

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

November 17, 2015

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

#4 CAPITOL MALL
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201

November 17, 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
Dr. Mark Gotcher	Deputy Commissioner
Ms. Jennifer Liwo	PLSB Attorney
Mr. Bobby Lester	Director of Federal Programs

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. Jennifer Davis	ADE Deputy General Counsel

I N D E X

	Page
Exhibits Index	3
Welcome and Preliminary Matters	4
Consent Agenda - Motion and Vote	4
Hearing Procedures	5
Senator Bart Hester	7
Representative Jim Dotson	10
A-1: Arkansas Connections Academy	12
A-2: Washington Academy (Texarkana)	60
A-3: Maumelle Charter School	77
Motion and Vote re: Adjournment	128
Court Reporter's Certificate	133

E X H I B I T S

A-1: ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

"Congratulations, Thanks, & Kudos" Comments

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

Article, "Cyber Students Gather in Real World to Shop for a Hypothetical Aquarium"

A-2: WASHINGTON ACADEMY (TEXARKANA)

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

Graduates Report

A-3: MAUMELLE CHARTER SCHOOL

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

Letter from Attorney Sam Jones to Alexandra Boyd
(11/12/15) re: Desegregation Analysis

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
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9
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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. The November 17, 2015 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education. 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 required the Commissioner to appoint an ADE staff to the panel, and that panel sits before you today. As chair, it is my goal to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing. I will request that each person speaking please state your name and title for the record. I will ask that you continue to speak clearly into the microphone for the benefit of the panel, the audience and the viewing audience. This entire meeting is being live-streamed and video-taped. Ms. Sharon Hill, our court reporter will be providing a transcript of this meeting and it will be posted on the ADE website.

So, are there any reports or items before we begin from the Panel?

CONSENT AGENDA

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If not, we'll begin with

1 the consent agenda. You have two items before you on
2 the Consent Agenda today and you've had an
3 opportunity to review those two items. Are there any
4 questions, corrections?

5 I'll accept a motion to approve the Consent
6 Agenda.

7 MS. BARNES: So moved.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A motion has been made by
10 Ms. Barnes and seconded by Dr. Gotcher. All those in
11 favor?

12 (UNANIMOUS VOTE OF APPROVAL)

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? The Consent
14 Agenda is approved.

15 HEARING PROCEDURES

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Clay, if
17 you will come forward and overview the process for
18 today.

19 MS. CLAY: Good morning. Kendra Clay, General
20 Counsel for the Department of Education. Your
21 hearing procedures today are going to be the same for
22 each item on your agenda. All persons, with the
23 exception of attorneys, need to be sworn in. The
24 charter school applicant or current charter holder
25 will have 20 minutes to present their case for either

1 amendment or authorization of their charter. Any
2 parties opposed will have 20 minutes after the
3 charter school's presentation. And then the charter
4 school will have 5 minutes of rebuttal. After that,
5 the authorizer will have discussion --

6 MS. MORRIS: Let me check your microphone. I'm
7 sorry.

8 MS. CLAY: I didn't think it was on.

9 MS. MORRIS: Here you go. I apologize.

10 MS. CLAY: Maybe I should turn it on first.
11 Just real quick I'll go back over. Everyone, with
12 the exception of attorneys, will need to be sworn in.
13 The charter school will have 20 minutes to present
14 their case. Any parties opposed will have 20 minutes
15 to present the opposition, and the charter school
16 will have 5 minutes of rebuttal. After that, the
17 Panel will have discussion and questions. You may
18 vote on the matter today or take the matter under
19 advisement and vote at a later meeting. And if you
20 do that, you can allow the charter school to get
21 technical assistance from the Department or gather
22 additional information, if needed. Do you have any
23 questions about the procedures today?

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay, if you'll go
25 over our procedures for revisions.

1 MS. CLAY: Yes. All of the panel members have
2 access to a Google doc where you will, after the
3 vote, go in and put how you voted, yes or no, on the
4 motion and then your reason for the vote. Once
5 everyone has inputted their vote and their reason,
6 Ms. Coffman will read those aloud to the audience.
7 And we're doing that to facilitate the State Board's
8 possible review of any of your actions so that they
9 know why you voted the way you did. So that will
10 take place at the end, after you vote on each agenda
11 item today.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And then any revisions to
13 the applications?

14 MS. CLAY: Yes. Just like all of your hearings
15 that you have, it's basically a contract negotiation.
16 A charter is a contract. So anything that is
17 different from what is written in the application or
18 current charter or anything additional that is said
19 today, the charter school will be held to what they
20 say.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. And I believe
22 we have a legislator or two in the audience. Are
23 there any that would like to speak? Please come
24 forward.

25 SENATOR HESTER: Thank you. My name is Bart

1 Hester. I represent District 1 in the Arkansas
2 Senate in northwest Arkansas, primarily Bentonville.
3 I'm here to speak today on behalf of Arkansas
4 Connections Academy. I think that northwest Arkansas
5 is well qualified to host Arkansas Connections
6 Academy because we are a melting pot for all of the
7 world and all of the country. For over five years
8 now 27 people a day move to northwest Arkansas. With
9 that 27 people a day, we get people from every
10 country moving to northwest Arkansas; we get people
11 from all over the state; we get people from all over
12 the country. And with those people that are coming
13 in there are unique needs, unique expectations, and
14 unique wants as far as education-wise. The
15 population in northwest Arkansas again is unique as
16 it's growing. The fact is that we have a smaller
17 amount of free and reduced lunches but that smaller
18 amount is still over 4,000 kids in Bentonville alone,
19 which is larger than most school districts. So our
20 teachers again are uniquely qualified to deal with
21 children that are from a poor socioeconomic
22 background and those from the far end of the other
23 spectrum. You know, I think that northwest Arkansas,
24 the community, backs these types of organizations and
25 charter schools. I've spoken with Superintendent

1 Poore and I think you'll see Bentonville School
2 District will not be here opposing this. I received
3 a lot of information from Bentonville School District
4 about how they would feel about this coming into
5 northwest Arkansas. You know, another question I
6 asked, I said, "Look, Bentonville is putting on a new
7 high school next year -- but not only will we be
8 putting on a new high school, we're going to be
9 putting on a new junior high I think in the next
10 year; we're adding schools every year. How can we
11 continue to attract and qualify good teachers -- good
12 quality teachers?" So this morning I spoke with
13 Superintendent Poore and I said, "If we bring another
14 school in, are you going to be able to get the good
15 quality teachers we need in Bentonville public
16 schools?" And he said, "The average teaching
17 position that we're getting right now, we're getting
18 over 200 applicants." And he said, "And then if you
19 want to talk about even special ed. needs, we're
20 getting approximately 20 applicants for every job
21 when it comes to special education." So we do not
22 have a problem with finding quality teachers in
23 northwest Arkansas that want to live there. And,
24 again, I think that these teachers' specific needs
25 and wants or the people's needs and wants for

1 northwest Arkansas, the people and the teachers that
2 we have are uniquely qualified to serve all the
3 students.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Senator Hester.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DOTSON: I'm State Representative
6 Jim Dotson, also from Bentonville. Senator Hester
7 took most of my notes. We didn't coordinate
8 beforehand; should have, I guess. You know, a couple
9 of points, I agree with everything he said. Just,
10 one, to make it real and personal, I have a neighbor
11 that lives across the street from me who tried to
12 find a job and position at Bentonville schools, also
13 at every other school in northwest Arkansas, and is
14 now driving 40, 45 minutes a day to teach in
15 Missouri. So just to reiterate that point, on a real
16 case-by-case basis we do have more qualified
17 applicants than we do have positions in northwest
18 Arkansas; so any additional help that we can have for
19 some of our teachers to be able to stay more locally
20 and also able to help all across the state at the
21 same time.

22 You know, also, one other thing that I'd bring
23 up, you know, I also am on the state's Advanced
24 Communications Technology Committee. We've been
25 studying the broadband issue, trying to make sure we

1 have access across the state for homes and
2 businesses. And we'll be making an initiative over
3 the next year to try to really focus in on that to
4 try to make broadband available so that everybody and
5 every student all over the entire state has access.
6 So, in particular, with regards for a location,
7 there's a lot of access and quality broadband in
8 northwest Arkansas to be able to push out learning
9 curriculum, but also trying to make sure that
10 students have access across the state to take
11 advantage of this particular opportunity which is
12 more of a niche market is extremely important, I
13 think. And we at the Legislature are really working
14 hard to try to make sure all the players involved are
15 able to bring that access all across the state.

16 You know, I've also spoken with Arkansas
17 Connections Academy, and I guess I didn't really
18 mention that that was what I was here for to speak.
19 But they are also committed to working with not only
20 the local communities in which they serve all across
21 the state, they're working and partnering with local
22 groups for, you know, field trips and clubs and
23 internships and that sort of thing, but also trying
24 to make sure that the learning schedules, which are
25 flexible, allow for extra learning activities; like

1 if a student wants to take a welding class or be
2 involved in internships like coding and that sort of
3 thing they can take advantage of those opportunities.

4 And back on the broadband issue, I believe that
5 they have those subsidies available within their
6 budget to make sure that all students are able to not
7 only have access but pay for it if they get enrolled
8 into the program. So I'd really appreciate a
9 favorable look at this and thank you for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Representative
11 Dotson.

12 A-1: CONTINUATION HEARING OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER
13 SCHOOL APPLICATION: ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: With that, we'll begin the
15 action agenda. Ms. Boyd, you're recognized.

16 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The first
17 agenda on the item [sic] is the Continuation Hearing
18 of the Open-Enrollment Public Charter School
19 Application from the Arkansas Connections Academy in
20 Bentonville, Arkansas. On October 14, 2015,
21 representatives of the Arkansas Connections Academy
22 appeared before the Charter Authorizing Panel
23 requesting to operate an open-enrollment charter
24 beginning in the 2016-17 school year. The Panel
25 tabled the discussion and requested additional

1 materials. In correspondence dated October 16, 2014,
2 the applicant was provided a letter that listed the
3 materials requested by the Panel. And here today we
4 have Dr. Beck and other representatives from
5 Connections Academy to continue answering your
6 questions that were tabled from the previous meeting.
7 Also, they have brought some additional materials
8 that I'll begin passing around as they begin.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Panel, this is
10 -- this motion was tabled previously, so I'll need a
11 motion to remove this item from the table.

12 MS. BARNES: So moved.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We have a motion by Ms.
15 Barnes and a second by Dr. Saunders to remove the
16 item from the table.

17 All right. If all representatives from Arkansas
18 Connections Academy and anyone speaking in opposition
19 would please --

20 MS. CLAY: You need to vote on that motion.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm sorry. All those in
22 favor of the motion to remove the item from the
23 table?

24 (UNANIMOUS VOTES OF APPROVAL)

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Any opposed?

1 Motion passed.

2 Now, if all representatives from the Arkansas
3 Connections Academy and anyone speaking in opposition
4 will please stand to receive the oath. Do you swear
5 or affirm that the testimony you are about to give
6 shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
7 the truth?

8 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWEREDLY AFFIRMATIVELY)

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Beck, we
10 have already completed the presentation part of the
11 item and so we will pick up exactly where we left off
12 with question-and-answer.

13 DR. BECK: That's good.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: First of all, I would like
15 to say thank you for providing the very well written
16 response to the questions. That was very helpful.
17 So we'll start with the Panel. Any questions?

18 DR. BECK: May I first indulge the Panel? I'd
19 like to introduce -- make sure to introduce
20 everybody.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. We'll do that.

22 DR. BECK: Okay. Bryce Adams, Carla Hartwell,
23 Josh Solomon, Mary Ann Sanders, Melissa Nelson, and
24 Pat Hoge. And also personally I brought my family
25 along with me, my beautiful wife Jennifer, my baby

1 who is almost asleep Jude, and Caleb and Hannah.
2 Thank you. They're here to learn about the process,
3 so thank you. I appreciate you indulging me there.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Panel Members,
5 any questions? Dr. Jones.

6 DR. JONES: I want to second that. Thank you
7 for the excellent information that you submitted.
8 Can you tell me a little bit about your dyslexia
9 program that you will offer for your students?

10 DR. BECK: Certainly. Dr. Pat Hoge.

11 DR. HOGE: Thank you. It's good to see you all
12 again. I'm Chief Academic Officer. And that is part
13 of our special ed. program so that really whatever in
14 a student's IEP is identified for them as a need,
15 whether it's a specific program, it's an Orton-
16 Gillingham program, it's a Lindamood-Bell program --
17 whatever the IEP specifies then that -- you know --
18 then we're in compliance with the IEP. It's not a
19 Connections Academy specific program; it's how the
20 IEP is driven as far as the needs of the student.

21 DR. JONES: Okay. State law requires that
22 whether a student is identified special ed. or not
23 that they be provided an interventionist in a
24 dyslexia program. Is there a waiver in place for any
25 of this?

1 DR. HOGE: No.

2 MS. CLAY: No.

3 DR. JONES: I see Kendra saying no. And so I
4 guess my better question is what's the process that
5 you will use to identify dyslexia for non-special ed.
6 students?

7 DR. HOGE: Right. And then we have the student
8 support team, so any student who is struggling in any
9 way goes before the student support team. And then
10 if an evaluation is recommended, then an evaluation
11 is conducted. And then if a student is identified,
12 then a program is put in place for them.

13 DR. JONES: Okay. And just for clarity on the
14 law, the student does not have to be diagnosed with
15 dyslexia; they just have to show characteristics or
16 markers of dyslexia to begin receiving services.
17 They do not have to be identified special ed.

18 DR. HOGE: And then we would be in compliance
19 with that.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

21 MS. PFEFFER: Good morning.

22 DR. BECK: Good morning.

23 MS. PFEFFER: And I too appreciate your answers
24 and the work that you -- or the adjustment that you
25 made on the stipend for the internet connections.

1 That was one of my primary concerns last time. But I
2 still have some, I guess, reservations in my mind
3 about teachers and the fact that your teachers will
4 all be centered in the northwest Arkansas area. I
5 just -- I did a quick check in looking at ALP's and
6 long-term sub waivers, and I haven't done a lot of
7 calculation but in Bentonville there are 21 total
8 ALP's, additional licensure plans, in place for
9 teachers and 12 of those are for special ed.
10 teachers. And in Fayetteville 10 -- there are 10
11 special ed. ALP's in place and in Fort Smith there
12 are 14. In Rogers, of the 32 total ALP's 11 are for
13 special ed. So just thinking in terms of teachers
14 coming from that area there, the public schools are
15 having difficulties filling some of their positions
16 and especially special education positions. So I do
17 have concerns about whether or not that you'll be
18 able to hire licensed special ed. teachers who have
19 experience not only in teaching students in an online
20 environment but teaching special ed. students around
21 the state. And, you know, because it's going --
22 that's going to be a challenge. So can you talk a
23 little bit about that?

24 MS. NELSON: Hi, I'm Melissa Nelson; I'm a Vice
25 President of Schools for Connections Academy. And

1 it's always a concern when you go into a new state to
2 find -- make sure that there's enough teachers to
3 staff our schools. But as the Senator said earlier,
4 you know, Bentonville is having 20 applications for
5 every special ed. position, so we're hopeful that we
6 will be able to staff the school with students --
7 with teachers who would physically report to the
8 office in Bentonville. Part of being an online
9 school allows us to go outside Bentonville if we need
10 to. If the teachers are somewhere else in Arkansas,
11 we can hire them and they would work remotely with
12 support from the teachers in the office and the
13 administrators in the office. Some of our states are
14 set up that way, so we can train the principal and
15 get everything ready to have those teachers not be in
16 Bentonville. If that's where the best teacher is who
17 could suit the needs of the students, we would find
18 that teacher wherever they are in Arkansas.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. But to reiterate, 12 of
20 Bentonville's special ed. positions are being filled
21 with teachers who are not currently licensed in
22 special ed. So --

23 MS. NELSON: Well, and like --

24 MS. PFEFFER: -- your comment about having those
25 available teachers, I'm just cautioning that I'm not

1 sure that there will be those teachers --

2 MS. NELSON: Well, and --

3 MS. PFEFFER: -- in that area.

4 MS. NELSON: Yes. That's a very good point.

5 And we would definitely at that point, if we do not
6 find the people that we're looking for in Bentonville
7 we will look outside the city to other places in
8 Arkansas to see if we can find people who will meet
9 the needs of the Arkansas children.

10 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. And can I follow-up with an
11 additional question?

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

14 MS. PFEFFER: And I made this note just as I was
15 reading through number four, processes you use to
16 insure equitable services to all students. And so
17 I'm still thinking about the area where the teachers
18 are going to be. And one of the concerns is the lack
19 of human contact with students in diverse geographic
20 areas of the state. So I'm wondering has there been
21 any attempt to reach out to local education service
22 cooperatives or ERZ's or reaching out so that there
23 would be potential for partnerships to be put in
24 place for those human connections with students in
25 those geographic areas?

1 DR. BECK: I'd like to start answering that. As
2 a professor at the U of A-Fayetteville, I have myself
3 done several service opportunities where I've been
4 able to go into the co-ops and establish some
5 relationships by giving some professional development
6 training for teachers. And so I would build on those
7 relationships as the board president for ARCA to
8 establish those relationships with those
9 cooperatives. And also, another thing that would be
10 relevant -- and this is -- we have established a fund
11 for students who are free and reduced lunch to make
12 sure that they are always able to attend any sort of
13 field trips and those sorts of important community
14 interaction type things that the school is doing.

15 Did you want to also comment?

16 MS. NELSON: Yeah. Just to say that as the
17 school -- when the school hires a school leader that
18 will be a primary job of the school leader to build
19 those community partnerships and I think service co-
20 ops are a wonderful way to do that. You know, we may
21 have teachers who are not living in Bentonville and
22 so having them have, you know, the ability to talk to
23 other teachers and to get professional development in
24 those service co-ops and then to get teachers and
25 students together at field trips is going to build

1 that face-to-face. One of the things that we hear
2 from teachers is that they get to know their students
3 even better in our environment despite the fact that
4 they're not face-to-face. And we actually have a
5 teacher here, Mary Ann Sanders, who is a teacher at
6 our Texas Connections Academy and she could probably
7 speak to that.

8 MS. SANDERS: Sure. Good morning. I'm Mary Ann
9 Sanders. I'm a Master Teacher at Texas Connections
10 Academy. I've been there since 2009, so I've done
11 this for a long time. I started out in brick-and-
12 mortar in 1981, so I have a lot of years' experience
13 behind me. This was a new challenge for me to come
14 into online learning and I actually have found
15 through the years that I know my students better
16 online than I did when I stood in the classroom with
17 them all day. I call these students all the time.
18 I'm a phone call away when they have a question. I
19 know their families; I know their -- you know -- the
20 learning coach; I know a lot more about them, their
21 situations, their struggles academically and
22 otherwise. I feel like I can reach out to these
23 kids, pull them into a live lesson room that's our
24 medium for pulling them in online and meet with them
25 one-on-one. For instance, in a math lesson, "You

1 need some help; here's a whiteboard, come on in. You
2 have a mic; we'll talk about it. You do the problem
3 for me and let me show you what it is you're doing
4 wrong. Let me help you." Whereas, in the classroom
5 I often have 30 students and it's really hard to stop
6 everybody while I come over here and work with
7 Johnny. I can't necessarily do that. So I've found
8 it to be very rewarding and I do know my students
9 much better than when I taught in brick-and-mortar.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: May I ask you a question
11 while you're up --

12 MS. SANDERS: Sure.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- Ms. Sanders? So we've
14 recently read a report about online learning and the
15 loss that some students have suffered in mathematics.
16 Can you address that and how your group is insuring
17 that that doesn't happen?

18 MS. SANDERS: Absolutely. With Connections
19 Academy, we have a math initiative going on right now
20 and they're doing a lot of things to insure that our
21 scores do come up in Texas. And I can speak directly
22 to that because, of course, that's where I'm from.
23 Our scores were all at or above state level in math,
24 so I think that's pretty impressive. We work very
25 diligently with the students to make sure that they

1 do meet the needs. We make sure that if there are
2 any interventions that we need to make -- all
3 students start out at what we call Tier 1 and that
4 might be an occasional intervention, like, "You need
5 a little extra help, let me pull you into a live
6 lesson room or you can come to my scheduled live
7 lesson where I'm doing some teaching." At Tier 2,
8 we're monitoring those kids every two to three weeks
9 because we already see they're struggling. At Tier
10 3, we're monitoring those kids every week to see what
11 it is they need and where we can help. I love it
12 because it's a very data rich environment.
13 Everything I need is at my fingertips, so I can see
14 how those students are doing. I can sort that data
15 and see exactly in Texas what teak [ps] it is that
16 they need, what standard it is that they need to work
17 on and pull them in and work specifically on that.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

19 MS. SANDERS: Sure.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions?

21 MS. BARNES: I have a follow-up question, I
22 suppose, regarding the needs of students who may need
23 additional support. In the response to number three,
24 you have pending a Title 1 allocation that an
25 addition would be -- additional interventionist would

1 be hired. In the event that the funding is
2 insufficient to meet your needs, what strategies do
3 you actually have in place as a back-up plan to meet
4 needs of students that may be coming in who need
5 additional support?

6 DR. HOGE: Thank you. And we talked about the
7 multi-tiered intervention program that we have and
8 that's part of the standard program. So that's, you
9 know, part of the standard offering and so that --
10 and Mary Ann was just commenting on that as well as
11 far as the Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3. Our assumption
12 is always that, you know, we want students to meet
13 with success in Tier 1. Research says that hopefully
14 85% of students will meet with success there if
15 teachers are supported, if they're highly qualified,
16 if you have a quality curriculum. But we know not
17 everybody will meet with success and that may be --
18 15% is sort of what research indicates would fall to
19 Tier 2. So that's -- we have interventions within
20 math and in reading, science, social studies,
21 writing, you know, set up to support students in Tier
22 2. That's part of the standard offering. And then
23 the idea is, you know, hopefully that students are
24 moving back up, you know, into Tier 1. Some still
25 don't, so they may need Tier 3, which could mean the

1 same intervention but it needs to be an increased
2 frequency and intensity. So that is for every
3 student, not just Title 1, you know, identified
4 students.

5 MS. BARNES: Exactly. And I guess that's what I
6 was trying to determine though because your response
7 was pending your Title 1 allocation; you would fund
8 some additional interventionists. And so that would
9 be --

10 DR. HOGE: That would be additional but that
11 would not be in place of. This is part of the
12 standard offering that all students receive.

13 MS. BARNES: Yes. Thank you.

14 DR. BECK: You're welcome.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning, Dr. Beck.

17 DR. BECK: Good morning.

18 DR. GOTCHER: I want to start off by just saying
19 how much I appreciate your response to the questions.
20 It was very much appreciated. My earlier concern was
21 that poverty could be a barrier to participate in
22 this program and I think you've addressed that with
23 the vouchers or whatever the term was for --

24 DR. BECK: The subsidy.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. For the internet access for

1 those kids based upon their free-and-reduced data.

2 So --

3 DR. BECK: I want to point out to you --

4 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah, please.

5 DR. BECK: -- that we're doing that monthly, in
6 particular because we've noticed that in other models
7 where it comes at the end of the semester, at the end
8 of the year those families just cannot put that money
9 up-front. So we want to provide that monthly in
10 order to pay that bill monthly.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Good. And I appreciate that. So
12 my question, now that I feel like I've got most of my
13 concerns answered, how will you simply be different
14 in quality --

15 DR. BECK: That's a good question.

16 DR. GOTCHER: -- than the other digital
17 campuses, digital providers we have in our state?
18 And you can -- you're welcome to bring any of your
19 team --

20 DR. BECK: Absolutely.

21 DR. GOTCHER: -- to sell me on that. But I
22 simply want to know how will you be different in
23 terms of quality, expanded choices, innovative,
24 anyway --

25 DR. BECK: Well, I think one you've just hit on,

1 and I want to start there, is that access and equity
2 piece. Because being accessible or being open, as
3 you pointed out earlier, is different than being
4 accessible to all Arkansas students. And that's why
5 we really have worked hard not just with that
6 internet subsidy piece and the free computer that
7 they have access to, to use, but also through -- we
8 established a fund for students to attend field trips
9 -- sorry -- and other sort of community events. So
10 that way, if they don't have money to do that out of
11 their own funds it's provided for. And so I think
12 that is a unique piece of us. I think also academic
13 achievement. And I want to bring up Pat Hoge to
14 comment on that.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning.

16 DR. HOGE: Thank you. Good morning. And, you
17 know, you brought up the report; we've all read the
18 report. And, honestly, we were excited about the
19 report. We worked with Mathematica on that portion
20 of the report because we wanted online schools to be
21 represented and they had not had a voice before. And
22 many of our school administrators who did that really
23 were giving the perspective of an online school
24 administrator with the portion of the report that --
25 in the Credo report that really talked about academic

1 performance. We were disappointed that it was sort
2 of this broad brushstroke at the end. They -- I
3 mean, if you read the report there are a number of
4 networks that were high performing networks and then
5 others that weren't performing, and we pride
6 ourselves on the fact that we are a high performing
7 system of schools. You can see that in the response.
8 We are extremely focused on academic performance for
9 all students. And not only do we perform well
10 compared to the state -- and our students who are
11 free and reduced meal eligible students are -- many
12 of them are performing equal to or better than the
13 state averages. But when we compare our performance
14 to other online charter schools or other online
15 systems then you can see that we're outperforming
16 them. You know, honestly, it's a point of
17 distinction and uniqueness that we are -- it's very
18 rare that -- you can look at the slides -- that we're
19 not meeting or exceeding other online charter schools
20 or providers. But for us really we wish that
21 everybody, you know, was performing where we were
22 because it's really -- we want -- together, you know,
23 we sort of hold hands and go together. But you can
24 see on the reading performance of online schools that
25 93% of the time we are meeting or exceeding the

1 performance of other national schools and 70% of the
2 time we are exceeding that performance in reading.
3 And then in math 60% of the time we're exceeding, 31%
4 meeting, so only 10% of the time, you know, are we
5 not equal or better than. So, again, we pride
6 ourselves -- and your question about quality, I think
7 this really speaks to the quality of the program
8 compared to other online schools but then state
9 averages.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you. Any other voices?

11 DR. BECK: I also wanted to bring up -- and I
12 already mentioned the community piece, having those
13 field trips, having those community events that we'll
14 be meeting at and during would really kind of help
15 provide that local community connection but also the
16 wider community that we have access through the
17 Connections network of schools, through clubs,
18 through other activities, through the advanced
19 placement activities. All those sorts of things
20 would be open to students, and so I think that access
21 there is also another unique aspect. I also want to
22 bring up the college and career readiness and I'm
23 going to have Melissa Nelson address that -- or Pat.
24 Sorry. Wrong person.

25 DR. HOGE: Yeah. I can go back -- I'm actually

1 very proud of what we're seeing as far as college and
2 career readiness for students. I mean, one thing
3 we're looking at high schools across the Connections
4 Academy schools. Just for a little history, we
5 started at K-8 and then we added 9th grade, 10th
6 grade, 11th grade and 12th grade, so it took a little
7 while to get a high school in a population and watch
8 them go on to graduate and acceptance into four-year
9 institutions. Then for several years we were sort of
10 balanced between a third of the students elementary,
11 a third middle, and a third high school, but now
12 we're seeing 46% of our students are high school.
13 And one, that's sort of a trend; you can see with,
14 you know, online learning but then it specifically
15 speaks to if students are coming at high school, are
16 they coming on cohort, are they credit deficient, and
17 then you have much less time to make up that
18 difference. So in this past year we saw 35% of our
19 students entering high school being credit deficient
20 and so they're entering at 10th grade, 11th and 12th
21 grade and so how much time do you have to sort of
22 make that up and get them back on track. Of the
23 graduating students that graduated last year, we had
24 almost 4,000 students graduate across the Connections
25 Academy schools and 80% of them graduated in four

1 years. So it's a matter of getting them back in, you
2 know, offering them the courses that they need, and
3 then getting them on track to graduation. Overall,
4 in the high school we had over 58.5% of the students
5 graduated -- I mean, were accepted into a four-year
6 institution, and that's sort of everyone, whether
7 they wanted to or not. They might've said they were
8 going on to work or going on to military or to a
9 four-year, but almost 60% overall. But of the
10 students who identified that they did want to go on
11 to a four-year institution 91% of them were accepted
12 into a four-year institution. So we have -- we think
13 about college and career from the minute they come as
14 an elementary school student; middle school and high
15 school it's a focus across -- I mean, across our
16 clubs and activities. I think I mentioned last time
17 we are a first generation club at high school, which,
18 again, if there's not sort of a family history there
19 and to be able to support the students, how do we
20 make sure students are in there together. But I
21 think now that we have been in high school for quite
22 a while we can see, you know, are we graduating
23 students, are they graduating on time, are we getting
24 them back on track, and then are they going on to
25 their two- and four-year institutions. So, another

1 sign of the quality. Thank you.

2 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you. Thank you, Madam
3 Chair.

4 DR. BECK: One other -- sorry; one other point
5 of uniqueness is high interaction. I mean, I think
6 we've talked about the technology a lot but -- and
7 that access and equity issue, and I think it's very
8 important. But the high interaction issue -- and I
9 want to bring up Mary Ann since she is a teacher --
10 she's the boots on the ground, as my grandpa always
11 would say -- to comment on her interaction with
12 students as well as learning coaches and parents.

13 MS. SANDERS: Mary Ann Sanders. My interaction
14 with the students, as I mentioned before, is much
15 higher than it was when I was in brick-and-mortar. I
16 do -- when I talk to the parents I can talk more
17 specifically about the needs of the child; the
18 parents, I feel like, are more informed, so I get a
19 lot of buy-in from the parents. And once you have
20 the parents -- if you've been in a classroom, you
21 know once you have the parents buy-in you're going to
22 have more success with the child too. So I feel like
23 that's a huge aspect that we have going for us.

24 Also, the students are accessible all the time to us
25 and we can just pull them into a live lesson room,

1 work with them. We also have opportunities to work
2 with them on field trips; for instance, one of our
3 field trips that we went on this year was called
4 Pumpkin Pi, P-i. And so we went out into a pumpkin
5 patch and took strings and measured the circumference
6 of pumpkins and compared it to the diameter of the
7 pumpkin and they discovered what pi was actually out
8 in a pumpkin patch. So we had a big turnout for that
9 because, of course, kids like that kind of thing. We
10 also do socialization. For instance, at Herman Park
11 there in the Houston area we had a big picnic; the
12 kids come; we do sack races, that kind of stuff, just
13 to get them socializing as well. A lot of the
14 families exchange phone numbers, so they do have that
15 communication as well. That's one of the things I
16 think that we're very good at. In addition, in
17 Texas, I know each school does it a little big
18 different, but before -- prior to state testing we
19 will go out and meet with -- in different parts of
20 the state teachers will go out and meet with the kids
21 and work with them about state testing so that
22 they're comfortable before they go into a room and
23 sit and take a test. They haven't been doing this
24 all year and we want to make sure they know, you
25 know, the grid-able answers, how do those work and

1 all that kind of stuff, and get their questions
2 answered face-to-face. So we try and get in some
3 face-to-face time with the kids too.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Pfeffer.

5 MS. PFEFFER: One of the things you talk about
6 in here is regardless of location all students are
7 going to have access to AP and career technical
8 courses. And I just started thinking about what is
9 that going to look like in an online environment and
10 especially students throughout the state; are there
11 any -- have there been any arrangements made for
12 students to get hands-on experiences with those
13 career technical education courses in which they
14 might be interested?

15 DR. BECK: Dr. Hoge.

16 DR. HOGE: Thank you. I can talk about the
17 courses that we offer. So currently in our catalog
18 we have 16 AP courses and 32 career tech ed. courses.
19 So there's not a physical component in the sense that
20 students don't need to go to a site. You know, we
21 were thoughtful about the career tech ed. courses
22 that we were choosing. We don't have an HVAC, you
23 know, course, for example, but that's not to say that
24 as we look, you know, at different partnerships that
25 when there are opportunities, whether it's STEM

1 opportunities or partners, could we have students go
2 to a site. But currently, again, there's the 32 CTE
3 around career clusters where we're identifying where
4 really the school wants to focus or are we seeing a
5 student focus in AP courses.

6 MS. PFEFFER: So there really is not --

7 DR. HOGE: Not -- no.

8 MS. PFEFFER: -- anything in place yet for any
9 of the hands-on technical experiences leading -- or
10 any career pathways?

11 DR. HOGE: There's not any in those -- right --
12 in the CTE courses that we offer there's not a
13 requirement, you know, for anything face-to-face or
14 hands-on and so we've sort of carefully chosen those
15 courses. But, again, we would add to the catalog,
16 you know, when there's an opportunity.

17 DR. BECK: Yeah. And I want to emphasize too
18 that that's one of the primary jobs of the head of
19 the school, once that person is hired, is to start
20 building those partnerships, to start developing
21 those partnerships with local communities, making
22 sure that there are internship opportunities, hands-
23 on opportunities for those students.

24 MS. PFEFFER: Has that been done in the other
25 states where you work? Is there an example you can

1 give me? Because I'm a little bit uncomfortable with
2 --

3 DR. BECK: Oh, that's a good question.

4 MS. PFEFFER: -- the constant -- once this
5 happens and this happens and this happens, so --

6 MS. NELSON: Well, as Dr. Hoge said, the courses
7 are created so that they can be totally done online.
8 Some of our states have -- our New Mexico school has
9 a STEM focus, so they do special field trips and they
10 go to Los Alamos and have a partnership and do things
11 like that. Our California school has some hands-on
12 science; that's a requirement for them so they
13 figured out how to do that. So we do it -- you know,
14 the courses aren't built to need it but we could do
15 it if that was a requirement.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I had some questions pulled
18 up here concerning -- I'm trying to understand -- I
19 don't know if they were just some typos. But
20 governance, in particular -- and I know one question
21 that I had asked concerning the contracting, with a
22 substantial portion of the budget to one entity. And
23 I was trying to look through here -- and I know you
24 addressed that in your response and I appreciate
25 that, but I still have some questions on that, in

1 particular looking at -- within the budget it
2 references Connections Academy of Arkansas LLC.

3 DR. BECK: Uh-huh.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: And in another part of the
5 application it references Arkansas Connections
6 Academy, Incorporated. And then also there is
7 another group -- let me see -- where it was
8 referenced and I was trying to understand just what
9 each particular group does, why they're separate.
10 Are they nonprofit? What's the structure?

11 DR. BECK: I'm trying to -- I think they're just
12 trying to figure out -- yeah, trying to figure out
13 whether it's typos or not.

14 MR. SOLOMON: I apologize. So I think you were
15 referring to there might've been a typo, an
16 inconsistency in the way Connections Academy of
17 Arkansas LLC was listed in the budget?

18 DR. SAUNDERS: It's listed multiple times
19 throughout the budget and there's also a reference to
20 Arkansas Connections Academy, Incorporated, that was
21 filed with the Secretary of State.

22 MR. ADAMS: Okay. That's them; that's the
23 board; that's the nonprofit.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Please state your name.

25 MR. ADAMS: Yeah. Bryce Adams, State Relations

1 for Connections Education. So Arkansas Connections
2 Academy, Incorporated, that's the nonprofit board; so
3 that's the board that Dennis heads up. Then there's
4 Arkansas -- or Connections Academy of Arkansas LLC;
5 that's what you see in the expenditures line of the
6 budget multiple times, and that's us, that's the
7 vendor Connections.

8 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. So that is a -- that would
9 be the vendor that we were referencing on the
10 contracting amounts, substantial parts.

11 MR. ADAMS: Right.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: So there's two separate entities?

13 MR. ADAMS: Yes. So the board is hoping to
14 contract with us. And the names are similar but
15 they're the incorporated nonprofit with their
16 501(c)(3) status and we're Connections of Arkansas
17 LLC.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Is it -- is that part of a larger
19 national organization?

20 MR. ADAMS: I'm not exactly sure how it's
21 structured.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

23 MR. ADAMS: But it's maybe a subsidiary of
24 Connections Education, the national branch, but I'm
25 not totally sure on that.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: And on the response you said that
2 you were asking to withdraw the waiver from the
3 bidding requirement. And I know that that reference
4 -- in particular, the -- let me see the language you
5 used -- the online learning tools. And within the
6 budget it also has that Connections Academy of
7 Arkansas for administration, for maintenance, all
8 these other services. So are all those other
9 services as well included within that response?

10 MR. ADAMS: That's correct.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: That's all I have for right now.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

13 MS. BARNES: Yes. I just wanted to go back and
14 make sure that I heard correctly or at least clarify.
15 In response to Ms. Pfeffer's question regarding
16 hands-on for career and technical, part of the
17 response was an example, in California, where they
18 have requirements for hands-on, but that the career
19 and technical courses were carefully chosen for your
20 school here in Arkansas in order to meet the needs
21 about the hands-on. So my question is going back to
22 the science conversation. Since that is a
23 requirement, hands-on opportunities, I just need to
24 be sure that we're not in a position where we're not
25 addressing any of the hands-on components of our

1 curriculum. I know that you'll only go up to 9th
2 grade. So --

3 DR. BECK: Sure.

4 MS. BARNES: -- a quick question on that.

5 DR. BECK: Dr. Hoge.

6 DR. HOGE: Thank you. And I did not want to
7 give the impression there were not hands-on
8 activities. There are hands-on activities across all
9 grade levels. And so particularly at the elementary
10 and middle school level we send science kits to
11 students so they receive physical materials and so
12 they also use materials in their home. Sometimes all
13 you need is a penny or a step or a chair or a glass
14 of water for your science, but other times you need
15 that equipment and based on state standards as far as
16 what tools or equipment do students need across the
17 grade levels. So that happens and so please, you
18 know, be assured of that. And then at high school
19 then it's either virtual labs -- again, what
20 activities -- to be honest, the purple cabbage that
21 we're always asking for; it seems to be a hardship
22 that people couldn't get purple cabbage. We thought
23 that was an easy one but sometimes it is what's in
24 your refrigerator, you know, what's in your home, and
25 then to make sure that students are having those.

1 And in the California specific, I mean, there is a
2 wet labs requirement within California, and so that
3 was very specific. And then actually in Texas, as
4 well -- in Texas, there needed to be 15% of the
5 curriculum needed to be hands-on or virtual.

6 MS. BARNES: 20% here.

7 DR. HOGE: 20%. So that's really it, is what is
8 it state by state, you know, what is the requirement
9 and then when do we go in and specifically adjust the
10 curriculum.

11 MS. BARNES: Okay. I mean, that helps us.

12 DR. BECK: Yeah. And I want to emphasize too
13 that as a board we are going to be fully compliant to
14 all Arkansas standards and requirements.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions?

16 DR. JONES: I do have a question.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

18 DR. JONES: Thank you for supplying the national
19 data which I requested. And still a concern for me
20 that your passing rates for schools supported by
21 Connections was 53.9 for math. And that's a very low
22 measure, especially when you consider most of our
23 assessments in the past have been based on a lower
24 level than we've implemented even this year and for
25 the future, a low bar. And so looking back at the

1 Credo report you know that that presents major
2 concerns, especially within the math area and
3 especially for those students that are special ed.,
4 that are ELL, because they -- according to the
5 report, they do significantly worse in online
6 schools. And in looking through this research I see
7 that Mathematica has conducted a lot of -- they've
8 provided some of the survey information. And maybe
9 I'm just missing it, but I have the entire report; I
10 could not find in here where Mathematica performed
11 higher than the others, but maybe I'm missing it. If
12 you can show this to me? That's still the greatest
13 concern for me, when we are given a report, not just
14 one, where students performed worse in complete
15 online instruction than they do in traditional public
16 schools. And then I'm looking for evidence to say
17 that this will be different. What are you going to
18 do about math? What's different than all this other
19 that says that students don't do well in math
20 instruction or in literacy with online instruction?

21 DR. BECK: Sure. And, first, a brief comment
22 about the Credo report. I attended the initial
23 online webinar about the Credo and I've read through
24 the entire report. It's really interesting stuff, I
25 agree, on a variety of levels. I think even if the

1 results were the exact opposite I think you would
2 probably have some concerns at least if someone were
3 to come out and say, "Well, traditional public school
4 students or brick-and-mortar students are doing much
5 worse than online." I think in the same way it kind
6 of creates some questions, "Well, why," because
7 traditional public schooling or brick-and-mortar
8 students are so diverse and they come from such a
9 diverse range of different types of schools. In the
10 same way, online learning, there are so many
11 different types of schools. And so I just wanted to
12 preface that and then bring up Dr. Hoge to talk about
13 what we're doing about math.

14 DR. HOGE: Thank you again. And, you know, we
15 share the concern about math. It's been a focus of
16 ours, you know, since day-one to look at when
17 students are coming to an online environment. And,
18 honestly, it's a question of how does an online
19 environment support students so well in reading
20 language arts and then what is happening in math, you
21 know, around that environment. So we've been
22 particularly looking at that. Because if you look at
23 the scores you can see that students, whether they're
24 free and reduced meal students, that they are again
25 performing equal to or better than state averages.

1 So when you look on the math -- I mean, on the
2 reading language arts side what our big take-away
3 there has been is that because students are online
4 they are reading all day long; they're reading across
5 subject areas. So they're reading for a variety of
6 purposes; they're being exposed to vocabulary in
7 print all day long. Then there is this sort of very
8 positive byproduct of being online as opposed to
9 listening to a teacher talk and who may not use that
10 rigorous vocabulary. They're being exposed to it at
11 high levels. So we're looking at math in that same
12 way to say what is it about the online environment
13 that needs to -- that could support students, you
14 know, specifically in that way. So, two things: one
15 is we've been definitely going down the intervention
16 path of how do you look to be able to personalize
17 learning, saying students are coming to us -- 35% are
18 coming not proficient on the state test in the prior
19 year, and that same 35%, you know, being -- having
20 gaps in math. So when they enter then we'll already
21 have that sort of going for us. So how do we
22 identify what their performance level is, and then
23 how do we through interventions, through personalized
24 instruction, you know, work to fill those gaps. So
25 that's that piece. If you can see across the

1 consecutive years, you know, where when students come
2 to us that first year at the 54% -- that's when
3 students are coming to us from their prior school
4 experience; 54% proficient. But if they came late,
5 they weren't there on day-one, then we're seeing that
6 45%. So it's a big -- you know what I'm saying, as
7 far as gaps to fill and to be able to keep them on
8 track for adequate yearly progress. If they stay two
9 years, you can see quite, you know, the improvement
10 and three years quite the improvement. So the one is
11 to make sure that they are going to successfully on
12 grade level perform; it's been filling those gaps.
13 But really what we've been doing around the math
14 initiative is two things: one, around growth mindset
15 of really looking -- you know, students are coming
16 with a fixed mindset about math particularly and
17 these are their performance levels. They're not
18 feeling good about math; they've already sort of
19 shutdown and they, you know, often get that language
20 at home too, sort of the "we're not good at math."
21 Then how do we change that language? So we have an
22 entire cultural shift when we're looking at
23 supporting learning coaches, teachers as well,
24 particularly elementary teachers, and students about
25 how they're approaching math and getting excited

1 about math. The other part that we're extremely
2 focused on is the math discourse because there can be
3 a danger if you're doing an online course and you're
4 completely independent but you're not having the
5 conversations that you need to have around math.
6 Students need to be talking to students; they need to
7 be talking to teachers; they need to be articulating
8 their problem-solving, their reasoning, their
9 thinking. They need to be learning from one another.
10 So that's a huge part of our initiative going forward
11 is the balance between the two, to make sure that
12 they are working in groups, they're collaboratively
13 problem-solving. They need to persist, you know, in
14 their problem-solving and they need to see that
15 everything doesn't get solved in a minute. And so
16 that's really the piece where we're focusing now, the
17 growth mindset and the discourse and the
18 communication. We have strong programs in place
19 aligned to standards; we have strong interventions in
20 place. But, again, going down a path in isolation is
21 not enough; you need both. So I do want you to know
22 it's a concentrated focus for us really every day; we
23 meet on this all the time. We're always watching the
24 performance, and then we want students to stay.
25 That's part of the socialization and connectedness is

1 to be able to stay, be connected, be as engaged as
2 you can, because if not then you sort of get into
3 this spiral. But I do want you to hear, you know,
4 that we are extremely focused on this; that
5 conversations around the discourse and collaborative
6 problem-solving is really, when you look across the
7 world and in countries that are performing well in
8 math what are their students doing, are they engaging
9 in math and how are their teachers assisting in that.
10 It's not something we typically see in the United
11 States and it's something that we struggle with as a
12 country, you know, as far as math performance and
13 something that we all, you know, need to take a look
14 at. But we really do want to lead the way because we
15 have an opportunity to do that in this environment.

16 DR. JONES: On the statewide rates that you've
17 supplied for us on the national measure, your schools
18 fall below the statewide passing rate. Where it had
19 67.1% statewide passing rates, you supplied 53.9 for
20 math. Is that accurate?

21 DR. HOGE: Yes.

22 DR. JONES: Okay. I have a follow-up question
23 and it goes back -- I needed some clarification in
24 information that was submitted. And it talked a lot
25 about your students that excel at middle school and

1 it said something to the fact that they have been
2 enrolled and are taking some of the advanced classes
3 at high school. And I guess can you explain that
4 just a little bit? Is that in other schools across
5 the state?

6 DR. HOGE: It's for students -- middle school
7 students being able to take high school courses?

8 DR. JONES: Uh-huh.

9 DR. HOGE: Yeah. And so either -- we see that a
10 lot in math, you know, where students are taking
11 Algebra 1 or moving on in math because they are
12 either -- the state has required that and so does the
13 state where Algebra 1 is an 8th grade course. So the
14 state -- it's a state requirement, graduation
15 requirement progression plan or whether the students
16 can excel. In our gifted and talented program, the
17 students are typically two years above grade level so
18 that if they're in middle school they're taking
19 Algebra 1, they're taking Geometry, they're taking
20 advanced math courses. An opportunity as well is in
21 science and then in reading language arts and also in
22 foreign language. We have a number of students who
23 are in middle school and they're already taking high
24 school foreign language courses and then getting high
25 school credit.

1 DR. JONES: Okay. And to be able to do that in
2 Arkansas you would have to get approval to be able to
3 teach those high school courses.

4 DR. HOGE: Okay. And award credit. Uh-huh.

5 DR. JONES: Which is a fairly simply process,
6 but there is a purpose behind that.

7 DR. HOGE: All right. Thank you for that.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. BECK: Can I say one more thing?

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

11 DR. BECK: I do want to emphasize too with the
12 Credo report it kind of broadly brushes all online
13 schools into one category and I think there's a
14 danger, statistically, looking at it that way.
15 Because as you saw from the slide and from other data
16 as well that's been provided things are different,
17 and compared to other online schools Connections
18 nationally is doing quite well. So I think there's a
19 danger with looking at it with a broad brush and
20 saying, "Online, bad." So --

21 DR. JONES: But do you have that report where it
22 compares different online and Connections is within
23 that, where it shows that Connections outperforms
24 others?

25 DR. BECK: That's slide nine.

1 DR. JONES: Not a slide but a report.

2 MR. ADAMS: That's separate from the report.

3 And that's something that I can speak towards. Yes,
4 the Credo -- okay, that's not -- we can take the
5 slides down; we don't need the slides for this one.
6 So the Credo report does list out in the appendix the
7 number of networks. Unfortunately for us they're not
8 named; they're just numbered, so there's one through
9 X. And through our own internal data -- we've been
10 working with Credo and trying to figure out exactly
11 which network we are. Based on internal data, we're
12 pretty sure we're either one or three in there. They
13 did say they were going to release to us the schools
14 that were studied so we'll be able to know for
15 certain, hopefully in the near future. We were
16 really hoping that we would know before today. But
17 based on our internals, one or three are -- we're
18 pretty sure.

19 DR. JONES: That explains why I couldn't find
20 it.

21 MR. ADAMS: Yeah. It's all numbers. It's
22 really unfortunate.

23 DR. BECK: Well, it was kind of blind
24 information though too, so -- Dr. Saunders?

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. Can you describe to me --

1 and maybe from your nationwide numbers -- but what
2 type of student you cater to? In other words, what
3 gap are you filling or what's the typical student
4 that would enroll?

5 DR. BECK: Well, I mean, I think there are a lot
6 of different types of students. There are students
7 that have unique needs. They might be a child actor;
8 they might be an athlete who is not able to attend a
9 brick-and-mortar school because of the attendance
10 days they're not able to do because they're often
11 traveling. There might be students who for one
12 reason or another are not able to keep up in the
13 traditional public schools. In particular, a lot of
14 higher functioning students on the autism spectrum
15 often enroll in online schools because there tends to
16 be more of a -- or I should say less distractions --
17 pardon me -- in working in a home environment, rather
18 than in a classroom where there's bells and other
19 students distracting and things like that. I think
20 also there are students that are medically ill or
21 challenged physically for one reason or another and
22 they're not able to -- or it's very difficult to
23 attend on a regular basis. So, I mean, I think it's
24 all and all of the above. In addition to that, I
25 think there is also a significant number of students

1 that for whatever reason their parents enroll late,
2 sometimes two or three months late in the process,
3 which puts them at quite a deficit and puts -- makes
4 -- puts the onus on us -- and we gladly accept it --
5 to really kind of step up and really help them not
6 just make up where they came in, but also make up for
7 the two or three months they missed in that school
8 year, which is unlike the traditional brick-and-
9 mortar schools where most students come in on day-
10 one.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you know what percentage of
12 the students enrolled were previously -- I say
13 previously -- immediately, their prior enrollment was
14 in home-school?

15 MS. NELSON: When a school starts typically in a
16 new school it's approximately 40% are former home-
17 schoolers and then every year after that it gets
18 smaller and smaller. Because there's a certain level
19 of home-school population who's very excited to go
20 back into a traditional -- more traditional
21 environment where there's accountability and the
22 curriculum is provided and there's a teacher. And
23 then there's a population of home-schoolers who don't
24 want to have that accountability; they want to do
25 their own thing. So it will be more at the beginning

1 and then it will go down as the years go on. That's
2 what we've seen.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Can I -- can we look at
4 that slide on the -- the slide you brought up earlier
5 that had the first year starting late proficiency
6 numbers? I just wanted to get a clarification on --
7 for example, the top left where it said First Year
8 Late 45%, is that how well those students performed
9 at the end of that first year? Am I --

10 MS. NELSON: Yes.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

12 MS. NELSON: Yeah. And it's amazing how many
13 students, like Dr. Beck said, do start late. I
14 looked at the numbers from Texas; right now, 40% of
15 their students started late, at least one day late.
16 So those are parents who made a decision based on --
17 they may have gone to their brick-and-mortar school
18 for two weeks and something happened on the bus and
19 they decided they didn't want their student to attend
20 anymore, so they found another solution but it puts
21 them at a little bit of a disadvantage. So our goal
22 is to keep them so they continue to grow.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I want to ask a follow-up
25 question to that. We've heard from our -- from

1 another online charter that they had difficulties
2 with kids that were enrolled then dropped, they might
3 come back. So talk to me a little bit about how you
4 would insure that when a child enrolls that they
5 complete that school year. And I realize you can't
6 make them stay, but what are the -- what are you
7 doing to help kids adjust to that learning
8 environment and --

9 DR. HOGE: Yeah. Well, you know, and the
10 numbers again, when you see the number of late
11 enrolling students -- and then those students who do
12 come in week two or three we always have that sense
13 that they might've had a bad end-of-the-year last
14 spring, then they went away for the summer and felt
15 like -- you know -- you sort of forget the pain; then
16 they started the school year again, they tried it one
17 more time, and said, "We're not doing this" -- and
18 it's an unfortunate time, you know, to make that
19 decision as opposed to doing it in the spring or the
20 summer. So those families are particularly at-risk
21 because they weren't there for the orientation
22 necessarily; they weren't there for the on-boarding.
23 So we have a very rigorous family support program and
24 there's three components of it. One is called Get
25 Started, the other is Get Coaching, and the other is

1 Get Connected. And the Get Started is all the things
2 that you need to do to be able to make this
3 transition, you know, from one school -- just moving
4 from one school to the next we know there's always
5 disruption with that. So how do we support them, how
6 do we get them set-up to have a successful
7 environment at home for online learning, how do they
8 understand the rules and responsibilities, how do
9 they connect with other learning coaches that have
10 gone through the first year. The first year is a big
11 year, you know, with the family adjustment and how do
12 we support them in that. So Get Started, there's two
13 student orientations, there's learning coach
14 orientation, and then there are sessions, online
15 sessions. So there's a lot that's going on in those
16 beginning stages. We also know from looking at the
17 data that if families only sort of reach out and
18 learn about the program online and don't go to a
19 face-to-face info session or don't connect with a
20 learning coach they're more likely to withdraw later.
21 So we can identify how many different events they
22 attended and then we reach out to them proactively to
23 say, "You should talk to another learning coach; you
24 should come to an info session." We want them
25 learning as much as they can. Once they're enrolled,

1 then we have the Get Coaching program; that's the
2 learning coach support program. So there's three
3 pieces of that. So those are the -- we try to make
4 them short, maybe 15 or 20 minutes; you know, how can
5 they fit that into their day, and really about topics
6 to get them started. The other is the learning coach
7 central, which is a landing page, a home page, where
8 they can get one-stop shopping -- where do I go to
9 get my questions answered, how do I remember how to
10 get to the grade book, how do I remember how to get
11 to a live session -- you know, all on one page for
12 them. And then we have a new learning coach
13 newsletter that goes out once a month that's
14 specifically to them and how do they connect with one
15 another. And then the next part, Get Connected, is
16 really about that, staying connected, and that
17 socialization. So we want them coming to field
18 trips; we want them coming to, you know, those face-
19 to-face sessions; we want them connecting with one
20 another. So sort of the inverse is if you come late
21 -- and for the more late you are, the lower the
22 performance -- but the later you are, the more likely
23 you are to withdraw. So we're really trying to
24 engage families and prevent that from happening as
25 much as we can in those three initiatives.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Any other
2 questions?

3 Ms. Clay, are there any remaining issues
4 regarding the requested waivers?

5 MS. CLAY: There are not.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Panel, I'll
7 accept a motion regarding the request for Arkansas
8 Connections Academy, Bentonville, Arkansas.

9 DR. GOTCHER: Motion to approve the request.

10 MS. BARNES: Second.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: There's a motion by Dr.
12 Gotcher and a second by Ms. Barnes to approve the
13 request. All those in favor of the motion?

14 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

16 MS. PFEFFER: No.

17 DR. JONES: Opposed.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. The motion has
19 passed. So I'm going to ask each member to complete
20 the online form and then we'll go around and read
21 your responses.

22 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

24 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the motion to approve.
25 And my reason was I felt like the applicant

1 adequately satisfied the request of the Panel and
2 they further demonstrated that poverty would not be a
3 barrier to participate in the Academy.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

5 DR. JONES: The applicant has not provided
6 evidence that they will create a system where
7 students will achieve even at state levels. Their
8 current national statistics indicate their students
9 are performing at low levels in math. And special
10 ed. populations and ELL populations are evidenced to
11 perform much lower with online learning and no
12 supports offered or insufficient supports offered
13 speak to assistance to specifically support these
14 students.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

16 MS. PFEFFER: I voted against the motion. While
17 I support personalized learning, I don't think the
18 online environment by itself is enough. I believe
19 that human support is critical for students and I'm
20 concerned about the lack of human capital support for
21 students outside of the northwest Arkansas area.
22 There's been a lack of outreach for support in other
23 parts of the state and I feel that students are going
24 to have limited career preparation opportunities with
25 the carefully selected curriculum which doesn't

1 promote the hands-on learning. And I'm also
2 concerned about the quality of teachers that will be
3 available for special need students due to the large
4 numbers of ALP waivers already in northwest Arkansas
5 schools.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

7 MS. BARNES: I am -- I voted for the motion.
8 And I am much more comfortable with this school's
9 vision and the goals that it set. I feel they have
10 some additional challenges, but at this time they are
11 no greater than others and therefore the
12 opportunities exist for students to exceed.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted for the motion. I
15 believe this would provide an opportunity for choice
16 with online providers.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

18 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the motion. And
19 although I have some concerns about the math scores
20 for all online schools -- but currently there's only
21 one other provider in the state. This will offer an
22 additional choice for those Arkansas families looking
23 for the virtual school path.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And Ms. Liwo.

25 MS. LIWO: I voted for. I do think that ARCA

1 has some challenges but I think they adequately
2 responded to at least my concerns, my concerns from
3 the previous meeting.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Beck, congratulations.
5 With a vote of five-to-two you're approved to move
6 forward with the next step which would be review or
7 not review by the State Board.

8 DR. BECK: Thank you. And I wanted to say very
9 helpful, all of you, the feedback you've given. And
10 the challenges -- I mean, they've been really healthy
11 challenges that will make our school better. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

14 Panel, do you want a 10-minute break? All
15 right.

16 (BREAK: 9:42 - 9:55 A.M.)

17 A-2: HEARING OF REQUEST FOR DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER
18 SCHOOL AMENDMENT: WASHINGTON ACADEMY (TEXARKANA)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll move to action item
20 number -- two, three? What are we on? Two. Ms.
21 Boyd, you're recognized.

22 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item A-2 is
23 a Hearing of Request for District Conversion Public
24 Charter School Amendment from Washington Academy
25 located in Texarkana. The State Board of Education

1 approved the application for Washington Academy on
2 January 14, 2013. The charter is approved to serve
3 grades -- students in grades 9 through 12 with a
4 maximum enrollment of 160. Representatives of
5 Washington County are -- I mean, excuse me --
6 Washington Academy are appearing before the Charter
7 Authorizing Panel to request amendments to the
8 current charter. And from Washington Academy we have
9 Mr. Terry Taylor; he's the principal there.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Will the
11 representatives from Washington Academy and anyone
12 speaking in opposition please stand to receive the
13 oath? Raise your right hand, please. Do you swear
14 or affirm that the testimony you're about to give
15 shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
16 the truth?

17 MR. TAYLOR: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Taylor, you have 20
19 minutes.

20 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, ma'am. Again, thank you for
21 allowing us to come before you again for -- on this
22 behalf. Washington Academy charter school is a
23 charter school that was established, again, in 2013
24 for the purpose of increasing graduation rates and
25 decreasing the dropout rate in the Texarkana,

1 Arkansas school district. And what we have done -- I
2 think I've given you a sheet in terms of our
3 graduations and how many have graduated. But what we
4 have found out is that most of our students, the
5 juniors and seniors, take up pretty much most of our
6 enrollment: 56 seniors this present time and about 37
7 juniors. Because what we have at Washington Academy
8 charter school is a school that you come for a
9 certain reason. Our 9th grade group, which will be
10 graduating, this year, in three years instead of
11 four, we started out with a group of about 15
12 students. And of that 15 we still have about 12 of
13 those students still here and they'll be graduating
14 in the springtime, early, because they wanted to come
15 for the early graduation option. And then you have
16 the students, especially the junior and senior
17 students, who are needing some credit recovery in
18 order to get back on track to graduate; even students
19 who possibly dropped out of school and decided they
20 wanted a high school diploma, not go the GED route,
21 and realize they need a high school diploma to get a
22 job. And so we have those types of students. What
23 we have found, especially with our group that's going
24 to graduate in the springtime, if we can get them
25 early -- and I requested this to add the 7th and 8th

1 grade as well as the 9th through 12th, because I
2 believe if we're going to identify them at-risk at
3 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, I think it would
4 help us if we'd identify them in the 7th and 8th
5 grade and get them over to our campus and try to help
6 them then before they fail two or three classes or
7 two or three grades and then once they're 18 or 19
8 try to help them. Try to help them on the front-end
9 rather than the back-end. And so what I request is
10 to try to extend from 9-12 to 7-12. And what the
11 district would do, the district would supply us with
12 an additional teacher as well as supply us with an
13 instructional aid to help out with those students in
14 those classrooms and as they travel on our campus,
15 because I really don't want them in touch in terms of
16 mixing with our high school students. So we'd have
17 an aid that travels with them and they will have some
18 classes, such as PE, with our high school teachers or
19 in drama with our high school teachers. And also our
20 math teachers will also be teaching them math for the
21 7th and 8th grade math courses, as well. So our
22 request is to be able to add the 7th and 8th grades
23 to the 9-12 grade charter.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Is there
25 anyone to speak in opposition?

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(BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Taylor, you have an additional five minutes or any additional time you need.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you. Do you all have any questions?

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Panel?

DR. JONES: I do have questions.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

DR. JONES: Hello.

MR. TAYLOR: Hey, how are you doing?

DR. JONES: Doing well. Is there another ALE that's in place, for example, for the 7th and 8th grade right now?

MR. TAYLOR: No, ma'am.

DR. JONES: Okay. So when your students come to you that's the only ALE that the district has?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, ma'am.

DR. JONES: Okay. Help me with this, measures of your success, because when I look at the state performance -- and this was, of course, from the last benchmark -- and I see that in literacy 3 out of 16 were proficient and in math 7 out of 26, that measure is not successful. And so tell me the other measures that would give us reason to expand students when

1 that's not successful?

2 MR. TAYLOR: Just by looking at that, just
3 simply by the numbers, it would not appear to be
4 successful. But when you look at it as always --
5 Washington Academy was an alternative school for the
6 district before it became a charter school. Before
7 that time nobody passed the test, zero. And so when
8 I look at it, I look at we have three in literacy, we
9 have seven in math, we have that many more that's
10 passed that never passed it even gone through those
11 doors before. And one of the things that we did when
12 we got there, instead of using the teachers that were
13 there -- I said if the students have to apply to come
14 there; why not require all teachers to apply. So all
15 the teachers applied; there's no one there that was
16 there three years ago when I first got to Washington
17 Academy. It's completely new staff because all the
18 teachers had to apply. I wanted teachers there who
19 was able -- who wanted to be there in terms of
20 teaching students who already came with some
21 problems, with some hang-ups, with some troubles,
22 with some luggage, baggage, and I wanted teachers
23 there who's going to help them. And that's one of
24 the things that we're doing; number one, we're going
25 to change the environment. We could not change it in

1 terms of the academic process for the students, so
2 you change the environment. And so what we looked at
3 first, we're changing the environment. That started
4 with the teachers who we have teaching the students.
5 And then also we want to change it in terms of the
6 mindset of the students, why are they coming, what
7 are the reasons they're coming, so we can focus on
8 what reasons are you coming. And one of the other
9 reasons that you look at, 16 students took the test,
10 27 took the test, and when you have 100 students --
11 because most of those who come are juniors and
12 seniors who did not do well their 9th and 10th grade
13 years, and so therefore we've got to work on changing
14 the mindset. And that's one of the other reasons we
15 believe if we can get those students earlier we have
16 the opportunity to help them academically earlier
17 rather than later and that will also help improve our
18 test scores on the state test.

19 DR. JONES: I agree this is a difficult
20 population and we can't expect to see those that
21 aren't as transient and don't have as many problems,
22 so there is an exception here. What about your
23 graduation rate? You've provided some information in
24 addition today. What I would like to know is the
25 total; how many students are dropping out and how

1 many are graduating?

2 MR. TAYLOR: If I could -- I can go by this
3 year, right now. We started out with 56 seniors this
4 year when school opened up. As of right now, we
5 still have 26 -- 27 that's going to graduate this
6 fall and then we still have another 31 who's going to
7 graduate in the springtime. So we still -- our
8 dropout -- I think we've lost maybe two students so
9 far. Because one thing we do when we receive the
10 students, we give each one of the students what we
11 call a PEP, which is a Personalized Education Plan.
12 What that Personalized Education Plan does, it tells
13 the student this is what you need in order to
14 graduate, this is how long it's going to take you,
15 this is how we're going to work with you to make sure
16 that happens. Because what you find, when you become
17 a junior and senior you become serious about "what I
18 really want is the end and how can you help me get to
19 the end." And that's what I tell them, "If we can
20 help you -- and the only way we can help you, you've
21 got to be there, you've got to participate in the
22 process, and you've got to want it yourself. If you
23 do those things, we're going to provide the avenue
24 for you; we're going to provide the resources for you
25 to be successful."

1 DR. JONES: And I appreciate your effort. If
2 this motion passes today and you expand, I'm asking
3 that when you come up for renewal -- you probably
4 have other measures of success, like credit recovery
5 -- how many credits were they behind, how many did
6 they catch-up.

7 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, ma'am.

8 DR. JONES: I would like to see your attendance
9 rate, because I know this is an especially difficult
10 population. And other measures of success -- if
11 that's enrolling in military, if that is getting them
12 jobs or apprenticeships -- look for those measures of
13 success; this is not the only measure. But we have
14 to evaluate what we're given.

15 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, ma'am.

16 DR. JONES: All right. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions? Ms.
18 Pfeiffer.

19 MS. PFEFFER: I'm sorry. You go. He can go
20 ahead.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: I just had a quick one. On Dr.
23 Jones's request, I think it would also be beneficial
24 to look at how the students were performing prior to
25 enrollment and then how they're performing since

1 then.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

3 MS. PFEFFER: And my question may just be a
4 little bit of lack of knowledge as to how this -- how
5 your charter was started. But you talked about
6 almost -- it almost sounded like you were talking
7 about two different groups. You said you have those
8 who come who want to graduate early and then those
9 who are needing to catch-up. So can you just give me
10 a little bit of background on the purpose of the
11 charter and how students are identified?

12 MR. TAYLOR: And that's what I really tell the
13 parents when they talk about coming to the charter; I
14 say it's really two schools in one. You have one
15 group of students who will come because, number one,
16 they want to graduate early, they want that small
17 class environment, they want to go ahead with their
18 life, whether they're going off to college, whether
19 they're going to go out here and find a job. And
20 then you have the other group who may need credit
21 recovery, who also may need a small environment, who
22 also may have had some problems in their early
23 childhood, may have kids already, may be already
24 working, may be the sole provider for their family.
25 So, therefore, they need a different set of hours.

1 They may not come from 8:00 to 3:35; they may come
2 from 10:00 to 3:35 or 10:00 to 5:00. So, therefore,
3 what we try to do is create an environment that's
4 going to be best for whatever the student needs. And
5 so really it is two schools in one: it's for those
6 who are highly motivated and want to finish early and
7 also those who need the extra help in terms of credit
8 recovery, in terms of flexible hours, in terms of
9 small classroom environment. It's all that.

10 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. So in thinking about -- and
11 the request is to expand to 7th and 8th grade.
12 Correct?

13 MR. TAYLOR: Yes.

14 MS. PFEFFER: Are there concerns though that
15 identifying kids too early -- maybe it absolves the
16 district from some of the responsibilities of really
17 getting kids ready for high school and getting up too
18 early on them to where, you know, it's -- I guess I'm
19 just wondering how this fits in with the scope of the
20 overall district vision and mission. Because 7th and
21 8th graders in with juniors and seniors is -- you
22 know -- that's a big difference right there in age
23 and I would be concerned about having that wide of an
24 age span in a situation where there are already
25 challenges for students.

1 MR. TAYLOR: Well, I think the biggest factor is
2 being able to identify them earlier than later and
3 maybe stopping that. And one of the things I always
4 like to say, I don't want to run the traditional in
5 terms of -- if we're going to be a traditional
6 alternative school like alternative school is run, I
7 don't want to do that. And so that's one of the
8 reasons I asked let's become a charter school is
9 because we want to change the mindset. Most of the
10 students -- I'd say 95% of the students that come to
11 our campus do not want to go back to the traditional
12 high school. And the reason they don't want to go
13 back to a traditional high school is because it feels
14 like a family atmosphere, because they have a
15 Personal Education Plan, and it's because of small
16 classroom sizes; it's because the teachers know them
17 by name. And one of the things that we do at our
18 graduation is a very, very I guess you'd say intimate
19 graduation. There's something that's written about
20 -- each student writes about themselves and why they
21 came to Washington Academy charter school, what
22 Washington Academy charter school did for them, and
23 how it helped them. And many of the testimonies is
24 if it was not for Washington Academy charter school
25 they would not have graduated. And so I think the

1 biggest focus -- and I do understand because I want
2 to protect them from the older element. One of the
3 teachers they're going to bring over, if it's passed,
4 is they will bring over a certified 4th through 8th
5 grade teacher who would teach them most of the core
6 classes but also they'll get a taste of some of the
7 high school art and drama and speech classes also.
8 But, again, by bringing over a paraprofessional that
9 everywhere they travel to that person would travel
10 with them so they do not get engulfed and mixed in
11 with the older kids.

12 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you. That helps.

13 MR. TAYLOR: Oh, you're welcome.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Good morning. You referred to
16 this earlier. Explain again where the 7th and 8th
17 grade students would be housed to try to keep them
18 separated. I know that's important --

19 MR. TAYLOR: Okay.

20 DR. GOTCHER: -- as a former principal.

21 MR. TAYLOR: And we have two -- actually, three
22 buildings. In the first building, which houses the
23 administration, the principal's office, the
24 counselor's office, there is a corridor down to the
25 left. And that very last room is where the 7th/8th

1 grade would be housed. They will be housed in that
2 area. Also in that area is what we call our science
3 and math areas; the science and math teachers are in
4 there. Those are the only classes in that building,
5 the science and math, and then that's where the
6 7th/8th grade students would be, along with the
7 counseling center, along with the administrative
8 office, along with the parenting center.

9 DR. GOTCHER: So they have adequate support the
10 way you're describing that?

11 MR. TAYLOR: Yes.

12 DR. GOTCHER: And you're satisfied with that
13 arrangement, as well?

14 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Very good.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Taylor, if the 7th and
17 8th grade students were to get on track and want to
18 go back into the traditional high school, that would
19 be an option for them?

20 MR. TAYLOR: Yes. Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions from
22 the Panel?

23 DR. JONES: One more.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

25 DR. JONES: Are any of your students enrolled in

1 that career technical center in Texarkana?

2 MR. TAYLOR: Yes. Yes. We have about 15 to 17
3 students that go over to the vocational-technical
4 center every day and then we bus them back to
5 Washington Academy charter school. We fit our
6 schedule so that those who really want to participate
7 in that, they can. Also on our campus we have what
8 we call Marketing DECA. We have about 10 students
9 who participate in Marketing DECA and have work
10 release and go to work each day. So any program that
11 we do not offer on campus that the traditional high
12 school offers, such as the vocational classes, our
13 students can take those classes; we bus them over; we
14 bring them back.

15 DR. JONES: I commend you for that. That's
16 good.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions?
18 Mr. Taylor, I know you've certainly made a huge
19 change in that school in those services to kids and
20 we appreciate that --

21 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- as I'm sure the
23 community does as well.

24 Ms. Clay, are there any remaining issues
25 regarding this request?

1 MS. CLAY: No.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. With that, any last
3 words, Mr. Taylor?

4 MR. TAYLOR: I just thank you all for giving me
5 the opportunity to come and just share.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'll accept a motion
7 regarding the request for Washington Academy in
8 Texarkana.

9 MS. BARNES: I move that we approve this motion.

10 DR. JONES: I'll second.

11 MS. BARNES: This request.

12 DR. JONES: I'll second that.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The motion has been made
14 by Ms. Barnes and seconded by Dr. Jones to approve
15 the request for Washington Academy of Texarkana. All
16 those in favor of the motion?

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? The motion
19 has passed.

20 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll give us just a
22 moment, we'll have a response from each member.

23 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

25 MS. LIWO: I voted for. I didn't have any

1 concerns with the request.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

3 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. I didn't have any
4 concerns either and it's a good opportunity to offer
5 the PEP to those 7th and 8th graders that may need
6 additional help or are looking to go a little
7 quicker.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted for. This would provide
10 an opportunity for students to receive the needed
11 accommodations in a more timely manner in their
12 academic career.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

14 MS. PFEFFER: I voted for. This will allow the
15 district to intervene early and provide options for
16 struggling students and appropriate support for the
17 younger students as planned.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

19 DR. JONES: I voted for this. Washington has
20 multiple measures of success, including graduating
21 students who likely would've been dropouts, helping
22 students recover credit, and providing these students
23 career opportunities through the vocational career
24 center.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

1 MS. BARNES: I voted for the motion. The
2 request is in alignment with the goals of this school
3 and it presents the opportunity for students to
4 experience educational success that may be sustained
5 throughout their K-12 academic experiences.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

7 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the motion to approve.
8 Adding 7th and 8th grades to this academy only
9 increases successful opportunities for those
10 students. Additionally, proper housing of the 7th
11 and 8th grade students is adequate.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Mr.
13 Taylor. And we look forward to more great things --

14 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- from your school.

16 Thank you.

17 A-3: HEARING OF REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER
18 SCHOOL AMENDMENTS: MAUMELLE CHARTER SCHOOL (ACADEMICS PLUS)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That moves us to action
20 item number 3. Ms. Boyd, you're recognized.

21 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item A-3 is
22 a Hearing of Request for the Open-Enrollment Public
23 Charter School Amendments for Maumelle Charter
24 School. This should actually read Academics Plus
25 Charter School. Recently, they had a name change.

1 The schools that are under the sponsoring entity of
2 Academics Plus are now called Maumelle Charter
3 School, the elementary campus and high school, but
4 the sponsoring entity itself is Academics Plus.

5 The State Board of Education approved the
6 application for Academics Plus on May 14, 2001. The
7 charter is approved to serve students in grades K-12
8 with a maximum enrollment of 1,300. Representatives
9 of the Academics Plus Charter School are appearing
10 before the Charter Authorizing Panel to request
11 amendments to the current charter. Here we have Rob
12 McGill, who is the Executive Director of Academics
13 Plus, to present to you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay, if you'll come
15 up next please, because this is a -- this requested
16 amendment is a license to open a new campus. Would
17 you explain the criteria?

18 MS. CLAY: Yes. You saw on your materials that
19 this is presented as an amendment request, and that
20 is what it is. It's a request for the Academics Plus
21 charter to be amended to allow them to open a campus
22 and call that the Scott Charter School. Instead of
23 having a separate charter, they're asking for a
24 license. That means they'll have one charter for all
25 of their schools but they would just, if granted,

1 have the license to operate that separate campus.

2 The law gives some criteria for when a charter
3 school can petition you all for a license and I'd
4 like to just go over that with you. It says that an
5 open-enrollment charter school can petition for a
6 license if the charter school has demonstrated
7 academic success as defined by the State Board for
8 all public schools and that the approved open-
9 enrollment charter has not been subject to any
10 disciplinary action, been classified in academic or
11 fiscal distress, or had its open-enrollment charter
12 placed on probation. I think the materials that were
13 provided to you are offered to support those
14 criteria, but I just wanted you to know going forward
15 that it is a little bit different than the typical
16 new open-enrollment charter school application that
17 you see, although a lot of the information presented
18 is the same.

19 DR. JONES: I have a follow-up for Kendra.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

21 DR. JONES: As a follow-up question, in some of
22 the comments -- one comment was made it remains
23 unclear if they understand that they cannot share
24 funds. Is that still the case?

25 MS. CLAY: If they are -- no. They will be able

1 to share funds --

2 DR. JONES: With a license?

3 MS. CLAY: Yes.

4 DR. JONES: Thank you.

5 MS. CLAY: And that comment was when they were
6 still pursuing a new open-enrollment charter.

7 DR. JONES: Okay. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

9 MS. PFEFFER: And this is for Ms. Clay too,
10 because in the packet that we received -- I mean,
11 there are still several issues that remain unresolved
12 and some of them, I think, are pretty substantive
13 issues. So in trying to prepare for this and feel
14 equipped to really listen and make good decisions,
15 you know, the question Dr. Jones just asked, that's
16 still in the unresolved issues. So I'm just unclear
17 what has been resolved and what has not and I'm
18 feeling a little concerned that we don't have all the
19 information we need as we're hearing this and being
20 asked to make a decision today. And maybe that's
21 just -- I need to get that out there, but those are
22 some of the concerns that I have. Any time there are
23 this many unresolved issues on big important areas of
24 a charter application I don't feel comfortable as a
25 panel member being able to make a good decision.

1 MS. CLAY: Okay. And I understand the concerns.
2 You know, part of -- and this may be something that
3 we need to address and try to improve for the next
4 charter cycle. Our process only allows the internal
5 committee so long to go back and forth and then at
6 the end there are usually some outstanding issues. I
7 understand that, you know, some of these you feel
8 like are more substantive than we usually see. I
9 don't know how to address that at this point other
10 than to just ask the questions of the presenters
11 today and get the information, if possible. Or, you
12 know, at the end of the hearing if you don't have
13 information then you need to have them come back at a
14 later meeting; that's certainly an option. But the
15 overall issue is something that we can look at going
16 forward in how to insure that we get all the
17 information that you all need before they ever show
18 up here to you.

19 DR. GOTCHER: Miss --

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

21 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Clay -- I'm sorry; do you have
22 any other follow-up with her?

23 MS. PFEFFER: No.

24 DR. GOTCHER: Just a governance piece. So
25 adding a license, should they be approved, doesn't

1 create another LEA. They're still one LEA;
2 therefore, that is why they can share the categorical
3 funds under -- as one LEA. Is that correct?

4 MS. CLAY: I may need some assistance.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Sure.

6 MS. CLAY: They're telling me there's one
7 district level LEA.

8 MS. BOYD: Yes. So it'll be that they'll have a
9 new LEA for the school building --

10 DR. GOTCHER: I'm sorry.

11 MS. BOYD: -- but they'll still have one
12 district level LEA.

13 DR. GOTCHER: One central LEA, just like a
14 district that has an elementary, secondary, so-forth.
15 Okay. That's what I meant. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I'd like to ask an
17 accountability question about that. So does that
18 mean that there will be an accountability report for
19 each school and one for the --

20 MS. BARNES: Yes. Academics Plus and our open-
21 enrollment charters are all treated as -- if there's
22 only one school, it's treated basically as a district
23 in a school. If it has multiple buildings, it's
24 treated as a district and then it would have
25 individual schools. So each building would have an

1 accountability requirement and report.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. That's very
3 helpful.

4 DR. GOTCHER: I'm understanding that better now.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. If all
6 representatives from the Maumelle Charter School and
7 anyone speaking in opposition will stand to receive
8 the oath; raise your right hand please. Do you swear
9 or affirm that the testimony you're about to give
10 shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
11 the truth?

12 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. McGill,
14 you're up.

15 MR. MCGILL: You've promoted me again. Thank
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. McGill.

18 MR. MCGILL: I'll take it. I got that one for
19 free. Thank you for having us here today. Good
20 morning, Committee. One thing before I get started
21 just to clarify a little bit, what we're doing with
22 the license is very similar to what KIPP does; so we
23 would be a district in the schools. I think that's
24 clear now but just kind of throwing that out there
25 for you. I'm the Executive Director -- I'm Rob

1 McGill -- of Academics Plus Charter School. Thank
2 you for the opportunity to share this opportunity
3 that we bring to you today. I'm excited to bring it
4 as an application for an open-enrollment charter
5 school for the Scott community because we definitely
6 see the need for this community to have a school.
7 And another thing that's exciting is as an Arkansas
8 based school we're now at the point in our tenure
9 that we are able to expand; we feel that. So I think
10 that's an important point also. But we'll go ahead
11 and get started. Today, you're going to hear from
12 several people: Ms. Diane Gross, the elementary --
13 Maumelle Charter School elementary principal; Ms.
14 Barbara Armstrong of Scott Heritage Farms; and then
15 Representative Camille Bennett. At this time I'll be
16 followed by Ms. Gross.

17 MS. GROSS: Good morning. I'm not sure I can do
18 this. I can do a lot of things but -- oh, look at
19 that. All right. They told me to point it to the
20 back at a black thing. Turn it the other way. This
21 is -- you know -- kindergartners, I've got that.
22 Thank you so much. All right. I pray --

23 Good morning, everybody. I'm very excited to
24 share with you the possibilities of opening another
25 building in Scott. And the mission of the Scott

1 Charter School would fall in line with the Academics
2 Plus mission. Our main goal is to educate children
3 to the best of our ability, to make them ready for
4 college and career, and we believe that with our high
5 expectations that can be accomplished.

6 Here we go. That's what I like, a black screen.
7 Okay. You all should have this in your packets and
8 if I can't figure it out maybe Alexandra can figure
9 it out. There you go.

10 First of all, I want to address the needs and
11 then I'm going to shoot right to some of the issues
12 that Ms. Pfeiffer had because we have supplied in our
13 packet to you the slides and I do address the
14 unresolved issues that we were dealing with.
15 Currently, the need exists in Scott because Pulaski
16 County Special School District closed the school in
17 Scott and that left limited choice for our families
18 in that area. Thirty-four out of the 35 schools in
19 Pulaski County have been labeled Needs Improvement by
20 the State and we feel that that need can be filled by
21 our building at Scott through Academics Plus.
22 Students have been rezoned; they're being bused
23 several miles from their home area at this point to
24 Harris Elementary and I believe Sylvan Hills Middle
25 School and High School. So the literacy need is

1 high. Academics Plus, our bar is red, and then
2 Pulaski County is yellow. You can see a significant
3 difference in our literacy scores. Then we addressed
4 in the other chart, in the graph, as you go across,
5 showing what Scott was achieving and then what Harris
6 has been achieving in reference to what our
7 elementary school in Maumelle has been achieving.
8 Then the same thing for the middle school and the
9 high school, just some comparisons to show you our
10 literacy and math scores are quite high.

11 Innovation is always a word that is connected to
12 charters and improving schools. We believe that it
13 means being quick to act when things are not
14 progressing and making the changes necessary to meet
15 the needs of students. We believe through utilizing
16 assessment outcomes to modify our curriculum or our
17 strategies and to inform our decisions is one way
18 that we're innovative and we will continue to do so
19 in the new building. We also are firm believers in
20 connecting social and emotional to the academics and
21 through responsive classroom techniques and
22 strategies our teachers will be trained in. We
23 believe that is also one of our high points. And
24 then probably the one that is most exciting to us and
25 to the people that will speak next is our emphasis on

1 agricultural sciences and the hands-on learning
2 opportunities in the community itself and what we can
3 bring to our students to encourage them in seeking
4 careers in the agri-sciences here in Arkansas and for
5 their field. And we're looking forward to various
6 partnerships in that regard.

7 I'm going to quickly go through the issues that
8 were mentioned that are still unresolved, as per the
9 Charter Internal Review Committee. The first one was
10 needing a more clear picture of the enrollment by
11 year, so we were to look at the chart starting in
12 2016. With our first year we would be a K-6 school
13 with the potential enrollment of 525, adding 75
14 students per year as we add a grade level, all the
15 way up to being a K-12 campus in 2022 with a total of
16 975 students in Scott.

17 The next thing that we were questioned about was
18 whether we would have a fulltime counselor. Yes, the
19 Scott building would have a fulltime counselor.
20 We've asked for flexibility in the way of a waiver
21 just to grant the charter the possibility -- let's
22 say we have 50 students over what the legal limit is
23 before we need to add a counselor; we would use that
24 waiver to wait to hire a counselor until the need
25 became apparent to us in discerning what was needed

1 at that building at that time. But we would have a
2 fulltime counselor at Scott.

3 The next slide, C15, this addresses the issue
4 that Ms. -- I believe it was Ms. -- Dr. Jones brought
5 up regarding the federal -- the state and federal
6 funds. We no longer have that as an issue because it
7 would be a license and we would be one district so-
8 to-speak and all schools would be under that. But we
9 have received a commitment from the Walton Foundation
10 for \$500,000. I think that was a question in some of
11 the documentation. We also at some point -- I'm not
12 sure where the misunderstanding came from, but we've
13 always and will have a fulltime principal on-site.
14 At some point someone either misread or -- I looked,
15 I couldn't find it, but they thought we'd have a
16 halftime and that's never been the case. We'll have
17 a fulltime principal at Scott. Then there was a
18 question about enrichment and funding. Our
19 enrichment program is during the teachers' duty day,
20 so there is no additional funding necessary; it's the
21 hour after, and our teachers work until 4:15. So
22 that hour is covered in the regular duty day. C18,
23 facilities, we are currently negotiating with Pulaski
24 County regarding the Scott Elementary building and I
25 believe those negotiations are still underway.

1 I love this sign; it means a lot to me. The
2 elementary school and high school are both reward
3 schools this year. This was my second time at the
4 elementary building. That means a lot to us. We're
5 also, both of us, were "A" schools this year. That
6 also means a lot to me. I understand those are just
7 one measurement but it is a very critical one in the
8 state of Arkansas, and we're very proud of the work
9 our teachers and students have accomplished. We will
10 extend what we've been doing and duplicate and I
11 think invigorate Scott through the agri-sciences.
12 That's kind of exciting to see what we might be able
13 to do there. And so our hope is that Scott Charter
14 School will have 975 students and we'll be serving
15 the needs of students in and around Scott since 2016;
16 that's our goal.

17 At this time I'd like to introduce Ms. Barbara
18 Armstrong from Scott Heritage Family Farm and
19 Arkansas Farm To Table. She'll be sharing with you
20 some of her excited vision for Scott.

21 MS. ARMSTRONG: Good morning. Thank you. I
22 appreciate this opportunity to share my vision and my
23 past relationship that I had with the Scott
24 Elementary School. My farm is a community supported
25 agricultural farm. It is located directly across the

1 street from the Scott Elementary School that was
2 there. The land was actually donated from the
3 ancestors of my landlord who is very proud of the
4 agriculture that we do have at Scott. I am only a
5 small portion of the 200 acres that surrounds the
6 front door of Scott Elementary. And the relationship
7 that we are looking forward to continuing is to
8 educate our children where their food comes from. I
9 am amazed daily of the children that do not know
10 exactly where their food comes from. They think
11 their food comes from the aisle in the grocery store.
12 And looking forward to the relationship and
13 continuing it with the school is we will look at the
14 opportunities in school and out of school. Right
15 now, if the school is in session, like I had hoped it
16 was when I forged a relationship with them back in
17 November of 2014, my goat would make many visits to
18 the school. They named him. A lot of the children
19 are terrified of farm animals and they don't really
20 understand the relationship that we farmers have with
21 them. And what I was doing was opening those doors
22 to where the children would know the life cycles of
23 not only the seeds that we plant in the ground for
24 our fruits and vegetables, but also the livestock
25 that is involved in it. I was really excited to do

1 this and there was an in-service that I did and I
2 took a chicken over to the school and we called it
3 Green Eggs and Ham. The children didn't believe that
4 this was a chicken because they really -- most of the
5 kids don't have access to that and this is a great
6 opportunity for these children. And my chicken was a
7 little different and the thing about my chicken that
8 made it so special was the color of their eggs are
9 the color of their legs. My chickens' legs were
10 green. They are a heritage breed chicken. I'm an
11 organic farmer. I believe in using heirloom seeds,
12 heritage breeds that my ancestors farmed with. And
13 so the children were really, really excited. And we
14 also had ham; we had pigs over at the farm. And they
15 were really -- didn't understand that me as a farmer
16 why I did this and it was -- that part that was
17 really rewarding to me was to share my life with
18 these children and my vision to educate them to where
19 their food comes from. We're looking forward to
20 doing the same thing with the Scott Charter School,
21 in-services at the school, coming to the farm, having
22 an experience that they can probably get nowhere
23 else. My CSA family, that's why they come to the
24 farm. They bring their families out to teach their
25 children where their food comes from. I have a

1 couple of CSA families that their children, small
2 little toddlers came out to the farm, was terrified
3 to get out of their vehicles because they hadn't seen
4 farm animals before. They were literally terrified
5 of dogs, even a chicken. And as their parents kept
6 coming to the farm and sharing the lifestyle of a
7 farmer and educating them that this is where our food
8 comes from and we're going to the farm to get it and
9 not to the grocery store, then over a period of time
10 the children really looked forward to coming to the
11 farm and they took part in that. They took part in
12 harvesting the eggs, planting the seeds, watching the
13 fruit grow, and then taking it home and sharing it
14 with their family. That's my vision of how I want to
15 share our farm, our lifestyle, our experiences just
16 across the street with these children so they will
17 get excited, their families will get excited, and in
18 that and all around we are creating a more healthy
19 lifestyle for our children. You hear now about, you
20 know, the obesity and everything that's in our
21 schools from not having healthy lunches. And that
22 will be another thing that we really look forward to
23 exploring with the school is to have a connection
24 with a farm that supplies your lunches. And I think
25 that this is just a great opportunity. The

1 community, we're all looking forward to exploring all
2 these opportunities that are there for the children.
3 And it is my vision, my commitment as a farmer to
4 make sure that our future is carried on. And the
5 only way that our future as farming is going to be
6 carried on is through our children. And if we're not
7 educating our children -- we can talk about it in a
8 classroom all day long, but if you don't have the
9 opportunity to walk outside your classroom and
10 experience it then you're not getting the whole
11 picture. And I really am looking forward to this and
12 I thank you for the opportunity.

13 MS. GROSS: Representative Camille Bennett.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BENNETT: Thank you very much for
15 letting me speak today. I'm the State Representative
16 for District 14. I lived in Scott before I moved to
17 Lonoke, and I'm actually moving back to Scott, so I
18 know this area well. It's very unfortunate that our
19 local school closed. I think if you don't live in a
20 rural area you don't quite understand what that means
21 for families in the area. It doesn't mean that your
22 kids go 12 blocks instead of 5 blocks; it means that
23 they go miles. If we don't have a local school, the
24 kids are getting on the bus at 5:30 and 6:00 in the
25 morning and being bused somewhere. That is

1 devastating to a rural area. I've been so excited by
2 the prospect of the new school opening there. I've
3 toured Academics Plus in Maumelle; I've done a lot of
4 research into people who have worked there, people
5 that have worked with Rob McGill, people who have
6 kids that go there, and I have heard nothing but
7 positive things. They've had several public hearings
8 at the church that I go to there, incredibly
9 positively received in the community. As you heard
10 from Ms. Armstrong, her farm is right across the
11 street. I'm on the board at Scott Connections, which
12 is basically a recreation of a working plantation
13 across the street. So we hope to also get involved
14 with the school. We used to have a relationship with
15 the Scott school where they would do tours; we had
16 lesson plans; Toltec Mounds is just down the area.
17 So this is a real growing area. When you look at the
18 number of students that were in the Scott school, it
19 is not representative of the number of students in
20 that area. The Scott school had not been maintained
21 for many years by Pulaski County. It did not have a
22 good reputation and a lot of parents were reluctant
23 to send their kids there because about every other
24 year we would have a threat of closure. So I think
25 once the new school is opened we are going to see

1 just an influx of kids into this school and hopefully
2 get a much better education, better prepared for
3 college. I'm committing to do anything I can do to
4 support this endeavor and I'm happy to answer any
5 questions, if anyone has any. Thank you very much.
6 I appreciate your time.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

8 MR. MCGILL: Just in closing, you did receive a
9 couple of opposition letters on desegregation. But
10 our legal counsel has found no segregation issues at
11 play and we have provided, I believe, a thorough
12 response to that. PCSSD -- and very importantly,
13 this is very important to it -- is unitary in student
14 assignment. We believe -- a couple of things as far
15 as the law was described -- we know that we are
16 academically successful and we are not on any type of
17 probations as Academic Plus. So as far as the letter
18 of the law, going forward with this school, I think
19 we definitely meet that. And we definitely believe
20 we have a strong application and a community that
21 needs us. So, thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. McGill.
23 Anyone speaking in opposition? You have 20 minutes.
24 Please identify yourself for the record.

25 MR. JONES: My name is Sam Jones, representing

1 the Pulaski County Special School District. I'll
2 take 30 seconds. This is not the first time we've
3 appeared before you in relation to Academics Plus in
4 whatever incarnation it has had in the past. We've
5 submitted multiple items and analyses; I trust you
6 all have read them, absorbed them, asked questions
7 internally about them. We stand upon those. We have
8 nothing further to offer. We remain in opposition to
9 the application.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. McGill,
11 you have 5 minutes.

12 MR. MCGILL: I think we'll stand with our first
13 20. Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Clay,
15 before we move forward with question and answer, can
16 you address the desegregation, if there are any
17 questions or concerns? We've received some letters.

18 MS. CLAY: Yes. I'll do my best. And I'm not
19 trying to be vague; it's just -- it's something that
20 is difficult to measure. So I'll give you a little
21 background. 6-23-106 requires you, the authorizer,
22 to attempt to measure the likely impact of a proposed
23 charter school on the efforts of public school
24 districts to achieve and maintain a unitary system.
25 Now this sounds easy enough but when you get down to

1 it it's not an easy task, and there are a couple of
2 reasons for that. By their very nature open-
3 enrollment charter schools are open enrollment. So
4 until they open we don't know who's going to be
5 there. We don't know where those kids have come
6 from, what district they came from, or even if they
7 were in public school before. You know, they attract
8 home-school students or students that have been in
9 private schools as well. So it's extremely difficult
10 to do an analysis because we don't know who's going
11 to be there when that school opens.

12 A background of some of the materials you have,
13 you do have a few letters that were submitted by
14 various parties. The charter school rules call for
15 the charter school to submit a desegregation analysis
16 with their request, which they did. And then it also
17 allows for local school boards to submit their own
18 analysis and they're supposed to do that 20 days
19 prior to your meeting. There's not been an official
20 analysis from Pulaski County Special School District
21 and there was a letter submitted. So just so you
22 know that they do have an opportunity to submit a
23 deseg analysis of their own. The best I can do --
24 and, again, I'm not trying to be vague; I just don't
25 know what else to do, other than to advise you of the

1 decision you have to make -- is if, after reviewing
2 the information that you've been provided and
3 questioning the parties that are here today, you feel
4 like granting this license will hamper, delay or in
5 any way negatively affect the desegregation of the
6 public school district -- that's directly out of the
7 law -- then the law requires you to deny the request.
8 And I'll just repeat that again so you can kind of
9 keep it in your head as you go: if you think that the
10 license will hamper, delay, or in any way negatively
11 affect the desegregation of the public school
12 district then you should deny the request.

13 Do you have any questions?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: None? Dr. Gotcher?

15 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Clay, I'm trying to work
16 through just new information. Pulaski County is
17 attempting to achieve unitary status and they have a
18 few indicators left to achieve. So the question
19 regarding that last statement you made, if a charter
20 applicant or the existence of a new charter entity --
21 if it affects that district's ability to achieve
22 unitary status, is that different than what you just
23 said quoting the law?

24 MS. CLAY: Well, there's two provisions of the
25 law, and it might be better if I read it -- if I go

1 through it all together. So you start with 6-23-
2 106(a) and it says that the public charter school,
3 local school board, and the district where the
4 charter school would be located should carefully
5 review the potential impact on their desegregation
6 efforts to create and maintain a unitary system of
7 desegregated public schools. It then tells you, the
8 authorizer, to attempt to measure the likely impact.
9 And then it gives a specific instruction in (c) that
10 the authorizer shall not approve any public charter
11 school that hampers, delays, or in any way negatively
12 affects the desegregation of a public school
13 district.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

15 MS. CLAY: Does that help or --

16 DR. GOTCHER: It does. Yes.

17 MS. CLAY: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

19 MS. PFEFFER: So, and I may be the only one here
20 needing this. But can we get a quick update on where
21 Pulaski County School District is in terms of
22 achieving unitary status?

23 MS. CLAY: In the desegregation analysis that
24 was submitted by ADE staff, which is in your packet,
25 it lists -- I believe there are five areas where

1 Pulaski County is currently not unitary. And I'll --
2 do y'all have a page number on that? Okay. The five
3 --

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's 53 of 181 on the
5 Maumelle application.

6 MS. CLAY: The five areas are discipline, school
7 facilities, staff, student achievement, and
8 monitoring.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have a question for Ms.
10 Boyd, and I hate to put her on the spot. I didn't
11 think about this question prior to. To your
12 knowledge -- or if Ms. Perry is still down there --
13 to your knowledge has there ever been opposition to
14 other charter schools that involved Pulaski County
15 schools where the desegregation has been a concern?

16 MS. CLAY: I don't have specific examples. The
17 Academics Plus folks are telling me they've had
18 opposition before. But I know probably three to five
19 years ago it was relatively routine for not only
20 Pulaski County but Little Rock School District to
21 make desegregation related opposition to charter
22 schools. Now a lot has changed since that time in
23 where we are with the Pulaski County deseg case and
24 school districts being declared unitary or mostly
25 unitary and the deseg case settling. But just

1 history-wise, there was a time when desegregation
2 related opposition was relatively common.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And was there ever a
4 finding that that would prevent a charter from going
5 forward?

6 MS. CLAY: I don't know that there was ever a
7 finding that the only reason a charter school was not
8 going forward was desegregation related. There may
9 have been some that were denied for other reasons.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. McGill, would you like
11 to offer --

12 MR. MCGILL: If you would you like more
13 clarification, Scott Smith could probably give some
14 more light into it.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Smith, if you'll be
16 recognized for the --

17 MR. SMITH: Madam Chair, Members of the Panel,
18 I'm Scott Smith with the APSRC on behalf of the
19 applicant. Along with me today is Jess Askew who
20 represents many schools with regards to desegregation
21 issues. A couple of points I would mention just for
22 a point of clarification, it's certainly more than a
23 feeling. The statute says if the application will
24 actually hamper, delay or negatively impact, so it's
25 not a matter if you feel like it might; will it

1 actually do so. I would also point out that this
2 panel has repeatedly approved this charter school in
3 the past, even when Pulaski County Special School
4 District had student assignment issues under the
5 desegregation case. And that point was specifically
6 challenged, as we mentioned in our response, with
7 Judge Marshall with the allegations that it was
8 somehow -- the existing Academics Plus then and other
9 charter schools were negatively impacting student
10 assignment. Judge Marshall found that not to be
11 true. So we certainly feel like that they're unitary
12 now; that's the good news with regard to student
13 assignment. That's not an issue. With regards to
14 the remaining obligations, that's obligations of
15 Pulaski County. They can't point to the Brinkley
16 School District or someone else out there with
17 regards to their obligations, nor to this applicant
18 with the regards to the school there. I think also
19 the trees-in-the-forest type issue is the fact that
20 they walked away from this school and they've already
21 decided to move to another area and so this applicant
22 is simply stepping into this issue. So we don't see
23 a negative impact at all. In other words, there is
24 no hamper and delay or negatively impacting any
25 desegregation efforts or any obligation to become

1 desegregated in areas out there. So we offer that
2 for your consideration. If you need more, certainly
3 Mr. Askew or someone else can step into those shoes
4 and answer those questions for you.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
6 from the Panel before we move forward?

7 DR. GOTCHER: Forgive me; I'm still not clear.
8 So the creation of this school, could it negatively
9 impact Pulaski County's ability to achieve unitary
10 status? And I don't know who can answer that or is
11 it just to be rhetorically placed at the table. But
12 that's something that I'm unsettled with at this
13 point.

14 MR. ASKEW: My name is Jess Askew and I work
15 with Mr. Smith and APSRC on this desegregation issue,
16 so I'm another face. I think that question has been
17 answered. Pulaski County has not offered you a
18 desegregation analysis, as Ms. Clay pointed out.

19 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

20 MR. ASKEW: They haven't told you how this would
21 impact. We have a couple of letters that have been
22 thoroughly rebutted. They say -- they point at Scott
23 Elementary or Scott Charter and they say Scott
24 Charter would have a racial balance effect. Well,
25 that's speculative. We don't know, as Ms. Clay said.

1 But the forest-and-trees issue that Mr. Smith alluded
2 to is Pulaski County School District has to tend to
3 its own business of becoming unitary in these issues
4 of discipline, school facilities, staff, student
5 achievement, and monitoring. That takes place within
6 the school buildings that Pulaski County has kept.
7 And it's walked away from Scott. So whether Pulaski
8 County becomes unitary in these five remaining areas
9 is up to Pulaski County, with the children,
10 buildings, faculty that it has kept. They walked
11 away from Scott, walked away from this specific
12 building. They intend to do whatever they intend to
13 do with the children that they have abandoned and
14 would bus to their school, Harris Elementary or
15 whatever other school, that they've kept open. Are
16 they going to intentionally segregate children in
17 Harris Elementary? No. Those are the kinds of
18 things that Pulaski County would have to prove to
19 you, if it even wanted to make the case, and it
20 hasn't done that. And by saying that Scott Charter
21 would look like such-and-such or, you know, wouldn't
22 be innovative, that doesn't even get close to the
23 question.

24 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you.

25 MR. ASKEW: It's clear to me that the answer is

1 no. And Judge Marshall found the answer no, not with
2 regard to Scott but with regard to all the charter
3 schools five years ago when Pulaski County still had
4 problems (i.e., was not unitary) in student
5 assignment and made this same argument. And Judge
6 Marshall said there's no impact.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: I have a follow-up. What did you
8 say the five areas were again?

9 MR. ASKEW: Discipline of children. So does
10 Pulaski County --

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Right.

12 MR. ASKEW: -- discipline minority children more
13 than non-minority children. School facilities.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Right.

15 MR. ASKEW: Does Pulaski County put money into
16 buildings in a way that is segregative or non-
17 segregative? Staff, that's basically hiring faculty,
18 dismissing staff. Student achievement, there's the
19 achievement gap. And monitoring, I think that means
20 monitoring its own unitary status obligations but I
21 can't speak to that. I don't represent Pulaski
22 County and haven't tried to figure out what its
23 problems are.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Can I follow-up?

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: (Nodding head up and

1 down.)

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Kendra, this may be a question
3 for Legal. So if I'm looking at these five
4 categories and I'm trying to make a decision on
5 whether or not the opening of this school would
6 hinder unitary status, looking at the enrollment
7 within the school would not affect these five
8 categories -- or would it?

9 MS. CLAY: I don't -- not directly. I'm trying
10 to think if there would be an indirect effect. But
11 no; the enrollment, not directly.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you all for
13 that clarification. We wanted to -- thank you, Mr.
14 McGill. Go ahead.

15 MR. MCGILL: Can I say one more thing?

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

17 MR. MCGILL: It's also important to know that
18 Pulaski County in its own analysis said there needed
19 to be a school at Scott. They said if the voters
20 would vote in the millage increase they would have
21 built a school, but since they didn't vote it they
22 closed it down. So now we're trying to fill that
23 void of where there obviously is a need that even
24 Pulaski County has determined that there is.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. All right.

1 Are we ready to proceed with questions? All right.
2 Ms. Pfeffer, if you'll go first.

3 MS. PFEFFER: Mr. McGill or -- I'm sorry --
4 whomever this is going to be appropriate; it's on the
5 facilities. So you're under negotiations right now
6 --

7 MR. MCGILL: Yes.

8 MS. PFEFFER: -- with Pulaski County on that?
9 What's the likelihood that they're going to be
10 agreeable to your contract terms?

11 MR. MCGILL: Well, and in their advertisement
12 for the school to be sold they put charter school, a
13 great opportunity for a charter school is one of
14 their advertisement keys. And I think, you know, Mr.
15 Key, I think, is -- we've talked with him several
16 times. I think he is open to discussion -- and I
17 don't want to say anything of what he would say. But
18 I think there's a good opportunity there and with Mr.
19 Key.

20 MS. PFEFFER: What is the timeline when you
21 expect to have a decision?

22 MR. MCGILL: As soon as possible, after these
23 proceedings are finalized. Sometime this spring,
24 early spring to late winter we'd like to be in. It
25 would be great if we got it by January 1st so we

1 could start making the adjustments to the building --
2 you know -- paint and all the things it may need to
3 update it.

4 MS. PFEFFER: And it seems like we've kind of
5 been here in a charter negotiation before. But it is
6 a little uncomfortable to be sitting here when
7 there's no guarantee that there is a facility and
8 then, therefore, there is a chance you could be
9 coming back then and asking for an amendment for a
10 different facility and that could change the dynamics
11 of everything. So are you going to provide
12 transportation?

13 MR. MCGILL: At this point there's not
14 transportation in the budget. That's not to say we
15 won't do that in the future, but at this point
16 there's not.

17 MS. PFEFFER: So --

18 MR. MCGILL: We're doing an afterschool program
19 for students so that they can stay until -- if they
20 can't be picked up early in the day, then they'll
21 have the doors open until 6:00. That's a part of we
22 anticipate being a Title 1 school and being able to
23 use Title 1 funds. That's why it's not an actual
24 part of this application, because if we put it in the
25 application and say, "Here's what we're going to do,"

1 then we couldn't use Title 1 funds for it, is my
2 understanding. Because it would be state mandated
3 that we -- it would be a requirement by the state;
4 don't want to supplant.

5 MS. PFEFFER: All right. So you would -- your
6 thought is you would use Title 1 funds?

7 MR. MCGILL: For an afterschool program to where
8 if parents can't get there by 3:15, 3:30, then they
9 can on the way home from work, wherever, they can
10 come by about 6:00. And that should give them time
11 to get off work at 5:00 in Little Rock and driving
12 through pick them up by 6:00.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. That still doesn't mean
14 there would be transportation for students to attend
15 the school?

16 MR. MCGILL: That's correct.

17 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

18 MR. MCGILL: But that's our plan to accommodate
19 parents.

20 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. Do you feel that will limit
21 the opportunity for students to -- and parents even
22 to apply for the charter?

23 MR. MCGILL: You know, I think we've found at
24 Academics Plus -- we offer transportation in parts of
25 the community, and not, but we have a lot of

1 applicants from the Maumelle city that would take
2 advantage of that. Now to say that every -- that
3 100%, there may be somebody that may be affected by
4 the transportation. But I don't think it is an
5 overwhelming concern because -- you know, I was
6 raised in the country; one thing people have in the
7 country is a vehicle. Because if they don't, how are
8 they doing to go to town to get anything to eat? So,
9 you know, the country folks probably have more --
10 percentage of them have vehicles more than maybe city
11 people. But, you know, for a true effect, I don't
12 think it will.

13 MS. PFEFFER: And what are the demographics of
14 Academics Plus?

15 MR. MCGILL: At this point -- let's see -- we
16 increased our minority count this last year. We're
17 from 77% down to 74% of white, so 26% minority from
18 where it was last year at 21%.

19 MS. PFEFFER: Okay. All right. That's all I
20 have right now.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: To what do you attribute
22 that change?

23 MR. MCGILL: Part of it is the cap increase and,
24 you know, just the opportunity of more people seeing
25 -- you know -- as far as -- I would like to say it's

1 the bus route we're doing, but I don't see that many
2 more kids on that bus. So it's really not
3 necessarily that; we're ranging still about 15 kids
4 on that bus, just like we did the year before. One
5 part of it too is that we had -- well, Hispanic is
6 where we got our kids. The African-American stayed
7 about the same and our Hispanics went up about 40
8 kids just in Hispanics. We added 100 students; you
9 know, our cap went from 750 to 850. With that, with
10 attrition of 11% we added 183 new students to the
11 school. And of those we had almost 50 minority
12 students and most of those were Hispanic.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Questions? Ms. Gross, I
14 have a question. I'm assuming at the Scott school
15 there would be a separate principal, another
16 principal. Tell us how you would collaborate with
17 that principal to insure that that school is as
18 successful as your school is?

19 MS. GROSS: I think it's exciting to add a
20 building to the family. The high school principal
21 and I have both worked very closely together and we
22 both have assistant principals, so we're growing the
23 administrative level all the time, which is exciting
24 also. I think that -- one thing I've noticed, I've
25 never had an assistant principal before and so that

1 mentoring piece of me I have enjoyed exploring that
2 and I think that it's a real learning opportunity. I
3 think adding like-minded people who believe in choice
4 and who believe in Scott, I think that's very
5 exciting. So I look forward to the process of not
6 only being involved in the hiring but in the growing
7 and working together. We meet regularly, quite
8 often, and so it might be a little drive but that's a
9 beautiful location and I know how to Skype. I may
10 not be able to monitor, you know, the clicker, but --
11 I'm looking forward to it very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: There's certainly some
13 great places to eat in that area of town.

14 MS. GROSS: I didn't want to say that.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions?

16 DR. JONES: I do.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

18 DR. JONES: I'm really excited about the
19 potential of having a science instruction and it
20 really can be different. And everything -- my most
21 important lessons were learned on the farm and it can
22 be done. But you also have to have a really strong
23 science instructor to get to levels that we really
24 want our students to perform, because that will start
25 being -- and it should be as important as literacy

1 and math. Do you have in mind who you're going to
2 hire for your science instructor or the training at
3 this point?

4 MS. GROSS: No, ma'am. But I am very excited
5 about a partnership that we just started with UCA,
6 Maumelle Charter Elementary. We're going through --
7 we have six teachers who are going to be working with
8 them in a grant they got regarding science and the
9 standards. And so with that start of those six
10 teachers at Maumelle Charter Elementary I see that as
11 definitely the potential for training of any new
12 hires in Scott. If any of those wish to -- you know
13 -- we're not sure about that yet; we're still -- you
14 know -- this is a big step for us right here and so
15 then starts those kind of conversations. I think
16 that the people that will be drawn to Scott are the
17 people who are just like you, who believe that
18 science is a vehicle for academics and literacy and
19 math and the social/emotional piece. I think -- I
20 know that we're drawn to what we're most interested
21 in, so I imagine that the pool would be perhaps
22 greater. And the stronger we become at Academics
23 Plus the more people are interested. I never have a
24 problem hiring, so I'm hopeful.

25 DR. JONES: Okay. I trust that if you immerse

1 your teacher into the new standards and training, as
2 UCA is doing, and use that as your basis then you'll
3 be fine in that area.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: One follow-up question to
5 what Dr. Jones had asked: I'm assuming you're a
6 member of APSRC. Are you a member of any co-op?

7 MS. GROSS: Yes. We're a member of Arch Ford
8 and we rely heavily on them.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Gotcher,
10 do you have a question?

11 DR. GOTCHER: I do, but I'm still working it
12 out. Let me pause for anybody else.

13 MS. PFEFFER: Can I go back to the
14 transportation question?

15 MR. MCGILL: Okay.

16 MS. PFEFFER: And kind of two things. Of your
17 current minority students what percent of them rely
18 on transportation to get to your school?

19 MR. MCGILL: Well, you're looking at 15 kids on
20 the bus. As far as minority, if you look at that bus
21 what do we have on there? About five or six?

22 MS. GROSS: Uh-huh.

23 MS. PFEFFER: Okay.

24 MR. MCGILL: Five or six African American, so
25 very small percentage.

1 DR. GOTCHER: I think my question was similar to
2 Ms. Pfeffer's, kind of looking at the different
3 transportation and how that would affect. But let me
4 just move on to something a little more concrete in
5 this area. Talk more about the ALE services. I've
6 seen the response but I'd like to hear more,
7 recognizing that all students are afforded the RTI
8 process but knowing that some students with
9 alternative learning need something more than that.
10 Talk more about maybe how you've supported ALE
11 students at Academics Plus and how you would
12 transition those methodologies to the students at
13 Scott?

14 MS. GROSS: Okay. First of all, I wouldn't
15 consider my students with needs like that as ALE
16 students, and so I understand the terminology and I
17 understand what you're asking, I think. We have a
18 strong RTI program. And our students who are not
19 being successful in the classroom through
20 intervention, remediation, and the tiered process, I
21 think that we're planting success at the elementary
22 building. Now that's where I am, K-5, and I believe
23 that the high school uses the same methodology
24 through their RTI process. Our students -- we work
25 really -- we work very hard to make sure that their

1 needs are met where they are, not -- we don't have a
2 place where we would put them. And so we work -- my
3 teachers have half-an-hour of dedicated intervention
4 every day in the classroom with students on-site. I
5 know the high school has intervention after school
6 that meet the needs of students and throughout the
7 day. Ms. Willis is here. I mean, eventually we'll
8 be at a high school level, so we have a strong
9 special ed. program as well. But you're talking
10 about general ed. population and we address their
11 needs where they are in the classroom. And so that's
12 how we've done it and how I perceive that we will
13 continue to do so in Scott. The idea is to keep them
14 in the classroom learning and to adjust the
15 strategies and the teaching in the classroom and make
16 sure that we're meeting their needs there. And when
17 the teacher feels that they are lacking support then
18 the RTI program kicks in and they move forward
19 through the tiers with the ultimate goal of either
20 success or potential for further assessment in other
21 areas.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Please, yes.

23 MS. WILLIS: Hello. Good morning. Kimberly
24 Willis; I'm the high school principal at Maumelle
25 Charter. I wanted to further address what you said

1 about ALE students and I just wanted to let you know
2 how committed we are to forward thinking. The high
3 school eventually we want to grow to be a high school
4 with Scott Charter. We have teachers who are
5 actually committed and dedicated at least one period
6 a day across four subjects to intervention classes
7 and an RTI prep period that has the motivation to
8 serve our under-served students. Because as we have
9 increased our cap by 100 students, we of course are
10 receiving those students who have very different
11 needs from what we have seen in the past. Actually,
12 last night we had a meeting with our leadership team
13 that we are looking to do a book study across our
14 staff to address the needs of those students who do
15 have different needs that tend to distract them from
16 student achievement. And we're finding that now, so
17 we're starting with that today. We have really
18 developed the RTI process very strategically. We
19 have done a lot of studies and a lot of different
20 things that have helped to monitor those students and
21 their progress. We are continuing to monitor and
22 adjust to make sure that those students who have
23 tended to be under-served are now served
24 academically, emotionally, mentally, and such.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

2 DR. JONES: I understand that you do K-2
3 standards based grading now. Is that correct?

4 MS. GROSS: I believe it's K-1 right now.

5 DR. JONES: Okay. Maybe I didn't recall that --

6 MS. GROSS: I'd love -- that's where I'm headed.
7 But, yes ma'am, I believe right now.

8 DR. JONES: Tell me about that. And do you plan
9 to take the standards based grading to Scott?

10 MS. GROSS: The standards based reporting is in
11 kindergarten and 1st grade based on standards, and
12 I'm sure you're very familiar with what that is. But
13 so the children are assessed based on what they
14 should know at a certain point in the year and that's
15 how those grades are done. And then I intend to move
16 that into 2nd grade. I've had an assistant principal
17 shift this year and so I got just a little behind,
18 but that is the goal. I'm very, very interested in
19 standards based reporting. It's very interesting
20 that you should ask that question. If I were to have
21 the say, I would definitely say that, yes, starting a
22 school is -- yes, you want to start with standards
23 based reporting and I would say that K-2 would be the
24 ideal place to start. But I think judging a student
25 on their standards ability is the way to go.

1 DR. JONES: Okay. Thank you.

2 MS. GROSS: Uh-huh.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

4 MS. LIWO: I'm not sure who can answer my
5 question. But I still have some concerns about
6 desegregation, especially when I consider the
7 transportation waiver. I don't know if you have a
8 copy of an October 2, 2015 letter authored by Samuel
9 Jones. Do you have a copy of that letter with you?

10 MR. MCGILL: The letter from Sam Jones, we have
11 it. Yes.

12 MS. LIWO: If you'll look at the third paragraph
13 on the second page of that letter, I don't want to
14 have to read it out to you but -- would it be easier
15 for you if I did?

16 MR. MCGILL: On the transportation, you know,
17 charter schools have been -- well, we were in 2001
18 and charter schools had not been providing
19 transportation. There's very few -- actually few
20 that do. We are one at Maumelle that does for some
21 students. But there are several charter schools in
22 Pulaski County that do not provide any transportation
23 that I'm aware of. And this was happening when Judge
24 Marshall made his decision that charter schools did
25 not affect the desegregation efforts of three

1 districts. So I don't think the transportation, as
2 far as a desegregation issue, is pertinent.

3 MS. LIWO: I don't know; when I read this letter
4 and it -- basically, you guys don't offer
5 transportation. I'll just read it. This is my
6 concern. Translation, "Students of low income who
7 are more often than not African American in this
8 country will not have access to the new charter
9 school and it will inevitably be populated,
10 especially as time passes, by middle and upper class
11 students who are in this community predominantly
12 white." And then you take that and couple it with
13 your five-year maximum enrollment projection and
14 you're planning on pulling, I guess, most of your
15 students from the Pulaski County Special School
16 District, explain to me why I shouldn't be worried
17 that this is going to have or cause the Pulaski
18 County Special School District problems with
19 maintaining its unitary status.

20 MR. SMITH: Sure. A couple of points on the
21 front-end. First of all, the letter I think was by
22 Mr. Walker rather than Mr. Jones. Second of all,
23 obviously, as we mentioned in our response, these
24 issues have been raised again and again and again
25 with regards to this charter school and the renewal

1 of this charter school, as well as many other charter
2 schools. Third, this same point was also litigated
3 with regards to the impact of charter schools on the
4 racial makeup of schools and the impact of that on
5 what was then student assignment issues that existed
6 for the Little Rock School District, the Pulaski
7 County Special School District, both of which they've
8 been alleviated from now. They are unitary with
9 regards to student assignment. And Judge Marshall
10 determined that there was no segregative impact by
11 charter schools in this area. Finally, I would
12 suggest that this is speculation. He has no way of
13 knowing what the school will look like yet because
14 there is no enrollment at the school at this point in
15 time. And with regards to that point, what we've
16 often seen is the charter schools look more like the
17 community they're associated with than traditional
18 schools in some ways, the overall county population
19 or the overall population to some degree. If you
20 look at that and you look at what Scott looked like
21 previously, it was somewhere close to white and black
22 populations; I think 40-something percent both in the
23 same areas. So even if you want to speculate, the
24 speculation is that this school will certainly
25 probably look -- have more of a minority impact than

1 Maumelle does currently because of the population
2 it's serving over there. So I think all of that says
3 that there is -- as far as we can tell, there is no
4 negative segregative impact with regards to this
5 school. And I said finally, but I should say one
6 more point: this certainly is with regards to the
7 school and its obligations, the charter school.
8 Pulaski County has the remaining obligations its got
9 in non-student assignment areas. And that's their
10 responsibility on how they run their district. This
11 school is not impacting that as far as we can tell in
12 any form or fashion.

13 MS. LIWO: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions? Mr.
15 McGill, I have a couple of fast-fire questions for
16 you.

17 MR. MCGILL: All right.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: At what grade levels at
19 Maumelle are your students one-to-one with devices?

20 MR. MCGILL: Almost at 5th, 6th, 7th and -- or
21 6th, 7th and 8th. The science room is the only one
22 in the middle school that does not have it, but we do
23 have a lab. Now this next year when we move into our
24 new facility all of the middle school will be one-to-
25 one. And we do -- we don't do -- we do laptops and

1 computers in the classroom. We don't -- we have
2 iPads accessibility, but we don't issue them to
3 students.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And what will be your plan
5 for Scott?

6 MR. MCGILL: Doing the same thing. We're having
7 -- the mobile labs is what we're going with. You're
8 looking at only 12 classrooms probably to start out
9 with, so doing mobile labs and a cart of iPads also.
10 I believe it was two labs and -- two mobile labs and
11 iPads, so they'll be comparable, and then a couple of
12 computers in each classroom, just like we have in
13 Maumelle.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I caution you that I often
15 see those computers on the lab --

16 MR. MCGILL: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- and not in the hands of
18 students. So I caution you to think about that as
19 you move forward. Do students ever graduate early
20 from Maumelle?

21 MR. MCGILL: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And I'm sure you've
23 read the ForwARd recommendations from ForwARd
24 Arkansas. And I was wondering if you had considered
25 either community -- beginning a ForwARd community?

1 MR. MCGILL: I think that's something we
2 definitely would look at for sure. Yes, ma'am. Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions from
4 panel members?

5 DR. JONES: Do you know how the broadband is at
6 Scott? Were they able to test online? Were they
7 there at that time?

8 MR. MCGILL: I cannot answer that at this point.
9 I don't know.

10 DR. JONES: But you are prepared to do what it
11 takes to get that?

12 MR. MCGILL: Yes.

13 DR. JONES: Okay.

14 MR. MCGILL: Yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Clay, are there any
16 remaining issues regarding this action item?

17 MS. CLAY: No.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If there are no further
19 questions --

20 DR. JONES: I'll make a motion that we approve
21 Scott as a license to the current charter.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: There's been a motion made
24 by Dr. Jones and a second by Dr. Saunders to approve
25 the request for license for Maumelle Charter School.

1 All those in favor of the motion?

2 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

4 MS. PFEFFER: No.

5 MS. LIWO: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Pfeffer and Liwo
7 are opposed. And, Dr. Saunders, you're abstaining --
8 or Dr. Gotcher; I'm sorry. All right. If you'll
9 take a moment to write your reasons --

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Hold on. Does that -- do we
11 require four votes to pass or just three, Kendra?

12 MS. CLAY: Present and voting; it's a majority
13 of those present and voting. So y'all are going to
14 make me do math on the spot just like the State Board
15 did last week. We have Saunders, Barnes, Jones, Liwo
16 -- so there's six that voted; a majority of that
17 would be four. So if there are two out of that group
18 that opposed, by my calculations -- which y'all
19 please check -- that motion passed.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: What about the abstention?

21 MS. CLAY: He is not voting. So it's present
22 and voting; that's why I needed to make sure that we
23 calculated correctly.

24 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones.

1 DR. JONES: I support this motion because
2 Academics Plus has evidence of academic success. The
3 Scott community needs a quality choice for education
4 and I feel confident this charter will provide that
5 opportunity.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

7 MR. ROGERS: I supported the motion due to the
8 success at Academics Plus and there's not a school
9 serving the Scott community.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I support the expansion due
12 to the history of success and into an area without a
13 currently operating school.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Barnes.

15 MS. BARNES: I voted in support of the motion.
16 The charter has been consistent in successful
17 academic outcomes and provides an additional
18 opportunity for students to be successful. At the
19 time of this presentation no concrete evidence was
20 provided to support negative impacts.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

22 DR. GOTCHER: I voted to abstain. Further study
23 on the impact of unitary status on PCSSD is required
24 for me to make a more informed vote on this matter.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Pfeffer.

1 MS. PFEFFER: My concerns with the unresolved
2 issues, as I mentioned before we started. I think
3 that Pulaski County and desegregation is an issue
4 that we need to be very aware of. I think that the
5 lack of clarity on the facility is an issue because
6 the goal of including agricultural education is tied
7 to the location of this school. I would have
8 preferred to have more time before we made that
9 decision and have all those issues resolved before we
10 began the discussion. And a lack of transportation
11 will make a difference in the students who are able
12 to attend this charter, and I think there will be
13 some who won't have the opportunity.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Liwo.

15 MS. LIWO: I voted against. I still have
16 questions about the desegregation issue and so I
17 voted against.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you. Mr.
19 McGill, you'll move forward to the next stage of this
20 process and good luck to you.

21 MR. MCGILL: Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Action item 4 has been
23 withdrawn prior to the hearing. Are there -- Ms.
24 Clay or Ms. Boyd, are there any other items to
25 consider today?

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MS. BOYD: No, ma'am.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: With no additional issues,
any from the Panel? Then I'll accept a motion to
adjourn.

DR. JONES: So moved.

MS. BARNES: I'll second.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Jones and Ms. Barnes
-- Dr. Jones made a motion, seconded by Ms. Barnes to
adjourn. All those in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We stand adjourned.

(The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.)

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A-1: ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

Exhibit One (1)

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A-1: ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

Exhibit Two (2)

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A-2: WASHINGTON ACADEMY

Exhibit One (1)

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A-3: MAUMELLE CHARTER SCHOOL

Exhibit One (1)

	85:1,21;86:1,20; 94:3;96:3;100:17; 102:8;109:24; 110:14;113:18,22; 115:11;126:2,8	Act (2) 4:9;86:13	adjourned (2) 128:11,13	7:10;12:15,17
§		action (6) 12:15;60:19;77:19; 79:10;124:16;127:22	adjust (4) 41:9;54:7;116:14; 117:22	ago (3) 65:16;100:19; 105:3
\$500,000 (1) 88:10	Academy (45) 8:4,6;11:17;12:13, 19,21;13:5,18;14:3; 15:19;17:25;21:6,10; 22:19;30:4,25;37:2,6, 16,20;38:2,4;39:6; 57:8;58:3;60:18,24; 61:1,6,8,11,22;62:7; 65:5,17;71:21,22,24; 74:5;75:7,15;77:8; 129:24;130:24; 131:24	actions (1) 7:8	adjustment (2) 16:24;55:11	agree (3) 10:9;42:25;66:19
[activities (7) 11:25;29:18,19; 31:16;40:8,8,20	adjustments (1) 108:1	agreeable (1) 107:10
[ps] (1) 23:15		actor (1) 51:7	administration (2) 39:7;72:23	agricultural (3) 87:1;89:25;127:6
[sic] (1) 12:17		actual (1) 108:23	administrative (2) 73:7;111:23	agriculture (1) 90:4
A		actually (15) 21:4,14;24:3; 29:25;33:7;41:3; 72:21;77:24;90:2; 93:17;101:24;102:1; 117:5,11;119:19	administrator (1) 27:24	agri-sciences (2) 87:4;89:11
A-1 (3) 12:12;129:24; 130:24	accept (5) 5:5;52:4;57:7; 75:6;128:3	Adams (11) 14:22;37:22,25,25; 38:11,13,20,23; 39:10;50:2,21	administrators (2) 18:13;27:22	ahead (4) 68:20;69:17;84:10; 106:14
A-2 (3) 60:17,22;131:24	acceptance (1) 30:8	add (6) 35:15;62:25;63:22; 87:14,23;111:19	Advanced (4) 10:23;29:18;48:2, 20	aid (2) 63:13,17
A-3 (3) 77:17,21;132:24	accepted (2) 31:5,11	added (3) 30:5;111:8,10	advantage (3) 11:11;12:3;110:2	aisle (1) 90:11
abandoned (1) 104:13	access (16) 7:2;11:1,5,7,10,15; 12:7;25:25;27:1,7; 29:16,20;32:7;34:7; 91:5;120:8	adding (5) 9:10;77:8;81:25; 87:13;112:3	advertisement (2) 107:11,14	Alamos (1) 36:10
ability (5) 20:22;85:3;98:21; 103:9;118:25	accessibility (1) 123:2	addition (4) 23:25;33:16;51:24; 66:24	advise (1) 97:25	ALE (6) 64:12,17;115:5,10, 15;117:1
able (34) 9:14;10:19,20; 11:8,15;12:6;17:18; 18:6;20:4,12;31:19; 44:16;45:7;47:1; 48:7;49:1,2;50:14; 51:8,10,12,22;55:2; 63:22;65:19;71:2; 79:25;80:25;84:9; 89:12;108:22; 112:10;124:6;127:11	accommodate (1) 109:18	additional (23) 6:22;7:18;10:18; 12:25;13:7;17:8; 19:11;23:23,25;24:5; 25:8,10;59:10,22; 63:12;64:3,3;74:17; 76:6;88:20;103:5; 126:17;128:2	advisement (1) 6:19	Alexandra (1) 85:8
above (3) 22:23;48:17;51:24	accommodations (1) 76:11	additionally (1) 77:10	A-Fayetteville (1) 20:2	Algebra (3) 48:11,13,19
Absolutely (2) 22:18;26:20	accomplished (2) 85:5;89:9	address (10) 22:16;29:23;81:3, 9;85:10,13;96:16; 116:10,25;117:14	affect (5) 98:5,11;106:7; 115:3;119:25	aligned (1) 46:19
absolves (1) 70:15	according (1) 42:4	addressed (3) 25:22;36:24;86:3	affected (1) 110:3	alignment (1) 77:2
absorbed (1) 96:6	accountability (5) 52:21,24;82:17,18; 83:1	addresses (1) 88:3	affects (2) 98:21;99:12	allegations (1) 102:7
abstain (1) 126:22	accurate (1) 47:20	addressing (1) 39:25	affirm (3) 14:5;61:14;83:9	alleviated (1) 121:8
abstaining (1) 125:7	achieve (6) 58:7;96:24;98:17, 18,21;103:9	adequate (3) 45:8;73:9;77:11	AFFIRMATIVELY (2) 14:8;83:12	allocation (2) 23:24;25:7
abstention (1) 125:20	achievement (6) 27:13;100:7;104:5; 105:18,19;117:16	adequately (2) 58:1;60:1	afforded (1) 115:7	allow (4) 6:20;11:25;76:14; 78:21
Academic (12) 15:12;27:12,25; 28:8;66:1;76:12; 77:5;79:7,10;95:17; 126:2,17	achieving (4) 86:5,6,7;99:22	adjourn (2) 128:4,9	African (2) 114:24;120:7	allowing (1) 61:21
academically (4) 21:21;66:16;95:16; 117:24	acres (1) 90:5		African-American (1) 111:6	allows (3) 18:9;81:4;97:17
ACADEMICS (25) 77:18,24;78:2,4,6, 9,12,20;82:20;84:1;	across (23) 10:11,20;11:1,10, 15,20;30:3,24;31:15, 15;40:8,16;44:4,25; 47:6;48:4;86:4; 89:25;92:16;94:10, 13;117:6,13		afterschool (2) 108:18;109:7	alluded (1) 104:1

17:5,8,11,12 alternative (4) 65:5;71:6,6;115:9 although (2) 59:19;79:17 always (12) 18:1;20:12;24:12; 32:10;40:21;46:23; 54:12;55:4;65:4; 71:3;86:11;88:13 amazed (1) 90:9 amazing (1) 53:12 amended (1) 78:21 amendment (6) 6:1;60:18,24; 78:16,19;108:9 amendments (4) 61:7;77:18,23; 78:11 American (2) 114:24;120:7 amount (2) 8:17,18 amounts (1) 38:10 analyses (1) 96:5 analysis (8) 97:10,15,18,20,23; 99:23;103:18;106:18 ancestors (2) 90:3;91:12 animals (2) 90:19;92:4 Ann (6) 14:23;21:5,8; 24:10;32:9,13 answered (5) 26:13;34:2;56:9; 83:12;103:17 ANSWEREDLY (1) 14:8 anticipate (1) 108:22 anymore (1) 53:20 AP (3) 34:7,18;35:5 apologize (2) 6:9;37:14 apparent (1) 87:25 appear (1) 65:3 appeared (2) 12:22;96:3 appearing (2) 61:6;78:9 appendix (1) 50:6	applicant (8) 5:24;13:2;57:25; 58:5;98:20;101:19; 102:17,21 applicants (4) 9:18,20;10:17; 110:1 application (15) 7:17;12:13,19; 37:5;61:1;78:6; 79:16;80:24;84:4; 95:20;96:9;100:5; 101:23;108:24,25 applications (2) 7:13;18:4 applied (1) 65:15 apply (4) 65:13,14,18; 109:22 appoint (1) 4:10 appreciate (10) 12:8;15:3;16:23; 25:19;26:11;36:24; 68:1;74:20;89:22; 95:6 appreciated (1) 25:20 apprenticeships (1) 68:12 approaching (1) 45:25 appropriate (2) 76:16;107:4 APPROVAL (3) 5:12;13:24;49:2 approve (10) 5:5;57:9,12,24; 75:9,14;77:7;99:10; 124:20,24 approved (9) 5:14;60:5;61:1,2; 78:5,7;79:8;81:25; 102:2 approximately (2) 9:20;52:16 APSRC (3) 101:18;103:15; 114:6 ARCA (2) 20:7;59:25 Arch (1) 114:7 area (24) 17:4,14;19:3,17; 33:11;42:2;58:21; 73:2,2;85:18,23; 93:18,20,21;94:1,16, 17,20;102:21; 112:13;114:3;115:5; 121:11;126:12 areas (13)	19:20,25;44:5; 73:3;80:23;99:25; 100:6;103:1;104:8; 105:8;116:21; 121:23;122:9 argument (1) 105:5 Arkansas (55) 4:5,9;8:1,2,3,4,5,8, 10,15,23;9:5,23;10:1, 13,18;11:8,16,12;13, 19,20,21;13:17;14:2; 17:4;18:10,18;19:8, 9;27:4;37:2,5,17,20; 38:1,4,4,16;39:7,20; 41:14;49:2;57:7,8; 58:21;59:4,22;62:1; 84:7;87:4;89:8,19; 123:24;129:24; 130:24 Armstrong (4) 84:14;89:18,21; 94:10 around (11) 13:8;17:20;35:3; 43:21;45:13,14;46:5; 47:5;57:20;89:15; 92:18 arrangement (1) 73:13 arrangements (1) 34:11 art (1) 72:7 articulating (1) 46:7 arts (3) 43:20;44:2;48:21 Askew (9) 101:19;103:3,14, 14,20;104:25;105:9, 12,15 asleep (1) 15:1 aspect (2) 29:21;32:23 assessed (1) 118:13 assessment (2) 86:16;116:20 assessments (1) 41:23 assignment (8) 95:14;102:4,10,13; 105:5;121:5,9;122:9 assistance (3) 6:21;58:13;82:4 assistant (3) 111:22,25;118:16 assisting (1) 47:9 associated (1) 121:17	assuming (2) 111:14;114:5 assumption (1) 24:11 assured (1) 40:18 athlete (1) 51:8 atmosphere (1) 71:14 at-risk (2) 54:20;63:2 attempt (3) 19:21;96:22;99:8 attempting (1) 98:17 attend (7) 20:12;27:8;51:8, 23;53:19;109:14; 127:12 attendance (2) 51:9;68:8 attended (2) 42:22;55:22 attorneys (2) 5:23;6:12 attract (2) 9:11;97:7 attribute (1) 110:21 attrition (1) 111:10 audience (4) 4:17,17;7:6,22 authored (1) 119:8 authorization (2) 4:8;6:1 authorizer (4) 6:5;96:21;99:8,10 Authorizing (5) 4:4,7;12:22;61:7; 78:10 autism (1) 51:14 available (4) 11:4;12:5;18:25; 59:3 avenue (1) 67:23 average (1) 9:16 averages (3) 28:13;29:9;43:25 award (1) 49:4 aware (2) 119:23;127:4 away (6) 21:18;54:14; 102:20;104:7,11,11 AYES (4) 57:14;75:17;125:2;	128:10 <hr/> B <hr/> baby (1) 14:25 back (26) 6:11;12:4;24:24; 29:25;30:22;31:1,24; 39:13,21;41:25; 47:23;52:20;54:3; 62:18;71:11,13; 73:18;74:4,14;81:5, 13;84:20;90:16; 93:17;108:9;114:13 back-end (1) 63:9 background (4) 8:22;69:10;96:21; 97:12 backs (1) 8:24 back-up (1) 24:3 bad (2) 49:20;54:13 baggage (1) 65:22 balance (2) 46:11;103:24 balanced (1) 30:10 bar (2) 41:25;86:1 Barbara (2) 84:14;89:17 BARNES (28) 5:7,10;13:12,15; 23:21;25:5,13;39:12, 13;40:4;41:6,11; 57:10,12;59:6,7;75:9, 11,14;76:25;77:1; 82:20;125:15; 126:14,15;128:6,7,8 barrier (2) 25:21;58:3 Bart (1) 7:25 based (14) 26:1;40:15;41:23; 50:11,17;53:16;84:8; 118:3,9,10,11,13,19, 23 basically (5) 7:15;82:22;94:12; 105:17;120:4 basis (3) 10:16;51:23;114:2 beautiful (2) 14:25;112:9 became (2) 65:6;87:25 Beck (36)
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13:4;14:9,13,18, 22:15;10:16;22:20:1; 25:14,16,17,24;26:3, 5,15,20,25;29:11; 32:4;34:15;35:17; 36:3;37:3,11;40:3,5; 41:12;42:21;49:9,11, 25;50:23;51:5;53:13; 60:4,8 become (5) 67:16,17;71:8; 102:25;113:22 becomes (1) 104:8 becoming (1) 104:3 beforehand (1) 10:8 began (1) 127:10 begin (6) 4:23,25;12:14; 13:8,8;16:16 beginning (4) 12:24;52:25;55:16; 123:25 behalf (3) 8:3;61:22;101:18 behind (4) 21:13;49:6;68:5; 118:17 believers (1) 86:19 bells (1) 51:18 below (1) 47:18 benchmark (1) 64:22 beneficial (1) 68:23 benefit (1) 4:16 Bennett (3) 84:15;93:13,14 Bentonville (17) 8:2,18;9:1,3,6,15; 10:6,12;12:20;17:7; 18:4,8,9,16;19:6; 20:21;57:8 Bentonville's (1) 18:20 best (5) 18:16;70:4;85:3; 96:18;97:23 better (12) 16:4;21:3,15;22:9; 28:12;29:5;43:25; 60:11;83:4;95:2,2; 98:25 bidding (1) 39:3 big (9)	33:8,11,17;44:2; 45:6;55:10;70:22; 80:23;113:14 biggest (2) 71:1;72:1 bill (1) 26:10 bit (10) 15:8;17:23;36:1; 48:4;53:21;54:3; 69:4,10;79:15;83:21 black (3) 84:20;85:6;121:21 blind (1) 50:23 blocks (2) 93:22,22 board (13) 20:7;37:23;38:2,3, 13;41:13;60:7,25; 78:5;79:7;94:11; 99:3;125:14 boards (1) 97:17 Board's (1) 7:7 book (2) 56:10;117:13 boots (1) 32:10 both (7) 46:21;89:2,5; 111:21,22;121:7,22 Boyd (11) 12:15,16;60:21,22; 77:20,21;82:8,11; 100:10;127:24;128:1 branch (1) 38:24 break (2) 60:14,16 breed (1) 91:10 breeds (1) 91:12 brick-and- (2) 21:11;52:8 brick-and-mortar (6) 22:9;32:15;43:4,7; 51:9;53:17 brief (2) 42:21;64:1 bring (16) 9:13;10:22;11:15; 26:18;27:13;29:11, 22;32:9;43:12;72:3, 4;74:14;84:3,3;87:3; 91:24 bringing (1) 72:8 Brinkley (1) 102:15 broad (2)	28:2;49:19 broadband (5) 10:25;11:4,7;12:4; 124:5 broadly (1) 49:12 brought (5) 13:7;14:24;27:17; 53:4;88:4 brush (1) 49:19 brushes (1) 49:12 brushstroke (1) 28:2 Bryce (2) 14:22;37:25 budget (8) 12:6;36:22;37:1, 17,19;38:6;39:6; 108:14 build (3) 20:6,18,25 building (16) 35:20;72:22;73:4; 82:9,25;84:25;85:21; 86:19;87:19;88:1,24; 89:4;104:12;108:1; 111:20;115:22 buildings (5) 72:22;82:23;104:6, 10;105:16 built (2) 36:14;106:21 bus (10) 53:18;74:4,13; 93:24;104:14;111:1, 2,4;114:20,20 bused (2) 85:22;93:25 business (1) 104:3 businesses (1) 11:2 buy-in (2) 32:19,21 byproduct (1) 44:8	Caleb (1) 15:1 California (4) 36:11;39:17;41:1,2 call (8) 21:17,18;23:3; 67:11;73:2;74:8; 78:22;97:14 called (5) 4:4;33:3;54:24; 78:2;91:2 came (7) 45:4;52:6;65:20; 71:21;88:12;92:2; 97:6 Camille (2) 84:15;93:13 campus (10) 63:5,14;71:11; 74:7,11;78:3,16,21; 79:1;87:15 campuses (1) 26:17 can (91) 6:20;9:10;10:18; 12:3;15:8;17:22; 18:11,14;19:8,10; 21:22;22:16,21;23:6, 11,13,14;26:18;28:7, 15,18,23;29:25; 30:13;31:22;32:16, 25;34:16;35:25;36:7; 42:12;43:23;44:25; 45:9;46:2;47:2;48:3, 16;49:9;50:3,4,25; 53:3,3;55:21,25;56:4, 8,25;62:24;66:7,15; 67:2,18,19,20;68:19; 69:9;74:7,13;79:3,5; 81:15;82:2;84:17,18; 85:5,8,20;86:2;87:2; 91:22;93:7;95:3; 96:15;97:23;98:8; 99:20;103:3,10; 105:24;106:15; 108:19;109:9,9; 112:20,21;114:13; 119:4;122:3,11 cap (3) 110:23;111:9; 117:9 capital (1) 58:20 career (17) 29:22;30:2;31:13; 34:7,13,18,21;35:3, 10;39:16,18;58:24; 74:1;76:12,23,23; 85:4 careers (1) 87:4 carefully (4) 35:14;39:19;58:25;	99:4 Carla (1) 14:22 carried (2) 93:4,6 cart (1) 123:9 case (8) 5:25;6:14;79:24; 88:16;100:23,25; 102:5;104:19 case-by-case (1) 10:16 catalog (2) 34:17;35:15 catch-up (2) 68:6;69:9 categorical (1) 82:2 categories (2) 106:4,8 category (1) 49:13 cater (1) 51:2 cause (1) 120:17 caution (2) 123:14,18 cautioning (1) 18:25 center (5) 73:7,8;74:1,4; 76:24 centered (1) 17:4 central (2) 56:7;82:13 certain (4) 50:15;52:18;62:9; 118:14 Certainly (9) 15:10;74:18;81:14; 101:22;102:11; 103:2;112:12; 121:24;122:6 certified (1) 72:4 chair (7) 4:12;12:16;32:3; 40:13;60:22;77:21; 101:17 CHAIRPERSON (138) 4:2,25;5:9,13,16; 6:24;7:12,21;10:4; 12:10;13:9,14,21,25; 14:9,14,21;15:4; 16:20;19:12;22:10, 13;23:18,20;25:15; 34:4;36:16;37:24; 39:12;41:15,17;49:8, 10;53:24;57:1,6,11, 15,18,23;58:4,15;
		C		
		C15 (1) 88:3 C18 (1) 88:22 cabbage (2) 40:20,22 calculated (1) 125:23 calculation (1) 17:7 calculations (1) 125:18		

<p>59:6,13,17,24;60:4, 13,19;61:10,18; 63:24;64:2,7,9;68:17, 21;69:2;72:14;73:16, 21,24;74:17,22;75:2, 6,13,18,21,24;76:2,8, 13,18,25;77:6,12,15, 19;78:14;79:20;80:8; 81:20;82:16;83:2,5, 13,17;95:7,22;96:10, 14;98:14,99:18; 100:4,9;101:3,10,15; 103:5;105:25; 106:12,16,25;110:21; 111:13;112:12,15,17; 114:4,9;118:1;119:3; 122:14,18;123:4,14, 17,22;124:3,15,18, 23;125:3,6,20,25; 126:6,10,14,21,25; 127:14,18,22;128:2, 7,11</p> <p>CHAIRPRESON (1) 12:14</p> <p>challenge (2) 17:22;21:13</p> <p>challenged (2) 51:21;102:6</p> <p>challenges (5) 59:10;60:1,10,11; 70:25</p> <p>chance (1) 108:8</p> <p>change (10) 45:21;65:25,25; 66:2,5;71:9;74:19; 77:25;108:10;110:22</p> <p>changed (1) 100:22</p> <p>changes (1) 86:14</p> <p>changing (2) 66:3,13</p> <p>characteristics (1) 16:15</p> <p>chart (2) 86:4;87:11</p> <p>Charter (117) 4:4,7,9;5:24,24; 6:1,3,3,13,15,20; 7:16,18,19;8:25; 12:12,18,22,23; 28:14,19;54:1;60:17, 24;61:2,6,8,22,23; 62:8;63:23;65:6; 69:5,11,13;71:8,21, 22,24;74:5;77:17,18, 23,23,25;78:2,7,9,10, 11,21,22,23,24;79:2, 5,6,9,11,16;80:6,24; 81:4;83:6;84:1,4,13; 85:1;87:9,21;89:13; 91:20;96:23;97:3,14,</p>	<p>15;98:19,20;99:2,4, 10;100:14,21;101:4, 7;102:2,9;103:23,24; 104:20;105:2; 107:12,13;108:5; 109:22;113:6,10; 116:25;117:4; 119:17,18,21,24; 120:8,25;121:1,1,3, 11,16;122:7;124:21, 25;126:4,16;127:12; 132:24</p> <p>charters (3) 4:9;82:21;86:12</p> <p>check (3) 6:6;17:5;125:19</p> <p>chicken (6) 91:2,4,6,7,10;92:5</p> <p>chickens' (1) 91:9</p> <p>Chief (1) 15:12</p> <p>child (4) 32:17,22;51:7;54:4</p> <p>childhood (1) 69:23</p> <p>children (26) 8:21;19:9;85:2; 90:8,9,18,22;91:3,6, 13,18,25;92:1,10,16, 19;93:2,6,7;104:9,13, 16;105:9,12,13; 118:13</p> <p>choice (5) 59:15,22;85:17; 112:3;126:3</p> <p>choices (1) 26:23</p> <p>choosing (1) 34:22</p> <p>CHORUS (4) 57:14;75:17;125:2; 128:10</p> <p>chosen (2) 35:14;39:19</p> <p>church (1) 94:8</p> <p>circumference (1) 33:5</p> <p>city (3) 19:7;110:1,10</p> <p>clarification (5) 47:23;53:6;101:13, 22;106:13</p> <p>clarify (2) 39:14;83:21</p> <p>clarity (2) 16:13;127:5</p> <p>class (3) 12:1;69:17;120:10</p> <p>classes (9) 48:2;63:6,18;72:6, 7;73:4;74:12,13;</p>	<p>117:6</p> <p>classified (1) 79:10</p> <p>classroom (16) 21:16;22:4;32:20; 51:18;70:9;71:16; 86:21;93:8,9;115:19; 116:4,11,14,15; 123:1,12</p> <p>classrooms (2) 63:14;123:8</p> <p>Clay (42) 5:16,19,19;6:8,10, 24;7:1,14;13:20; 16:2;57:3,5;74:24; 75:1;78:14,18;79:25; 80:3,5,9;81:1,21; 82:4,6;96:14,18; 98:15,24;99:15,17, 23;100:6,16;101:6; 103:18,25;106:9; 124:15,17;125:12,21; 127:24</p> <p>clear (4) 83:24;87:10;103:7; 104:25</p> <p>clearly (1) 4:16</p> <p>clicker (1) 112:10</p> <p>close (2) 104:22;121:21</p> <p>closed (3) 85:16;93:19; 106:22</p> <p>closely (1) 111:21</p> <p>closing (1) 95:8</p> <p>closure (1) 94:24</p> <p>club (1) 31:17</p> <p>clubs (3) 11:22;29:17;31:16</p> <p>clusters (1) 35:3</p> <p>co- (1) 20:19</p> <p>coach (7) 21:20;55:13,20,23; 56:2,6,12</p> <p>coaches (3) 32:12;45:23;55:9</p> <p>Coaching (2) 54:25;56:1</p> <p>coding (1) 12:2</p> <p>COFFMAN (140) 4:2,25;5:9,13,16; 6:24;7:6,12,21;10:4; 12:10,14;13:9,14,21, 25;14:9,14,21;15:4;</p>	<p>16:20;19:12;22:10, 13;23:18,20;25:15; 34:4;36:16;37:24; 39:12;41:15,17;49:8, 10;53:24;57:1,6,11, 15,18,23;58:4,15; 59:6,13,17,24;60:4, 13,19;61:10,18; 63:24;64:2,7,9;68:17, 21;69:2;72:14;73:16, 21,24;74:17,22;75:2, 6,13,18,21,24;76:2,8, 13,18,25;77:6,12,15, 19;78:14;79:20;80:8; 81:20;82:16;83:2,5, 13,17;95:7,22;96:10, 14;98:14;99:18; 100:4,9;101:3,10,15; 103:5;105:25; 106:12,16,25;110:21; 111:13;112:12,15,17; 114:4,9;118:1;119:3; 122:14,18;123:4,14, 17,22;124:3,15,18, 23;125:3,6,20,25; 126:6,10,14,21,25; 127:14,18,22;128:2, 7,11</p> <p>cohort (1) 30:16</p> <p>collaborate (1) 111:16</p> <p>collaborative (1) 47:5</p> <p>collaboratively (1) 46:12</p> <p>college (6) 29:22;30:1;31:13; 69:18;85:4;95:3</p> <p>color (2) 91:8,9</p> <p>comfortable (3) 33:22;59:8;80:24</p> <p>coming (21) 8:12;9:4;17:14; 24:4;30:15,16;43:17; 44:17,18;45:3,15; 56:17,18;66:6,7,8; 69:13;91:21;92:6,10; 108:9</p> <p>commend (1) 74:15</p> <p>comment (7) 18:24;20:15;27:14; 32:11;42:21;79:22; 80:5</p> <p>commenting (1) 24:10</p> <p>comments (1) 79:22</p> <p>Commissioner (1) 4:10</p> <p>commitment (2)</p>	<p>88:9;93:3</p> <p>committed (3) 11:19;117:2,5</p> <p>Committee (4) 10:24;81:5;83:20; 87:9</p> <p>committing (1) 95:3</p> <p>common (1) 101:2</p> <p>communication (2) 33:15;46:18</p> <p>Communications (1) 10:24</p> <p>communities (2) 11:20;35:21</p> <p>community (23) 8:24;20:13,19; 27:9;29:12,13,15,16; 74:23;84:5,6;87:2; 89:24;93:1;94:9; 95:20;109:25; 120:11;121:17; 123:25,25;126:3,9</p> <p>comparable (1) 123:11</p> <p>compare (1) 28:13</p> <p>compared (4) 28:10;29:8;33:6; 49:17</p> <p>compares (1) 49:22</p> <p>comparisons (1) 86:9</p> <p>complete (3) 42:14;54:5;57:19</p> <p>completed (1) 14:10</p> <p>completely (2) 46:4;65:17</p> <p>compliance (2) 15:18;16:18</p> <p>compliant (1) 41:13</p> <p>component (1) 34:19</p> <p>components (2) 39:25;54:24</p> <p>computer (1) 27:6</p> <p>computers (3) 123:1,12,15</p> <p>concentrated (1) 46:22</p> <p>concern (8) 18:1;25:20;41:19; 42:13;43:15;100:15; 110:5;120:6</p> <p>concerned (4) 58:20;59:2;70:23; 80:18</p> <p>concerning (2)</p>
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<p>36:18,21 concerns (17) 17:1,17;19:18; 26:13;42:2;43:2; 59:19;60:2,2;70:14; 76:1,4;80:22;81:1; 96:17;119:5;127:1 concrete (2) 115:4;126:19 conducted (2) 16:11;42:7 confident (1) 126:4 congratulations (2) 60:4;77:12 connect (3) 55:9,19;56:14 connected (5) 47:1;55:1;56:15, 16;86:11 connectedness (1) 46:25 connecting (2) 56:19;86:20 connection (2) 29:15;92:23 Connections (38) 8:4,5;11:17;12:13, 19,21;13:5,18;14:3; 15:19;16:25;17:25; 19:24;21:6,9;22:18; 29:17;30:3,24;37:2,5, 16,20;38:1,1,4,7,16, 24;39:6;41:21;49:17, 22,23;57:8;94:11; 129:24;130:24 consecutive (1) 45:1 CONSENT (5) 4:24;5:1,2,5,13 consider (4) 41:22;115:15; 119:6;127:25 consideration (1) 103:2 considered (1) 123:24 consistent (1) 126:16 constant (1) 36:4 contact (1) 19:19 CONTINUATION (2) 12:12,17 continue (6) 4:15;9:11;13:5; 53:22;86:18;116:13 continuing (3) 90:7,13;117:21 contract (4) 7:15,16;38:14; 107:10</p>	<p>contracting (2) 36:21;38:10 conversation (1) 39:22 conversations (3) 46:5;47:5;113:15 CONVERSION (2) 60:17,23 co-op (1) 114:6 cooperatives (2) 19:22;20:9 co-ops (2) 20:4,24 coordinate (1) 10:7 copy (2) 119:8,9 core (1) 72:5 corrections (1) 5:4 correctly (2) 39:14;125:23 correspondence (1) 13:1 corridor (1) 72:24 Counsel (2) 5:20;95:10 counseling (1) 73:7 counselor (5) 87:18,19,23,24; 88:2 counselor's (1) 72:24 count (1) 110:16 countries (1) 47:7 country (8) 8:7,10,12;47:12; 110:6,7,9;120:8 County (36) 61:5;85:16,19; 86:2;88:24;94:21; 96:1;97:20;98:16; 99:21;100:1,14,20, 23;102:3,15;103:17; 104:2,6,8,9,18;105:3, 10,15,22;106:18,24; 107:8;119:22; 120:15,18;121:7,18; 122:8;127:3 County's (1) 103:9 couple (11) 10:8;92:1;95:9,14; 97:1;101:21;103:21; 120:12,20;122:15; 123:11 course (7)</p>	<p>22:22;33:9;34:23; 46:3;48:13;64:21; 117:9 courses (18) 31:2;34:8,13,17,18, 18,21;35:5,12,15; 36:6,14;39:19;48:7, 20,24;49:3;63:21 court (1) 4:19 covered (1) 88:22 create (4) 58:6;70:3;82:1; 99:6 created (1) 36:7 creates (1) 43:6 creating (1) 92:18 creation (1) 103:8 credit (9) 30:16,19;48:25; 49:4;62:17;68:4; 69:20;70:7;76:22 credits (1) 68:5 Credo (8) 27:25;42:1,22,23; 49:12;50:4,6,10 criteria (3) 78:17;79:2,14 critical (2) 58:19;89:7 CSA (2) 91:23;92:1 CTE (2) 35:2,12 cultural (1) 45:22 current (7) 5:24;7:18;58:8; 61:8;78:11;114:17; 124:21 currently (9) 18:21;34:17;35:2; 59:20;85:15;88:23; 100:1;122:1;126:13 curriculum (8) 11:9;24:16;40:1; 41:5,10;52:22;58:25; 86:16 cycle (1) 81:4 cycles (1) 90:22</p>	<p>danger (3) 46:3;49:14,19 data (8) 23:12,14;26:1; 41:19;49:15;50:9,11; 55:17 dated (1) 13:1 day (18) 8:8,9;10:14;21:17; 44:4,7;46:22;53:15; 56:5;74:4,10;88:19, 22;93:8;108:20; 116:4,7;117:6 day- (1) 52:9 day-one (2) 43:16;45:5 days (2) 51:10;97:18 deal (1) 8:20 dealing (1) 85:14 DECA (2) 74:8,9 decided (3) 53:19;62:19; 102:21 decision (9) 53:16;54:19;80:20, 25;98:1;106:4; 107:21;119:24;127:9 decisions (2) 80:14;86:17 declared (1) 100:24 decreasing (1) 61:25 dedicated (2) 116:3;117:5 deficient (2) 30:16,19 deficit (1) 52:3 defined (1) 79:7 definitely (8) 19:5;44:15;84:5; 95:19,19;113:11; 118:21;124:2 degree (1) 121:19 delay (4) 98:4,10;101:24; 102:24 delays (1) 99:11 demographics (1) 110:13 demonstrated (2) 58:2;79:6 denied (1)</p>	<p>101:9 Dennis (1) 38:3 deny (2) 98:7,12 Department (3) 4:5;5:20;6:21 describe (1) 50:25 described (1) 95:15 describing (1) 73:10 deseg (3) 97:23;100:23,25 desegregated (2) 99:7;103:1 desegregation (22) 95:9;96:16;97:15; 98:5,11;99:5,12,23; 100:15,21;101:1,8, 20;102:5,25;103:15, 18;119:6,25;120:2; 127:3,16 despite (1) 21:3 determine (1) 25:6 determined (2) 106:24;121:10 devastating (1) 94:1 developed (1) 117:18 developing (1) 35:20 development (2) 20:5,23 devices (2) 4:6;122:19 diagnosed (1) 16:14 diameter (1) 33:6 Diane (1) 84:12 difference (4) 30:18;70:22;86:3; 127:11 different (26) 7:17;26:13,22; 27:3;33:18,19;34:24; 42:17,18;43:9,11; 49:16,22;51:6;55:21; 69:7,25;79:15;91:7; 98:22;108:10; 112:20;115:2; 117:10,15,19 difficult (5) 51:22;66:19;68:9; 96:20;97:9 difficulties (2) 17:15;54:1</p>
D				
		daily (1) 90:9		

digital (2) 26:16,17	documentation (1) 88:11	20,22,24,24;125:7,8, 10,25;126:1,10,11, 21,22;128:5,7,8	17:16;19:21;34:13; 38:1,24;60:25;67:11, 12;71:15;78:5;95:2; 126:3;127:6	47:8
diligently (1) 22:25	dogs (1) 92:5	drama (2) 63:19;72:7	educational (1) 77:4	engulfed (1) 72:10
diploma (2) 62:20,21	donated (1) 90:2	drawn (2) 113:16,20	education-wise (1) 8:14	enjoyed (1) 112:1
directly (5) 22:21;89:25;98:6; 106:9,11	done (12) 17:6;20:3;21:10; 35:24;36:7;62:1; 94:3;104:20;112:22; 116:12;117:19; 118:15	drive (1) 112:8	effect (3) 103:24;106:10; 110:11	enough (4) 18:2;46:21;58:18; 96:25
Director (2) 78:12;83:25	door (1) 90:6	driven (1) 15:20	effort (1) 68:1	enrichment (2) 88:18,19
disadvantage (1) 53:21	doors (3) 65:11;90:21; 108:21	driving (2) 10:14;109:11	efforts (4) 96:23;99:6;102:25; 119:25	enroll (3) 51:4,15;52:1
disappointed (1) 28:1	DOTSON (3) 10:5,6;12:11	dropout (2) 61:25;67:8	Eggs (3) 91:3,8;92:12	enrolled (6) 12:7;48:2;52:12; 54:2;55:25;73:25
discerning (1) 87:25	down (12) 19:13;44:15;46:20; 50:5;53:1;72:24; 94:16;96:25;100:12; 106:1,22;110:17	dropouts (1) 76:21	either (9) 5:25;40:19;48:9, 12;50:12;76:4;88:14; 116:19;123:25	enrolling (2) 54:11;68:11
disciplinary (1) 79:10	DR (212) 5:8,10;13:4,13,15; 14:9,13,18,22;15:5,6, 10,10,11,21;16:1,3,7, 13,18,22;20:1;24:6; 25:10,14,15,16,16,17, 18,24,25;26:3,4,5,11, 15,16,20,21,25; 27:15,16;29:10,11, 25;32:2,4;34:15,15, 16;35:7,11,17;36:3,6, 16,17;37:3,4,11,18; 38:8,12,18,22;39:1, 11;40:3,5,5,6;41:7, 12,16,17,18;42:21; 43:12,14;47:16,21, 22;48:6,8,9;49:1,4,5, 7,8,9,11,21,25;50:1, 19,23,24,25;51:5; 52:11;53:3,11,13,23; 54:9;57:9,11,17,23, 24;58:4,5;59:13,14; 60:4,8;64:8,9,10,12, 16,19;66:19;68:1,8, 16,21,22,22;72:14, 15,20;73:9,12,15,23, 24,25;74:15;75:10, 12,14;76:8,9,18,19; 77:6,7;79:19,21;80:2, 4,7,15;81:19,20,21, 24;82:5,10,13;83:4, 13;88:4;98:14,15; 99:14,16;103:7,19; 104:24;105:7,11,14, 24;106:2;112:16,17, 18;113:25;114:5,9, 11;115:1;116:22; 117:25;118:1,2,5,8; 119:1;124:5,10,13,	dropped (2) 54:2;62:19	elementary (22) 30:10;31:14;40:9; 45:24;78:3;82:14; 84:12,13;85:24;86:7; 88:24;89:2,4,24;90:1, 6;103:23;104:14,17; 113:6,10;115:21	enrollment (15) 52:13;61:4;62:6; 68:25;78:8;79:9; 82:21;87:10,13;97:3, 3;106:6,11;120:13; 121:14
discipline (4) 100:6;104:4;105:9, 12		dropping (1) 66:25	electronic (1) 4:6	enrolls (1) 54:4
discourse (3) 46:2,17;47:5		due (3) 59:3;126:7,11	element (1) 72:2	enter (1) 44:20
discovered (1) 33:7		duplicate (1) 89:10	elementary (22) 30:10;31:14;40:9; 45:24;78:3;82:14; 84:12,13;85:24;86:7; 88:24;89:2,4,24;90:1, 6;103:23;104:14,17; 113:6,10;115:21	entering (2) 30:19,20
discussion (5) 6:5,17;12:25; 107:16;127:10		during (2) 29:14;88:19	eligible (1) 28:11	entire (5) 4:18;11:5;42:9,24; 45:22
dismissing (1) 105:18		duty (2) 88:19,22	ELL (2) 42:4;58:10	entities (1) 38:12
disruption (1) 55:5		dynamics (1) 108:10	else (6) 18:10;91:23;97:25; 102:16;103:3;114:12	entity (4) 36:22;78:1,4;98:20
distinction (1) 28:17		dyslexia (5) 15:8,24;16:5,15,16	emotional (1) 86:20	environment (21) 17:20;21:3;23:12; 34:9;43:17,19,21; 44:12;47:15;51:17; 52:21;54:8;55:7; 58:18;65:25;66:2,3; 69:17,21;70:3,9
distract (1) 117:15		E	emotionally (1) 117:24	equal (3) 28:12;29:5;43:25
distracting (1) 51:19		earlier (8) 18:3;25:20;27:3; 53:4;66:15,16;71:2; 72:16	emphasis (1) 86:25	equipment (2) 40:15,16
distractions (1) 51:16		early (13) 62:14,15,25;69:8, 16,22;70:6,15,18; 76:15;107:24; 108:20;123:19	emphasize (3) 35:17;41:12;49:11	equipped (1) 80:14
distress (1) 79:11		easier (1) 119:14	encourage (1) 87:3	equitable (1) 19:16
District (39) 8:1;9:2,3;60:17,23; 62:1;63:11,11;64:17; 65:6;70:16,20;76:15; 82:7,12,14,22,24; 83:23;85:16;88:7; 93:16;96:1;97:6,20; 98:6,12;99:3,13,21; 100:20;102:4,16; 104:2;120:16,18; 121:6,7;122:10		easy (3) 40:23;96:25;97:1	end (10) 7:10;8:22;26:7,7; 28:2;53:9;67:18,19; 81:6,12	equity (2) 27:1;32:7
districts (4) 8:19;96:24;100:24; 120:1		eat (2) 110:8;112:13	endeavor (1) 95:4	ERZ's (1) 19:22
district's (1) 98:21		ed (19) 9:19;15:13,22; 16:5,17;17:9,11,13, 18,20;18:5,20,22; 34:18,21;42:3;58:10; 116:9,10	end-of-the-year (1) 54:13	especially (10) 17:16;34:10;41:22; 42:2,3;62:16,23; 68:9;119:6;120:10
diverse (3) 19:19;43:8,9		educate (3) 85:2;90:8;91:18	engage (1) 56:24	establish (2) 20:4,8
doc (1) 7:2		educating (2) 92:7;93:7	engaged (1) 47:1	established (3) 20:10;27:8;61:23

<p>evaluate (1) 68:14</p> <p>evaluation (2) 16:10,10</p> <p>even (15) 9:19;21:3;41:24; 42:25;58:7;62:18; 65:10;92:5;97:6; 102:3;104:19,22; 106:23;109:21; 121:23</p> <p>event (1) 24:1</p> <p>events (3) 27:9;29:13;55:21</p> <p>eventually (2) 116:7;117:3</p> <p>everybody (6) 11:4;14:20;22:6; 24:17;28:21;84:23</p> <p>everyone (4) 4:5;6:11;7:5;31:6</p> <p>everywhere (1) 72:9</p> <p>evidence (4) 42:16;58:6;126:2, 19</p> <p>evidenced (1) 58:10</p> <p>exact (1) 43:1</p> <p>exactly (6) 14:11;23:15;25:5; 38:20;50:10;90:10</p> <p>example (5) 34:23;35:25;39:17; 53:7;64:13</p> <p>examples (1) 100:16</p> <p>exceed (1) 59:12</p> <p>exceeding (4) 28:19,25;29:2,3</p> <p>excel (2) 47:25;48:16</p> <p>excellent (1) 15:7</p> <p>exception (3) 5:23;6:12;66:22</p> <p>exchange (1) 33:14</p> <p>excited (13) 27:18;45:25;52:19; 84:3,23;89:20;90:25; 91:13;92:17,17;94:1; 112:18;113:4</p> <p>exciting (6) 84:7;86:24;89:12; 111:19,23;112:5</p> <p>excuse (1) 61:5</p> <p>Executive (2) 78:12;83:25</p>	<p>Exhibit (4) 129:25;130:25; 131:25;132:25</p> <p>exist (1) 59:12</p> <p>existed (1) 121:5</p> <p>existence (1) 98:20</p> <p>existing (1) 102:8</p> <p>exists (1) 85:15</p> <p>expand (4) 64:25;68:2;70:11; 84:9</p> <p>expanded (1) 26:23</p> <p>expansion (1) 126:11</p> <p>expect (2) 66:20;107:21</p> <p>expectations (2) 8:13;85:5</p> <p>expenditures (1) 38:5</p> <p>experience (6) 17:19;21:12;45:4; 77:4;91:22;93:10</p> <p>experiences (4) 34:12;35:9;77:5; 92:15</p> <p>explain (4) 48:3;72:16;78:17; 120:16</p> <p>explains (1) 50:19</p> <p>exploring (3) 92:23;93:1;112:1</p> <p>exposed (2) 44:6,10</p> <p>extend (2) 63:10;89:10</p> <p>extra (3) 11:25;23:5;70:7</p> <p>extremely (5) 11:12;28:8;46:1; 47:4;97:9</p>	<p>facility (4) 108:7,10;122:24; 127:5</p> <p>fact (6) 8:16;17:3;21:3; 28:6;48:1;102:19</p> <p>factor (1) 71:1</p> <p>faculty (2) 104:10;105:17</p> <p>fail (1) 63:6</p> <p>fair (1) 4:12</p> <p>fairly (1) 49:5</p> <p>fall (4) 24:18;47:18;67:6; 85:1</p> <p>familiar (1) 118:12</p> <p>families (12) 21:19;26:8;33:14; 54:20;55:17;56:24; 59:22;85:17;91:24; 92:1,17;93:21</p> <p>family (10) 14:24;31:18;54:23; 55:11;69:24;71:14; 89:18;91:23;92:14; 111:20</p> <p>far (16) 8:14,22;15:20; 24:11;30:1;40:15; 45:7;47:12;67:9; 95:14,17;110:25; 114:20;120:2;122:3, 11</p> <p>Farm (17) 89:18,19,24,25; 90:19;91:14,21,24; 92:2,4,6,8,11,15,24; 94:10;112:21</p> <p>farmed (1) 91:12</p> <p>farmer (4) 91:11,15;92:7;93:3</p> <p>farmers (1) 90:20</p> <p>farming (1) 93:5</p> <p>Farms (1) 84:14</p> <p>fashion (1) 122:12</p> <p>fast-fire (1) 122:15</p> <p>favor (6) 5:11;13:22;57:13; 75:16;125:1;128:9</p> <p>favorable (1) 12:9</p> <p>Fayetteville (1)</p>	<p>17:10</p> <p>federal (2) 88:5,5</p> <p>feedback (1) 60:9</p> <p>feel (17) 9:4;21:22;26:12; 32:18,22;58:23;59:9; 80:13,24;81:7;84:9; 85:20;98:3;101:25; 102:11;109:20;126:4</p> <p>feeling (3) 45:18;80:18; 101:23</p> <p>feels (2) 71:13;116:17</p> <p>felt (2) 54:14;57:25</p> <p>FEW (7) 57:22;75:23;97:13; 98:18;119:19,19; 125:24</p> <p>field (10) 11:22;20:13,25; 27:8;29:13;33:2,3; 36:9;56:17;87:5</p> <p>figure (6) 37:12,12;50:10; 85:8,8;105:22</p> <p>figured (1) 36:13</p> <p>filed (1) 37:21</p> <p>fill (3) 44:24;45:7;106:22</p> <p>filled (2) 18:20;85:20</p> <p>filling (3) 17:15;45:12;51:3</p> <p>finalized (1) 107:23</p> <p>Finally (2) 121:11;122:5</p> <p>find (10) 10:12;18:2,17; 19:6,8;42:10;50:19; 67:16;69:19;88:15</p> <p>finding (4) 9:22;101:4,7; 117:16</p> <p>fine (1) 114:3</p> <p>fingertips (1) 23:13</p> <p>finish (1) 70:6</p> <p>firm (1) 86:19</p> <p>first (23) 6:10;12:16;14:14, 18;31:17;42:21;45:2; 53:5,7,9;55:10,10; 65:16;66:3;72:22;</p>	<p>85:10;87:9,12;96:2, 12;107:2;115:14; 120:21</p> <p>fiscal (1) 79:11</p> <p>fit (2) 56:5;74:5</p> <p>fits (1) 70:19</p> <p>five (13) 8:7;64:3;99:25; 100:2,6,18;104:8; 105:3,8;106:3,7; 114:21,24</p> <p>five-to-two (1) 60:5</p> <p>five-year (1) 120:13</p> <p>fixed (1) 45:16</p> <p>flexibility (1) 87:20</p> <p>flexible (2) 11:25;70:8</p> <p>focus (9) 11:3;31:15;35:4,5; 36:9;43:15;46:22; 66:7;72:1</p> <p>focused (3) 28:8;46:2;47:4</p> <p>focusing (1) 46:16</p> <p>folks (2) 100:17;110:9</p> <p>followed (1) 84:16</p> <p>follow-up (10) 19:10;23:21;47:22; 53:24;79:19,21; 81:22;105:7,24; 114:4</p> <p>food (6) 90:8,10,11;91:19, 25;92:7</p> <p>Ford (1) 114:7</p> <p>foreign (2) 48:22,24</p> <p>forest-and-trees (1) 104:1</p> <p>forged (1) 90:16</p> <p>forget (1) 54:15</p> <p>Forgive (1) 103:7</p> <p>form (2) 57:20;122:12</p> <p>former (2) 52:16;72:20</p> <p>Fort (1) 17:11</p> <p>forth (1)</p>
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81:5 forward (29) 5:17;7:24;46:10; 60:6;77:13;79:14; 81:16;87:5;90:7,12; 91:19;92:10,22;93:1, 11;95:18;96:15; 101:5,8;103:6;112:5, 11;116:18;117:2; 123:19,23,23,25; 127:19 found (9) 21:14;22:7;53:20; 62:4,23;95:10; 102:10;105:1;109:23 Foundation (1) 88:9 four (6) 19:15;30:25;62:11; 117:6;125:11,17 four-year (6) 30:8;31:5,9,11,12, 25 free (6) 8:17;20:11;27:6; 28:11;43:24;83:19 free-and-reduced (1) 26:1 frequency (1) 25:2 front (1) 90:6 front-end (2) 63:8;120:21 fruit (1) 92:13 fruits (1) 90:24 fulltime (5) 87:18,19;88:2,13, 17 fully (1) 41:13 functioning (1) 51:14 fund (3) 20:10;25:7;27:8 funding (3) 24:1;88:18,20 funds (8) 27:11;79:24;80:1; 82:3;88:6;108:23; 109:1,6 further (6) 58:2;96:8;116:20, 25;124:18;126:22 future (5) 41:25;50:15;93:4, 5;108:15	51:3;105:19 gaps (4) 44:20,24;45:7,12 gather (1) 6:21 GED (1) 62:20 General (2) 5:19;116:10 generation (1) 31:17 Gentlemen (1) 4:3 geographic (2) 19:19,25 Geometry (1) 48:19 gets (1) 52:17 gifted (1) 48:16 Gillingham (1) 15:16 given (4) 42:13;60:9;62:2; 68:14 gives (2) 79:2;99:9 giving (3) 20:5;27:23;75:4 gladly (1) 52:4 glass (1) 40:13 goal (7) 4:12;53:21;85:2; 89:16;116:19; 118:18;127:6 goals (2) 59:9;77:2 goat (1) 90:17 goes (3) 16:9;47:23;56:13 Good (36) 4:2;5:19;9:11,11, 14;14:13;15:11; 16:21,22;19:4;21:8; 25:16,17;26:11,15; 27:15,16;33:16;36:3; 45:18,20;72:15; 73:15;74:16;76:4; 80:14,25;83:19; 84:17,23;89:21; 94:22;102:12; 107:18;116:23; 127:20 Google (1) 7:2 GOTCHER (48) 5:8,10;25:15,16,18, 25;26:4,11,16,21; 27:15;29:10;32:2;	57:9,12,23,24;72:14, 15,20;73:9,12,15; 77:6,7;81:19,20,21, 24;82:5,10,13;83:4; 98:14,15;99:14,16; 103:7,19;104:24; 114:9,11;115:1; 116:22;117:25; 125:8;126:21,22 governance (2) 36:20;81:24 grade (34) 30:5,6,6,6,20,21; 40:2,9,17;45:12; 48:13,17;56:10;62:9; 63:1,3,3,3,5,21,23; 64:14;66:12;70:11; 72:5,17;73:1,6,17; 77:11;87:14;118:11, 16;122:18 graders (2) 70:21;76:5 grades (7) 61:3,3;63:7,22; 77:8;78:7;118:15 grading (2) 118:3,9 graduate (10) 30:8,24;62:18,24; 67:5,7,14;69:8,16; 123:19 graduated (5) 30:23,25;31:5; 62:3;71:25 graduating (7) 30:23;31:22,23; 62:10,13;67:1;76:20 graduation (7) 31:3;48:14;61:24; 62:15;66:23;71:18, 19 graduations (1) 62:3 grandpa (1) 32:10 grant (2) 87:21;113:8 granted (1) 78:25 granting (1) 98:4 graph (1) 86:4 great (6) 77:13;91:5;92:25; 107:13,25;112:13 greater (2) 59:11;113:22 greatest (1) 42:12 Green (2) 91:3,10 grid-able (1)	33:25 grocery (2) 90:11;92:9 Gross (15) 84:12,16,17;93:13; 111:13,19;112:14; 113:4;114:7,22; 115:14;118:4,6,10, 119:2 ground (2) 32:10;90:23 group (9) 22:16;37:7,9;62:9, 11,23;69:15,20; 125:17 groups (3) 11:22;46:12;69:7 grow (3) 53:22;92:13;117:3 growing (4) 8:16;94:17;111:22; 112:6 growth (2) 45:14;46:17 guarantee (1) 108:7 guess (9) 10:8;11:17;16:4; 17:2;25:5;48:3; 70:18;71:18;120:14 guys (1) 120:4	happened (1) 53:18 happening (3) 43:20;56:24; 119:23 happens (5) 36:5,5,5;40:17; 67:16 happy (1) 95:4 hard (4) 11:14;22:5;27:5; 115:25 hardship (1) 40:21 Harris (4) 85:24;86:5;104:14, 17 Hartwell (1) 14:22 harvesting (1) 92:12 hate (1) 100:10 head (4) 19:12;35:18;98:9; 105:25 headed (1) 118:6 heads (1) 38:3 healthy (3) 60:10;92:18,21 hear (5) 21:1;47:3;84:11; 92:19;115:6 heard (4) 39:14;53:25;94:6,9 hearing (12) 4:13;5:15,21; 12:12,17;60:17,23; 77:17,22;80:19; 81:12;127:23 hearings (2) 7:14;94:7 heavily (1) 114:8 heirloom (1) 91:11 held (1) 7:19 Hello (2) 64:10;116:23 help (24) 10:18,20;22:1,4; 23:5,11;29:14;52:5; 54:7;63:4,5,8,8,13; 64:19;65:23;66:16, 17;67:18,20,20;70:7; 76:6;99:15 helped (2) 71:23;117:20 helpful (3)
G			H	
gap (2)			half-an-hour (1) 116:3 halftime (1) 88:16 Ham (2) 91:3,14 hamper (4) 98:4,10;101:24; 102:24 hampers (1) 99:11 hand (2) 61:13;83:8 hands (2) 28:23;123:17 hands- (1) 35:22 hands-on (14) 34:12;35:9,14; 36:11;39:16,18,21, 23,25;40:7,8;41:5; 59:1;87:1 hang-ups (1) 65:21 Hannah (1) 15:1 happen (1) 22:17	

<p>14:16;60:9;83:3 helping (1) 76:21 helps (2) 41:11;72:12 here's (2) 22:1;108:25 Heritage (4) 84:14;89:18;91:10, 12 Herman (1) 33:10 HESTER (4) 7:25;8:1;10:4,6 Hey (1) 64:11 Hi (1) 17:24 high (50) 9:7,8,9;28:4,6; 30:3,7,11,12,15,19; 31:4,14,17,21;32:5,8; 40:18;44:11;48:3,7, 23,24;49:3;62:20,21; 63:16,18,19;70:17; 71:12,13;72:7;73:18; 74:11;78:3;85:4,25; 86:1,9,10,23;89:2; 111:20;115:23; 116:5,8,24;117:2,3 higher (3) 32:15;42:11;51:14 highly (2) 24:15;70:6 Hill (1) 4:19 Hills (1) 85:24 hinder (1) 106:6 hire (4) 17:18;18:11;87:24; 113:2 hired (2) 24:1;35:19 hires (2) 20:17;113:12 hiring (3) 105:17;112:6; 113:24 Hispanic (2) 111:5,12 Hispanics (2) 111:7,8 history (3) 30:4;31:18;126:12 history-wise (1) 101:1 hit (1) 26:25 Hoge (27) 14:24;15:10,11; 16:1,7,18;24:6;</p>	<p>25:10;27:13,16; 29:25;34:15,16;35:7, 11;36:6;40:5,6;41:7; 43:12,14;47:21;48:6, 9;49:4,7;54:9 hold (2) 28:23;125:10 holder (1) 5:24 home (9) 40:12,24;45:20; 51:17;55:7;56:7; 85:23;92:13;109:9 home- (1) 52:16 homes (1) 11:1 home-school (3) 52:14,19;97:8 home-schoolers (1) 52:23 honest (1) 40:20 honestly (3) 27:18;28:16;43:18 hope (2) 89:13;94:13 hoped (1) 90:15 hopeful (2) 18:5;113:24 hopefully (4) 24:13,23;50:15; 95:1 hoping (2) 38:13;50:16 host (1) 8:5 hour (2) 88:21,22 hours (2) 69:25;70:8 housed (3) 72:17;73:1,1 houses (1) 72:22 housing (1) 77:10 Houston (1) 33:11 huge (3) 32:23;46:10;74:18 human (4) 19:19,24;58:19,20 HVAC (1) 34:22</p>	<p>identified (7) 15:14,22;16:11,17; 25:3;31:10;69:11 identify (7) 16:5;44:22;55:21; 63:2,4;71:2;95:24 identifying (2) 35:3;70:15 ie (1) 105:4 IEP (4) 15:14,17,18,20 ill (1) 51:20 imagine (1) 113:21 immediately (1) 52:13 immerse (1) 113:25 impact (14) 96:22;99:5,8; 101:24;102:23; 103:9,21;105:6; 121:3,4,10,25;122:4; 126:23 impacting (3) 102:9,24;122:11 impacts (1) 126:20 implemented (1) 41:24 important (10) 11:12;20:13;32:8; 72:18;80:23;84:10; 95:13;106:17; 112:21,25 importantly (1) 95:12 impression (1) 40:7 impressive (1) 22:24 improve (2) 66:17;81:3 improvement (3) 45:9,10;85:19 improving (1) 86:12 incarnation (1) 96:4 included (1) 39:9 including (2) 76:20;127:6 income (1) 120:6 inconsistency (1) 37:16 Incorporated (4) 37:6,20;38:2,15 increase (2) 106:20;110:23</p>	<p>increased (3) 25:1;110:16;117:9 increases (1) 77:9 increasing (1) 61:24 incredibly (1) 94:8 independent (1) 46:4 indicate (1) 58:8 indicates (1) 24:18 indicators (1) 98:18 indirect (1) 106:10 individual (1) 82:25 indulge (1) 14:18 indulging (1) 15:3 inevitably (1) 120:9 influx (1) 95:1 info (2) 55:19,24 inform (1) 86:17 information (14) 6:22;9:3;15:7; 42:8;47:24;50:24; 66:23;79:17;80:19; 81:11,13,17;98:2,16 informed (2) 32:18;126:24 initial (1) 42:22 initiative (4) 11:2;22:19;45:14; 46:10 initiatives (1) 56:25 Innovation (1) 86:11 innovative (3) 26:23;86:18; 104:22 inputted (1) 7:5 in-service (1) 91:1 in-services (1) 91:21 instance (3) 21:25;33:2,10 instead (4) 62:10;65:12;78:22; 93:22 institution (3)</p>	<p>31:6,11,12 institutions (2) 30:9;31:25 instruction (6) 42:15,20,20;44:24; 99:9;112:19 instructional (1) 63:13 instructor (2) 112:23;113:2 insufficient (2) 24:2;58:12 insure (5) 19:16;22:20;54:4; 81:16;111:17 insuring (1) 22:16 intend (3) 104:12,12;118:15 intensity (1) 25:2 intentionally (1) 104:16 interaction (5) 20:14;32:5,8,11,13 interested (4) 34:14;113:20,23; 118:18 interesting (2) 42:24;118:19 internal (4) 50:9,11;81:4;87:9 internally (1) 96:7 internals (1) 50:17 internet (3) 16:25;25:25;27:6 internship (1) 35:22 internships (2) 11:23;12:2 intervene (1) 76:15 intervention (8) 23:4;24:7;25:1; 44:15;115:20;116:3, 5;117:6 interventionist (2) 15:23;23:25 interventionists (1) 25:8 interventions (4) 23:2;24:19;44:23; 46:19 intimate (1) 71:18 into (30) 4:16;9:4;12:8; 18:1;20:4;21:14,23; 23:5;24:24;30:8; 31:5,12;32:25;33:4, 22;47:2;49:13;52:20;</p>
	I			

56:5;73:18;94:4; 95:1;101:14;102:22; 103:3;105:15;114:1; 118:16;122:23; 126:12 introduce (3) 14:19,19;89:17 inverse (1) 56:20 invigorate (1) 89:11 involved (6) 11:14;12:2;90:25; 94:13;100:14;112:6 iPads (3) 123:2,9,11 isolation (1) 46:20 issue (17) 10:25;12:4;32:7,8; 81:15;88:3,6;102:13, 19,22;103:15;104:1; 120:2;123:2;127:3,5, 16 issues (20) 57:3;74:24;80:11, 13,16,23;81:6;85:11, 14;87:7;95:10; 101:21;102:4;104:3; 120:24;121:5; 124:16;127:2,9; 128:2 item (13) 5:22;7:11;12:17; 13:11,16,22;14:11; 60:19,22;77:20,21; 124:16;127:22 items (5) 4:22;5:1,3;96:5; 127:24	5;64:8,9,10,12,16,19; 66:19;68:1,8,16; 73:23,24,25;74:15; 75:10,12,14;76:18, 19;79:19,21;80:2,4,7, 15;88:4;95:25,25; 112:16,17,18;113:25; 114:5;118:1,2,5,8; 119:1,9,10;120:22; 124:5,10,13,20,24; 125:15,25;126:1; 128:5,7,8 Jones's (1) 68:23 Josh (1) 14:23 Jude (1) 15:1 Judge (6) 102:7,10;105:1,5; 119:23;121:9 judging (1) 118:24 junior (3) 9:9;62:16;67:17 juniors (4) 62:5,7;66:11;70:21	111:2,3,6,8;114:19 Kimberly (1) 116:23 kind (15) 29:14;33:9,12; 34:1;43:5;49:12; 50:23;52:5;83:24; 89:12;98:8;108:4; 113:15;114:16;115:2 kindergarten (1) 118:11 kindergartners (1) 84:21 kinds (1) 104:17 KIPP (1) 83:22 kits (1) 40:10 knowing (2) 115:8;121:13 knowledge (3) 69:4;100:12,13	56:20,21;107:24 later (6) 6:19;55:20;56:22; 66:17;71:2;81:14 law (9) 15:21;16:14;79:2; 95:15,18;98:7,7,23, 25 LEA (7) 82:1,1,3,7,9,12,13 lead (1) 47:14 leader (2) 20:17,18 leadership (1) 117:12 leading (1) 35:9 learn (2) 15:2;55:18 learned (1) 112:21 learning (30) 11:8,24,25;21:14, 20;22:14;30:14; 32:12;39:5;43:10; 44:17;45:23;46:9; 54:7;55:7,9,13,20,23, 25;56:2,6,12;58:11, 17;59:1;87:1;112:2; 115:9;116:14 least (5) 39:14;43:2;53:15; 60:2;117:5 left (5) 14:11;53:7;72:25; 85:17;98:18 legal (3) 87:22;95:10;106:3 legislator (1) 7:22 Legislature (1) 11:13 legs (2) 91:9,9 less (2) 30:17;51:16 lesson (6) 21:23,25;23:6,7; 32:25;94:16 lessons (1) 112:21 letter (9) 13:2;95:17;97:21; 119:8,9,10,13;120:3, 21 letters (4) 95:9;96:17;97:13; 103:21 letting (1) 93:15 level (12) 22:23;40:10;41:24;	44:22;45:12;48:17; 52:18;82:7,12;87:14; 111:23;116:8 levels (9) 40:9,17;42:25; 44:11;45:17;58:7,9; 112:23;122:18 license (13) 78:16,24;79:1,3,6; 80:2;81:25;83:22; 88:7;98:4,10;124:21, 25 licensed (2) 17:18;18:21 licensure (1) 17:8 life (3) 69:18;90:22;91:17 lifestyle (3) 92:6,15,19 light (1) 101:14 likelihood (1) 107:9 likely (5) 55:20;56:22;76:21; 96:22;99:8 like-minded (1) 112:3 limit (2) 87:22;109:20 limited (2) 58:24;85:17 Lindamood-Bell (1) 15:16 line (2) 38:5;85:1 list (1) 50:6 listed (3) 13:2;37:17,18 listen (1) 80:14 listening (1) 44:9 lists (1) 99:25 literacy (8) 42:20;64:22;65:8; 85:25;86:3,10; 112:25;113:18 literally (1) 92:4 litigated (1) 121:2 little (26) 15:8;17:23;23:5; 30:4,6;33:17;36:1; 48:4;53:21;54:3; 69:4,10;76:6;79:15; 80:18;83:21;91:7; 92:2;96:20;100:20; 108:6;109:11;112:8;
J	K	L		
January (2) 61:2;107:25 Jennifer (1) 14:25 Jess (2) 101:19;103:14 Jim (1) 10:6 job (5) 9:20;10:12;20:18; 62:22;69:19 jobs (2) 35:18;68:12 Johnny (1) 22:7 Jones (71) 15:5,6,21;16:3,13; 41:16,17,18;47:16, 22;48:8;49:1,5,21; 50:1,19;57:17;58:4,	K-1 (1) 118:4 K-12 (3) 77:5;78:7;87:15 K-2 (2) 118:2,23 K-5 (1) 115:22 K-6 (1) 87:12 K-8 (1) 30:5 keep (6) 45:7;51:12;53:22; 72:17;98:9;116:13 Kendra (5) 5:19;16:3;79:19; 106:2;125:11 kept (4) 92:5;104:6,10,15 Key (2) 107:15,19 keys (1) 107:14 kicks (1) 116:18 kids (28) 8:18;21:23;23:8, 10;26:1;33:9,12,20; 34:3;54:2,7;69:23; 70:15,17;72:11; 74:19;91:5;93:22,24; 94:6,23;95:1;97:5;	122:23;123:15 labeled (1) 85:19 labs (6) 40:19;41:2;123:7, 9,10,10 lack (6) 19:18;58:20,22; 69:4;127:5,10 lacking (1) 116:17 Ladies (1) 4:2 land (1) 90:2 landing (1) 56:7 landlord (1) 90:3 language (8) 39:4;43:20;44:2; 45:19,21;48:21,22,24 laptops (1) 122:25 large (1) 59:3 larger (2) 8:19;38:18 last (12) 17:1;30:23;31:16; 54:13;64:21;72:25; 75:2;98:19;110:16, 18;117:12;125:15 late (12) 45:4;52:1,2;53:5,8, 13,15,15;54:10;		

<p>115:4;118:17;121:6 live (7) 9:23;21:23;23:5,6; 32:25;56:11;93:19 lived (1) 93:16 lives (1) 10:11 livestock (1) 90:24 live-streamed (1) 4:18 living (1) 20:21 Liwo (14) 59:24,25;75:24,25; 119:3,4,12;120:3; 122:13;125:5,6,15; 127:14,15 LLC (4) 37:2,17;38:4,17 local (9) 11:20,21;19:21; 29:15;35:21;93:19, 23;97:17;99:3 locally (1) 10:19 located (3) 60:25;89:25;99:4 location (4) 11:6;34:6;112:9; 127:7 long (6) 21:11;44:4,7; 67:14;81:5;93:8 longer (1) 88:6 long-term (1) 17:6 Lonoke (1) 93:17 Look (38) 9:6;12:9;19:7; 28:18;34:9,24;36:23; 43:16,22;44:1,16; 47:6,13;53:3;64:20; 65:4,8,8;66:9;68:12, 24;77:13;81:15; 84:18;87:11;90:13; 92:22;94:17;104:21; 112:5;114:20; 119:12;121:13,16,20, 20,25;124:2 looked (5) 53:14;66:2;88:14; 92:10;121:20 looking (30) 17:5;19:6;30:3; 37:1;41:25;42:6,16; 43:22;44:11;45:15, 22;49:14,19;55:16; 59:22;65:2;76:6; 87:5;90:7,12;91:19;</p>	<p>93:1,11;106:3,6; 112:11;114:19; 115:2;117:13;123:8 Los (1) 36:10 loss (1) 22:15 lost (1) 67:8 lot (27) 9:3;11:7;17:6; 21:12,20;22:20;32:6, 19;33:13;42:7;47:24; 48:10;51:5,13;55:15; 79:17;84:18;89:1,4, 6;90:18;94:3,22; 100:22;109:25; 117:19,19 love (3) 23:11;89:1;118:6 low (4) 41:21,25;58:9; 120:6 lower (3) 41:23;56:21;58:11 luck (1) 127:20 luggage (1) 65:22 lunch (1) 20:11 lunches (3) 8:17;92:21,24</p>	<p>108:1 mandated (1) 109:2 manner (1) 76:11 many (19) 27:22;28:11;43:10; 53:12;55:21;62:3; 65:9;66:21,25;67:1; 68:5,5;71:23;80:23; 90:17;94:21;101:20; 111:1;121:1 markers (1) 16:16 market (1) 11:12 Marketing (2) 74:8,9 Marshall (6) 102:7,10;105:1,6; 119:24;121:9 Mary (6) 14:23;21:5,8; 24:10;32:9,13 Master (1) 21:9 materials (8) 13:1,3,7;40:11,12; 78:18;79:12;97:12 math (44) 21:25;22:19,23; 24:20;29:3;41:21; 42:2,18,19;43:13,15, 20;44:1,11,20;45:13, 16,18,20,25;46:1,2,5; 47:8,9,12,20;48:10, 11,20;58:9;59:19; 63:20,20,21;64:23; 65:9;73:3,3,5;86:10; 113:1,19;125:14 Mathematica (3) 27:19;42:7,10 mathematics (1) 22:15 matter (5) 6:18,18;31:1; 101:25;126:24 MAUMELLE (19) 77:18,23;78:2; 83:6;84:13;86:7; 94:3;100:5;110:1; 113:6,10;116:24; 119:20;122:1,19; 123:13,20;124:25; 132:24 maximum (3) 61:4;78:8;120:13 may (31) 6:17;14:18;20:20; 22:10;23:22;24:4,17, 25;44:9;53:17;69:3, 20,21,22,23,23,24; 70:1,1;76:5;77:4;</p>	<p>78:6;81:2;82:4; 99:19;101:8;106:2; 108:2;110:3,3;112:9 Maybe (14) 6:10;38:23;42:8, 11;51:1;56:4;67:8; 70:15;71:3;80:20; 85:8;110:10;115:10; 118:5 McGill (45) 78:12;83:13,15,17, 18;84:1;94:5;95:8, 22;96:10,12;101:10, 12;106:14,15,17; 107:3,7,11,22; 108:13,18;109:7,16, 18,23;110:15,23; 114:15,19,24;119:10, 16;122:15,17,20; 123:6,16,21;124:1,8, 12,14;127:19,21 meal (2) 28:11;43:24 mean (18) 24:25;28:3;30:2; 31:5,15;32:5;41:1, 11;44:1;51:5,23; 60:10;61:5;80:10; 82:18;93:21;109:13; 116:7 means (8) 78:24;86:13;89:1, 4,6;93:20,22;105:19 meant (1) 82:15 measure (7) 41:22;47:17;64:23; 68:13;96:20,22;99:8 measured (1) 33:5 measurement (1) 89:7 measures (6) 64:19,24;68:4,10, 12;76:20 medically (1) 51:20 medium (1) 21:24 meet (16) 19:8;21:24;23:1; 24:2,3,12,14,17; 33:19,20;39:20; 46:23;86:14;95:19; 112:7;116:6 meeting (15) 4:3,18,20;6:19; 13:6;28:19,25;29:4, 14;60:3;81:14;97:19; 116:16;117:12; 128:13 Melissa (3) 14:23;17:24;29:23</p>	<p>melting (1) 8:6 member (6) 57:19;75:22;80:25; 114:6,6,7 members (4) 7:1;15:4;101:17; 124:4 mentally (1) 117:24 mention (2) 11:18;101:21 mentioned (7) 29:12;31:16;32:14; 87:8;102:6;120:23; 127:2 mentoring (1) 112:1 met (1) 116:1 methodologies (1) 115:12 methodology (1) 115:23 Mexico (1) 36:8 mic (1) 22:2 microphone (2) 4:16;6:6 middle (12) 30:11;31:14;40:10; 47:25;48:6,18,23; 85:24;86:8;120:10; 122:22,24 might (10) 23:4;34:14;51:7,8, 11;54:2;89:12;98:25; 101:25;112:8 might've (3) 31:7;37:15;54:13 miles (2) 85:23;93:23 military (2) 31:8;68:11 millage (1) 106:20 mind (2) 17:2;113:1 mindset (6) 45:14,16;46:17; 66:6,14;71:9 minority (7) 105:12;110:16,17; 111:11;114:17,20; 121:25 minute (2) 31:13;46:15 minutes (12) 5:25;6:2,4,13,14, 16;10:14;56:4;61:19; 64:3;95:23;96:11 misread (1)</p>
M				
<p>ma'am (9) 61:20;64:15,18; 68:7,15;113:4;118:7; 124:2;128:1 Madam (5) 12:16;32:2;60:22; 77:21;101:17 main (1) 85:2 maintain (2) 96:24;99:6 maintained (1) 94:20 maintaining (1) 120:19 maintenance (1) 39:7 major (1) 42:1 MAJORITY (4) 57:14;125:2,12,16 makes (1) 52:3 makeup (1) 121:4 making (4) 11:2;35:21;86:14;</p>				

88:14 Miss (1) 81:19 missed (1) 52:7 missing (2) 42:9,11 mission (3) 70:20;84:25;85:2 Missouri (1) 10:15 misunderstanding (1) 88:12 mixed (1) 72:10 mixing (1) 63:16 mobile (3) 123:7,9,10 models (1) 26:6 modify (1) 86:16 MOMENT (3) 64:1;75:22;125:9 MOMENTS (3) 57:22;75:23; 125:24 money (3) 26:8;27:10;105:15 monitor (3) 112:10;117:20,21 monitoring (6) 23:8,10;100:8; 104:5;105:19,20 month (1) 56:13 monthly (3) 26:5,9,10 months (2) 52:2,7 more (45) 10:16,19;11:12; 21:20;32:16,18,22; 49:9;51:16;52:20,25; 54:17;55:20;56:21, 22;59:8;65:9;73:23; 76:11;77:13;81:8; 87:10;92:18;101:12, 14,22;103:2;105:12; 106:15;110:9,10,24; 111:2;113:23;115:4, 5,6,9,10;120:7; 121:16,25;122:6; 126:24;127:8 morning (17) 4:2;5:19;9:12; 16:21,22;21:8;25:16, 17;27:15,16;72:15; 83:20;84:17,23; 89:21;93:25;116:23 MORRIS (2) 6:6,9	mortar (2) 21:12;52:9 most (16) 8:19;10:7;26:12; 41:22;52:9;62:4,5; 66:11;71:9;72:5; 86:24;91:4;111:12; 112:20;113:20; 120:14 mostly (1) 100:24 motion (36) 5:5,9;7:4;13:10,11, 14,20,22;14:1;57:7,9, 11,13,18,24;58:16; 59:7,14,18;68:2;75:6, 9,13,16,18;77:1,7; 124:20,23;125:1,19; 126:1,7,15;128:3,8 motivated (1) 70:6 motivation (1) 117:7 Mounds (1) 94:16 move (13) 8:8;60:5,19;75:9; 96:15;102:21;103:6; 115:4;116:18; 118:15;122:23; 123:19;127:19 moved (4) 5:7;13:12;93:16; 128:5 moves (1) 77:19 moving (5) 8:10;24:24;48:11; 55:3;93:17 much (20) 22:9;25:19,20; 30:17,21;32:14;43:4; 55:25;56:25;58:11; 59:8;62:5;84:22; 93:14;95:2,5,21; 96:13;112:11;127:21 multiple (5) 37:18;38:6;76:20; 82:23;96:5 multi-tiered (1) 24:7 myself (1) 20:2	38:14 national (6) 29:1;38:19,24; 41:18;47:17;58:8 nationally (1) 49:18 nationwide (1) 51:1 nature (1) 97:2 near (1) 50:15 necessarily (3) 22:7;54:22;111:3 necessary (2) 86:14;88:20 need (61) 5:23;6:12;9:15; 13:10,20;15:14;18:9; 22:1;23:2,4,11,13,16, 16,22;24:4,25;31:2; 34:20;36:14;39:23; 40:13,14,16;46:5,6,6, 7,9,13,14,21;47:13; 50:5;55:2;59:3; 62:21;64:4;67:13; 69:20,21,25;70:7; 76:5;80:19,21;81:3, 13,17;82:4;84:6; 85:15,20,25;87:23, 24;103:2;106:23; 108:2;115:9;127:4 needed (8) 6:22;41:4,5;47:23; 76:10;87:25;106:18; 125:22 needing (4) 62:17;69:9;87:10; 99:20 needs (31) 8:13;9:19,24,25; 15:20;18:17;19:9; 23:1,22;24:2,4,25;1; 32:17;39:20;44:13; 51:7;70:4;85:10,19; 86:15;89:15;95:21; 115:15;116:1,6,11, 16;117:11,14,15; 126:3 negative (3) 102:23;122:4; 126:20 negatively (7) 98:5,10;99:11; 101:24;102:9,24; 103:8 negotiating (1) 88:23 negotiation (2) 7:15;108:5 negotiations (2) 88:25;107:5 neighbor (1)	10:10 Nelson (12) 14:23;17:24,24; 18:23;19:2,4;20:16; 29:23;36:6;52:15; 53:10,12 network (2) 29:17;50:11 networks (3) 28:4,4;50:7 new (23) 9:6,8,9;18:1;21:13; 36:8;52:16;56:12; 65:17;78:16;79:16; 80:6;82:9;86:19; 94:2,25;98:16,20; 111:10;113:11; 114:1;120:8;122:24 news (1) 102:12 newsletter (1) 56:13 next (13) 9:7,9;11:3;55:4; 56:15;60:6;78:15; 81:3;86:25;87:17; 88:3;122:23;127:19 niche (1) 11:12 night (1) 117:12 nine (1) 49:25 nobody (1) 65:7 Nodding (2) 19:12;105:25 non- (1) 105:16 None (1) 98:14 non-minority (1) 105:13 nonprofit (4) 37:10,23;38:2,15 non-special (1) 16:5 non-student (1) 122:9 nor (1) 102:17 northwest (15) 8:2,4,8,10,15,23; 9:5,23;10:1,13,17; 11:8;17:4;58:21;59:4 note (1) 19:14 notes (1) 10:7 noticed (2) 26:6;111:24 November (2) 4:3;90:17	nowhere (1) 91:22 number (14) 19:15;23:23;28:3; 48:22;50:7;51:25; 54:10;60:20;65:24; 69:15;77:20;94:18, 19;100:2 numbered (1) 50:8 numbers (8) 33:14;50:21;51:1; 53:6,14;54:10;59:4; 65:3
O				
			oath (3) 14:4;61:13;83:8 obesity (1) 92:20 obligation (1) 102:25 obligations (6) 102:14,14,17; 105:20;122:7,8 obviously (2) 106:23;120:23 occasional (1) 23:4 October (3) 12:20;13:1;119:8 off (4) 14:11;25:18;69:18; 109:11 offer (11) 15:9;34:17;35:12; 59:21;74:11;76:4; 96:8;101:11;103:1; 109:24;120:4 offered (4) 58:12,12;79:13; 103:17 offering (4) 24:9,22;25:12;31:2 offers (1) 74:12 office (6) 18:8,12,13;72:23, 24;73:8 Officer (1) 15:12 official (1) 97:19 often (8) 22:5;45:19;51:10, 15;112:8;120:7; 121:16;123:14 older (2) 72:2,11 on-boarding (1) 54:22 Once (9)	

7:4;32:19,21; 35:19;36:4;55:25; 56:13;63:7;94:25 one (91) 10:10,22;17:1; 19:18;21:1;26:25; 30:2,13;32:4,4;33:2, 15;34:5;35:18;36:20, 22;40:23;42:14; 44:14;45:10,14;46:9; 49:9,13;50:5,8,12,17; 51:11,21;52:10; 53:15;54:16,24;55:3, 4;56:11,14,19;59:21; 65:11,15,23,24;66:8, 14;67:9,10;68:22; 69:14,14,15;70:5; 71:3,7,17;72:2; 73:23;78:24;79:22; 82:1,3,6,11,13,19,22; 83:18,20;86:17,23, 24;87:9;88:7;89:7,7; 99:19;106:15; 107:13;110:6;111:4, 24;114:4;117:5; 119:20;122:5,21,25; 129:25;131:25; 132:25 one-on-one (1) 21:25 one-stop (1) 56:8 one-to- (1) 122:24 one-to-one (1) 122:19 online (44) 17:19;18:8;21:14, 16,24;22:14;27:20, 23;28:14,14,19,24; 29:8;30:14;34:9; 36:7;39:5;42:5,15,20, 23;43:5,10,17,18; 44:3,8,12;46:3;49:12, 17,20,22;51:15;54:1; 55:7,14,18;57:20; 58:11,18;59:16,20; 124:6 only (25) 9:7;11:19;12:7; 17:19;28:9;29:4; 40:1;55:17;59:20; 64:17;67:20;68:13; 73:4;77:8;81:4; 82:22;90:4,23;93:5; 99:19;100:19;101:7; 112:6;122:21;123:8 on-site (2) 88:13;116:4 onus (1) 52:4 open (9) 27:2;29:20;78:16, 21;97:3,4;104:15; 107:16;108:21 open- (3) 79:8;82:20;97:2 opened (2) 67:4;94:25 OPEN-ENROLLMENT (10) 12:12,18,23;77:17, 22;79:5,11,16;80:6; 84:4 opening (4) 84:24;90:21;94:2; 106:5 opens (1) 97:11 operate (2) 12:23;79:1 operating (1) 126:13 opportunities (15) 12:3;20:3;33:1; 34:25;35:1,22,23; 39:23;58:24;59:12; 76:23;77:9;87:2; 90:14;93:2 opportunity (27) 5:3;11:11;35:16; 47:15;48:20;59:15; 66:16;75:5;76:4,10; 77:3;84:2,2;89:22; 91:6;92:25;93:9,12; 97:22;107:13,18; 109:21;110:24; 112:2;126:5,18; 127:13 opposed (12) 5:13;6:2,14;13:25; 44:8;54:19;57:15,17; 75:18;125:3,7,18 opposing (1) 9:2 opposite (1) 43:1 opposition (13) 6:15;13:18;14:3; 61:12;63:25;83:7; 95:9,23;96:8;100:13, 18,21;101:2 ops (1) 20:20 option (3) 62:15;73:19;81:14 options (1) 76:15 order (5) 4:4;26:10;39:20; 62:18;67:13 organic (1) 91:11 organization (1) 38:19 organizations (1) 8:24 orientation (2) 54:21;55:14 orientations (1) 55:13 Orton- (1) 15:15 others (4) 28:5;42:11;49:24; 59:11 otherwise (1) 21:22 ours (1) 43:16 ourselves (2) 28:6;29:6 out (50) 11:8;19:21,22; 21:11,22;23:3;26:3; 27:3,10;33:4,7,19,20; 36:13;37:12,12;43:3; 50:6,10;55:17,22; 56:13;62:4,11,19; 63:13;64:22,23; 66:25;67:3;69:19; 80:21;83:24;85:8,9, 18;90:14;91:24;92:2, 3;98:6;102:1,16; 103:1,18;105:22; 114:12;119:14; 123:8;125:17 outcomes (2) 86:16;126:17 outperforming (1) 28:15 outperforms (1) 49:23 outreach (1) 58:22 outside (4) 18:9;19:7;58:21; 93:9 outstanding (1) 81:6 over (23) 6:11,25;8:7,11,11, 18;9:18;11:2,5;22:6; 31:4;63:5;72:3,4,8; 74:3,13;79:4;87:22; 91:2,14;92:9;122:2 Overall (6) 31:3,9;70:20; 81:15;121:18,19 oversees (1) 4:7 overview (1) 5:17 overwhelming (1) 110:5 own (8) 27:11;50:9;52:25; 97:17,23;104:3; 105:20;106:18 orientation (2) 54:21;55:14 orientations (1) 55:13 Orton- (1) 15:15 others (4) 28:5;42:11;49:24; 59:11 otherwise (1) 21:22 ours (1) 43:16 ourselves (2) 28:6;29:6 out (50) 11:8;19:21,22; 21:11,22;23:3;26:3; 27:3,10;33:4,7,19,20; 36:13;37:12,12;43:3; 50:6,10;55:17,22; 56:13;62:4,11,19; 63:13;64:22,23; 66:25;67:3;69:19; 80:21;83:24;85:8,9, 18;90:14;91:24;92:2, 3;98:6;102:1,16; 103:1,18;105:22; 114:12;119:14; 123:8;125:17 outcomes (2) 86:16;126:17 outperforming (1) 28:15 outperforms (1) 49:23 outreach (1) 58:22 outside (4) 18:9;19:7;58:21; 93:9 outstanding (1) 81:6 over (23) 6:11,25;8:7,11,11, 18;9:18;11:2,5;22:6; 31:4;63:5;72:3,4,8; 74:3,13;79:4;87:22; 91:2,14;92:9;122:2 Overall (6) 31:3,9;70:20; 81:15;121:18,19 oversees (1) 4:7 overview (1) 5:17 overwhelming (1) 110:5 own (8) 27:11;50:9;52:25; 97:17,23;104:3; 105:20;106:18 P packet (3) 80:10;85:13;99:24 packets (1) 85:7 page (5) 56:7,7,11;100:2; 119:13 pain (1) 54:15 paint (1) 108:2 Panel (28) 4:4,7,11,11,17,23; 6:17;7:1;12:22,24; 13:3,9;14:17,18; 15:4;57:6;58:1; 60:14;61:7;64:7; 73:22;78:10;80:25; 101:17;102:2;103:6; 124:4;128:3 paragraph (1) 119:12 paraprofessional (1) 72:8 pardon (1) 51:17 parenting (1) 73:8 parents (14) 32:12,16,18,19,20, 21;52:1;53:16;69:13; 92:5;94:22;109:8,19, 21 Park (1) 33:10 part (22) 14:10;15:12;18:8; 24:8,9,22;25:11; 37:4;38:18;39:16; 46:1,10,25;56:15; 81:2;91:16;92:11,11; 108:21,24;110:23; 111:5 participate (5) 25:21;58:3;67:21; 74:6,9 particular (8) 11:6,11;26:6; 36:20;37:1,9;39:4; 51:13 particularly (5) 40:9;43:22;45:16, 24;54:20 parties (4) 6:2,14;97:14;98:3 partnering (1) 11:21 partners (1) 35:1 partnership (2) 36:10;113:5 partnerships (6) 19:23;20:19;34:24; 35:20,21;87:6 parts (4) 33:19;38:10;58:23; 109:24 pass (1) 125:11 passed (8) 14:1;57:19;65:7, 10,10;72:3;75:19; 125:19 passes (2) 68:2;120:10 passing (4) 13:8;41:20;47:18, 19 past (6) 30:18;41:23;89:23; 96:4;102:3;117:11 Pat (4) 14:24;15:10;27:13; 29:23 paragraph (1) 33:5,8 patch (2) 44:16;46:20;59:23 pathways (1) 35:10 pause (1) 114:12 pay (2) 12:7;26:10 PCSSD (2) 95:12;126:23 PE (1) 63:18 pending (2) 23:24;25:7 penny (1) 40:13 people (22) 8:8,9,9,10,11,12; 10:1;19:6,8;40:22; 84:12;86:25;94:4,4, 5;110:6,11,24;112:3; 113:16,17,23 people's (1) 9:25 PEP (2) 67:11;76:5 per (2) 87:8,14 perceive (1) 116:12 percent (2) 114:17;121:22 percentage (3) 52:11;110:10; 114:25 perform (4) 28:9;45:12;58:11;
--

<p>112:24 performance (12) 28:1,8,13,24;29:1, 2;44:22;45:17;46:24; 47:12;56:22;64:21 performed (3) 42:10,14;53:8 performing (10) 28:4,5,6,12,21; 43:25;47:7;58:9; 68:24,25 perhaps (1) 113:21 period (3) 92:9;117:5,7 Perry (1) 100:12 persist (1) 46:13 person (4) 4:14;29:24;35:19; 72:9 personal (2) 10:10;71:15 personalize (1) 44:16 personalized (4) 44:23;58:17;67:11, 12 personally (1) 14:24 persons (1) 5:22 perspective (1) 27:23 pertinent (1) 120:2 petition (2) 79:3,5 Pfeffer (51) 16:20,21,23;18:19, 24;19:3,10,14;34:4,5; 35:6,8,24;36:4; 57:16;58:15,16; 68:18,19;69:2,3; 70:10,14;72:12; 76:13,14;80:8,9; 81:23;85:12;99:18, 19;107:2,3,8,20; 108:4,17;109:5,13, 17,20;110:13,19; 114:13,16,23;125:4, 6;126:25;127:1 Pfeffer's (2) 39:15;115:2 phone (2) 21:18;33:14 physical (2) 34:19;40:11 physically (2) 18:7;51:21 Pi (2) 33:4,7</p>	<p>P-i (1) 33:4 pick (2) 14:11;109:12 picked (1) 108:20 picnic (1) 33:11 picture (2) 87:10;93:11 piece (9) 27:2,6,12;29:12; 44:25;46:16;81:24; 112:1;113:19 pieces (1) 56:3 pigs (1) 91:14 place (15) 7:10;15:24;16:12; 17:8,11;19:24;24:3; 25:11;35:8;46:18,20; 64:13;104:5;116:2; 118:24 placed (2) 79:12;103:11 placement (1) 29:19 places (2) 19:7;112:13 plan (8) 24:3;48:15;67:11, 12;71:15;109:18; 118:8;123:4 planned (1) 76:17 planning (1) 120:14 plans (2) 17:8;94:16 plant (1) 90:23 plantation (1) 94:12 planting (2) 92:12;115:21 play (1) 95:11 players (1) 11:14 Please (15) 4:6,14;7:23;13:19; 14:4;26:4;37:24; 40:17;61:12,13; 78:15;83:8;95:24; 116:22;125:19 PLUS (24) 77:18,24;78:2,4,6, 9,13,20;82:20;84:1; 85:2,21;86:1;94:3; 95:17;96:3;100:17; 102:8;109:24; 110:14;113:23;</p>	<p>115:11;126:2,8 point (29) 10:15;19:4,5;26:3; 28:16;32:4;81:9; 84:8,10,19;85:23; 88:11,14;101:22; 102:1,5,15;103:13, 22;108:13,15; 110:15;113:3; 118:14;121:2,14,15; 122:6;124:8 pointed (2) 27:3;103:18 points (4) 10:9;86:23;101:21; 120:20 pool (1) 113:21 poor (1) 8:21 Poore (2) 9:1,13 populated (1) 120:9 population (10) 8:15;30:7;52:19, 23;66:20;68:10; 116:10;121:18,19; 122:1 populations (3) 58:10,10;121:22 portion (4) 27:19,24;36:22; 90:5 position (4) 9:17;10:12;18:5; 39:24 positions (4) 10:17;17:15,16; 18:20 positive (2) 44:8;94:7 positively (1) 94:9 possibilities (1) 84:24 possibility (1) 87:21 possible (3) 7:8;81:11;107:22 possibly (1) 62:19 posted (1) 4:21 pot (1) 8:6 potential (6) 19:23;87:13;99:5; 112:19;113:11; 116:20 poverty (2) 25:21;58:2 pray (1)</p>	<p>84:22 predominantly (1) 120:11 preface (1) 43:12 preferred (1) 127:8 prep (1) 117:7 preparation (1) 58:24 prepare (1) 80:13 prepared (2) 95:2;124:10 present (8) 5:25;6:13,15;62:6; 78:13;125:12,13,21 presentation (3) 6:3;14:10;126:19 presented (2) 78:19;79:17 presenters (1) 81:10 presents (2) 42:1;77:3 President (2) 17:25;20:7 pretty (5) 22:24;50:12,18; 62:5;80:12 prevent (2) 56:24;101:4 previous (2) 13:6;60:3 previously (4) 13:10;52:12,13; 121:21 pride (2) 28:5;29:5 primarily (1) 8:2 primary (3) 17:1;20:18;35:18 principal (13) 18:14;61:9;72:20; 84:13;88:13,17; 111:15,16,17,20,25; 116:24;118:16 principals (1) 111:22 principal's (1) 72:23 print (1) 44:7 prior (8) 33:18;44:18;45:3; 52:13;68:24;97:19; 100:11;127:23 private (1) 97:9 proactively (1) 55:22</p>	<p>probably (10) 21:6;43:2;68:3; 86:24;91:22;100:18; 101:13;110:9; 121:25;123:8 probation (1) 79:12 probations (1) 95:17 problem (3) 9:22;22:2;113:24 problems (6) 65:21;66:21;69:22; 105:4,23;120:18 problem-solving (4) 46:8,13,14;47:6 PROCEDURES (4) 5:15,21;6:23,25 proceed (1) 107:1 proceedings (1) 107:23 process (14) 5:17;15:2;16:4; 49:5;52:2;66:1; 67:22;81:4;112:5; 115:8,20,24;117:18; 127:20 processes (1) 19:15 professional (2) 20:5,23 professor (1) 20:2 proficiency (1) 53:5 proficient (3) 44:18;45:4;64:23 program (25) 12:8;15:9,13,15,16, 16,19,24;16:12;24:7, 8;25:22;29:7;48:16; 54:23;55:18;56:1,2; 74:10;88:19;108:18; 109:7;115:18;116:9, 18 programs (1) 46:18 progress (2) 45:8;117:21 progressing (1) 86:14 progression (1) 48:15 projection (1) 120:13 promote (1) 59:1 promoted (1) 83:15 proper (1) 77:10 proposed (1)</p>
--	---	---	---	--

<p>96:22 prospect (1) 94:2 protect (1) 72:2 proud (3) 30:1;89:8;90:3 prove (1) 104:18 provide (10) 26:9;29:15;59:15; 67:23,24;76:9,15; 108:11;119:22;126:4 provided (12) 13:2;15:23;27:11; 42:8;49:16;52:22; 58:5;66:23;79:13; 95:11;98:2;126:20 provider (2) 59:21;69:24 providers (3) 26:17;28:20;59:16 provides (1) 126:17 providing (4) 4:20;14:15;76:22; 119:18 provisions (1) 98:24 public (22) 9:15;12:12,18; 17:14;42:15;43:3,7; 51:13;60:17,23; 77:17,22;79:8;94:7; 96:23;97:7;98:6,11; 99:2,7,10,12 Pulaski (35) 85:15,19;86:2; 88:23;94:21;96:1; 97:20;98:16;99:21; 100:1,14,20,23; 102:3,15;103:9,17; 104:2,6,7,9,18;105:3, 10,15,21;106:18,24; 107:8;119:22; 120:15,17;121:6; 122:8;127:3 pull (4) 21:23;23:5,17; 32:25 pulled (1) 36:17 pulling (2) 21:24;120:14 pumpkin (4) 33:4,4,7,8 pumpkins (1) 33:6 purple (2) 40:20,22 purpose (3) 49:6;61:24;69:10 purposes (1)</p>	<p>44:6 pursuing (1) 80:6 push (1) 11:8 put (9) 7:3;16:12;19:23; 26:8;100:10;105:15; 107:12;108:24;116:2 puts (4) 52:3,3,4;53:20 putting (3) 9:6,8,9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <p>qualified (5) 8:5,20;10:2,16; 24:15 qualify (1) 9:11 Quality (13) 4:9;9:12,15,22; 11:7;24:16;26:14,23; 29:6,7;32:1;59:2; 126:3 question-and-answer (1) 14:12 quick (6) 6:11;17:5;40:4; 68:22;86:13;99:20 quicker (1) 76:7 quickly (1) 87:7 quite (8) 31:21;45:9,10; 49:18;52:3;86:10; 93:20;112:7 quoting (1) 98:23</p> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <p>races (1) 33:12 racial (2) 103:24;121:4 Raise (2) 61:13;83:8 raised (2) 110:6;120:24 range (1) 43:9 ranging (1) 111:3 rare (1) 28:18 rate (4) 47:18;61:25;66:23; 68:9 rates (4) 41:20;47:16,19;</p>	<p>61:24 rather (4) 51:17;63:9;66:17; 120:22 reach (4) 19:21;21:22;55:17, 22 reaching (1) 19:22 reads (13) 7:6;22:14;27:17; 28:3;42:23;57:20; 77:24;96:6;98:25; 119:14;120:3,5; 123:23 readiness (2) 29:22;30:2 reading (10) 19:15;24:20;28:24; 29:2;43:19;44:2,4,4, 5;48:21 ready (4) 18:15;70:17;85:3; 107:1 real (5) 6:11;10:10,15; 94:17;112:2 realize (2) 54:5;62:21 really (56) 11:3,13,17;12:8; 15:13;22:5;27:5,22, 25;28:20,22;29:7,14; 35:4,6;41:7;42:24; 45:13,15;46:16,22; 47:6,14;50:16,22; 52:5,5;56:5,16,23; 60:10;63:15;67:18; 69:12,14;70:5,16; 74:6;80:14;90:19,25; 91:4,13,13,15,17; 92:10,22;93:11; 111:2;112:18,20,22, 23;115:25;117:17 reason (10) 7:4,5;51:12,21; 52:1;57:25;62:9; 64:25;71:12;101:7 reasoning (1) 46:8 reasons (8) 66:7,8,9,14;71:8; 97:2;101:9;125:9 rebuttal (2) 6:4,16 rebutted (1) 103:22 recall (1) 118:5 receive (8) 14:4;25:12;40:11; 61:12;67:9;76:10; 83:7;95:8</p>	<p>received (5) 9:2;80:10;88:9; 94:9;96:17 receiving (2) 16:16;117:10 recently (2) 22:14;77:25 recognized (4) 12:15;60:21;77:20; 101:16 recognizing (1) 115:7 recommendations (1) 123:23 recommended (1) 16:10 record (2) 4:15;95:24 recover (1) 76:22 recovery (4) 62:17;68:4;69:21; 70:8 recreation (1) 94:12 red (1) 86:1 reduced (4) 8:17;20:11;28:11; 43:24 reference (3) 37:19;39:3;86:6 referenced (1) 37:8 references (2) 37:2,5 referencing (1) 38:9 referred (1) 72:15 referring (1) 37:15 refrigerator (1) 40:24 regard (4) 87:6;102:12;105:2, 2 regarding (11) 23:22;39:15;57:4, 7;74:25;75:7;88:5, 24;98:19;113:8; 124:16 regardless (1) 34:6 regards (11) 11:6;101:20; 102:13,17,18;120:25; 121:3,9,15;122:4,6 regular (2) 51:23;88:22 regularly (1) 112:7 reiterate (2)</p>	<p>10:15;18:19 related (3) 100:21;101:2,8 relation (1) 96:3 Relations (1) 37:25 relationship (6) 89:23;90:6,12,16, 20;94:14 relationships (3) 20:5,7,8 relatively (2) 100:19;101:2 release (2) 50:13;74:10 relevant (1) 20:10 reluctant (1) 94:22 rely (2) 114:8,17 remain (2) 80:11;96:8 remaining (6) 57:3;74:24;102:14; 104:8;122:8;124:16 remains (1) 79:22 remediation (1) 115:20 remember (2) 56:9,10 remotely (1) 18:11 remove (3) 13:11,15,22 renewal (3) 4:8;68:3;120:25 repeat (1) 98:8 repeatedly (1) 102:2 report (22) 18:7;22:14;27:17, 18,19,20,24,25;28:3; 42:1,5,9,13,22,24; 49:12,21;50:1,2,6; 82:18;83:1 reporter (1) 4:19 reporting (3) 118:10,19,23 reports (1) 4:22 represent (2) 8:1;105:21 Representative (8) 10:5,5;12:10; 84:15;93:13,14,15; 94:19 representatives (8) 12:21;13:4,17;</p>
--	---	--	---	---

14:2;61:4,11;78:8; 83:6 represented (1) 27:21 representing (1) 95:25 represents (1) 101:20 reputation (1) 94:22 request (27) 4:13;57:7,9,13; 58:1;60:17,23;61:7; 63:9,22;68:23;70:11; 74:25;75:7,11,15; 76:1;77:2,17,22; 78:10,19,20;97:16; 98:7,12;124:25 requested (6) 12:25;13:3;41:19; 57:4;62:25;78:15 requesting (1) 12:23 require (2) 65:14;125:11 required (3) 4:10;48:12;126:23 requirement (11) 35:13;36:12,15; 39:3,23;41:2,8;48:14, 15;83:1;109:3 requirements (2) 39:18;41:14 requires (3) 15:21;96:21;98:7 Research (4) 24:13,18;42:6;94:4 reservations (1) 17:2 resolved (2) 80:17;127:9 resources (1) 67:24 responded (1) 60:2 response (15) 14:16;23:23;25:6, 19;28:7;36:24;39:1, 9,15,17;75:22;95:12; 102:6;115:6;120:23 responses (1) 57:21 responsibilities (2) 55:8;70:16 responsibility (1) 122:10 responsible (1) 4:13 responsive (1) 86:21 results (1) 43:1 review (6)	5:3;7:8;60:6,7; 87:9;99:5 reviewing (1) 98:1 revision (1) 4:8 revisions (2) 6:25;7:12 revocation (1) 4:8 reward (1) 89:2 rewarding (2) 22:8;91:17 rezoned (1) 85:22 rhetorically (1) 103:11 rich (1) 23:12 right (40) 5:16;9:17;13:17; 15:4;16:7;22:19; 35:11;38:11;39:11; 49:7;53:14;57:6; 60:15;61:13;64:7,14; 67:3,4;68:16;70:22; 83:5,8;84:19,22; 85:11;90:14;94:10; 105:11,14;106:25; 107:1,5;109:5; 110:19,20;113:14; 118:4,7;122:17; 125:8 rigorous (2) 44:10;54:23 Rob (3) 78:11;83:25;94:5 Rock (3) 100:20;109:11; 121:6 Rogers (7) 17:12;59:17,18; 76:2,3;126:6,7 room (6) 21:23;23:6;32:25; 33:22;72:25;122:21 route (2) 62:20;111:1 routine (1) 100:19 RTI (6) 115:7,18,24; 116:18;117:7,18 rules (2) 55:8;97:14 run (3) 71:4,6;122:10 rural (2) 93:20;94:1	sack (1) 33:12 Sam (2) 95:25;119:10 same (16) 5:21;10:21;25:1; 43:5,10;44:11,19; 79:18;86:8;91:20; 105:5;111:7;115:23; 121:2,23;123:6 Samuel (1) 119:8 Sanders (10) 14:23;21:5,8,9; 22:12,13,18;23:19; 32:13,13 satisfied (2) 58:1;73:12 SAUNDERS (37) 13:13,15;36:16,17; 37:4,18;38:8,12,18, 22;39:1,11;49:8; 50:24,25;52:11;53:3, 11,23;59:13,14; 68:21,22;76:8,9; 105:7,11,14,24; 106:2;124:22,24; 125:7,10,15;126:10, 11 saw (3) 30:18;49:15;78:18 saying (6) 16:3;25:18;44:17; 45:6;49:20;104:20 schedule (1) 74:6 scheduled (1) 23:6 schedules (1) 11:24 school (231) 5:24;6:4,13,15,20; 7:19;8:19;9:1,3,7,8, 14;10:13;12:13,18, 24;18:6,9;20:14,17, 17,17,18;27:22,23; 30:7,11,12,15,19; 31:4,14,14,15,17,21; 33:17;35:4,19;36:8, 11;39:20;40:10,18; 43:3;45:3;47:25; 48:3,6,7,18,23,24,25; 49:3;51:9;52:7,15, 16;53:17;54:5,16; 55:3,4;59:23;60:11, 18,24;61:22,23;62:1, 8,8,19,20,21;63:16, 18,19;65:5,6;67:4; 70:17;71:6,6,8,12,13, 21,22,24;72:7;73:18; 74:5,12,19;77:2,15, 18,18,23,24,25;78:3, 3,9,22;79:3,5,6,16;	82:9,19,22,23;83:6; 84:1,5,6,8,13;85:1, 16,16,25,25;86:7,8,9; 87:12;89:2,2,14,24; 90:1,13,14,14,15,18; 91:2,20,21;92:23; 93:19,23;94:2,14,15, 18,20,25;95:1,18; 96:1,23,23;97:7,11, 14,15,17,20;98:6,11; 99:2,3,4,11,12,21; 100:6,20,24;101:7; 102:2,3,16,18,20; 103:8;104:2,4,6,14, 15;105:13;106:5,7, 19,21;107:12,12,13; 108:22;109:15; 111:11,14,17,18,20; 114:18;115:23; 116:5,5,8,24;117:3,3, 118:22;120:9,15,18, 25;121:1,6,7,13,14, 24;122:5,7,7,11,22, 24;124:25;126:8,13; 127:7;132:24 schoolers (1) 52:17 schooling (1) 43:7 Schools (66) 4:9;8:25;9:10,16; 10:12;17:14,25;18:3; 27:20;28:7,14,19,24; 29:1,8,17;30:3,4,25; 41:20;42:6,16;43:9, 11;47:17;48:4;49:13, 17;50:13;51:13,15; 52:9;59:5,20;69:14; 70:5;78:1,25;79:8; 82:25;83:23;85:18; 86:12;88:8;89:3,5; 92:21;97:3,9;99:7; 100:14,15,22;101:20; 102:9;105:3;119:17, 18,21,24;121:2,3,4, 11,16,18 school's (2) 6:3;59:8 science (15) 24:20;36:12;39:22; 40:10,14;48:21;73:2, 3,5;112:19,23;113:2, 8,18;122:21 sciences (1) 87:1 scope (1) 70:19 scores (7) 22:21,23;43:23; 59:19;66:18;86:3,10 Scott (54) 78:22;84:5,14,25, 25;85:15,17,21;86:5;	87:16,19;88:2,17,24; 89:11,13,15,18,20, 23;90:1,4,6;91:20; 93:16,17;94:11,15, 18,20;101:13,18; 103:22,23,23;104:7, 11,20;105:2;106:19; 111:14;112:4; 113:12,16;115:13; 116:13;117:4;118:9; 121:20;123:5;124:6, 21;126:3,9 screen (1) 85:6 Second (14) 5:8;13:13,15;15:6; 57:10,12;75:10,12; 89:3;119:13;120:22; 124:22,24;128:6 secondary (1) 82:14 secondary (3) 5:10;75:14;128:8 seconds (1) 96:2 Secretary (1) 37:21 seeds (3) 90:23;91:11;92:12 seeing (5) 30:1,12;35:4;45:5; 110:24 seeking (1) 87:3 seems (2) 40:21;108:4 segregate (1) 104:16 segregation (1) 95:10 segregative (4) 105:16,17;121:10; 122:4 selected (1) 58:25 sell (1) 26:21 semester (1) 26:7 Senate (1) 8:2 SENATOR (4) 7:25;10:4,6;18:3 send (2) 40:10;94:23 senior (2) 62:16;67:17 seniors (5) 62:5,6;66:12;67:3; 70:21 sense (2) 34:19;54:12 separate (6)
	S			

<p>37:9;38:12;50:2; 78:23;79:1;111:15 separated (1) 72:18 serious (1) 67:17 serve (5) 10:2;11:20;61:2; 78:7;117:8 served (1) 117:23 service (4) 19:21;20:3,19,24 services (6) 16:16;19:16;39:8, 9;74:19;115:5 serving (3) 89:14;122:2;126:9 session (4) 55:19,24;56:11; 90:15 sessions (3) 55:14,15;56:19 set (4) 18:14;24:21;59:9; 69:25 settling (1) 100:25 set-up (1) 55:6 seven (1) 65:9 several (8) 20:3;30:9;80:11; 84:12;85:23;94:7; 107:15;119:21 shall (4) 14:6;61:15;83:10; 99:10 share (10) 43:15;75:5;79:23; 80:1;82:2;84:2,24; 89:22;91:17;92:15 sharing (3) 89:19;92:6,13 Sharon (1) 4:19 sheet (1) 62:2 shift (2) 45:22;118:17 shoes (1) 103:3 shoot (1) 85:11 shopping (1) 56:8 short (1) 56:4 show (5) 16:15;22:3;42:12; 81:17;86:9 showing (1)</p>	<p>86:5 shows (1) 49:23 shutdown (1) 45:19 side (1) 44:2 sign (2) 32:1;89:1 significant (2) 51:25;86:2 significantly (1) 42:5 silence (5) 4:6;57:22;64:1; 75:23;125:24 similar (3) 38:14;83:22;115:1 simply (5) 26:13,22;49:5; 65:3;102:22 sit (1) 33:23 site (2) 34:20;35:2 sits (1) 4:11 sitting (1) 108:6 situation (1) 70:24 situations (1) 21:21 six (5) 113:7,9;114:21,24; 125:16 sizes (1) 71:16 Skype (1) 112:9 slide (6) 49:15,25;50:1; 53:4,4;88:3 slides (4) 28:18;50:5,5;85:13 small (7) 69:16,21;70:9; 71:15;90:5;92:1; 114:25 smaller (4) 8:16,17;52:18,18 Smith (8) 17:11;101:13,15, 17,18;103:15;104:1; 120:20 so- (1) 88:7 social (2) 24:20;86:20 social/emotional (1) 113:19 socialization (3) 33:10;46:25;56:17</p>	<p>socializing (1) 33:13 socioeconomic (1) 8:21 so-forth (1) 82:14 sold (1) 107:12 sole (1) 69:24 Solomon (2) 14:23;37:14 solution (1) 53:20 solved (1) 46:15 somebody (1) 110:3 somehow (1) 102:8 someone (4) 43:2;88:14;102:16; 103:3 Sometime (1) 107:23 Sometimes (3) 40:12,23;52:2 somewhere (3) 18:10;93:25; 121:21 soon (1) 107:22 sorry (10) 6:7;13:21;27:9; 29:24;32:4;68:19; 81:21;82:10;107:3; 125:8 sort (22) 11:23;12:2;20:12; 23:14;24:18;27:9; 28:1,23;30:9,13,21; 31:6,18;35:14;44:7, 21;45:18,20;47:2; 54:15;55:17;56:20 sorts (2) 20:13;29:19 sounded (1) 69:6 sounds (1) 96:25 span (1) 70:24 speak (12) 4:15;7:23;8:3; 11:18;21:7;22:21; 50:3;58:13;63:25; 86:25;93:15;105:21 SPEAKERS (2) 14:8;83:12 speaking (6) 4:14;13:18;14:3; 61:12;83:7;95:23 speaks (2)</p>	<p>29:7;30:15 special (27) 9:19,21;15:13,22; 16:17;17:9,11,13,16, 18,20;18:5,20,22; 36:9;42:3;58:9;59:3; 85:16;91:8;96:1; 97:20;102:3;116:9; 120:15,18;121:7 specific (8) 9:24;15:15,19; 41:1,3;99:9;100:16; 104:11 specifically (8) 23:17;30:14;32:17; 41:9;44:14;56:14; 58:13;102:5 specifies (1) 15:17 spectrum (2) 8:23;51:14 speculate (1) 121:23 speculation (2) 121:12,24 speculative (1) 103:25 speech (1) 72:7 spiral (1) 47:3 spoke (1) 9:12 spoken (2) 8:25;11:16 sponsoring (2) 78:1,4 spot (2) 100:10;125:14 spring (4) 54:14,19;107:23, 24 springtime (3) 62:14,24;67:7 staff (10) 4:11;18:3,6;65:17; 99:24;100:7;104:4; 105:17,18;117:14 stage (1) 127:19 stages (1) 55:16 stand (6) 14:4;61:12;83:7; 96:7,12;128:11 standard (5) 23:16;24:8,9,22; 25:12 standards (12) 40:15;41:14;46:19; 113:9;114:1;118:3,9, 10,11,19,22,25 start (15)</p>	<p>14:17;20:1;23:3; 25:18;27:1;35:19,20; 53:13;99:1;108:1; 112:24;113:9; 118:22,24;123:8 started (17) 21:11;30:5;34:8; 53:15;54:16,25;55:1, 12;56:6;62:11;66:3; 67:3;69:5;83:20; 84:11;113:5;127:2 starting (4) 53:5;87:11;117:17; 118:21 starts (2) 52:15;113:15 state (52) 4:14;7:7;8:11;10:5, 20;11:1,5,10,15,21; 15:21;17:21;18:1; 19:20;22:23;26:17; 28:10,13;29:8;33:18, 20,21;34:10;37:21, 24,25;40:15;41:8,8; 43:25;44:18;48:5,12, 13,14,14;58:7,23; 59:21;60:7,25;64:20; 66:18;78:5;79:7; 85:20;88:5;89:8; 93:15;109:2,3; 125:14 statement (1) 98:19 states (4) 18:13;35:25;36:8; 47:11 state's (1) 10:23 statewide (3) 47:16,18,19 statistically (1) 49:14 statistics (1) 58:8 status (9) 38:16;98:17,22; 99:22;103:10; 105:20;106:6; 120:19;126:23 statute (1) 101:23 stay (6) 10:19;45:8;46:24; 47:1;54:6;108:19 stayed (1) 111:6 staying (1) 56:16 STEM (2) 34:25;36:9 step (5) 40:13;52:5;60:6; 103:3;113:14</p>
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<p>stepping (1) 102:22</p> <p>still (29) 8:18;17:2;19:17; 24:24;36:25;41:19; 42:12;62:12,13;67:5; 6,7;79:24;80:6,11,16; 82:1,11;87:8;88:25; 100:12;103:7;105:3; 109:13;111:3; 113:13;114:11; 119:5;127:15</p> <p>stipend (1) 16:25</p> <p>stood (1) 21:16</p> <p>stop (1) 22:5</p> <p>stopping (1) 71:3</p> <p>store (2) 90:11;92:9</p> <p>strategically (1) 117:18</p> <p>strategies (4) 24:2;86:17,22; 116:15</p> <p>street (5) 10:11;90:1;92:16; 94:11,13</p> <p>strings (1) 33:5</p> <p>strong (6) 46:18,19;95:20; 112:22;115:18;116:8</p> <p>stronger (1) 113:22</p> <p>structure (1) 37:10</p> <p>structured (1) 38:21</p> <p>struggle (1) 47:11</p> <p>struggles (1) 21:21</p> <p>struggling (3) 16:8;23:9;76:16</p> <p>student (31) 11:5;12:1;15:20, 22;16:7,8,9,11,14; 25:3;31:14;35:5; 51:2,3;53:19;55:13; 67:13;70:4;71:20; 95:13;100:7;102:4,9, 12;104:4;105:4,18; 117:16;118:24; 121:5,9</p> <p>students (206) 10:3;11:10;12:6; 15:9;16:6;17:19,20; 18:6,17;19:16,19,24; 20:11,25;21:2,15,17; 22:5,8,15,25;23:3,14,</p>	<p>22;24:4,12,14,21,23; 25:4,12;27:4,8;28:9, 10,11;29:20;30:2,10, 12,15,19,23,24;31:4, 10,19,20,23;32:12, 14,24;34:6,10,12,20; 35:1,23;40:11,16,25; 42:3,14,19;43:4,4,8, 17,19,23,24;44:3,13, 17;45:1,3,15,24;46:6, 6,24;47:8,25;48:6,7, 10,15,17,22;51:6,6, 11,14,19,20,25;52:9, 12;53:8,13,15;54:11, 11;58:7,8,14,19,21, 23;59:3,12;61:3; 62:4,12,13,16,17,18, 22;63:13,16;64:16, 25;65:13,20;66:1,4,6, 9,10,15,25;67:8,10, 10;68:24;69:11,15; 70:25;71:10,10; 72:17;73:6,17,25; 74:3,8,13;76:10,16, 17,21,22,22;77:3,10, 11;78:7;85:22;86:15; 87:3,14,16,22;89:9, 14,15;94:18,19;97:8, 8;108:19;109:14,21; 111:8,10,12;112:24; 114:17;115:7,8,11, 12,15,16,18,24; 116:4,6;117:1,8,9,10, 14,20,22;119:21; 120:6,11,15;122:19; 123:3,18,19;126:18; 127:11</p> <p>student's (1) 15:14</p> <p>studied (1) 50:14</p> <p>studies (2) 24:20;117:19</p> <p>study (2) 117:13;126:22</p> <p>studying (1) 10:25</p> <p>stuff (3) 33:12;34:1;42:24</p> <p>sub (1) 17:6</p> <p>subject (2) 44:5;79:9</p> <p>subjects (1) 117:6</p> <p>submit (3) 97:15,17,22</p> <p>submitted (6) 15:7;47:24;96:5; 97:13,21;99:24</p> <p>subsidiary (1) 38:23</p> <p>subsidiaries (1)</p>	<p>12:5</p> <p>subsidy (2) 25:24;27:6</p> <p>substantial (2) 36:22;38:10</p> <p>substantive (2) 80:12;81:8</p> <p>success (16) 24:13,14,17;32:22; 64:20;68:4,10,13; 76:20;77:4;79:7; 115:21;116:20; 126:2,8,12</p> <p>successful (11) 55:6;64:24;65:1,4; 67:25;77:9;95:16; 111:18;115:19; 126:16,18</p> <p>successfully (1) 45:11</p> <p>such-and-such (1) 104:21</p> <p>suffered (1) 22:15</p> <p>suggest (1) 121:12</p> <p>suit (1) 18:17</p> <p>summer (2) 54:14,20</p> <p>Superintendent (2) 8:25;9:13</p> <p>supplant (1) 109:4</p> <p>supplied (3) 47:17,19;85:12</p> <p>supplies (1) 92:24</p> <p>supply (2) 63:11,12</p> <p>supplying (1) 41:18</p> <p>support (27) 16:8,9;18:12; 23:23;24:5,21;31:19; 43:19;44:13;54:23; 55:5,12;56:2;58:13, 17,19,20,22;73:9; 76:16;79:13;95:4; 116:17;126:1,11,15, 20</p> <p>supported (5) 24:15;41:20;89:24; 115:10;126:7</p> <p>supporting (1) 45:23</p> <p>supports (2) 58:12,12</p> <p>suppose (1) 23:22</p> <p>supposed (1) 97:18</p> <p>sure (45)</p>	<p>10:25;11:9,14,24; 12:6;14:19;18:2; 19:1;20:12;21:8; 22:12,25;23:1,19; 31:20;33:24;35:22; 38:20,25;39:14,24; 40:3,25;42:21;45:11; 46:11;50:12,18; 67:15;74:22;82:5; 84:17;88:12;93:4; 106:16;113:13; 115:25;116:16; 117:22;118:12; 119:4;120:20; 123:22;124:2;125:22</p> <p>surrounds (1) 90:5</p> <p>survey (1) 42:8</p> <p>sustained (1) 77:4</p> <p>swear (3) 14:4;61:13;83:8</p> <p>sworn (2) 5:23;6:12</p> <p>Sylvan (1) 85:24</p> <p>system (4) 28:7;58:6;96:24; 99:6</p> <p>systems (1) 28:15</p>	<p>Taylor (31) 61:9,17,18,20;64:2, 5,11,15,18;65:2;67:2; 68:7,15;69:12;70:13; 71:1;72:13,19,21; 73:11,14,16,20;74:2, 18,21;75:3,4,20; 77:13,14</p> <p>teach (4) 10:14;49:3;72:5; 91:24</p> <p>teacher (12) 18:16,18;21:5,5,9; 32:9;44:9;52:22; 63:12;72:5;114:1; 116:17</p> <p>teachers (54) 8:20;9:11,12,15, 22;10:1,19;17:3,3,9, 10,13,18;18:2,7,10, 12,15,21,25;19:1,17; 20:6,21,23,24;21:2; 24:15;33:20;45:23, 24;46:7;47:9;59:2; 63:18,19,20;65:12, 14,15,18,18,22;66:4; 71:16;72:3;73:3; 86:22;88:21;89:9; 113:7,10;116:3; 117:4</p> <p>teachers' (2) 9:24;88:19</p> <p>teaching (8) 9:16;17:19,20; 23:7;63:20;65:20; 66:4;116:15</p> <p>teak (1) 23:15</p> <p>team (4) 16:8,9;26:19; 117:12</p> <p>tech (2) 34:18,21</p> <p>technical (7) 6:21;34:7,13;35:9; 39:16,19;74:1</p> <p>techniques (1) 86:21</p> <p>Technology (2) 10:24;32:6</p> <p>telling (2) 82:6;100:17</p> <p>tells (2) 67:12;99:7</p> <p>tend (2) 104:2;117:15</p> <p>tended (1) 117:23</p> <p>tends (1) 51:15</p> <p>tenure (1) 84:8</p> <p>term (1)</p>
T				
		<p>table (5) 13:11,16,23;89:19; 103:11</p> <p>tabled (3) 12:25;13:6,10</p> <p>take-away (1) 44:2</p> <p>talented (1) 48:16</p> <p>talk (16) 9:19;17:22;20:22; 22:2;32:16,16;34:5, 16;43:12;44:9;54:3; 55:23;69:13;93:7; 115:5,10</p> <p>talked (6) 24:6;27:25;32:6; 47:24;69:5;107:15</p> <p>talking (4) 46:6,7;69:6;116:9</p> <p>taped (1) 4:19</p> <p>task (1) 97:1</p> <p>taste (1) 72:6</p> <p>taught (1) 22:9</p>		

<p>25:23 terminology (1) 115:16 terms (13) 17:13;26:23;62:2; 63:15;65:19;66:1,5; 70:7,8,8;71:5;99:21; 107:10 terrified (3) 90:19;92:2,4 Terry (1) 61:9 test (8) 33:23;44:18;65:7; 66:9,10,18,18;124:6 testimonies (1) 71:23 testimony (3) 14:5;61:14;83:9 testing (2) 33:18,21 TEXARKANA (6) 60:18,25;61:25; 74:1;75:8,15 Texas (8) 21:6,9;22:21; 23:15;33:17;41:3,4; 53:14 therefore (6) 59:11;66:13;69:25; 70:2;82:2;108:8 thinking (6) 17:13;19:17;34:8; 46:9;70:10;117:2 third (5) 30:10,11,11; 119:12;121:2 Thirty-four (1) 85:18 thorough (1) 95:11 thoroughly (1) 103:22 though (3) 25:6;50:24;70:14 thought (3) 40:22;88:15;109:6 thoughtful (1) 34:21 threat (1) 94:24 three (21) 23:8,23;45:10; 50:12,17;52:2,7; 54:12,24;56:2,25; 60:20;62:10;63:6,7; 65:8,16;72:21; 100:18;119:25; 125:11 throughout (4) 34:10;37:19;77:5; 116:6 throwing (1)</p>	<p>83:24 tied (1) 127:6 Tier (11) 23:3,7,9;24:11,11, 11,13,19,21,24,25 tiered (1) 115:20 tiers (1) 116:19 timeline (1) 107:20 timely (1) 76:11 times (4) 37:18;38:6;40:14; 107:16 title (8) 4:14;23:24;25:3,7; 108:22,23;109:1,6 today (23) 4:12;5:2,18,21; 6:18,23;7:11,19;8:3; 13:3;50:16;66:24; 68:2;80:20;81:11; 83:19;84:3,11;93:15; 98:3;101:19;117:17; 127:25 toddlers (1) 92:2 to-face (1) 56:19 together (7) 20:25;28:22,23; 31:20;99:1;111:21; 112:7 told (2) 84:19;103:20 Toltec (1) 94:16 took (8) 10:7;30:6;33:5; 66:9,10;91:2;92:11, 11 tools (2) 39:5;40:16 top (1) 53:7 topics (1) 56:5 to-speak (1) 88:8 total (4) 17:7,12;66:25; 87:15 totally (2) 36:7;38:25 touch (1) 63:15 toured (1) 94:3 tours (1) 94:15</p>	<p>towards (1) 50:3 town (2) 110:8;112:13 track (6) 30:22;31:3,24; 45:8;62:18;73:17 traditional (14) 42:15;43:3,7; 51:13;52:8,20,20; 71:4,5,11,13;73:18; 74:11;121:17 train (1) 18:14 trained (1) 86:22 training (4) 20:6;113:2,11; 114:1 transcript (1) 4:20 transient (1) 66:21 transition (2) 55:3;115:12 Translation (1) 120:6 transportation (15) 108:12,14;109:14, 24;110:4;114:14,18; 115:3;119:7,16,19, 22;120:1,5;127:10 travel (3) 63:14;72:9,9 traveling (1) 51:11 travels (1) 63:17 treated (3) 82:21,22,24 trees-in-the-forest (1) 102:19 trend (1) 30:13 tried (3) 10:11;54:16; 105:22 trips (9) 11:22;20:13,25; 27:8;29:13;33:2,3; 36:9;56:18 troubles (1) 65:21 true (2) 102:11;110:11 trust (2) 96:5;113:25 truth (9) 14:6,6,7;61:15,15, 16;83:10,10,11 try (12) 11:3,4,14;34:2; 56:3;63:5,8,8,10;</p>	<p>70:3;72:17;81:3 trying (19) 10:25;11:9,23; 25:6;36:18,23;37:8, 11,12,12;50:10; 56:23;80:13;96:19; 97:24;98:15;106:4,9, 22 turn (2) 6:10;84:20 turnout (1) 33:8 two (30) 5:1,3;7:22;23:8; 38:12;44:14;45:8,14; 46:11;48:17;52:2,7; 53:18;54:12;55:12; 60:20,20;63:6,7; 67:8;69:7,14;70:5; 72:21;98:24;114:16; 123:10,10;125:17; 130:25 two- (1) 31:25 type (4) 20:14;51:2;95:16; 102:19 types (5) 8:24;43:9,11;51:6; 62:22 typical (2) 51:3;79:15 typically (3) 47:10;48:17;52:15 typo (1) 37:15 typos (2) 36:19;37:13</p>	<p>unique (7) 8:13,13,14,15; 27:12;29:21;51:7 uniquely (2) 8:20;10:2 uniqueness (2) 28:17;32:5 unitary (19) 95:13;96:24;98:17, 22;99:6,22;100:1,24, 25;102:11;103:9; 104:3,8;105:4,20; 106:6;120:19;121:8; 126:23 United (1) 47:10 unlike (1) 52:8 unresolved (6) 80:11,16,23;85:14; 87:8;127:1 unsettled (1) 103:12 up (38) 10:23;14:11;18:14; 19:12;22:11,21; 24:21,24;27:13,17; 29:11,22;30:17,22; 32:9;36:18;38:3; 40:1;43:12;51:12; 52:5,6,6,53:4;62:5; 67:4;68:3;70:17; 78:15;81:18;83:14; 87:15;88:5;104:9; 105:25;108:20; 109:12;111:7 update (2) 99:20;108:3 up-front (1) 26:9 upon (2) 26:1;96:7 upper (1) 120:10 use (10) 16:5;19:15;27:7; 40:12;44:9;87:23; 108:23;109:1,6; 114:2 used (2) 39:5;94:14 uses (1) 115:23 using (2) 65:12;91:11 usually (2) 81:6,8 utilizing (1) 86:15</p>
U				
<p>UCA (2) 113:5;114:2 ultimate (1) 116:19 UNANIMOUS (4) 5:12;13:24;75:17; 128:10 unclear (2) 79:23;80:16 uncomfortable (2) 36:1;108:6 under (6) 6:18;78:1;82:3; 88:8;102:4;107:5 under-served (2) 117:8,23 underway (1) 88:25 unfortunate (3) 50:22;54:18;93:18 Unfortunately (1) 50:7</p>				
V				
<p>vague (2)</p>				

96:19;97:24 variety (2) 42:25;44:5 various (2) 87:5;97:14 vegetables (1) 90:24 vehicle (2) 110:7;113:18 vehicles (2) 92:3;110:10 vendor (2) 38:7,9 Vice (1) 17:24 video- (1) 4:18 viewing (1) 4:17 virtual (3) 40:19;41:5;59:23 vision (7) 59:9;70:20;89:20, 22;91:18;92:14;93:3 visits (1) 90:17 vocabulary (2) 44:6,10 vocational (2) 74:12;76:23 vocational-technical (1) 74:3 voice (1) 27:21 voices (1) 29:10 void (1) 106:23 VOTE (12) 5:12;6:18,19;7:3,4, 5,10;13:20;60:5; 106:20,21;126:24 voted (20) 7:3,9;57:24;58:16; 59:7,14,18,25;75:25; 76:3,9,14,19;77:1,7; 125:16;126:15,22; 127:15,17 voters (1) 106:19 VOTES (2) 13:24;125:11 voting (4) 125:12,13,21,22 vouchers (1) 25:23	24;119:7 waivers (3) 17:6;57:4;59:4 walk (1) 93:9 walked (4) 102:20;104:7,10, 11 Walker (1) 120:22 Walton (1) 88:9 wants (5) 8:14;9:25,25;12:1; 35:4 WASHINGTON (19) 60:18,24;61:1,5,6, 8,11,22;62:7;65:5,16; 71:21,22,24;74:5; 75:7,15;76:19; 131:24 watch (1) 30:7 watching (2) 46:23;92:12 water (1) 40:14 way (26) 7:9;16:9;18:14; 20:20;27:10;37:16; 43:5,10;44:12,14; 47:14;49:14;67:20; 73:10;84:20;86:17; 87:15,20;93:5;98:5, 10;99:11;105:16; 109:9;118:25;121:12 ways (1) 121:18 webinar (1) 42:23 website (1) 4:21 week (3) 23:10;54:12; 125:15 weeks (2) 23:8;53:18 welcome (4) 4:5;25:14;26:18; 72:13 welding (1) 12:1 weren't (4) 28:5;45:5;54:21,22 wet (1) 41:2 what's (7) 16:4;37:10;40:23, 24;42:18;51:3;107:9 Whereas (1) 22:4 wherever (2) 18:18;109:9	white (3) 110:17;120:12; 121:21 whiteboard (1) 22:1 whole (4) 14:6;61:15;83:10; 93:10 whomever (1) 107:4 who's (5) 52:19;65:23;67:6; 97:4,10 wide (1) 70:23 wider (1) 29:16 wife (1) 14:25 Willis (3) 116:7,23,24 winter (1) 107:24 wish (2) 28:20;113:12 withdraw (3) 39:2;55:20;56:23 withdrawn (1) 127:23 within (10) 12:5;24:19;37:1; 39:5,9;41:2;42:2; 49:22;104:5;106:7 without (1) 126:12 wonderful (1) 20:20 wondering (3) 19:20;70:19; 123:24 word (1) 86:11 words (3) 51:2;75:3;102:23 work (26) 16:24;18:11;22:6, 24;23:16,17;31:8; 33:1,1,21,25;35:25; 44:24;66:13;67:15; 74:9,10;88:21;89:8; 98:15;103:14;109:9, 11;115:24,25;116:2 worked (5) 27:5,19;94:4,5; 111:21 working (11) 11:13,19,21;46:12; 50:10;51:17;69:24; 94:12;112:7;113:7; 114:11 world (2) 8:7;47:7 worried (1)	120:16 worse (3) 42:5,14;43:5 write (1) 125:9 writes (1) 71:20 writing (1) 24:21 written (3) 7:17;14:15;71:19 wrong (2) 22:4;29:24	10:00 (2) 70:2,2 100 (3) 66:10;111:8;117:9 100% (1) 110:3 106a (1) 99:2 10-minute (1) 60:14 10th (4) 30:5,20;63:3;66:12 11 (1) 17:12 11% (1) 111:10 11:25 (1) 128:13 11th (3) 30:6,20;63:3 12 (6) 17:9;18:19;61:3; 62:12;93:22;123:8 12th (3) 30:6,20;63:1 14 (5) 12:20;17:12;61:2; 78:6;93:16 15 (6) 56:4;62:11,12; 74:2;111:3;114:19 15% (2) 24:18;41:4 16 (4) 13:1;34:18;64:22; 66:9 160 (1) 61:4 17 (2) 4:3;74:2 18 (1) 63:7 181 (1) 100:4 183 (1) 111:10 19 (1) 63:7 1981 (1) 21:12 1st (2) 107:25;118:11
W			Y	
wait (1) 87:24 waiver (5) 15:24;39:2;87:20,			y'all (3) 100:2;125:13,18 year (38) 9:7,10,10;11:3; 12:24;26:8;30:18,23; 33:3,24;41:24;44:19; 45:2;52:8,17;53:5,7, 9;54:5,16;55:10,10, 11;62:10;67:3,4; 87:11,12,14;89:3,5; 94:24;110:16,18; 111:4;118:14,17; 122:23 yearly (1) 45:8 years (15) 8:7;21:15;30:9; 31:1;45:1,9,10; 48:17;53:1;62:10; 65:16;66:13;94:21; 100:19;105:3 years' (1) 21:12 yellow (1) 86:2 younger (1) 76:17	11:25 (1) 128:13 11th (3) 30:6,20;63:3 12 (6) 17:9;18:19;61:3; 62:12;93:22;123:8 12th (3) 30:6,20;63:1 14 (5) 12:20;17:12;61:2; 78:6;93:16 15 (6) 56:4;62:11,12; 74:2;111:3;114:19 15% (2) 24:18;41:4 16 (4) 13:1;34:18;64:22; 66:9 160 (1) 61:4 17 (2) 4:3;74:2 18 (1) 63:7 181 (1) 100:4 183 (1) 111:10 19 (1) 63:7 1981 (1) 21:12 1st (2) 107:25;118:11
			Z	
			zero (1) 65:7	
			1	
			1 (18) 8:1;23:3,24;24:11, 13,24;25:3,7;48:11, 13,19;108:22,23; 109:1,6;129:25; 131:25;132:25 1,300 (1) 78:8 10 (3) 17:10,10;74:8 10% (1) 29:4	2
				2 (6) 23:7;24:11,19,22; 119:8;130:25 20 (11) 5:25;6:2,13,14; 9:20;18:4;56:4; 61:18;95:23;96:13; 97:18

20% (2) 41:6,7	4,000 (2) 8:18;30:24		
200 (2) 9:18;90:5	4:15 (1) 88:21	7	
2001 (2) 78:6;119:17	40 (2) 10:14;111:7	7 (1) 64:23	
2009 (1) 21:10	40% (2) 52:16;53:14	70% (1) 29:1	
2013 (3) 4:10;61:2,23	40-something (1) 121:22	7-12 (1) 63:10	
2014 (2) 13:1;90:17	45 (1) 10:14	74% (1) 110:17	
2015 (3) 4:3;12:20;119:8	45% (2) 45:6;53:8	75 (1) 87:13	
2016 (2) 87:12;89:15	46% (1) 30:12	750 (1) 111:9	
2016-17 (1) 12:24	4th (1) 72:4	77% (1) 110:17	
2022 (1) 87:15	5	7th (14) 62:25;63:4,21,22; 64:13;70:11,20; 72:16;73:16;76:5; 77:8,10;122:20,21	
21 (1) 17:7	5 (4) 6:4,16;93:22;96:11	7th/8th (2) 72:25;73:6	
21% (1) 110:18	5:00 (2) 70:2;109:11	8	
26 (2) 64:23;67:5	5:30 (1) 93:24	8:00 (1) 70:1	
26% (1) 110:17	50 (2) 87:22;111:11	80% (1) 30:25	
27 (4) 8:8,9;66:10;67:5	501c3 (1) 38:16	85% (1) 24:14	
2nd (1) 118:16	525 (1) 87:13	850 (1) 111:9	
3	53 (1) 100:4	8th (15) 48:13;62:25;63:4, 21,22;64:13;70:11, 21;72:4,16;73:17; 76:5;77:8,11;122:21	
3 (5) 23:10;24:11,25; 64:22;77:20	53.9 (2) 41:21;47:19	9	
3:15 (1) 109:8	54% (2) 45:2,4	9 (1) 61:3	
3:30 (1) 109:8	56 (2) 62:6;67:3	9:42 (1) 60:16	
3:35 (2) 70:1,2	58.5% (1) 31:4	9:55 (1) 60:16	
30 (2) 22:5;96:2	5th (1) 122:20	91% (1) 31:11	
31 (1) 67:6	6	9-12 (2) 63:10,23	
31% (1) 29:3	6:00 (4) 93:24;108:21; 109:10,12	93% (1) 28:25	
32 (3) 17:12;34:18;35:2	60% (2) 29:3;31:9	95% (1) 71:10	
35 (1) 85:18	6-23- (1) 99:1	975 (2) 87:16;89:14	
35% (3) 30:18;44:17,19	6-23-106 (1) 96:21	9th (6) 30:5;40:1;62:9; 63:1,3;66:12	
37 (1) 62:6	67.1% (1) 47:19		
4	6th (2) 122:20,21		
4 (1) 127:22			