

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

October 14, 2015

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

#4 CAPITOL MALL
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201

OCTOBER 14, 2015

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

Ms. Deborah Coffman	Chairman/Chief of Staff
Dr. Debbie Jones	Vice Chair/Asst. Commissioner of Learning Services
Ms. Ivy Pfeffer	Asst. Commissioner - HR/Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
Dr. Eric Saunders	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Administrative Services
Ms. Annette Barnes	Asst. Commission - Public School Accountability
Mr. Greg Rogers	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Admin. Services
Mr. Bobby Lester	Director of Federal Programs
Ms. Jennifer Liwo	PLSB Attorney
Dr. Mark Gotcher	Deputy Commissioner

ALSO APPEARING:

Ms. Mary Perry	Coordinator - Learning Services
Ms. Alexandra Boyd	Public School Program Coordinator

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

Ms. Kendra Clay	ADE General Counsel
Ms. Lori Freno	ADE Deputy General Counsel
Ms. Jennifer Davis	ADE Deputy General Counsel
Mr. Cory Biggs	ADE Deputy General Counsel

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EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. The October 14, 2015 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I want to welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education. Thank you for being here today. I ask that you please silence all electronic devices. The Charter Authorizing Panel oversees the authorization, renewal, revision and revocation of charters. The Arkansas Quality Charter Schools Act of 2013 requires the Commissioner to appoint an ADE staff to this panel. On July 1, 2015, Commissioner Key named nine members to the Charter Authorizing Panel: Ms. Jennifer Liwo -- raise your hand so they can see you; Mr. Bobby Lester; Mr. Greg Rogers, Assistant Commissioner; Dr. Eric Saunders, Assistant Commissioner; Ms. Annette Barnes, Assistant Commissioner; Ms. Ivy Pfeffer, Assistant Commissioner; Dr. Debbie Jones, Assistant Commissioner and Vice Chair of this committee; Dr. Mark Gotcher, Deputy Commissioner; and I'm Deborah Coffman, Chief of Staff and Chair of the committee. Welcome.

In our audience today I believe we have some legislators and I'd like to recognize those

1 legislators and thank them for coming. And, Senator
2 Elliott, I believe you have a few remarks for us.

3 SENATOR ELLIOTT: Yes. Good morning, Panel, and
4 good morning to the audience. I've been meaning to
5 come just to make this statement to you because my
6 statement is a general one about charter schools and
7 about how we are using them or not using them for the
8 good, or for the ill, I think, of our state. So it's
9 a general statement of asking this panel to think
10 about and be not oblivious to what I think is
11 absolutely an attempt across this nation to
12 charterize so many of our public school districts.
13 And this is not because I am against charters; I am
14 not. But charters are not the priority for most of
15 the kids who live in my district and who go to most
16 of the schools in this country. So what I would ask
17 you specifically to be aware of and thoughtful about
18 in Arkansas is, while public school districts do
19 their best to educate all of the kids in this state
20 -- please understand that as we continue to divvy up
21 and pull out and piecemeal our school districts, you
22 are the very people who are responsible for making
23 sure all of the rest of these kids have a high
24 quality education. I'm asking you to be aware of
25 what it means when you continue to pull a whole

1 apart. And as I said before, it's not an anti-
2 charter, although I say to everybody all the time
3 that is not -- charters are not my priority; my
4 priority is to make sure that -- two things: one, as
5 I looked at the agenda today, we never had the notion
6 in this state -- even when charters started in
7 Minnesota back in 1992, there was never the notion
8 that it was going to be about competition. I have
9 seen on the agenda today one school, one proposal
10 that I think is an absolute embodiment of what was
11 envisioned by charter schools, and that's the
12 proposal from Fort Smith. It was supposed to be
13 something new and different and not something that's
14 just replicating what others are doing, and I wish we
15 would look for and demand more of that in our charter
16 schools. Because in a way charter schools have been
17 given a bad deal by the way we have pitted charters,
18 all about competition with the traditional schools.
19 And what happened in Fort Smith is people getting
20 together and using this as a laboratory, as charters
21 should be used. And I'm just saying to you, you have
22 all this power. I hope you will be thoughtful about
23 you are the very same people who are responsible for
24 making sure the traditional schools do what they need
25 to do and make sure all kids have an education, a

1 high quality one. Be mindful of pulling the whole
2 apart, while you are saying to what's left, "Be sure
3 you do the job that you're charged with doing."
4 Thank you for hearing me and I'll see you in
5 November.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Senator
7 Elliott. Representative Gossage.

8 REPRESENTATIVE GOSSAGE: I didn't really come
9 prepared to speak today, but thank you for the
10 opportunity. I just want to encourage the Panel --
11 and these are public schools, regular traditional
12 public schools and public charter schools. I know
13 that this committee has what's best in mind for the
14 students. And bottom line is I just ask you to look
15 at each application on its merits, make a decision
16 that again is in the best interest of the students
17 who live in that community.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, sir.
19 Representative McGill.

20 REPRESENTATIVE MCGILL: Good morning.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MCGILL: Let me say I'm very
23 pleased with what we've done in Fort Smith. The two
24 words that come to mind is cooperation and
25 collaboration. They've done that. The school board

1 is very supportive; the community is very excited.
2 And we see it -- from my vantage, I see a lot of
3 other things that will probably transpire. We want
4 to put it -- my thinking is put it in the district
5 that can use it and I think it will spread economic
6 development. Where we can have quality education,
7 we're going to economic development. And I would
8 strongly support this effort by my city and the
9 citizens of Fort Smith. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, sir.
11 Representative Mayberry.

12 REPRESENTATIVE MAYBERRY: Thank you. I didn't
13 really come with a prepared statement or anything.
14 But I just want to say that as a parent I think we
15 all want options, and that's what I think every group
16 here is trying to do, and I hope that you give your
17 utmost consideration to those options that are out
18 there. Every child learns differently. Every
19 community has different sets of circumstances -- the
20 closeness of the school, the teachers that are there,
21 the availability of all the resources that are there.
22 And I'd just ask that you give all of these
23 consideration, specifically -- I'm sorry I won't be
24 able to be here when it comes up, but our Redfield
25 location -- I know that the group of people who have

1 been here, they've been here before. To me, when you
2 keep coming back and you keep coming back it's got to
3 show you that this group of people really want to
4 make this work, and I hope that you take that into
5 consideration; that you've got a group of dedicated
6 folks who are trying to make the charter school in
7 Redfield work and take that into consideration as
8 well. I fully support it. It's not in my district,
9 but I am aware of the area and I know that there's a
10 good group of people working hard there. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Are there any
12 other legislators in the room that would like to
13 speak?

14 We do appreciate it. We appreciate our elected
15 officials and thank you for being here today and
16 thank you for those words.

17 We will move forward with our reports.

18 REPORT-1: CHAIR'S REPORT

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The first is the Chair
20 Report. As Chair, my goal is to facilitate a fair
21 and reasonable hearing. I will request that each
22 person speaking please state your name and title for
23 the record. I will ask that you continue to speak
24 clearly into the microphone for the benefit of the
25 Panel, the audience and the viewing audience who's

1 joining us today via live-stream. Ms. Sharon Hill,
2 our court reporter is here and will be providing a
3 transcript of this meeting and it will be posted on
4 the Arkansas Department of Education website for
5 transparency.

6 Panel Members, as we go around, are there any
7 additional reports from panel members?

8 Just one for the record. I do know that Ms.
9 Barnes, Mr. Rogers, Dr. Jones, Ms. Perry and Ms.
10 Jennifer Davis, our staff attorney, will be attending
11 the National Association of Charter School
12 Authorizers leadership conference October 19 through
13 22.

14 Any other --

15 REPORT-2: UPDATE ON CHARTER APPLICATION CYCLES

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. With that,
17 we'll move to Report Number 2, an Update on Charter
18 Application Cycles. Ms. Perry, you're recognized.

19 MS. PERRY: Good morning. I'm Mary Perry,
20 Coordinator with the Division of Learning Services,
21 Arkansas Department of Education. Of course, as you
22 know, we're here today to conduct hearings on the
23 open-enrollment applications and you will be hearing
24 three. Those numbers have changed recently, with
25 items -- action items 2 and 3 today being removed

1 from the agenda, and action item 1 tomorrow being
2 removed from the agenda.

3 In the district conversion application cycle, we
4 received by deadline in September six district
5 conversion applications. They have been reviewed by
6 the Charter Internal Review Committee. Those reviews
7 have been sent to the applicants; they are now
8 working on responding to the Internal Review
9 Committee comments and questions. Hearings will be
10 conducted for the district conversion charters on
11 November 18th and 19th.

12 There are four open-enrollment renewal
13 applications and one district conversion renewal
14 application that were sent yesterday. Those are
15 customized to each individual renewal applicant and
16 they are due on December 17th, and the hearings will
17 be conducted by you in February on those.

18 And keeping in mind all of those due dates and
19 what's upcoming next, we also have provided to you
20 proposed 2016 meeting dates. This will actually be
21 on the agenda in November. It's provided for you to
22 look at. We've distributed some to APSRC here today
23 and others. It will be an action item for you to
24 take up and consider in November, but we wanted to
25 get those dates out there. They were put in place

1 considering the dates that the State Board set last
2 week for its 2016 meeting dates. We always try to
3 set up the Panel to meet the week following so that
4 we have as much time as possible to meet the
5 timelines that are in statute about notifications.
6 And then also taking into consideration the timelines
7 for the applications that both you approved back in
8 the summer and the State Board then approved
9 following that -- following your July meeting. They
10 approved it in August.

11 Are there any questions on the application
12 cycles at this point? Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Perry.

14 REPORT-3: WARREN MIDDLE SCHOOL GIFTED AND TALENTED SERVICES
15 REPORT

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Report Number 3, Warren
17 Middle School Gifted and Talented Services Report,
18 Dr. Mary Kathryn Stein. You're recognized, Dr.
19 Stein.

20 DR. STEIN: Good morning. And I am the Public
21 School Program Coordinator for Gifted and Talented
22 and Advanced Placement, and I was asked to review
23 documents submitted by the Warren Middle School to
24 see if they were meeting standards for gifted and
25 talented services. And I have submitted those

1 documents to you and I would say that yes, they are
2 providing services to their gifted and talented
3 students, both curricular and extracurricular
4 activities. And I'll be happy to answer any
5 questions about those documents, if anyone has one.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any questions for Dr.
7 Stein?

8 DR. STEIN: Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Stein. Ms.
10 Perry, I believe that Carla Wardlaw was on the phone?

11 MS. PERRY: Yes, ma'am. She was on the phone if
12 any questions were --

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No questions from her?

14 MS. PERRY: That's right. There were no
15 questions from her. She was just there to provide
16 any answers for you.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

18 CONSENT AGENDA

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. We'll move to
20 the Consent Agenda. You have two consent agenda
21 items. Panel Members, you had the opportunity to
22 review those two consent agenda items. Are there any
23 questions or corrections?

24 We'll accept a motion to approve the consent
25 agenda.

1 MS. BARNES: I move to approve the consent
2 agenda.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes has made a
4 motion.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Seconded by Dr. Gotcher to
7 approve the consent agenda. All those in favor?

8 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? Motion has
10 passed.

11 HEARING PROCEDURES

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay, will you outline
13 the process for today?

14 MS. CLAY: Good morning. I'm Kendra Clay,
15 General Counsel for the Department of Education.
16 I'll go over your hearing procedures with you today.
17 They may be familiar to you. We have three
18 applications that you will hear today. All persons,
19 with the exception of attorneys, need to be sworn in.
20 The applicant will then have 20 minutes to present
21 its case for approving its application. And any
22 parties opposed will follow the applicant, and the
23 parties opposed will have 20 minutes as well. After
24 that, the applicant will have 5 minutes for rebuttal
25 and closing statement and then you as a panel will

1 have questions and discussion. After you have asked
2 your questions and had your discussion, you may take
3 a final vote today or you may defer that vote and
4 allow the applicant to get technical assistance from
5 the Department and bring them back at a later
6 meeting. One thing that I want to make sure you are
7 aware of and that the people in the audience are
8 aware of, we have a Google doc that you all have
9 access to that we are asking that you put your vote
10 and your reasons in. This will be after the vote is
11 made. Ms. Coffman will give you time to put your
12 reason for a yes or no vote on whatever the motion
13 is. This is in an effort to give some additional
14 information to our State Board members when they are
15 deciding whether or not to review a decision that you
16 make today and for the people in the audience. That
17 document will be available as soon as the charter
18 office cleans it up. They won't make any substantive
19 changes, but they'll make any grammatical and
20 technical changes that are necessary before we
21 release that.

22 Do any of you have questions about the
23 procedures or what's going to happen with the Google
24 doc and stating your reasons?

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay, if you will go

1 back over for the audience that this hearing will be
2 recorded and any of their statements will be
3 considered part of the process as we move forward and
4 kind of explain that for everyone in the audience.

5 MS. CLAY: Yes. I think what you're asking
6 about is, you know, part of the discussions that will
7 happen here today are about certain aspects of the
8 application and the proposed programs. So anything
9 that -- one way to look at it is this is basically a
10 contract negotiation. Because should an application
11 be approved, the applicant will have a charter and a
12 charter is a contract. So anything that is different
13 or in addition to what is in the application that is
14 said here today will be part of the charter and the
15 applicant will be held to that. We'll do our best to
16 make all of those changes in the actual charter, but
17 that just is something that everyone needs to be
18 aware. Think of this as a negotiation, because at
19 times there may be things that will change right here
20 during the discussion part.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Clay. Any
22 questions for Ms. Clay? All right. With that, we'll
23 move to the action agenda.

24 A-1: HEARING OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
25 APPLICATION: ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY, BENTONVILLE,

1 ARKANSAS

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Action item number one is
3 Hearing of Open-Enrollment Public Charter School
4 Application for Arkansas Connections Academy,
5 Bentonville, Arkansas. Ms. Perry, you're recognized.

6 MS. PERRY: Thank you. I'd first like to talk
7 to you and to the audience a little bit about exactly
8 what you have in the packet of information. I just
9 want to discuss what's in the actual packets that are
10 in the agenda. As you go through those, you first
11 have a summary document, followed by the Charter
12 Internal Review Committee and the applicant response
13 document. I'd like to point out that the highlighted
14 section that indicates whether the response is fully
15 responsive, partially responsive, or not responsive
16 is a reference to the response after the applicant
17 had a chance to look at the questions and comments
18 and write those responses. I'd also like to be sure
19 and point out to you that the Internal Review
20 Committee was dealing with whether or not the
21 response was fully responsive. There's not really a
22 judgment factor on whether they thought the response
23 was necessarily good or weak in certain areas; was it
24 fully responsive to the prompt is what we were
25 dealing with there. I want to make that very clear.

1 Next, you find the Waivers Requested section with
2 legal comments on the waivers and the responses from
3 the applicants about those. Those are color-coded.
4 I would call your attention especially to anything
5 color-coded in red, where Legal has pointed out that
6 those were not granted in the past and are remaining
7 issues. And that is, of course, not to say that
8 things that were not color-coded in red have to be
9 granted by the Panel at all; it's just letting you
10 know what issues Legal found there. Following in the
11 packet, behind that, is the Arkansas Department of
12 Education legal staff desegregation analysis. Then,
13 the actual application as it was originally submitted
14 in July follows. Next -- and you'll find this only
15 for the first applicant for today -- performance data
16 from other charters that's operated by the same
17 entity. We limited that to data in contiguous
18 states. As this charter authorizer, we could have
19 put many, many pages in there for other states as
20 well. And then, finally, the last thing that you'll
21 see, at least in this packet -- some of the others
22 will have opposition; that will be the last -- is the
23 ESEA data for the district in which the charter will
24 reside. Again, this is -- the first one up is the
25 Virtual Academy; it is for the district where the

1 physical location would be. We did not put all of
2 the districts in there.

3 All right. As we turn our attention now
4 specifically to Arkansas Connections Academy -- or I
5 guess I should back-up. Are there any questions on
6 what was in the packet? I think y'all are very
7 familiar with it because I know you've reviewed the
8 materials very carefully.

9 We are here now for the hearing of the open-
10 enrollment public charter school application,
11 Arkansas Connections Academy, to be physically
12 located in Bentonville, Arkansas. Arkansas
13 Connections Academy is a proposed virtual open-
14 enrollment public charter school to be located within
15 the Bentonville School District. The sponsoring
16 entity is Arkansas Connections Academy, Incorporated.
17 The applicant is requesting to serve students in
18 grades K through 12 with a maximum enrollment of
19 3,000 students, beginning in the 2016-2017 school
20 year. The applicant has notified affected districts
21 of this proposed public charter school. ADE staff
22 reviewed the application and concerns were shared
23 with the applicant for response. The application,
24 the evaluation, and the applicant's responses are
25 included for review by the Charter Authorizing Panel.

1 Dr. Dennis Beck, the board president of the
2 sponsoring -- excuse me -- of the charter, proposed
3 charter will lead the presentation for the
4 application. Dr. Beck.

5 DR. BECK: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Good morning. All
7 the representatives from Arkansas Connections Academy
8 and anyone speaking in opposition, if you would
9 please stand for the oath -- or if you're on the
10 phone, please raise your right hand. Do you swear or
11 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
12 be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
13 truth?

14 (ALL WITNESSES ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Beck,
16 you're recognized.

17 DR. BECK: Thank you. First, I want to thank
18 the Panel and every member on the Panel for taking
19 the time to do you due diligence of our application.
20 I really appreciate that, on behalf of our panel. I
21 wanted to begin by introducing the members of our
22 founding board for Arkansas Connections Academy. My
23 name is Dennis Beck; I'm the president of the board.
24 And I am also a professor of educational technical in
25 online learning at the University of Arkansas in

1 Fayetteville. And I first heard about Connections in
2 connection with my research on vulnerable populations
3 in K-12 online learning, as they are -- Connections
4 Education is a national provider and international
5 provider as well of curriculum online. It was an
6 opportunity -- I had several opportunities to
7 interact with several of the people with Connections
8 and had opportunity to kind of go onto the hood and
9 see their curriculum first-hand as an instructional
10 designer. I'd also like to introduce Virginia Walton
11 Ford.

12 MS. FORD: Good morning. I'm Virginia Walton
13 Ford; I'm the treasurer of the board of ARCA. My
14 first kind of connection with Connections Academy was
15 about five years ago in Detroit; I went to speak and
16 I met a group of students that were from the
17 Connections Academy in Ohio. And I thought these
18 were really outstanding students who really, really
19 had a handle on what they were doing educationally,
20 and it stayed in my mind. So when the opportunity
21 came up to be a part of providing the same kind of
22 activity for Arkansas, I was just really delighted
23 and privileged to be asked to serve on the board.
24 Thank you.

25 DR. BECK: Thank you, Virginia. Also here on

1 our board is our board secretary, Carla Hartwell, and
2 she has the -- adds so much to our board, in that she
3 has been a learning coach for a virtual school
4 student -- two virtual school students for over five
5 years. Also, board guests from Connections Education
6 are Pat Hoge, Melissa Nelson, Josh Solomon, and Bryce
7 Adams. And they represent curriculum and
8 instruction, school operations, finance and business
9 services, and state regulatory affairs. And they
10 will be also available to answer specific questions
11 of the Panel.

12 I'm not seeing the PowerPoint. I just see me.
13 I look good but -- all right.

14 So the board chose Connections because of their
15 extensive national and international reach and
16 established track record in so many states. And what
17 you're looking at here is a map of the 30 fully
18 chartered partner schools, one state sponsored
19 school, and one international private school. And
20 you can see, based on the different shades there,
21 where Connections is. And moving on to the next
22 slide, if I can -- what it's really all about though,
23 the reason that we chose Connections is because of
24 the students. My research that I mentioned earlier
25 is on vulnerable populations in K-12 online learning.

1 And one thing that that research has shown is that
2 there are certain groups of students who tend to do
3 well in virtual schools. Some of these are families
4 in need of flexibility. For example, athletes -- at
5 one of our information sessions we met a family whose
6 son was in the professional rodeo circuit. And he's
7 not able to attend a traditional brick-and-mortar
8 school because of the amount of unexcused absences
9 that he would get, and they were very interested in
10 Arkansas Connections because of that. Average and
11 gifted students -- these are people that need access
12 to accelerated and diverse courses, courses like
13 perhaps Mandarin Chinese; courses like accelerated AP
14 courses that are not available in their traditional
15 public school. Also, for one reason or another,
16 there are students that are struggling, those that
17 need to catch-up. Many times, students enter
18 Connections one or two grades behind and they have
19 the opportunity then to take an accelerated path and
20 develop a plan with their teachers and their learning
21 coach to do that. Also, special needs and medically
22 homebound students -- our own board secretary, Carla
23 Hartwell, has a five-year old son, Zaden [ps], who is
24 medically homebound and as a result, has been able to
25 benefit from virtual schooling. Student athletes and

1 performing arts -- and then also bullied students.
2 It's interesting what the research says though here.
3 These look like discreet categories, and they're
4 really not, of students. What they really are is --
5 there's a lot of overlap in the categories. So one
6 of the things it says, for example, is that special
7 needs kids are often bullied in a lot of traditional
8 public schools. And many of these special needs kids
9 have sought out virtual schooling as kind of a haven
10 from those bullying experiences and have really
11 experienced a lot of academic success as a result.

12 Here's a little bit about Arkansas Connections,
13 which is about the importance of parent and family
14 involvement. We've had over 3,000 requests for
15 information via Connections' website. And what this
16 really just shows us -- you can see there's obviously
17 population emphasis in the Little Rock and northwest
18 Arkansas areas, but really all around the state there
19 are families interested in Arkansas Connections
20 Academy. And this shows that it's not just myself
21 and Carla and Virginia who are excited about
22 Connections, and we are, but it's 3,000 Arkansas
23 families that want it.

24 All right. Which brings us to the 50 million
25 dollar question of today, and that is: why Arkansas

1 Connections Academy? I think the first answer is
2 that one size does not fit all. As a colleague of
3 mine once said, "If you're going out for a burger,
4 you don't always want to go to McDonald's." There
5 are so many different types of burger restaurants
6 that you might want to go to. Personally, I'm from
7 Fayetteville, Arkansas, and I love Hugo's, if anybody
8 has been to Hugo's. It's a great place and you get a
9 great -- a really great burger for a good price, but
10 it's a lot better than McDonald's. And the same
11 thing in online learning and education in general;
12 there's a growing interest in new modes of learning
13 and online programs in themselves have different
14 strengths. But quality is important and that's why
15 when we as a board went to do our due diligence and
16 look at providers we wanted an experienced partner,
17 and we think that we've found one in Connections
18 Education. They currently educate 65,000 students,
19 which is 21% of the United States' online students.
20 They're in 26 states and have 3,000 interested
21 families here in Arkansas. And they've been doing
22 this since 2001, which not many people can say that
23 about online education. Also, speaking to the
24 quality, they are accredited by AdvancED and regional
25 accreditors and they have NCAA approved courses. And

1 just a quick comment on that, there's currently no
2 online option in Arkansas that is NCAA approved. And
3 we've actually had families come to our information
4 sessions and public hearings demanding and asking for
5 a quality online option that has NCAA approved
6 courses. And they also have award-winning curriculum
7 -- and as you can imagine, curriculum is important to
8 me. I have a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction;
9 I'm an instructional designer; I have over 20 years
10 of experience as an instructional designer. I love
11 curriculum. I kind of geek out on curriculum, and
12 I've had the opportunity to geek out on Connections
13 Education curriculum.

14 So here's how it works; here's how the school
15 will serve kids. And I want to -- first, I want to
16 dispel a myth about online learning. This is not the
17 picture of some kid in their jammies sitting in front
18 of the computer reading passively. Okay. I hate
19 that commercial. I don't know who made that
20 commercial; I want that commercial to be thrown away,
21 but I don't get all of what I want. What it is
22 though about with Connections is it's a triad; it's a
23 learning triad approach where the student is right
24 where they belong, in the center. The student
25 explores; they create; they learn. But as they

1 interact through the technology, they interact with
2 the curriculum, which helps inform them and instruct
3 them and enrich them. They interact with their
4 teacher, which helps them to -- the teacher evaluates
5 the students' input, the students' assignments and
6 their activities and interactions. And they interact
7 with their learning coach, who helps implement
8 everything; helps motivate, collaborate schedules in
9 the course. And the teachers will be in an office in
10 the Bentonville School District. Together, they will
11 be working together in a face-to-face environment
12 there. That is something that's also part of the
13 academic model.

14 So I want to break that down, that learning
15 triad. The first thing I want to talk about is the
16 curriculum, and in particular about Connexus.
17 Connexus is the learning management system where the
18 curriculum is housed. Connexus connects us. Nice
19 pun, right? So, basically, students, learning coach,
20 teacher, administrators all have a log-in and they
21 have access to different levels of data. So the
22 student might have access to a secure web mail system
23 where they can interact with teachers and other
24 students. They then interact with -- do their
25 different lessons, complete different lessons and

1 activities, and other things like that. The learning
2 coach has kind of like an ability to see data on
3 their student or students and help them, make sure
4 that they're completing things on time and to high
5 quality. The teacher then is able to see several
6 students, all of their students together, and as a
7 result has data on all those students. And we'll go
8 into that a little bit more. And then the
9 administrator then has data on all of the teachers,
10 as well as the students. The Connexus lessons -- any
11 time and anywhere. And I want to emphasize that
12 because, as you all know, not all students have the
13 opportunity to be -- to not work while they're
14 completing their education. Several students, many
15 students have to work to help provide for their
16 families. And so with Connections Academy, students
17 would be able to work during the day or during the
18 evening and still complete their education on their
19 own time. And there's a secure web mail system. It
20 was explained to me as a walled garden. It's
21 completely secure. Once the students are logged in,
22 they can interact with teachers and students in a
23 completely secure environment.

24 So let's talk a little bit about the teachers,
25 their instruction and interaction. And I've had the

1 opportunity over the last few years in my research
2 and in other venues to interact with teachers with
3 Connections and to see them teach and watch them
4 interact with students. And so what they do, for
5 example, they have something called a live lesson
6 session, which is very much like a WebEx report or
7 WebEx online session. There's a virtual whiteboard
8 lesson; there's chat and audio for class discussions;
9 it's recorded if a student is sick or perhaps has to
10 miss that for another reason and they can go back and
11 watch it; there's one-on-one and group instruction;
12 there's times when the teacher will simply just pick
13 up the phone -- old-school technology, right? -- and
14 call the student and do what's called a content --
15 or, pardon me -- curriculum-based assessment, a CBA.
16 And that is where they simply just ask some questions
17 and do some formative assessment to see where that
18 student is in a particular content area. And then
19 more important than all that is kind of what all of
20 that is based on, and that is a Personalized Learning
21 Plan, which provides -- which is for every student.
22 There's a plan developed for every student to provide
23 a kind of -- based on student input, on their goals
24 and objectives, teacher input, and the learning coach
25 input to help provide a plan for that student's

1 educational and learning aspirations -- inspirations.
2 This picture that you're looking at now is a picture
3 of what teachers see when they log on. This is kind
4 of their data-driven dashboard. As you can see,
5 there are several different pieces of data that they
6 can access, and we'll talk a little bit about that
7 later. But the thing I want to emphasize here is
8 that in talking to one principal she made the comment
9 that she knows her students better after the first
10 two weeks than she did in an entire semester in a
11 face-to-face classroom because of her access to this
12 wealth of data that she has access to. Here's an
13 example of the wealth of data; it's called an
14 Assessment Objective Performance Report, and this is
15 one of the things that I geek out on as a curriculum
16 guy. So the Arkansas frameworks -- right -- and the
17 Common Core frameworks breaks it down by standard.
18 And for each standard all of the assignments, all of
19 the lessons, all of the activities are all linked to
20 that standard. And it shows how the student did on
21 that particular assignment or assessment and it shows
22 how many are left in that -- for that particular
23 standard for them. And if they -- and if it looks
24 like they're not going to reach mastery of that
25 standard, the teacher then has an opportunity to add

1 more particular assignments or activities on to help
2 differentiate, to help that student reach their
3 goals.

4 I also -- I want to bring up Virginia Walton
5 Ford, as well, right now to talk a little bit about
6 the second part of the two parts that we see as
7 really important in schooling: first, academics, but,
8 second, socialization is very important. And that's
9 one of the things why we explored what Connections
10 had to offer.

11 MS. FORD: One of the reasons we were looking --

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Hold on just a second.
13 Doug, go ahead.

14 MR. BRADBERRY: If you're on-line with us on the
15 phone, could you please mute your phone? Because
16 we're getting -- someone is driving in a car and we
17 have road noise. So if you would please mute your
18 phone. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

20 MS. FORD: One of the reasons that we -- that
21 our board has been really excited is that this is a
22 really strong academic program. But also one of the
23 things that really turned me on at least is that
24 there's a lot of opportunity for socialization.
25 There's a lot of clubs that the kids can be involved

1 in and interact with other students. Also, they get
2 together for events, you know, regional events, and
3 it gives kids the opportunity to meet their
4 classmates and oftentimes to meet their teachers.
5 The teachers will come -- drive around the state to
6 be able to meet their students. As I travel around
7 the state, I hear from parents that their concern
8 with online schools is whether their children will
9 know other students. And so there's a really great
10 opportunity with Connections; it's really encouraged.
11 And that was one of the things Carla and Dennis and I
12 were really excited about, that they would have a
13 chance to meet their students. They have student
14 government; they have a student newsletter. So
15 there's all kinds of times when students can get
16 together and talk to other students and know their
17 classmates. Also, one of the things I was really
18 excited about, we visited another Connections Academy
19 and they shared with us that their student council
20 gets together and plans a prom. And those are the
21 kinds of things parents really want to hear; they
22 want to know that their kids are going to have a
23 well-rounded, exciting experience in school and build
24 a lot of memories. So those were the things that we
25 found really important to partner with the excellence

1 of the academic program. So on behalf of our board,
2 we want to thank you for listening to all of our
3 thoughts and reviewing our proposal, and we'll be
4 happy to entertain any questions later. Thank you so
5 much.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Beck, you have about
7 three more minutes, if you'd like to use those, or we
8 can add them to your five minutes.

9 DR. BECK: I can't get the slide thing to work,
10 unfortunately. There it is. You've got to love it
11 when you're an educational technology professor and
12 you can't get the slides to work, right?

13 We thought it was also important to make sure --
14 to see what parents nationally think of Connections
15 Academy. And here are some of the results from an
16 independent survey by Shapiro and Raj: 95% of parents
17 agreed that the curriculum was high quality; 95%
18 agreed their children were satisfied with the
19 program; 96% were satisfied with teachers'
20 helpfulness, and you can see some of the other ones
21 there at the bottom. But I wanted to highlight that
22 because -- I think it's important to highlight two
23 things: first, it was an independent survey company
24 that was done anonymously, without connections to
25 Connections Academy; and, second, such high marks,

1 something that really impressed us as a board.

2 And that's -- that is actually the end of our
3 presentation. So, thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Are there
5 anyone -- is there anyone here to speak in
6 opposition?

7 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And silence fell over the
9 room. You have five additional minutes for any
10 closing statements, Dr. Beck.

11 DR. BECK: I think I'm good, actually. I'd
12 rather add that to the question-and-answer time.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Thank you so
14 much. As our procedure with panel members, we
15 usually go around the group, giving each panel member
16 an opportunity to ask a question, and that way you
17 can hear from everyone. So, Ms. Barnes, we will
18 start with you.

19 MS. BARNES: Good morning. Thank you. Thank
20 you so much for your presentation.

21 DR. BECK: Thank you. Thanks for bearing with
22 all the --

23 MS. BARNES: Oh, no. No problem. I just need
24 to go back and find a couple of things. And you may
25 have already covered some of this information, but I

1 was particularly interested in a couple of pieces
2 with respect to the Personalized Learning Plans that
3 you are going to prepare. Can you walk me through a
4 little bit more of the parental involvement with
5 that, how the parents engage, talk about the learning
6 coach, the teacher, the student? And we recognize
7 that you have a number of students who will come from
8 various backgrounds. So give me a little more
9 information about the parental engagement component.

10 DR. BECK: Sure. And I'm going to have Dr. Pat
11 Hoge, the Chief Academic Officer of Connections,
12 address that question.

13 DR. HOGE: Thank you. Good morning, everyone.
14 On the Personalized Learning Plan, that's a great
15 question and it's really core to what we do, is that
16 at the start of every semester that the teacher, the
17 learning coach and the student are involved in
18 creating the Personalized Learning Plan. It's a
19 process that we go through and it's not just a one-
20 half-hour session; it's a -- you know -- it's a
21 multi-day session. We're looking at student academic
22 history; we're looking at what brought them to
23 Connections, you know, in the first place; we're
24 getting the student's attitude; and then we're
25 saying, "What are your short-term goals?" You know,

1 "What are you hoping to accomplish this week, this
2 month, this semester?" But then, beyond that, "What
3 are your hopes for this year?" And then, "What are
4 your college and career plans?" So part of our plan
5 is -- it's really three-fold. One, it's to look
6 across their career, where they're going, and to make
7 sure we're setting up courses or opportunities that
8 will move them in the right direction. The other
9 thing is within courses to make sure they're being
10 placed at a level that's appropriate for them; are
11 they on the honors track or do they need more
12 essential or foundations courses; is it a student who
13 needs foreign language, needs more career tech ed.
14 So we have different levels of courses the students
15 sort of move in and out, you know, from an honors
16 level to a more standard level, which is really
17 essential as part of their plan. But the next part
18 is once they're in their courses that we're
19 personalizing a path within the courses. If they're
20 struggling in math, do they need to slow down? Do
21 they need to go at a slower pace? Do they need more
22 intervention there? If they're in gifted and
23 talented, in language arts or in English, do they
24 need to be accelerated there? And then within
25 individual lessons teachers can modify; they can add

1 lesson modifications; they can skip or move students
2 ahead, you know, if that's the appropriate pace. So
3 there's really the opportunity for teachers to
4 personalize at the lesson level, at the course level,
5 and at the course offering level on that student's
6 path. But then learning coaches and students are
7 engaged in this Personalized Learning Plan on an
8 ongoing basis, so there's a constant touch-back. And
9 those are in the required context with teachers and
10 learning coaches, to make sure that we're revisiting
11 the plan and that we're either modifying it, you
12 know, or adjusting it as needed. So it's definitely,
13 as Dr. Beck showed the triad, that everyone is
14 involved, you know, in the decision-making process.

15 MS. BARNES: I'll probably come back to it.

16 DR. HOGE: Okay. Sure.

17 MS. BARNES: And I'm not going to use all of the
18 time because I'm sure some of the other panelists
19 will have some questions. But I also wanted to know
20 -- I know in the first year you're looking at K-9.
21 So in reading, if you have students who are on the
22 accelerated path, part of it has to do with -- I
23 believe you said courses that they may need would be
24 offered, pending the board and teacher approval. And
25 I was trying to picture a scenario in which you may

1 have a student come, an accelerated student, and they
2 need a math course. Normally, that's in 9th grade.
3 Could you walk me through a scenario where the
4 approval may not be granted for that student to take
5 the next level of math course? And it doesn't have
6 to be math; it could be any number of courses. But I
7 guess my main question has to do with -- I need to
8 know how and why a student, if they were on the
9 accelerated path and choosing to be a part of this
10 charter -- and I know that there's some things that
11 can and cannot be mastered in the first year. But
12 what does that look like that it would not be granted
13 since -- I'm trying to also picture how the personnel
14 involved would be working with the student, choosing
15 the courses that are appropriate, wouldn't be a
16 situation that that student would just not be able to
17 enroll in a course that they needed to further their
18 next path? Can you walk me through that denial or
19 what that reason would be or how you would address
20 the individual needs of students?

21 DR. BECK: (Nodding head up and down.) And I'm
22 going to have Missy Nelson, who is vice president of
23 Connections Academy Schools, to address that
24 question.

25 MS. NELSON: Hi. Thank you very much. This is

1 a concern. This is something that happens a lot when
2 we open a new school. So when we're thinking about
3 the courses that we're going to offer we realize that
4 we're going to have kids who are above grade level.
5 So, for example, we opened a school in North Carolina
6 this year and we offered English 9, but we also
7 offered English 10 for just those few students who
8 needed it. We also offered AP, if there was a
9 student who needed it. So we always want to make
10 sure that there is an opportunity for students who
11 can accelerate. In math, we went up to pre-Calc. If
12 we had had a student who walked in the door who
13 wanted calculus, we would have offered them calculus
14 if that was something that they needed. And one of
15 the things that we asked for in the application was a
16 waiver for some licensure requirements. If we have
17 one student who needs calculus, what we would like to
18 be able to do in the situation with a really low
19 number course like that is to use our national
20 private school, which has certified teachers but
21 they're not necessarily certified in Arkansas. So
22 that would give us the opportunity to offer the full
23 compliment of courses for any student who walks in
24 the door to meet their needs.

25 MS. BARNES: Okay. So in my request for like a

1 potential scenario of when it may not be granted,
2 since it's dependent upon the approval of the teacher
3 and the board, what -- can you give me any kind of an
4 instance where a student may not be able to move
5 forward because of their learning plan or --

6 MS. NELSON: I mean, to my understanding, as
7 long as the student meets the requirements to be in
8 that course --

9 MS. BARNES: Okay.

10 MS. NELSON: -- we would make every attempt to
11 offer that course.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Pfeffer.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Good morning.

14 DR. BECK: Good morning to you.

15 MS. PFEFFER: And I think what Ms. Barnes was
16 asking about kind of leads into some of my questions
17 regarding course offerings and the workforce that
18 you're going to need in order to be able to offer the
19 education experience that every child would need. So
20 I wanted to go back and make sure that I understand
21 something in your presentation, Dr. Beck. You said
22 that the teachers will actually be located in one
23 place, in an office in Bentonville. Is that correct?

24 DR. BECK: That's correct.

25 MS. PFEFFER: So all teachers that you would

1 utilize are going to be face-to-face -- you know --
2 you're going to have every teacher on-site in one
3 location. Is that correct?

4 DR. BECK: Missy.

5 MS. NELSON: The majority of teachers would be
6 there. Our goal would be to have all of them in the
7 office, because it's better for training new
8 teachers; it's better for collaboration on students.
9 But there could be -- if we had a chemistry teacher
10 and the only -- they were in the Delta and there was
11 no other grade chemistry teacher available, we could
12 have -- we would train that person to work at home.
13 But we would prefer for them to be in the office with
14 their principal.

15 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So in thinking about that
16 and the students that you don't know you're going to
17 have, the numbers you're not sure about, you're going
18 to be drawing your workforce from that area, in the
19 Bentonville area, and I guess northwest Arkansas area
20 because, ideally, you're going to be bringing
21 teachers in to be located in one place. When you --
22 and Bentonville -- I was looking through some data
23 this morning in terms of long-term subs and teachers
24 on ALP's. And while Bentonville doesn't seem to have
25 a need for shortages in certain areas, the

1 surrounding school districts definitely do. So when
2 you start looking at the salary that you're going to
3 offer teachers and the needs in those surrounding
4 areas, do you feel pretty certain that you're going
5 to be able to find licensed teachers? I know you're
6 asking for a waiver, but you said your intent is to
7 hire licensed teachers but it's not in your waiver.
8 I'm just trying to gauge how confident you are in
9 being able to pull together the workforce that you're
10 going to need. Any thoughts on that?

11 MS. NELSON: I think we're very confident.
12 You'll get a lot of teachers who want to try a new
13 model and so they want to be in this new virtual
14 school. And they like the idea of our pay scale
15 which rewards excellence; it's merit-based. So we
16 get people who come in for that reason. We do have
17 schools in 30 other states and we have managed to
18 fully staff those schools. So we believe that we
19 can. If it got to the point where we're missing a
20 couple, you know, hard-to-find teachers, then that
21 would be when we would look outside the Bentonville
22 area to meet those needs.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So, and as -- if this
24 charter is approved, will you go K-12 fully starting
25 next year or --

1 MS. NELSON: No. It would be K-9 next year and
2 then we'll add a grade until we get to K-12.

3 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So in terms of course
4 offerings, especially when you get to the high school
5 level, what -- because it seemed like when I -- I
6 made a note in here that your course offerings for
7 high school are uncertain at this time. And one of
8 the things you've talked about is trying to attract
9 or trying to appeal to students who are gifted and
10 accelerated, going beyond, or those that may have
11 some needs. I guess I'm a little uncomfortable
12 without, you know, seeing what the plan is,
13 especially for those high school courses, because you
14 do have to have so many different teachers with
15 different expertise. So --

16 MS. NELSON: Right. I mean, it's something that
17 in many states that don't have, for example, a
18 composite science license where you have to hire each
19 -- what we could do if we had four kids who wanted to
20 take chemistry, and that's not a typical 9th grade
21 course, we could hire an adjunct who did that part-
22 time, you know, just to teach for those four
23 students. We have done that in the past. So we do
24 have some flexibility since it is an online school.
25 That's not ideal, and we don't want to have a whole

1 -- you know -- we want to have a full-time teaching
2 staff who's devoted to the students. But if we --
3 you know -- to meet those requirements we could do
4 that.

5 MS. PFEFFER: But you would never -- if you had
6 one student that came in that said, "I want to take
7 chemistry," or they had already had a science class
8 because they came from another state or another --
9 you know -- where that would be their next step, you
10 would -- you would provide that course for that
11 student?

12 MS. NELSON: In a case where it's like a core
13 course like that, we would have to figure out how to
14 do it, whether it be through adjuncts or, if we had
15 the waiver, we could send them to the national
16 Connections Academy and they would be one student in
17 a certified teacher's course, just not an Arkansas
18 certified teacher.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Just a couple more
20 questions. Is that okay?

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: (Nodding head up and
22 down.)

23 MS. PFEFFER: Looking at the availability for an
24 online environment for all students and insuring that
25 students from low income families have the

1 opportunity for this, are there allowances or
2 provisions for equipment, technology, for internet
3 band-width or the internet connections? Are there
4 some provisions for that to be sure that there are
5 some students who are not excluded from having an
6 opportunity?

7 DR. BECK: Absolutely. I don't know if you
8 recall but one of the first slides -- and I can't
9 quite figure out this thing, so we'll just go without
10 it. About 45% of the students nationally in
11 Connections Academies are low SES -- pardon me --
12 they're free-and-reduced meal; I misspoke. So we
13 have experience of dealing with that in other states.
14 The particular provision that we have with Arkansas
15 Connections Academy is we're pleased to offer a
16 computer and an internet subsidy for students who
17 would qualify in that.

18 MS. PFEFFER: And they would qualify by being
19 qualified for free-and-reduced lunch? Is that how
20 they qualify for it?

21 DR. BECK: Yeah, that's how.

22 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And in terms of the field
23 trips, I noticed there were some field trips outlined
24 in locations throughout the state. Since you're not
25 in a position where you're going to offer

1 transportation, how would you insure that those
2 students could connect with others and have
3 opportunities to participate?

4 DR. BECK: That's a great question about field
5 trips actually. Virginia, do you want to address
6 that?

7 MS. FORD: The field trips are usually planned
8 in regional areas. And for parents who can't get
9 there, there would be some assistance provided for
10 them because we want to make sure every child that's
11 enrolled has the opportunity to go on field trips.
12 And they would initially be in every region, so it
13 would be a group of kids in different areas --
14 northwest Arkansas, for example -- that would come
15 and we would help them get there.

16 MS. PFEFFER: So no definite plan, but the
17 promise that children would be able to participate?

18 MS. FORD: Yeah. I mean, this is a really
19 important part of our program. And the socialization
20 part of our program is very, very valid and we are
21 really, really committed to making sure that that
22 happens.

23 MS. PFEFFER: And I understand. I just have
24 also been in charge of organizing some of those field
25 trips and sometimes it's very difficult to, you know,

1 to get those arrangements made, so --

2 MS. FORD: Well, we're going to work really hard
3 to make sure -- with our school leaders and with our
4 teachers to make sure that those things are put
5 together very well and that every parent has whatever
6 information they need to get there. That's really,
7 really important to us.

8 DR. BECK: Missy, do you want to add to that?

9 MS. NELSON: This is a problem we have across
10 the country. So as soon as the principal, the school
11 leader is hired, this is something that we'll talk to
12 them about and make sure that the plan is developed
13 for how the parents will know when the field trips
14 are, making sure they're very regionalized so parents
15 have lots of opportunities to attend, and so there's
16 a system for parents to ask for assistance if they
17 need it.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

19 DR. BECK: I did want to add too, one of the
20 things I love about Connections Academy field trips
21 is that there's a priority put on once we see which
22 students sign up for a field trip that those
23 students' teachers are kind of encouraged and
24 provided for so they can attend those field trips.
25 And so, that way, there is a face-to-face connection

1 with their online students.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Saunders.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Good morning.

4 DR. BECK: Good morning.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: I'll start off with, could you
6 summarize for me -- what would you be offering that's
7 not currently offered in the state?

8 DR. BECK: Absolutely. The first thing that we
9 would be offering that's not currently offered in the
10 state is a -- well, I don't want to use the same
11 analogy that I used before, but a different type of
12 virtual school I guess would be the best way of
13 putting it. It's one that focuses on not just high
14 tech but high touch, one that encourages and is very
15 -- has a very high emphasis on accountability for the
16 student and accountability for the teachers, and one
17 that really focuses on high achievement and the
18 achievement of students and them achieving their own
19 personal goals as well as state goals. So that would
20 be the first thing. I think second of all, we're
21 providing choice for Arkansas families who've already
22 indicated that they want that choice. Over 3,000
23 families -- actually, the recent number I was just
24 told was 3,200 now -- families have indicated an
25 interest in enrolling in Connections, Arkansas

1 Connections Academy. Now, so providing a choice for
2 those families I think is very important and I
3 already went over the different categories of
4 different types of students. There are obviously
5 some students that for one reason or another may not
6 thrive in a traditional brick-and-mortar environment,
7 and that's where Connections can come in. I think
8 another reason is that the current virtual school is
9 at or very near their cap. So with those 3,000
10 families that are interested -- they are not able to
11 serve those 3,000 families, I'll put it that way. I
12 think another reason is the NCAA approved courses,
13 which, if approved as a charter in Arkansas, Arkansas
14 Connections Academy would be the only online option
15 that has NCAA approved courses.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Regarding the 3,000
17 number, can you tell me exactly what that number is?
18 And not --

19 DR. BECK: What do you mean?

20 DR. SAUNDERS: What does it represent?

21 DR. BECK: It represents -- like one of those
22 would represent a family who wants information on
23 enrolling in Arkansas Connections Academy.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Is that based upon hits on the
25 website or how is that based?

1 DR. BECK: Bryce?

2 MR. ADAMS: Good morning. Bryce Adams,
3 Executive Director of State Relations. So that 3,200
4 number comes from the website but it's not hits; it's
5 registrations. So there are lots of families, and we
6 don't track where they're coming from, that are
7 visiting the website for additional information and
8 we just don't know how many families are in that
9 category. But there are 3,200 families from Arkansas
10 addresses who have registered, who have given their
11 email addresses, their home addresses over to the
12 Connections website, saying, "Please give us more
13 information on Connections. Please keep us informed
14 of the application process and the approval process.
15 And if you guys ever do get approved, please let us
16 know so we can potentially look at enrolling." So we
17 believe that there's a much bigger population. I
18 mean, the registration is going to represent a
19 smaller population compared to all of the families
20 who are actively looking at the website. But the
21 3,200 number makes us feel like there's really a
22 demand here.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: When did that -- when did you
24 start counting that number?

25 MR. ADAMS: Yeah. So that's from 2011 to about

1 end of summer.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders, any other
3 questions?

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, ma'am.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Regarding the licensure issue,
7 looking at Section 5 of the requested waivers from
8 the superintendent to the principals to the teachers,
9 why not explore the ALP process available from the
10 ADE?

11 DR. BECK: Well, first of all, are you --
12 regarding the waiver for licensure?

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

14 DR. BECK: Is that what you're asking about?
15 ARCA teachers would be licensed, but ARCA has asked
16 -- what we're asking specifically for is that the ADE
17 allow some teachers licensed in states other than
18 Arkansas to instruct ARCA students. So these
19 teachers would be used for courses where ARCA cannot
20 find an Arkansas certified teacher and courses with
21 low student enrollment, things like Mandarin Chinese
22 or another -- perhaps an obscure language, AP
23 courses, career electives, things like that. And we
24 would still even with that anticipate that at minimum
25 90% of course enrollments would be taught by Arkansas

1 licensed teachers. And what this waiver will help us
2 do, we'll be able to offer courses that otherwise we
3 would not be able to; thus, it would give students a
4 richer educational experience. And we could operate
5 without this waiver and use only Arkansas licensed
6 teachers but what it would do is it would limit some
7 of the courses available to students, which is one of
8 the things that attracted us first to Connections is
9 that national experience and the availability of a
10 lot of those courses for Arkansas students.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. How does that apply to the
12 licensure on the superintendent and principal?

13 DR. BECK: Do you want to address that, Missy or
14 Bryce?

15 MR. ADAMS: Yeah. So my understanding is that
16 the ALP program is for alternative licensing. It's a
17 different pathway towards licensure. Is that
18 correct? No? Okay. I think I would need more
19 information on that. But what Dr. Beck said is
20 exactly correct, that we would pursue -- we hope to
21 pursue an all-of-the-above strategy in hiring and
22 finding the best talent. Most of those people are
23 going to be Arkansas licensed. The board would like,
24 but does not necessarily have to have, the ability to
25 use those out-of-state teachers who are still

1 licensed and still keep up with their state PD, just
2 so that we can find the best teacher, wherever they
3 are, to serve the students who are enrolled.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: I can understand that. But
5 asking for a waiver from multiple -- my question
6 would be: what specifically within the rules or laws
7 is holding up your progress?

8 MR. ADAMS: Oh. I believe that it's that the
9 teachers are required to be certified in Arkansas.
10 So the waiver is not going to apply for most of the
11 teachers. Most of the teachers -- we're anticipating
12 90% -- are going to be licensed in Arkansas. But for
13 those few course enrollments that we'd like to be
14 able to offer to those low enrollment course
15 students, they would be licensed, just not in
16 Arkansas. It's my understanding that teachers in
17 Arkansas have to be licensed in Arkansas, and so that
18 is the hang-up there.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: I would understand that the ALP
20 process would satisfy that on those isolated
21 incidents.

22 MR. ADAMS: So I'm not totally familiar with
23 that process, but that's something I can look into
24 and get back to you.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I have a few more. May I?

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you want to do them now
2 or wait?

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Just a couple.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Go ahead.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: I know you mentioned earlier
6 merit pay. Is that correct?

7 DR. BECK: Yes.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: Were you also -- I didn't see it
9 listed. Were you asking for a possible waiver from
10 6-17-119, the alternative pay law --

11 DR. BECK: We are seeking --

12 DR. SAUNDERS: -- or would you be in compliance
13 with that?

14 DR. BECK: I'm sorry; I didn't have the exact
15 number. But we are seeking a waiver of the personnel
16 policies and salary schedule. Is that the same one?

17 DR. SAUNDERS: No. No, that's a separate law.

18 DR. BECK: Okay.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Would they need that waiver?

20 DR. BECK: Of the one that you're asking about?

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

22 DR. BECK: Can you repeat that, please?

23 DR. SAUNDERS: 6-17-119.

24 DR. BECK: Which is -- which is the alternative
25 pay one?

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Uh-huh. We can come back and
2 revisit that --

3 DR. BECK: I apologize.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: -- in a few minutes.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll give you time --

6 DR. BECK: Sorry.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- and Ms. Clay time to
8 research that. Going ahead and moving forward, Dr.
9 Jones, you're recognized.

10 DR. JONES: Good morning, Dr. Beck.

11 DR. BECK: Good morning.

12 DR. JONES: I have a few curriculum questions.
13 I'm right here.

14 DR. BECK: Sorry.

15 DR. JONES: That's okay.

16 DR. BECK: I'm a little bit far-sighted.

17 DR. JONES: And accountability questions. I saw
18 in the application that you had achievement data for
19 Texas, and I saw the map with 30 other schools, I
20 think you said. Do you have national achievement
21 data for all of those schools? I saw that you had
22 national survey data on parent satisfaction, but do
23 you have data on their performance?

24 DR. BECK: Uh-huh.

25 DR. HOGE: Certainly. Good morning. We do.

1 You know, we try not to compare state-by-state
2 because of the difference state accountability
3 systems and different tests as far as looking at
4 proficiency and state standards changing. But we do
5 across -- we're in 26 states with 30 schools. And so
6 then we do look across nationally how our Connections
7 Academy schools are doing; how are they doing
8 compared to the state averages, how are they doing if
9 they're in a district, how they're doing from their
10 performance from the previous year, and then across
11 subject areas. So we didn't include that in the
12 packet but we can certainly present that.

13 DR. JONES: I would request that we look at that
14 national data. Do you have a slide or anything
15 available today to share that data with us?

16 DR. HOGE: We don't. But what we see -- I can
17 talk to it at a high level as far as what we see
18 consistently across the states, is that in every
19 state we are equal to or students achieve higher than
20 in English Language Arts. That's a trend that we see
21 in all of our schools. We're very excited to see
22 that, and particularly it's free and reduced meal
23 students where we see that. And none of the states
24 are performing poorer, you know, than state averages;
25 again, it's equal to or exceeding. That's a

1 phenomenon that we're really trying to understand
2 because -- what is it about the online environment
3 that's really presenting students who perhaps weren't
4 in text or language or vocabulary rich environments,
5 you know, now are, and so they're now really
6 exceeding in that area. We're seeing nice growth in
7 science and in social studies and in writing. We are
8 about meeting or exceeding averages, state averages
9 in those areas, but then we are improving every year
10 and so we're excited to see that improvement. You'll
11 see that in math that's an area where we continue to,
12 you know, have concerns and put a lot of focus in
13 math, trying to understand what is it about the
14 students that are coming to an online school, what is
15 it about learning math online. We know from our
16 national data that 35% of the students that are
17 enrolling in online schools are coming behind in math
18 and 37% are arriving after the first day of school.
19 So arriving late puts you at further risk, and
20 particularly in math. So we're trying to, you know,
21 understand that. That said, we are improving every
22 year in math and we can show you that data as well
23 and we can talk more about the math initiatives.

24 DR. JONES: I would be interested in looking at
25 that data. Thank you.

1 DR. HOGE: Uh-huh.

2 DR. JONES: Dr. Beck --

3 DR. BECK: Yes, ma'am.

4 DR. JONES: -- in setting performance goals for
5 this school, I see that you wrote that students --
6 that your goals were students would approach a level
7 of proficiency that is nearly equivalent to other
8 Arkansas students?

9 DR. BECK: That's correct.

10 DR. JONES: Is that to say that you will not
11 have the goal that your students will perform at the
12 proficiency level of the state's students?

13 DR. BECK: That's also correct. Our proficiency
14 goals are a .90 ratio of school-to-state proficiency
15 rates. And the reason is because, generally
16 speaking, when students enroll in an online school
17 it's to solve a problem; it's for a specific reason.
18 And many times it's because they're behind already.
19 And as a result, there's that .90 ratio of school-to-
20 state proficiency. And did you want to add anything
21 on that?

22 DR. HOGE: The goal is certainly always for
23 students to meet or exceed averages. And then we're
24 looking at the first year of the school and to say
25 what can we hold the school accountable to, not

1 knowing exactly the student population that's coming,
2 we want to make sure that we're setting a bar that's
3 rigorous but also that's attainable, and then from
4 there to continue. But, again, meeting or exceeding
5 is always the goal.

6 DR. JONES: Dr. Beck, also to I guess balance
7 the students that come in behind, you also said a
8 major part of your audience would be gifted students.
9 So in my mind, I would think that that would balance
10 that out. I can say I'm not comfortable --

11 DR. BECK: Sure.

12 DR. JONES: -- opening a new school and setting
13 lower standards than the state average. Because
14 looking at a state average, we have many states in
15 that average that are -- many students in that
16 average that are well behind and so that's not what I
17 would consider a very rigorous standard. And so just
18 competing at the state average would make me much
19 more comfortable, if you would be willing to discuss
20 that, and --

21 DR. BECK: Absolutely.

22 DR. JONES: -- opening a new school but at
23 minimum performing at the state average.

24 DR. BECK: I think that's something that
25 definitely we can discuss as a board.

1 DR. JONES: Okay. And then explain to me a
2 little bit about -- I saw slide 11 on your
3 presentation. I know that all of your courses are
4 NCAA approved.

5 DR. BECK: Uh-huh.

6 DR. JONES: Are those courses -- when I look at
7 the identifying information for the standards, I
8 don't see Common Core alignment. It may be there.
9 My question is: are your math and English classes
10 aligned to Common Core standards currently?

11 DR. HOGE: Yes. The answer is yes.

12 DR. JONES: Okay. And then, will you tell me
13 your process -- you know, the state is in the process
14 of realigning our Common Core standards.

15 DR. HOGE: Yeah.

16 DR. JONES: And the changes that we make in the
17 standards and that are approved by our State Board,
18 how will your system handle changing the coursework,
19 the standards and the courses? What systematic
20 changes -- how do you go about making those changes?

21 DR. HOGE: Sure. And we look at alignments.
22 First of all, we take alignments very seriously. And
23 being in 26 different states we have to understand
24 the current status, you know, of each state and then
25 what's changing, and particularly all of the sort of

1 unraveling that's been happening around Common Core,
2 you know, to stay on top of that. That said, there
3 is just a common process that state departments have
4 of updating their standards. And within Arkansas,
5 you have your six-year renewal, so we just look at
6 that to make sure that we are -- that we understand
7 which subject areas, which grade levels and which
8 year. So when we look at alignments there's three
9 ways that we look at it: one, when it's a new school,
10 new state. Then, we have existing courses. So then
11 we take your state standards, in this case Common
12 Core for language, arts and math, and then your
13 science, social studies, all your electives. And
14 then we do the alignment of our existing courses to
15 your standards. And then, if there are any areas
16 where it looks like an existing course doesn't fully
17 meet the standard then we do the work. Sometimes a
18 course works as is; other times, it needs to be
19 customized, you know, to fully meet. Then we create
20 a different instance of that course within the
21 Connexus platform. So, for example, we have one base
22 algebra I course but we have 26 different iterations
23 of it because they are a little bit different from
24 state to state or in population to population. So
25 that said, that's sort of aligning your standards,

1 you know, to the existing courses. The next part is
2 making sure do you have course requirements that we
3 don't currently have a course for. So if you look at
4 your middle school state history, we don't have an
5 Arkansas state history, you know, currently in the
6 course catalog; then we build the course to your
7 standards. So we start with your standards, go over
8 the expectations and then what does that look like,
9 what are you looking -- how do students need to
10 demonstrate that learning, you know, in Arkansas?
11 Then we build the course and that would be in place
12 when the school opens. Sometimes it doesn't need to
13 be a separate standalone course, but there needs to
14 be modifications within the course. So if I look at
15 a U.S. History course and if on your standards there
16 are Arkansas specific standards or requirements, then
17 we go in again and customize the course. So all that
18 work gets done. So that's sort of existing courses,
19 new courses, and then your changing standards. Then,
20 we have an annual renew process with our courses, a
21 continuous improvement cycle. So the courses that
22 are being offered for 15-16, can those same courses
23 be offered in 16-17 in states, and why or why not.
24 So state standard updates, you know, are one of those
25 processes. So we have teams who are watching it. We

1 have teams in the curriculum department who are
2 watching the alignments but then are also then doing
3 the modifications to insure that when your state says
4 these go into effect this year that we have a revised
5 course in place for that school year.

6 DR. JONES: Thank you. I'm a gifted student.
7 Tell me all the services that I will have.

8 DR. HOGE: I have a big umbrella, but --

9 DR. JONES: Tell me your job again.

10 DR. HOGE: I'm Chief Academic Officer.

11 DR. JONES: Are you in the state?

12 DR. HOGE: No. In Connections Education.

13 DR. JONES: Okay.

14 DR. HOGE: Right. And so we have -- there are a
15 few courses that are being offered through an online
16 course provider. But as far as, you know, any other
17 presence, no. But I am responsible for performance
18 in all the states, you know, understanding the state
19 standards. I have curriculum development and
20 production, but then I have instructional services
21 and under that is student services. You know,
22 there's special education, gifted and talented, ELL,
23 counseling.

24 DR. JONES: Okay. So if I'm a gifted student I
25 get the advanced coursework?

1 DR. HOGE: That's one of the things that you get
2 is advanced coursework. And so you may be -- whether
3 it's reading/language/arts, math -- those are the two
4 in the first year -- whether it's science. So that's
5 across the elementary school and middle school; we
6 start in 3rd grade. Then we also have elective
7 courses, whether it's Chinese, whether it's, you
8 know, Spanish that we're offering to students. In
9 elementary, in reading/language/arts, we do partner
10 with Junior Great Books and so we have students in a
11 literature study that's part of the gifted program.
12 So in addition to coursework they are also doing this
13 peer-to-peer collaboration and shared inquiry. And
14 then, in high school then of course there are honors
15 courses and then AP courses. But we also have
16 introduced what we call Talent Networks where we
17 wanted to really recognize and provide students who
18 are gifted, either in academics or in performing arts
19 or in sports, they have an opportunity to come
20 together and be further supported. And so students
21 apply to the networks. They have parent support;
22 they have the support of their teachers, their
23 counselors. And it's a rigorous enrollment process
24 or submission because then we really want this group
25 of students who are committed to being a part of the

1 Talent Network. So their opportunities are with --
2 they come together, they work on special projects,
3 they have special speakers, you know, and special
4 opportunities. So there are a number of ways that we
5 wanted gifted students not only in their coursework
6 but then also in, like I'm saying, speaker series,
7 gifted and talented -- I mean, collage and career
8 planning opportunities that are brought to them.

9 DR. JONES: Is additional money spent on gifted
10 students, aside from a regular student?

11 DR. HOGE: No, in the sense that that's not a
12 part of the budget; it's part of the curriculum
13 offering. And so whether a student needs to be in a
14 math course with more support or in a gifted course,
15 you know, with enhancement, then that's all part of
16 the standard offering.

17 DR. JONES: Dr. Beck, are you expecting to
18 receive the gifted and talented money for students,
19 gifted students, in the matrix?

20 DR. BECK: I'm going to call on Josh here to
21 address that. He's Director of Finance and Business
22 Services.

23 MR. SOLOMON: Yeah. We cannot budget for it, so
24 we're very conservative in our budget. I only
25 actually used two categories of funding, the mainstay

1 funding and some professional development funding --
2 but obviously if that funding is available that we
3 use it. And if it's restricted, use it for
4 restricted purposes.

5 DR. JONES: Well, it comes within the metrics
6 for gifted identified students. Yet, I don't see in
7 your budget where you're spending extra money for
8 gifted and talented services.

9 MR. SOLOMON: It's included within the program.

10 DR. JONES: As all other general students
11 receive?

12 MR. SOLOMON: It's included within the program,
13 a different budget line. I think it's explained
14 actually in the Review Committee department response
15 documentation, where it shows --

16 DR. JONES: What page?

17 MR. SOLOMON: -- the kind of support. Give me
18 one second. Page 36.

19 DR. JONES: Page 36 of the application?

20 MR. SOLOMON: Page 36 of the response to the
21 Review Committee questions. And the courses actually
22 are included, as well. So the gifted courses would
23 be included in the instructional or the program
24 support that is mentioned on page 22; it's mentioned
25 on page 36.

1 DR. JONES: How do I find what's written here --
2 do you not pay extra support for students, to
3 identify students, the assessments that you'll put
4 students into the gifted program?

5 MR. SOLOMON: It's an extra cost of the program
6 that's included within the support that would be --
7 it's included within the services of Connections
8 Education. So, yes. Is there extra expense for
9 Connections? Yes. But it's included within the
10 program.

11 DR. JONES: Okay. That's all the questions I
12 have right now.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good
15 morning, everyone. Just on the other end of the
16 spectrum I have some questions regarding special
17 education. In regard to special education, I was a
18 little concerned that the original -- there was an
19 original waiver request to have that -- or to be
20 waived from special ed. And, of course, that cannot
21 be waived. So can you explain more and talk a little
22 bit more about how the IEP students may be served.
23 One of the things I was impressed with was the
24 expanded opportunities that you offer for students.
25 And as a former superintendent and principal, the

1 difficult challenge I had as a principal and a
2 superintendent was some of my special ed. students
3 that were really struggling in the brick-and-mortar,
4 as you said, environment. So I'm concerned that
5 there was an original waiver request to pull away
6 from special ed. How have you folks responded since
7 that cannot be waived? And how would those kids be
8 served?

9 DR. BECK: Absolutely. Dr. Hoge.

10 DR. HOGE: Yes. Thank you for your question.
11 And, you know, one thing is that special education
12 students do find a good home in Connections Academy
13 schools. And while we talked about the bullying
14 before -- Dr. Beck mentioned that -- we see a lot of
15 students on the autism spectrum who may have been
16 doing fine in elementary school but then they tried
17 to transition to middle school or high school and are
18 having a hard time, struggling. And academically
19 they were doing fine but socially they were
20 challenged and they were looking for an alternative.
21 So we do see that. We see that group of students
22 particularly growing as far as the percentage. We
23 see it's an equal distribution -- not equal, but sort
24 of standard distribution across whether they're
25 emotionally disturbed or speech/language, you know,

1 occupational therapy students and sort of your -- you
2 know -- your learning disabled students. But, again,
3 that autism spectrum population is growing. So
4 students come to us -- if they come to a Connections
5 Academy school with an IEP, then the student support
6 services group, you know, meets immediately to review
7 the IEP and to make decisions about how that's
8 implemented in the virtual world. So what direct
9 services is the special education teacher giving,
10 whether it's the special education manager; how are
11 they teaming together with the general ed. teacher;
12 and how that's being provided and what that looks
13 like, and all in alignment with the IEP. So if
14 there's an amount of directed instruction that's
15 provided, then through live -- the live synchronous
16 instruction, that may be daily opportunities for live
17 instruction or it may be, again, team teaching with
18 the special education teacher joining a general ed.
19 live lesson session. In addition to that are the
20 related services. So we do have -- we'll run the
21 gamut of whether it's face-to-face speech pathology
22 or whether it's virtual, and it's really the IEP team
23 that's determining whether a virtual speech therapy
24 or virtual RT is the right service, you know, for
25 that student. Or, again, do they need to be able to

1 -- someone needs to go to the home for that; do the
2 parents need to travel for that? And then, how do we
3 accommodate that. So it is looking across. And then
4 what sorts of technology do they need. We've done a
5 lot -- and if I could comment on that a bit -- around
6 accessibility. We are really steeped in
7 understanding the accessibility technical standards,
8 and then movement from 508 to the WCAG 2.0 AA
9 standards. Even though the federal guidelines
10 haven't officially moved from 508, you know, to the
11 WCAG standards, we've adopted those at Connections.
12 So anything we do within Connexus, the platform, or
13 any curriculum development is being developed to the
14 higher WCAG 2.0 AA standards. That sets a high bar
15 for ourselves, but it really is about access, you
16 know, for students and then for families. So
17 anything that's going to a teacher, anything that's
18 going to a learning coach, or anything that's going
19 to a student will then reach that higher expectation.
20 We've also put together our own training course
21 around accessibility so that we have a culture of
22 access for all, and every employee, every teacher,
23 every administrator has taken the course. We rolled
24 it out last fall and by winter, by December we were
25 at 99% completion rate, and then getting that last

1 1%. And then we're constantly updating tutorials and
2 initiatives so that we all, you know what I'm saying,
3 are embracing accessibility. So it's not just about
4 a student on an IEP that we're looking at; we're
5 looking at how does the platform and how does the
6 curriculum really position itself to be -- so that
7 there's no barriers for students in order to access
8 the curriculum and platform.

9 DR. GOTCHER: I assume that the special ed.
10 services will be contracted? Will you have special
11 ed. teachers? I know that's a challenge in the
12 state, going back to Ms. Pfeffer's comment about
13 teacher effectiveness and licensure. And that's a
14 real concern for me, folks. How will you insure that
15 those modifications are being met, because of the
16 diversity of needs of our special needs kid and we're
17 yet providing possibly another virtual opportunity?
18 So talk with me about how -- will they be contracted?
19 I think I looked --

20 DR. HOGE: Yeah.

21 DR. GOTCHER: -- in some of the similar pages
22 that we saw with GT services.

23 DR. HOGE: Let me talk a little bit about it and
24 then have Missy join us as far as staffing.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Sure.

1 DR. HOGE: But we do have -- so then we
2 increased the staffing so that you could see that now
3 it's a special education manager and then the 2.2,
4 the FTE's for staffing. So we -- you know -- you
5 brought that to our attention; it was important for
6 us to -- you know -- for the board to revisit that.
7 But then that is really the fulltime staff doing
8 fulltime sort of direct service. That doesn't
9 account for the related services, so those are
10 contracted services.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Thirty-four, is that the page I'm
12 looking -- or you're looking at, page 34?

13 MR. SOLOMON: The revised budget shows 2.2 being
14 the amount of special ed. So, give me one second.
15 So there will be 2.2 teachers in the first year and
16 five in the second year.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

18 MR. SOLOMON: And that's page 20 in the
19 responses.

20 DR. GOTCHER: All right. Very good. All right.
21 Just one other comment on the special ed. Having an
22 IEP meeting is a very important process and a legally
23 bound process. If we have opportunities for students
24 to be served, or teachers serving students out-of-
25 state, how have other states mastered or been able to

1 become effective in conducting IEP meetings with
2 faculty possibly in other parts of the nation and the
3 state?

4 DR. HOGE: Yeah. That's a great question. And
5 we do that every day, all day long, you know, as far
6 as -- and actually it brings greater access for
7 parents. You know, oftentimes, if parents weren't
8 attending an IEP meeting or they had childcare issues
9 or transportation issues, now that we're doing a
10 virtual meeting then the family has the opportunity
11 to join by phone. Everyone is on the phone, so it
12 equalizes that. And then there is the opportunity,
13 whether it's the virtual speech therapist, the
14 virtual occupational therapist, if there are other
15 teachers that are involved, and through NCAA then
16 everyone is joining the call and then hearing, you
17 know, what the decisions are, what the expectations
18 are to be able to implement the IEP.

19 DR. GOTCHER: That's what I would guess, being a
20 virtual application. So, yeah. Thank you. That's
21 all I have for now. I may have some later.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Liwo.

23 MR. WALTER: Madam Chair?

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

25 MR. WALTER: I'm sorry. Tripp Walter, staff

1 attorney, Arkansas Public School Resource Center. At
2 the appropriate time I had some additional responses
3 to Dr. Saunders' questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you. Ms.
5 Liwo.

6 MS. LIWO: Hi. Good morning. My questions may
7 be a little bit easier. But I have some concerns
8 about students socializing. I guess I need a bit
9 more in depth clarification on how they will interact
10 with one another. And then, the other question I
11 have -- it seems to me that community involvement
12 seems almost limited to parents acting as learning
13 coaches. I guess I want to hear from you guys how
14 are you bringing in the broader community to benefit
15 the students?

16 MS. NELSON: Hi. Community involvement and
17 parent involvement is so important to our program.
18 So when the school is set up they'll divide the state
19 into regions, so there could be five regions in the
20 state of Arkansas. And there will be community
21 coordinators who are parent volunteers who will set
22 up field trips for students in their area. So that's
23 a chance for students to get to know one another.
24 They could meet at a park; you know, a low-key kind
25 of thing, an activity, a socialization event for them

1 to get to know one another. So that's one way we do
2 it. And that's beyond our teachers who are going to
3 plan field trips that may be more academic-based in
4 the regions where they would invite all the students
5 to go to a museum somewhere in the state; anybody
6 could attend. They'll RSVP, like Dr. Beck said, so
7 that the teachers will say, "Oh, I have five students
8 who are going to that field trip. I'm going to
9 attend as well." And the teacher will go there and
10 help facilitate the parents getting to know one
11 another. They might do an activity in the beginning
12 so it's not just all the people walking through a
13 museum together; it's some kind of group activity
14 where the parents can get to know one another so they
15 can learn to provide support for one another as well.
16 But beyond field trips, we have the clubs and
17 activities where students will get to know one
18 another. They get to know each other during live
19 lesson. Those are those synchronous sessions. Most
20 of our teachers have five minutes at the beginning of
21 class where the students can talk to one another.
22 I've seen in some other states where they might have,
23 you know, a lunch period where all the kids can bring
24 their lunch, get into the live lesson session and
25 perhaps share with one another, get to know one

1 another by doing like a PowerPoint slide about
2 myself. And then that's how they meet initially and
3 then it becomes very organic. These students are
4 used to talking to one another that way, in a way
5 that I'm not comfortable with -- but, you know,
6 texting and being more faceless. So they get to know
7 one another. It's amazing. I was the principal at
8 the Minnesota school for many years and to see those
9 kids meet and have friendships that last throughout
10 their career at the school. And sometimes they don't
11 meet until graduation and it's so exciting for them
12 to see one another when they finally meet for the
13 first time somebody they've been talking to for
14 years.

15 DR. BECK: Just a really quick comment too. I
16 would also add that the flexibility of the school in
17 terms of when students can take their classes and do
18 their lessons really helps enhance socialization
19 opportunities outside the school. So the parents
20 will get together often and say, "Oh, my child is in
21 karate. Is your child in karate? Okay. Let's
22 schedule -- make sure that the lessons, their live
23 lessons or whatever else is going on in their
24 coursework is scheduled around that activity." So
25 you actually see -- you tend to see more

1 extracurricular outside activity involvement.

2 DR. HOGE: I just wanted to add one comment that
3 the socialization doesn't occur just outside of the
4 curriculum. There's a very conscious effort to
5 insure, as we're developing courses, that there are
6 opportunities for students to interact with their
7 peers. So within courses, if they're working on a
8 project together, if they're working on an
9 assignment, that there's peer-to-peer interaction,
10 whether they're working on a writing assignment. So
11 we have discussion boards, we have discussion
12 assignments, and then we have collaborative work. So
13 they're coming together for their coursework and then
14 they're coming together in clubs and activities or
15 these other social -- so it really is a part of their
16 full day to be not isolated but to be with their
17 peers.

18 MS. LIWO: And could you speak to how you're
19 reaching out to the broader community? Are you --
20 will you guys do anything to maybe make sure that
21 students have the opportunity for internships with
22 local businesses? Or, what are you doing in that
23 regard?

24 DR. HOGE: That is part of the high school, the
25 college and career planning opportunities. So one

1 thing that -- and in middle school we have a new
2 course around college and career planning, a new
3 club. So we have the same thing in high school; we
4 have our First Generation Club. And so then there
5 are things that are done nationally, so students are
6 coming together to hear national speakers and
7 conversation around internships, workforce, college
8 and career. But then we say -- then, locally, then
9 how does the counselor at the school identify the
10 students that need to start to have those
11 conversations, how do they go on field trips that are
12 more about exploring jobs, exploring internships, and
13 how do we make those connections. So it really is
14 with the staff, you know, in the school. Then
15 there's rich experience within the faculty always to
16 be able to say how do we reach out and where does it
17 make sense with the community.

18 MS. LIWO: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

20 MR. ROGERS: You said your only source of
21 funding is going to be the foundation funding and
22 professional development. And your budget was based
23 off \$4 million for 600 kids. What happens if you
24 don't get to 600? I know you said in there, reading,
25 that you had to have 50 to be vital. But if you

1 don't have -- if you don't get 600 in the first year,
2 you're only showing a \$29,000 fund balance. So what
3 -- if you only get 400, what's going to happen then?

4 MR. SOLOMON: Sure. Before we get to that, let
5 me just address the first part of what you said. For
6 the budget we only assume these two funding
7 categories that are included here. We do think that
8 the school will have other funding, including title
9 funding, IDEA funding; we just didn't put it in the
10 budget. We wanted to be extremely conservative and
11 show that we could work off the assumptions that were
12 provided. If the school does not get to 400, one
13 thing is most of the expenses are actually variable
14 of the school. So mostly -- especially any fees from
15 Connections are variable, and even staffing is
16 variable. So if we see that you're not going to get
17 to 400, the board will then be able to make a
18 decision on, you know, what changes; they'll see how
19 the fees affect what -- the interesting thing is
20 every single month they'll actually see a full set of
21 -- they'll see not only the budget, but they'll see a
22 re-forecasted picture of what the school is going to
23 look like. And they'll be able to make decisions as
24 they go, depending on, you know, what the enrollment
25 looks like because enrollment really drives most of

1 the expenses of the school. The other thing is, if
2 it does fall below where they're not projected to
3 actually pay out the expenses of the school, that's
4 there. There is the agreement actually from the CEO
5 of -- CFO of Connections Education which is a
6 guarantee that there will be a reduction of fees.
7 But we don't project that to happen.

8 MR. ROGERS: The other question I had was I
9 think when Ms. Pfeffer was asking questions she asked
10 about poor kids or economically challenged kids;
11 y'all would offer assistance to them and you would do
12 that through -- going through the NSLA. But if
13 you're not doing lunches how are you going to know
14 which ones are?

15 MR. SOLOMON: So, well, the schools don't
16 actually provide lunches; they actually collect the
17 income forms, which are based on the, you know, U.S.
18 Department of -- the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
19 It's a federal income form. So that's how they'll be
20 able to identify who qualifies. Title funding, for
21 example, is dependant on who qualifies. So they
22 actually will collect those forms as well.

23 DR. BECK: What was the question?

24 MR. ROGERS: On the title funding. I'm good.

25 DR. BECK: I would also add that as board

1 president I really don't anticipate that scenario
2 that you put forth happening with 3,200 families now
3 interested in Connections and having actually filled
4 out that information on their website and asking for
5 more, and giving their address. Which people do not
6 give addresses, generally speaking, these days unless
7 they're seriously interested. That's five times --
8 more than five times the number of our first year
9 enrollment cap. And so -- and that's without any
10 serious advertising efforts, so --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

12 MR. LESTER: Yes. Dr. Gotcher had a few
13 questions about special education and mentioned the
14 IEP process, and that answered my question there.
15 But could you walk me through the challenge of the
16 identification process of special ed. students that
17 you're going to have, identifying special ed.
18 students?

19 DR. BECK: Oh, special ed. students.

20 DR. HOGE: Thank you. And I didn't mention that
21 before because I was saying that as students come to
22 us with an IEP then we're honoring that. But the
23 other is -- and if students come to us, then we want
24 to quickly identify if they're struggling in any way
25 and then if we need to call the student services

1 team. So we do have a very rigorous RTI process
2 where -- set up at the school, you know, for student
3 services, how we're identifying students as far as
4 academic performance and where we need to bring those
5 students, you know, for conversation. When students
6 come to us we have -- we use -- it's called a LEAP, a
7 longitudinal evaluation of academic progress, a
8 formative assessment, that we do as pre, mid and
9 post, at kindergarten through 8th grade. And then we
10 use the Scantron at high school for pre, mid and
11 post, so we do that at 9th grade. So, one, it's an
12 early indicator, you know, are there any concerns.
13 Our LEAP assessment has shown predictor value to show
14 that when we look at students how they're performing
15 on the pre-test; is there any risk as far as how they
16 might be -- if they might be proficient on the state
17 test. So we have an early read on do they appear to
18 be on-track, do they appear to be approaching alarm
19 or in alarm, and then we throw an indicator to the
20 teacher's home page so that we're all very well
21 aware. You know, a student may be on track in
22 reading and not be on track in math. So we want
23 previous test results, you know, if they have those
24 from their prior school. And then, again, that goes
25 into this indicator to say is there any reason to

1 think that this student is not being successful. You
2 saw on the teacher home page where we're looking at
3 metrics ever single day, their dynamic, so a teacher
4 can see. Say it's an algebra I course, I went to bed
5 last night and everybody was -- you know -- had a 70
6 or above, and I woke up this morning and three
7 students, you know, had fallen below a passing score.
8 I click on that and I go see exactly who those three
9 students are. So either course performance in the
10 grade book, the Personalized Learning Plan, you know,
11 conversations that students and teachers and learning
12 coaches are having, or these indicators, the
13 formative assessments. And students are then
14 identified, you know, through a standard on the
15 student services process where they're brought to
16 team, you know, and for the conversation and to
17 identify if further assessment or evaluation needed
18 or is it intervention. We do, again, apply a
19 response to intervention. We consider tier one being
20 core curriculum, core qualified teachers,
21 professional development, intervention that occurs
22 there, differentiation. That's all tier one. And so
23 then we do identify students in need of Tier Two
24 support. We have a number of interventions, whether
25 it's reading, math, or whether it's behavioral

1 interventions. We need to support the student, you
2 know, hopefully back up into tier one performance.
3 But then tier three so is the intervention; is the
4 student responding to it? Does it need to be more
5 intense? Does it need to be more frequent? Or does
6 it need to be different? Or is the student being
7 identified for special education? So there is a
8 process. We're watching all students, you know, on
9 that continuum -- and, again, the ideal is everybody
10 performing in tier one. We do have -- are watching
11 -- there's all the data on the teacher home page
12 where if we say that there is that green happy face,
13 the yellow sort of straight-line face, you know, or
14 the red sad face, beside that needs to be an
15 intervention number. Because we never want to see a
16 red sad face, say in math, and there not be an
17 intervention number there. So -- or a frown in a
18 tier one intervention; that doesn't make sense to me.
19 But red, you're at risk and you only have tier one
20 intervention. So we're really working with the
21 teachers and staff to make sure is there a two, is
22 there a three, and how we're monitoring that. So
23 we're constantly pulling the data, what's available
24 to teachers, and then for their administrators, you
25 know, in the school overall.

1 MR. LESTER: One last question. I think I've
2 been to every nook and cranny in Arkansas, in
3 traveling around, and a lot of times there's issues
4 with connectability and all this kind of thing. What
5 is your technical support, technology support program
6 look like for those children who are having trouble
7 with that?

8 DR. BECK: Well, I'll kind of begin by just
9 saying that the internet subsidy that the board will
10 provide will go to the families so that they will
11 then have access to that money to find the internet
12 access that is best in their area, whether that be
13 satellite, whether that be broadband, you name it.
14 It'll be up to their choice. And I think that's
15 really important to emphasize because if we were
16 looking at a contract with just one provider you
17 wouldn't have access in some areas of Arkansas. But
18 because we're allowing the families to choose that, I
19 think we have a lot of confidence in that. And we
20 have students in other states who have accessed it on
21 a personal hotspot on their phone, not -- maybe not
22 the most ideal, but they've completed school with it.
23 So access at different levels, different speeds,
24 things like that has all been looked into pretty
25 extensively on my part. Did you want to add

1 something?

2 DR. HOGE: I just want to -- before Josh goes, I
3 just wanted to also say the technical support is
4 always there, you know, for students, especially if a
5 family hasn't had technology in the home and hasn't
6 been on the internet. They're the ones to call often
7 and we want them to be calling for support. So we
8 have a number of different customer support help
9 desks with the students calling or the learning coach
10 is calling. We also for learning coaches have a lot
11 of support programs and new initiatives this year to
12 support learning coaches. It's a little
13 overwhelming, you know, if the program is new, the
14 curriculum is new, and the technology is new. So we
15 make sure that we're getting to them quickly and
16 giving them the support that they need.

17 MR. SOLOMON: So I wanted to say what Pat just
18 said. But one thing that tech support helps -- it
19 will help with issues on the regular family computer,
20 not just the computers that Connections would send
21 out as part of the support to students who can't
22 afford a computer. If they can't get the Connexus,
23 they can't learn and so -- and that's the priority,
24 is making sure they can get Connexus.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Tripp, let's come

1 back to Dr. Saunders' question.

2 MR. WALTER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair,
3 Members of the Panel. I wanted to address two of the
4 items that Dr. Saunders brought up: the alternative
5 pay waiver (6-17-119) and the administrator licensure
6 waiver request. As to 6-17-119, as you know, that
7 deals with alternative pay programs that school
8 districts set up. To me, that waiver goes hand-in-
9 hand with the rest of the compensation issue waivers,
10 specifically, if you will look -- and, unfortunately,
11 I don't know what page this is in the way your
12 materials are displayed in front of you. But on page
13 47 of Connections' original application, at the top
14 where it talks about salary scales, you will note
15 that Connections has built in an incentive program
16 that in my opinion would be similar, but designed
17 specifically for them in their compensation package.
18 So, again, just flexibility for them to implement the
19 type of compensation, in this case the incentive
20 package that they would like to have.

21 Secondly, concerning the administrative waivers,
22 I think as all of you know with licensure waivers,
23 this is a commonly requested waiver. And, again, it
24 has to do with flexibility, but more important here I
25 think to provide you some assurance -- I mean, as I

1 think you've already seen the application, hopefully
2 heard from the Connections staff today, it's looking
3 for the best fit. And, obviously, they've stated to
4 you that they're going to try and find a licensed
5 individual first, but if not they want to find that
6 best fit for the program. And we've seen examples I
7 think throughout the state where charters have done
8 that and been successful with it. I think KIPP is
9 one of the examples that comes to mind. Again, this
10 is part of the flexibility piece part of the charter
11 process and, of course, now school districts also
12 have the same flexibility to receive waivers. But
13 one of the important things I wanted to bring in
14 front of you here is hopefully you don't view this as
15 a diminution of quality; instead, it's an
16 opportunity, if needed, for the school to find the
17 best fit that will best drive student achievement and
18 will best operate the school.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any follow-up?

20 DR. SAUNDERS: No.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Beck, is there a
22 response for the questions that Dr. Jones had posed
23 regarding the data?

24 DR. BECK: Do you mean the national data? Is
25 that what you're talking about?

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Uh-huh.

2 DR. HOGE: I didn't step away to get that today.
3 You know, I'd made the more general comments about
4 how we're performing across the 26 states and that's
5 something that we could get to you.

6 DR. JONES: Well, I just think before I could
7 approve the program I really want to look at the
8 performance of Connections and look at the
9 performance of the curriculum. Because if Texas is
10 doing well, that's good, and I would love to see
11 other data comparable to that. But I don't know. I
12 want to look at the national picture before I can
13 approve that. The second answer that I need is: are
14 you saying that you're going to perform at the state
15 level, state average?

16 DR. BECK: Let me comment on that. I've just
17 conferred with my board members and I'm saying yes,
18 we will. We will change that goal.

19 DR. JONES: Okay. I do have one additional
20 question on ELL students.

21 DR. BECK: For me or --

22 DR. JONES: ELL Students. What services -- I
23 saw that you have a sheltered program. Explain to me
24 what -- I'm first-year in the country; I speak no
25 English; my parents speak no English. What services

1 are provided for me?

2 DR. BECK: Absolutely. Pat.

3 DR. HOGE: So what we do as far as ELL students
4 is look to see where they're performing, similar to
5 special ed. We look to see where do they come in,
6 what level. So we follow all state, you know,
7 guidelines and requirements around screening, around
8 what needs to be performed within the first 30 days,
9 you know, a student enrolling in the school, and then
10 identifying the support. So the school would have an
11 ELL lead in the school, so someone that's certified
12 and designated to ELL but then they're also supported
13 at the Connections level. As I mentioned before, we
14 have a very small ELL population across the schools,
15 but it's growing. So we want to make sure that we
16 are identifying those students and giving them the
17 support that they need. So it will vary and it may
18 be that the ELL lead is providing sort of full
19 service for that student and direct service every
20 day. But that ELL lead is working with the team
21 teaching approach with the classroom teacher. It's
22 an emersion program, so we're not doing translations
23 and we're not doing -- you know -- presenting the
24 curriculum in their native language; it's presented
25 in English. But then we are supporting families so

1 that if the families can't read the enrollment
2 documents or other school-related -- you know --
3 operational school handbook, then those are
4 translated for the families. And then we're
5 following the process as far as making sure that
6 we're screening students, evaluating them, you know,
7 on the timeline and to see whether their level of
8 service can be reduced, does it need to be increased,
9 can they be released, and then there's monitoring and
10 checking points.

11 DR. JONES: Okay. In addition to that, I see
12 you provide translating documents. What about in
13 person? If they need clarification on their reports
14 or what this means, do you provide live translation
15 services for parents and students?

16 DR. HOGE: On the phone. We do that. Yes,
17 absolutely, on the phone.

18 DR. JONES: I'm sorry; you might have said that.
19 One additional question: I did read in your
20 application that your students will participate in
21 online assessment for the summative assessment. Is
22 that correct -- for the state summative assessment?

23 DR. HOGE: Yes. Yes.

24 DR. JONES: Okay. And so if there were a waiver
25 available, you would not be applying for a waiver to

1 have paper tests?

2 MS. NELSON: No. We would give the state test
3 to the students. And typically what we do is we rent
4 like hotel ballrooms, community centers so that
5 students don't have to travel too far. We send
6 certified teachers to proctor those tests. We've had
7 great success across the country of having 95% in
8 attendance.

9 DR. JONES: Good. Thank you.

10 MS. NELSON: Uh-huh.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes, additional
12 questions?

13 MS. BARNES: Yes.

14 DR. BECK: I did want to make a real quick
15 comment to Dr. Jones. And I hope I didn't mess up
16 your last name because I can't quite see your
17 nameplate. Is it Dr. Jones?

18 DR. JONES: It is Jones. Yes.

19 DR. BECK: Okay. Thank you. I have seen the
20 national data, and the national data is at or above
21 for literacy and social studies, like Dr. Hoge
22 mentioned. And for issues -- for math, it's the one
23 area of concern where it's kind of below state
24 average.

25 DR. JONES: Is there a link on the national

1 website that I can look at for national data?

2 MR. ADAMS: Okay. Yeah. So we could actually
3 answer this in a couple of ways. As part of the
4 application we were asked to submit links to
5 accountability reports for all other states that we
6 work in for people who were working on the
7 application. So we did that, and that's where Texas
8 and Louisiana data comes from. If you want the
9 national data, we'd be happy to get that to you.
10 We've got slides prepared back home and we'd be able
11 to get that to you. We'll just need a little bit
12 more time, but we could do that today.

13 DR. JONES: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

15 MS. BARNES: Yes. I have a number of things
16 going on in my mind. Dr. Saunders asked a question
17 that was on my mind initially as well, and that was
18 what are you offering that's different or that we
19 don't already have access to, students have access
20 to, with respect to a virtual school setting? I
21 think you talked about yours is more high touch
22 versus high tech. And I've been listening to all of
23 your presentations and I want you to know I
24 appreciate the enthusiasm, the commitment and the
25 desire to reach out and touch and meet the needs that

1 you perceive are not being met through a brick-and-
2 mortar and other already established charter schools.
3 I'm looking back and listening and thinking about the
4 fact that you already have I believe you said --

5 DR. BECK: 3,200.

6 MS. BARNES: -- 3,200 as of now interested
7 families. The question was stated in such a way that
8 "so where are these families coming from?" I think
9 the response was more in line with, "Well, we're not
10 actually sure where they are."

11 DR. BECK: Actually, we are.

12 MS. BARNES: But then the response was -- Dr.
13 Beck, but then the response was that "we have their
14 addresses and we have email addresses." So we do
15 know pretty much where these individuals are. I'm
16 also trying to reconcile a couple of pieces in my
17 mind with respect to -- so are these -- it says, "In
18 the first year we're looking at K-9." Are these
19 3,200 interested registered families more in that
20 area, since we're only going to be looking at the
21 potential of 600 in the first year? How many of
22 those are actually high school students? So, all of
23 this comes back around to something that -- I've
24 looked at your minimum qualifications on your
25 principal and assistant principal. As a matter of

1 fact, I don't think we have an FTE for an assistant
2 principal but you're looking at about 600 students,
3 so that exceeds 500. And I'm trying to dismiss that
4 part and go over to your counselor minimum
5 qualifications. A secondary teacher or -- I'm
6 looking at the page -- you said a secondary teacher
7 for the secondary content area or grade level or
8 Arkansas counselor certification. And so you're
9 looking at K-9 grade range; looking at middle school
10 students who some may have extreme special needs;
11 some may need to be in gifted and accelerated, making
12 sure that they're on track. I'm trying to figure out
13 how you plan to really address those needs if you are
14 looking at the best fit. And there's no real
15 assurance that you're going to have the type of
16 guidance and counseling services that may be needed
17 for success in the school. That's a primary question
18 for me.

19 MS. NELSON: So we definitely want to have a
20 robust guidance program. And within the budget there
21 is a Manager of Counseling, and that Manager of
22 Counseling will be a certified Arkansas counselor who
23 will develop their guidance program. So there will
24 also be advisory teachers who could be teachers or
25 they could be certified counselors who will work with

1 the high school and the middle school students to
2 prepare them for what they need for college and
3 career readiness for their social and emotional
4 needs. They'll work with the elementary teachers who
5 are talking to parents and students in case there's a
6 child in distress, you know, making sure that we're
7 meeting all of the needs, if they need to get the
8 social service agencies, you know, in the communities
9 involved. We train them; all of our staff is trained
10 in identifying children in distress. And the big
11 part of that is that Manager of Counseling who will
12 spearhead that at the school level.

13 MS. BARNES: Okay. So back to the initial
14 question --

15 MS. NELSON: Okay.

16 MS. BARNES: -- since this is going to be my
17 last question, I think. What can you say right now,
18 knowing that I'm struggling as a panelist, to tell me
19 what makes you so unique that I should just be
20 jumping up and down and excited about your school?

21 DR. BECK: Absolutely. First, I would say --
22 and I apologize if I'm repeating myself. But first I
23 would say is that we are a different type of an
24 online school. We use different modes of learning
25 than the current online school in Arkansas. We use

1 different approaches to accountability for students
2 and learning coaches and teachers. We use different
3 approaches to making sure and developing not just the
4 Personalized Learning Plan but helping those students
5 to achieve their learning goals and aspirations. So
6 I would say one of those ways is something called a
7 "teachlet." I think I got the term right. And, Pat,
8 do you want to talk a little bit about teachlets and
9 some of the unique technology opportunities within
10 the Connexus?

11 DR. HOGE: Sure. Thank you, Dr. Beck. So that
12 is one way that we try to differentiate ourselves or
13 we do differentiate ourselves, is to say, "What does
14 the instructional experience look like for students,"
15 and to make sure that it's highly interactive and
16 engaging. One of the things that we've most recently
17 done is when you look at the Next Generation
18 assessments that are coming, if you look at the PARCC
19 assessments, and you look at the tech-enhanced items
20 that students are experiencing in their online
21 assessment, we take those very seriously. So we've
22 created with our multimedia and design group our own
23 -- now we're calling them widgets -- so widgets and
24 teachlets that are practice items that gets students
25 in, to get them engaged, get them using the

1 technology. So it's really about -- and then those
2 interactives give students immediate feedback on
3 their performance. We've done a lot of work on
4 learning sciences and really saying how is it that
5 students learn in this environment; how do they
6 learn. And we're very focused on practice and on
7 feedback and student engagement, which does
8 differentiate us. So in these interactive teachlets
9 and widgets then we've looked at -- they're not
10 adaptive, but there is an automatic feedback system
11 within the widget. We want practice to be low-risk
12 for students. We want them to be able to practice
13 often, you know, not in a judgmental way, but in a
14 learning way and for students to be able to get in,
15 get feedback and then move along with their
16 performance. So we spend a lot of attention on what
17 is the right interactive, not just so that it's
18 flashy, you know, and shiny, but it's really giving
19 students a personalized experience and it's giving
20 them feedback. We just within our Connexus platform
21 we have a new alert system so that whenever a teacher
22 gives feedback on student work. They put it in a --
23 like you've graded a paper and you, you know, re-
24 uploaded the paper or within Textbox the learning
25 coaches are alerted that feedback is there and the

1 students are alerted. Because it is all about this
2 high touch, is that teachers are engaged with
3 students and teachers are engaged with learning
4 coaches. We want to make sure that there's this
5 constant communication. So just in the past week I
6 just pulled five different learning coach thank-you's
7 that we got in the mail about the new feedback
8 alerts, about how they're -- now they're more aware
9 of the feedback the teachers are giving, that they
10 love the interaction, you know, and the feedback
11 they're giving. So I think the part about continuous
12 improvement, it's all about making sure that we are
13 truly personalizing -- and we think that's a word
14 that can be thrown around, you know, a little bit
15 easily; and then really what's -- you know -- Dr.
16 Beck said under the cover about personalization, and
17 how do these areas that we know make a difference for
18 students. Even in student engagement, when I
19 mentioned that around the learning sciences, we just
20 did an algebra 1 pilot last year where we went in and
21 added student goal-setting and student reflection
22 within their algebra 1 course. And we've been doing
23 a pretty rigorous study to watch to see how feedback
24 and reflection is -- is there any kind of
25 relationship, hopefully a correlational relationship

1 between student engagement -- you know -- that
2 reflection and goal-setting and the math performance.
3 There was enough data there and improvement seen last
4 year in the first semester in improved course
5 completions in math and increased performance that
6 we've made the similar enhancements to all
7 kindergarten through algebra II math courses for this
8 year. So, you know, when we talk about how do we
9 differ it really is about the efficacy of what we're
10 doing. We're looking at student learning, and that's
11 the driver, but the learning coach and the student
12 are a part of this learning journey.

13 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer, any follow-
15 up?

16 MS. PFEFFER: Just a couple of things. I guess
17 one thing -- okay, I noticed in your data you said
18 that in the surrounding -- or the states that use
19 Connections about 40-something percent are low income
20 students, 45%?

21 DR. BECK: Free and reduced meal.

22 MS. PFEFFER: Free and reduced.

23 DR. BECK: We said 45%.

24 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

25 DR. BECK: That's nationally.

1 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And in Arkansas, about 61%
2 of our students -- and that was based on the previous
3 year's data -- are considered low income based on
4 their free and reduced lunch status. So there is a
5 difference there in the population of our state and
6 the demographics nationally. So one of my
7 curiosities is why you chose Bentonville to be the
8 site where all of your teachers would be working.
9 Because, again, when you have a site for your
10 teachers it's almost like the school, so your
11 teachers are going to primarily be from that
12 Bentonville area. And the low SES percent of
13 students in Bentonville is 27%, so it's much
14 different than the state. Is there -- I guess one of
15 my -- I guess I can let you answer why Bentonville.

16 MR. ADAMS: So we got different direction from
17 the board. First of all, a couple of them are from
18 the Fayetteville area, so that was a consideration.
19 Secondly, we look for a few things when we're trying
20 to identify a facility that's really going to work.
21 We look for a central location; airport access is
22 important; we want it to be relatively accessible for
23 all the support that Connections will bring to the
24 school, so that was an issue as well; we looked for a
25 good space, a good office space that's going to be

1 well connected and the teachers are all going to be
2 able to work together. And the real important thing
3 I think to take away from this is that even though
4 the teaching and learning center is going to be
5 Bentonville it really is a statewide school. So
6 we're not expecting a 21% or 27% free and reduced
7 lunch rate. What we find in the other states in
8 which we support schools is that the school very
9 closely mirrors state demographics in terms of free
10 and reduced meals, in terms of racial demographics,
11 in terms of special ed. percentage, and everything
12 else. So we really are looking to be a statewide
13 school, even though the teaching and learning center
14 will be in Bentonville.

15 MS. PFEFFER: And I would certainly hope that it
16 would -- that there would be opportunities for you to
17 have a diverse representation of students and that no
18 student would be unable to have the equity of access
19 to an opportunity. But, again, if most of your
20 teachers are coming from that area of very low
21 poverty, are they going to be equipped with the
22 culturally responsive teaching principles and
23 understanding of dealing with students in diverse
24 settings? And as your map showed, you have a lot of
25 interest from the Little Rock area; you have a lot of

1 interest from the hub in northeast Arkansas, where
2 you're having a growing number of diverse population;
3 south Arkansas. So if you truly do have a diverse
4 representation of students -- I'm again going back to
5 the workforce, and by the very nature of your
6 location choice I think you're -- I think that that
7 is a -- that's going to be a consideration of mine.
8 So I will move on.

9 I'm looking at your staffing levels here --

10 DR. HOGE: Could I comment on that for just a
11 second? Because I think one thing that we haven't
12 touched on today too is that although the school will
13 start there and the teachers will be in that office
14 building, and for the reasons that Ms. Nelson said --
15 we want teachers coming today and to have the
16 collaboration -- you know -- the team building, that
17 as the school grows and as the staff grows we --
18 usually, it's not the practice to just make the
19 building bigger, you know, and to bring more people
20 in. What we want is, as the staff grows, is the
21 teachers then are able to move home, you know, to
22 work from home, and we're able to hire from around
23 the state. So it's really about taking teachers
24 closer to the students. So then, you know, your
25 concern about only hiring from that limited area,

1 it's really then you become -- you're hiring around
2 the state. And so then, as the student population
3 grows and the school becomes 3,000, then where the
4 students are teachers are there. So those field
5 trips, you know, those are more spontaneous;
6 performance testing, the state testing, it's not all
7 teachers being, you know, at the location. So that
8 happens, you know, as the school grows which, one,
9 again gets teachers closer to students but then also
10 addresses the staffing, but it's pulling from
11 staffing across the state.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. I guess I had missed that
13 in your application. So that would be --

14 MR. SOLOMON: Yeah. It should --

15 MS. PFEFFER: -- the plan?

16 MR. SOLOMON: Sorry. On page 55 of the
17 application it talks about as the school grows the
18 board may explore additional satellite teaching
19 centers throughout the state. So it talks a little
20 bit about regional centers as well.

21 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Going back then to your
22 staffing plans for the 2016-17 school year, I'm
23 looking at the numbers here, and you're going K-9.
24 You've got 7.2 teachers for K-5, 7.3 teachers for 6-
25 9. Are your two special ed. teachers included in

1 those two numbers there or are those an additional
2 two FTE's?

3 MS. NELSON: They would be additional.

4 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Because that's not in -- so
5 instead of having 21.6 total staff you would have
6 23.6?

7 MS. NELSON: He's looking it up.

8 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And I'm not looking at your
9 budget sheet to see if that's reflected there as
10 well. And I guess still I'm sitting here in my mind
11 -- if your goal is to have -- let's see. You're
12 wanting -- what is your goal for the number of
13 students in grades 6-9, 240? I think I'm reading
14 that correctly, 240 students in grades 6-9 and 7.3
15 teachers. I guess my concern is just still about the
16 sufficient numbers. Because when you get to that 9th
17 grade it can be very fluid based on the students who
18 enroll 9th grade. You know, there's that typical
19 pattern for 9th grade but then you always can have --
20 you know -- as students move in with different needs,
21 or if you have a special education student who only
22 needs resource services and that's the best approach
23 for their IEP, do your special ed. numbers allow for
24 your teachers to be not only licensed in special ed.,
25 but highly qualified in those various subject areas

1 that a resource teacher would have to be? So I'm
2 just not sure -- I'm not comfortable with the
3 workforce situation, given the challenges that we're
4 already having statewide. I'm just a little
5 concerned there. Maybe some of my colleagues have
6 looked at that and feel a little more comfortable
7 with those ratios. But we would also need to confirm
8 your student-to-teacher ratio based on that, plus
9 your budget, I guess.

10 MS. NELSON: I understand your concerns and it's
11 so up in the air when you're starting a new school
12 about who those students are going to be and the
13 grade levels they're going to come in. One of the
14 things that when we hire a school leader and they
15 start to hire their staff we definitely are looking
16 for the best candidates who are multiply certified.
17 So they're certified maybe in middle school and in
18 high school, you know, composite science, those
19 things that will enable us to move back and forth.
20 You know, as I stated earlier, if we have to hire an
21 adjunct because we have four kids who want to take
22 physics, you know, we have the ability to do that in
23 a way that you couldn't do in a brick-and-mortar
24 school. And that person may have a fulltime job at
25 the brick-and-mortar school down the street and only

1 work for us, you know, so many hours per week. So
2 those kinds of activities we have done in other
3 states and been successful.

4 MS. PFEFFER: But, again, I think one of the
5 real issues is going to come back to special
6 education and the requirements for highly qualified
7 teachers, and as you get into the high school level
8 that is more and more difficult. And I think we're
9 going to be in a situation where we're pulling away
10 from our workforce base, adding more, and we're going
11 to wind up with a lot of additional licensure plans
12 for very needy kids who are going to be interacting
13 virtually with teachers.

14 MS. NELSON: And to address your special ed.
15 issue, that's variable. So if more special ed.
16 children come with more needs, then we definitely
17 would increase the special ed. staffing ratio, the
18 staffing for them.

19 MS. PFEFFER: I'm finished. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: In your application concerning
22 the licensure waivers, you made the statement in a
23 couple different times. But it says with the waiver
24 from licensure all staff will be subject to the Code
25 of Ethics. Can you describe how that would work?

1 DR. BECK: How staff are subject to the Code of
2 Ethics?

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, sir.

4 DR. HOGE: Could you just restate the question?
5 I'm not sure if we understand the question.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. It says in the application
7 that all staff will be subject to the Code of Ethics.

8 MS. NELSON: Right. If Arkansas has a specific
9 Code of Ethics and we had some teachers who were like
10 from our national Connections Academy private school,
11 we would definitely make sure that they're still
12 following all of those requirements.

13 MS. PFEFFER: This may be a legal question, but
14 if a teacher is licensed out-of-state I'm not sure
15 that they can be held accountable for Arkansas' Code
16 of Ethics. So I think that would be a matter for the
17 state in which they were licensed. Is that correct,
18 Ms. Clay?

19 MS. CLAY: That's correct. Our process for
20 enforcing Arkansas Code of Ethics is only for those
21 Arkansas licensed educators. I suppose a school
22 could have an internal process for enforcement of the
23 same code, but the actual PLSB process that we have
24 here at the Department is only able to be enforced
25 against Arkansas licensed educators.

1 MR. WALTER: May I briefly address, Madam Chair?

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

3 MR. WALTER: I was going to say pretty much what
4 Ms. Clay did. I think the idea was to impress upon
5 the Panel the seriousness with which Connections
6 takes the ethics issue in general. And as has been
7 pointed out, certainly if there is a teacher who is
8 not Arkansas licensed then that person cannot be held
9 to the Code of Ethics as far as the PLSB process.
10 But it is a standard which Connections can use to
11 make sure its teachers exhibit high character and
12 high fidelity.

13 DR. BECK: I'd also like the director of the
14 APSRC to address this issue.

15 MR. SCOTT SMITH: Madam Chair, Members of the
16 Board, as you know, this issue was talked about also
17 with the district waiver law that got passed this
18 past year, and it is something that's currently in
19 place. Just about every open-enrollment charter
20 school in the state has a licensure waiver, so it's
21 not unprecedented for a waiver to be granted in this
22 area. And the ethics question is always taken
23 seriously with regards to this issue. And as you
24 know, many of the ethics issues involve other laws as
25 well or other courses of action, either directly to

1 the school or in some other areas, such as criminal
2 conduct or something like that. So there are ways of
3 addressing any of these issues. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Smith. Dr.
5 Saunders, any other questions?

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. Concerning governance, can
7 you describe to me what the make-up of the board --
8 what that would look like?

9 DR. BECK: You mean in terms of my self being
10 the board president and --

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Or the number of members, how
12 they're selected --

13 DR. BECK: Yes.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: -- things of that nature.

15 DR. BECK: There's between three and seven board
16 members. Right now, we are at three. We have a
17 couple of other candidates that we're currently
18 vetting for the process. They are voted on by the
19 current board members as to whether or not they'll be
20 accepted as a board member. What kind of other
21 information?

22 DR. SAUNDERS: That's what I'm wanting. If
23 somebody wanted to be on the board, how would they go
24 about that process?

25 DR. BECK: They would contact my self or Ms.

1 Hartwell or Ms. Ford, and we would put their name on
2 the next agenda and we'd consider it.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: So the existing board would then
4 vote on the governance?

5 DR. BECK: That's right.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: I mean, is there a length of the
7 term?

8 DR. BECK: I believe it's one year. I believe
9 it's one year we decided. Yeah, it was one year,
10 renewable.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: A few more questions. I'm
12 looking down at your budget; in the proposed budget
13 it's roughly on a \$4 million revenue. And if I'm
14 just doing some rough math in the budget, is that
15 correct that over \$2 million would go to Connections
16 LLC?

17 MR. SOLOMON: I haven't done the rough math but
18 I'm assuming you're correct.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Does that sound appropriate?

20 MR. SOLOMON: Give me a second. It's probably
21 -- it might be correct.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: And you have asked for a waiver
23 from the bid laws. Correct?

24 DR. BECK: That is correct. Would you like me
25 to comment on that?

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Sure. Absolutely.

2 DR. BECK: Absolutely. ARCA will -- ARCA plans
3 -- sorry -- ARCA is Arkansas Connections Academy --
4 will plan to contract with Connections Education for
5 educational products and services, as described, and
6 the standard fee schedule. That would be page 253 of
7 your pdf or attachment 16, and these services are
8 also described in detail in the CIRC review. These
9 products and services are kind of -- they're all
10 built around Connexus, which is the learning
11 management system where the curriculum is housed, and
12 they're unique to Connections. So the reason that we
13 asked for this particular waiver is because so that
14 way we could contract with Connections, more quickly
15 establish the ARCA program, because of the uniqueness
16 of the product.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you feel it would be
18 appropriate to follow the bid requirements?

19 DR. BECK: If we followed -- if ADE denied this
20 waiver request, we would comply with the required RFP
21 process. However, it would set us back in terms of a
22 little bit of our time table in terms of eventually
23 hiring a school leader and things and such.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: That's all for now.

25 DR. BECK: Sure.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

2 DR. JONES: You stated one of the differences
3 about your charter is the live touch. Are your
4 teachers required to have live sessions per week?

5 DR. BECK: They are required to have live
6 sessions in the semester. For the exact numbers per
7 week, I'm going to defer that to Dr. Hoge.

8 DR. HOGE: Thank you. So we don't term it as
9 live sessions, to say that they have to have live
10 synchronous sessions, but they need to have contact
11 with students. And so it could be through the live
12 synchronous session; it could be through the field
13 trip; it could be through the phone call. So
14 teachers have requirements as far as they need a live
15 synchronous contact every two week with students.
16 But then teachers then make the decisions about the
17 live synchronous sessions. So some students are in
18 those five days a week; other days, other students
19 are one day a week for each of their subject areas.
20 So Monday might be with math and Tuesday is with
21 reading, with language arts. So we set minimums and
22 then we are watching those minimums all the time as
23 far as contact for learning coaches and the students,
24 but then it's always more than that.

25 DR. JONES: Okay. I guess that's what I'm

1 asking. What's the minimum for the live instruction
2 for a teacher?

3 DR. HOGE: There's not a minimum for live
4 instruction; there's a minimum for live contact.

5 DR. JONES: Okay.

6 DR. HOGE: Because the live instruction is
7 really -- and when I mentioned before about the
8 multi-tiered instructional program, a teacher is
9 going to use live instruction at tier 1; then I might
10 use it as we're starting a new subject or focusing on
11 westward expansion and I want to bring all my
12 students together and focus on that. So that's one
13 way I'm using live instruction. As tier 2, I'm
14 seeing that students need support and I may say, "I
15 need to meet with this student every day for 20
16 minutes for tier 2 support." Or tier 3 may be the
17 student needs to come to a mandatory math session,
18 you know, every morning for 30 minutes. So the
19 curriculum doesn't dictate it; it's the student
20 performance, you know, and where they are on that
21 multi-tiered, you know, intervention timeline. So
22 there's not a minimum -- you know what I'm saying? --
23 per se of a live synchronous instruction. The school
24 does though set the school leader and then the school
25 leadership team set a calendar of live synchronous

1 sessions so that the math teacher isn't trying to do
2 -- the 3rd grade math teacher isn't trying to do a
3 session at the same time as the reading session. So
4 we create a master schedule and that's sent to the
5 learning coaches. So the learning coaches put that
6 on the calendar, they know when their live sessions
7 are. It's part of what Connections provides is the
8 link into Adobe Connect and those licenses and those
9 seats to be able to conduct the sessions. So it's an
10 expectation, but then there's not a requirement for a
11 weekly. Does that help?

12 DR. JONES: Did you say there's a minimum for
13 just live communications or communications with the
14 student?

15 DR. HOGE: Every two weeks there needs to be a
16 contact, a live contact with the student, and that's
17 in addition to -- a webmail exchange doesn't count,
18 you know, texting doesn't count. It needs to be on
19 the phone in a live session or face-to-face.

20 DR. JONES: Okay. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Follow-up to Dr. Saunders'
23 question, the application indicates that there are
24 six board members, three out-of-state, three in-
25 state. But the legal response said that that had

1 been cleaned up -- or maybe not the word "cleaned
2 up," but that all board members are in-state and
3 that's your intent to maintain that. Because you
4 mentioned --

5 DR. BECK: That is correct.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

7 DR. BECK: That is correct.

8 DR. GOTCHER: And none of them will be employed
9 --

10 DR. BECK: No.

11 DR. GOTCHER: -- with Connections? Okay. And
12 there's no waiver -- there's no request for a waiver?

13 DR. BECK: There's no request for a waiver on
14 that.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Making sure I was clear on
16 that. All right. Thank you. Just --

17 DR. BECK: The University of Arkansas wouldn't
18 like that too much.

19 DR. GOTCHER: They probably would not. So one
20 of the things I'm struggling with, when I first think
21 about the approval process for any of our charter
22 apps I have to look at legislative intent and there
23 are six filters that I want to look through when I
24 consider. And one of the things that -- one of the
25 legislative intents is to provide expanded choices,

1 and I do think this offers an expanded choice. But
2 the question I'm struggling with as a panel member is
3 how expansive can Arkansas become -- how expansive.
4 And so when you think of the opportunities already
5 provided via virtual opportunity for students, the
6 thing that I'm still working through is how expansive
7 can we become as a state? And already there are a
8 couple of virtual opportunities, but I do think
9 you're coming close to selling me that it is a
10 different type of virtual environment. I'm still a
11 little concerned about the achievement information
12 that's yet to be provided, which will be. So I
13 wanted to let you know those are the filters that I'm
14 struggling with, is the legislative intent, how
15 expansive can this panel allow for Arkansas students
16 as far as choices go. That was just a comment --

17 DR. BECK: Sure.

18 DR. GOTCHER: -- and you're welcome to comment.

19 DR. BECK: No. I'm going to comment just a
20 little bit.

21 DR. GOTCHER: Sure.

22 DR. BECK: Because, first of all, I would divide
23 it into different types of choices: choices for
24 parents and families; choices for the student in
25 terms of their educational path; and then choices for

1 teachers, as new professional opportunities for
2 teachers in Arkansas. And so I would say that right
3 now with our next year plan of 600 students we're
4 planning on starting small. One of the reasons we're
5 starting small is we want to do it right. And so
6 starting with a smaller number of students, a smaller
7 cap will help insure that. And then increasing a
8 little bit each year will help us to be able to
9 manage growth I think in a responsible manner. But
10 in terms of learning opportunities for all students,
11 just being there, like the different analogies -- I'm
12 not going to bore you with another analogy --

13 DR. GOTCHER: No more burger analogies?

14 DR. BECK: Yeah. There's the Hugo, the car,
15 versus the Maserati, right? But, you know, I could
16 do that because I'm a car enthusiast. But there's
17 different types, obviously, of online learning, just
18 like there's different types of face-to-face
19 learning. I think of all the different opportunities
20 right now, I mean, just in terms of clubs. My son
21 and daughter are involved in a 4H robotics club right
22 now, and I didn't even know 4H offered robotics. I
23 thought they were just, you know, other types of
24 things that they offered. But comparing that
25 robotics club to another club offered by their local

1 school, very different; very different the way it's
2 taught, how it's taught, the instructor. The
3 instructors, both good quality, very different. And
4 so in online learning it makes sense also just to
5 realize that it's different; it's different out there
6 across education. Yes, technology changes that, but
7 at kind of a breakneck speed. That's one of the
8 reasons we wanted to partner with a national provider
9 that has almost 15 years of experience in making
10 these changes to curricular frameworks and making
11 updates to the technology and making sure that the
12 students have access when they need it. So that's
13 kind of my comment.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Dr. Beck.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo, any additional
16 questions?

17 MS. LIWO: I think I have a few more questions
18 piggybacking off the comments on the -- or the
19 questions on the Code of Ethics. I just want to make
20 sure that for the teachers that you guys will get
21 from out-of-state, you're going to make sure that in
22 their state they've gone through background checks
23 and haven't violated the Code of Ethics there?

24 DR. BECK: (Nodding head up and down.)

25 MS. LIWO: And then I was thinking --

1 DR. BECK: They will also have -- sorry. They
2 will also have an Arkansas background check, as well.

3 MS. LIWO: Okay. Now some states, their
4 disqualifying offenses differ from those in Arkansas.
5 If you have a difference between disqualifying
6 offenses between states, how will that affect your
7 decision to employ a certain teacher?

8 DR. BECK: Well, ultimately, it's the decision
9 of the school leader. But the Arkansas background
10 check would flag it and they would not be allowed to
11 teach Arkansas students, so --

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers?

13 MR. ROGERS: No.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester?

15 MR. LESTER: No.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
17 from the Panel? Then I'll ask a few. Mine are very
18 quick. I want to come back to some things that you
19 said; I just need just a little bit of clarification.
20 Dr. Beck, you mentioned the internet subsidy. Could
21 you give me the amount?

22 DR. BECK: One moment on that. We're looking it
23 up.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

25 DR. BECK: That's one thing, I always allow my

1 wife to handle the budget.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: While you're looking for
3 that, let me go ahead and give you the second one.
4 Ms. Nelson mentioned some assistance for field trips
5 and I'd like for you to expand on what "some
6 assistance" means for field trips.

7 DR. HOGE: It really varies, you know, whether
8 it's the transportation, if there's a cost for
9 transportation, and then is that waived or is that
10 reduced, you know, for a family. Other times, it's
11 entrance, if there's a fee, and then we put money
12 aside -- you know what I'm saying? -- within the
13 school funds to say if there's -- is it a reduced
14 entrance fee or that the school would pay for that.
15 Because we don't want students to, again, not attend;
16 they would not be able to get there or not be able to
17 participate in the event. The school leader -- we
18 were considering them -- called tech points before,
19 but the school leader sort of has some discretionary
20 funds to say do I use that for her or am I using that
21 for software or am I using it for field trip
22 accounts. So that's there, you know, for the school
23 leader really to be able to support families as
24 needed.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I think the question

1 that was asked previously by panel members was about
2 really your intention to provide services to our
3 students most in need. So our highest poverty
4 students may not have cars; they may not have
5 transportation available in the home, so they're
6 relying upon someone else. And so that's why I want
7 to really dig into that to see is that group of
8 students really going to be encouraged to enroll in
9 your school. And so "encouraged" means that there is
10 a subsidy that actually pays for their internet
11 access and that there is a really concentrated plan
12 to provide the transportation needed to allow those
13 students to participate. So the idea of there might
14 be some money there is inadequate to say that
15 transportation will be provided by whatever means has
16 to be taken to provide that.

17 DR. HOGE: Right. So I should've been more
18 emphatic about that, and that really is if the family
19 needs that. But I do want to say on the enrollment
20 process, Arkansas Connections Academy is a public
21 school so there is no, you know, point anywhere in
22 the enrollment process where if someone is not being
23 -- you know -- someone has any kind of screening for
24 eligibility. So it's not as if you're looking at a
25 family's income or free and reduced deal, their

1 address, in saying that they would not -- you know --
2 in any way does that enter into the enrollment.
3 Instead, if you meet enrollment requirements, if you
4 have your documents in, you know, your residence then
5 you're qualified. And it's really about doing the
6 work. You know, again, you're submitting documents
7 going through the process. And so there is no
8 screening, you know, of students.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let me clarify; I didn't
10 ask you about screening. I asked you about what
11 services will be provided for those kids. And so the
12 communication goes out among the families.

13 DR. HOGE: Right.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're very well aware of
15 that. That's what I'm asking. What service will be
16 provided to kids?

17 DR. HOGE: And whatever service is needed. So
18 if students are going to state testing and there's
19 not transportation, then students will -- a taxi will
20 go to the home. You know, it's always what does the
21 student need to be able to get to there. So it could
22 be that they are driving with another learning coach.
23 It could be, you know, that we say, "Can you -- can
24 we connect you with another learning coach?" And if
25 they're saying, "There's no one in my area, I'd

1 prefer not to do that," or "I'm bringing my other
2 three students," then we will say, "Is a taxi, you
3 know, the right option for you," and to get that and
4 make sure that those arrangements are there and the
5 funding is there.

6 DR. BECK: Yeah. I'll add something too. And
7 as an independent board we'll -- we make the field
8 trips and the internet subsidy, the computer
9 provision a priority to those students that qualify.
10 I did some looking up on the budget and the current
11 internet subsidy was \$17.50 per student for eligible
12 families. Sorry, for eligible families. But as a
13 board, we're hoping to -- yes, per month -- as a
14 board, we're hoping to increase that as the need
15 becomes more and more apparent in order to make sure
16 that there's access to all Arkansas families. And I
17 also would mention that as a board we have to be
18 careful because we don't want to ever say, "Oh, come
19 to Arkansas Connections Academy and you'll get all
20 your field trips paid for," because that's an
21 inducement. Right? So we're walking somewhat of a
22 thin line here. And we'll provide as much as we
23 possibly can to bring those students; we don't want
24 it to be a problem for them. But we don't want to
25 ever come across as an inducement.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer, I see you
2 have a follow-up.

3 MS. PFEFFER: Well, you said \$17.50 per month
4 for the internet subsidy. Have you -- do you have an
5 amount, like what's the average cost in Arkansas for
6 internet connection?

7 DR. BECK: I'm not sure at this point.

8 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. I think it's quite a bit
9 more than that.

10 DR. BECK: I would say so.

11 MS. PFEFFER: Yeah.

12 DR. BECK: That's why it's a subsidy.

13 MS. PFEFFER: It is a subsidy. But I would say
14 that that right there will --

15 DR. BECK: It's a board priority.

16 MS. PFEFFER: -- limit the access, the equity of
17 access for a great number of our students. And that
18 -- if I'm incorrect, someone correct me. But I just
19 don't see how -- I think if we're going to provide
20 opportunities for students we need to be able to
21 provide opportunities for all students.

22 DR. BECK: I agree.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Some need more than others. And
24 even to the point of the field trips, I understand
25 you can't just say, "It's all paid for, it's all

1 taken care of," as you said, you know. But when
2 those barriers are put in place there will not be
3 equitable access for all students to get to have this
4 opportunity.

5 MS. SOLOMON: So the budget was based on
6 national metrics that we see. So the \$17.50 is kind
7 of a standard. There are some instances, some
8 schools where the board may elect to actually spend
9 more on subsidy. That could happen here as well.
10 And there are some states where the actual free and
11 reduced lunch percentages are much higher than here.

12 MS. PFEFFER: But you're asking us to make a
13 decision today --

14 MS. SOLOMON: No, actually --

15 MS. PFEFFER: -- that will impact Arkansas
16 students --

17 MR. SOLOMON: Sure. Absolutely.

18 MS. PFEFFER: -- and you're telling me that the
19 board could -- the board could --

20 MR. SOLOMON: Yes.

21 MS. PFEFFER: -- just like a while ago the board
22 could've made a decision on the achievement goal that
23 you set out as a low bar to begin with and we've had
24 to push you to up that. I just -- you told me the
25 board could choose to do that. I would think that

1 the board should've looked at what is going to be the
2 cost for these students and already have made that
3 determination.

4 DR. BECK: First of all, ma'am, we did look at
5 that, what the cost would be for students. And we're
6 all Arkansan residents; we're Arkansas residents.
7 And we very seriously took this as a consideration.
8 The \$17.50 is an initial estimate based on, as best
9 as we can imagine, how many students we'll have our
10 first year, similar to the academic achievement goal
11 by the way which was a first-year goal. Personally,
12 I'm fine with shooting for the stars and making sure
13 that we shoot for state averages in terms of
14 proficiency. But to say that that's going to happen
15 in the first year, it may; we're hoping it will.
16 That's our goal. That's what we're believing for.
17 That's what we're going to be working towards.
18 Absolutely. In the same way, our internet subsidy is
19 an internet subsidy and we don't tell families that
20 internet is going to be completely provided for. We
21 do, however, tell them that we will help them in as
22 much way as possible. And as a board we are
23 committed to making sure that that is taken care of.
24 One of the problems that -- or one of -- that was one
25 of the actual issues that I was initially very

1 impressed with. Because looking nationally at other
2 Connections Academies they match the amount of
3 students that are free and reduced meal. And what
4 that told me was that it's not a barrier in these
5 other states where there is an internet subsidy of a
6 similar amount. And so there are students signing up
7 and it's not as much of a barrier as perhaps
8 perceived. However, that doesn't diminish the
9 importance of it. And it's something that us as a
10 board really take seriously and we're going to
11 tackle.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Beck --

13 DR. BECK: Yes. I'm sorry.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- I want to follow-up on
15 another question.

16 DR. BECK: Sorry. I get kind of over-excited
17 sometimes.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You mentioned the student
19 that was in the rodeo circuit.

20 DR. BECK: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: There are instances like
22 that all across the state; we have many talented
23 students in our state.

24 DR. BECK: We do.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So talk to me very briefly

1 about -- I certainly can see how a student could
2 enroll in your system and get their services. But
3 many of those students want to come back to a home
4 base; they may want to actually at times throughout
5 the school year re-enroll in their local school. And
6 so talk to me a little bit about collaboration, how
7 you kind of see it in your mind, collaboration with
8 the traditional public school that those children --
9 it may be what I consider their home base.

10 DR. BECK: Absolutely.

11 MS. NELSON: That would be our goal. If the
12 student wants us for a temporary period of time, you
13 know, we're going to work with that student so the
14 transition is seamless. So if it's a high school
15 student we're going to suggest that they try and move
16 in a marking period so their credits will easily
17 transfer with them. So the counselors from our
18 school will work with their counselor and will make
19 sure the transcripts are there so that they can move
20 back and forth. That would definitely be something
21 -- you know -- we would celebrate with the student if
22 they met their goal and now they want to go back to a
23 traditional school; we would do whatever we could to
24 make that transition seamless for them.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: I've got some questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Can you just explain for me why
4 the request for the waiver from the annual report for
5 school district goals?

6 DR. BECK: The annual progress report
7 publication?

8 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, sir.

9 DR. BECK: Well, ARCA will report to parents
10 online, which will be more likely to engage parents
11 and less costly than publishing reports in newspapers
12 and all districts nationwide. Since the students are
13 online and since the parents and their learning
14 coaches are online it seemed to us a more efficient
15 process of being able to reach everybody, and since
16 we're serving students across the state. With that
17 said, if the waiver was denied the board would
18 discuss compliance with Connections and come up with
19 a solution.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: I agree it would be more
21 efficient, but I think many times the reason you
22 publish a report is not just for your own students
23 but for other students. And as we discussed, not all
24 students have home internet and so that's not always
25 a viable option to get the word out to those that may

1 not see that.

2 Another question that I had concerned --
3 concerning your attendance waivers, the attendance
4 records and reports generally and mandatory
5 attendance requirements, how long of inactivity would
6 a student go before they would be dropped on your
7 roll?

8 DR. BECK: We'd follow fully all state laws and
9 regulations and requirements, which is 10 days.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions?
12 Dr. Beck, any additional comments?

13 DR. BECK: I just want to reiterate that the --
14 actually, two things. First, I wanted to apologize.
15 I did get a little -- not upset, but just a little
16 bit passionate there with my last comments and I
17 didn't want to offend anybody in those. So, I
18 apologize for that. But I wanted to reiterate our
19 passion as a board for this, for Arkansas Connections
20 Academy. We believe that it is a unique solution.
21 We believe that it provides increased opportunities
22 for students, for parents and for teachers. It uses
23 -- encourages the use of different and innovative
24 teaching methods. It improves student learning. And
25 it really provides all of those expanded choices,

1 including NCAA approved courses to Arkansas families
2 and things that Arkansas families have been asking
3 for. So I just once again want to thank the Panel
4 and all the members of the Panel for your due
5 diligence in this, and thank you for your questions.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Beck. We
7 appreciate your passion. I hope you will also
8 appreciate our passion for --

9 DR. BECK: I do.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- every student in the
11 state.

12 DR. BECK: Absolutely.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay, if you'll come
14 forward; I have a couple of questions for you. What
15 is the length of this charter request?

16 MS. CLAY: Just a second. Oh, no, I'm sorry.
17 They're all five -- all of these initial charters are
18 five years. So you don't deal with the length until
19 a charter comes back for renewal.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

21 MS. CLAY: Sorry; my brain not going yet.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And would you give us a
23 comment on are there any remaining issues regarding
24 waivers?

25 MS. CLAY: There are a couple of issues that I

1 think I can talk about and the applicant can just
2 confirm that they would agree to this. The first one
3 is in part of their licensure package one of the
4 rules listed is the ADE rules governing parental
5 notification of assignment of a non-licensed teacher
6 to teach a class more than 30 consecutive days for
7 granting waivers. Those rules actually no longer
8 exist independently. They're combined with the ADE
9 rules governing educator licensure, which they
10 already requested. So they do not need a waiver of
11 those rules. They can't have a waiver because they
12 don't exist. So if they'd just confirm their
13 understanding of that is the first issue.

14 The second one is on the rules governing
15 personnel policies and salary schedules, I believe
16 they only need Sections 4 through 8. That Section 9
17 is especially important because it includes the
18 website publication requirement. So if they would
19 just confirm --

20 DR. BECK: Yes.

21 MS. CLAY: -- that they are willing to do that.
22 And they are saying yes beside me.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Are you saying yes to
24 both?

25 DR. BECK: Uh-huh. (Nodding head up and down.)

1 MS. CLAY: They are nodding yes to both.

2 DR. BECK: Yes.

3 MS. CLAY: And those are the only remaining
4 issues that we have with their waivers.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: What about 6-17-119 that
6 Dr. Saunders raised?

7 MS. CLAY: We don't have any problem with them
8 adding that. And I believe there is at least one
9 other charter school that already has a similar
10 waiver. We don't have any issues if they want to add
11 that, if you all are willing to grant that.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And what is the response
13 from the applicant?

14 DR. BECK: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A little louder for the
16 record.

17 DR. BECK: Yes. Sorry.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any -- Dr. Saunders.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Can you repeat on the website
20 thing? I couldn't follow you on that one.

21 MS. CLAY: Oh, okay. They asked for -- it's
22 number 7 on the waiver sheet; in with the personnel
23 policies and salary schedules, those ADE rules, which
24 are the very last piece of the list there -- the ADE
25 rules governing personnel policies and salary

1 schedules -- there's actually a longer title to that
2 rule that includes "and requirements for posting
3 items to the district website," something along those
4 lines. So in order to keep the website posting as a
5 requirement for them they would only need waivers of
6 Sections 4 through 8. So they would not be getting a
7 waiver of Section 9, which is the website posting
8 requirement.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

10 MS. CLAY: Okay.

11 DR. BECK: Can I make --

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

13 DR. BECK: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Can I make
14 one more comment?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

16 DR. BECK: If the Panel finds the RFP waiver
17 request -- I don't know what the word would be --
18 objectionable, we're willing -- we are more than
19 willing to withdraw that.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Beck. Ms.
21 Clay, I understand that it is upon this Panel to
22 approve this application, disapprove this
23 application, or take matters under advisement until a
24 future date?

25 MS. CLAY: That is correct.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. What is the
2 will of the committee?

3 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, what is that future
4 date? Maybe Ms. Clay could --

5 MS. CLAY: There's not a set future date. But
6 just timing-wise, you're dealing with a potentially
7 new school opening and the fact that any of your
8 decisions have to go to the State Board, and if they
9 chose to review it that pushes it out another month.
10 So there's not a set date. You already have a panel
11 meeting set for November, so that could be an option.
12 If for some reason it needed to be a later date -- I
13 don't believe any further dates are currently
14 scheduled, but that's something that we could address
15 if the Panel so chose.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, if we chose to table
17 could we provide a list of required components that
18 we'd like to see reported on in November?

19 MS. CLAY: Yes.

20 DR. GOTCHER: Then I'd like to move that we
21 table the application and provide a list from the
22 Panel, points to be considered -- or to be brought
23 forth with the applicant.

24 MS. BARNES: Second.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So we have a motion by Dr.

1 Gotcher and a second by Ms. Barnes to panel -- to
2 table this application and provide requested points
3 to the applicant. Any discussion?

4 DR. GOTCHER: The one thing I might add is I'd
5 want to get that to them as soon as possible. I feel
6 this is a sense of urgency in terms of being able to
7 provide possible services to students if we don't
8 respond to the points. So can I just ask the Panel
9 if we could provide that by the end of this week or
10 the first of next week, just so we can get that to
11 Ms. Perry or Ms. -- yeah, Ms. Perry.

12 MS. PERRY: That's fine.

13 DR. GOTCHER: Does that need to be done in a
14 motion?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay.

16 MS. CLAY: In providing that list, if it's not
17 something that you all do today in discussion it will
18 need to be done individually.

19 DR. GOTCHER: That's right.

20 MS. CLAY: So a list would have to go by each
21 person to Ms. Perry. Her office -- she and Alexandra
22 can compile that and provide it. But you are a
23 public board and so you could not have discussion on
24 the items needed after this meeting.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

1 DR. JONES: I do want to explain what one of my
2 further requests will be and maybe can seek some
3 guidance from Finance. The reason I ask questions
4 about GT is because historically gifted and talented
5 money, as I'm told, was a separate payment and then
6 it found its way into the matrix. Within school
7 districts they are required to spend a certain amount
8 on gifted and talented students per year. And so
9 with that expectation, would -- if they had the
10 waivers for gifted and talented that they have, is
11 that expectation removed from the charter? And that
12 might be a legal question. If they were granted
13 their waivers from gifted and talented for special
14 funding, are they still required to spend a certain
15 amount on their gifted students?

16 MS. CLAY: I'm hearing no from the applicant. I
17 don't know the answer to that. I'd have to look at
18 it.

19 DR. JONES: Okay. And so -- and that's why I
20 want a better picture of the gifted services, beyond
21 advanced placement courses, that will be provided.
22 And I will add that to the list. Because in my eyes,
23 schools are getting extra money for gifted and
24 talented services; yet, I didn't see in their budget
25 where they were directly going to spend money. And

1 so I would like to see some work, more detailed work
2 on the budget to show that they have planned
3 services, not just for gifted students but ELL
4 students and special ed. students.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other discussion among
6 the board members? We have a motion to panel -- I
7 said panel -- to table -- to table this action. All
8 those in favor?

9 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Those opposed?

11 (SILENCE)

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The motion is passed.

13 I'll ask you to take a few moments to write your
14 reasons, and specifically in the reasons if you will
15 -- anything that you're thinking right now that you
16 know, those points that you want to send to this
17 applicant, let's take a few moments to write those
18 down and then we'll come back and read those aloud
19 for the record.

20 DR. BECK: May I ask one last question? What
21 format do you want those responses in? Do you want
22 it just in person or do you want us to do a written
23 response, electronically or --

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I would prefer a written
25 response, and then we'll ask you to come before us

1 and -- that way, we can have any questions.

2 DR. BECK: Thank you very much.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you want the specific areas of
4 our --

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: -- points?

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. Yes. If you would
8 go ahead and begin filling those out, that would be
9 helpful to the applicant; they can have an idea. And
10 then Ms. Perry will have the full compiled list. And
11 as Dr. Gotcher said, you can send more ideas to Ms.
12 Perry by the end of the week or first of next week.
13 But this will give the applicant an idea, to use the
14 remaining days of the week.

15 MS. CLAY: Panel Members, one thing on the sheet
16 that you're typing in, if you'll go ahead and mark
17 that you voted for the motion. But we'll need that
18 on other ones too, how you actually voted on the
19 motion.

20 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher, if you will
22 give your vote aloud and your reason and your
23 explanation?

24 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the motion. And my
25 comments: currently, I feel expanded choices are

1 probably available for Arkansas students.

2 Furthermore, work is needed in the area of serving
3 low-achieving students and reporting on comparable
4 national achievement data. And then, on the side
5 I'll provide more detail in my comments to Ms. Perry
6 and she can provide it to them.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

8 DR. JONES: I voted for the motion. I need
9 additional information regarding specifics within the
10 budget regarding services for GT, EL, and special
11 education. In addition, I'm requesting national
12 performance data specifically on state assessments
13 regarding proficiency in math and literacy; providing
14 one composite score for all the Connections'
15 charters. Because there was a concern in the
16 application of those courses that are yet to be
17 aligned with Arkansas standards, I'm requesting a
18 list of the courses that are NCAA approved and
19 aligned with Arkansas standards.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Lester.

21 MR. LESTER: Yes. I need additional information
22 about the process to provide equitable services for
23 those Title 1 students.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

25 MS. LIWO: I haven't been sold on substantial

1 involvement with the broader community; I would like
2 more information on that. I would also like for you
3 to re-address the subsidy issue that Ms. Pfeffer
4 referenced. And I'll leave it at that. I voted for.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

6 MS. PFEFFER: I voted for the motion to be able
7 to get some additional information. This was
8 described as a unique opportunity, and I just want to
9 know how can we move to where all students would have
10 access and the opportunity for a unique experience.
11 I would also like -- there's a little bit of
12 contradiction in one of the comments that Dr. Beck
13 made about most students enrolled in online programs
14 to solve a problem. So I think there's a little bit
15 of disconnect there between a solution to a problem
16 and a unique opportunity. So I'll pose some
17 questions to get those answers.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Rogers.

19 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion. And the
20 reason I did is because a lot of the concerns
21 concerned the GT. I need a little more clarification
22 about how they're different from what's not already
23 being offered in Arkansas through virtual schools and
24 other opportunities. Also, I'd like to see a little
25 more detail in the budget because I think they

1 reflected today that they would receive title and
2 special ed. funding. But the only two revenue
3 sources they listed was foundation and professional
4 development.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Saunders.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted yes, needing more
7 information as well. And particular items that I
8 wrote down was how the Code of Ethics, such as
9 reporting, investigating, et cetera, would be
10 applied; why the ALP process would not suffice
11 concerning licensure; why over 50% of the budget is
12 specified to an individual company; need for waiver
13 of bidding requirements; why the waiver from teaching
14 load; why is there a waiver from the teaching load
15 when current law allows it. Sorry; it's long. Why
16 the original goal was at .90; waiver from
17 professional development -- overall, why it is
18 different from what's currently being offered; and
19 subsidy for low income students being more in line
20 with expenses.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

22 MS. BARNES: I voted yes for the motion. My
23 reasons have been addressed I think probably
24 throughout. But additional information is needed
25 with respect to services to address how the school

1 will meet the needs of middle level students grades 6
2 through 8 and high school grade 9 with respect to
3 their needs in acceleration and/or remediation. Many
4 unknowns regarding meeting the needs of Title 1
5 students, as funding will likely come into play. I
6 would like a better picture of what ratios and grade
7 levels will realistically look like in the initial
8 600 cap with respect to the already 3200 addressed
9 registrants.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Panel. Dr.
11 Beck, I hope you'll take these items back with you
12 and come back with both written and -- written
13 responses and a presentation that can help us answer
14 those questions.

15 DR. BECK: Absolutely. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Best of luck to you.

17 That concludes action item 1. For the general
18 public, I will let you know that action item 2 and
19 action item 3 have been pulled. And I'm aware that
20 Senator Ross has entered the room, and if you would
21 like to make a comment to the group?

22 SENATOR ROSS: Thank you. This is my first
23 visit down here, so it's good to be with you. First,
24 I want to thank you for your service. I wasn't able
25 to be here earlier this morning, but I will just say

1 this: I am here in support of education and that
2 includes the Fort Smith charter request. I
3 appreciate the work you do, appreciate your
4 judgments, and would ask you to give every
5 consideration. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, sir.

7 Because we didn't get a break this morning, I'm
8 going to add break and lunch together. And I would
9 hope that we could re-adjourn at -- or come together
10 back at 12:15. Thank you.

11 (LUNCH BREAK: 11:26 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.)

12 A-4: HEARING ON OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

13 APPLICATION: FUTURE SCHOOL OF FORT SMITH, FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If we're ready to
15 reconvene, we're to action item 4, Hearing on the
16 Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Application for
17 the Future School of Fort Smith, Fort Smith,
18 Arkansas. Ms. Perry or Ms. Boyd -- Ms. Boyd, you are
19 recognized.

20 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Future
21 School of Fort Smith is a proposed open-enrollment
22 public charter school to be located in the Fort Smith
23 School District. The sponsoring entity is Future
24 School. The applicant is requesting to serve
25 students in grades 10 through 12 with a maximum

1 enrollment of 450, beginning in the 2016-17 school
2 year. The applicant has notified affected districts
3 of this proposed public charter school. ADE staff
4 reviewed the application and concerns -- and the
5 concerns were shared with the applicant for response.
6 The application, the ADE evaluation, and the
7 applicant's response are included for review by the
8 Charter Authorizing Panel. And to open up for
9 speaking for the Future School we have Trish
10 Flanagan.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Will all
12 representatives of the Future School of Fort Smith
13 stand and anyone in opposition? Stand and raise your
14 right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the
15 testimony you are about to give shall be the truth,
16 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

17 (ALL WITNESSES ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Flanagan,
19 you are recognized.

20 MS. FLANAGAN: Thank you. Thank you. My name
21 is Trish Flanagan; I'm the founder of the Future
22 School of Fort Smith -- and I wanted to see if I can
23 turn on -- there it is. Okay. I've been in
24 education for many years as a teacher, an educator,
25 an administrator, and an advocate for youth around

1 the country and internationally, and I've seen
2 countless students fall through the cracks. Our team
3 that are represented here have come up with a plan
4 and the group to support the plan to change that for
5 students. We are on a mission to cultivate the
6 limitless potential of innovative and collaborative
7 and compassionate students to be prepared for the
8 21st century. Our school plans to open a year from
9 now with 150 tenth grade students and over three
10 years we expect to have 450 tenth through twelfth
11 grade students.

12 We would like to express our sincere gratitude
13 for some of the legislators that spoke today on our
14 behalf that support our already growing support
15 network of collaborators from within the district
16 itself and from the town of Fort Smith, including
17 leaders in higher education; Dr. Barron and his team
18 at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, which is
19 one of our major partners; the local school board in
20 Fort Smith, and the local school administration. Dr.
21 Benny Goodan and Dr. Deanie Mehl have shown us
22 support and bravery, to be quite honest, in
23 partnering with us, because our goal is to do what
24 charters were supposed to do, as Senator Joyce
25 Elliott mentioned. Charters are supposed to be a

1 laboratory for innovation that serve the needs of all
2 students, and that's what we hope to do. So we're
3 well underway.

4 Right now, I'd like to ask our community members
5 who have joined us to please stand and be recognized.
6 This group represents parents, business leaders,
7 community and service providers, and educational
8 leaders. Thank you.

9 Working with the district and working with
10 partners in the town of Fort Smith, we knew that we
11 had to understand the needs of the students from
12 their perspective, so we went right to the programs
13 that work with students. We looked at -- we went and
14 met with the Boys' and Girls' Club, developed a
15 relationship with them, the University, and the
16 district itself. Within the Fort Smith Public School
17 District, they do a great job at educating students.
18 They offer programs like the Western Arkansas
19 Technical Center that's offered at the University of
20 Arkansas-Fort Smith that serves 20 different
21 districts, where students can get concurrent college
22 credit. Students are also able to access classes
23 like the EAST Initiative where they can develop
24 technological skills. And three of the campuses at
25 the junior high and elementary level are digital

1 conversion campuses, which means that each student
2 has their own laptop, moving forward towards 21st
3 century technological literacy. These programs are
4 innovative; however, they only serve a very small
5 percentage of students. We want to make sure that
6 all students get access to these programs without any
7 kind of entrance criteria, except for just being an
8 Arkansas resident, ready to go to 10th grade.

9 When we look at the district's overall math
10 proficiency, we see the similar case that we've seen
11 around the country, which is certain groups of
12 students score significantly lower than others. And
13 in this case, the TAG students are scoring much lower
14 than all other students. In addition, the graduation
15 rate is lower in the district than it is in the state
16 and it is nationally. There are two high schools in
17 Fort Smith currently, two public high school options:
18 Northside and Southside. They serve distinctively
19 different groups of students and for that reason,
20 looking at the Northside demographic of students with
21 an 81% poverty rate, we are going to be right in the
22 middle of that neighborhood to make sure that we are
23 accessible to all students who need us the most.

24 We also are looking intensively at career and
25 college prep. And as we know, oftentimes, this is

1 only given lip service, but we are commending our
2 district colleagues for actually seeking this
3 information now from students.

4 The information that I'm going to share now
5 comes from a 2014 graduating senior exit survey which
6 represents 84% of the graduates from Northside and
7 Southside. 44% of students that graduated last year
8 said that they sometimes or never were provided
9 helpful college and career planning; 33% said they
10 sometimes and never -- or never were engaged or
11 challenged in their core classes; 55% said they
12 sometimes or never were taught how to use technology;
13 30% sometimes or never felt encouraged to continue
14 their education; and 28% were sometimes or never
15 prepared for the transition to work and college. Now
16 there are many students that are getting these needs
17 met and there are many that are not, hundreds, and we
18 want to make sure that we have that opportunity
19 available for students that are struggling, for
20 students that are on their way to MIT, and for
21 students right in the middle.

22 Based on what we found out by talking to
23 students, by looking at their feedback, and by
24 talking to educators and industry partners in Fort
25 Smith and around Fort Smith, we knew we had to go

1 find the best practice in the country. And so I've
2 been on an exploratory trip nonstop nearly for the
3 past year, looking at over 30 high school campuses.
4 I've looked at international baccalaureate; I've
5 looked at STEM, STEAM, college prep, Montessori --
6 you name it. And there's a lot of innovation
7 happening out there, but almost never are students
8 given the opportunity at real world application and
9 in developing a network of support and advising from
10 experts within their schools and outside in the
11 community, except for one network of schools and
12 that's the Big Picture Learning Network. When we
13 visited schools in this network, these pictures were
14 taken from a school in Oakland, California. We saw
15 students that were engaged and we saw a face to what
16 that means by being engaged in learning and ready to
17 go to college and career. One student, at the top
18 you see he had built a flight simulator from scratch
19 from a \$50,000 Department of Defense grant that he
20 wrote with the help of his advisor. This student was
21 going to a free public high school. Below, there's a
22 student, a Latino student; she was on the verge of
23 dropping out in a very large high school in
24 California, with a very high dropout rate. And we
25 asked her, "How did you decide to leave your friends

1 and take on a brand-new environment?" And she said
2 two things. One is, "I want an opportunity to work
3 in the real world and get credit for it." And the
4 other is, "I want to build my network of support with
5 people that know how to get into college and do
6 well," because she was the first to go to college in
7 her family. And so these students are developing
8 skills for the 21st century. They're getting a
9 chance while in high school to explore their careers,
10 which, as we've talked to students, the irony of it
11 is is that we talk about college prep and college
12 pathways but yet we never trust students to go and
13 look at what that actually is.

14 So Big Picture Learning is the network that we
15 will be a part of for support, professional
16 development, and any kind of technical assistance.
17 They've been around for 20 years. Their model has
18 been proven to work in 55, and growing, schools in
19 the United States and abroad there in 10 countries.
20 Across the network they have an 87% graduation rate
21 and they do this because they personalize the
22 learning plan for students. They start with the
23 student in mind and they work outside from that
24 standpoint. We will be the first high school in
25 Arkansas to join this network. And we know that you

1 can't just look at outcomes and pretend that it's
2 going to work for all students, so we dug deep and we
3 found out that Big Picture actually has a demographic
4 that meets the same characteristics of our
5 demographic on the north side of Fort Smith. We also
6 wanted to make sure that there was a light at the end
7 of the tunnel for students. If they're going to do
8 all this work, we want them to be prepared for
9 something that's going to be worth their time, so we
10 looked at the occupations that were in demand in
11 western Arkansas. And up until 2022, here's what we
12 found. So we developed our four concentrations from
13 which students can choose to develop their personal
14 learning plan around -- arts and letters, technology
15 and industry, education and public service, and
16 entrepreneurship -- to make sure that they have a job
17 waiting for them, hopefully, if all goes well, at the
18 end of the road. And so we do this by focusing on
19 three components. There's a lot of noise right now
20 in education but we've siphoned it down to three
21 essential components for student success and we will
22 receive training, guidance and continued
23 collaboration with our Big Picture Learning partners.

24 Personalized academics, real world
25 collaboration, and meaningful advising -- each

1 student will have their own Personalized Learning
2 Plan. Just like a student with special education
3 needs has a by-law requirement to be provided
4 personalized academics so will every single student
5 at Future School. They will have a diverse platform
6 to choose from for how they take their courses. We
7 will have project-based face-to-face classes where
8 students will engage in individual instruction at
9 times, small group instruction, and whole class
10 instruction based around a thematic project. They
11 will also be able to choose online classes in the
12 case where we can't -- we don't have the capacity to
13 offer it in person. And, most importantly, we are
14 planning to offer concurrent credit through our
15 partnership with the University of Arkansas-Fort
16 Smith, one other way where at-risk students will
17 really get launched successfully out of high school
18 by having free college credit on their transcripts.
19 Each student will graduate with a portfolio which is
20 becoming more and more in demand in industry and
21 higher education to demonstrate not only what they're
22 able to do academically, career-wise, and
23 professionally outside of when they graduate, but
24 also to demonstrate their growth, their grit, their
25 ability to overcome challenges and failures by

1 working in the real world. And, again, real world
2 collaboration is essential to our model, as you can
3 see by our 30 support letters in our application, the
4 group that has joined us today, and the overwhelming
5 support that we've gotten this morning from
6 legislators. Students will design their internship
7 based on guidance from their advisor and their
8 personal learning team. They will go out and they
9 will do informational interviews within the
10 industries of their choice. What's really exciting
11 for us is that we're already developing curriculum
12 that's informed by industry, because we're shortening
13 this pipeline, we're shortening this gap so that
14 students know exactly what kind of programs, what
15 kind of computer programs, what kind of manufacturing
16 programs, et cetera, et cetera that they need to --
17 that they'll be trained in by the time they're ready
18 to graduate.

19 Meaningful advising is our third pillar. Every
20 student will have an advisor that follows them from
21 day-one at Future School until they graduate. That
22 advisor is one of their teachers and they know that
23 student backwards and forwards. They know them over
24 the course of years. They develop a lifelong
25 relationship. They understand the goals of that

1 student. They, in many cases, will help them
2 articulate for the first time their goals. And as
3 well as teachers, students will have a mentor in the
4 community at their internship site. And so we look
5 at the model that seems to be working. We spoke to
6 students that had changes, unbelievable things happen
7 in their life because of this innovation. And we
8 looked at the demographics that lined up with our
9 student needs in Fort Smith. And so, according to
10 across the network data for Big Picture, there's an
11 87% graduation rate. Our goal is to meet or exceed
12 state graduation rates. This does, but we still want
13 to beat Big Picture Learning. 78% of students take
14 college courses while in high school. 89% of parents
15 are actually showing up to visit with the advisors
16 once a month every year for their students. 74% of
17 students are enrolling in college within one year of
18 graduation. And for those students who choose not to
19 go directly into college, 74% of them find employment
20 from their internship site. And so this is a
21 community initiative, a community developed and a
22 community led initiative with the students right at
23 the center of it.

24 At this point I'd like to ask two of our
25 community members to join us and address the Panel.

1 Steve Clark is a business leader in Fort Smith, and
2 he's the treasurer of our school board.

3 MR. CLARK: Thank you so much, Trish, and thank
4 you to the Panel, and thank you for your willingness
5 to serve on this panel; what a responsibility. I'm
6 sure it's not taken lightly, nor should it be. As a
7 representative of the business community in Fort
8 Smith, we're very excited to be here. The Chamber of
9 Commerce has announced its support with over 1,200
10 members. Our largest employers have voiced their
11 support. And I think what you're beginning to see is
12 that Fort Smith, having historically been a
13 manufacturing town, and manufacturing jobs are not
14 what they once were, is beginning to try and find
15 what-next looks for itself. And candidly, if you
16 want to be perceived as a progressive community you
17 have to do the things that progressive communities
18 do. And one of the things that progressive
19 communities do, just like Little Rock, is provide
20 educational options for its citizens and their
21 citizens' children. What appeals to me particularly
22 as a businessman about this particular model is I
23 happen to believe -- we all talk about change -- you
24 know, change in our economy. But we never talk,
25 often, about the velocity of change. And I think

1 what you're beginning to see is the velocity of
2 change increasing. When I went to school we thought
3 in terms of buckets; right? I mean, grade school,
4 junior high, high school and college, job. It
5 doesn't exist that way anymore. This network, this
6 school allows all of our students from the least
7 among us to the most among us to engage at a very
8 early level the opportunity to build network. And
9 there's not a person in this room that can appreciate
10 the value of network. So I would just like to say on
11 behalf of the business community in Fort Smith,
12 Arkansas that we support this initiative. We support
13 Trish and we support this in every manner that we
14 can. And so after you've given time for questions I
15 hope that you would find the questions to be
16 satisfactory and you would vote in the affirmative.
17 Thank you.

18 MS. RICHARDSON: Good afternoon, Panel. My name
19 is Talicia Richardson. I am a mental health
20 therapist, also a community activist, adjunct
21 professor -- I do a little bit of everything, so I
22 like to stay busy. I'm a native of Fort Smith and a
23 product of the Fort Smith School District; I'm a 1991
24 grad of Northside High School. And when I attended
25 Northside 25 years ago it was driven in us to go to

1 college, not because our teachers or our instructors
2 asked us to, but because of the community; they
3 demanded that of us; our churches, our families. As
4 a first generation college student, I made it happen
5 because I had tenacity. Not all students -- again,
6 not all students possess that same tenacity. Some
7 students need assistance in getting there, regardless
8 of their skin color, regardless of their
9 socioeconomic status.

10 I am here today because I believe with the Big
11 Picture concept the Future School will be a huge
12 asset to our community. There are people that don't
13 necessarily support charter schools. And I was in
14 Dallas, Texas when charter schools were launched.
15 There were pros and cons. My daughter attended
16 private school, blue ribbon schools, ivy schools.
17 And even when we resided in Phoenix, Arizona, she
18 attended a public school that had specialized
19 programs that worked with high school young ladies.
20 One girl in particular did an internship as an
21 apprentice with an electrician. Two years later, she
22 could actually work in that field and was working
23 with contractors. She decided to go to ASU with a
24 full paid scholarship. She had options. She did not
25 have debt. Those are things and opportunities that

1 should be accessible to our students in our
2 community. Not everyone is college-bound and we need
3 to expose our students to an environment that is
4 global, giving them assets while they are residing in
5 Fort Smith, Arkansas. It is time. There are people
6 in the community that support this and we need to go
7 back to the old-school way of growing our students.
8 There are two particular educators, Mr. Abernathy and
9 Mr. Hendrix. These were educators in the 50's, 60's,
10 70's and 80's. They touched a lot of lives. One of
11 those lives is here, Jackie Flake. And these men,
12 they not only took their instruction as 6th grade
13 teachers seriously, they went into the community;
14 they engaged the family; they knew when the birthday
15 parties were; they knew when the barbecue grills were
16 getting pulled out in the neighborhood and they
17 participated. They made sure that before athletics
18 became academics, and that is the focus of Future
19 School: how do we specialize those programs for the
20 individual student with the family and with the
21 community. The citizens of Fort Smith that are there
22 today and those to come need options, and Big Picture
23 Learning for us is an option and one that we would
24 welcome in our city.

25 MS. FLANAGAN: Thank you, Steve and Talicia.

1 One thing I will recognize before we close up is that
2 we have asked for a new -- a waiver, if that's the
3 first time the Panel have seen it, for seat time
4 based around our model. Which we will answer
5 questions as we go, but I wanted to alert you to the
6 document that you have in front of you for the Q-and-
7 A. At this time we are -- we'd like to close.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. I think you
9 have two minutes and 35 seconds remaining, if you
10 need it.

11 Anyone speaking in opposition?

12 (MOMENT OF SILENCE)

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If not, Ms. Flanagan, you
14 have five minutes, in addition, to make any final
15 statements before we begin the Q-and-A.

16 MS. FLANAGAN: Well, improv is always a good
17 thing, I guess. I love what Steve and Talicia said
18 because they really spoke for all the people that
19 we've been engaging. As a part of this process, we
20 were required to have a public hearing once to insure
21 that there was some level of community support. And
22 what we've done by putting our foot down and saying
23 "this will not be a conflict of interest between the
24 adults in the room, we will be an example" -- and
25 what's happened is that that has come to fruition.

1 We held the community meetings over the summer to
2 inform the community. Our policy and our philosophy
3 is transparency so that people are informed of what's
4 going on, what they can expect, and actually, most
5 importantly, that they can see our best practices to
6 insure that we're aligning with what the community
7 needs. And we hope that over the course of this
8 conversation you will see that our policies, our
9 procedures, we have -- our goal is to
10 institutionalize all of these feel-good concepts, but
11 that they actually become a part of the permanent
12 institution of Future School, just as they would in
13 any other public high school.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. All right.
15 We'll begin with panel questions. And would anyone
16 like to start? Mr. Lester, thank you. Mr. Lester.

17 MR. LESTER: A couple of times in the
18 presentation I saw that each student will have a
19 Personalized Learning Plan, kind of directing them
20 towards their options.

21 MS. FLANAGAN: Right.

22 MR. LESTER: How are these plans developed and
23 the appropriate assessments that are used for that
24 planning?

25 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh. I can speak to that, but

1 I'm going to have our expert from Big Picture
2 Learning, who has many years in developing these
3 plans, speak on that.

4 MR. EMMETT: Good afternoon. My name is Edward
5 Emmett. I'm a representative from Big Picture and
6 also I'm the executive director of a charter school
7 in Delaware that's been implementing Big Picture for
8 about five years. In my state we call them Student
9 Learning Plans, but it's the same thing.
10 Personalized Learning Plans are basically designed
11 with parents, with students, with a mentor, and with
12 an advisor that will sit down and really define, you
13 know, what the student's goals are and really
14 identify what career paths and academic paths we need
15 to move to help students find success. And when
16 we're looking at students with different disabilities
17 we also can sometimes have a special education
18 teacher in there or other therapists, so it is a very
19 fluid process. They're usually revised -- in my
20 school they're revised about eight times a year. But
21 at any given time a student can say, "I've
22 accomplished this goal and I need to change something
23 or move it." So, I mean, it is a very fluid piece,
24 but it's also the cornerstone of what our kids use.
25 If you come and visit -- go visit a Big Picture

1 school and you ask a student, "What is your student
2 learning plan, or Personalized Plan," they usually
3 carry it with them and they're also very reflective
4 around that. So that's -- a lot of their reflective
5 pieces all revolve around that piece of our plan.

6 MR. LESTER: So you involve the community as
7 well as parents in that same --

8 MR. EMMETT: Absolutely.

9 MR. LESTER: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

11 MR. ROGERS: I don't have anything.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

13 MS. LIWO: I don't have anything.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, just a couple of points. Two
16 of the board members are out-of-state. And just
17 being a former superintendent I know how powerful the
18 board relationships are. How do you plan to include
19 the two out-of-state board members, what means, and
20 talk to me a little bit about that?

21 MS. FLANAGAN: Well, I'm not sure what you're
22 referring to. Currently, we've got four board
23 members that live in Fort Smith.

24 DR. GOTCHER: That may have been from the
25 original application, which happened to the previous

1 applicant as well. The original application --

2 MS. FLANAGAN: Oh, you're talking about like the
3 advisor, that first or second page on there?

4 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Yes. So give me your board
5 make-up as it is today --

6 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. Sure.

7 DR. GOTCHER: -- as far as -- okay.

8 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. So four of our board
9 members live in Fort Smith and one lives in
10 Fayetteville.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. That's fine. Okay.
12 Secondly, as I was looking there were a couple of
13 emails in opposition. Maybe you could explain why
14 those that attended felt that their signature on the
15 sign-in sheet, both of them interpreted it as a
16 letter -- or as a signature of support. Maybe
17 explain that confusion for those public meetings.

18 MS. FLANAGAN: Sure. We never intended to
19 misrepresent what was going on. In fact, one of the
20 women who sent in the letters -- and she and I have
21 been in conversations and she actually emailed me
22 about that, her concern, and I responded immediately
23 the next day and said, "Tell me -- here's the
24 language from our application and here's what they're
25 going to interpret those signatures as. And whoever

1 wants their name off just email it to me and I'll
2 take it off." And I never heard a follow-up
3 response.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Sure. And it was like, we all in
5 education, we have sign-in sheets.

6 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Whether you want to be there or
8 not, you have to sign in sometimes.

9 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

10 DR. GOTCHER: So there was never a message sent
11 to those participants that signing in was not -- was
12 a supportive signature?

13 MS. FLANAGAN: No. No. I mean, you can see on
14 the sign-in sheets, as well.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Very good. Thank you for that
16 clarification. That's all I have at this moment.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

19 DR. JONES: Yes. And it's a little bit more on
20 the personalized plan. You can really only provide a
21 quality Personalized Learning Plan if there are
22 choices for students, and you briefly mentioned some
23 of this. Can you tell me some of the choices -- you
24 know, I'm in regular core classes -- that will be
25 different for those students?

1 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes, definitely. So we have a
2 few long-term and short-term plans to make sure that
3 we have a diverse offering. First of all, the
4 internship credits will be awarded right now through
5 local credit as an elective. We're also going to be
6 emphasizing the career focus. Emphasis right now is
7 in the coursework and the Arkansas curricular
8 frameworks, the technology pieces, the business
9 education pieces. But the long-term plan that we
10 have is with our partnership at UAFS is to access
11 their CTE classes, as well as their concurrent credit
12 classes.

13 DR. JONES: Okay. So if the student -- and you
14 mentioned you have four specific program areas, but I
15 didn't catch all of them.

16 MS. FLANAGAN: Sure.

17 DR. JONES: Art -- will you go through those
18 again?

19 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. Arts and letters,
20 entrepreneurship, education and public service,
21 technology and industry.

22 DR. JONES: Okay. And so if a student decides
23 that they want to go into entrepreneurship what can
24 they expect in their long-range plan, even if these
25 are long-term goals? I know I'll have my core

1 classes; some of those classes may be concurrent
2 credit with Fort Smith. What in addition to that
3 could they expect?

4 MS. FLANAGAN: I think we would start by
5 backwards planning, you know, setting interim levels
6 of goals for students; what do you want to do by the
7 time you're in 12th grade; what do you want to do by
8 the time next semester happens. And so in your
9 example, in the case of entrepreneurship, immediately
10 the student would be looking at "maybe I need to take
11 an entrepreneurship course;" "maybe I need to be more
12 proficient in Excel for my financial projections;" "I
13 want to work with an entrepreneur who has actually
14 done this." So we would design and help them to
15 access those entrepreneurs in the community to learn
16 from that real-world environment.

17 DR. JONES: Okay. Do you have commitments from
18 businesses that will take on apprentice work with the
19 program of the charter?

20 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. Currently -- I believe it's
21 in the packet -- we've got eight formally signed up
22 for sponsoring internships.

23 DR. JONES: Very good. Tell me a little bit
24 about your courses. Does Big Picture run your
25 courses or are you responsible within the school for

1 your teachers creating the curriculum for your
2 courses?

3 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. One of the I think value-
4 adds that Big Picture has in differentiators is that
5 it's all personalized; just like for the students it
6 is, so does every school. And there are around in so
7 many different kinds of schools around the country
8 that what we're going to do is develop a curriculum
9 committee. And I think in the packet that I sent in
10 today we have more details on what the professional
11 development and support from Big Picture will be.
12 But essentially it's going to be our team that will
13 be the resident experts, and so we're seeking out the
14 best professional development for them along of the
15 lines of innovation.

16 DR. JONES: Okay. And I'll tell you why I asked
17 that. So basically I hear that you're following the
18 state frameworks in developing your curriculum
19 online. And that's why I wouldn't ask for state
20 performance data for Big Picture across the nation,
21 while you did provide graduation data and going-to-
22 work data and that's very helpful. In looking at
23 career inventory, I think this was within your
24 application -- and they're running together now. Did
25 you -- what do you do for a career inventory for your

1 students?

2 MS. FLANAGAN: Well, as you noticed on our
3 performance metrics, we're looking at the college
4 workforce readiness assessment, which is right now
5 being used by Big Picture as well as a number of
6 school networks in Arkansas.

7 DR. JONES: All right. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Good afternoon. First of all, I
10 want to commend you on I think the community
11 involvement and then the effort that you've made
12 already in trying to get partnerships in the
13 community and working with the district. I think
14 that's somewhat unique from what I've seen in this
15 position, so I commend you on that, on reaching out
16 and building those bridges. I understand that some
17 of your -- is it correct in assuming that some of
18 your courses would be done through WATSI [ps]?

19 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. We're working with the
20 director of WATSI right now.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Just in a nutshell so to
22 say, what are you offering that's different? Because
23 I know WATSI is offered in Fort Smith and surrounding
24 districts.

25 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: What is a kid going to see in
2 your program that they are not currently getting?

3 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh. Well, number one, it's
4 about access. So right now there's criteria to enter
5 a lot of these enrichment programs, but once you
6 register for Future School you're going to have
7 access to these programs. There will be certain
8 guidelines we'll have to follow for certain classes,
9 but ultimately we intend on complimenting what's
10 already there and supporting the development of
11 innovation, you know, with our partners. But
12 specifically, programmatically speaking, as we've
13 looked around the state and again across the country,
14 what is not happening that we will be bringing that's
15 different -- and in this case to WATSI and other
16 programs in the district and the surrounding
17 districts -- is that Personalized Learning Plan for
18 every student that holds the entire learning team
19 accountable and motivated throughout the year, and
20 retaining student goals; internships for every
21 student based on their interest and the industry
22 demand; and then, of course, an advisor that follows
23 that student from start to finish. And I would just
24 add that we're really excited about -- and we've
25 already -- some of us have already been visiting with

1 Big Picture folks at their conferences, their
2 national conferences, where we are a part of a
3 national and global network.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Also, I have a big concern
5 over -- I think that our teacher preparation programs
6 are essential for the educators. And I noticed that
7 you have the licensure waivers, and principal's
8 responsibility, superintendent and those things, and
9 I want to be careful that we do not just apply for
10 those because that's what a charter school does, that
11 there's actually reason to do that in the benefit of
12 students.

13 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: And so my question is: with our
15 current ALP procedures whenever you cannot find
16 somebody that's certified for the position then you
17 would apply for the ALP and be able to do that. Why
18 would there be a need for a waiver from those?

19 MS. FLANAGAN: The hiring pool. So we are going
20 to hire certified teachers, licensed teachers where
21 we can. But we don't want to close off the best fit,
22 the instructors that would really bring that
23 experience. We will have everyone going through that
24 alternative licensure program once they get hired.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: So would the ALP satisfy that?

1 MS. FLANAGAN: Is ALP additional licensure?

2 MS. PFEFFER: Yes. That's what I was going to
3 ask when you said the ALP is the additional licensure
4 plan that a currently licensed educator would add an
5 area to their license.

6 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

7 MS. PFEFFER: But you just said they would go
8 through an alternative licensure program then?

9 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

10 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

11 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. We're looking at APPLE
12 right now.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Okay.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: So then under that plan would the
15 licensure still need -- would there still need to be
16 a waiver? I guess I'm asking Ms. Pfeffer on that.

17 MS. PFEFFER: Well, that was new to me to hear
18 her say that. So in terms of if a candidate did not
19 get enrolled in the APPLE program then they would
20 have to have a waiver from that. But once candidates
21 are enrolled in the APPLE program they are working on
22 the provisional license if they're enrolled and
23 hired.

24 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. We want to --

25 MS. PFEFFER: So that may need to be something

1 we need to look at.

2 MS. FLANAGAN: We just want to make sure that
3 we've minimized absolutely the barriers. Because I
4 know a lot of charters outsource teachers and we
5 don't want to do that. And so we want to make sure
6 that we can look right in our neighborhood and if the
7 teachers or folks that would be the best instructors
8 on campus don't have that certification that that's
9 not going to hinder them from starting our
10 professional development and our curriculum writing
11 in a few months.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Could that just be done on a
13 case-by-case basis then and then seek that waiver
14 approval from licensure?

15 MS. FLANAGAN: I'm going to ask Tripp to address
16 that.

17 MR. WALTER: Thank you. Tripp Walter, staff
18 attorney, Arkansas Public School Resource Center. I
19 think to go along with what Ms. Flanagan said, while
20 obviously the goal is to hire certified teachers, and
21 obviously all teachers will be highly qualified when
22 required, they want the flexibility and would like to
23 maintain the waiver just because sometimes -- again,
24 looking for the best fit. Again, this is driving
25 student achievement. It may not be at all times that

1 that's a licensed teacher. She's indicated that she
2 will try and work through the APPLE program, but I
3 think the flexibility is needed for those
4 opportunities where she said she finds somebody who's
5 a real good fit for the program, may not be through
6 the traditional process, but that she believes fits
7 their model and can drive student achievement.

8 MS. FLANAGAN: Just to tag on to that, going
9 back to the actual schools that we saw -- and I
10 really grilled principals and said, "How are you
11 doing this? I mean, this is so out of the box and
12 you have numbers to prove it." And they said, "We
13 have to have the right people," and I think we can
14 all attest to that. And so, you know, that student
15 that built the flight simulator from scratch, he did
16 that with an engineer that had been in the Air Force
17 for 30 years. And so we would hate to pass up the
18 chance to bring that person on because of
19 technicalities.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: But you would be able under our
21 current system to have that person available through
22 a technical certificate. Is that possible, Ms.
23 Pfeffer?

24 MR. SCOTT SMITH: There may be a situation where
25 the individual is retired and they just don't want to

1 go through the certification process but they have
2 amazing expertise in that critical area. So we need
3 that flexibility in case we run into a situation like
4 that. So we certainly wouldn't want to close that
5 off if they have the ability to bring that kind of
6 expertise in for these students.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Smith, will you
8 identify yourself for the record?

9 MR. SMITH: Sorry. Scott Smith with APSRC.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. I assume the
11 world knows you but just in case Ms. Hill doesn't.

12 MR. SMITH: Your words, not mine.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I'll pass it on for now.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Pfeffer.

15 MS. PFEFFER: Ms. Flanagan, maybe because --
16 when you started talking about the APPLE program --
17 so I'm looking here in your application. And if I'm
18 understanding right, you're planning to hire six
19 teachers for next year, adding the 10th grade.

20 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

21 MS. PFEFFER: Those teachers would teach core
22 academic classes.

23 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

24 MS. PFEFFER: And those six teachers would also
25 teach a career tech course.

1 MS. FLANAGAN: An elective.

2 MS. PFEFFER: As an elective. And they would
3 also be acting as an advisor for up to 20 students.
4 Is that correct?

5 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes.

6 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And they would be teaching
7 up to 150 students a day, if you had that full
8 enrollment?

9 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. We are on block schedule,
10 so there will be a different daily maximum.

11 MS. PFEFFER: So in looking at that you would be
12 -- you would have the teachers -- ideally, you would
13 be able to have people who were licensed in the first
14 place ideally. If you didn't, then those teachers
15 would be encouraged to enroll in the APPLE program to
16 work on licensure. So that is correct?

17 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes.

18 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. But they're not going to
19 probably be licensed in the core area and also in a
20 CTE area. So you're looking at -- in your
21 application here you're talking about -- let's see --
22 instructors will teach based on their background
23 experiences -- I've lost it here -- their expertise
24 or interest?

25 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh. Right. And so for the

1 CTE requirement, which we're, you know, in contact
2 right now with the Department of Career Education --
3 but right now, to insure that we're ready to roll
4 next year we have -- we're working with UAFS that
5 already has CT approved teachers providing those
6 courses.

7 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So the likelihood would be
8 they would be getting that through a different means?

9 MS. FLANAGAN: (Nodding head up and down.)

10 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And to really go forward
11 with this, the licensure waiver would probably be
12 necessary in order for you to avoid getting caught in
13 a situation --

14 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah.

15 MS. PFEFFER: -- where you did not have someone.
16 If one of these teachers who is non-licensed is
17 teaching a core course, they would be highly
18 qualified but -- and if they were also teaching a CTE
19 course, it is -- I just want to verify that there are
20 those curriculum frameworks not only for the core
21 courses but also through the CTE --

22 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes.

23 MS. PFEFFER: -- that those people would be
24 following?

25 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh.

1 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And Dr. Saunders talked
2 about then the preparation and support. So, you
3 know, as we look at that, in order to -- okay, you're
4 going to teach core content, career tech classes, and
5 advising. If these -- if they do not go through any
6 type of preparation, I think it would be a very
7 overwhelming task for a teacher.

8 MS. FLANAGAN: Right.

9 MS. PFEFFER: So if we go through and this is --
10 this application is approved, I would like to work
11 out kind of a more formal arrangement in terms of the
12 APPLE program, what we -- you know -- how could we
13 help insure that your people met the requirements in
14 a timely fashion in order to get enrolled in the
15 APPLE program, if they were to go that route. But we
16 could also provide you information with other
17 nontraditional programs so that -- because there are
18 timelines that would have to be met for that. So
19 with that -- did I miss reading that in your
20 application? I mean, is that clearly stated in your
21 application that you would -- that it would be your
22 goal to help them get in a nontraditional program for
23 licensure?

24 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. Yeah.

25 MS. PFEFFER: It is in there?

1 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes.

2 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. If someone can find that so
3 we can kind of look at that. And I just want to make
4 sure that that would be clear and that if this is
5 approved we would be able to work hand-in-hand with
6 you.

7 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. Just to recall, on our
8 waiver form for the licensure piece we stated at the
9 end of our explanation that, you know, we're going to
10 provide extensive training and support and coaching
11 for not only teachers but administrators, and we've
12 already begun that, laying out what that's going to
13 look like. That will comply with state and federal
14 laws.

15 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. But that is a little bit
16 different than hoping to get teachers enrolled in a
17 nontraditional program?

18 MS. FLANAGAN: Uh-huh. Yeah. In fact, I've
19 reached out to the Teachers Union to advise us on the
20 best program that would work for this model, and
21 we're still waiting to hear back.

22 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. All right. So we would
23 include that in as part of the waiver that -- would
24 that be -- is that the appropriate place to put that?

25 MS. FLANAGAN: Which piece of the waiver?

1 MR. SMITH: So, I'm sorry. Is the Panel asking
2 the applicant to change their charter at this point
3 and stage?

4 MS. PFEFFER: Well, it's my understanding from
5 Ms. Flanagan that that was part of the plan and I
6 just didn't read that in here. So that's what I'm
7 asking; is that part of the plan?

8 MR. SMITH: I think that's part of the plan.
9 But the other part of the plan may be that they
10 actually have someone who doesn't want an Arkansas
11 certification --

12 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So --

13 MR. SMITH: -- and they want to maintain
14 flexibility in those areas, if possible.

15 MS. PFEFFER: How is it worded then in the plan
16 or in the proposal? That they will be encouraged to
17 enroll and obtain licensure? Is that how it's
18 worded?

19 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes, in this section. Yes, in
20 the waiver section, what I'm reading.

21 MR. SMITH: And "encouraged" obviously doesn't
22 mean a mandate.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. That's where I want to be
24 clear. Are we saying they're going to or are we
25 going to encourage them?

1 MS. FLANAGAN: No. We will have everyone go
2 through an alternative certification program. And to
3 advise us on the best one for our model is what we
4 are looking to do.

5 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

6 MS. FLANAGAN: But, again, we want to make sure
7 that does not hinder us from hiring folks that are
8 not licensed.

9 MS. PFEFFER: Initially?

10 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah.

11 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. All right. That helps me.
12 I've got a couple of questions about food services.
13 I wanted to check -- you indicate here that -- let's
14 see, let me find it here -- you will apply for the
15 Federal National School Lunch Program. And you
16 talked about meeting deadlines to participate in the
17 program. There's nothing mentioned about breakfast.
18 Do you plan to provide that option, meal option for
19 students?

20 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. We looked into it deeper
21 and we found out that in certain cases you can ask
22 for a waiver from breakfast. But if our students
23 need it, then we're going to work with the lunch
24 program to meet that need for breakfast.

25 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. I don't believe there's

1 anything in your application regarding breakfast, so
2 -- let me see here.

3 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. If it's required, based on
4 our student population, then we will provide it.

5 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And then I guess my only
6 other question was -- and this may not be the
7 appropriate question for you. But was there ever any
8 consideration to work with the Fort Smith School
9 District and this become kind of a district
10 conversion charter?

11 MS. FLANAGAN: We have been working with them
12 since the beginning, as I understand. That was never
13 posed to us as an option.

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

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

16 MS. BARNES: Good afternoon. I feel I should
17 say something. You've kept me quite alert after my
18 wolfed-down lunch, so I wanted you to know that's
19 saying a whole lot right there. No, sincerely, I
20 don't necessarily, I think, have questions; I think
21 they've been answered. I appreciate the
22 conversation, the discussion, and I certainly
23 appreciate the support and community members and
24 business leaders who are onboard. I was looking
25 through the application and looking at some of the

1 follow-up questions that the team had prior to it
2 coming to the Panel, and I think that the group has
3 done an exceptional job in trying to communicate that
4 to us. I sense, I think, some angst on the part of
5 my self and my coworkers here today because, you
6 know, this is a huge step. But I do want you to know
7 that I am actually excited about the potential, the
8 demographic, the population, the area. And so I
9 looked -- and since you're starting with 10th
10 graders, I think what I've reviewed is very
11 manageable with respect to the maximum cap of 150
12 students. And I looked at some of the areas that you
13 are going to seek to make sure that you are in
14 compliance with, and the internship part really did
15 intrigue me as well. And I'm saying all of this to
16 say: so when you do have 9th graders -- and I noticed
17 I think in the application you made mention that if
18 they came as a 10th grader and were behind entering
19 from their 9th grade years that they would receive
20 their instruction via online, I believe. What types
21 of supports are there to insure that you're going to
22 be able to help move those young people along? And
23 the reason I ask that question is, obviously, if they
24 are interested in becoming a part of your school it's
25 because of the hope that they see and opportunity to

1 get involved, to get a job, to learn, to have more
2 hands-on. But there's also a sense of hopelessness
3 that can capture a student. And I guess I'm just
4 asking what types of supports do you have in line for
5 that student who comes and they are behind but
6 they're entering the 10th grade should this
7 application be approved and they're a part of your
8 school? They would be receiving instruction online
9 but how will you -- what's the safety-net for that
10 student or those students?

11 MS. FLANAGAN: Well, just to -- thank you; I
12 appreciate all your comments. Just to clarify, if a
13 student comes in under-credited then their whole
14 entire learning plan won't be online; it will just be
15 those credits that they have to make-up that we don't
16 offer, because we don't have 9th grade.

17 MS. BARNES: Right.

18 MS. FLANAGAN: But I'll let Ed speak to it in
19 one second, but I'll just say that it all goes back
20 to the personalization and that learning team that
21 really wraps around the student and encourages them
22 to take on risks that they've failed, you know,
23 attempting in past times. So we're hoping -- we know
24 -- we've seen the evidence that that works. But
25 essentially the other piece, programmatically

1 speaking, is during that real-world learning lab that
2 students have four days a week with their advisor for
3 an hour-and-a-half, that is time where students are
4 working on their internship plans, their assessments;
5 they're able to be accessible for small group
6 instruction or any sort of enrichment or help that
7 they would need. In addition, we will have an online
8 learning center director for that exact reason, to
9 encourage the student to keep them on their goal plan
10 and to provide any sort of assistance that they need
11 to catch up. And then I'm going to let Ed say
12 something.

13 MR. EMMETT: So one of the foundations of Big
14 Picture really is the advisory structure which a lot
15 of the longitudinal data and studies we've done --
16 and when we've asked students, you know, five years
17 after they finish school "what was one of the largest
18 elements that helped you be successful," they usually
19 report it's their advisor and their advisory. There
20 are reunions of advisories that happen all across our
21 country 10 years after the fact because it really
22 becomes their family; they really take care of each
23 other. So when you talk about their safety-net,
24 that's their safety-net for everything, not just the
25 academics; it's social, emotional. And that is the

1 piece that we see in most Big Picture schools is that
2 advisory structure. So, I mean, that's where
3 students really never get lost in a Big Picture
4 school because somebody always knows them and their
5 story and will pick them up when they're down and
6 help them carry everything forward.

7 MS. BARNES: One other question. So I see --
8 and I'm tracking through, you're going 10 through 12
9 ultimately. You have a student coming in in 10th
10 grade and they're trucking along, doing very fairly
11 well, may have even started off a little bit behind
12 with all of the support, advisors, advisee support.
13 They're doing well. But over -- I don't know --
14 somewhere between 11th and 12th grade -- I'm looking
15 in the future because I believe you believe in it
16 enough, that if you see this -- what happens when a
17 student is just not clicking in the program? Would
18 they be sent back to the traditional school? How do
19 you support that? And I know it may sound like the
20 same question, but it's really not in my mind. In my
21 mind I'm looking at sometimes charters have the
22 option of giving back maybe and maybe the public
23 school can have that opportunity. I know open-
24 enrollment public charters are public schools. And
25 so I guess my question is: what do you do to keep

1 them? How do you see keeping them? And I know this
2 would be the first year, first school in Arkansas. I
3 think that also is something that captured my
4 attention, which helped me see something different
5 here. But --

6 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. So, that's really
7 relevant. In my experience, you know, I taught high
8 school with Teach For America on the Mexican border
9 with a 55% dropout rate and 50 pregnant girls in one
10 year, and I didn't know what was happening. And
11 really that's -- what we're doing today is the
12 culmination of my many years of experience and the
13 folks that are here today to address that very issue.
14 Because we know sometimes things can seem brand-new
15 and shiny and fun, and then what happens six months
16 into the year? And let me just say that that is what
17 keeps me up at night, how do we make sure, because
18 this is rigorous not only for students but also for
19 the staff. Because they're starting something up in
20 the context of Fort Smith that has not been done
21 before and they have to change the mindset from --
22 into a student-centered environment. And students
23 are going to be required to build relationships with
24 adults, look them in the eyes; I mean, all of these
25 things that they may or may not be ready to do. So

1 in the case of when a student is struggling, I think
2 it again goes back to -- which is the reason why we
3 focus first and foremost on our network of support,
4 which is to have mentors in the industry to say,
5 "Hey, your academics might be frustrating you because
6 this is the fifth English class that you've struggled
7 with, but you're over here doing this with us." And
8 what we've seen with our Big Picture network is
9 testimonies of that over and over again where algebra
10 class was a drag and kids weren't even showing up
11 until, oops, all of a sudden I'm working in an IT
12 firm and there's a piece of that class that I need to
13 have for my project. So I think there's many things
14 that I could speak about. I would like to ask Ed to
15 come up again because he has so many stories of this
16 and I think they're important to share.

17 MR. EMMETT: See, the problem is I'm going to
18 have to ask you to take a leap with me a little bit
19 because when -- I've worked in my school for 19
20 years; we've been involved with Big Picture for five.
21 One of the issues we did have was when we were
22 pushing more challenging work on our students they
23 would escape, say "this is just too hard; I'm going
24 to go back to where I was." And then that was one of
25 our fears when we went with Big Picture; it was like

1 we are accelerating you; we're asking you to do more;
2 we're pushing outside your comfort zone. And we
3 actually saw our retention rates skyrocket as we were
4 expecting more from our students. I could not even
5 give you a personal story of where a kid said, "I
6 don't want to do this anymore; I want to go back."
7 It's actually the opposite, when we -- you know --
8 somebody said, "Well, would you go back?" And it's
9 like, "No, I would never," because that
10 personalization is real. You know, if a student is
11 like, "This isn't working for me," that entire
12 community will come together and say, "Well, what
13 will work for you? What can we shift? What can we
14 adjust?" So, I mean, it's a very responsive model
15 that we've implemented but, I mean, that's the huge
16 thing is we don't see kids leaving because of it.
17 And I think it goes back to that for some students
18 they feel it's the first school that cares about
19 them. So, I mean, that's where we just don't see
20 that. I mean, we do have students that transfer
21 because they move and it's usually that the kids are
22 sad that they're moving. But my experience is we
23 just don't see that. And I know network-wide we
24 don't see that quite often where they just do not buy
25 into the model because we really can adapt it to what

1 works. And, you know, when you're connecting a
2 student and saying, "What is your passion," and then
3 finding an internship that aligns with that, I mean,
4 you really can't beat that.

5 MS. BARNES: I'm finished.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, may I --

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, thank you. May I ask a
9 question of our business partner board members? Sir,
10 forgive me for not recalling your name.

11 MR. CLARK: Steve Clark.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Hi, Mr. Clark.

13 MR. CLARK: Hi. How are you?

14 DR. GOTCHER: I'm doing very well. I recently
15 heard a phrase that really stuck with me about it's
16 important in education that we cast a wider net. And
17 as a business partner, I've also been impressed with
18 what I've seen across our state, whether it's
19 conversion charter, open-enrollment, or just schools
20 of innovation, where they've been able to make those
21 regional partnerships and impact those kids before
22 they even leave high school. And so I'm very
23 encouraged with what I'm hearing. I'd like a story
24 or two or just a -- of some of the conversations
25 you've had with some of your colleagues in the

1 business community and how this will impact that
2 partnership and how kids' lives will be changed by
3 casting this wider net, if you will, sir.

4 MR. CLARK: Well, thank you for the opportunity
5 to share that with you. You know, Fort Smith is --
6 if you've not been there lately, you should come
7 sometime. It's a city that's got a rich history, but
8 is certainly in the midst of transition. Where we
9 struggle candidly is when we began to make the move
10 from a traditional heavy manufacturing city to more
11 soft manufacturing technology or health care we have
12 to attract a different kind of employee than
13 historically we've had to attract, a higher education
14 level. You know, I joke -- it's not a joke, so
15 tongue-in-cheek -- but in many meetings where I would
16 say that, you know, Fort Smith's number one export is
17 its best talent -- all right -- because for the last
18 15 years the first train out of town people that had
19 options exercised those options. Well, for us to be
20 a vibrant city, you know, like I like to joke,
21 there's no cavalry coming. Right? So once you kind
22 of cross the bridge intellectually and emotionally
23 and financially that, look, it's going to happen or
24 not happen with the resources that we have to bear,
25 well, the resources that we have to bear are our

1 talent. And from my perspective as a businessman
2 trying to grow a business I need not just anyone
3 who's going to up and move to Fort Smith, Arkansas,
4 believe it or not. All right; believe it or not.
5 You know, so what we have to do is cultivate
6 internally the people that are already attracted to
7 the city, have an affinity for the city, have a
8 loyalty to the city, and not just a certain
9 demographic of our city. We do not do as good a job
10 as we can in Fort Smith in making opportunity
11 available to the spectrum of our citizens. I know
12 personally that a lot of problems with charter
13 schools is, candidly, if I can speak candidly, is
14 that they become publicly funded private schools for
15 middle class white kids. I mean, that's what I read,
16 that's what I hear as a pushback. We sat down in our
17 city and said, you know, "We want to buck the
18 expectation and the trend in every conceivable way
19 because this is an exercise in the economics of our
20 human capital in Fort Smith. We need to provide the
21 least among us as much as we provide the most among
22 us." And Future School is one of the ways, one of
23 the critical ways that we can do that. So as a
24 businessman I don't want, you know, any of our
25 students to have to think they have to leave in order

1 to be successful in their life. But I'll tell you,
2 there's a huge delta between our employee -- our
3 employers, like myself, and the perspective, you
4 know, employees that will be in the market five or
5 six years from now. The internship element of this
6 to me is a game changer. I mean, if I can introduce
7 a 16-year old young man or young woman to want their
8 future -- what they perceive their future -- they
9 want it to be, or perhaps more importantly give them
10 a taste of it so they can decide that's not what they
11 want to be, then they can be more effective in their
12 collegiate years and not end up with a four-year
13 degree, \$40,000 in debt for something they never
14 wanted to do. So to me, this is a real opportunity
15 to expose our young citizens to what could be. I'm
16 not sure that helps but --

17 DR. GOTCHER: It did, Mr. Clark.

18 MR. CLARK: Thank you.

19 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you very much.

20 MR. CLARK: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other -- Dr. Saunders.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. I wanted to clarify what I
23 thought I heard on the certification. Did you say --
24 I may not have heard this correctly. Did you say all
25 of your certified staff -- sorry -- teachers,

1 principals, superintendents would either be certified
2 or enrolled in an alternative licensure program?

3 MS. FLANAGAN: The teachers. We have -- I have
4 -- I've been looking for mentoring to provide for
5 superintendents.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. But the superintendent,
7 what's the situation on the superintendent? Why
8 would you need a licensure waiver?

9 MS. FLANAGAN: The same reason, so that we can
10 find the best person for the job and not have
11 obstacles to that.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: So would they have any
13 educational background?

14 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. If you look at our --

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Is there any guidance there?

16 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. If you look at our
17 application under our job descriptions and
18 qualifications, the superintendent, which will also
19 be the principal at the beginning, will have a number
20 of years -- I can't remember exactly, but in
21 education.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: But they would not be working
23 towards licensure. Is that correct?

24 MS. FLANAGAN: Right.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: On transportation, there would be

1 no transportation provided. Correct?

2 MS. FLANAGAN: Actually, no. We have in our
3 budget a bus pass for every student in case they need
4 it.

5 DR. SAUNDERS: And why the request for 6-21-304
6 on making purchases?

7 MS. FLANAGAN: Let's see. Actually, after
8 further -- we've actually decided to rescind that
9 waiver.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: One other question. On section
11 7, the rules governing the requirements, website
12 postings, is that just a specific part of that,
13 asking for the waiver? I assume the salary schedule
14 is --

15 MR. WALTER: If I may address that, Madam Chair
16 -- yes, that's correct.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Just limited to salary schedules?

18 MR. WALTER: Exactly. As they are -- as you
19 know, there is being a waiver asked for that. May I
20 also address one of Dr. Saunders' other points
21 concerning the licensure? I just wanted to make it
22 clear that we want the waiver left in place on
23 licensure for teachers and administrators. Again, if
24 we have an individual or individuals who do not wish
25 to seek Arkansas licensure that there is the

1 flexibility to employ those individuals if they will
2 be a proper fit for the school.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. I understand that those
4 waivers would still be in place. But it would still
5 be under the idea that they would all either be
6 certified or enrolled in a certification program.
7 Correct?

8 MR. WALTER: Well, yes, given the caveat that
9 I've added. Yes, sir.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Which was?

11 MR. WALTER: Which was if there was an
12 individual or individuals who did not wish to pursue
13 Arkansas licensure then that waiver would be in
14 effect.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: So then the second one would be
16 they'd be either certified or enrolled in an
17 alternative program but not be inclusive of everyone.
18 Correct?

19 MS. WALTER: Well, not inclusive of those
20 individuals.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

23 DR. JONES: I'm really excited about the program
24 structure and getting kids into careers and not just
25 one set of kids. And I've seen this recently in

1 another conversion charter where you saw National
2 Honor Society kids in there and you have what we
3 might have considered traditional tech kids. If I'm
4 an advanced kid, I'm a GT kid, what in your program
5 -- what services -- what will attract me to your
6 school? And answer the same for a student, a non-
7 English speaking student, ELL student.

8 MS. FLANAGAN: Right. It goes back to the
9 personalization and the flexibility that we have
10 around that personal learning plan and the team that
11 designs it. For students that are looking for
12 enrichment we have -- that's, you know, one of the
13 strengths that we have about our seamless partnership
14 with the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith is
15 offering those concurrent credit classes for them;
16 but not just to send them to the college campus or
17 have them sit in the online -- a room at school and
18 take a concurrent credit class. But also part of
19 that mentoring and that advising that helps that
20 student ramp up the level of their internship so that
21 maybe their authentic assessment is more rigorous,
22 more a high level of professionalism for that
23 student, so you see that we're still trying to
24 address achievement academically and career-wise.
25 For English Language Learners [Spanish phrase is

1 spoken].

2 DR. JONES: You've proven your point, I think.
3 Thank you. One question and maybe I misinterpreted
4 this. As students that come in as a 10th grader --
5 if a student comes in as a 10th grader and they did
6 not have algebra 1 or geometry -- well, you would
7 have the 10th grade geometry. If they didn't have
8 the algebra class passed, what do you do for that
9 student?

10 MS. FLANGAN: The online course that --

11 DR. JONES: So they do have -- they can make up
12 credits through an online course?

13 MS. FLANAGAN: Right.

14 DR. JONES: Okay. That answers my question.
15 Thank you.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Point of order. Does she have to
17 translate that?

18 (COURT REPORTER SHAKING HER HEAD FROM SIDE TO
19 SIDE.)

20 DR. JONES: I don't know what was said but it
21 was very impressive.

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

24 MS. PFEFFER: Just one. And I noticed in one of
25 your waivers here you -- it was under Library/Media

1 Specialist -- you will utilize online libraries and
2 you refer to every student having a classroom-ready
3 device. I just want to make sure that that is
4 something that will be provided to all students?

5 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes.

6 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And will they all have the
7 same device? Are they responsible for it or -- can
8 you describe what kind of devices you're going to
9 have for all of your students?

10 MS. FLANAGAN: Sure. Each student will have a
11 fully equipped laptop with the software that the
12 teachers will choose as they develop curriculum.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And then I do want to go
14 back, and I'm not trying to beat a dead horse here,
15 but you're saying something that's a little bit
16 different from what Mr. Walter and Mr. Smith are
17 saying in terms of the licensure. And I just want to
18 -- I don't want us to come back and have to rehash
19 it. A few minutes ago, you made the statement that
20 all of your teachers would participate in an
21 alternate licensure program and that was not what we
22 had gathered from the application. So that's why I
23 think Dr. Saunders and I both kind of pressed you on
24 that and we're just trying to figure out what this is
25 going to look like.

1 MS. FLANAGAN: Right.

2 MS. PFEFFER: But when -- but a minute ago, Mr.
3 Walter said -- basically, his words are that they
4 would all be encouraged but that if someone didn't
5 want to they would not all go through a program --
6 but you had indicated they all would. So can you
7 just clarify that so that we can all know exactly
8 what's there? We realize you would want that waiver
9 to stay in place for the initial employment part.
10 But can you clarify what would happen then?

11 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. The ideal scenario is that
12 we have a complete waiver so that we can hire people
13 that do not choose to go through the licensure
14 process. That said, we are partners with educators
15 and we understand that if someone coming in without
16 experience teaching that they need to understand
17 classroom management and pedagogy and everything
18 else. So we want to get everyone trained but, again,
19 we don't want to cut ourselves off from accessing
20 real knowledge and expertise in the community.

21 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: On that topic, would you be
23 agreeable to setting a cap on the number of personnel
24 serving in typically licensed roles that are either
25 not certified or not enrolled in a certification type

1 program?

2 MS. FLANAGAN: I think it would depend on the
3 purpose of the cap and the nature of it.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: I want to make sure that we have
5 the personnel in front of the kids with the proper
6 training.

7 MS. FLANAGAN: Okay.

8 MS. SMITH: I think that's the purpose of the
9 waiver. And, obviously, this was a key issue in the
10 passage of the waiver law. They want a place for
11 everybody. It was one of the key innovation aspects
12 of a charter school, their ability to get waivers in
13 this area. And so setting a cap may very well cut
14 someone off. Let's say it's Mr. Clark who wants to
15 help teach a course but doesn't have an Arkansas
16 teacher certification and doesn't plan on going
17 through the arduous process of an alternative
18 learning environment. So we just think that it's the
19 flexibility that's intended for the whole entire
20 charter concept. So that's -- they've already
21 indicated clearly that it's not going to be their
22 preferred method, they're going to do everything they
23 can to avoid it, but if they need that flexibility
24 they want that flexibility in place.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions?

1 DR. JONES: I do have one.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

3 DR. JONES: I had this marked earlier. You
4 wanted to imbed oral communications within your
5 English classes. Is there any reason -- we have a
6 process for applying for imbedded courses. Can you
7 go through that process? And the reason I ask, it
8 just helps you insure that you set up those standards
9 correctly. It really is more of assistance than it
10 is to say "we're just going to teach these two
11 classes together."

12 MS. FLANAGAN: I'm going to see if Barbara is
13 still there because you're mentioning the specific
14 process and I know she is more equipped to answer
15 that. Barbara, if you are on the line?

16 MS. COX: I am on the line and thank you for the
17 question, Dr. Jones.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Barbara -- may I ask if
19 Barbara has been sworn in?

20 MS. COX: We are aware of the process and they
21 could follow the process. Because they're going to
22 be developing a 10th grade curriculum prior to the
23 opening of the school, they wanted to go ahead and
24 notice that they wanted to imbed oral communications
25 into 10th grade English. And so there may be

1 opportunities in the future where they come before
2 the Panel and request that other courses are
3 imbedded, but at this time the purpose was to let you
4 know that as they develop the 10th grade English
5 course they will include all of the curriculum
6 frameworks for oral communications. And I hope you
7 can hear me. Thank you for this opportunity.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Barbara -- I'm assuming
9 that was Barbara Hunter Cox?

10 MS. COX: Could you say that again?

11 MR. BRADBERRY: Barbara, state your last name
12 please.

13 MS. COX: Yes. This is Barbara Hunter Cox.

14 MR. BRADBERRY: And your position?

15 MS. COX: I'm director of Teaching and Learning
16 at APSRC.

17 MR. BRADBERRY: And, number two, have you been
18 sworn in?

19 MS. COX: Yes, sir, I was sworn in before the
20 original conversation.

21 MR. BRADBERRY: Thank you.

22 DR. JONES: And so I didn't understand her
23 response. Does that mean she's going to go through
24 the process to get approval from the State Board for
25 imbedded courses?

1 MS. FLANAGAN: Barbara, would you like to
2 continue your response?

3 MS. COX: I'd be glad to reply. I'm getting a
4 little time-lag from hearing you on the phone and
5 from seeing the visual picture. They are aware of
6 the ability to imbed a course by going through the
7 current process. Their purpose of putting this in
8 the application was because the school will be
9 developing curriculum for 10th grade prior to the
10 opening of the school year and they wanted to alert
11 you that as they write the 10th grade English
12 curriculum they will imbed oral communications into
13 that as part of the development process, and a
14 guarantee that they will make sure that course
15 covered all the curriculum frameworks and Common Core
16 standards for both of those two courses.

17 DR. JONES: It sounds to me like you're going to
18 go through the process. Is that what she's saying,
19 Kendra?

20 MS. CLAY: If I can add one thing, you'll see
21 this -- I don't know if it's on additional open-
22 enrollment or district conversion. But even the
23 schools that are asking for a waiver of a particular
24 standard for accreditation because they're going to
25 imbed, the curriculum unit has asked that they still

1 go through that process because they need to to get a
2 course code assigned. So they will still have to go
3 through the process with your division and then those
4 ultimately go to the State Board as a full package.

5 DR. JONES: Thank you. That's what I wanted to
6 make clear.

7 MS. FLANAGAN: Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions from
9 panel members? I have a question, Ms. Flanagan. You
10 alluded to the collaboration previously with UA-Fort
11 Smith and with the Fort Smith School District. Would
12 you talk briefly about what that collaboration looked
13 like?

14 MS. FLANAGAN: Sure. Well, the University of
15 Arkansas-Fort Smith came on as our very first partner
16 early on and essentially we were looking at sharing
17 resources for students -- in the town that we have,
18 we have to sort of work together -- and,
19 specifically, concurrent credit courses. So we have
20 already options that have been in place, whether it's
21 online or it's WATSI, where students are getting
22 concurrent and CT credit at the same time, as well as
23 a lot of extracurricular programs that we've looked
24 at. Right now, at the University of Arkansas-Fort
25 Smith we're interested in things like robotics and

1 those sorts of programs that would be innovative for
2 students. And then with the district it's been a
3 long-term conversation and process because we are
4 really, as we know, paving new path here. And we
5 just solidified their support for us; they really
6 came up with that. And upon approval, that's when
7 we're going to look at the details of sharing
8 professional development opportunities, reaching out
9 to students who could benefit from this model, and
10 then, of course, sharing resources around
11 extracurriculars and potentially services.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And what is your plan --
13 or have you started thinking about a plan for ongoing
14 communication with the district?

15 MS. FLANAGAN: Yes. A while ago, we began to
16 formulate an MOU and what that would look like. We
17 were looking at best practices. There are a few
18 other school districts that work with their charters.
19 But ideally it would be a steering committee, you
20 know, regular meetings, so that we understand what's
21 happening on both campuses.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions?
23 Ms. Clay, are there any issues related to waivers
24 that need to be addressed?

25 MS. CLAY: There is just one and it's the very

1 last waiver listed on the waiver sheet. These are
2 waivers regarding student discipline policies. These
3 are routinely granted by the Panel. The applicant
4 said that they would comply with all state laws, so
5 the question would be whether they still need that
6 waiver. If they would just say yes or no, I think
7 that will be sufficient.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Flanagan?

9 MR. WALTER: I think what was intended, was
10 intended there, is -- again, as the application
11 points out, there will be a discipline policy put in
12 place that may not be exactly per 6-18-501. But as
13 the text points out, it will be -- and we know this
14 is a concern of this panel -- that it will provide
15 complete due process safeguards all the way up
16 through the process, full hearings through the board
17 level. So I apologize if the wording was not what it
18 should have been, but that is the intent. And so,
19 yes, we would like to maintain that waiver.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Does that clarify
21 everything for Ms. Clay?

22 MS. CLAY: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional
24 conversation? Then I will -- Ms. Flanagan, do you
25 have any final remarks?

1 MS. FLANAGAN: No. I'm just standing at
2 attention.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Then I will entertain a
4 motion.

5 DR. JONES: I'll make a motion that we approve
6 the Future School application for open-enrollment
7 charter.

8 MS. BARNES: Second.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I have a motion by Dr.
10 Jones and a second by Ms. Barnes to approve the
11 application for the Future School of Fort Smith, Fort
12 Smith, Arkansas. Any discussion?

13 DR. SAUNDERS: I do.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: I still have a concern over the
16 licensure. I can support this decision; the
17 licensure I have a hold-up with. I think that a
18 school is only -- or any organization is only as
19 strong as it's personnel. And I think especially in
20 education there's training that needs to be done,
21 even if they do not already have that when they start
22 day-one, but in that process. I would be more
23 comfortable with the yes vote on this issue if you
24 would be willing to report, say, annually to the
25 Charter Panel or the Charter Unit -- a report just

1 showing the percentage of classes and personnel that
2 are certified and working toward certification and
3 those that are not.

4 MR. SMITH: I think that is amenable to the
5 applicant. And just, you know, to further reiterate
6 the point -- obviously, this board, this agency is
7 familiar with the waiver concept. The Commissioner
8 himself fits the waiver notion; the recent
9 appointment to Little Rock School District fits the
10 waiver notion. So I think you understand what we're
11 trying to accomplish with regards to talent and where
12 we're trying to find that talent. But I think your
13 request is acceptable.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other discussion? So
15 I have a motion on the table. All those in favor?

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? Motion
18 carried. If you'll take just a moment to write your
19 reasons, then we will read those for the record.

20 MS. FLANAGAN: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. I voted for the motion. And
23 I was extremely encouraged by the regional
24 partnerships that will occur as a result of this
25 charter school and the potential retention of human

1 capital. And a side note, Mr. Clark, I wrote the
2 word "human capital" just seconds before you did, so
3 that really made a strong connection with me. But,
4 furthermore, the potential retention of human capital
5 while they're still in school -- so those connections
6 are very important to me. Further, I believe this
7 will improve the economic picture of the Fort Smith
8 community. That's the reason I voted for the motion.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Jones.

10 DR. JONES: I approved the motion because we
11 very much need a real model that's practiced for
12 Personalized Learning Plans. I believe with the
13 agreements and relationships they have with
14 apprenticeships and with higher ed. in the area they
15 have a legitimate plan that can be successful. We
16 have high expectations.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Lester.

18 MR. LESTER: I think the proposed charter has
19 all the components in place, especially like the
20 advisory structure that they've set up, as well as
21 the business partnerships to meet the goals that
22 they've set aside in their application.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Liwo.

24 MS. LIWO: I voted for. And what I really liked
25 is just the Personalized Learning Plan followed with

1 the internship opportunities and the advisors
2 throughout the entire process. I think this is going
3 to give students a lot of opportunities to explore
4 what they think they're interested in without paying
5 for it in advance and then learning that they don't
6 actually like what they're doing.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Pfeffer.

8 MS. PFEFFER: I voted for the motion. The
9 community support and relationships is evidence that
10 students will have a unique opportunity and a
11 detailed big picture plan for personalized learning
12 supports. Our goal is every student having the
13 opportunity to be successful. And if I can add just
14 something to consider, the ADE actually has an
15 agreement with E-STEM charter school for a residency
16 program that they are working through right now that
17 is a path for their non-licensed teachers to be
18 licensed. So I would really like the opportunity to
19 talk with Ms. Flanagan about what they're doing, and
20 it may be that it can meet all of our goals to insure
21 that these educators that are taking on a very unique
22 challenge would have an opportunity to really get
23 that preparation. So I didn't think about that until
24 just a minute ago.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Pfeffer.

1 Mr. Rogers.

2 MR. ROGERS: I approved it a lot like for
3 everybody else, because of the community involvement
4 and support and the ability of the individualized
5 learning plans, internships, community collaboration,
6 and the mentors and advisors to help them to be
7 successful.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I voted for it. I believe
10 there's community interest and support for the
11 proposal and I thought there were clear guidelines
12 and expectations.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Barnes.

14 MS. BARNES: I voted yes. I believe this
15 charter is an example of what can be accomplished to
16 level the playing field for all students while
17 providing the opportunity for real world experiences.
18 In short, I am a Big Picture person and this concept
19 inspires hope. The details have been thoroughly
20 thought out with the end goal in mind.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Ms.
22 Flanagan. I would encourage you, because you have a
23 unique opportunity here -- I would let you know that
24 our State Board always loves to hear good ideas and
25 they love a video that summarizes those good things

1 that are happening in schools. Our Commissioner puts
2 out a monthly video and he highlights students that
3 are doing unique and wonderful things in the world of
4 education. So there are a lot of opportunities to
5 tell your story and I hope that you will begin to
6 think about how you tell that story from the
7 beginning so that others can learn from it. So,
8 thank you.

9 MS. FLANAGAN: Thank you. And thank you on
10 behalf of the Future School team and the community at
11 Fort Smith.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Congratulations.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations.

14 Board, will you be okay with a 10-minute break?

15 (BREAK: 1:40-1:55 P.M.)

16 A-5: HEARING OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
17 APPLICATION: REDFIELD TRI-COUNTY CHARTER SCHOOL, REDFIELD,
18 ARKANSAS

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll reconvene action
20 agenda number 5, Hearing of the Open-Enrollment
21 Public Charter School Application for Redfield Tri-
22 County Charter School, Redfield, Arkansas. Ms. Boyd,
23 you are recognized.

24 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Redfield
25 Tri-County Charter School is a proposed open-

1 enrollment public charter school to be located within
2 the White Hall School District. The sponsoring
3 entity is Redfield Tri-County Charter School. The
4 applicant is requesting to serve students in grades
5 5-12 with a maximum enrollment of 400, beginning in
6 the 2016-17 school year. The applicant has notified
7 affected districts of this proposed public charter
8 school. The ADE staff reviewed the application and
9 concerns were shared with the applicant for response.
10 The application, the ADE evaluation, and the
11 applicant's responses are included for review by the
12 Charter Authorizing Panel.

13 And on behalf of Redfield Tri-County Charter
14 School we will start with Amanda Knight who -- excuse
15 me, I always do that -- Amanda Kight who is on the
16 board of directors for the school.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If all the representatives
18 for Redfield Tri-County Charter School will stand and
19 all those in opposition please stand and raise your
20 right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the
21 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
22 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

23 (ALL WITNESSES ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Kight,
25 you're recognized.

1 MS. KIGHT: Good afternoon. Today, I will be
2 representing -- I'm sorry; before I get started,
3 where is my -- okay. Sorry. All right. Today, I'll
4 be representing the Redfield Tri-County Charter
5 School board of directors and the families and
6 students in the tri-county area that want to have a
7 voice and a choice in their child's education. Our
8 school will be located at 101 School Street, in
9 Redfield, Arkansas. We believe that we'll be pulling
10 primarily from three school districts: White Hall,
11 Sheridan, and Pulaski County. RTCCS will focus on
12 core character values and community service and will
13 strive to empower students to change not only their
14 lives but to change the lives of those around them
15 and the community in which they live. RTCCS will be
16 a small structured learning environment. We will
17 have an extended day to offer students tutoring,
18 mentoring, and the opportunity to participate in club
19 participation. RTCCS will focus on closing the
20 achievement, learning, and opportunity gaps. Our
21 RTCCS curriculum will be aligned to the Arkansas
22 framework and will meet Common Core state standards.
23 It will be STEM infused and will require our students
24 to engage in critical thinking, enhance their
25 research skills, and work on communication skills.

1 For the innovations at Redfield Tri-County
2 Charter -- this year when we attended the workshop
3 with Mary Perry and Alexandra there was a
4 representative from the University of Arkansas there
5 and she spoke to our group. And believe it or not,
6 she actually talked about our school. She said small
7 school environment is an innovation; no one really
8 has that much anymore. So, one of our major
9 innovations is that we are intentionally going to be
10 a small school environment. We are not going to plan
11 -- our long-term plan is not to become, you know, a
12 very large high school. It's not. We believe that
13 there is a segment of student population that would
14 benefit from a small school setting. So in addition
15 to our small school setting, we're going to have an
16 extended school day because we believe that we will
17 have students that are behind and they will need
18 extra time to get them caught back up. And we will
19 focus on character and community service. One of the
20 things that we are going to start -- it's been a
21 dream of mine for three years now -- it's an
22 organization called EACH, Education and Community
23 Heroes; very similar to like a PTO but it adds the
24 components of the students and community members,
25 alongside teachers and parents working together. And

1 so EACH will be the program that we'll utilize as our
2 parent communication and participation vehicle.

3 The education need -- these are the three scores
4 for the three middle schools closest to where we are
5 and these are the enrollments of those schools.
6 Sheridan and White Hall are performing average/above
7 average, where Fuller Middle School obviously is
8 struggling. All of them have over 400 students in
9 their middle school. Our whole school when we're
10 fully at capacity will only be 400 students. If you
11 look at our area, the poverty rate for each of these
12 schools are 44.44% for White Hall, 47.48% for
13 Sheridan, and 69.72% for Fuller. But the reported
14 poverty rates for the elementary schools that feed
15 into these middle schools are: Hardin Elementary is
16 at 50.42%; Bates Elementary is at 83.29%; and East
17 End Intermediate is at 56.55%. And these are the
18 elementary schools that feed into there. And it's a
19 conundrum as to why is that percent so high in the
20 elementaries and then it drops off so much at middle
21 school. And I've read a lot of material and no one
22 really knows the one-and-only reason for that to
23 happen, but some of it could be that maybe the
24 children just don't want to fill out the forms and
25 they're a little bit embarrassed. Because middle

1 school/junior high is when I noticed my children
2 wanted to kind of separate from me. They wouldn't
3 tell me when the awards were going to be given; you
4 know, they didn't want me to be there. They don't
5 want you to be involved, and so you kind of have to
6 work at being involved. And so I think maybe it's a
7 stigma that they didn't want associated with, so
8 maybe they don't get their parents to fill out the
9 paperwork. I'm not sure what it is. But our small
10 school setting will let us take these kids that are
11 economically disadvantaged and who may have fallen
12 behind because of that and have relationships with
13 them that are not available in a larger school
14 setting. We'll be able to get to know that student
15 as a person and we'll get to know their strengths and
16 weaknesses. We will encourage them to attend
17 tutoring sessions in the morning that are actually
18 optional. These tutoring sessions in the morning
19 that we are going to have are going to be driven by
20 our students that are strong in different subjects.
21 We will have staff available to keep -- you know --
22 to monitor that, but we will hopefully get our
23 students to actually teach others. Because my father
24 always told me the way you really know -- the one
25 true way you know you know something is that you can

1 teach it to someone else. So that not only
2 reinforces for the child doing the tutoring; it helps
3 that child communicate with the person that is
4 struggling, and hopefully that will even get a
5 relationship, a peer relationship going there so that
6 we can build on that.

7 In the ESEA reports for these three school
8 districts, White Hall overall for literacy was
9 82.55%, but the economically disadvantaged percent
10 for White Hall was 73.81%. So you can see that's
11 almost a 9% difference between the overall test
12 performance on this test and then the economically
13 disadvantaged. For math it was also about a 10%
14 discrepancy between overall score for White Hall and
15 for economically disadvantaged. Sheridan, there was
16 about a 6% for literacy and about a 6% for math in
17 those same kind of scores. Pulaski County Special
18 School District, there was about a 7% for literacy
19 difference between their overall scores and what the
20 economically disadvantaged kids were able to score,
21 and there's about a 10% difference in math.

22 A study from the National Center for Educational
23 Statistics indicates low income students fail to
24 graduate at five times the rate of middle income
25 families. Based on the data for 2014, the

1 disadvantaged students -- I've gone through this --
2 the three school districts are scoring approximately
3 10% lower, the facts I just went over, at White Hall,
4 about 6% at Sheridan, and somewhere between 7% and
5 10% at Pulaski County Special School District. The
6 graduation rates for those schools, for the school
7 districts that we'll be pulling students from mainly:
8 White Hall's overall graduation rate, 86.56%; White
9 Hall's economically disadvantaged, 76.39%. So, there
10 again, about a 10% discrepancy between the overall
11 and the economically disadvantaged students.
12 Sheridan's overall is 83.67% graduation rate;
13 economically disadvantaged is 79.02%. About a 4%
14 discrepancy there. Pulaski County Special School
15 District, 72.89%, with economically disadvantaged
16 students graduating at a rate of 67.61%.

17 In this paper I found that was written by Jay
18 Greene and Marcus Winters, entitled The Effect of
19 Residential School Choice on Public High School
20 Graduation, it states that "states could improve
21 graduation rates by decreasing the size of their
22 districts and giving parents greater choice in the
23 school system to educate their children." We believe
24 that RTCCS will provide a choice for our families in
25 this area that they don't have right now, and they're

1 probably not going to have it because the CMO's --
2 it's not as profitable; they can't make their budget
3 work. You know, we've actually talked to a couple,
4 and with a small school setting it's very difficult
5 because you are limiting yourself because you're
6 limiting your student population. So we understand
7 the challenge that we will be having. Our group,
8 when we first came -- this is our third year in a row
9 to come -- our first year, everybody questioned about
10 whether or not we'd be sustainable. Here we are and
11 it's year-three and we're still here; we're still
12 fighting for the opportunity to provide this to
13 students. We were questioned about what was our
14 motivation; we're only motivated by, you know,
15 helping Redfield be more economically successful.
16 Well, that may be true but the only thing with that
17 being true is it has to be a high-performing
18 successful school for that to actually happen. So if
19 I have a high-performing successful school, my
20 students are happy, my families are happy, and then,
21 yes, Redfield might benefit from that. So we are not
22 motivated by the economics of it. We believe that
23 there is a segment of that population out there that
24 currently is falling through the cracks. You know,
25 if you look at the percent of those that are not

1 graduating I believe that can be lessened by a small
2 school setting, getting those kids engaged, because
3 at our place we're going to have open participation
4 in any sporting or activities that we have. So
5 instead of competing for 15 or 20 spots on a
6 basketball team anybody that wants to play, they're
7 going to play as long as their grades hold up.
8 Because in our school, just like at my house when I
9 was growing up with my parents, if the grades started
10 falling sports got cut off. So that's a motivation
11 for you to do well in school. It's a privilege for
12 you to actually get to participate. But you're
13 involved and you feel like you're a member of the
14 group. Everyone gets involved. We'll be a place for
15 everyone.

16 Here's just a few little shots of the school,
17 inside it. We do have lockers available. One of the
18 things that we've done in the past two years --
19 because our first year financial concerns crept in;
20 that's one of the reasons that we were denied. So
21 since funding will be limited, because of our
22 commitment to having a small school setting, I wanted
23 to show you guys what we had done the past two years.
24 We have started getting our library prepared. We've
25 talked with a couple of retired librarians from

1 around the area and we've been working on that. We
2 have a cafeteria that has tables and chairs donated
3 by community members. We have passed a State Health
4 inspection for that. We have a gym; we have an
5 auditorium; we have a stage; we've got a lot of the
6 components, a lot of the ingredients it needs to take
7 to make a school. And we've been building up on that
8 to help our financial situation. Here's a picture of
9 the inside of our gym. That gym has seen many a
10 basketball games on its court. It's old, but it has
11 -- if you're kind of, you know, nostalgic for the
12 good ol' days, it's an old-school basketball gym.
13 You kind of have to know where the sweet spots are on
14 the floor and that kind of gives you a home court
15 advantage. Our site sits on -- oh, I'm sorry; this
16 is the kitchen. We do have a fully equipped kitchen;
17 we have a stove; we have a dishwasher; we have
18 serving trays; we have the heat table. It's all in
19 there for us to use. The tables and chairs are
20 there. We don't have to get any of that. That's
21 there for us to use already. We'll not have to buy
22 that out of our budget.

23 The green space -- the site that we are going to
24 be located on has eight acres of land that's with it.
25 And you can tell we have some really big, tall oak

1 trees on our property. It would be a ideal
2 environment for kids to get outside and do P.E.; they
3 could do nature walks; they could -- we could do
4 science experiments outside; we could have soccer; we
5 could have volleyball -- I mean, not volleyball -- we
6 could have kickball; lots of things that we can do
7 outside. We have eight acres that our kids can enjoy
8 while they attend the school.

9 The school governance will be by the Redfield
10 Tri-County Charter School board of directors. They
11 will have the final decision-making authority for
12 RTCCS in the areas of finance and purchasing and
13 hiring and firing of the school director and the
14 staff.

15 In conclusion, to kind of sum it all up in
16 pictures because pictures say a lot instead of words
17 sometimes that get confused -- there's our building,
18 our auditorium. It does have a stage, lockers. We
19 have school desks; we have over 200 desks that were
20 purchased and donated to us by a community member.
21 We have several of the rooms already set up with the
22 desks in them, with a teacher's desk in there. We
23 don't have to buy any of that furniture; it's already
24 there. The bottom middle picture is behind our gym.
25 It's actually set up as a football field. Our

1 bleachers are already there. It does have a small
2 scoreboard there with it. And outside, in front of
3 the school, we do have the backstop there for when we
4 play softball or kickball.

5 We have done a lot of work in the past two
6 years. We are passionate; we're committed. We
7 believe there are -- we see the process in education,
8 not only in Arkansas but in our nation. Kids, when
9 they're in high school, don't see the long-term
10 results of deciding to drop out. Dropping out is
11 easy. It's hard to motivate them to stay in. In a
12 small school, a small town -- I don't know how many
13 of you grew up in that situation -- everybody knows
14 you, everybody knows your momma, everybody knows your
15 grandparents. It's hard to be doing wrong and
16 somebody not call you on it. Our students will be
17 held accountable. We will have high expectations. I
18 have a son with autism and probably the most
19 important thing I learned -- he was attending Jenkins
20 Memorial in Pine Bluff and his teacher told me, "He
21 will do exactly what you expect of him. If you
22 expect a little, you're going to get a little. If
23 you expect a lot, you're going to get a lot." And
24 that was eye-opening. And it seems so basic, you
25 know, why didn't I think of that. I should have

1 known. But I was enabling him to stay where he was
2 by helping him. And so when I started demanding from
3 him what I demanded from his older brother, he's a
4 totally different child now at age 17, drives a car,
5 in regular classes at school, in Beta Club, basically
6 an A and B student. He works hard every day to do
7 that. I expect it. He knows I expect it. He does
8 not want to disappoint me. Our whole school picture,
9 the vision that we have for what we're going to offer
10 these students is exactly that: expect a lot, get a
11 lot. Everybody feels like they're a part of a
12 family; everybody is included. Small environment,
13 everybody is held accountable.

14 One of the main points I also want to make is
15 these are big thick applications; mistakes can be
16 made; mistakes have been made; you know, mistakes
17 will always be made. You know, it's a big, long
18 process to go through. Hours and hours of time is
19 spent on this. And if you're looking for a reason to
20 deny somebody it's in there. What we're asking you
21 to do is look for a reason why to approve somebody,
22 somebody that is committed, passionate, I'm-in-it-
23 with-you. We can help. We are willing to take on
24 that challenge of having to have those financial
25 headaches. In our situation it will come down to

1 need and want. We'll pay for what we need, and if
2 there's stuff that you want then you're going to have
3 to work for it. We're going to have to depend on our
4 community, which has stood by us. Two years later,
5 they still come to every fundraiser. We make money.
6 We support the community center. We keep it up and
7 running and available. They've donated desks;
8 they've donated furniture in the cafeteria. We have
9 community support. A lot of the charters that you
10 have don't have that. We have that, so we have that
11 pillar holding us up already.

12 So look for reasons to approve us. We
13 understand the process. We may be weak in some
14 areas. We know that ADE has the expertise. I have
15 talked to Mary Perry and Alexandra so much, I know
16 that. We know you're a resource that we can count
17 on. You have the experience and the knowledge and
18 you can help us be successful because we will not let
19 you down. We are hard-working and persevering.
20 We're still here year-three. We're hoping for a
21 better outcome this year. Thank you.

22 Paul Byrd would like to come up and say --

23 MR. BYRD: Good afternoon. I'm Paul Byrd; I'm
24 an attorney here in Little Rock. I grew up in
25 Redfield. I was educated there. Mandy's parents

1 were my teachers. I know the educational abilities
2 that this group has. They have the experience to
3 build a curriculum. They even know how to get a bus
4 route organized and maintained. They've been in this
5 community. I wanted to speak to you a little bit
6 about why I think -- and it was exciting to see this
7 prior group before us reaching out and doing
8 something new. I think there's an opportunity to do
9 something new here. And I guess if I could just put
10 you in my experience and my time growing up in the
11 Redfield community, what was so bizarre is that four
12 miles away was another community, Hensley, Woodson,
13 and we had the Oren community, which is the east
14 Grant County, southern Pulaski. Because of
15 artificial boundaries they went to school 15 miles
16 that way, we went to school 15 miles that way. And I
17 graduated with -- from my Redfield school experience
18 with like 30 people and we lost half of them before
19 we got to graduation. And those ones that dropped
20 out were not unintelligent. It's as I've grown up
21 from teenage years to 20's, my 30's, my 40's, and now
22 I'm in my 50's, I still run into these people who are
23 just as intelligent as I was, but they didn't have
24 the opportunities. And what divided this area was
25 their economic opportunities. My parents focused on

1 education and we pushed it. But if you'll just drive
2 from Wrightsville, Arkansas to Redfield, Arkansas, on
3 the old highway, you will see a group of people that
4 as far as -- my non-educational professional opinion,
5 but my growing up in the world of education, they've
6 been underserved. The southern part of Pulaski
7 County, the eastern part of Grant County, and the
8 northern part of Jefferson County have sat there with
9 little children getting up in the mornings and
10 catching buses and driving north and catching buses
11 and driving south. I think there's an opportunity
12 for a socioeconomic impact that crosses racial lines.
13 And you've got a wonderful motivated group of
14 professional educators that are ready to reach out
15 into these under-developed areas and give them a leg-
16 up. When I was a child we dreamed that -- the school
17 books, textbooks, told us that development was going
18 to come from Little Rock to Pine Bluff and that
19 corridor was going to be an economic corridor. We
20 have NCTR down there. We have water rail highways.
21 I've talked to economic development people, and they
22 say, "You have everything in the world here to grow
23 and develop. What's the problem?" I said, "My
24 opinion, the problem has been that the
25 Woodson/Hensley area has been underserved." They

1 used to have a Levi plant there, used to have an
2 Allis Chalmers plant there. We've lost that
3 corridor. It should have grown from that time period
4 forward. But I think people saw that as an
5 uneducated workforce with underprivileged people in
6 it and it was too much economic distress. The Delta
7 has died. We've been trying to develop the Delta.
8 I've been very involved with other people who are
9 trying to do the same. I don't think the Delta will
10 ever grow from Pine Bluff to Little Rock, but it
11 might grow from Little Rock to Pine Bluff. Believe
12 it or not, this side of the river where Woodson and
13 Hensley and Redfield are is the Delta. It is where
14 the Delta ends. The Delta comes from the Mississippi
15 River and crosses over the Arkansas River and hits
16 right there. I think you've got an opportunity to
17 create a Delta corridor that could bring growth with
18 an educated workforce back down to Pine Bluff, and
19 then Pine Bluff can starburst this development back
20 out into the Delta. But it's not coming south going
21 north; it may come north going south, and it could
22 start right here. As modest as our efforts may have
23 seemed, I think we've got an opportunity to make a
24 great change in that area. And as far as funding and
25 curriculum problems, they can develop a curriculum.

1 I've seen them for 50 years do it. Funding, we're in
2 a catch-22. We have people say, "We want to help you
3 but we want to see you get the charter." We're like,
4 "Well, we can't get the charter until we get the
5 funding." We're in a catch-22. If you want to give
6 us a conditional charter on funding -- but there are
7 people like me and other professionals in the area
8 that want to help, be involved, fundraise, whatever
9 it takes to get it going, but we've got to get going.
10 Thank you for your time.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Byrd. Is
12 there anyone here to speak in opposition?

13 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Kight, you have five
15 additional minutes.

16 MS. KIGHT: I won't take all five minutes. But
17 I just did want to reiterate one thing that Paul did
18 touch on. The board members that we have -- we
19 probably have between -- around 200 years experience
20 teaching. I still -- I am 50 years old. And my mom
21 and dad have been around in that city, around
22 Redfield, around that area their whole lives. And
23 they will still run into people on the street and
24 say, "Oh, today is so-and-so's birthday," one of
25 their kids that they taught 50 years ago. Okay.

1 That's the kind of environment we want to try to
2 build for these children that are being dropped
3 through the cracks. We want them to know someone
4 knows them, someone knows their name, someone may
5 actually even know their birthday. My mom is -- I
6 don't know how she does it; she remembers everybody's
7 birthday. I mean, she can talk about kids, you know,
8 and it's amazing to me. But that's the kind of
9 environment we want. Once you get them in that
10 environment -- I agree; we're going to start small.
11 Are we going to be a state-of-the-art charter school
12 right out of the door? No, we're not. Are we going
13 to be something that can be built on? Yes, we will.
14 We will start small and work. Okay. We're hard
15 workers, we're committed. We're not going to get a
16 charter and then drop off. We want to make a
17 difference in those lives. We want to give somebody
18 an opportunity that they don't have right now. I've
19 seen too many of the kids that my kids grew up with
20 that didn't make it to graduation day, you know. And
21 that to me is one of the worst things that can happen
22 to a kid because they don't realize at that time what
23 a life-changing decision that they are making. They
24 don't -- they're not there to realize that. So
25 hopefully we can take those kids and intervene. Can

1 we save them all? No. But if we save five a year,
2 wouldn't that be awesome. If we save two a year,
3 wouldn't that be awesome. You know, we understand
4 it's a challenge that we're taking up but we are up
5 for the challenge. As long as you're willing to work
6 with us, you will have a winning partnership. That's
7 all I have.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. All right.
9 Let's start with panel questions. Ms. Pfeffer, you
10 look like you're ready.

11 MS. PFEFFER: I am. Ms. Kight, first of all, I
12 do want to tell you that I can identify with the
13 communities you're describing. I didn't grow up in
14 quite as small a community, but our small community
15 was surrounded by very small schools. And so I do
16 understand everything you said. And also I hope that
17 everybody feels like we don't approach this as "we've
18 got to find something wrong here," because we really
19 do -- I would love -- I do not want to be a barrier
20 for your application. We just feel the
21 responsibility to insure that any decision we make
22 regarding kids is ultimately going to be the best
23 decision for them. So I want you to know the
24 questions that we ask, if we sometimes get pretty
25 aggressive with questions, it's not that we are

1 looking for problems for you. But what I want -- and
2 these are some things that we may need to think
3 through -- just starting with the workforce that
4 you're going to be trying to bring in, it looks like
5 from your application you are projecting to need
6 three teachers. Is that correct?

7 MS. KIGHT: No, ma'am.

8 MS. PFEFFER: Regular classroom?

9 MS. KIGHT: No, ma'am. Ten. Ten teachers.

10 MS. PFEFFER: I'm looking at your budget report.

11 MS. KIGHT: Yes, ma'am. And it says 10 teachers
12 and four aids.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Then I'm looking at the
14 wrong page. That would make me feel a lot better if
15 it were 10.

16 MS. KIGHT: Ten teachers, four aids first year.

17 MS. PFEFFER: Ten teachers, four aids. Okay.

18 MS. KIGHT: First year.

19 MS. PFEFFER: For grades 5 through 8. Okay.

20 And special ed.?

21 MS. KIGHT: One special ed. teacher --

22 MS. PFEFFER: One special ed. Okay.

23 MS. KIGHT: -- full-time. One counselor full-
24 time.

25 MS. PFEFFER: And with those 10 they would be

1 teaching grades 5 through 8, so that middle level.
2 They would be looking at -- to be highly qualified.
3 You've asked for a waiver from the licensure
4 requirements but in those core areas they would need
5 to be highly qualified.

6 MS. KIGHT: Yes.

7 MS. PFEFFER: So you would have teachers that
8 would have to be highly qualified in English, math,
9 science, social studies, music, art, and so I'm just
10 trying to think through whether or not your staffing
11 is going to be feasible. Because if you have --
12 depending on the number of students you have you'll
13 need to have teachers with that extra expertise. So
14 I'm going to think about it for just a minute on
15 those numbers --

16 MS. KIGHT: Okay.

17 MS. PFEFFER: -- since that's there.

18 MS. KIGHT: Yeah.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Because that three really had
20 concerned me there.

21 MS. KIGHT: I was saying, "Well, three, wait a
22 minute."

23 MS. PFEFFER: Yeah. Yeah. I was just looking
24 at, I guess, a sheet in there that wasn't -- okay.
25 So then, going to another question, you talked about

1 EACH is --

2 MS. KIGHT: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. PFEFFER: -- your -- is that your
4 philosophy? Is that the --

5 MS. KIGHT: It is a group that we're going to
6 start and that will be our vehicle for parent
7 participation, student participation, and community
8 involvement. We will work with our community members
9 on different projects that may need to be done in
10 different outlying communities that our students come
11 from. We will look for, you know, ways to engage our
12 children, our students, with community members in the
13 Hensley, Wrightsville, East End, Oren, all those
14 areas outlying around that students will be coming
15 from. We also hope that our community outreach will
16 go the other way where that if a member of the
17 community has a profession that some of our students
18 are interested in that we can get them in as a guest
19 speaker; that they'll be willing to come in and speak
20 to our children, and maybe they would even offer
21 shadowing for a day or something. I know Dr. Conley
22 Byrd is a vet. I know him well because I have many
23 pets, and he lives right there in Redfield and has a
24 veterinary office right there in Redfield. I have no
25 doubt that if I talk to Conley and I had a student

1 that was interested in becoming a vet that I couldn't
2 arrange something with Conley for them to come and
3 work with him for a day or something, just so they
4 get that. We totally liked -- loved the Future
5 School before us; that's our vision with money.
6 Okay. That's what we want to do but on a much
7 smaller scale, and it's going to have to be scaled
8 back differently. And ours isn't going to have the
9 bells and whistles that they get to have because we
10 don't have the financial backing that they have. The
11 area that we're in is not as big as Fort Smith, but
12 we can do the same kind of things in a much small-
13 scale back-way. We have dentists, we have
14 veterinarians, we have engineers. I work in IT; I'm
15 a computer programmer. I do system administration.
16 I've done that in my career. I have 28 years
17 experience. I have information I can share and I'm
18 already committed. I have friends in the IT field
19 and I can get them to volunteer some of their time.

20 MS. PFEFFER: But you've not yet gotten that --
21 you've not yet gotten a formalized plan where you
22 know these people are going to be interacting in
23 these ways with your students?

24 MS. KIGHT: Oh, I have five that -- you know --
25 Dr. Byrd has said he would. I can't -- I'm horrible

1 with names. I'm sorry; I should have had the list.
2 But there's a dentist that has said they would; I've
3 said I would; I have a cousin that's an engineer. We
4 have several different people we've talked to that
5 have committed to participating in our efforts.

6 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

7 MS. KIGHT: Dr. Massey. Okay. Sorry.

8 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

9 MS. KIGHT: They thought of it; not me.

10 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Well, I'm going to let
11 somebody else ask a few questions.

12 MS. KIGHT: Okay.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

14 MS. BARNES: Well, actually, I had a question
15 about EACH as well because I was -- you know -- I
16 love the concept and I -- but I didn't see a detailed
17 plan of how that's set up. And so I just wanted to
18 hear --

19 MS. KIGHT: Right.

20 MS. BARNES: -- you know, is this something that
21 you would have monthly interactions? Is this
22 something --

23 MS. KIGHT: I would hope to start out with at
24 least a monthly meeting. Okay. And then depending
25 on how it grows or which direction it takes and how

1 much involvement we get, maybe it becomes a weekly or
2 maybe it becomes every two weeks or maybe it has to
3 go to every-other-month. It kind of depends on the
4 project that's going on and who you need and when
5 they're available, because not everybody might could
6 make it at certain times. So we'll have to have some
7 scheduling issues. But I believe it's a concept that
8 will work. I know you have at least 10 or 15 people
9 right here in the community that will be community
10 members on it, because the board of directors -- the
11 members of the board of directors do not have any
12 children that will be attending the school, but we're
13 all committed to the effort. So we would participate
14 in that and hopefully that will just be one of those
15 things that we can leverage and take off as we get to
16 know our students too. Because the first year it's
17 probably not going to be as big -- we'll have to
18 build on it because we're going to have to get to
19 know our students, what are they interested in, who
20 do we know that does that, how can we get that
21 contact. And that will have to be -- so the first
22 year it will be slower; I agree with that. But
23 that's the vision that we'd grow into is that
24 everybody can be a member of each -- and they can
25 know that they can make a difference. And they can

1 learn about different occupations through that; they
2 can do community service through that. You know, to
3 me it just -- the possibilities of it are very
4 exciting.

5 MS. BARNES: Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Kight, can you stand
7 closer to the mic or pull it closer to you?

8 MS. KIGHT: Is that better?

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're just having a little
10 trouble hearing you.

11 MS. KIGHT: I'm sorry. Is that better?

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's perfect. Thank
13 you.

14 MS. BARNES: The other thing I -- you know -- I
15 was reading through and I looked here, I believe a
16 member of the team had asked for some additional
17 information on how you would discuss growth
18 expectations. And I was trying to visualize how --
19 are you familiar with what I'm asking you?

20 MS. KIGHT: I think you're probably talking
21 about the contingency plan, in case we don't have
22 enough students.

23 MS. BARNES: Right. No, I'm talking more in
24 terms of student performance --

25 MS. KIGHT: Okay.

1 MS. BARNES: -- and if you have students coming
2 in who are behind grade level --

3 MS. KIGHT: Right.

4 MS. BARNES: -- and how you would assess them
5 and how you would actually verify growth. What do
6 you have in place for that now? I understand, just
7 listening to you, that you have a cap of 200 students
8 in your beginning year and you're looking at having a
9 full-time counselor. And, you know, it certainly
10 exceeds what would be required. I agree with the
11 concept but I'm just -- I look at the study hall and
12 the tutoring and things like that, and those are
13 mechanisms. But I just kind of wanted to hear a
14 little bit more about that.

15 MS. KIGHT: Right. That is one reason that we
16 do have a full-time counselor. We're going to rely
17 heavily on that person to work with our students and
18 identify areas that they might need help with that
19 may be causing their school performance to be less
20 than optimal. So we're going to really leverage the
21 counselor's time with that. Hang on just a second;
22 let me get to the right page.

23 MS. BARNES: I'm not sure if your book is
24 exactly like mine. I was reading on page 4.

25 MS. KIGHT: I'm trying to get to the right page.

1 We will be doing -- we're using the MAP to measure
2 the student's -- individual's target growth. We will
3 -- I know we cannot ask for -- cannot demand the
4 transcript from the previous school, but we could ask
5 for it -- or if they're willing to share that with
6 us, so we can see how they're doing. We will be
7 meeting with the parents. We hope to really nourish
8 and encourage parental involvement because, like I
9 said, for some reason, middle school is when parental
10 involvement seems to drop off. And for kids that
11 have gotten behind they need all the support they can
12 get. They need -- even if we were to go so far as to
13 offer tutoring outside even the school hours, if we
14 had someone that needed to have extra math with a
15 parent there. Because I'm kind of experiencing that
16 with my son; he's getting behind a little bit and
17 I've actually told the teacher that "if you can stay
18 after school, I will take off work and I will come
19 sit in while you teach him the concepts so that I can
20 know it, so that at home I can reinforce that
21 concept." So we might even have a program like that.
22 It will really depend on the students that we get.
23 And it's hard to talk about -- I don't know if I'm
24 going to get students that -- you know -- 20% of my
25 students are going to be behind a grade level, I

1 don't know. All we can do is give them the
2 assessments at the beginning of school, let the
3 teachers teach them, give us feedback, get a plan for
4 that child that's behind, work with them, buddy them
5 up with somebody -- there are different methods that
6 we can use. You have the small group settings;
7 there's many different methods that you can use for
8 those children that are behind. And you don't want
9 to make them feel alienated or you don't want to make
10 them stand out for that, because that age child is
11 very conscious of being different. You know, they
12 don't want to stand out as being different. So I
13 believe our approach is just going to be more one-on-
14 one. We have four aids available. We might can
15 leverage the aids to help the students. You know,
16 because we are going to be doing some project-based
17 learning, so that's one reason we have the four aids
18 there. So we'll have four aids available. So if
19 that child needs to be maybe pulled out and helped
20 with a certain topic or a certain concept, or
21 reinforced in a certain strength in math maybe, that
22 they can get that individualized attention with an
23 aid. A counselor will be there. And like I said, we
24 are going to be involved and we're going to know the
25 families and hopefully can foster those relationships

1 so that that child has the support, not only at
2 school but he has his peers supporting him with
3 tutoring while being buddied up with somebody that
4 now knows that -- you know -- they kind of get that
5 relationship going, and with the parents to get them
6 to support us in that and hopefully participate in
7 getting their children caught back up.

8 MS. BARNES: You can come back to me.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Dr. Saunders.

10 MS. BARNES: Thank you.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I noticed in the budget the
12 first year there's no money for computers. Can you
13 expand on the technology?

14 MS. KIGHT: Yes. We have -- one of our board
15 members, Mr. Schollmeier, has donated 55 computers.
16 They will not be brand-new for the first year but
17 they will be available. We will have a computer lab
18 that has 25 computers in it. Our library is set to
19 have four computers in that. In our second year we
20 budgeted more money to do a tech refresh on those
21 computers and get them more up-to-date. They will be
22 functional; they will not be top-of-the-line. But,
23 like I said, with what we're going for we'll have to
24 start out small and build on it. So Mr. Schollmeier
25 was nice enough to donate those computers and we're

1 going to utilize those our first year, and we'll
2 probably have to still have some of them around our
3 second year. But by year-three we should have all of
4 our hardware refreshed so that it would be more
5 state-of-the-art.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: And you had a request for a
7 waiver from website postings. What in particular are
8 you looking for there?

9 MS. KIGHT: We really thought twice about
10 putting that in there, and I probably should have
11 pulled it. Because I'm very familiar with the
12 required reports that has to be on the website
13 because I look at the White Hall School District for
14 my child. So I believe we can rescind that --

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

16 MS. KIGHT: -- because I believe we will have no
17 problem posting that information.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: It's under section -- it's at the
19 end of section 8. And I notice in the budget for
20 year-two you have modular buildings and set-up.

21 MS. KIGHT: Yes, sir.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Can you expand on that just a
23 little bit?

24 MS. KIGHT: With the increase in student
25 population, with the facility that we're currently

1 using, we would have to bring on modular buildings to
2 accommodate the new 50 students coming onboard.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Would there be plans in the
4 future to build permanent facilities?

5 MS. KIGHT: That would be our goal. Yes, sir.
6 Like I said, we do have that eight acres available to
7 us. And so, yes, long-term, we would be looking at
8 -- we would already start working on that first year
9 out, start putting -- you know -- start figuring out
10 a plan to get to that point. Because long-term we do
11 want a permanent structure instead of modular
12 buildings.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. That's all for now.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Before we move on, how
15 many students can you have in the present building?

16 MS. KIGHT: The 200 that we will have for the
17 first year.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

19 MS. KIGHT: So we will not have to have modular
20 buildings the first year.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

22 DR. JONES: Good afternoon.

23 MS. KIGHT: Good afternoon.

24 DR. JONES: Can you clarify for me the minimum
25 number of days, instructional days that you will

1 have?

2 MS. KIGHT: On that, that was a long goal, long-
3 term goal. I was to rescind that one because we're
4 going to do the 178 days, especially the first year
5 or two till we get to know our students and get set-
6 up. We're not going to do any of that. At a later
7 date, if we think that would be beneficial, we can
8 always come back before the Board and ask for it
9 then. We're going to stick to the 178-day schedule.

10 DR. JONES: Okay. Thank you for that
11 clarification. I see that key program features
12 include STEM, a focus on science, technology,
13 engineering and math.

14 MS. KIGHT: Uh-huh.

15 DR. JONES: I have a concern with the limited
16 number of computers, and I think we expressed this
17 last go-round. Not to say students can't learn in
18 the absence of computers; I don't believe that at
19 all. However, if one of your program features is
20 that you're a STEM school, I do believe the fields of
21 science, engineering, math, but certainly technology,
22 if you're preparing students for those fields in
23 order to earn a living to support a family, they have
24 to have frequent interaction with technology. Are
25 the computers that you have in place to open the

1 school year next year, are they -- do they meet the
2 tech specs --

3 MS. KIGHT: Yes.

4 DR. JONES: -- to administer --

5 MS. KIGHT: The ACT Aspire, yes.

6 DR. JONES: -- online assessment?

7 MS. KIGHT: Yes. I did verify that.

8 DR. JONES: Okay. How old are those computers?

9 MS. KIGHT: They are currently four years old.

10 DR. JONES: Did you verify with DIS or any of
11 ours?

12 MS. KIGHT: I looked at the website for ACT
13 Aspire --

14 DR. JONES: Okay.

15 MS. KIGHT: -- is what I did, and I went to
16 their website, found their minimum hardware
17 requirements, and we do meet those.

18 DR. JONES: Okay. Can you tell me what makes it
19 a STEM focus?

20 MS. KIGHT: The STEM focus is more so for
21 getting the children interested back into the
22 sciences and to the math. Technology follows on. I
23 had looked up -- I don't know if I have that; all my
24 cards are scattered here. Technology came from
25 science; you know, science is where everything gets

1 started. So we're going to concentrate the first
2 couple of years on getting our children back into the
3 sciences and to the math and then build on that to
4 build into technology. Because where I work
5 everybody has gotten to the mindset of if their
6 computer is down they can't work, you know, because
7 the computer is down. There's lots of work you can
8 do and technology that you can use that isn't based
9 on that computer on your desk. And that's why we'll
10 have to leverage that the first couple of years,
11 because, yes, we are going to be not having computers
12 in every room for every student in every class.
13 That's correct, we won't. But we will have the lab
14 with the 25 computers in it, so they will have the
15 ability to get on the computers. And at our
16 location, we are located directly across the street
17 from the Redfield Public Library. They also have a
18 couple of computers in there that we can use and we
19 have access to the library system right across the
20 street. So we are -- I mean, literally, the street
21 has no traffic on it. You can walk across the street
22 and you're at the library. So we're very close to
23 that. There's a lot you can do -- and I know you may
24 laugh at this, but like for keyboarding -- when I
25 took typing in high school I thought my typing

1 teacher was absolutely crazy; she told me to go home
2 and practice on my kitchen table because, you know, I
3 didn't have a typewriter to practice on. And my
4 parents can tell you, I went home and I practiced on
5 my kitchen table. Like I knew the keyboard, you
6 know, and I ended up being -- I'm a very good typist.
7 But there's a lot of different things that you can
8 do, a lot of different choices you can make to still
9 have that technology to be planned that first year or
10 two of operation and then build into, then technology
11 becomes more of a focus for our school. Because I
12 believe -- I keep telling my son that's 20 years old,
13 anything in the medical field you can earn a living,
14 you know. So that's the focus I want is to give
15 these kids, the ones that are interested -- and going
16 on that, you know, you look at the kids and everybody
17 always wants to say we need to do college prep, and
18 we do for the ones that want to go to college or
19 they're made for college. But there's a lot of
20 children that college isn't the route that they're
21 going to take and you need to prepare them to go into
22 vocational -- or prepare them to go into the
23 workforce. So, yes, you know, one of the things that
24 I think we've kind of gotten away from -- I think, in
25 the state legislature somebody actually made a bill

1 about kids making change. You know, you go to Sonic
2 and they come out and they bring you your food; you
3 know, a lot of people can't make change anymore. If
4 they don't have the cash register in front of them
5 and give them the readout of what it is, they kind of
6 balk at it. You know, there's a lot of different
7 skills that you can teach children 5th through 8th
8 grade to build them up so that when they do hit the
9 high school years and we are more established and we
10 do have a stronger infused curriculum of STEM
11 components that they'll be ready for that.

12 DR. JONES: Okay. Address that with me, please.
13 Tell me about your curriculum for science and math,
14 and what do you have planned?

15 MS. KIGHT: Our plan -- I'm sorry; can I get a
16 drink? You get up here and you get very dry mouth.
17 I don't know what it is about this room. Our
18 curriculum is really going to be based on college and
19 career readiness. So we're going to really focus on
20 introducing these children who have never really
21 given a lot of thought to what they're going to do
22 when they grow up to professions, to different
23 careers, to different jobs that they can get out
24 there. A lot of them, you talk to them, they haven't
25 given it any thought and their families -- you know,

1 they don't have anything from home pushing them to
2 certain -- you know -- to expose them to that. They
3 just don't know. You can't have a goal in life if
4 you've not ever been exposed to it. You know, they
5 grow up in today's -- and they have the cell phone
6 but, you know, they don't really get out in the world
7 per se, given where we live, where we are. Because
8 Redfield is halfway in between Little Rock and Pine
9 Bluff. Pine Bluff is steady losing people and it's
10 -- you know -- it's an exodus from Pine Bluff, and I
11 feel for them, and they're trying to turn that
12 around. In Jefferson County, we only had two growing
13 cities in the last census and one of them was
14 Redfield and the other was White Hall. So we're one
15 of two growing cities. So if we want our area of the
16 state to grow, we need to get our children motivated
17 and exposed and interested in professions, you know,
18 that -- part of them will either go to a vo-tech or
19 require them to go to a college prep. And our
20 curriculum is going to be based on working with that
21 guidance counselor to really get those kids excited
22 about the possibilities. And that's one reason that
23 we are investing a whole year in that the first year
24 right out of the gate. Because I think it's so
25 important at the 5th grade level -- and the 8th

1 graders, you know, we're going to have a little bit
2 harder time with because they're already 8th graders.
3 But we're going to start with the 5th graders and try
4 to really focus on getting their careers in their
5 minds of what they want to do when they grow up. And
6 not only that, "Okay, now that I think I know what I
7 want to do, how do I get there," and work with them
8 on getting the plan; "Well, then you need to take a
9 lot of math and you need to, you know, work on your
10 math skills if you're going to be an engineer." You
11 know, kind of get them prepped to start thinking
12 long-term, because kids are very short-term planners.
13 They want to know what's happening tonight or whose
14 house they're going to go to or that. So we need to
15 get them long-term planning and we need to build
16 those skills in the children. Our science, we're
17 going to do a lot of project-based learning. I think
18 hands-on is good. I'm a learner -- and there's
19 different learning styles. I like to see things, I
20 like to do things. I learn better that way. And so
21 we're going to -- that's one of the reasons we have
22 the four aids allotted in our application is that we
23 are going to do more hands-on project-based
24 activities with them so that they can be actively
25 engaged and be participating; not just be listeners

1 sitting at a desk, maybe tuning the teacher out, but
2 they'll actually be involved.

3 DR. JONES: Okay. On that project-based
4 learning, do you have partnerships or ideas of who
5 you're going to work with for training for project-
6 based learning or --

7 MS. KIGHT: We have done some research on that.
8 I wish I could remember; the Buck Institute, I
9 believe is one of the websites that we looked at.

10 DR. JONES: Are you going to join Buck
11 Institute?

12 MS. KIGHT: Long-term, yes, that's our goal to
13 do that. I don't know that right out the gate we
14 will. Like I said, I see our first year standing up
15 as really getting to know and getting a base year.

16 DR. JONES: Okay. You started to address the
17 key program features of college and career readiness.
18 Aside from counseling and encouraging kids to think
19 about their career, since this is a key feature what
20 other parts do you have that make this a college and
21 career readiness program?

22 MS. KIGHT: Long-term, we would like to partner
23 with -- because our location, we're kind of in
24 between Little Rock and Pine Bluff. So we do have U
25 of A-Little Rock close; we have Pulaski Tech; we have

1 SEARK; we have UAPB, all within 20 miles of us,
2 whether you go north or whether you go south. So I
3 would like to partner with them and work toward
4 getting college credit involved for our high
5 schoolers as we bring them on. I've lost my train of
6 thought; I'm sorry. Let me see if I can get it back.
7 And possibly to do partnerships or internships in
8 different businesses. But we're not going to be able
9 to do large-scale internships in Redfield because we
10 are so small. We are limited on the opportunities
11 that. So we will have to branch out and that will be
12 something that we have to plan for and know that once
13 we get past the hurdle of getting it authorized we
14 will have a group of people that will start that
15 planning for the future immediately. So we kind of
16 are ready; you know, every year, when we add that
17 grade, we're more prepared than we are right now for
18 that long-term. Because it is a big task to do what
19 we're trying to do. It is huge, and we understand
20 that. So we are really focused on 5 through 8 right
21 now and what we can do. We have dreams and visions
22 of what we can do long-term outside, and we will work
23 on those and we will leverage -- you know -- we're
24 going to join the APSRC; we'll talk to other
25 charters; you know, we'll try to do kind of what

1 Trish did beforehand, because she got to travel to
2 all these cool schools and get all that experience
3 under her belt. We don't have that kind of funding
4 behind us. So we're going to have to do that after
5 we get stood up, because then -- a lot of people that
6 we've been talking to and approaching, kind of like
7 Paul says, the chicken and the egg; they want to help
8 you but they want you to have that authorization
9 first. And so we're kind of stuck where we can't --
10 you know, we're not booming like Fort Smith is; we're
11 not booming like Bentonville is. We're small-town
12 Redfield, growing in Jefferson County, seeing a need
13 that we think we can help fill. And I think once we
14 get the authorization then we will have more
15 opportunity to get partnerships going with people and
16 to leverage that. I know last year we had Sandra
17 Smith Jones present for us last year and she had
18 worked with UAPB and had an agreement with them. And
19 I'm sure we could go back down there and work with
20 them and get that going. And, you know, one of the
21 first things that we'll do is start that kind of
22 preparation for the future coming up. Because 9th
23 grade is going to be here before you know it, you
24 know, because that first year is going to go by very
25 quickly. So hopefully we can just get the

1 opportunity to get started and then build for that,
2 because that's our long-term vision.

3 DR. JONES: Thank you. That's all I have right
4 now.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

6 MR. LESTER: No.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

8 MR. ROGERS: I just -- I pulled up what Dr.
9 Gotcher had talked about earlier with 6-23-102, where
10 it says for the legislative intent for charter
11 schools. And I know that you talked about the small
12 school learning environment is what you're trying to
13 be innovative with. But when you start talking about
14 the donated computers, what speed is this going to
15 have for the schools coming in there == what other
16 innovative ways is this charter school going to be,
17 except for the small environment? I'm not saying I
18 don't agree with that because, I mean, I think most
19 of us here are from small schools --

20 MS. KIGHT: Right.

21 MR. ROGERS: -- and so we appreciate the small
22 school environment. But also I'm worried about what
23 those 200 kids would be missing out from the small
24 school environment too, because, you know, I can talk
25 about small schools also. And there was one big

1 thing with my school district. They didn't want to
2 move to a new football field because everybody liked
3 the old school football field, and there was a big
4 ol' fight in our small school district to move to a
5 new football field. And so I understand. But it was
6 a better field, better lights, better -- you know --
7 so I understand the small school mentality also, so
8 --

9 MS. KIGHT: Right. And a small school to me is
10 the biggest thing. Because, whether you realize it
11 or not, you're giving those kids an opportunity that
12 they won't have anyplace else, because their parents
13 can't afford to send them to a private school. And
14 right now the only option they have is go out the
15 door and get on a school bus and go to the public
16 school. So innovative, yes, that is something they
17 do not have access to right now. They do not have
18 that choice right now for that because the families
19 we're talking about are middle to low income families
20 and they can't afford to send them, you know, to Miss
21 Selma's or to -- you know -- and I'm not saying
22 that's a middle school; that's a lower grade school
23 -- but to one of the private schools. They just
24 can't afford it. So that is a big innovation. I
25 think the other thing that we want to do is to give

1 them the opportunity to catch up, you know, to get
2 some one-on-one aid, counselor, mentor, somebody from
3 the community to work with them to get them caught up
4 if they're behind. You know, they'll also be able to
5 be involved in things. Because right now a lot of
6 these kids that we're trying to target, when they go
7 to school the only way they have to get there is a
8 school bus. And so if you're having a Beta Club
9 meeting after school today, guess what. Or if you're
10 having a science club meeting after school today,
11 guess what. Those kids don't get to participate in
12 that because they have to go outside, get on a school
13 bus and go home. Our day -- at the end of our day,
14 we have 30 minutes built in so that we can have club
15 activities while the kids are still at school so that
16 they can participate in those things; they can get
17 exposed to those ideas; they can be on the chess club
18 or the technology club and have that 30 minutes
19 occasionally, whenever we get the schedule in for
20 when we're going to do that. They can participate
21 and then they can go out and get on the bus and go
22 home. So the extended school day, small school
23 setting, and one other one -- those are the two that
24 are coming to my mind. I should have made notes what
25 the three are. Those are the two that I think are

1 the biggest differences that we're going to have that
2 other schools don't have. And I don't believe you're
3 going to get a CMO to come in and provide that to you
4 in a public school environment because the money is
5 just not there for them, for the overhead that they
6 have. So I believe there are people out there -- we
7 went out in the communities to get our signatures for
8 support. We went up to Wrightsville and sat out in
9 front of the Dollar General Store, talked to a lot of
10 nice people, got some signatures from Wrightsville.
11 One of the ladies, she was very excited. She had a
12 3rd grader and a 6th grader. "Oh, my gosh; you're
13 going to have a school in Redfield?" I said, "That's
14 what we're trying to do." And, guess what, she was a
15 music teacher and her first question was, "Are you
16 going to have music?" I said, "Yes, ma'am. We've
17 already had a piano donated to us." So we have a
18 piano. We're going to have choir. And then I said,
19 "Would you be interested in teaching?" You know, go
20 ahead and start working those relationships. She was
21 very excited that that opportunity might be coming
22 their way. And that -- we went out two times, two
23 different places on that one day, and got 12 kids to
24 sign up on a sheet saying that they were interested
25 in coming to a school in Redfield. And that was just

1 one time that we went out. I think parents are
2 looking for something else, because they may have a
3 child that the current situation is not working. I
4 know a couple of -- my younger son is a junior. My
5 mom has talked to their grandparents, you know, and
6 they're concerned because they're having a hard time
7 getting their kids to get up and go to school. I'm
8 not sure what the -- I don't know what the motivation
9 is, but, you know, if you can make school a place
10 where kids are welcome, they feel welcome, they feel
11 at home, they feel included, they feel involved, man,
12 you've got a success. Because if you can get those
13 kids to feel that, then you get them to quit
14 disappearing in the larger schools. And larger
15 schools, there's nothing wrong with a large school;
16 there's not. I went -- you know -- I went to White
17 Hall, I went to UCA, and there's nothing wrong with
18 any of that. Some kids just would do better in a
19 small school setting. You have some kids that
20 actually have anxiety disorders, you know, so that
21 when they go to a crowded place that has 500 kids in
22 it they freak out, and the next thing you know,
23 they're falling out of school. And they may be going
24 to a K-12 online because that's the only choice they
25 have right now. You can go to a public school with

1 800 kids in it or you can go to an online school.
2 What we want to be is that stop-gap measure in
3 between that, that keeps them engaged, gives them
4 social interaction, gives them educators involved in
5 their life, involved in their education to help keep
6 them on the path to get them to that final goal of
7 high school diploma. And hopefully, when they get to
8 the diploma then they look and see they've had all of
9 this exposure to careers and opportunities and vo-
10 tech and different things that you can do, if they
11 choose to further their education and go on, you
12 know. But right now, you're losing them; you're
13 losing them before they ever finish the 12th grade.
14 Because for whatever reason, whether it's
15 participation, anxiety, overwhelmed -- I don't know;
16 I don't know what it is. But I'm just saying I
17 believe that there is a need for this kind of setting
18 in a public school that is free for people to go to
19 instead of having to pay for it, for private school.

20 MS. ROGERS: That's all I have.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

22 MS. LIWO: Nothing.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

24 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

25 First of all, I want to commend you guys for your

1 passion. I understand this is the third application
2 that you've even applied for. This is my first term
3 on this Charter Authorizing Panel. So I recognize
4 your passion; I appreciate that. One of the things
5 that I'm concerned about -- let me just ask: where
6 currently are the students attending? I see White
7 Hall.

8 MS. KIGHT: Yes, sir.

9 DR. GOTCHER: There's a Pulaski County school.

10 MS. KIGHT: Fuller. Fuller is the closest
11 Pulaski County Special School District middle school
12 to us. Sheridan is also around our area. So those
13 are the three that we think we'll pull from, but I
14 also think Dollarway. You know, we're going to have
15 transportation provided to our students. We're going
16 to not do a traditional bus route; we're going to do
17 a satellite. And we are going to -- you know --
18 we'll go south far enough to pick up kids from
19 Dollarway. If we have interest from that way, we'll
20 go down there and we'll bring them back, you know.
21 So it's open. You know, one of the things Mary Perry
22 taught me the first year: charter schools are open to
23 any student in the state of Arkansas.

24 DR. GOTCHER: Right.

25 MS. KIGHT: So anywhere they come from, they can

1 come to me. So, like if somebody lives in Conway and
2 they work at NCTR, instead of their kid being in
3 Conway and them being at work at NCTR and being an
4 hour apart, maybe they want their kid to come and
5 come to this school. That's a possibility. You
6 know, those kids are out there. And that way,
7 they're close. If something happens to their child
8 at school during the school day, they're right there.
9 For school events, after school, they're right there.
10 You know, there are different motivations for people
11 to want this, and for some people that's what they
12 want. Some people, no, they don't want any part of
13 it and they want this, and that's great. That's why
14 we need to have choice available, because you need to
15 find the right place for that kid to be able to
16 thrive and to finish high school and move on to the
17 next level.

18 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Some of the things that
19 you've mentioned, which I certainly appreciate --
20 providing the kid with small school environment,
21 providing the kid with one-on-one instruction --
22 currently, the public schools in Arkansas,
23 traditional or charter, typically provide and honor
24 the response to intervention where we identify
25 learning goals for these students and provide those

1 interventions. So I'm not hearing that what Redfield
2 could provide would be unique to what is already
3 occurring in other public schools, either traditional
4 or charter school settings. So my concern, one of
5 the things that I saw from the very beginning was the
6 slide you had and it provided the innovative bulleted
7 items. And I wasn't able to see anything that I saw
8 that was innovative that I wasn't providing in my
9 school district or my school building. So in
10 honoring the legislative intent, I've yet to see the
11 expanded choices for kids or the innovative teaching
12 and learning methods. So can you talk a little bit
13 more -- besides the small school -- we've heard that
14 -- and with all due respect, we've heard that enough.
15 I need to hear more of why this is a unique expanded
16 learning opportunity for the kids of this community.

17 MS. KIGHT: My belief, that time that we have --
18 the extended time we have in our school day. Most of
19 the tutoring I see happening in the public schools
20 happens after school gets out. So school -- the last
21 bell rings, kids go get on buses. If you need extra
22 tutoring, then you're staying after school for that
23 extended time and then parents have to come pick them
24 up. Okay. That's a problem because some parents are
25 working, they do not have a ride. You know, so --

1 DR. GOTCHER: So going from the 153 to the 178,
2 you would still want to have the extended school day.
3 Is that what I'm hearing? Because you had --

4 MS. KIGHT: Yes. Yes.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Because --

6 MS. KIGHT: We are going to have the extended
7 school day, 178 days.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

9 MS. KIGHT: So we're going to go 7:30 till --
10 well, I can't remember what the times are, but we're
11 going to have 35 minutes in the morning and 30
12 minutes in the afternoon. We're still going to have
13 extended school day.

14 DR. GOTCHER: With 178 days. Okay.

15 MS. KIGHT: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Go ahead. Continue. I'm sorry.

17 MS. KIGHT: That's all right. I want to make
18 sure we get that square --

19 DR. GOTCHER: Sure.

20 MS. KIGHT: -- because our waiver thing is a
21 mess. But I think that's a difference from us and
22 the public school. We are trying to build into our
23 regular school day extra time to focus on those kids
24 that need extra help, that they can get while they're
25 there, and it's not a burden on the parents to try to

1 get there to pick them up. Because a lot of times,
2 you know, the tutoring will be over and the parents
3 are running late and the kid is standing out on the
4 sidewalk. You know, it's just not a good situation.
5 So that was one of our goals was to provide that
6 extra time that they need and have it be during the
7 regular school day so that they can get on the bus
8 and still go home and not have to have that burden on
9 their family or that child be -- "Oh, look, so-and-
10 so's mom forgot them," because they're standing out
11 there, you know, or be, you know, singled out because
12 of that. So that is one difference that we do have.
13 We are going to do the extended day with 178 days a
14 year.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Good. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions? Ms.
17 Pfeffer.

18 MS. PFEFFER: Yes. I do want to go back to the
19 staffing. And for your first year, the 5-8 grades,
20 your teachers will have to meet -- the majority of
21 your teachers will have to meet highly qualified
22 status. And one of the challenges that we're seeing
23 right now with middle level educators and licensing
24 middle level educators is the problems they're having
25 passing the Praxis score, even after going through

1 preparation programs. So I have some concerns about
2 whether or not, if you do hire non-licensed teachers,
3 will you be able to staff to have teachers who meet
4 highly qualified designations in all those areas.
5 You know, and it's great that you found a music
6 teacher -- and you need to hang on to that music
7 teacher because there's not a whole lot of -- you
8 know -- that's an area that's in high demand, but --
9 so, you know, again, I just -- what are your plans to
10 really insure that you've got the workforce that you
11 need? And then, for those that you hire who are not
12 licensed but who do meet highly qualified status, how
13 will they be supported so that they are equipped to
14 handle the classroom management issues, planning and
15 preparation, the professional responsibilities, which
16 will need to be evaluated according to the Teacher
17 Excellence Support System? So --

18 MS. KIGHT: Hiring quality people I think is a
19 concern for everybody. I mean, everybody that's in
20 place right now, all public schools, that is a
21 challenge. I know our high school recently had a
22 hard time finding a chemistry teacher. I mean, it's
23 -- I mean, it is hard to find that. The only thing I
24 can tell you is that we'll look under every rock;
25 we'll phone every person that we know that -- you

1 know -- someone like me that -- I'm a math major,
2 computer science minor. You know, I could teach, you
3 know, if I got -- if I wasn't working where I'm
4 working not. But you need to look for those kinds of
5 people that live in your community already. Maybe
6 it's a retired teacher that's been retired five or
7 six years. Maybe you can approach them and they want
8 to come back, you know, and they're willing to do
9 that. So we'll work every connection, network,
10 opportunity that we have.

11 Dad, do you want to say anything about hiring
12 people or how we would --

13 MR. KIGHT: Certainly, teachers that we had in
14 the past that are possibly interested in coming back
15 and --

16 MS. KIGHT: Oh, this is -- I'm sorry.

17 MR. KIGHT: Oh, I'm sorry.

18 MS. KIGHT: Say your name.

19 MR. KIGHT: James Kight. We had a very
20 successful teaching staff whenever we were closed and
21 some of those are still teaching and some of them
22 have expressed interest in coming back to Redfield,
23 should we get the charter authorization. That would
24 be one place. But other places, we would look at,
25 you know, students graduating from college and going

1 to job fairs and that type thing to try and, you
2 know, entice teachers to come to a small school
3 setting. And I think that there's a lot of teachers
4 interested in a smaller situation; they get kind of
5 lost in a bigger school too.

6 MS. KIGHT: And another thing, you have Teach
7 America [sic] as an option. U of A has an option
8 with some teaching programs up there. UAPB has a
9 program out there that Sandra Smith Jones had talked
10 to them about, where some of their teaching students
11 could come and do some of their student teaching at
12 our site. You know, if you get those relationships
13 going between there, that could turn into a teacher
14 for you long-term. So I know that one of the kids
15 that graduated with my oldest son, she wants to be a
16 teacher. She's two years away from graduating, and
17 I'm sure she would love to come back and be there. I
18 mean, if you're a small town person, you get it; that
19 you want that small town environment and that you
20 want that. And I believe there's -- you know -- some
21 teachers would come for it. I believe that there are
22 some teachers that may have retired and been gone
23 five or six years that might be interested in helping
24 us stand it up; that they, you know, love the
25 profession. I'd never be in it; it's not like

1 teachers get paid what they're worth. But, you know,
2 they're not valued like they should be, I don't
3 think. But a lot of teachers, you know, they may
4 have gotten to a point -- I know I talked to two
5 ladies in Wrightsville; both of them were retired
6 teachers and both had returned to teaching. They
7 were off like two years, and she said, "I went back."
8 And I said, "Isn't that crazy that you thought you
9 were ready to retire," and she went back. So that's
10 not uncommon to happen. But, yes, we understand it's
11 going to be hard to find that, but we do believe that
12 there are people out there and we will do our best to
13 find the best qualified people we can to fill those
14 slots.

15 Paul wants to say something.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

17 MR. PAUL BYRD: I wanted to address just a
18 couple of things. As far as computers, I'm a lawyer;
19 I spend 20 to 30 grand a year in computer technology.
20 I've got tech people. I'll get them involved. We'll
21 figure out how to raise money. We'll get better
22 systems. Again, that's the chicken and the egg. One
23 of the things that I think you'll find that's
24 innovative is -- here's what I think is innovative
25 about this. The man that just got up and talked,

1 James Kight, has been a school administrator for
2 many, many years over Blue Ribbon schools; third in
3 the state at one time, before we got closed; just
4 excellent schools. But the people that live just
5 beyond our boundary, within four miles of us, didn't
6 get access to it. If you want to talk about
7 innovation in the charter school process, again,
8 drive through Woodson and Hensley and let's bring the
9 pink elephant in the room. There is a racial divide
10 within those boundaries. Let's bust those walls
11 down. Let's open it up and let's let those poor
12 pulpwood-hauling kids over in the eastern part of
13 Grant County come over and be involved in a Blue
14 Ribbon school environment. And the same for the
15 Woodson and Hensley kids that haven't had that
16 opportunity. That's what I think is so innovative
17 about -- we're going to break down some artificial
18 walls and create an excellent opportunity. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Byrd.

21 MS. BANKS: I'd like to speak about human
22 resources.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders. Oh, I'm
24 sorry. State your name, please.

25 MS. BANKS: My name is Linda Banks. And I

1 should have spoken up earlier when we were talking
2 about finding resources to come to the school. I was
3 the director of the gifted and talented program for
4 White Hall School District. I implemented the
5 program, and I was one of the pioneers in gifted and
6 talented education. And one of the things that I did
7 early on was we wanted to show how the gifted and
8 talented program could spill over and benefit the
9 rest of the school community. So one of the things I
10 did was develop a resource directory for the entire
11 district. I sent out a mass mailing in White Hall
12 and Redfield to people that we thought might be
13 interested in supporting the school, in coming to the
14 school and being a mentor or allowing kids to shadow
15 or whatever. We ended up with overwhelming response.
16 And I developed at that time -- that was before we
17 had computers. We had like a three-ring binder and
18 we had -- it was divided up in architects, engineers,
19 teachers, doctors, nurses, every field that you could
20 imagine. And this book was just stuffed full of
21 people that volunteered to come and do these things.
22 So what we did from that, we took and did an index
23 box with these same names in there. The names were
24 in there under each career field. Every teacher had
25 the index box in their room, and if a teacher wanted

1 someone that was in history or science or geography
2 or whatever, all they had to do is go to the box,
3 look under that index -- it was indexed in there --
4 and then go to the main library -- go to the library
5 and open it up and there was the whole resume of a
6 person that was willing to come to the school. Now
7 that operated within our school district I know at
8 least probably 15 years and I know Mr. Right probably
9 remembers when we had that at the Redfield -- we had
10 it on seven campuses. So every teacher had access to
11 people that were willing to come to the school, and
12 we were never without people to come and speak or --
13 and I remember I had someone from Simmons Bank come
14 one time and he had -- he was going to speak on
15 finance. And he was so afraid he was actually
16 trembling when he went into the classroom; I had to
17 assure him that these kids were not going to bite.
18 He said, "I've never spoken to children before." I
19 said, "Well, you know, get over it; they're fine; you
20 know, they're not going to do anything." So I had
21 that experience, and I would be glad to implement
22 that and make sure that we have that kind of a
23 program where we can reach out and find the people.
24 Because our area is very rich in resources. We have
25 NCTR and we have the Pine Bluff Arsenal just right in

1 our door. Another thing I did, I was the director of
2 a summer program at NCTR, a shadow and mentoring
3 program for a number of years during the summer
4 through AGATE. And they paid me a small amount of
5 money to go during the summertime and stay out there,
6 and this was for the high school students, the ones
7 that could drive and get themselves there. So we had
8 a number of scientists at NCTR that were willing to
9 have kids shadow them all day long. And what we did,
10 we did a mass mailing to the employees at NCTR. The
11 ones that were interested, they filled it out and
12 sent it back; some said, "No, I don't want any kids
13 in my lab;" others said, "Yes, I'll be glad to have
14 kids in my lab." So we had that resource. And we
15 had kids that drove from -- and some of them came and
16 stayed with relatives and friends just so they could
17 participate in that summer AGATE program. And they
18 were able to mentor, high-level scientists, people
19 that were doing work in caloric restriction and such
20 as that, that kind of research at NCTR. We had drug
21 research there, still going on, where there's all
22 kinds of high-level research going on there with
23 world renowned scientists. I know one person out
24 there, Angelo Turturro. At that time he was a world
25 renowned scientist in caloric restriction, and so we

1 had that kind of high level scientists available to
2 us. Well, those people are still there. And so it
3 just needs to be coordinated and it needs to be done.
4 And, of course, some of them don't live in Redfield.
5 Many of those people live in Little Rock, but they
6 are there at Jefferson or -- they have to pass
7 through Redfield and a lot of them, they can get time
8 off from work to come into the Redfield school and do
9 a presentation or to work on a daily basis or maybe
10 bring those kids in during the summertime to NCTR.
11 Some of those students had made lifelong friendships
12 with some of the people that they mentored and
13 continued to go into the fields of science. So the
14 opportunity is there. We just need the coordination;
15 we need the opportunity to do it. And anyway, I
16 myself would be -- I'm retired, but I would be glad
17 to volunteer my services and my time to help
18 implement this in the school. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Banks.
20 Could you -- Ms. Kight, could you tell us what NCTR
21 is?

22 MS. KIGHT: National Center for Toxicological
23 Research.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Say it again.

25 MS. KIGHT: National Center for Toxicological

1 Research. It's a FDA facility.

2 MS. BANKS: It's a FDA facility, Food and Drug
3 Administration.

4 MS. KIGHT: It's maybe six miles south of
5 Redfield, eight miles, something like that.

6 MS. BANKS: Do what?

7 MS. KIGHT: About six miles south of Redfield.

8 MS. BANKS: Do what?

9 MS. KIGHT: It's about six miles south of
10 Redfield.

11 MS. BANKS: Yeah. It's not very well advertised
12 and you don't see or know a whole lot about it. It
13 is at Jefferson, which is about five miles south of
14 Redfield, and then it's about four or five miles down
15 the river road, sort of hidden -- and maybe that's
16 for a reason, but -- of course, they do do some
17 animal research out there. They do mice; they have
18 hairless mice. And, you know, I've seen it all out
19 there. They've done all the drug research. They do
20 marijuana studies out there with Reece's monkeys.
21 And so, you know, I'm probably telling more than I
22 should, but it is out there. And I don't know if any
23 of y'all know Art Norris, but he was the director of
24 NCTR for a number of years and he did live in
25 Redfield. But that research there is available to

1 us. Now when I was out there and I accidentally
2 picked up the phone, I'm talking to someone in
3 Baltimore, Maryland, because it is the second FDA
4 facility under the research facility in Baltimore.
5 But it is low-key for a number of reasons, but it is
6 there. It's at the north end of the Pine Bluff
7 Arsenal. All of that used to be the Pine Bluff
8 Arsenal and then NCTR took the south end of it so you
9 have to go in through actually -- onto the federal
10 property at the south end of the arsenal to get in
11 there. And there are no big signs or anything. But,
12 trust me, it's there; look it up, the National Center
13 for Toxicological Research.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Any other
15 questions? Dr. Saunders.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I want to commend you on
17 the work that you've done. I did want to say I do
18 have some concerns. My concerns, in particular, deal
19 with the number of students that may or may not show
20 up and the finances. And with that, I just -- you
21 know -- I would be concerned about trying to approve
22 a program that would not be financially stable and
23 would therefore threaten to interrupt the normal
24 process of kids learning. That's what would concern
25 me.

1 MS. KIGHT: And I understand your concern and
2 it's a valid concern, you know. But it's one of
3 those things kind of like when a young couple wants
4 to try to have a baby; you know, if you wait till you
5 have the financial means, you'll never have a baby.
6 You know, at some point you have to have the faith
7 that I have a good base, I have a good foundation, I
8 have skills that will help me deal with any
9 challenges that arise, and leap.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. KIGHT: I mean, you've got to make that
12 leap. And I can't tell you -- we've had so many
13 people tell us, "Well, if y'all have authorization we
14 would" -- you know -- so here I am. You know, I need
15 you to leap with me and know that we are committed,
16 we're sustainable, we have managed our money for the
17 past two years and stretched it out and made it last.
18 We've kept the community center open; it has
19 insurance on it; we pay the light bill, the gas --
20 you know -- we pay all the bills, we keep it going.
21 We understand how to manage money. Like I said, we
22 have 200 years of teaching experience on our board.
23 We have decades of experience running successful
24 businesses. We have financial management people on
25 our board that know how to manage the money. Okay.

1 Money will be important to us. We will have strict
2 purchasing policy; you know, things will be checked
3 and double-checked. Money will be accounted for.
4 And like I said, we will take care of a need and the
5 wants are going to have to be funded some other
6 place.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Who is the current owner of the
8 facility?

9 MS. KIGHT: The organization KRMS is the owner
10 of the facility, and we would be leasing it from
11 them.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: What does that stand for?

13 MS. KIGHT: Keep Redfield Middle School. It was
14 an organization that was made when the White Hall
15 School District first -- intentions of trying to shut
16 the school came about. That group was a 501(c)(3)
17 that was formed to try to work with the school
18 district to see if we could work with them to keep it
19 open. But when it closed, they were successful in
20 bidding on the school property and actually won the
21 bid. And so we -- they have owned it for two years
22 now -- about a year-and-a-half now.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: Have you approached the White
24 Hall School District to look at a possible district
25 conversion charter where that would be more

1 financially stable?

2 MS. KIGHT: We have not yet, but that is
3 something that we could do. You know, that's one of
4 the things -- it's an option. In our heads, we kind
5 of have the vision of what we want and to be like an
6 entity of our own that has, you know, our vision.
7 But if that comes down to, you know, that's our only
8 option or that's one of the options that you feel
9 comfortable with, we'd have to, you know, look into
10 that. But we really think that, if we get the
11 authorization, then all these people that have been
12 telling us "we would help you, but you don't have
13 authorization," they're going to step forward and
14 we're not going to have to start our first year with
15 those 25 computers that are four years old. We're
16 going to get people like Paul Byrd to step up. And
17 instead of spending his 20 or 30 thousand dollars a
18 year on his tech, he's going to help me get that
19 going, you know. Those people are there; they're
20 just waiting for an authorization, you know. And
21 they're with us; they've been with us the whole time,
22 and we just need you to know that we believe we're
23 sustainable. We know how to manage money, we
24 understand what we're taking on, and we're still here
25 and we're still seeking approval to do this and to

1 have a leap -- jump with us; leap with us and you
2 won't regret it.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions from
4 the Panel?

5 MS. KIGHT: Dr. Byrd would like to say
6 something.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Byrd.

8 DR. CONLEY BYRD: Thank you. My name is Conley
9 Byrd; I'm a veterinarian and I'm Justice of the Peace
10 for that end of the county. I have been State
11 Veterinarian and served in a regulatory capacity for
12 the entire state of Arkansas. I'm a business owner;
13 I operate a small animal clinic there in Redfield.
14 I've been a part of this community for the majority
15 of my life. What I see, the opportunity before you,
16 it would appear to me that if this charter school
17 concept is going to work anywhere, if there's a small
18 community where this thing can be successful, it is
19 Redfield, drawing from all of those areas around us.
20 Jefferson County is going through a tremendous amount
21 of educational problems that y'all and the Department
22 of Education are highly aware of. We don't want to
23 see that sort of thing happen. We're committed to be
24 successful in this process. We are in this catch-22.
25 A lot of the questions that I've heard you ask this

1 morning are things that we can't truly address until
2 we have a charter. If you want to make it
3 provisional, fine. Give us the opportunity. That's
4 what we're asking for. We've been here for the third
5 year in a row and, if need be, we'll come back again.
6 But we would like to begin. We get out and build
7 support and interest in the community, and they say,
8 "Okay. Can we -- when can we start?" "Well, we
9 don't have a charter." Well, that's the catch-22.
10 When are we going to hire people? "Well, I can't
11 offer you a job because I don't have a charter. I
12 don't have the authorization to begin." The
13 resources that we have and have utilized in this
14 community in the past to support the Redfield Junior
15 High, which was a top-performing school in the school
16 district and in the state of Arkansas, higher than
17 White Hall performed, we're offering that capacity to
18 the surrounding areas to bring these people in that
19 don't now have a real good choice. If you look at
20 those students that live in that area, we have a few
21 that belong to these highly educated professionals
22 that live in our community who have done well because
23 their parents have taken extra interest in their
24 education. We know the difference that education can
25 make and the interest that can help. We have had

1 students that have driven, when we had the junior
2 high, from Pine Bluff up to Redfield to be in the
3 junior high when we had school choice. And those
4 kids performed well and they were a racial minority.
5 We don't have any problem with race in our community.
6 We're open. What we want to have is the opportunity
7 for these kids to begin to do those things. And I
8 think you're going to see innovations coming down the
9 road as we can make these relationships. NCTR has
10 been there for a long time. It is at the south end
11 of the Pine Bluff Arsenal, which was the biological
12 warfare center. And when Nixon shut that down, they
13 created the National Center for Toxicological
14 Research, a research facility. Also, on that same
15 facility is a regulatory segment of FDA that's out
16 there as well, which I have a number of veterinary
17 friends and other people that come to me in my
18 practice that are out there that would be glad to
19 support us. We can't begin to make those inter-
20 connections till you give us some sort of
21 authorization, and that's what we're here for is to
22 request that. We're going to be stewards of
23 everything that you give us. I'm also president of
24 the Keep Redfield Middle School organization, and I
25 promise you our board -- some of them are here today

1 -- we're going to lease to the charter school for a
2 dollar a year. That's not a problem. We have a
3 facility. We have the people who are committed and
4 passionate about trying to make this happen. What we
5 don't have is the opportunity commitment from you to
6 allow us to take the next steps. We're reaching out.
7 We've had people that have joined us, you know, Mr.
8 Schollmeier and other people, who've come in with
9 financial help. I've got a professional fundraiser
10 that's at my beck and call to begin to start trying
11 to get grants, but we can't get a grant without that
12 authorization. We have to have a place to start.
13 We're going to get the resources. All we came here
14 today to do, again, is to ask you to let us start;
15 let us try. Put a provisional, if you want to, you
16 know. I don't think we can do any more harm to these
17 students in one or two years than has been done by
18 the public education system that they've been
19 submitted to in the surrounding areas that we're in.
20 We want to see them have the opportunity to graduate
21 from high school; whether they go vocationally or
22 whether they go on to college, we want to make those
23 possible and we're going to use every innovation that
24 we've got at our disposal to make that happen. Thank
25 you very much.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Clay, do
2 you have any remaining issues regarding requested
3 waivers?

4 MS. CLAY: No.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any final words, Ms. Kight

6 --

7 MS. KIGHT: I have one --

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- before we need to make
9 a motion?

10 MS. KIGHT: One final word. There are very few
11 homegrown charter schools out there, but the ones
12 that are out there are pretty good, Haas Hall and
13 eSTEM. So I'm not saying we're going to start off
14 being that but that's the vision that we have: a
15 homegrown, community-initiated, community-supported,
16 high-performing school. All we need is an
17 opportunity to make that dream come true.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Kight.
19 Panel, I'll accept a motion regarding the Redfield
20 Tri-County Charter School, in Redfield, Arkansas.

21 DR. GOTCHER: First, we have a question for
22 Legal. Do you mind?

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Absolutely.

24 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Clay, there is not -- I just
25 did a quick glance at the law. There's not a

1 provision in the law for a provisional charter
2 application. I know that was mentioned a couple of
3 times, but I didn't see anything on conversion or
4 open-enrollment for provisional.

5 MS. CLAY: No, except in the sense that I guess
6 any charter is provisional, that you could bring a
7 charter school back in at any time for action on
8 their charter as far as revocation or modification.
9 But there is no provisional charter. If a charter is
10 granted, it's initially for a five-year period.

11 DR. GOTCHER: That was my concern. Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Panel Members?

13 MS. BARNES: First of all, let me say I know
14 that you have been here three years in a row and I'm
15 very familiar with Redfield. I think you're familiar
16 with some of the lines of my questions from last
17 time. And I do see quite a bit of work that has been
18 done, but I am struggling with trying to move forward
19 at this point. I do not have enough conviction,
20 unfortunately, to feel comfortable to go ahead and
21 move forward. So in the absence of someone else's
22 motion, I would probably go ahead and make my motion.
23 And at this time I move that we not approve the
24 Redfield request for charter.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have a motion by Ms.
2 Barnes and a second by Dr. Gotcher to deny the
3 Redfield Tri-County Charter School application, for
4 Redfield, Arkansas. Is there any discussion? All
5 those in --

6 MS. KIGHT: Can I have -- is there -- can I
7 speak on that? Okay. After you vote, can I speak?

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay.

9 MS. CLAY: Typically, this time is for
10 discussion of the panel members, but it's at your
11 discretion if you would allow additional comments.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Kight, I'll give you a
13 minute.

14 MS. KIGHT: In this process, it would be nice to
15 get feedback on what it would take for you to have
16 conviction. Because we're working hard; we're trying
17 to maintain and to further it. We have done things
18 to improve the situation. You know, a lot of it is
19 based on getting a charter authorization, you know,
20 and, like Kendra said, like Ms. Clay said, you could
21 make us come back every year. You know, every
22 charter is provisional but you just look at them
23 every five years. You know, we want to be part of
24 the solution; desperately, we want to be part of the
25 solution. I don't see anybody else coming up here

1 three years in a row trying to get something for
2 their community. And just like someone said for the
3 Future Home -- Future School of Fort Smith, every
4 city deserves the opportunity to be successful.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

6 MS. KIGHT: Every city.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Kight.

8 Okay. We have a motion. Is there any other
9 discussion?

10 MS. BARNES: I didn't know if I needed to
11 respond yet to her question.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We can in our notes give
13 to her clarification. Dr. Saunders.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Question, just a clarifying
15 question. The motion is to deny the application.
16 Correct?

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Correct.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Is that the motion?

19 MS. BARNES: (Nodding head up and down.)

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is that correct, Ms.
22 Barnes?

23 MS. BARNES: Yes.

24 DR. GOTCHER: And that's what I seconded.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So the motion is to deny

1 the application. All those in favor of denying the
2 application?

3 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? The motion
5 passed.

6 If you'll take a few moments then to write in --
7 and Ms. Kight has asked for detailed information that
8 would help them for a future application. So, we'll
9 take a few moments for that.

10 Dr. Gotcher.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I voted for the
12 denial of the application. And my reasons were that
13 there was no evidence that there was -- that there
14 were innovative or different teaching methods that
15 offer expanded choices for the potential students of
16 Redfield. And I just have to go back to legislative
17 intent that we've got to offer innovative and
18 different teaching methods and to expand the choices
19 for our students. I think -- well, that's all I have
20 at this time. Maybe we can visit, Ms. Kight.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

22 MS. BARNES: I voted to deny the charter at this
23 time because I am unable to support the request at
24 this time. I feel the conversion effort could be
25 more sustainable at this time. The concept of a

1 small school environment is admirable, but no
2 evidence was presented for sustainability, long-range
3 planning with respect to accountability, and
4 appropriate instructional practices.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

6 MR. LESTER: I agree with the motion to deny.
7 The charter showed no evidence of offering different
8 or innovative services.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

10 MS. LIWO: I voted in favor of denying the
11 application, really because I didn't see what
12 Redfield was -- what was innovative about what
13 Redfield was offering and didn't see a lot of well-
14 defined plans supporting your vision. So --

15 MS. KIGHT: Can you for the constructive
16 criticism define the plans? That might be --

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Can you give her any more
18 on that?

19 MS. LIWO: I'll give you one example. It's just
20 with each -- I think that's a great vision. But how
21 are -- I didn't -- you didn't tell me what -- you
22 didn't give me concrete information about who was
23 supporting it, how you'd go out -- how you would --
24 I'm sorry. I didn't know where your students were
25 going to find mentors in the community, for example.

1 I didn't know what you meant by community projects.
2 That's just -- it was so broad. Was it -- is it
3 community clean-up or -- I mean, are you -- is it
4 internships? Is it -- and how are you going about
5 getting internships? I don't know if I'm making
6 myself clear.

7 MS. KIGHT: And I understand, and that's kind of
8 what our frustration is. If you will tell me what
9 you need before I come, I will bring it. But I fill
10 out the application, I get fully responsive, and I
11 come and you say, "Well, I'm turning you down because
12 you don't have a plan." What plan is it that you
13 need? I will bring it with me next time. I mean,
14 that's just -- that's just the -- you know -- we're
15 working very hard. And when we go through this
16 process, if I need something else tell me in advance
17 and give me an opportunity to provide that -- because
18 that's not a requirement of the application. And to
19 me, I don't see that that's in there as a requirement
20 to get an authorization. You know, you fill out the
21 application, you come and you answer the questions,
22 and you -- you do or you don't. And so if you need a
23 plan, just identify it in that first rendition, when
24 we get the responses back, so that I can then work on
25 that and submit it.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, Ms. Kight, I think
2 that was described previously in the application.
3 "Fully responsive" just means -- is not any type of
4 rubric to say how well you've answered; it just says
5 that you have answered.

6 MS. KIGHT: Correct. But --

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And so then that's upon
8 the Panel to decide if you've answered fully.

9 MS. KIGHT: Yes. But, see, the frustration on
10 my part is if you need more information, if you let
11 me know ahead of time I can plan. Because, you know,
12 hours and hours, hundreds of hours goes into this.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

14 MS. KIGHT: Hundreds of hours. Okay?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We appreciate that.

16 MS. KIGHT: So I'm working and then I get up
17 here and I almost feel stifled because I wasn't given
18 the opportunity to prepare. I mean, I have invested
19 hundreds out of my time. You know, I would give you
20 the plan, you know, if I knew I needed a tech refresh
21 plan or if I needed -- you know -- if I could just
22 get advance notice on areas that I wasn't particular
23 enough, that you needed more detail ahead of time,
24 instead of being on the fly because --

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

1 MS. KIGHT: -- you're asking someone that's a
2 public -- not a public speaker in a pressure
3 situation --

4 DR. GOTCHER: You bet.

5 MS. KIGHT: -- you know, like that.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Kight -- oh, I'm sorry.

7 MS. LIWO: If I may -- and I'm not necessarily
8 the greatest public speaker either. But I do -- I
9 may have given you one example of each. But,
10 honestly, I'm a little bit wary of kind of feeding
11 you a list and having you walk out of here believing
12 that if you come back next year --

13 MS. KIGHT: Right.

14 MS. LIWO: -- you're going to get my vote.

15 MS. KIGHT: Right.

16 MS. LIWO: I just -- and I hope I can speak for
17 you all. But we can point out the areas that we saw
18 that maybe needed a little bit of work, but please
19 don't walk out of here thinking that that is a set
20 list that guarantees you approval if you come back
21 next year.

22 MS. KIGHT: And we don't. We understand the
23 process. We understand how it goes. But what we
24 just want -- it seems like always, you know, we're
25 close but it's just not quite there. It's this

1 close; we're just not right there. You know, at some
2 point, you know, there has to be a finish line that
3 when you've met all these checkmarks then you've got
4 it, you know. And that's just what we're working for
5 is how to keep improving. You know, we listen to
6 everything you say. I go back and I re-read
7 everything. You know, I read all the other
8 applications. I read what you said on them. I mean,
9 hundreds of hours spent with me trying to get a feel
10 for what the expectation is and what is -- what we
11 need; what's that missing thing that we need.
12 Because we have a lot of the components; you know, we
13 have more than most charters you ever authorized
14 because of how we've come about, you know. And so
15 it's just very frustrating on our part because we're
16 working hard. I'm sorry. But, yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We need to continue.

18 MS. KIGHT: Yeah. Go ahead. My bad. I won't

19 --

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

21 MS. PFEFFER: My decision, I voted to -- let me
22 make sure what I voted. I voted for the motion to
23 deny the charter. And my decision was based on -- in
24 large part what I heard today was not about creating
25 a school for the future, but more about a school of

1 the past. And I'm concerned about the capacity to
2 have the staff that the charter would need, and not
3 just limiting to licensure but even being able to
4 meet the highly qualified status. I know that
5 education is very important to you and to your
6 community. And I'm going to piggyback off of the
7 question Dr. Saunders asked about a possible
8 partnership between your community or organization
9 and the local district for a district conversion
10 charter, so that you do have those extra support
11 pieces there that could blend in with what you --
12 some of your goals. The lack of technology -- I
13 understand if you had the charter then you can
14 possibly get some other resources. But I think we're
15 in dangerous territory when we approve this and
16 believe everything else will come. So --

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

18 DR. JONES: I voted in favor of the motion to
19 deny the charter. The charter applicants cannot
20 define their curriculum for math, English language
21 arts, or science. The charter sites as primary
22 program features a focus on STEM and a focus on
23 college and career readiness. The charter budget did
24 not include expenses for technology, nor would your
25 school be well equipped with technology. There were

1 not established career pathways, agreements for
2 concurrent credit, or established career options for
3 students.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

5 MR. ROGERS: I voted to deny the motion as well.
6 And I go back to what I talked about earlier, about
7 the legislative intent, as well as Dr. Gotcher did.
8 And although I like the concept of a small school --
9 I think everybody does -- like knowing everybody
10 that's in there and the closeness of it. But the
11 legislative intent for charters was -- it says that
12 it has to expand choices, improve student learning,
13 and have innovative teaching methods. And I'm just
14 not sure that I heard any of that today. I mean, I
15 like the idea of a small school concept, but other
16 than that, as far as intent, I just didn't hear it
17 today.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I had concerns over the
20 financial stability and enrollment numbers. And one
21 thing that Ms. Pfeffer said that I would like to
22 expand on was that -- there was one common theme that
23 I heard and I want to make sure that, you know, the
24 kids -- the environments that we're putting them into
25 -- and I think a small school environment is a great

1 idea; however, I want to make sure that the
2 environment we put them into is preparing them for
3 tomorrow and not for yesterday; that we're not trying
4 to get back to how things were, that we're trying to
5 prepare them in a better way for tomorrow.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Thank you,
7 Panel. Ms. Kight, we certainly know that small
8 schools do a lot of great things. There's a lot of
9 people in this room that came from a small school.
10 So, as Dr. Saunders said, environment is critical for
11 kids and you have that in spades. So a lot of great
12 things were said today. I think there will be some
13 feedback that comes from this. Ms. Perry will be
14 able to provide -- she and Ms. Boyd will be able to
15 provide additional feedback. And feel free to ask
16 questions. Anything that you need, we are happy to
17 provide support for. So, best of luck to your team.

18 MS. KIGHT: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay, are there any --
20 I have a sign-in sheet. Do you know of anyone that's
21 here for public comment?

22 MS. CLAY: I don't know of anyone.

23 MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Is there anything
25 else before the Panel today?

1 MS. PFEFFER: This -- and I may should have
2 asked about this early this morning when Ms. Perry
3 was going over the timeline for -- well, I don't
4 remember now what we were going over, but with the
5 timelines. But I was wondering what is the process
6 if we feel like that we want to review a charter?
7 What is the process about getting that on the agenda?
8 Do we request that at a meeting? Do we -- can
9 someone --

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay.

11 MS. PFEFFER: -- talk me through that?

12 MS. CLAY: A couple of ways that can happen.
13 One thing, if it's something that you would like to
14 discuss with your panel members on whether to bring a
15 particular charter in that would need to be done at a
16 meeting. If it's something that you have concerns
17 individually, those would need to be communicated to
18 the Charter School office and to Ms. Coffman, and we
19 would provide notice to the particular school and ask
20 them. If it's a particular issue, we'd want to give
21 them as much information as possible about what the
22 topic would be. But what would happen is we would
23 bring them in for possible probation, modification,
24 or revocation of the charter.

25 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And my concern was -- would

1 be publication of our priority schools, that there
2 were I believe three that were on the priority list.
3 And I know we don't have all of our information yet
4 from the 2015 assessments, but I would like for us to
5 have those charters that were identified as priority
6 schools to come back to go through a review of their
7 charters. I think that's something we really need to
8 look at.

9 MS. CLAY: One other option is if you didn't
10 want to have a full hearing on whether action was
11 taken on their charter, you could ask them to come in
12 for a report too. So that would be up to you on how
13 that information was provided to you.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Is the Charter Panel allowed to
15 have a work session, same as the State Board?
16 Obviously, we would fall under the same media
17 notification, et cetera.

18 MS. CLAY: Yes. So, if you wanted to just talk
19 with a particular charter with no action to be taken,
20 you could do that. I don't know that it would
21 necessarily be a work session, but it could be a
22 meeting for that purpose and then have a, if
23 necessary, later, a formal meeting where action could
24 be taken. It's basically the same thing; you would
25 be sitting here and it would be open to everyone.

1 But it might feel less formal if it's just a report
2 and review, rather than having someone in for action.

3 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you.

4 DR. JONES: Kendra, I have an additional
5 question. If they just come -- if we call them back
6 for just a report, can we not take action?

7 MS. CLAY: If there's a possibility that you're
8 going to take action, we would want to provide notice
9 to them that that's a possibility. So if you would
10 prefer, just in one meeting. and, I mean, if you --
11 if we notice -- if we send them notice that there
12 will be possible action, you're not required to take
13 any action but it would appear on your agenda as an
14 action item. We would go through the hearing
15 procedures for probation, modification or revocation,
16 and it would be a hearing similar to what you had
17 today, with 20 minutes -- it actually calls for the
18 Department staff to present information, so any
19 information you needed from the Department staff, and
20 then the charter school would be able to follow-up
21 with a 20-minute presentation. And it would be more
22 of a formal hearing process, rather than just what I
23 would call a conversation about performance.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And is that something, Ms.
25 Boyd, that we would have time for in our November

1 agendas or is that something that we would need to
2 schedule an extra day for?

3 MS. BOYD: The November agenda is pretty heavy
4 for the two days. Right now, it seems like we're
5 going to have six district conversion applications
6 and then we also have about four or five amendments
7 that have recently been submitted to be heard in
8 November, and at least three of them are going to be
9 pretty lengthy.

10 DR. JONES: Can you remind us of the timeline,
11 if action were to be taken? Remind us of the
12 timeline. It would have to go -- say, for example,
13 we saw data and we would make a recommendation to put
14 the school on probation or closed, then we would have
15 to wait till the next month to go before the school
16 board for their action. And I'm just thinking about
17 the families within that charter. We would want to
18 -- the Board has stated before to take action quickly
19 so that parents have options to get their students --
20 have plenty of time to make decisions. So this is
21 something I don't think we would want to put off
22 until February, till February's meeting. Mary, can
23 you advise us on that?

24 MS. PERRY: You certainly could schedule a
25 meeting in December. We do not have a scheduled

1 meeting in December. That is at your call. I do
2 want to point out that there are four open-enrollment
3 charters that are on the priority list and two
4 district conversion charters that are on the priority
5 list, so that's a significant number. I don't know
6 that you want -- whether your pleasure is to ask all
7 of them in. At least one of the district conversions
8 has recently been before the special committee with
9 the State Board of Education very recently. So that
10 has occurred for one of those charters that are on
11 that priority -- one of the district conversions that
12 are on that priority list. But anyway, there are a
13 significant number there. There are four open-
14 enrollment and two district conversion. So, quite
15 frankly, I'd probably recommend calling a special
16 meeting in December to do that.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: I'd recommend calling a special
18 meeting in December and seeing all of those schools,
19 all four, and then the two. Right? Is that correct?
20 You said four open-enrollment, two conversions?

21 MS. PERRY: Yeah. Three of the open-enrollment
22 are coming back to you for renewal this spring, as
23 well; three of the four.

24 MS. PFEFFER: But, again, this spring timeline
25 --

1 MS. PERRY: That's right.

2 MS. PFEFFER: -- is getting late.

3 MS. PERRY: The timeline is late.

4 MS. PFEFFER: Yeah. Yeah.

5 MS. PERRY: And even next year when we
6 accelerate it it's still late for --

7 MS. PFEFFER: Well, and these are schools that
8 have been placed on priority status based on multiple
9 years of data --

10 MS. PERRY: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. PFEFFER: -- in the lowest 5%.

12 MS. PERRY: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. PFEFFER: And, therefore, I would say if
14 we're going to have them come, it needs to be kind of
15 with the possibility that action will be taken and it
16 would need to be done in a manner in which there
17 would be time for whatever needed to be done.

18 MS. PERRY: I don't have the State Board meeting
19 date for December.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: December 10th and 11th.

21 MS. PERRY: The following week? That's awfully
22 close there. But you know how we have to do; we'll
23 have to give notice in advance, at least 10 days in
24 advance. We've got to give people time to say that
25 they want to appeal your hearing or have the Board

1 review it, get that letter out, get it back, and get
2 it back all published before the State Board meeting.
3 So it does have to come very quickly on the heels of
4 the State Board meeting and it can't come in advance
5 of it because the law is explicit that we have -- you
6 have to make a decision and we have to get it
7 notified 10 days in advance of the next State Board
8 meeting.

9 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

10 DR. JONES: Is this a manageable request, Ms.
11 Boyd and Ms. Perry --

12 MS. PERRY: For us to get the --

13 DR. JONES: -- for December, all of them?

14 MS. PERRY: Yes, I think it is.

15 DR. JONES: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, December 16th would be
17 the Wednesday following the State Board.

18 MS. PERRY: I don't know if you could do six in
19 that day, but certainly the 16th and 17th. If you
20 want to try to do six and go a long day, we'll be
21 happy to do that. It's at your pleasure. We
22 certainly can be here for a long day without any
23 difficulty.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So if the Board considers
25 tonight, independently -- if they think about -- each

1 person thinks about do we need a day or two, and
2 possibly what information we would need those school
3 districts to bring --

4 MS. PERRY: That would be great.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- we could discuss that
6 tomorrow and make final plans?

7 MS. PFEFFER: Make a recommendation.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Make a recommendation?

9 MS. PERRY: To us, and direct us tomorrow, then
10 we would make that happen. Absolutely.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That gives everybody time
12 to sleep on it and think about what questions you
13 might ask, and that way we can do it publicly and
14 make a list together.

15 All right. Any other topics to discuss? Well,
16 then, if there are no additional issues before us
17 today, we'll begin at 8:30 in the morning. And I'll
18 accept a motion to adjourn.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: So moved.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders. And
21 seconded by?

22 MS. PFEFFER: Second.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All those in favor?

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All those opposed? Motion

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has passed.

DR. JONES: Thank you, legal team and Mary;
thank y'all for all your work on this, and Alexandra.

(The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.)

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REPORT-2
EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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