  
17 it is important. But really becoming a more  
18 differentiated school by individual student need -- I  
19 will say to you that when we can do that really well  
20 we will be a great school. When we look at our  
21 current performance, I couldn't say to you that that  
22 would be satisfactory at this moment. I think we  
23 should -- I think we certainly need to improve and I  
24 think those are inputs into that improvement. Excuse  
25 me.

1 DR. JONES: I recognize there are other  
2 measures. Are there other measures of success that  
3 you can share to show the effectiveness of the  
4 school?

5 DR. SIDES: Yes, ma'am. We use an internal  
6 measurement system called Scantron where they have  
7 pre- and post-. So we look for one year's growth; we  
8 do this by all students, 95% of all students. It's a  
9 goal that 95% of all students would take this  
10 assessment but -- so you've got the online score, you  
11 have assessment coming from this, and then we have an  
12 additional place where students are working, Study  
13 Island, and we will pull from that additional point  
14 of data to then remediate when that's important. So  
15 I think that you're asking me holistically can you  
16 demonstrate -- aside from this one measure can you  
17 demonstrate growth of students from a separate  
18 measure, and Scantron would be our best way to do  
19 that and we do have those reports.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Looking at the performance  
22 as compared to the state, I would be really  
23 interested to know in particular do you think that  
24 there are concentrations of characteristics or  
25 factors of your students' demographics. I'm sure you

1 have a diverse -- people are attending for numerous  
2 reasons. Are there concentrated characteristics of  
3 demographics that typically do not perform as well  
4 within your population that could be easily  
5 identified, I guess?

6 DR. SIDES: The commitment of the learning  
7 coach, how they will partner with us, really  
8 regardless of any demographic; how they will work  
9 closely with us, or whether they may come into this  
10 to sort of go it alone, those are the differences  
11 more than I think demography. You know, we have a  
12 lower percentage of African American students than,  
13 you know, than we see statewide. We are -- I'm sure  
14 you guys know our demographics; we're at 86% white, I  
15 believe; 8.3% African American; and then the next  
16 largest population would be 3% Hispanic. So we're  
17 basically 14% minority. So this is not appealing to  
18 minorities at this moment the way that, you know,  
19 it's appearing -- appealing to the Caucasian  
20 population. But I would say that, you know, it's  
21 really not a function of demography; it's a function  
22 in terms of the success. It's a function of our  
23 partnership and our daily commitment, and, you know,  
24 how we stick to what is required every day together  
25 and that means more than any -- the demographic

1 inputs, in my view. We've had free and reduced lunch  
2 students, you know, that have done quite well.  
3 There's been -- you know -- the Targeted Achievement  
4 Gap Group, yes, it's been off by 6% from all  
5 students. But, you know, we've been achieving goals  
6 in our -- all students and Targeted Achievement Gap  
7 Group for, you know, literacy in I think it was 2012,  
8 and in those preceding years. So, you know, I  
9 wouldn't say that there -- I need to be very direct;  
10 as it relates to demography, I have no reason to  
11 believe that there are certain demographics that  
12 function less well here than other demographics.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I've got a question, Dr.  
14 Sides. Okay. You know, obviously, there is -- we're  
15 in this time where online digital learning is kind of  
16 a big deal than it used to be -- bigger deal than it  
17 used to be. We have the new program at the  
18 University of Arkansas, the University program, and  
19 Arkansas Virtual Academy being the only virtual --  
20 fully virtual school in the state. And, you know, we  
21 do want to commend you on being, you know, a pioneer  
22 in that forefront. And we also, you know, as we do  
23 with other charters and our traditional public  
24 schools, we want to be proud of what we have out  
25 there. And what's concerning I think to some of us

1 panel members -- I don't want to speak for all of  
2 them -- is that, you know, right now it's hard for us  
3 to gauge -- you know -- we can say a traditional  
4 public school in elementary school they should be  
5 performing 80%, 90% proficiency rates. Obviously,  
6 that's not happening with your school at this time,  
7 and we know there's some factors that relate to that.  
8 We would like to see those numbers up there but the  
9 reason some kids come to your school -- it's just a  
10 different way of doing things. And so my question  
11 is: what specifically do you have planned to address  
12 raising the achievement of these kids?

13 DR. SIDES: I'll give Lisa a chance to speak  
14 here and then I'll follow up with comments.

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Scott. Good  
16 afternoon. We have several plans. I should start by  
17 saying that we're assessment rich. We assess our  
18 students when they first come in; we do a pre-test  
19 with Scantron; we do a post-test at the end of the  
20 year with Scantron so we can see a gains report. We  
21 use an assessment that's called PLA -- and, forgive  
22 me, I can't remember the acronym right now -- but  
23 this is one that's going to breakdown grade level  
24 specific topics for students and skills that they are  
25 lacking. We have another platform we use called

1 Study Island; it has a pre-test for grade level  
2 specific data. And then we have assessments for  
3 every single lesson that our students are doing. We  
4 have unit assessments, formative assessments with the  
5 online sessions as well, and then we take this data  
6 and we look at it every day basically. And so all of  
7 our teachers meet with an administrator; once every  
8 three weeks we're going to -- on a three-week  
9 rotation. First, you know, I look at the data that  
10 you have across the board of all your students. And  
11 then you're going to go into looking at the topics  
12 that need to be addressed. And so the next week  
13 those are addressed and they are observed. And then  
14 the next week you start feedback, "Let's talk about  
15 how that went; let's talk about what's going to  
16 happen next; and let's role-play," and there's some  
17 coaching that goes along with that with our teachers.  
18 So the professional development is a part of the way  
19 we're going to address that. But we're doing it  
20 within the data itself and the professional growth  
21 plan that each teacher has. Of course, you know,  
22 that starts TESS right off the bat. We also have  
23 Math on Demand for our students from 8:30 to -- 8:00  
24 to 3:30 every day of the week, Monday through  
25 Thursday. A student can at any time go into Math on

1 Demand and get help with what they're struggling with  
2 within the curriculum. And on Friday mornings there  
3 is an office time where they can do a follow-up; "I  
4 came in earlier in the week, I got some help, I'm  
5 still confused; can you clarify some things for me?"  
6 Our teachers this year -- also we've increased the  
7 amount of time with the online instruction of the  
8 students; you heard Scott talk about that earlier.  
9 The data is going to drive who comes, how often they  
10 come, how many times a week they're going to come.  
11 So they come into their weekly session; there's a  
12 formative assessment attached to that, plus all of  
13 the other data-points that we have too. And if we  
14 see things aren't going well then there's a  
15 remediation session to follow-up with that student or  
16 group of students and then later in the week we're  
17 going to do the same thing with students one-on-one.  
18 So we're going to have the at-large group, smaller  
19 groups, one-on-one sessions with the students. And  
20 we also have National Math Lab. When a student is  
21 signed up to do National Math Lab it is an agreement  
22 with the teacher and the parent; it has to be a  
23 teacher recommendation. They are going every single  
24 day; it's a required session that they go to every  
25 day. They can't opt out of it. They have so many

1 unexcused absences and then they're out of the  
2 program and there's a different route we're going to  
3 take at that time with those students. So it's a  
4 little different from Math on Demand. Math on Demand  
5 is help as you need it; National Math Lab is an  
6 actual start-to-finish set of topics you're going to  
7 be working with a teacher throughout the whole year  
8 to assess. We also have taken in grades 6, 7 and 8,  
9 our students who are at the highest risk; it's the  
10 first year we've done this. We've taken those  
11 students and put them with two of our teachers that  
12 we believe are outstanding math teachers and they are  
13 working with these students through the curriculum.  
14 These are children who are working on grade level in  
15 math. And so what they are doing is actually  
16 dictating and prescribing for that student "this is  
17 what you're going to be doing today, this is what you  
18 do tomorrow, this is when you come see me, this is  
19 how we're going to be together, this is the  
20 assessment you're going to take for me; now let's do  
21 it." They are driving every single piece for that  
22 student on a day-to-day basis, but the data again is  
23 driving the decisions they're making for those  
24 students too. For the -- we treat our students  
25 differently from grade band to grade band. So at K

1 to 2 you're going to see a heavy emphasis on progress  
2 monitoring with DIBELS, and the Quals [ps] data as  
3 well is going to be studied at the beginning of the  
4 year with those kindergartners, first time students  
5 in the public school that are in first grade. And a  
6 plan is built with the student -- with the parent for  
7 the K, 1 and 2 students to build math and reading  
8 fluency. There's a math screen that they're going to  
9 be given periodically to be sure that the students  
10 are doing that. You know, we saw the dip in the  
11 grade 2 happening with the literacy and the math and  
12 there are several things that we could say to address  
13 that. We know we had two brand-new teachers who were  
14 hired late in the year on that particular grade  
15 level; one came in October, one took a new -- a  
16 returning teacher actually took a new role and  
17 another teacher was brought in, so it was hard to put  
18 that learning curve down for those teachers. We also  
19 changed the focus of those online sessions for those  
20 students last year so that it was less ITBS test prep  
21 and more curriculum within the session. And we  
22 think, you know, with a second-grader who goes in and  
23 takes ITBS tests again that took the PARCC curriculum  
24 there is a little bit of a gap to be addressed there  
25 too. And so we're moving back to more of that with

1 our students to address that. I think the biggest  
2 thing that we do too is our teachers go through a lot  
3 of professional development throughout the year. We  
4 meet every week for two hours. We do a lot of  
5 collaboration and we've given a lot of focus to the  
6 RTI process that we do every week with our teachers.  
7 So there's been some training and development because  
8 you have to transfer what you've been doing in the  
9 regular brick and mortar setting into a virtual  
10 setting and that's not always easy for some teachers  
11 to do the very first year, the first few months. And  
12 so we have dedicated a lot of time to refining that  
13 process. And I can happily say to you as of a few  
14 weeks ago we're very pleased with the differences and  
15 the growth that's been happening during these RTI  
16 discussions with students who are really struggling.  
17 We have high school advisors who are working with our  
18 9th and 10th graders. Whenever things aren't going  
19 well, they're not showing up for class or they're not  
20 turning in assignments, the high school advisors are  
21 right on it and they're working with the general  
22 education teacher to build a plan for the student to  
23 get them back on track so that they can continue with  
24 their studies and find out what the problem is and  
25 address that. I'd like to just stop and look at my

1 team for just a minute and ask if there was anything  
2 I left out that they may want to add on that piece.  
3 I guess that's it.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Other questions from Panel  
5 Members? Dr. Saunders.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: In looking at your original  
7 waivers I assume do all of those still need to be in  
8 place? Are all of those exercised?

9 DR. SIDES: I have not found waivers that we  
10 need to remove. To take them each one by one and  
11 make sure that they have been exercised, we have  
12 quite an extensive list. So I would just need to go  
13 through and say when was the last time we used this  
14 waiver and submit to you, you know, whatever those  
15 waivers may be that might be removed. But for the  
16 most part, our waivers are important to us because so  
17 many of the things that are designed through  
18 Standards for Accreditation, so many of the things  
19 that are designed are never considering, and probably  
20 shouldn't be considering virtual learning. They're  
21 built for bricks and mortar down to how you hang  
22 flags on a flagpole. So I would say that the waivers  
23 that we have, you know, we will often say -- you know  
24 -- revisit together. But I shouldn't report to you  
25 at this time waivers that we would wish to rescind.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: I know that through this model I  
2 think you do a lot of work to make education possible  
3 for students that otherwise could not see it as being  
4 possible, and I think that's one of the good things  
5 about this particular model that you use now. Of  
6 your existing waivers which ones do you find to be  
7 the most beneficial or the most effective?

8 DR. SIDES: Excuse me. I need to get my binder.  
9 I should have had these tabbed.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: I don't know if it helps you any;  
11 I have Bates 21, Section 7.

12 DR. SIDES: Okay.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Does that line up with yours?

14 DR. SIDES: The most useful --

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Sure.

16 DR. SIDES: -- waivers that we have --  
17 certainly, nurse to student ratio. The nurse to  
18 student ratio would be important when people are not  
19 on site. Academic facilities master plan, those  
20 sorts of -- those sorts of waivers.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you think those are -- when I  
22 say "effective," do you think those are beneficial  
23 because they offer you flexibility and/or the staff  
24 or -- but when I'm looking for effectiveness I'm kind  
25 of looking at which one of these do you think allows

1           you to affect student achievement the most? And it  
2           may be those that you mentioned.

3           DR. SIDES: All right. This just takes a little  
4           bit of time. You'd asked the question earlier about  
5           Teacher Fair Dismissal Act, the amount -- the  
6           frequency with which that is used. That's not  
7           something that we've had to exercise, you know, with  
8           any sort of regularity. I can think of one instance.  
9           Let's see here. You know, so many of these --  
10          example, ALE, library media specialist, Public School  
11          Library Media Technology Act; it's not that we're  
12          using these as much as it is that we would be in a  
13          lot of trouble as it relates to law or Standards for  
14          Accreditation if they didn't -- if we didn't have  
15          them by virtue of not having a library and that sort  
16          of thing.

17          DR. SAUNDERS: And I understand that and I do  
18          appreciate that. I know your model is different. I  
19          mean, it is a different one all together. So I do  
20          understand and appreciate that.

21          DR. SIDES: I appreciate your grace on my answer  
22          there.

23          DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. This question may be for  
24          our staff. You have a waiver currently of 6-21-304;  
25          that was the manner of making purchases, bidding

1 requirements.

2 DR. SIDES: I believe that that was rescinded in  
3 our last -- in our renewal hearing. That was one, in  
4 2012 -- I believe that that was one -- Tripp, can you  
5 just double-check that? But I believe that that was  
6 a waiver that we were asked to rescind in our renewal  
7 hearing. We have a policy for this and we do just  
8 what we should as it relates to law and our policy as  
9 relates to this.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. That's my question. That  
11 was clarified.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Other questions? Dr.  
13 Sides, the current structure that y'all have is  
14 there's 500 students. And we talk a lot about the  
15 Tier 1, Tier 2 students. How many people do you have  
16 on your waiting list for that Tier 1?

17 DR. SIDES: There would be a couple hundred  
18 students is a best guess.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And are those typically  
20 made up of home-school students? Is that kind of  
21 where --

22 DR. SIDES: That would generally be home-school.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you. Dr.  
24 Saunders.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: I have one more question I forgot

1 to ask you. On your waiver for the teacher license  
2 requirement, what percentage of your staff are  
3 licensed in the subjects they teach?

4 DR. SIDES: Well, they are all licensed. We  
5 have really two teachers, three teachers who  
6 basically are teaching at this time; they're teaching  
7 out-of-state. We had a need for teachers who had  
8 experience teaching virtually and that was our most  
9 advantageous move. Overall, you know, the longer-  
10 term plan is that all of our teachers would be  
11 teaching within the state of Arkansas. They are  
12 Arkansas certified in every case and then highly  
13 qualified across multiple subject areas.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So just to follow-up on  
15 that, there are -- how many teachers do you have?

16 DR. SIDES: We currently have the total -- and  
17 I'm not thinking about family academic support -- 35  
18 including also special education, not considering  
19 those that are working on the family academic support  
20 side or classified employees who are administrative  
21 in nature.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: So of those 35 how many have  
23 Arkansas license?

24 DR. SIDES: Of those 35, every one will have  
25 Arkansas licensure.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Currently?

2 DR. SIDES: That's correct.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: I mean, they all have --

4 DR. SIDES: Yes.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: -- Arkansas license right now or  
6 they are in the process of getting it?

7 DR. SIDES: They currently have.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: They currently have it?

9 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

11 DR. SIDES: Yeah.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other follow-up  
13 questions? Okay. Without any more discussion I will  
14 entertain a motion.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: I make a motion to accept their  
16 application for a five-year renewal.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion to  
18 accept the renewal. Is there one -- there was a  
19 removal also of the amendment for vocal music. Is  
20 that correct?

21 MS. CLAY: (Nodding head up and down.)

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and  
23 a second -- do we have a second?

24 MS. PFEFFER: I'll second.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and

1 a second. Any discussion? All in favor say "aye."

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All those opposed? Okay.  
4 The motion passes.

5 DR. SIDES: Thank you all.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We'll take a break, a 10-  
7 minute break.

8 (OFF THE RECORD - 3:36 P.M.)

9 (BACK ON THE RECORD - 3:45 P.M.)

10 A-9: REQUEST FOR DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL  
11 RENEWAL: MOUNTAIN HOME HIGH SCHOOL CAREER ACADEMY

12 MR. BRADBERRY: If you've joined us online,  
13 would you please identify yourself?

14 MS. BROWN: Yes. This is Mountain Home High  
15 School Career Academy.

16 MR. BRADBERRY: If you would, turn your computer  
17 down so we don't get feedback please.

18 MS. BROWN: Okay. The computer is down now.

19 MR. BRADBERRY: Okay. And what is your name?

20 MS. BROWN: My name is Dana Brown and I'm the  
21 principal here at Mountain Home High School Career  
22 Academy. And I have a panel with me as well.

23 MS. HOGUE: Mountain Home is a district  
24 conversion charter asking for a five-year renewal.  
25 They've had their charter since 2003

1                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. If we've got people  
2 here that will speak for the charter or against, even  
3 though you're online, if you would, raise your right  
4 hand so I can swear you in. Do you swear or affirm  
5 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but  
6 the truth?

7                   (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

8                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Okay. Those  
9 speaking for the charter you'll have 20 minutes to  
10 present. We're looking at your PowerPoint, so we'll  
11 go ahead and proceed.

12                   SUPT. MYERS: My name is Lonnie Myers; I'm  
13 superintendent of Mountain Home Public Schools. I  
14 first of all want to tell you how excited we are here  
15 to request the renewal of our charter application.  
16 We think this application is consistent with our  
17 mission and vision. Our mission and vision says  
18 Committed to Excellence in Education, Every Student -  
19 Every Time. The waivers that you will be hearing  
20 about today we sought last year through the Schools  
21 of Innovation and we were advised by Commissioner  
22 Kimbrell and the ADE to seek these innovative  
23 concepts through the charter renewal, which is what  
24 we're doing today. This application will seek  
25 flexibility in teacher licensure and mandatory

1 student attendance, as well as student access to  
2 offerings in our keystone curriculum. We're really  
3 excited that you're going to hear our request today.  
4 I can assure you that as superintendent of Mountain  
5 Home Public Schools, the Mountain Home High School  
6 Career Academy and the board of education also  
7 supports this effort. Thank you. And I'll turn it  
8 over to Principal Brown now.

9 MS. BROWN: Am I supposed to see the -- okay,  
10 there it is. Thank you. In the first slide, we talk  
11 about whenever we're reviewing the charter we always  
12 reflect, revise and re-energize. We always look at  
13 our approach to change through the work of Peter  
14 Drucker, where systematic change requires a  
15 willingness to look at change as an opportunity.  
16 What I'd like to share with you today is a little bit  
17 of our story to get some of you up-to-speed, since  
18 2003, as well as share some of our accolades and  
19 recognitions that we've received under this charter.  
20 We are a wall-to-wall career academy model. In 2001,  
21 we started research to restructure and redesign our  
22 high school into this wall-to-wall career academy  
23 model. In 2003, we partnered with the ADE Charter  
24 Department and became a conversion charter. What our  
25 wall-to-wall career academy looks like, it's three

1 small learning communities which we call career  
2 academies. They were created to support programs of  
3 study that we currently have in our community  
4 partnerships. What you're going to find that's  
5 different with our model that you have not seen  
6 throughout the rest of this -- you know -- throughout  
7 today is that we are a traditional high school; we  
8 follow all of your accountability guidelines followed  
9 by ADE. The thing that makes us different is the  
10 philosophy behind the career academy model, the  
11 charter supports this model. So that's why we  
12 decided to become a conversion charter high school.  
13 We have been a conversion charter high school since  
14 2003, and this particular charter supports the career  
15 academy model which is research-based. It follows  
16 the National Career Academy Coalition national  
17 standards of practice, which also aligns very well  
18 with the Advance Ed. standards of practice. So if  
19 you could go to the next slide please --

20 You can see our mission and vision and belief  
21 statements dovetail very nicely with our national  
22 standards of practice. One thing again that you're  
23 going to see throughout this model is that there is a  
24 collaborative culture that has been established.  
25 What we're looking at is through our mission, vision

1           and belief statement we have embedded our community  
2           within our school; we have a strong student voice  
3           where our students are very active in their  
4           educational process, as well as transitional  
5           programs. So you're going to see a lot of  
6           stakeholder involvement throughout this particular  
7           model. Next slide please.

8                     Our three academies consist of: communication,  
9           arts and business, or CAB; our ACME, which is  
10          agriculture, construction, manufacturing and  
11          engineering; and health and human services, HHS. So  
12          next slide please.

13                    One of the philosophies behind this model is  
14          shared leadership. One of the things that you'll  
15          hear me say over and over again is that people  
16          support what they help create. And here at Mountain  
17          Home High School Career Academy we empower our  
18          teachers to be teacher leaders and are very involved  
19          with the instruction and curriculum that is delivered  
20          to our students. We have academy leaders, we have  
21          department chairs, and we have an administrative  
22          team, and we work very closely together; it's not a  
23          chain of -- it's a chain of connection, is what we  
24          like to call it, rather than a chain of command. So  
25          we're very supportive of that collaborative nature.

1 Next slide please.

2 Any time that you redesign a high school and do  
3 things that are outside of the box, like the charter  
4 allows us to do, you have to think differently. And  
5 one of the things that I really believe that is one  
6 of the main reasons that we have sustained since  
7 2001, with the research, and 2003, you know, from the  
8 beginning of the implementation process is our  
9 embedding of the community within our programs, but  
10 also the leadership component because you really do  
11 have to look at change in a different way. The  
12 principal, in my role, I have to look at my  
13 relationship with the academy coordinator, Brigitte  
14 Shipman, who is here with us today. You have to be  
15 able to, as Rick LeVine said, be loose or tight  
16 within your leadership style and be comfortable with  
17 that. Some things I have to be loose with, some  
18 things I have to be more structured with. So I think  
19 being able to have that flexibility, rather than like  
20 a dictatorship, I think that that helps support our  
21 model. We do have -- we have empowered our teachers;  
22 we do have teacher leaders, which are academy  
23 leaders. We also have a very strong freshman  
24 transition bridge program, which I also have Ron  
25 Czanstkowski who is also here, who is our junior high

1 principal. That relationship between 9th grade and  
2 high school, which we are on two separate campuses --  
3 our junior high is 8th and 9th grade and our high  
4 school is grades 10 through 12, so you have two  
5 different administrations on each site. However, our  
6 freshman transition academy is located on a different  
7 campus, so you really do have to develop that  
8 relationship with administrator to administrator and  
9 be able to work -- to be able to transition kids in  
10 the 9th grade academy. We do look at defining  
11 leadership roles because you can't just tell teachers  
12 that they are the leaders; you have to build a  
13 leader; you have to mentor them; you have to provide  
14 them with the appropriate professional development.  
15 Within our academies we always make sure that we team  
16 and we always look to Reflect, Revise and Re-Energize  
17 each time that we are looking at our fix-it list for  
18 each -- anything that we need to improve on. Next  
19 slide.

20 Our career academy model would not be able to be  
21 supported and could not have sustained since 2003  
22 unless we have all the key players that you see on  
23 this particular slide. We have to have the support  
24 of district leadership where the board supports us,  
25 the superintendent supports us, and understands what

1 it is that we're doing, because again we're looking  
2 at learning differently; we're trying to provide real  
3 world learning opportunities for our students, embed  
4 within the community so that they're able to  
5 transition to that post-secondary plan, whether it is  
6 a career -- going straight into, you know, a career  
7 or into college. Building leadership -- again,  
8 having a principal that has the relationship with the  
9 teachers and allows the teachers to be teacher  
10 leaders, as well as the administration from the 9th  
11 grade freshman transition is also critical. Parents  
12 have to understand what it is that you're doing.  
13 Again, we also have to have community resources  
14 because if we ask our community to think outside the  
15 box with us we have to have them a part of our plan.  
16 We really do focus on state support, not only with  
17 the charter but also with Arkansas Department of  
18 Career Education, and national support. We have a  
19 very close relationship with the National Career  
20 Academy Coalition which is the entity that actually  
21 helps with our evaluation process. And again all of  
22 the work that we've done since 2003 could not have  
23 been accomplished if we were not a charter high  
24 school. Next slide.

25 Any time -- again, kind of the theme of this is

1 to reflect and revise any of our projects in our  
2 programs. So, you know, whenever we got ready to  
3 renew our charter that was an opportunity for us to  
4 reflect on our practices and best practices that we  
5 have done since 2003. Well, we've come a long way  
6 since 2003. I'm really excited to share some of the  
7 things that have happened since 2003. We were very  
8 excited whenever we did renew to the Arkansas School  
9 Board, State Board; they had said -- one of the  
10 comments was that we were the best-kept secret in the  
11 state of Arkansas, and so that was quite a  
12 compliment. But, again, we are a very research-based  
13 model. We went through an evaluation with National  
14 Career Academy Coalition where they look at their  
15 standards of practice. This is a very rigorous  
16 evaluation that we had to go through. They had  
17 members from students that sat as a panel for  
18 questions; they had parents from each academy,  
19 students from each academy, teachers from each  
20 academy, business partners from each academy that  
21 were interviewed separately to see if we were  
22 actually doing what we said we were doing. And it  
23 was very -- there were three levels: one is in  
24 progress, which means that you may be doing some of  
25 the standards very well, some of them you may not be;

1 one is certified, which is the next level where  
2 you're meeting some of the national standards but you  
3 really need to work on some of the other connections;  
4 and model status is the highest status that you can  
5 receive. And we received model status, which means  
6 in all three academies where we met or exceeded the  
7 national standards of practice set forth for the  
8 National Career Academy Coalition, which is really  
9 unheard of because most -- there are very few wall-  
10 to-wall career academy models where you are open to  
11 every child gets the opportunity to be a part of the  
12 way that we've set up our learning community. Next  
13 slide.

14 Within the National Career Academy Coalition  
15 family, the Ford Foundation is another evaluation  
16 process that we went through where it was evaluating  
17 our relationship with our community -- how are you  
18 embedding your community within your school. And the  
19 Ford Foundation, again a very rigorous process, found  
20 that our high school -- we received the highest  
21 level, the national designation of leadership in a  
22 high school redesign at the professional level in a  
23 rural setting. So, again, you know, we're not a  
24 Little Rock school, we're not a Fayetteville, we're  
25 not a Springdale, so some of our limitations are

1 because we are in an isolated area. So for us to,  
2 you know, to receive that particular level was quite  
3 an honor. Next page, or next slide.

4 From the Ford Foundation some of the best  
5 practices that we brought back -- and had the  
6 opportunity to mentor with Sandy Mittelsteadt, who  
7 actually wrote the book A Toolkit for Career  
8 Academies that helps schools to design career academy  
9 models -- we were allowed and had the opportunity to  
10 receive her as a mentor, as well as Rick Delano and  
11 Cheryl Carrier, which are all affiliated with the  
12 Ford Foundation. Some of the best practices that we  
13 used are teacher externships where teachers actually  
14 go out into our community and they are front-loaded  
15 with a packet which you received in your -- in our  
16 application; it shows you exactly what teachers are  
17 supposed to look for and tie into their curriculum,  
18 what it is that they found so that they're able to  
19 build integrative projects from what they've learned  
20 in our community. And so that was one of the pieces  
21 of the Ford Foundation best practices that we brought  
22 back. Also, the business advisory board -- we have a  
23 very active business advisory board. Our business  
24 advisory board provides us the opportunity to engage  
25 teachers in teacher externships. They help us place

1           our students in student internships. They also help  
2           our community understand exactly what it is that  
3           we're doing here at the high school to continue to  
4           embed the community so that the kids really  
5           understand, you know, what it is that they are  
6           interested in doing whenever they get out of high  
7           school. But I think one of the more important  
8           lessons that our kids are learning is whenever  
9           they're exposed to internships that they see what  
10          they don't want to do, which in the long-run helps  
11          them with that post-secondary transition planning.  
12          Next slide.

13           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Brown, you have about  
14          four minutes left.

15           MS. BROWN: Oh, my goodness. Okay. Well, then  
16          I'm just going to skip over some of our next slides.

17           CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Now you will get an  
18          additional five minutes if there's nobody that's  
19          going to speak against you though.

20           MS. BROWN: Okay. You know what our charter  
21          waivers are; we've talked about flexible scheduling;  
22          we've talked about -- I'm sure that there will be  
23          questions with that. One of the things, the big  
24          piece, if you go to the next slide -- two more slides  
25          -- our delay is really hard. Our common planning

1 time is one of the biggest pieces. We have a late-  
2 start day where our two academies meet and -- for a  
3 common plan, where they desegregate data to where  
4 they are able to see exactly where our students are  
5 struggling with weak student learning expectations  
6 and bring in to where they develop integrative  
7 projects. Also, we look at integrative project  
8 development during that particular time while the  
9 other academy is working on a remediation process.  
10 Next slide.

11 Our ACT scores continue to be above the state  
12 and national average. Next slide.

13 I'm just going to talk to you since I have just  
14 very little time left. Some of our best practices,  
15 you'll see, is our freshman transition where we do  
16 teach our students a philosophy of not what do you  
17 want to be when you grow up, but what is it that --  
18 what is your learning style, what career interests do  
19 you have. So that's the philosophy behind our  
20 freshman transition, not what you want to be when you  
21 grow up. Next slide.

22 We have a very active mentoring process, a  
23 mentoring program, where the first Wednesday of every  
24 month 100 community members come see exactly what it  
25 is that we're doing here at the high school. They

1 partner with an advisory group, like a homeroom, if  
2 you will, and they stay with that group for three  
3 years so that they're able to teach kids those  
4 lifelong lessons of how to interview, how to build a  
5 resume, you know, internships; they are really a  
6 networking process. Next slide.

7 Our business advisory board -- the next slide,  
8 we really do cooperate with our community as well as  
9 our other schools where we do have integrative  
10 projects where -- you can read; I won't -- you have a  
11 copy of this, so I won't read through what our  
12 integrative projects are. But that is how we embed  
13 our community within our integrative projects, as  
14 well as our other schools. Because you know whenever  
15 you bring in a high school student to mentor a  
16 younger grade that usually makes a really lasting  
17 impression.

18 One of the things that -- I'm just going to skip  
19 to our recognitions. We were recognized and were  
20 featured on CNBC Education Nation for one of the top  
21 10 schools in the nation with Solutions to Education  
22 in 2012. And if you go to our website you can  
23 actually click on the link and see it. We do consult  
24 and we do have schools that come to see us from  
25 across the state of Arkansas, from across the nation;

1 we've worked with the Maryland Department of  
2 Education, Mississippi State Department of Education,  
3 as well as -- as quickly as last night, as early as  
4 last night we were asked to talk with Nebraska  
5 Department of Education to look at how we are doing  
6 this particular model. We are also working with Hans  
7 Meader, who was with the U.S. Department of  
8 Education, who now has the National Center for  
9 College and Career Transitions, NC3T, a webinar  
10 series, and working to build professional development  
11 for some of the rural schools in the state of New  
12 York to begin with. So we have been doing a lot of  
13 work to really provide opportunities for our students  
14 that give them experiences through charter waivers,  
15 like internships, to allow them to go out into our  
16 community and do things differently and experience  
17 that particular transition before they actually spend  
18 the money to, you know, to make their college plans.  
19 And I am out of breath and I am really sorry but I  
20 really tried to hurry, because we are so excited  
21 about what it is that we're doing here in Mountain  
22 Home and I could just talk to you for hours. But I  
23 thank you so much for the opportunity to present this  
24 information to you and you didn't make us drive in  
25 the bad weather. So, again, we are very appreciative

1 of that.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Is  
3 there anybody here to speak in opposition? Okay.  
4 Ms. Brown, is there anything else you wanted to add?

5 MS. BROWN: Oh, I could go on for hours, if you  
6 would let me, if you would give me more than 20  
7 minutes. We've been sitting here since 8:30. And I  
8 just really have to commend you guys because the last  
9 couple of times that I've presented this renewal  
10 we've actually had to present to the State Board of  
11 Education. And just to be able to see the workings  
12 of the Panel in that you do truly, you know, value  
13 our kids' education, I just really appreciate it very  
14 much. And I just -- like I said, we are so excited  
15 about what it is that we do here at Mountain Home.  
16 Again, like I said, we help schools and help build  
17 that mentor relationship with them, to help them  
18 better their -- you know -- their students'  
19 education. So I could talk for hours, so --

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. I think we'll go  
21 ahead and turn that over to questions. Dr. Saunders,  
22 do you have a question?

23 MS. BROWN: All I see is my PowerPoint. I said  
24 on our screen we're looking -- where we can see on  
25 the computer, all I see is my PowerPoint. I can't

1 see the people who are asking the questions. Okay.  
2 We can see you now.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: All right. Am I there?

4 MS. BROWN: Yes, you are. Thank you.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you. I want to go into the  
6 new waivers requested and I'm just going to start  
7 with number one on the licensure.

8 MS. BROWN: On licensure for the new waiver --  
9 let me get to my -- the three areas that we're asking  
10 for for waivers is our internship program, a new work  
11 permit program, as well as some of the classes that  
12 ASU-Mountain Home actually teaches. For the  
13 internship program, what we would like to request is  
14 that any licensure can apply to our internship  
15 program where sometimes we have to focus on the whole  
16 child, and sometimes it's an elementary teacher, as  
17 much as for that particular licensure versus, you  
18 know -- so any licensure is what we would recommend  
19 or what we were requesting. One of the things that  
20 goes hand-in-hand with that is, you know, we do live  
21 in a rural setting; we do live, you know, two-and-a-  
22 half hours away from anything. And so a lot of times  
23 our applicant pool is a little bit lower than what,  
24 say, it might be in Bentonville or any of those other  
25 places. So the internship and work permit, that's

1 pretty much the same licensure waiver that we're  
2 asking for. The one that's different is the ASU  
3 credentials; you know, you have college professors  
4 that are credentialed to teach the criminal justice,  
5 the allied health for the EMT's and the CNA's. And  
6 what we would like for our kids to have is the  
7 opportunity to go over and have their senior year  
8 look differently and that is what the -- you know --  
9 Dr. Myers referenced earlier that we applied to the  
10 Schools of Innovation and then they directed us back,  
11 that "you could request this from your charter  
12 because this is something that you do differently."  
13 So what we did is, with the Schools of Innovation, we  
14 talked to them about what would it look like if we  
15 put it in the charter as well. So we did have the  
16 committee that was requested with students, parents,  
17 community members, teachers, administration,  
18 counselors, and our work in our new waivers truly had  
19 the voice of every stakeholder that we have. And so  
20 our focus has been making our senior year look  
21 differently and we really want to look at even like  
22 our work permit program, one of the things that we  
23 really focus on. You know, some of our kids, with  
24 our graduation rate, looking at how we want to  
25 improve our graduation rate, sometimes we had seniors

1           that, you know, for whatever reason in our area they  
2           have to work and they're the main income for their  
3           family. And so they have -- you know -- they have  
4           messed up and lack that one credit of English. They  
5           won't come back because they're not able to leave and  
6           go to work. And so we really want to look at meeting  
7           the needs of our students and our community to allow  
8           our kids that opportunity to actually graduate. And  
9           so looking and making the senior year look  
10          differently is what we would like to do. And going  
11          back to ASU-Mountain Home, they're credentialed to  
12          teach at the college level but they don't hold a  
13          teacher licensure and so that's kind of the area  
14          where we wanted to waive the licensure. In our  
15          original waivers you do allow us to do that with our  
16          First program and with our Mash program, and we just  
17          kind of wanted to tag on and expand to that original  
18          waiver.

19                 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So the waiver you are  
20          requesting is specifically limited for internship,  
21          work permit, the ASU-MH and technical center --

22                 MS. BROWN: Correct.

23                 DR. SAUNDERS: -- as well as the service line?

24                 MS. BROWN: Yes.

25                 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. One of the waivers

1 included, 6-17-302, Licensure of the Principals --

2 MS. BROWN: Oh, no. That would not -- we would  
3 not want that waiver. Again, we worked -- that was  
4 some of the work that we pulled from and it was  
5 suggested that we use whenever we were looking at our  
6 Schools of Innovation. And so we kept those in there  
7 but, no, we want to keep -- take that -- scratch that  
8 out because every principal -- I'm certified,  
9 obviously. I've been doing this since 2000. And we  
10 have -- both my assistant principals are credentialed  
11 as well, and so is the junior high principal. So  
12 that one needs to be taken out. That's not even an  
13 issue.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So we need to withdraw 6-  
15 17-302 --

16 MS. BROWN: Yes.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: -- as well as Standards of  
18 Accreditation 15.02 that's for principals?

19 MS. BROWN: Yes, sir.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: And Arkansas Code 6-17-909 has  
21 been repealed?

22 MS. BROWN: Okay. I don't know what that --  
23 which one that is.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm under the impression, Ms.  
25 Clay, it has been repealed. Is that correct?

1 MS. BROWN: Yes.

2 MS. CLAY: It has been repealed. And I might be  
3 able to offer a little bit of clarification on what  
4 waivers I think would be inclusive in this licensure  
5 waiver. They've already withdrawn 6-17-302 and  
6 Standards for Accreditation 15.02 -- it's been a long  
7 day, I'm sorry; 6-17-909 has been repealed; 6-15-  
8 1004, they already have a waiver of, so that would be  
9 duplicative. So the only waivers that I think that  
10 they need for this licensure piece are Arkansas Code  
11 Annotated 6-17-309, 6-17-401, 6-17-902, and the ADE  
12 Rules Governing Educator Licensure Section 9.01. So  
13 if they would be agreeable to that, that may speed up  
14 this -- at least the licensure piece of the waiver.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Are you agreeable to that,  
16 Ms. Brown?

17 MS. BROWN: Yes, sir. Again, I would -- I mean,  
18 Kendra has been very nice to help us through this  
19 process and we really appreciated her help. But,  
20 again, we may have missed some of the ones that she  
21 had said. So, yes, we'll agree with that. Because  
22 again the principal issue is not an issue.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Saunders, do you  
24 have further questions?

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. And moving down to number

1 two, class size and teaching load --

2 MS. BROWN: What that actually refers to is the  
3 number of kids only in the work permit program and  
4 the internship program.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: The same ones that are listed in  
6 the previous waiver?

7 MS. BROWN: No. Well, it is because of the  
8 internship and work permit program; it's within that  
9 particular one. And whenever we were told to put  
10 them, we said to group them together and that's the  
11 only reason why that's grouped with it.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So number two, for a  
13 waiver for class size and teaching load, would only  
14 apply to the internship and work permit. Correct?

15 MS. BROWN: Yes, sir.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: No content classes included.  
17 Correct?

18 MS. BROWN: Correct. Yes. Any licensure is  
19 what we would request. And the reason that we want  
20 that is because we want to have more kids -- one of  
21 my slides, if you noticed, this last year we were  
22 able to place in our little rural community I believe  
23 -- yeah, 167 students had the opportunity to  
24 experience a real-world learning application. And  
25 they were able to do it either in first semester or

1 second semester, so we were able to have a little bit  
2 of flexibility. Current programs do not allow that,  
3 so that's why we need the waiver that we have and we  
4 need the flexibility.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Number three, mandatory  
6 attendance.

7 MS. BROWN: Again, we want our senior year to  
8 look different and those would apply to internships  
9 and work permits. What we would like to see is --  
10 you know -- currently, seniors have a full schedule;  
11 well, we would like for them to have a full schedule  
12 but we would like to have the opportunity to have  
13 like -- we're on an A/B block, so we have 90-minute  
14 periods. And what we would like to see is still  
15 provide students the opportunity to have breakfast or  
16 lunch, if they need it; so again hitting that  
17 targeted group that we're really trying to focus on.  
18 So we would like for students to attend our campus  
19 two periods, two consecutive periods, have the  
20 opportunity to eat lunch, and then leave for  
21 internships, double-block it -- either internship or  
22 work permit or ASU-Mountain Home. Or the reverse --  
23 maybe they go and take one of the criminal justice  
24 classes in the very beginning of the day and then  
25 come at lunch and then finish their day if they're in

1 sports or band or whatever or an ag-class that they  
2 want to take in the afternoon. So we really want to  
3 focus on what their schedule looks like and to have  
4 that flexibility to make their senior year look  
5 different and relevant. Because what we're finding  
6 is our kids are finishing the majority of their  
7 classes, you know, by their junior year, and so we  
8 really want to provide them with different  
9 opportunities in their senior year and we really  
10 think that this waiver would allow us to do that.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And I understand the need  
12 for that model and I'm trying -- I'm having a tough  
13 time of understanding. If they have a teacher on  
14 record per the licensure waiver, from number one --  
15 let's just assume for the internship portion they  
16 have a teacher on record, they also have a waiver  
17 from the class size, then why is there a need -- why  
18 do you need a waiver from attendance? Because then  
19 won't the student be in attendance to have the  
20 necessary number one and number two?

21 MS. BROWN: Actually, they would be. That's a  
22 good point. We just wanted to make sure all of our  
23 bases were covered because the one law said that they  
24 have to have a full schedule and we just really  
25 wanted to make sure that we were allowed to have them

1 off-campus, even though -- and they would be tied to  
2 a teacher of record, so you're actually correct. So  
3 that was just one of those -- I guess a safety net on  
4 our part to make sure we were covered and to be able  
5 to provide that opportunity to make that senior year  
6 relevant. So, yes, I think that would actually fit  
7 within what we've already asked for.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: And so it almost sounds to me  
9 like it needs to be either one and two or number  
10 three? And probably appropriately to be number one  
11 and two and to exclude number three?

12 MS. BROWN: I think more appropriately one and  
13 two. You are correct. Because that would allow us  
14 to do exactly what we are wanting to do if you  
15 granted those first two. Because, again, like you  
16 said, that's a very good point; if they are attached  
17 to a teacher of record, which they would be at that  
18 particular point -- if you grant this, then that  
19 would be in their schedule. So, yes. I have to work  
20 through it. Sorry.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: No, that's okay. And I really  
22 meant it as a question to make sure I was  
23 understanding it properly and I stand to be corrected  
24 if I'm not understanding it correctly. I don't think  
25 it's in our best interest to grant waivers that are

1 not needed or exercised, and so I just want to make  
2 sure that it is needed -- and if it is, I don't have  
3 an issue with it. But I want to make sure that it is  
4 needed. So you're under the impression -- you feel  
5 that number three is not necessary?

6 MS. BROWN: I don't think number three is  
7 necessary, as long as we're able to do what we want  
8 to do with it with number one and two. Again, I  
9 think that would be correct. And I'm looking at Dr.  
10 Myers as well -- and hang on just a second, I think  
11 he's -- okay, I think we're good. Yes. So as long  
12 as we're able to put in that, that would be -- yes,  
13 that meets our needs.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: So you do wish to withdraw number  
15 three. Is that correct?

16 MS. BROWN: Yes.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Moving on to number four,  
18 can you talk about number four please?

19 MS. BROWN: And that's the keystone curriculum?

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, ma'am.

21 MS. BROWN: Okay. With the keystone curriculum,  
22 I'm going to defer to Brigitte Shipman and to Ron  
23 Czanstkowski. Brigitte Shipman is our career academy  
24 coordinator; she actually started our keystone  
25 program as the teacher. And then Ron Czanstkowski,

1 I'll let him add in as well since he's the 9th grade  
2 -- 8th and 9th grade principal at our junior high.  
3 So that way you can hear from more than just me.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

5 MS. SHIPMAN: Hi, this is Brigitte Shipman.  
6 Yes, as Ms. Brown has stated, I began with the  
7 freshman transition program and actually taught  
8 keystone when that curriculum was originally being  
9 formed throughout the state. And the focus is, of  
10 course, trying to give those freshmen a last chance  
11 so to really engage students in school at that age  
12 level based on the data and research nationally. And  
13 what we found was that we keep talking about the  
14 freshman year being the most important year of a  
15 student's life and then hearing that when they have  
16 nine weeks left in their freshman year. So the  
17 freshman transition program is a philosophy for the  
18 career academy school. We have been trying to listen  
19 to the kids, and so our whole freshman program that  
20 has been nationally recognized has been developed by  
21 listening to our kids. And our students have  
22 developed this program and we listen to their voices  
23 seriously. And when they asked me, "Miss Shipman,  
24 this is really important; why am I just now hearing  
25 it," it was really hard as a teacher to answer kids

1 and say, "I have no good reason." And so with  
2 listening to our kids and collaborating, we just feel  
3 like giving our kids the change to succeed in their  
4 most important year of high school needs to be heard  
5 and needs to be supported before the end of their  
6 freshman year.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So what is it specifically  
8 you're asking a waiver from?

9 MR. CZANSTKOWSKI: This is Ron Czanstkowski,  
10 junior high principal. Thank you for hearing us.  
11 What we're asking for is basically to take the  
12 keystone curriculum -- and we teach it to about half  
13 the 9th grade kids in the first semester and the  
14 other half the second semester -- and just move it  
15 down one semester. And we would teach the second  
16 semester 8th grade kids and first semester 9th grade  
17 kids. That way they'll get the full benefit of the  
18 entire curriculum of keystone and the time to make  
19 adjustments and the time to individualize their  
20 experience in that class and their education  
21 throughout the two years they are in my building in  
22 8th and 9th grade. What that would also do is really  
23 also give us a chance to work with the middle school,  
24 with the 7th grade teachers and principals and  
25 counselors, in drill down really deep with individual

1 kids. Because we're going to have to identify the  
2 most mature students that we could find in the 8th  
3 grade to take that course and it would not be based  
4 on grades, because sometimes the kids with the best  
5 grades don't necessarily have the most maturity. So  
6 we would find the most mature kids that by the time  
7 Christmas was over they could have the curriculum,  
8 benefit from it, learn from it, and then have a full  
9 9th grade year to experience it. And then those  
10 other students we would have to do in the first  
11 semester 9th grade year. And we wouldn't have to  
12 rush anything for the high school, wouldn't have to  
13 do anything where we didn't feel like they had a  
14 chance to get the full benefit and ask questions --  
15 and parents also ask a lot of questions for the  
16 keystone. It really is the most important class, in  
17 my opinion, in the students' experience of high  
18 school. It's not academically the most important  
19 class but for the experience and the enjoyment and  
20 the direction for their three or four years of high  
21 school, and even the post-secondary experience  
22 they're going to have, it's a vital, critical class.  
23 And I've had a chance to work among them 24 years; I  
24 worked as a math teacher at the high school for 10,  
25 worked with Ms. Brown here as assistant principal for

1           10, then I transferred to the junior high four years  
2           ago to be the head principal. And after listening to  
3           the kids this is one of the biggest things that I  
4           think our kids are lacking -- or not lacking, but our  
5           kids need is just a little bit more time. We're not  
6           asking them to do it in the first semester of the  
7           grade; we're asking second semester 9th grade and  
8           then first -- or second semester 8th grade and first  
9           semester 9th grade.

10           DR. SAUNDERS: And this particular -- this  
11           keystone curriculum, I guess my question is: what's  
12           stopping you from doing that right now without our  
13           approval?

14           MR. CZANSTKOWSKI: Well, we asked that through  
15           the Schools of Innovation last spring and we were --  
16           like Ms. Brown said before, we were directed to  
17           approach this through the charter because it really  
18           is something that we could do and that we want to do  
19           and that we're hearing from our kids and our parents.

20           MS. BROWN: Well, and then also keystone  
21           curriculum was actually in one of our original  
22           waivers within the charter to replace career  
23           orientation from the 8th grade level and add keystone  
24           to the 9th grade level. And so that's where keystone  
25           actually originated was within this charter. And so

1 whenever we did apply for Schools of Innovation  
2 that's why they went back to "you need to go through  
3 the charter to do this."

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, we might need  
5 some help with this. So is there -- there's -- right  
6 now there's a -- we have a waiver with Mountain Home  
7 to waive career orientation 8th grade?

8 MS. SHIPMAN: Yes.

9 MR. CZANSTKOWSKI: Yes, sir.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: How do we have a waiver for  
11 8th grade when their charter is 9 through 12?

12 MS. BROWN: Actually, if you look in the charter  
13 we grew our end-of-course testing population and 8th  
14 grade is actually included with that for algebra  
15 already, and so 8th grade is in essence within the  
16 charter.

17 MR. CZANSTKOWSKI: And we just had a Standards  
18 Assurance visit this fall and the gentleman that came  
19 and went through all of our information asked me  
20 those questions you're asking right now and they were  
21 very happy with how we're approaching all the stuff  
22 with our students and I think with the keystone  
23 class, with the curriculum replacing the career  
24 orientation.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay.

1 MS. CLAY: Okay. A couple of things. Eighth  
2 grade is not included in the current charter, but  
3 don't be alarmed because what they're doing with  
4 their career orientation can be done outside of a  
5 charter school. I believe what happened -- this  
6 charter originated in 2003, so I don't have the  
7 history on exactly what happened. But what would  
8 happen if someone were to request that today, we  
9 would redirect them to Career Ed. for them -- for  
10 Career Ed. to look at the curriculum and they would  
11 decide whether that's appropriate to substitute for  
12 the career orientation course. So what they're  
13 requesting does not need a waiver through you all; it  
14 may need a waiver through Career Ed. and that's  
15 something that I don't have the expertise on to know  
16 their process and requirements, but someone over  
17 there would.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Brown, do you  
19 understand that? The way it's currently structured,  
20 we can't grant a waiver or we can't let you -- we  
21 can't waive career orientation for you at this point,  
22 is my understanding. That would be a request that  
23 needs to be made through Career Education.

24 MS. BROWN: Well, that's actually already been  
25 waived in 2003, so that's actually been in place

1 since 2003.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And is that --

3 MS. BROWN: I mean, we've already got -- we've  
4 already gone through several technical assistance  
5 visits with Arkansas Department of Career Education  
6 and, I mean, we've never been cited for it and they  
7 know that's what we're doing. And so that's actually  
8 -- that's not what we're asking you to do; we're just  
9 asking to restructure keystone, which is actually in  
10 the original charter.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And is that something that  
12 requires a waiver or can they just do that, Ms. Clay?

13 MS. CLAY: I believe if it's -- if the keystone  
14 curriculum was something that was approved by Career  
15 Ed., then restructuring that curriculum or how it's  
16 offered or when it's offered you would need to go  
17 through Career Ed.

18 MS. BROWN: See, and that's kind of where this  
19 whole process kind of gets muddy because in 2003 we  
20 were recognized with the Pioneer Award for coupling  
21 career orientation -- you know -- the career  
22 education with charter schools from this model. And  
23 so we've worked hand-in-hand with this and, again,  
24 we're continuing to be directed back to the charter  
25 to be allowed to do this. So it's kind of like we're

1 in a vicious cycle, so I'm not sure where we need to  
2 go with this. Because, again, when we go to ACE they  
3 tell us we need to get it through the charter, you  
4 know, so I'm not sure really where to go with this.

5 DR. JONES: Hi, this is Debbie Jones with  
6 Learning Services. And I compare this -- and I just  
7 spoke with Ms. Porter two weeks ago -- with a lot of  
8 the schools that have chosen to transition the  
9 keyboarding down. Both your keystone and your career  
10 orientation are CT courses, and just as is the  
11 keyboarding, and so what she told me to tell school  
12 districts to do was to submit to them a yearly waiver  
13 so that you can move that course down. But that is a  
14 CTE course for which they make the calls. And then  
15 she said that they would have that waiver when  
16 Standards came to visit and Standards would recognize  
17 that waiver.

18 MS. BROWN: Okay.

19 MR. CZANTKOWSKI: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Other questions?  
21 Okay. Ms. Pfeffer.

22 MS. PFEFFER: Hi, this is Ivy Pfeffer; I'm with  
23 Educator Licensure. I had a couple of questions  
24 about the expanded work permit program and it may  
25 kind of go along the same lines as what we've been

1 talking about with Career Ed. And I notice on page  
2 23 you go into acknowledging that teachers must have  
3 the career preparation licensure code, which is an  
4 endorsement to a standard license through Career Ed.  
5 And so I guess my first question would be have you  
6 worked with Career Ed. on this where it would allow  
7 any licensure to add that endorsement?

8 MS. BROWN: Well, what we would like to do is go  
9 through ADE and the charter to actually get that  
10 permission and not go with ACE on the particular  
11 program. Because they are really enforcing JAG and  
12 that was what their current rules and regs are asking  
13 us to do, and we want to make it an ADE-approved  
14 course through the charter.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, is that -- I  
16 don't think that's an allowable thing. We can't --  
17 we don't have the authority to waive CTE  
18 requirements. Is that correct?

19 MS. CLAY: That's correct. I mean, I suppose  
20 there could be some sort of course approval that  
21 would be outside of career and tech for a work permit  
22 program, but if it's to count for career and tech,  
23 those units of credit, it's got to go through Career  
24 Ed.

25 MS. PFEFFER: And I also notice that it would --

1 they've asked for ADE to submit the course credit  
2 code for that. So I think you've got two things  
3 going; you've got -- this is asking us to basically  
4 waive the licensure requirement that comes to us  
5 through Career Ed. on that endorsement and then also  
6 to create a course content or a course code for a  
7 credit. So, you know, that was -- those are my  
8 concerns about whether or not we can do that without  
9 some further discussion and partnership possibly.

10 MS. BROWN: I guess again they directed us to  
11 the charter and so that's why we've asked for those  
12 particular waivers to allow us to actually have this  
13 program.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And it's probably something  
15 we're just going to have to get our charter office to  
16 work with CTE to try to help get you in the direction  
17 that you want to go. And I just don't think we feel  
18 comfortable as a panel right now to be able to say  
19 we're going to waive their requirements. I know it's  
20 cumbersome and tedious and confusing for you guys;  
21 it's just something we need to work through.

22 MS. BROWN: But they don't even have a work  
23 permit program. That's why we're asking to develop  
24 this through the charter. They have JAG, which JAG  
25 has barriers and only is allowed to have like 15 kids

1 attached to that particular teacher. And that  
2 doesn't fit our community and it doesn't fit our  
3 student needs either. And so that's why they  
4 redirected us to the charter because there's more  
5 flexibility for that concern and that way, we have  
6 more opportunities for our students. Their program,  
7 JAG, I'm not knocking it; it fits a niche. But what  
8 we need through the charter is a work permit program  
9 and internship program that allows our students to be  
10 able -- their needs to be met and our community needs  
11 to be met.

12 MS. PFEFFER: This is Ivy again. I think that  
13 -- and we're not -- I mean, when you say "they," are  
14 you talking about the Department of Career and  
15 Technical Education?

16 MS. BROWN: Yes.

17 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

18 MS. BROWN: And Schools of Innovation. Those  
19 are the two departments that we've talked to within  
20 this.

21 MS. PFEFFER: I think my concern is just us  
22 agreeing to put an endorsement on an educator's  
23 license because those licenses would actually be --  
24 or those endorsements would actually be referred to  
25 our Educator Licensure Unit by them. So I think it's

1 just a matter of insuring that as this work permit  
2 program could be put into place that we would just  
3 have clear understanding with them regarding that  
4 licensure. And the other question I had is for all  
5 these options that you're asking on page 24, the  
6 licensure areas and the areas of criminal justice,  
7 allied health, engineering, computer applications --  
8 I think that my question is the way that you're  
9 wording that, what you're doing there is asking for a  
10 waiver of licensure for those professionals that  
11 would be teaching those courses. Is that correct?

12 MS. BROWN: It's the credentials of the  
13 instructors at ASU-Mountain Home. Yes. They have  
14 credentials to teach the class but they also have --  
15 they don't have a teacher licensure, but they are  
16 credentialed to teach and they have a bachelor's or a  
17 doctorate in criminal justice -- I mean, you know,  
18 master's or, you know, a doctorate in that particular  
19 field but they just don't have the teacher licensure.  
20 And that's what we would like to waive on that one.  
21 Going back to the work permit, that was what the  
22 current standards are and we would like to get away  
23 from having to have the endorsement of 412 on their  
24 particular licensure. That's why we're trying to go  
25 through the charter and not go through ACE. So we're

1 not asking you to waive their rules and regs; we're  
2 asking you to allow us to do this through our  
3 charter.

4 MR. CZANSTKOWSKI: Well, the thing that is  
5 somewhat frustrating from our end is we went through  
6 all this with Schools of Innovation and we got a one-  
7 sentence answer and that was, "You can" -- you know  
8 -- "you can make this application through your  
9 charter." That was the feedback we got after hours  
10 and hours of work to try to put this together -- a  
11 612 -- actually, a 616 continuum of trying to start  
12 our kids at 6th grade thinking about their career  
13 goals and then moving all the way through to a degree  
14 or a certification. And so, you know, if we can  
15 actually get Career Ed. and -- if we could get  
16 everybody in the same room I think it could be worked  
17 out. But I think we just feel like a ping-pong ball  
18 getting batted back and forth between various groups.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, did you have  
20 something to add?

21 MS. CLAY: Just for the Panel Members, and maybe  
22 for the folks at Mountain Home too -- the innovation  
23 process last year, they probably did get a one-  
24 sentence response. But the reason for that response  
25 was Dr. Kimbrell, who was Commissioner at the time,

1 decided that he did not want to grant additional  
2 waivers for any charters through the innovation  
3 process. He felt that it was more appropriate to  
4 come through the charter approval process and keep  
5 all the waivers in one place. So any response in the  
6 innovation process wasn't specific to particular  
7 waivers; it was just a general response that the  
8 Schools of Innovation was the mechanism he wanted to  
9 see charters get additional waivers. So I think that  
10 helps with clarification and that it wasn't specific  
11 to these particular requested waivers, that wasn't  
12 the right avenue; it was just that he wanted to see  
13 them come through the Charter Panel. So I hope that  
14 helps clarify at least the innovation side of it.

15 SUPT. MYERS: This is Lonnie Myers. May I speak  
16 to that?

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, sir.

18 SUPT. MYERS: We spent hours working with ADE on  
19 this application before it was ever submitted. I  
20 guess again our frustration is why could that have  
21 not been said on the front-end, "you're a charter  
22 school, therefore this is not the correct avenue."  
23 We're getting a little off here, I understand, but  
24 it's just the number of hours that have gone in  
25 trying to work with ADE, work through the charter,

1 and even with Career and Tech Ed., that no one ever  
2 -- again, it feels like we just keep getting knocked  
3 back and forth like a ping-pong ball. And it  
4 would've been really nice if ADE on the front-end  
5 would have said, "You're a conversion charter, we  
6 don't think this is the route," instead of allowing  
7 us, you know, to have conversation time after time  
8 about our process and help us get through it, and  
9 then just to get one sentence saying, "Okay, this is  
10 not the correct avenue." So, you know, I hope you  
11 hear from our side that we have worked many, many  
12 hours trying to present this in a way to help our  
13 students, because as I said in the beginning our  
14 vision is reaching every student every time. And we  
15 can't do it unless we somehow get out of this box  
16 we're in everywhere we turn.

17 MS. BROWN: And again that's the whole point of  
18 a charter is to allow this flexibility of -- I mean,  
19 since 2003, we've been a charter school and we've  
20 been nationally recognized by the best practices that  
21 we have followed; research-based -- everything is  
22 research-based, so everything that we're asking for  
23 is research-based. And so every time that we've come  
24 up for renewal we've been allowed to work through  
25 because the charter allows the outside-of-the-box

1 thinking and it allows us to be able to meet the  
2 needs of our students and our community, which is why  
3 we are a charter. I mean, we are a traditional high  
4 school; we follow your accountability measures; we  
5 follow everything; we follow your curriculum; we  
6 follow everything ADE. But this is why we are a  
7 charter is to allow those particular waivers and have  
8 been allowed to do that since 2003.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I understand your concern  
11 there and perhaps frustration with some of the  
12 process you've encountered and I do want to commend  
13 you on the program that you have; you have a  
14 fantastic program. And I think we do everything we  
15 can to support you in your success with that. I  
16 think in trying to remember one of the statements  
17 that was made just a few minutes ago -- in addressing  
18 this number four I am trying to identify, if you  
19 would, a specific rule, law or standard that you are  
20 requesting a waiver from or something that  
21 specifically standing in your way. That's what we  
22 are trying to identify. And I remember a comment  
23 being made, and I don't know if it includes all of  
24 this, but it was concerning the licensure  
25 endorsement. Is that the only thing that's standing

1 in your way?

2 MS. BROWN: Our licensure endorsement, yes, we  
3 would like for it to say bottom line for internship;  
4 if we have a teacher that we have to hire for  
5 internship or work permit we would like for it to  
6 have any licensure and allow that to be any  
7 licensure. If we have a class over at ASU where  
8 there is criminal justice -- I'm just going to throw  
9 that out there, or allied health -- even though that  
10 instructor doesn't hold an Arkansas teacher licensure  
11 but is credentialed to teach at that college, we  
12 would like that particular licensure piece waiver  
13 just for those three pieces.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And I understand that.  
15 And was that addressed in number one?

16 MS. BROWN: Yes.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So what are we addressing  
18 specifically in number four?

19 MS. BROWN: That was keystone. And we  
20 understand we'll take that back to ACE.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

22 MS. BROWN: I think this goes back to Ms.  
23 Pfeiffer had had -- or Dr. Pfeiffer, I'm not for sure,  
24 I'm sorry -- but Ivy Pfeiffer is all y'all referred to  
25 her as today, so I apologize if I didn't get the

1 Doctor or Missus correct.

2 MS. PFEFFER: It's Missus. Thank you.

3 MS. BROWN: It went back to her comment with  
4 wasn't comfortable with the 412 endorsement or piece.  
5 That's what we're under the guidelines right now for  
6 our internship program and that's not what we want.  
7 We want to be allowed to have any licensure, period,  
8 for any teacher to teach internship, work program and  
9 waive licensure for ASU, those classes that we  
10 listed.

11 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And part of what I'm going  
12 through is the way you have it stated in here that  
13 your -- when you're talking about your expanded work  
14 program, "The ADE will be required to issue a course  
15 code for the work permit program; students will be  
16 required to contact teacher/supervisor when absent."  
17 Skipping on down, "Teachers must have the 412 career  
18 preparation licensure code because -- submit the  
19 accountability report." And I guess what I'm saying  
20 is because of the way you have it stated here as well  
21 -- I mean, it just reiterates that -- I don't know  
22 that we have the authority to waive that, and that's  
23 something that I feel like we need to check into  
24 that, in asking Dr. Jones whether or not they can  
25 create the course code for that. And so my question

1 was the discussion -- if you all had had the  
2 discussion with the Department of Career Education.  
3 And I understand it is frustrating. What I would --  
4 I would volunteer to take this on and seek out all  
5 the answers and, you know, try to get back to  
6 everyone in a timely manner. Just kind of speaking  
7 -- I know we have another meeting next month, I  
8 believe in March -- is that correct? If it's  
9 something that we need to go forward with, if it's  
10 something we can either look at sooner, I'll be happy  
11 to kind of -- to kind of look at that. But it seems  
12 like this crosses our licensure plus curriculum  
13 areas, and so I just want to make sure that anything  
14 we would approve would not have any unintended  
15 consequences for you all and also involving two  
16 different state agencies. So those would be my  
17 concerns and the Panel may have some different  
18 answers.

19 MS. BROWN: Well, now -- and the reason that we  
20 even included that in there was because that's what  
21 the current program had required and that's why we're  
22 asking for the waiver. And maybe that was a mis-  
23 wording on our part. But what the waivers that we're  
24 asking for in one and two, like what we've talked  
25 about, is we would have to have a course code from

1           you if you approve this because if it says any  
2           licensure it would have to have an ADE approved or  
3           course code that's attached to that particular  
4           stipulation on any licensure. And so currently  
5           that's what we're falling under which is what we want  
6           to get away from. We want to get away from the 412  
7           endorsement and that's what -- and that may have been  
8           the mis-step in our wording. What we're asking for  
9           again is to have those two programs, internship and  
10          work program, away from that 412 licensure.

11           DR. JONES: And I hope this explanation will  
12          help a little bit, and I may be way off-base. But  
13          the way that ADE handles creating course codes is our  
14          Curriculum Instruction Unit creates a course that has  
15          frameworks and those must be tied to the content  
16          frameworks. And so if we were to create a course  
17          code over here, it would be a content -- it would  
18          have content standards within that and those would be  
19          expected to be taught. And that's why when it's a  
20          CTE course they create the frameworks for whatever  
21          that work program is and then they send us the course  
22          code. We don't have the authority to create course  
23          codes for CTE courses. Does that help at all?

24           MS. SHIPMAN: Yes. But I think -- this is  
25          Brigitte Shipman again, the academy coordinator. I

1 think where we're getting lost is in the content and  
2 frameworks, because we want the content and -- we  
3 need it to look different to -- because if we follow  
4 the CTE frameworks and what they're looking for, we  
5 get to serve 15 students in our internship program,  
6 where we're looking at serving way more than that.  
7 And it's just -- I think what we're doing is we're --  
8 we keep crisscrossing the need for the curriculum to  
9 look different, to serve more students. It's like I  
10 feel like we're chasing our tail.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. I'm going to try to  
12 take a stab at this. So basically what you're asking  
13 for is to be able to essentially write a new course  
14 with frameworks that address your internship needs  
15 that you would then turn in to us for course approval  
16 and a course code with the waiver of licensure for  
17 the internship program.

18 MS. BROWN: And work permit program. Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And so the question, I  
20 guess, is, one -- and that's what you're asking us to  
21 do is have that particular course take the place of a  
22 CTE course. Is that correct?

23 MS. BROWN: Yes.

24 MS. SHIPMAN: Yes.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And do we have that

1 authority to do that, Ms. Clay? I mean, I think I  
2 understand what the problem is and what the issue is.  
3 I just don't know that we can actually do that  
4 legally.

5 MS. CLAY: That's correct. It's within the  
6 purview of Career Ed. I know we probably sound like  
7 a broken record, but that's just statutorily --  
8 they're granted the career --

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Now we can do this for --  
10 we could do it for a course if we wanted to, any  
11 course; it just couldn't specifically take the place  
12 of one of the CTE required credits?

13 MS. CLAY: That's correct. And I don't know --  
14 I would -- there are other schools who are doing this  
15 career academy model, so I would imagine that there's  
16 already some sort of course approval outside of the  
17 JAG program. I know we've seen recently lots of the  
18 career academies come through. So I don't know, but  
19 I would imagine that there is already some mechanism  
20 for them to do what they want to do, which is not in  
21 the purview of this panel to give the full green  
22 light on the course code and whatnot.

23 MS. BROWN: Now, and that's the thing; the  
24 career academies that are coming through with your  
25 charter have come to us as us being a mentor for

1 helping them to redesign their high school in that  
2 manner -- so, no, there are not any -- that's why,  
3 again, we're going through the charter to do this,  
4 because since 2003 we've had this relationship with  
5 the charters to where we have the flexibility to do  
6 the things that we need to do to meet the needs of  
7 our students and our community. And, again, I guess  
8 we are just chasing our tail; this is where we  
9 continue to get redirected to and I'm just  
10 disappointed that we're having to go through -- we've  
11 never had to go through this intense of a -- and I  
12 know things change, but there again -- I mean, we've  
13 been a model for charters as well as for academies  
14 since 2003. I mean, even featured on CNBC Education  
15 Nation, for goodness sakes.

16 MS. SHIPMAN: I think we're setting -- we're the  
17 school that is being looked to is what Ms. Brown is  
18 saying. And so we're setting the standards, I guess,  
19 which sounds -- I don't want to say we're --

20 MS. BROWN: We're arrogant.

21 MS. SHIPMAN: Yeah, we're sounding arrogant but  
22 we're not; we're just leaps and bounds ahead, and so  
23 these other schools are coming to us. And so we're  
24 creating this because we're seeing the need in  
25 listening to the kids, again, and the community. So

1 we're setting the standard so-to-speak, and so with  
2 that comes thinking out of the box and with that  
3 comes -- we're needing some type of guidance and help  
4 here because it is outside of the box; it is creating  
5 something that isn't out there.

6 MS. BROWN: And that's why we have gone with the  
7 charter because, again, we need the flexibility to be  
8 able to do the internship program as we need to do  
9 it, as well as the work permit program. We need to  
10 be able to do them differently than what ACE is  
11 allowing -- that's already in place.

12 MS. SHIPMAN: Because kids are needing this real  
13 world application to be able to decide for  
14 themselves, "okay, I'm out here now in the world of  
15 work and I'm seeing maybe what I don't want to do, is  
16 more important than seeing what it is that I do want  
17 to do," and they're articulating these needs to us.  
18 And so if you're serving over half of these seniors  
19 versus 15 of them I think it's worth this effort. So  
20 we'll keep trying to create programs to help our  
21 students because, you know, our need and our passion  
22 comes from serving a much larger population and  
23 making it look different because we're hearing our  
24 kids. You know, having kids sit in a classroom, 15  
25 students in an internship program is not nearly as

1 effective as serving almost all of our seniors and  
2 then actually being able to go out in the world of  
3 work. So there's a big difference in what our CTE's  
4 and ACE's are doing and what we're asking for.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. I think that there's  
6 no question that we think that you guys are doing a  
7 great job and trying to meet the needs of the kids.  
8 Unfortunately, what we're saying is that the outside-  
9 the-box thinking at this point -- that what you're  
10 asking to do we don't have the current ability to do.  
11 So what we have before us two options: we can -- you  
12 can agree to pull that particular waiver request and  
13 we can move forward or we could actually basically  
14 table this till next month and refer you to get  
15 technical assistance where possibly our Charter  
16 Office and Career Education can sit down and try to  
17 come to some kind of solution to try to help you meet  
18 the needs of the kids. You know, as far as us being  
19 able to say, you know, today we can approve that  
20 waiver, like I think our Counsel has stated, we don't  
21 have the authority to do so. So that's just kind of  
22 where we're at. And so I will leave that to you  
23 guys. Is that something that you'd be interested in  
24 as far as getting technical assistance to try to  
25 accomplish this goal or would y'all rather request --

1 rescind the waiver request and --

2 MS. BROWN: Which waiver are you asking us to  
3 throw out?

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think it's the one in  
5 particular with trying to move down the keystone  
6 class, number four.

7 MS. BROWN: Okay. So are you saying then we're  
8 okay with the internship program, waiving licensure,  
9 one, two -- one and two and three? Well, three was a  
10 no, a whatever; it doesn't even -- it's not -- it's  
11 irrelevant. So one and two you would approve, and  
12 three -- I'm fine with chunking keystone.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: No, we can --

14 MS. BROWN: We'll work through that one.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We can --

16 MS. BROWN: Our main deal is licensure --

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Right.

18 MS. BROWN: -- and class size. That's the two  
19 biggest ones that our -- that's our sticking point.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And to be clear -- Ms. Clay  
21 may have to help -- we can't -- we can do the  
22 licensure waiver but we cannot waive the licensure  
23 and give credit for the CTE course?

24 MS. CLAY: The work permit.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: It's the work permit.

1 MS. BROWN: It's an ADE course and we just give  
2 it a CR like what we do for our -- make it a career  
3 focus but then CR, like what we do for FIRST and MASH  
4 already -- why can't we do that and just disconnect  
5 from ACE and not be -- just be you guys and we just  
6 give a CR for credit and not give a grade?

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And so you're talking about  
8 for local credit?

9 MS. BROWN: Yes. If we did work  
10 permit/internship, not career focus -- because by the  
11 time they get to that point they've already had all  
12 their career focus credits required to graduate. So  
13 they meet all of those needs. So this is just in  
14 addition -- or it could be a local credit through you  
15 guys to where we can just give a CR or whatever you  
16 would like for us to do and waive licensure.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think there's an issue  
18 with whatever you choose to give for local credit and  
19 licensure requirements because it's not -- it won't  
20 go on transcripts, it won't count --

21 MS. BROWN: Currently, in the original waivers  
22 FIRST goes on the transcript and MASH goes on the  
23 transcript as a CR. And so does internship.  
24 Internship is already under the current original  
25 waivers that we were asked to do back in 2003, and

1 they get a credit for that as well. They get a CR,  
2 not a letter grade.

3 MS. BARNES: This is Annette Barnes, and I  
4 apologize for needing this particular clarification.  
5 I was familiar in the beginning when you first did  
6 the district conversion. But as you were speaking  
7 toward the credit, and we are trying to discern  
8 between local credit and it being on the transcript,  
9 is it for credit for graduation, credit for  
10 completion of this portion of the -- for this  
11 academy, that will help me if you'll clarify credit,  
12 the CR.

13 MS. BROWN: It's for our graduation credit.  
14 It's not for career focus; it's for practical art.  
15 They're allowed to do it that way.

16 MS. BARNES: So is that above the minimum of 20?

17 MS. BROWN: Correct.

18 MS. BARNES: Okay. That then is local credit.  
19 All right. Thank you.

20 MS. BROWN: It's not like part of a program of  
21 study completer; that's not tied to that at all.  
22 It's just an experience that the kids are able to  
23 have and they get a CR on their transcript and that's  
24 all they get. It doesn't count toward their GPA; it  
25 doesn't count toward their -- where their rank is in

1 class; it's just they get credit for it.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Any other issues  
3 with that or questions from Panel Members? So as far  
4 as the one and two, the waiver of licensure just  
5 won't include -- I mean, it will be just for that  
6 local credit course that they're referring to with  
7 their internship.

8 MS. BROWN: Correct.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

10 MS. BROWN: And that's what we would just like  
11 to expand on with the work permit program, internship  
12 program. Just pull it out of the ACE, unhook from  
13 that, and just allow us to do a CR, which internship  
14 we already do just a CR on their transcript. It's  
15 not a part of the program of study; it's not part of  
16 their GPA; it's just a CR on their transcript, our  
17 requirement, if they choose it -- or they don't have  
18 to.

19 MS. PFEFFER: So -- and this is Ivy again. So  
20 just for clarification, I'm a senior, I'm  
21 participating in the work permit program; that means  
22 that I'm going to have like an advisor or someone  
23 who's monitoring me and insuring that I go out and I  
24 do my -- complete my internship hours. Am I on the  
25 right track?

1 MS. BROWN: Yes, ma'am. And what you'll do is  
2 we'll have a teacher assigned, any licensure -- that  
3 kind of gives us the flexibility so that they're able  
4 to -- you know -- if they don't have a job, help them  
5 get a job. But most of the people that -- our  
6 criteria is that they already have a job, and it's  
7 meeting the needs of those kids who have to support  
8 their family and allow them to work, if they don't  
9 need to have those credits, and they're not just  
10 sitting in a classroom or a study hall, and -- or  
11 dropping out. And so that -- you know -- that's the  
12 premise behind the work permit program. And, again,  
13 all we're asking for -- again, unhook from ACE and  
14 just let it be a credit on their transcript, just a  
15 CR.

16 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So then going back to the  
17 teacher, I may teach five periods of English in a day  
18 and the sixth period -- I know you're on a block, so  
19 -- but, you know, for that extra period I might be,  
20 quote, teaching the work permit or overseeing the  
21 work permit program for a group of students?

22 MS. BROWN: Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. PFEFFER: And you would -- and if you had  
24 the waiver of licensure -- okay, so that's where I  
25 think -- if we're talking about going back to a

1 waiver of licensure for any teacher, it would just be  
2 for that particular program. You're not wanting a  
3 waiver of licensure for all of your classes?

4 MS. BROWN: No, no, no, no. All I'm asking for  
5 a waiver of licensure is internship, waiver of  
6 licensure for work permit, and waiver of licensure  
7 for those credentialed professors at ASU-Mountain  
8 Home that teach criminal justice or allied health or  
9 all of those other ones listed.

10 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

11 MS. BROWN: That's all we're asking for. I  
12 mean, that way -- like currently if I had a math  
13 teacher that I can spare at the time and they can do  
14 the work permit program, great, then I can put them  
15 in there and they can actually supervise those kids.  
16 If it's a coach, a PE teacher, and they're licensed  
17 in PE, they can go over the work permit program. If  
18 I have a person who is business ed. certified, it  
19 doesn't matter where it is, just as long as they can  
20 supervise that particular program and separate from  
21 ACE on those two areas.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And this is a question for  
23 probably our Panel Members. If they're -- from what  
24 I understand they're wanting to do for local credit,  
25 then they would not need -- they couldn't use the

1 current CTE course code for internship. And if they  
2 did -- if we developed our own course code for an  
3 internship, then it wouldn't matter what the  
4 licensure was.

5 MS. BROWN: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: The way with licensure  
7 would only be for the CTE, in which we've already  
8 establish we can't waive licensure for a CTE course  
9 code?

10 MS. PFEFFER: Right. I just wanted to go back  
11 and clarify that when we said "waiver of licensure  
12 for any teacher" it was a waiver of licensure for any  
13 teacher for that specific purpose.

14 MS. BROWN: Yes, that's it. I'm sorry if we did  
15 not articulate that well, but that is it in a  
16 nutshell.

17 MS. SHIPMAN: Yes.

18 MS. PFEFFER: We're not waiving licensure for  
19 them to teach?

20 MS. BROWN: No, not any -- no, we -- I mean,  
21 again, we have -- we fall under your HQT guidelines.  
22 We follow all of that. We're not like the other  
23 charter schools that you've talked to today. We  
24 follow Teacher Fair Dismissal; we follow all of that.  
25 The only thing that we're asking for is just to look

1 at curriculum differently and to be able to get that  
2 flexibility and meet the needs of our kids. That's  
3 it.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Brown, how many --  
5 what's the average number of periods would you say  
6 that kids are involved in this internship program?

7 MS. BROWN: Right now, we're very flexible  
8 because we -- it depends on -- like the hospital,  
9 they usually do surgeries that our kids can actually  
10 go and, you know, watch and that's usually in the  
11 morning. Some community members would rather have  
12 them in the afternoon. For example, if they're with  
13 the court system sometimes court is more -- can get a  
14 lot more out of it during the afternoon versus the  
15 morning. So, I mean, you can have -- like the  
16 daycares, typically they like for them to be there in  
17 the morning; some of them like to be there in the  
18 afternoon. I'm just hitting -- you know -- like our  
19 veterinarian, every like Tuesday morning is when they  
20 actually do their surgeries so that our kids would be  
21 able to -- if they have that flexibility in their  
22 schedule, they could go and watch some of the  
23 surgeries that the vets are performing on the  
24 animals. So they're getting real world learning  
25 opportunities before they spend all that money and

1           that post-secondary time. We've had so many kids --  
2           I wish I could have them tell you what their stories  
3           are. We had one little girl who she knew exactly  
4           what she wanted to do; she wanted to own her own  
5           daycare. She kept saying, "That's what I want." She  
6           had the design picked out, the name picked out, what  
7           her pods were going to look like, everything. We put  
8           her in with an internship program; within her  
9           reflection log she said, "I don't even think I want  
10          to have kids now." So that is the experience that we  
11          want our kids to have.

12                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions or  
13                   concerns from the Panel Members? All right. No  
14                   other questions, I will entertain a motion.

15                   MS. BARNES: Mr. Chairman, I move that we  
16                   approve the renewal of the conversion charter.

17                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And that's with the  
18                   adjustment to the waivers as mentioned?

19                   MS. BARNES: Yes, with the adjustment of the  
20                   waivers.

21                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion.  
22                   Do we have a second?

23                   DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

24                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We have a motion and a  
25                   second to approve the charter renewal. All in favor

1 say "aye."

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed? Motion  
4 passes. Thank you, Ms. Brown.

5 MS. BROWN: Thank you. Thank you so much for  
6 working with us and I apologize if we seem like, you  
7 know, it was -- we were trying to be difficult.  
8 We're really not trying to be difficult; we're very  
9 passionate about our program. So, yeah, I just want  
10 to cry right now.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah.

12 MS. BROWN: But thank you very much.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Brown, are you still  
14 there? Hello? Ms. Brown, still there?

15 MS. BROWN: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Hey, I just want to just  
17 let you know we'll commit to you guys to reach out to  
18 Career Ed. and try to raise this question with them,  
19 and this is something that we're just working  
20 through. Obviously, Career Ed. is on the forefront  
21 as far as what we're trying to do in schools and we  
22 commend you for your work in that area. It's just  
23 like I said in the beginning, it's something we're  
24 going to have to work through. So we may have an  
25 additional clarification where we do work with CTE

1 and maybe come back and modify some of that. But I  
2 just wanted to say that and thank you for staying  
3 with us so late today.

4 MS. BROWN: Will we -- I know that y'all had  
5 mentioned another meeting in March that I know we're  
6 expected to come to. Are we going to get  
7 correspondence that lets us know a meeting time and  
8 where we're supposed to be?

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Just for clarification,  
10 there is a meeting in March but it won't -- you guys  
11 don't have to come to that. That was just if we  
12 decided to table this at this time and do technical  
13 assistance, but we chose to go ahead and accept the  
14 charter as you presented it. So there's no need for  
15 the March follow-up at this point.

16 MS. BROWN: Okay. That's what I needed to know.  
17 Thank you again for working with us and hearing us  
18 out.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, ma'am. Have a good  
20 day.

21 MS. BROWN: You too.

22 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Mr. Bradberry  
23 disconnected the conference call.)

24 MS. HOGUE: Before we leave, I wanted to say --

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yeah, Ms. Hogue.

1 MS. HOGUE: I want to announce -- oh, sorry --

2 MS. BROWN: No, we're still here.

3 MS. HOGUE: -- two changes that we're going to  
4 have. One, we've hired Alexandra Boyd who is taking  
5 -- Alexandra Boyd was hired to take Sky's position  
6 that she had before, and so I want to introduce y'all  
7 to Alexandra. She came from the University of  
8 Arkansas, working with Mr. Ritter -- Dr. Ritter up  
9 there. And that's exciting. Now the not-exciting,  
10 not-fun, the bad news: Sky is leaving in another  
11 week-and-a-half. So we hate -- she's going back home  
12 to Seattle, so we're happy for her but I haven't  
13 forgiven her yet and I'm not sure I will. But I  
14 wanted y'all to know the changes we're going through  
15 in the Charter Office.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Well, welcome  
17 aboard -- and, Sky, we're sorry to lose you.

18 MS. BLEDSOE: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do we need to formally take  
20 any action to table the work session till next month  
21 or just not do it or just go home, or what?

22 MS. HOGUE: I move we go home.

23 MS. CLAY: I second that. No, you don't need to  
24 take any formal action. You can just --

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We're going to move

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the work session to next month. So unless there's any other questions we'll be adjourned -- or do I need to take a motion to adjourn?

DR. JONES: I make a motion to adjourn.

DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right.

(The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.)

1

	<b>54:14;173:1</b>	<b>25;297:1;299:4;</b>	<b>154:3,10;158:20;</b>	<b>75:18</b>
<b>\$</b>	<b>\$7300 (1)</b>	<b>300:7,12;310:18;</b>	<b>165:3;198:12,20;</b>	<b>accordance (3)</b>
	147:9	<b>311:10;316:1;</b>	<b>200:2;223:3;228:22;</b>	231:12,13;233:5
<b>\$1,047,294 (1)</b>	<b>\$8.25 (1)</b>	<b>321:13;324:8,10,13;</b>	<b>256:1</b>	<b>according (3)</b>
177:15	100:22	<b>325:2,19;328:22;</b>	<b>academies (9)</b>	30:15;112:15;
<b>\$1.1 (1)</b>	<b>\$80,000 (3)</b>	<b>330:3;333:1,21</b>	278:2;279:8;	172:5
56:9	40:13;41:7;53:8	<b>aboard (1)</b>	281:15;284:6;285:8;	<b>account (1)</b>
<b>\$1.2 (1)</b>	<b>\$800,000 (1)</b>	337:17	287:2;322:18,24;	177:6
57:9	211:24	<b>above (12)</b>	323:13	<b>accountability (6)</b>
<b>\$1.4 (1)</b>	<b>\$801,000 (2)</b>	51:20;111:1;	<b>ACADEMY (61)</b>	82:3;176:24;
59:25	56:2;57:1	122:10;123:10;	7:24;10:11;21:3;	206:13;278:8;316:4;
<b>\$1.413 (1)</b>	[	172:4;237:2,6,10;	46:13,16;48:25;	318:19
60:1		238:16,23;287:11;	50:16,19;51:13;	<b>accountable (5)</b>
<b>\$1.487 (3)</b>		328:16	52:19;98:12;165:19,	92:5;105:3;106:18;
57:10;60:3,4	<b>[ps] (2)</b>	<b>above-board (1)</b>	21;166:13;179:7;	143:10;206:14
<b>\$11,000 (1)</b>	143:17;267:2	22:24	181:25;215:1;	<b>Accreditation (5)</b>
177:20	<b>[sic] (2)</b>	<b>absences (1)</b>	225:24;227:1,2;	231:13;269:18;
<b>\$1200 (1)</b>	34:15;162:6	266:1	228:1,3;232:23;	271:14;294:18;295:6
113:11		<b>absent (2)</b>	235:9,15;252:9;	<b>accredited (1)</b>
<b>\$13 (1)</b>	<b>A</b>	206:3;318:16	256:17;262:19;	233:1
101:6		<b>absentees (1)</b>	275:11,15,22;277:6,	<b>accurate (4)</b>
<b>\$13.70 (1)</b>	<b>A/B (1)</b>	206:2	20,22,25;278:10,15,	6:23;60:15;63:3;
52:15	297:13	<b>Absolutely (10)</b>	16;279:17,20;280:13,	65:25
<b>\$14,000 (1)</b>	<b>A-1 (2)</b>	32:16;45:13;65:3;	22;281:6,10,20;	<b>accuse (1)</b>
147:10	6:3,6	66:22;69:13;127:2;	282:20;283:14,18,19,	157:22
<b>\$140,000 (1)</b>	<b>A-2 (3)</b>	187:23;243:12;	20,20;284:8,10,14;	<b>ACE (9)</b>
62:10	7:23;8:1;9:21	246:7,8	285:8;287:9;300:23;	308:2;309:10;
<b>\$15,000 (1)</b>	<b>A-3 (2)</b>	<b>absorb (1)</b>	301:18;320:25;	312:25;317:20;
41:8	39:2,5	140:20	322:15;328:11	324:10;327:5;
<b>\$16 (1)</b>	<b>A-4 (2)</b>	<b>academic (24)</b>	<b>accelerate (1)</b>	329:12;330:13;
101:21	46:12,14	20:8;28:22;29:16;	115:18	331:21
<b>\$2 (2)</b>	<b>A-5 (2)</b>	74:5,11;75:13;97:5;	<b>accelerated (3)</b>	<b>ACE's (1)</b>
41:18;44:23	50:15,18	103:14;172:6;	20:6;34:10;150:15	325:4
<b>\$2.00 (1)</b>	<b>A-6 (2)</b>	208:14;210:10;	<b>accept (13)</b>	<b>achieve (1)</b>
41:8	67:17,20	229:8;232:3;237:21;	5:19,21;6:25;	231:19
<b>\$220,000 (4)</b>	<b>A-7 (2)</b>	241:11;242:11;	32:14;38:12;50:3;	<b>achieved (2)</b>
56:17;57:3,15;	165:18,20	243:1,4;245:25;	64:4,6,10;156:15;	72:22;75:17
61:23	<b>A-8 (1)</b>	253:1,13;270:19;	274:15,18;336:13	<b>achievement (25)</b>
<b>\$250,000 (2)</b>	226:25	273:17,19	<b>acceptance (2)</b>	70:7,9,10;74:1,5,8;
56:13;57:13	<b>A-9 (1)</b>	<b>academically (8)</b>	19:20,23	77:25;92:21;93:9,24;
<b>\$27,000 (2)</b>	275:10	171:25;173:8;	<b>accepted (4)</b>	105:4;109:5,20;
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<p><b>500/500 (1)</b> 255:11</p> <p><b>501c3 (2)</b> 143:15;177:18</p> <p><b>51.9% (1)</b> 237:9</p> <p><b>5-1/2 (2)</b> 247:10,20</p> <p><b>5-11 (1)</b> 240:13</p> <p><b>52% (1)</b> 237:12</p> <p><b>54 (1)</b> 144:11</p> <p><b>54% (2)</b> 236:20;237:7</p> <p><b>540 (1)</b> 11:10</p> <p><b>55 (3)</b> 31:10,11;107:19</p> <p><b>566 (1)</b> 170:22</p> <p><b>57% (2)</b> 237:12,14</p> <p><b>5-8 (2)</b> 244:12,18</p> <p><b>58% (1)</b> 258:2</p> <p><b>59% (3)</b> 69:21,22;258:3</p> <p><b>5th (5)</b> 43:9;44:8,17,19; 114:5</p>	<p><b>6-17-309 (1)</b> 295:11</p> <p><b>6-17-401 (1)</b> 295:11</p> <p><b>6-17-902 (1)</b> 295:11</p> <p><b>6-17-909 (2)</b> 294:20;295:7</p> <p><b>62.2% (1)</b> 236:4</p> <p><b>6-21-304 (1)</b> 271:24</p> <p><b>6-23-102 (1)</b> 104:14</p> <p><b>6-23-105 (1)</b> 105:6</p> <p><b>64% (1)</b> 238:8</p> <p><b>65% (2)</b> 99:18;237:25</p> <p><b>66 (2)</b> 31:6,8</p> <p><b>66% (2)</b> 99:18;238:10</p> <p><b>66.9% (1)</b> 238:24</p> <p><b>67% (2)</b> 232:12;238:24</p> <p><b>67.6% (1)</b> 238:3</p> <p><b>68.8% (1)</b> 236:2</p> <p><b>69 (3)</b> 228:11,13;241:24</p> <p><b>69% (2)</b> 120:17;238:11</p> <p><b>6th (11)</b> 29:3;44:20;113:6; 114:5,15;122:12; 128:5,8;138:22; 139:2;313:12</p>	<p><b>7-1/2% (1)</b> 54:14</p> <p><b>72% (2)</b> 238:3,11</p> <p><b>72.8% (1)</b> 237:24</p> <p><b>75 (1)</b> 228:16</p> <p><b>75.9% (1)</b> 175:13</p> <p><b>750 (2)</b> 111:10;135:15</p> <p><b>76% (1)</b> 258:1</p> <p><b>78 (1)</b> 98:19</p> <p><b>79.3% (1)</b> 175:12</p> <p><b>7th (31)</b> 10:8;11:23;12:3,4, 5,11,13,16,19,20; 13:4;15:15,23;16:5; 17:1;24:10;32:22,25; 33:2;35:2;36:8,14, 18;37:24;38:2;73:20; 80:5;114:5;130:20; 139:3;302:24</p>	<p>281:3;301:2;302:16, 22;303:2;304:8,23; 305:7,11,13,15</p>
			<b>9</b>
			<p><b>9 (8)</b> 176:6;214:1; 215:22;233:24; 235:22;257:2,5; 305:11</p> <p><b>9% (1)</b> 107:19</p> <p><b>9.01 (1)</b> 295:12</p> <p><b>90 (2)</b> 70:13;78:9</p> <p><b>90% (5)</b> 75:3;172:10; 246:11,20;263:5</p> <p><b>900 (4)</b> 79:17,18;151:22, 23</p> <p><b>900-and-something (1)</b> 69:5</p> <p><b>90-minute (2)</b> 18:16;297:13</p> <p><b>9-11 (2)</b> 244:14,19</p> <p><b>9-12 (1)</b> 184:6</p> <p><b>94% (1)</b> 240:9</p> <p><b>95% (4)</b> 172:10;247:23; 260:8,9</p> <p><b>98% (2)</b> 126:11,11</p> <p><b>9th (24)</b> 24:13;80:5;107:3; 122:22;172:8; 183:11;205:11,12; 247:10;268:18; 281:1,3,10;282:10; 301:1,2;302:13,16, 22;303:9,11;304:7,9, 24</p>
<b>6</b>		<b>8</b>	
<p><b>6 (3)</b> 128:24;240:14; 266:8</p> <p><b>6- (1)</b> 294:14</p> <p><b>6% (1)</b> 262:4</p> <p><b>6:00 (1)</b> 26:20</p> <p><b>60 (1)</b> 175:19</p> <p><b>60% (1)</b> 107:7</p> <p><b>600 (2)</b> 79:17;98:8</p> <p><b>60k (1)</b> 41:15</p> <p><b>61% (2)</b> 69:22;100:20</p> <p><b>612 (1)</b> 313:11</p> <p><b>6-15- (1)</b> 295:7</p> <p><b>616 (1)</b> 313:11</p> <p><b>6-17-302 (2)</b> 294:1;295:5</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p><b>7 (7)</b> 43:19;54:13;63:21; 94:16;138:22;266:8; 270:11</p> <p><b>7% (1)</b> 54:13</p> <p><b>7,000 (2)</b> 43:19;44:14</p> <p><b>70 (1)</b> 107:17</p> <p><b>70% (4)</b> 69:16,19;238:22, 24</p> <p><b>70.7% (1)</b> 238:23</p> <p><b>71 (1)</b> 228:16</p> <p><b>71% (1)</b> 258:3</p>	<p><b>8 (9)</b> 43:1,8,23;98:20; 121:15;128:3; 183:13;251:16;266:8</p> <p><b>8,500 (1)</b> 52:15</p> <p><b>8,570 (1)</b> 62:22</p> <p><b>8.3% (1)</b> 261:15</p> <p><b>8:00 (2)</b> 188:3;264:23</p> <p><b>8:30 (2)</b> 264:23;290:7</p> <p><b>80 (1)</b> 36:12</p> <p><b>80% (2)</b> 97:17;263:5</p> <p><b>800 (1)</b> 98:8</p> <p><b>83% (1)</b> 258:3</p> <p><b>84% (1)</b> 258:2</p> <p><b>85 (2)</b> 44:5;45:18</p> <p><b>850 (1)</b> 111:10</p> <p><b>86% (1)</b> 261:14</p> <p><b>8th (18)</b> 29:3;31:11;73:21; 114:5,10,17;172:7;</p>	