

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

April 15, 2015

*Linda Parker Court Reporting
501-847-9448*

Original File CAP 4-15-15.prn

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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

#4 CAPITOL MALL
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201

APRIL 15, 2015

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

Dr. Mike Hernandez	Chairperson/Deputy Commissioner
Dr. Eric Saunders	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Administrative Services
Dr. Cody Decker	Asst. Commissioner - Research & Technology
Ms. Annette Barnes	Asst. Commission - Public School Accountability
Ms. Deborah Coffman	Chief of Staff

ALSO APPEARING:

Ms. Cindy Hogue	Director of Educational Options
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ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

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

ADE STAFF ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Alexandra Boyd	Public School Program Coordinator
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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. HOGUE: Good morning; Cindy Hogue. I guess we want to start with any reports that you might have.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do y'all have any reports to give this morning?

(Brief moment of silence)

CONSENT AGENDA

MS. HOGUE: Okay. In the minutes we gave you, there was some corrections and so we gave you the corrected copy.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And the Panel's had a chance -- I'll give you a minute to look at the -- review the corrected minutes, and then I would entertain a motion.

MS. COFFMAN: Dr. Hernandez, I'm ready to make a motion.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Coffman.

MS. COFFMAN: I make a motion to approve the amended minutes.

MS. BARNES: Second.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We have a motion by Ms. Coffman and a second by Ms. Barnes. All in favor say "aye."

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

1 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed? Okay.

2 A-1: COVENANT KEEPERS COLLEGE PREPARATORY

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: The next item is -- what
4 I've got on the agenda is the Consideration of
5 Covenant Keepers College Preparatory.

6 MS. HOGUE: Yes. December 10, 2007, Covenant
7 Keepers was granted a charter. Actually, the charter
8 was for grades 6 through 12 and -- they started with
9 6 through 8 and then they kept adding on, which was
10 allowed in the charter, and they added on attendance.
11 Their cap was approved. So it started at 260, and
12 now 380, and they're back to serving grades 6 through
13 8 -- but in the meantime, they have added upper
14 grades. Today, they're here because in July of '14
15 the State Board of Education met, and based on a
16 three-year -- their test results for three years, for
17 2011 to 2013, they have a rate of 46.95% in math and
18 literacy. And then they also -- this past February
19 they also still have the application of academic
20 distress based on the scores from the last three-year
21 period. Kendra is here to sort of explain the parts
22 the meeting.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, if you could also
24 explain the hearing procedures.

25 MS. CLAY: Sure. 6-23-105 allows the

1 authorizers to place a public charter school on
2 probation, modify, revoke or deny renewal of the
3 charter, if the authorizer determines that the
4 persons operating the public charter school -- and it
5 lists four different criteria. The one that we're
6 dealing with today is the one I'll read to you, and
7 that's if they fail to meet academic or fiscal
8 performance criteria deemed appropriate and relevant
9 for the public charter school by the authorizer. Any
10 action that you take under this section should be
11 based on the best interest of the public charter
12 school students, the severity of the violation, and
13 any previous violation the public charter school may
14 have committed. So that's the overall statutory
15 scheme that got us to this point. Your charter
16 school rules have varying procedures for how this
17 hearing will go. It's similar to the previous
18 hearing that you had, but it is a little bit
19 different. First, all persons, with the exception of
20 attorneys, need to be sworn by -- sworn in before
21 they give testimony. The procedures call for ADE
22 staff to present for 20 minutes on basically the
23 reasons for you to take action. The ADE staff is not
24 going to do that today. We do not have any sort of
25 recommendation. You see the information in your

1 packet. There are staff members here to answer
2 questions, if needed, but that part of the hearing
3 procedure you can just skip over. So after the ADE
4 staff portion, the procedures call for the Charter to
5 have 20 minutes to present its case regarding any
6 action that you could or could not take. After that,
7 you will have time for a discussion and questions for
8 the charter school or ADE staff, and then you may
9 issue a final decision today or take the matter under
10 advisement until a future scheduled meeting. One
11 thing that I want to make sure you understand is that
12 there is nothing that requires you to take action
13 today. It's discretionary whether you take any
14 action and also discretionary on what action you take
15 as far as probation, modification or revocation of
16 the charter. Do y'all have any questions about the
17 procedures or why we're here today? Okay.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. It looks like we'll
19 go ahead and those that are not attorneys that will
20 be speaking today at the hearing, if you would please
21 stand and raise your right hand to be sworn in.

22 MS. HOGUE: And I want to introduce you to Dr.
23 Valerie Tatum, who is the original speaker, and then
24 she'll introduce the rest of them.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Do you

1 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
2 and nothing but the truth?

3 (ALL WITNESSES ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Okay. So I
5 understand we're -- we won't have any presentation
6 from Staff, so we'll move right into Ms. Tatum's. If
7 you want, you can go ahead and get started.

8 DR. TATUM: Good morning to everyone on the
9 Charter board. I apologize for my voice; the
10 allergies and everything this season just always
11 pretty much messes me up. But we're prepared to
12 present to you all of the awesome things that's going
13 on at Covenant Keepers and I have other professional
14 staff that can speak to certain information, such as
15 the data, the rollout of the curriculum, as well as
16 the school culture, and many other great things
17 that's going on. So we do have a PowerPoint that we
18 would like to present to you.

19 Just a little update about who we are: seven
20 years of operating at Southwest Little Rock, serving
21 a high needs population. Every year our free-and-
22 reduced lunch has really increased; we're this year
23 about 92%; 60% are African American; 40% Hispanic;
24 23% ELL; and we have 37% of highly mobile children
25 that are entering our building each and every year.

1 Where our students come from: about 5% of those
2 students already have -- 5% of the students come from
3 ALE; 7% are first-year in the United States; 25% are
4 priority schools; 30% come from focus schools; and 33
5 from other achieving, Needs Improvement and other
6 charter schools, or maybe even out of the state. If
7 you really hone in on some of the obstacles that we
8 have made opportunities for us, just to recap: first
9 year 7%; ALE is 5%; priority school is 25. But the
10 overall population of our kids, where they're coming
11 from, is 67% of what we deal with this particular
12 year. When students enroll with us, 72% of our
13 students arrive at 5th grade level or below in
14 reading. I want to say that again: 72% of our
15 students arrive at 5th grade or below in reading.
16 Now in math, 70% -- 76% of our students arrive at 5th
17 grade level or below in mathematics. This year we've
18 had a great experience with many of the children
19 coming from different areas that we've already
20 mentioned, but this year we've seen the greatest
21 influx our third quarter. We've had referrals coming
22 from local school leaders, head of schools, with many
23 of the three big districts. We've had behavior
24 interventionists reaching out, talking to us about
25 our program and really looking for the right fit --

1 again, coming from the three big districts. And then
2 we've had a huge parent referral this year. We've
3 had many parents just speaking to us about a lot of
4 the needs that many of the districts could not really
5 take care of, so we have a unique situation at
6 Covenant Keepers that has allowed us to really help
7 many of the kids. And, finally, we've enrolled 40
8 students during the third quarter this year alone.
9 Parent satisfaction, we are always proactive with our
10 community and stakeholders. We want to know how they
11 feel about us. So we did a survey which polls and
12 indicates that 82% of our parents are totally
13 satisfied with us. As we went into the community
14 year after year, we discovered that in Southwest
15 Little Rock, where we are strategically placed, where
16 we want to be, 86% name recognition, satisfied with
17 us, and 88% have given us positive feedback about
18 what we're doing and how we're performing out in
19 Southwest Little Rock. This year we tried to reach
20 out to a APSRC, which has been phenomenal consulting
21 leadership coaches that have really, really worked
22 with us. We approached them prior to the first -- in
23 2013; they were not able to work with us, but they
24 did sign a contract with us. And so it was very
25 unique for us to go through book studies and this is

1 one particular book that we really studied and it
2 became a part of how we began to really look at our
3 school. And so this book study is Good to Great by
4 Jim Collins, and that has really rolled out some of
5 the things that we'll talk about later. The growth
6 mindset: regardless of where they are, our children,
7 academically, when they come to us, if we have the
8 opportunity to serve students from year to year, or
9 more than one year, we see tremendous growth. And so
10 with that being said I would like for Ms. Jones to
11 come, our Data PLL Coordinator, and she'll give you
12 more.

13 MS. JONES: Good morning. Covenant Keepers
14 serves a highly mobile population of students.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ma'am, if you could just
16 state your name.

17 MS. JONES: Okay. Jenna Jones.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

19 MS. JONES: Covenant Keepers serves a highly
20 mobile population of students. For example, 37% of
21 our students that were at Covenant Keepers last year
22 came to us after October 1. We have the opportunity
23 to serve students, and we wanted to find out that
24 whenever we had the opportunity to serve students for
25 one or more years whether we saw academic growth.

1 Using the NWEA MAP assessment data, we wanted to
2 determine the average point growth of students who
3 have remained with CK for one full school year or
4 more. And we determined that the growth average of
5 long-term students meet or exceed typical growth
6 nationwide on the reading and math NWEA MAP
7 assessments. For example, with our 7th grade
8 cohorts, these are students that were with us in 6th
9 grade and are now with us in 7th grade. Their growth
10 average was 11.11 points, while typical growth
11 nationwide is only 6 points; 65.7% of students in
12 this cohort exceeded typical growth for reading.
13 With math, with the same group, their growth average
14 was 10.77 points, while typical growth is only 9
15 points; 48.6% of students in this cohort exceeded
16 typical growth for math. The next group is our 8th
17 grade cohort that has been with us from 7th grade
18 into 8th grade. They've been with us for one full
19 school year. In reading, their growth average was
20 13.29 points, while typical growth expected
21 nationwide of only 5 points; 88.2% of students in
22 this cohort exceeded typical growth for reading. And
23 the same group in math, their growth average was
24 10.35 points, while typical growth nationwide was 7
25 points; 64.7% of students in this cohort exceeded

1 typical growth for math. And the last group I want
2 to present is our 8th grade group that's been with us
3 from 6th grade all the way into 8th grade. Their
4 reading growth average was 14.89 points, while
5 typical growth expected is only 9 points; 75% of
6 students in this cohort exceeded typical growth for
7 reading. And in math, this cohort's growth average
8 was 19.35 points -- .38 points. The typical growth
9 is only 13 points expected. 75% of students in this
10 cohort exceeded typical growth for math. We also
11 wanted to determine the percentage of long-term
12 students, the definition of "long-term" being
13 students that remain at Covenant Keepers for a period
14 longer than one school year. We determined that the
15 majority of these long-term students were the
16 students that were scoring proficient on the NWEA MAP
17 assessment. With our 7th grade reading proficiency,
18 63% of 7th graders that scored proficient on the NWEA
19 MAP assessment in reading were those long-term
20 students, and a full 100% of 7th graders who scored
21 proficient on the math assessment in 7th grade were
22 long-term students. With our 8th graders, 75% of 8th
23 grade students who scored proficient in reading on
24 the MAP assessments were long-term students. And in
25 math, those 8th grade students that were long-term,

1 66% of students that scored proficient school-wide
2 were those long-term students. We also wanted to
3 determine the percentage of long-term students among
4 those who had their growth goal on the winter NWEA
5 MAP assessment. Students are given grown goals from
6 NWEA's research team and they're individualized based
7 on where the students are at this point. We
8 determined that the majority of students that were
9 meeting those growth goals were our long-term
10 students. 82.1% of 7th grade students who met or
11 exceeded those growth goals were our long-term
12 students for reading. And 67.9% of those 7th grade
13 students who exceeded their growth goal in math were
14 long-term. For 8th grade reading, 85.7% of those 8th
15 graders that met or exceeded their growth goals were
16 long-term students. And with 8th grade math, 68.8%
17 of those students who scored proficient were long-
18 term students. How have our students been able to
19 show this much growth? Our curriculum coordinator,
20 Laurette Whipps, will elaborate on that adoptive
21 curriculum and our classroom strategy.

22 MS. WHIPPS: Good morning. My name is Laurette
23 Whipps. I'm just going to share a little bit about
24 our curriculum that we've been using this year that's
25 really helped our students and helped our teachers.

1 With the push to Common Core, one of the biggest
2 issues that we recognized was that our teachers,
3 despite professional development, did not have any
4 proper experience with it, could not push the rigor
5 that needed to be pushed forward to our students.
6 Same with our students; if they weren't getting the
7 rigor, then how were we expecting them to progress.
8 So last year we faced those ugly truths and sat and
9 we thought and researched to find a curriculum that
10 would push Common Core out, and we decided on
11 Expeditionary Learning for English and Engaging New
12 York for math. With this curriculum, as Ms. Jones
13 has shared, we found a rigor being pushed forward in
14 the classroom with the teachers. And this rigor
15 caused comprehension to -- in students to -- it
16 caused students to gain comprehension, more
17 comprehension in those critical thinking skills,
18 which really helped them on our NWEA status, and you
19 see that in growth. Which they were doing in the
20 past, but it's just becoming more easy for them to do
21 now because they have the proper rigor needed in
22 order to move forward. To accommodate our curriculum
23 and for our teachers, we implemented a new lesson
24 planning scheme as well called the NAG; it is Jane
25 Pollack created. It's, of course, our curriculum

1 100%. It goes through five stages of planning tools
2 and it also uses a research-based horizontal, high
3 yield strategy. To accommodate the NAG with our
4 students, we used the interactive notebooks, and the
5 interactive notebooks laid out in the NAG to a T. In
6 the beginning, students are setting their goals.
7 This is where they're identifying what they're going
8 to learn for the day and then they're able to
9 interact with that goal. It's just for their own
10 understanding, so that it's not just information
11 that's being thrown at them. The next step is
12 accessing their prior knowledge. Here, they're
13 pulling in things that they've used in the past to
14 apply to whatever they're getting ready to learn for
15 the day and it also gets their brains firing for the
16 lesson. The next step in the NAG is reading the
17 information and this is where the teacher, based on
18 the goal that they are being given, lays out in the
19 students' interactive notebook tools for them to use
20 to help them access this new information.

21 Moving on to applying -- the students are able
22 to apply within the interactive notebook and this is
23 just some assessments for the teachers to look at to
24 say, "Yes, my student has this," or, "In my future
25 planning I need to do more in this particular area."

1 It applies standards for the students as well. The
2 last step is that students generalize. This is where
3 they explain what they have learned for the day from
4 their teacher -- and again, another way for the
5 teacher to assess them, to see if they understood
6 100% what she or he was teaching for the day.

7 Ms. Jones is going to come up and show what we
8 do when students aren't getting this information and
9 the interventions that we put in place for students
10 who are not getting it or who have surpassed this
11 information.

12 MS. JONES: At Covenant Keepers, our English
13 language -- English learner population is 23% of our
14 student body. Once a student is determined to be an
15 English language learner, our LPAC determines what
16 appropriate interventions are needed and we determine
17 their needs based on assessment data and based on
18 what teachers have told us about what they recognized
19 in their classrooms. Our English learners are given
20 the following interventions as needed: we have a
21 specialized Plus Time during the day where they
22 receive support from an ESL endorsed teacher who
23 assists them in English language development and
24 helps make connections from what they're learning in
25 Plus Time and what they're learning in their other

1 classes. Students are also provided with Rosetta
2 Stone accounts and they're able to access that at
3 school during specific times and also access that in
4 the home. We have an afterschool tutoring program,
5 both in literacy and math, for those English language
6 learners who need assistance in those skills, and
7 teachers are given consistent ongoing professional
8 development from that ESL endorsed teacher.

9 When we received our recommendations from the
10 academic distress team at ADE, it was a major wakeup
11 call for us. Seven of the nine recommendations dealt
12 with analyzing individual student data and providing
13 appropriate interventions to those kids who were
14 struggling. Because of our recommendations, Covenant
15 Keepers has implemented a school-wide weekly format
16 assessment strategy that cycles each week -- and you
17 can see the flowchart that we've created. It allows
18 us to pinpoint student needs and we have standards-
19 based interventions we put in place for student who
20 are falling behind or are not getting what they need
21 specifically on student standards. Monday is our
22 assessment day, and teachers participate in those
23 weekly common formative assessments on Monday;
24 Tuesdays are used to grade the assessments; and then
25 Wednesday, feedback is given to the students in the

1 classrooms to walk through "why was this incorrect"
2 and "what can we do to make sure that we can
3 understand the standards fully." We have a ELC after
4 school to analyze the data trends from the
5 assessments and teachers complete a standards
6 tracking tool that has data for each of their
7 classes. Thursdays, we hold another ELC, which is
8 specifically for intervention decision-making, where
9 we determine which kids should be red flagged and
10 placed into appropriate programs or given specific
11 interventions during Plus Time or in the regular
12 classroom. And teachers talk about adjusting their
13 instruction based on how students scored that week.
14 Fridays are set aside for teacher collaboration and
15 planning together. Our school aims to help students
16 practice metacognition. We really want them to think
17 about their thinking in practical settings. So
18 that's why we have two different kinds of data talks
19 during the school year. We have NWEA data talks
20 before and after each NWEA session. Students meet
21 with their math or their ELA teacher to complete a
22 goal-setting worksheet, where they look at their
23 scores from their previous test and talk about what
24 they're going to do to make sure that they meet their
25 growth goal on the next test. This can be something

1 as simple as spending 30 minutes each day or working
2 in our Reading Plus program that we provide for the
3 students. It could be reading or learning five new
4 vocabulary words a week, but the students set their
5 own rules. After the NWEA assessment, they go back
6 to that goal-setting worksheet with their teacher and
7 say, "I did meet my growth goal and here's why" or,
8 "I didn't meet my growth goal. What can I do to make
9 sure that I meet it next time?" We also have student
10 life proficiency data talks, which really focuses on
11 student portfolios. The student sits down with the
12 teacher or a member of the leadership team and they
13 walk through the work that they have produced from
14 their classes, and the students are able to say,
15 "This is what proficiency looks like," and "This is
16 how I know I'm going to be proficient," or that "I'm
17 working toward proficiency." And by signing a
18 conference form, the student and the teacher and a
19 leadership team, they all commit to making sure that
20 the student is moving toward proficiency.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Jones, you have about
22 two minutes left.

23 MS. JONES: Okay. Dr. Tatum is going to wrap it
24 up for today.

25 DR. TATUM: In closing, one thing that we really

1 had to go back and look at, at the beginning of last
2 year and moving into this year, we really had to have
3 a school culture mindset. We began to really focus
4 on the culture of the school and that has made a
5 tremendous difference. Because even with the severe
6 needs of some of the kids that we've had there in the
7 building, we had to really develop two different
8 pieces. And one was we already had the new demerit
9 system that we put in place, and then we had to bring
10 on another individual, which is our Dean of Student
11 Affairs, and that particular piece is to really work
12 with kids that were really challenged, maybe a mental
13 health individual. So, the culture really had to be
14 dealt with in order for the curriculum to really go
15 about as it should have, and that has been done.

16 In closing, we just want to show you from the
17 voices within and who counts every day, our parents
18 and our teachers.

19 (SHOWING VIDEO)

20 DR. TATUM: And I'll say this, from John
21 Maxwell, "A man must be big enough to admit his
22 mistakes, smart enough to proffer them, and strong
23 enough to correct them." We're prepared to answer
24 any questions you may have.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Dr. Tatum. All

1 right. We will now move into the question and
2 discussion time, and we'll start over here with Ms.
3 Coffman.

4 MS. COFFMAN: Good morning.

5 DR. TATUM: Good morning.

6 MS. COFFMAN: Dr. Tatum, thank you for your
7 passion for these kids. I have just a couple of
8 questions, and I think actually I'll address them to
9 you and then if you have other staff you want to
10 answer.

11 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

12 MS. COFFMAN: In your presentation, you gave a
13 lot of weight to the results of your NWEA
14 assessments. And so I'm very interested in, did your
15 NWEA assessments accurately predict the students that
16 would be proficient on the state assessment?

17 MS. WHIPPS: Thank you. The reason we used NWEA
18 is because, as there currently isn't a proficiency
19 model or assessment that we're using, like the ACTAAP
20 -- we're doing PARCC this year -- we wanted to use a
21 nationally normed test that has a lot of research
22 behind it, that has scores from students all over the
23 nation that shows where the proficiency is. And as
24 we are very focused on our growth model this year, as
25 you saw, many of our students come to us many grade

1 levels behind, and so our goal is to help them grow
2 two or three grade levels. However, they may not be
3 proficient for some of those students. So we're
4 really focused on a growth model for this year and
5 having many of our students meet their growth goals
6 set by NWEA. And our students are making that
7 progress to meet their growth goals for the spring
8 assessment.

9 MS. COFFMAN: I want to restate my question.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

11 MS. COFFMAN: Is it Ms. Whipps?

12 MS. WHIPPS: Ms. Whipps?

13 MS. COFFMAN: No, I'm sorry, what's your name?

14 MS. JONES: Ms. Jones.

15 MS. COFFMAN: Ms. Jones.

16 MS. JONES: Yes.

17 MS. COFFMAN: Let me restate my question. My
18 question was: does the NWEA accurately predict the
19 students that will be proficient on the state
20 assessment?

21 MS. JONES: Yes, ma'am, I believe it does,
22 because it is Common Core based.

23 MS. COFFMAN: Okay. So, you knew at winter,
24 when you gave the NWEA assessment, that half of your
25 kids were not proficient; you knew that then?

1 MS. JONES: Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Jones, so was the --
4 this isn't the first year y'all have used NWEA. You
5 used it last year for the 2014 assessment. Is that
6 correct?

7 MS. JONES: Yes, sir.

8 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Dr. Saunders.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Good morning.

10 MS. JONES: Good morning.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: First off, I wanted to look at
12 some of the information you presented, some of the
13 bar graphs, if you would. So just taking any one of
14 those as an example -- first of all, in the
15 comparisons to the national averages, did you run any
16 significant tests on those, do you know?

17 MS. JONES: Any significant test on the national
18 -- compared to the national average?

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes, ma'am.

20 MS. JONES: That would have been the proficiency
21 data.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Did you run any test for
23 statistical significance on the difference though, is
24 where I was going.

25 MS. JONES: I'm not sure.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

2 MS. JONES: I mean, I'm sorry.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: That's okay. No, that's okay. I
4 was just curious if you did and what the results were
5 on that. And I noticed that in the title of these
6 they're listed as cohorts. So, is that just looking
7 at what you later referenced as the long-term
8 students or is that for the entire 8th grade class?

9 MS. JONES: We looked at the entire 8th grade
10 class, but the specific group we were looking at --
11 because if we're trying to show growth, the students
12 have to take multiple assessments so that we can
13 track that. So whenever the bar graphs were showing
14 whether students had met their growth goals or how
15 many points they were growing within a period of
16 time, we could only show the students that have been
17 with us. Some of the students -- the schools that
18 the students were coming from, they don't use NWEA.
19 So we have the scores that we had of students that
20 have tested with our school.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: So it probably wouldn't be
22 reflective of the long-term students. Is that
23 correct?

24 MS. JONES: Yes, sir.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Did you have -- I noticed,

1 looking at these graphs in performance, that all
2 these are tied to the MAP test, the NWEA test. Did
3 you have any similar comparisons on benchmark ACTAAP
4 for years past?

5 MS. JONES: We have used NWEA in years past, and
6 because benchmark last year was based on Arkansas
7 standards and because Common Core has been based --
8 I'm sorry -- NWEA has been based in Common Core for
9 the last three years, they were measuring different
10 skills and were measuring different standards. And
11 so we didn't think it would be an accurate comparison
12 actually on how students were scoring on the NWEA,
13 based on how they were scoring on the ACTAAP.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah, I agree with you on that.
15 I mean, similar data that would be -- a similar graph
16 that would be reflective purely of ACTAAP scores in
17 comparison to other groups as state averages. Any
18 analysis on that in years past, how your students
19 individually to those cohorts perform in comparison
20 to state averages?

21 MS. JONES: I'm not sure what -- I'm sorry, I'm
22 not sure --

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think what Dr. Saunders
24 is asking is, some of the charts that you had there
25 reference that -- you used the example -- I think one

1 of them said that 66% of 8th graders that were long-
2 term students scored proficient according to the NWEA
3 MAP test. And so what he's asking is that did you do
4 any kind of analysis on ACTAAP scores to see how many
5 long-term students were proficient in comparison with
6 the state average?

7 DR. TATUM: No, we didn't necessarily do that.
8 We've done that in the past, but we don't have that
9 information to present. We did that in the -- on the
10 appeals, our renewal; we presented all of that
11 information where we did go back and looked at the
12 ACTAAP frameworks. But now we -- as Ms. Jones said,
13 we wanted to roll out the Common Core, which is
14 totally where the NWEA is, and so that's where we
15 begin to find out where we are as a school.

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So would you expect that --
17 if this is an accurate predictor, you expect that
18 your scores should be up based on the PAARC
19 assessment?

20 DR. TATUM: Yes, we suspect that. Of course, we
21 just took the PAARC, so we don't know what it's going
22 to roll out and look like. However, as Ms. Jones
23 mentioned, we wanted all of our children to
24 experience a level of entry, and so that's where we
25 begin to hone in on the growth model. Because when

1 we began to look at the Arkansas frameworks, we
2 couldn't really identify -- well, we could identify
3 where our kids were, but now as we rolled out NWEA we
4 were able to look at each title individually to find
5 out where they are according to the Common Core state
6 standards.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Decker.

8 DR. DECKER: Thank you for your presentation. I
9 certainly appreciate the enthusiasm and also the
10 analysis that's been done thus far with the data. I
11 do have kind of a continuing line of questions
12 regarding assessment data. This might be best for
13 Ms. Jones or Dr. Tatum, whomever is appropriate. So
14 my first question here: do you believe the 2012, 2013
15 and 2014 ESEA reports are an accurate representation
16 of the school's performance?

17 DR. TATUM: I do not.

18 DR. DECKER: Okay. Could you explain why?

19 DR. TATUM: When we looked at 2012, in starting
20 our middle school, there were so many internal things
21 that we had to really deal with. When we started
22 2012, ending that year, going into the 2013, at the
23 middle school, that was totally again a reset year of
24 where we started back in 2008. And so at the middle
25 school, we were able -- 2008, the first three years

1 as a middle school, we really began to look at our
2 growth and we saw it moving in the right direction.
3 Once we brought on the high school, at 10th grade, we
4 began to deal with a different type of energy, and
5 that energy caused some adverse things to happen in
6 our middle school. So, Dr. Decker, that's when we
7 began to really go back, ask the Board -- the State
8 Board of Education -- to remove our high school,
9 because we could really look at again our middle
10 school and really begin to track the growth in the
11 right direction. So, the three years -- looking at
12 last year, we look at that as a reset year. As I
13 said, we had to really deal with a lot of the
14 culture, kids coming in to us. Again, we had maybe
15 -- and I don't really have the data, so I don't want
16 to project something -- but many of our kids were
17 highly mobile and they were new to our school. And
18 that's what we're finding happened every single year;
19 it's dealing with high mobility, with the high
20 mobility of kids that's coming into our school. So,
21 at this point we cannot shy away from being an ALE or
22 a look of an ALE school. That's something that we've
23 had to come into embracing, where we are in Southwest
24 Little Rock. We've made a decision to be there;
25 that's where we want to be. We strategically placed

1 our self there. So when we look at the last three
2 years, I don't believe that's an accurate report.

3 DR. DECKER: And maybe a follow-up. So I'm
4 looking for ways to root for what you're doing --

5 DR. TATUM: Yes.

6 DR. DECKER: -- in this. I'm also a data guy.

7 DR. TATUM: Yes.

8 DR. DECKER: And what I'm struggling with is --
9 that's the kind of the line of thought I was
10 initially going with. But my understanding of the
11 ESEA reports is they remove highly mobile students
12 from the calculations that's there. So when we're
13 looking at ESEA, I believe we are looking at the
14 students that were at the school on or before October
15 1 of that school year, that was there.

16 DR. TATUM: Well, we looked at -- if you look at
17 our school, most of our school is a TAGG group, and
18 so that TAGG is a whole different animal. So, again,
19 if we look at that and go back and look at the ESEA
20 reports, there was one year that we were achieving.
21 And so the year that we went off of the achieving is,
22 that's when our high school began to really cause us
23 some problems and that was with high turnover of
24 teachers and so many other things that began to go
25 on. But, yes, it takes out the highly mobile, but

1 when you look at the ESEA report, if you go and you
2 look at all of those TAGG areas, Dr. Decker, that's
3 pretty much our whole school.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Let me get a clarification.
5 I just want to make sure terminology reason is
6 correct. The "highly mobile," I think I see it as
7 two definitions. So the highly mobile that Dr.
8 Decker is referring to is accurate, but the one that
9 you're -- when you say "highly mobile," are you
10 meaning that they were there one full school year and
11 maybe not the previous year before or the next year
12 after?

13 DR. TATUM: That is correct. Or --

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So those students would be
15 in your testing group or wouldn't be pulled out of
16 the ESEA? I think it's a terminology thing. When he
17 says "highly mobile," it means somebody that was in
18 and out of your school during the course of one year.
19 What you're talking about "highly mobile" as being,
20 they weren't -- might not have been there in 2012,
21 but they were in 2013, and then gone in 2014?

22 DR. TATUM: Or didn't complete the whole year
23 with us. We've had -- definitely our ELL population,
24 some of those don't even complete the year with us.

25 DR. DECKER: Just a couple more questions. So

1 do you have statistics on the number of students who
2 -- or the percent of students who enter and then
3 leave your school prior to exiting 8th grade?

4 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir. We do have those
5 statistics. We are data individuals, as well, so we
6 look at things like that and to just see how many
7 kids are in and out, how many of our kids are highly
8 mobile in one year, as Ms. Jones beautifully
9 presented, the long-term kids. So we have pulled all
10 of that different type of data too.

11 DR. DECKER: And if I may, can you give me an
12 approximation of that number? I'll take a
13 percentage.

14 DR. TATUM: Approximation of what number?

15 DR. DECKER: The students who exit the charter
16 prior to finishing 8th grade.

17 DR. TATUM: October 1 is -- many students are
18 there before October 1, then leave, and then come
19 back before testing, so they are highly mobile. Yes.
20 So when I -- I can't really say about how many or a
21 percentage. Do you want me to guess?

22 DR. DECKER: Well, that's okay. I was looking
23 for an answer, but I think I'll reserve my next round
24 of questions.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Barnes.

1 MS. BARNES: Good morning.

2 DR. TATUM: Good morning.

3 MS. BARNES: I thank you again, Dr. Tatum, for
4 the presentation, along with the staff of the school.
5 I, like my colleagues, am a little concerned with
6 respect to as we talk about over the long-term. And
7 given the challenges that -- I believe in the
8 PowerPoint you had so appropriately crossed out
9 obstacles and turned it into opportunities.

10 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. BARNES: So I understand that the vision of
12 the school is to provide avenues for students who may
13 or may not be successful elsewhere. It's also to
14 allow for a change.

15 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

16 MS. BARNES: I think in response to Ms.
17 Coffman's question with respect to was the, you know,
18 school aware at the beginning of the year, given that
19 they were using the NWEA assessments, how the
20 students would be performing and the approximate
21 percentage that would be proficient, and with the
22 NWEA being aligned to Common Core. So I'm taking
23 into consideration all of the responses as I also
24 reflect on the ESEA designation as not truly being an
25 accurate reflection of the school. I believe that's

1 what the question was, did you believe the ESEA
2 reports are an accurate reflection of the school's
3 performance. So I'm a little concerned because I
4 too, like Dr. Decker, I was trying to determine about
5 how many of these students began at the 6th grade and
6 followed through through the 8th grade. Because I
7 was looking at the three-year performance with the
8 math and literacy and it went from 50.4 in the 2012
9 year to 43.1 last year. So even given with highly
10 mobile, those who are in the school, out of school,
11 back in the school, those who have been removed --
12 because it's based on non-mobile students -- from
13 those that were continuously enrolled, at least
14 October 1 through the first day of testing. So I'm a
15 little torn in how to understand. I guess I'm saying
16 all of this to see if you can help me understand --

17 DR. TATUM: I can.

18 MS. BARNES: -- what's different based on where
19 you are and what we can see when we're looking at
20 indicators of performance. Can you help me with
21 that?

22 DR. TATUM: I can. When we started our middle
23 school, and we did look at the data, we had 67% -- or
24 67 children return to Covenant Keepers. We ended up
25 with as high as 196 kids. And then our average

1 quarter was 171. And so that was a lot of new
2 children that entered our building the first year.
3 Every year now, which this is our second year, we
4 have found that the number of students staying on
5 with us has increased, and that's been about a
6 hundred and maybe 37 -- anywhere from 127 to maybe
7 137 kids that's remaining with us. And so when I go
8 back and I look at the new year as a middle school,
9 again, we had just a marginal amount of kids that
10 remained with us. Of course, all of the 8th grade
11 went to high school, so we do have a large number of
12 kids that are entering our building every single
13 year.

14 MS. JONES: I've got some supporting data that
15 may help to address the student percentage, the
16 number of students that have stayed with us and have
17 found success by staying at Covenant Keepers. The
18 8th grade cohort that we presented, that has been
19 with us from the fall of 2012 to our winter of 2015.
20 We had eight students from 8th grade that have been
21 with us since 6th grade, all the way through 8th
22 grade. Eight students. Meanwhile, our 7th grade
23 kids that have stayed with us from 6th grade all the
24 way into 7th grade, we have 35 students that have
25 been with us from the fall of 2013 to the winter of

1 2015. So just from those numbers you can see that we
2 are building a capacity of students that are staying
3 on at Covenant Keepers. And that's what we want to
4 see, students that can stay with us from 6th grade
5 through 8th grade so that they can see that growth.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Coffman.

7 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you. I have just a couple
8 of things that I'd like to put out on the record, so
9 if you'll indulge me. One, I appreciate that the
10 population is moving in and out of your school. Talk
11 to us a little bit about your parent outreach to help
12 to stabilize that.

13 DR. TATUM: What our parent outreach looks like,
14 as we start in the middle school, we begin in
15 December or at the beginning of the year. We begin
16 to reach out and do parent surveys -- what would they
17 like to see, what does the curriculum look like, and
18 even our mental health organization. So we do the
19 same every year. We begin to ask parents to return
20 and why they should return, and so that's a very
21 intimate meeting; we sit down with parents. And we
22 also do a re-enrollment form, just as speculation to
23 see how many parents are still going to come back to
24 us and hold those particular seats. And last year --
25 and this year we already have started and done the

1 process, and that's a huge number that's going to
2 return to us. I will say with what I've looked at
3 and everything that's about 80% of our kids that will
4 be back in our building this year. One thing that we
5 did find that parents really shied away from us in
6 the beginning because of our high school. And so
7 many times, in the building we were in, parents
8 didn't want their middle school kid along with the
9 high school children, so that was a little challenge
10 for us as well. But we have a lot of children that's
11 going to return to us and parents have confirmed
12 that.

13 MS. COFFMAN: And the parents that have
14 confirmed that their children will not return, are
15 they -- is there any summary data or are they
16 anecdotally telling you why?

17 DR. TATUM: Yes. And that's -- Ms. Coffman, we
18 want to know that and so -- some are moving out of
19 town, out of state; we have some health issues where
20 some of our ELLs may have to go back home. And so --
21 and really, some are just looking for a different
22 type of extracurricular, that maybe their children
23 can play a little more maybe basketball, football --
24 extracurricular activities that we do not offer.

25 MS. COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you. That was

1 helpful. Another question that I have is -- I
2 appreciate that you addressed your core instruction
3 and looked at your curriculum; you're making sure
4 that it's being implemented in the classroom. And
5 then you've talked a little bit about your Tier 2 and
6 Tier 3 interventions, so I'm not -- you've already
7 described your programs.

8 DR. TATUM: Um-huh.

9 MS. COFFMAN: What I'm really more interested in
10 is how you're using your time. So if a child were to
11 have Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention, how is the time
12 allotted for them? What's adjusted for them? That's
13 my first part of the question. And then -- then,
14 because of the interventions, what is the trajectory
15 for those kids to be on grade level?

16 DR. TATUM: Okay.

17 MS. COFFMAN: So if it's not going to happen in
18 one year, is it going to happen -- considering that
19 if they stayed in your school building 6th, 7th and
20 8th grade, is the trajectory such that when they left
21 you, assuming they stayed --

22 DR. TATUM: Right.

23 MS. COFFMAN: -- would they be on grade level?

24 DR. TATUM: Yes. And Ms. Whipps, she can help
25 you with that question.

1 MS. WHIPPS: We wanted to allow time for
2 students who were progressing in our curriculum or
3 who were behind in our curriculum, so we set aside in
4 the middle of the day a tutoring time called Plus
5 Time. Because when we call something "tutoring," the
6 students don't take it serious. So we made it an
7 actual class time where students go in, according to
8 their NWEA data, where they fall in their
9 (inaudible), and according to what their cards tells
10 us. And teachers -- students get interventions from
11 different teachers in different areas for math
12 tutoring. If a student is exceeding, then they have
13 computer time during that time where they work on
14 those programs. So that's 60 minutes a day that they
15 have allotted in our schedule for that -- or
16 actually, about 55 minutes a day that we have
17 allotted in our schedule. We do it right after
18 lunch, so that's a time for them to do their
19 refresher and then return to class after that period.

20 MS. COFFMAN: May I follow-up?

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

22 MS. COFFMAN: So the second part of my question
23 is: then, if you have a great number of students that
24 are doing literacy and math below 5th grade level,
25 and you need to get them to 8th grade by your end of

1 the time with them, then is -- what is your -- how
2 are you looking at that so that their trajectory is
3 -- or how are you increasing their intervention if 60
4 minutes is not enough to get them there?

5 MS. WHIPPS: I'm sorry. Let me clarify
6 something for you. Math and literacy are both 90
7 minutes a day; every student gets 90 minutes. And
8 what we do -- because Expeditionary Learning is a
9 rigorous curriculum. What we do is take the first
10 half of class -- and our teachers do it different
11 ways; it depends on how it works for them -- but we
12 will remediate with our interactive notebooks. We
13 build our interactive notebooks on the particular
14 tool or skill that the student will be using in
15 Expeditionary Learning and Engaging New York, and it
16 makes it easier for us to teach the lesson, because
17 you do a big background builder for them. And that
18 90 minutes gives us so much time to do so many
19 different things with our students, interventions
20 within the classroom, so that we can have PLC
21 meetings and we talk to our teachers about Plus Time,
22 the things that now we can pass on to them, because
23 we won't have a whole class who's failing. We might
24 have three people -- three kids who are not doing too
25 well in a particular area, and we can say to those

1 Plus Time teachers, you know, "You have these kids;
2 this is what we want you to do with them when they go
3 into Plus Time." We've looked at the cards and we've
4 sat down with PLCs and we find that this extra time
5 is really helpful for us, not only during school, but
6 we also do tutoring after school with students who
7 are still not getting it during Plus Time. So we
8 have extended day, which is great for us, because we
9 can do so many extra things with our students.

10 DR. TATUM: Ms. Coffman, I think it's also
11 important to understand, as Ms. Jones was talking
12 about, every single week there's a process that
13 children are doing. Reading Plus is a computer-based
14 computer program, which DeQueen had great success
15 with that, especially with their ELLs; Kahn Academy
16 for the very enriched kids that we have; GT, we push
17 them. And also every week we are having data talks.
18 Now mind you, NWEA is not just one kind of snapshot
19 and this is the data. This is a monitored time. We
20 start in the summer. We monitor all of our kids,
21 where there are. You have a huge data wall that sits
22 around and we reward them. And so each card shows
23 different -- four increments, and so we're looking at
24 the growth and so we're able to track that. And so
25 Monday -- on Thursdays, they're given an assessment;

1 Fridays, teachers are talking about it. There's a
2 whole other process that's going on. We're having
3 data talks with our kids so they will know that they
4 are on-point and moving towards proficiency. So that
5 is how we are really working with children, 5th grade
6 and below, because it's not just a school, a teacher;
7 it's parents involved, it's our board involved. So
8 this whole process is really helping us to really
9 streamline and really look at individual students to
10 make sure that they're on target to meet their growth
11 goals.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Saunders.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I want to commend y'all on
14 the focus on the data and trying to react to the
15 students' needs and everything. I just think that's
16 definitely crucial and very important to where you
17 need to be. My first question was: when did you
18 start to receive correspondence or interaction, if
19 you would, with the State Department?

20 DR. TATUM: We started -- are you talking about
21 the recommendation or when we received the letter?

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

23 DR. TATUM: Okay. We got them in October. We
24 were proactive to call the State Department in
25 because it was serious for us to really know, along

1 with our service providers, the direction we were
2 going to take. And so with that, Covenant Keepers
3 has been very proactive in working through the
4 recommendations and building a plan that works for
5 our kids, that works for our parents, that works for
6 our community.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: And I understand, if I hear
8 correctly -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- but you
9 were saying that a lot of these recommendations and
10 responses, if you would, have been data focused,
11 focused on that stuff. And my concern with that is,
12 in looking at past performance, a person proficient
13 and advanced in math and literacy in 2012 was 45.1.

14 DR. TATUM: Um-huh.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: '13, 43.6; '14, 43.1. To me,
16 attention should have been given to those numbers
17 prior to October of 2014, and actions taken. So why
18 -- I guess my question is: why did it take the
19 interaction from the State Department before these
20 procedures were set forth?

21 DR. TATUM: No, sir. We were -- we were
22 mentioning it then, but we had already had some
23 things in place. We also said that about -- we only
24 had about 60-something kids that returned to us and
25 all the rest of the population was very new as we

1 returned to a middle school, so it was a re-starting
2 year. And so we've never really looked at data the
3 way that we have this year. We had to deal with the
4 culture of the school last year and re-starting.
5 That was really huge for us, Dr. Saunders. And so
6 this year, moving forward, and recognizing as a
7 middle school that we were then going in a wrong
8 direction, we began to clean that up immediately,
9 this year, moving forward. We had already started
10 before the Department came in. We had already gone
11 to APSRC and began to ask them about how do we move
12 forward, and we began to work with children in
13 looking at data. So it did not take the Department
14 to come in and tell us what to do; we were already
15 there. And so with the recommendations -- I
16 definitely want to commend the Department, Dr. Wilde
17 and his team. They asked such a profound question
18 that really helped us streamline what we -- we know
19 we are moving out of academic distress; we know that
20 for sure. Dr. Wilde, he asked us, and Roxy Browning,
21 "How do you know? How do you know your children are
22 moving toward sufficiency?" That has been the
23 question, as the instructional leader, I ask my
24 teachers, I ask my leadership team, and I ask my
25 students. And, Dr. Saunders, if you came to our

1 Covenant Keepers, they will be able to tell you how
2 they're moving from both growth into proficiency.
3 That's all I've been talking about as an
4 instructional leader and making sure that everyone on
5 this leadership team that has presented today,
6 everyone in reading that book, "Good to Great" -- not
7 only does it mean people ride on the bus; it means,
8 as Jim Collins says, having the right people in the
9 right seats on the bus. That is what has made the
10 change happen at Covenant Keepers this year. We're
11 moving from academic distress, I guarantee you.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. One other question. What
13 can you tell me -- what opportunities, educational
14 opportunities, are available at Covenant Keepers that
15 are not available at traditional schools?

16 DR. TATUM: One opportunity, as a school leader
17 with Little Rock, as a math coach, a lot of my time
18 is spent working with kids. One opportunity is being
19 able to decide whether a child gets the demerit
20 system, a demerit point, or does a child need to go
21 into a mental health piece that's part of -- because
22 we can't really teach children if they're having
23 mental health issues. That has been the beauty of
24 Covenant for many years. Last year, we had a part-
25 time individual there, but this year we needed a

1 full-time organization on board, Life Strategy. So
2 when some of our children begin to act out -- we
3 definitely can't say why because that's a breach of
4 confidentiality -- but they're able to go to the
5 mental health therapist right then. We have a lot of
6 parents that come and they're there supporting us.
7 So those are the different types of things that
8 happen at Covenant. Also, the classrooms; classrooms
9 are very engaging. The new curriculum has really
10 brought on a new rigor for our children and for our
11 teachers to think a whole new way. And the level of
12 PD that we take our teachers through every given week
13 -- those have made the change and those are the
14 different things that are going on at Covenant, which
15 is just a small margin of what's going on inside the
16 district that I've experienced as the school leader.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: I think my next question is for
18 Ms. Jones. You had mentioned the afterschool
19 intervention program for ELL students.

20 MS. JONES: Yes, sir.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Is that only for ELL students or
22 can other students attend?

23 MS. JONES: Other students can attend as well by
24 request. Whenever we have parent nights we always
25 open that up as an opportunity and make sure that

1 they know about the afterschool program that we have.
2 We have a math teacher that's on campus that works
3 with the students and we have a person that's on
4 campus that actually was a former student at Covenant
5 Keepers that came to the United States, couldn't
6 speak English, and she was able to go through our ELL
7 program, and through studying. And so she really
8 knows where a lot of our students are coming from and
9 she offers some support with their homework and with
10 literacy help. And they can also use Rosetta
11 instructor in that.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: So I see you have growth of 20%
13 ELL students --

14 MS. JONES: Yes, sir.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: -- something in that range. What
16 specific interactions just for them and to address
17 their needs take place?

18 MS. JONES: As I mentioned, the Plus Time, where
19 we're doing a lot of support with the literacy,
20 especially where I'll work with the English teachers
21 and we'll talk during our PLCs about student needs
22 and things that they're seeing in the classroom. For
23 example, I had a conversation with our English
24 teachers that sometimes are -- Spanish speakers have
25 issues with some types of figurative language,

1 because, you know, sometimes those idioms and things
2 are a little difficult to grasp if English is your
3 second language. And so using visuals and using
4 conversation to help them practice and just what
5 they're learning specifically in their English
6 classroom. We also make sure that the teachers know
7 best practices for supporting the English learners
8 within their classrooms.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

10 MS. JONES: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Tatum, we talk a lot
12 about re-set years and a lot of in-flux and out-flux
13 of students, and so my question is a little bit about
14 your staff. What's the typical turnover rate for
15 your teachers?

16 DR. TATUM: I'm glad you said it. As a middle
17 school, we've had minimal turnover. A couple of
18 positions this year was no fault of ours; it was
19 maybe a family issue and then someone else just
20 decided they wanted to get out of education all
21 together. But it has been awesome. The quality, we
22 have seventy -- I think about 73, 76% of our teachers
23 are licensed and the other ones are from
24 nontraditional licensures or degrees. We've been
25 very fortunate to work with Cara Smith; she's with

1 the TFA, Teach For America, and so there's a filter
2 of teachers that come through us. Also, Dr. Ritter
3 and Ben Brown with the Arkansas Teacher Corp, we've
4 had success in getting teachers from there. So it's
5 awesome to have such great teachers that are so
6 passionate as I am to work with the kids.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Specifically your math and
8 literacy teachers, is that -- is there turnover there
9 or is that pretty stable?

10 DR. TATUM: It's pretty stable. We have Doctor
11 -- we have a doctor of mathematics that's teaching,
12 very strong, courageous, and has a special education
13 endorsement. Our literacy teacher, Ms. Whipps, "The
14 Bomb," sitting right here, she's been with us for so
15 many years, and she rolls out and studies curriculum
16 all through the summer and each and every day, and
17 she has a lot of contacts with the interactive
18 notebooks. And I also have to give thanks to Ms.
19 Susan Owens that has really helped us to rollout this
20 curriculum with integrity. So we're doing great
21 things there at Covenant.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And this goes back to
23 something with culture that was mentioned earlier. A
24 lot of the programs that were put out there, like
25 Engaging or the NWEA, some of the literacy programs,

1 what is the buy-in for teachers as far as -- is it
2 something that's -- I feel like in dealing with these
3 kids you obviously have to have a passion. You know,
4 I've worked in inner-city New Orleans schools,
5 working in districts that had high poverty and
6 different numbers of students, and you almost have to
7 have a -- I use the term "war room." You do go to
8 war every day and you have to have a heart for that.
9 And so the only way that I've seen clearly to do that
10 is if it's a grassroots effort, coming from the
11 bottom up, and saying, you know, "This is what we buy
12 into to do -- to make it work successfully in dealing
13 with these types of students." So my question is:
14 your leadership team has done a great job of coming
15 in and explaining some of this. But is it -- would
16 you characterize it as a top-down approach or do your
17 teachers truly buy-in and do some of these things
18 that you're asking them to do?

19 DR. TATUM: Through our hiring process, we're so
20 transparent; we allow different individuals to come
21 in and to -- they don't just sit in a seat and state
22 "you're hired." It may take two weeks or a week to
23 be hired. They come in, they do a lesson plan, they
24 sit with our teachers, have the intimate talk about
25 what goes on every day and the hard work that takes

1 place. And so every teacher we have onboard this
2 year, it's not forced; it's just rolled out. There
3 are frustrations, of course. They certainly share
4 those. But every year we're getting teachers that
5 are committed to working with hard cases, children
6 that are difficult to deal with. So it's not by
7 force that the teachers are doing this; it's strictly
8 because they are committed. They have heart and they
9 have passion for our kids and they're rolling out the
10 curriculum it takes.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

12 DR. TATUM: Oh, and the expert told me to tell
13 you it was the teachers who pushed for the Engaging
14 New York and the interactive notebooks. So that
15 wasn't pushed.

16 DR. DECKER: I have a follow-up question
17 regarding the NWEA assessment data -- or, Ms. Jones,
18 you may be more appropriate. So we saw a comparison
19 of students that was defined as long-term in the
20 Charter and their growth compared to students
21 nationally who took the NWEA. And in comparison to
22 the national results, was there consideration for
23 students short-term versus long-term and those
24 results?

25 MS. JONES: The thing that's difficult to show

1 in short-term versus long-term -- because for
2 measuring growth, the short -- you know, we don't
3 have anything to measure if they're only taking one
4 test or two tests at the school. To show growth, you
5 have to see fall term to spring term, for an entire
6 year.

7 DR. DECKER: And, Ms. Jones, what I'm getting at
8 is, is I'm looking at the integrity of that
9 comparison. And when we look at a cohort of students
10 at the Charter, and we look at only those, and
11 compare their growth versus national students who
12 took the NWEA, I believe in the growth that we're
13 looking at from the NWEA that's representative of all
14 students. Would you agree?

15 MS. JONES: Those students are only -- it's only
16 measured from students that have taken fall exams to
17 the spring exams. If the student was at a school and
18 took a winter test, their growth isn't going to be
19 thrown into it. And let me just say that growth
20 doesn't mean on grade level; it's just the NWEA's
21 research team shows this is the expected growth from
22 the fall assessment to a spring assessment.

23 DR. DECKER: Ms. Jones, here again -- let me ask
24 it in a different way. In the national data from
25 NWEA that was displayed, there are students

1 represented in that data that may not have been at
2 their particular school for a year or more. Would
3 you agree?

4 MS. JONES: Yes, sir.

5 DR. DECKER: So that's I guess one of my
6 concerns when we're doing that comparison using NWEA
7 data; we're looking at the full body of students that
8 take the NWEA versus a subset of the students at the
9 charter. Just a point of clarification. And then a
10 second question, and then I'll quit after this for
11 now, is there any data you can share with regard to
12 attendance, discipline, course grades, some of the
13 other indicators outside of just assessment data that
14 can be shared?

15 DR. TATUM: Well, our attendance, in the last
16 report we received, was like 96%, and so our children
17 believe in showing up. You asked about the
18 attendance -- and what was the other one?

19 DR. DECKER: Discipline.

20 DR. TATUM: Discipline. Our IMOs, every time we
21 meet during these different quarters, it shows that
22 we are meeting our IMOs as far as discipline. So,
23 again, we haven't in the past, but that's with us
24 being proactive looking for something to keep kids in
25 school. And so that demerit system allows kids to

1 get so many points, and so we give them the points,
2 we're able to talk to them about the points, and it's
3 just not suspicion and you go home. So we wanted to
4 add a layer of success in there for our kids to stay
5 in. And, again, it goes back on the heels, Dr.
6 Decker, of having that mental health piece. I'm
7 building something here for you; it's just not every
8 day kids or whatever. It's just where a lot of these
9 challenges come from where we could suspend quite a
10 few of the kids, they stay at home, but now we're
11 meeting our IMOs with the discipline. But we also
12 add a layer of student affairs to deal with some of
13 the character education, how to really build a
14 culture in the school and the way to act, really.

15 DR. DECKER: Okay. One more. You spoke, Dr.
16 Tatum, earlier, about Dr. Wilde and his team posing
17 that kind of very significant question, "How do you
18 know that the number of students proficient and
19 advanced is going to increase and the school is not
20 going to be in academic distress?" So I guess I
21 can't help myself but ask, what data do you use?
22 What is that definitive piece or pieces that you look
23 at to know that next year is perhaps a brighter story
24 and so-forth than prior years?

25 DR. TATUM: Well, one thing, I had to start and

1 deal with putting everybody in the right seat, making
2 sure that the leadership team really, really
3 understood their responsibility to the children.
4 From that point, rolling out a phenomenal data-driven
5 school improvement plan that we began to do every
6 day. This is how I know. Every day, I can randomly
7 pull a child and the forms that we use to say "How do
8 you know you're moving toward proficiency?" The
9 child will tell you, "Well, I'm at a 201 on this
10 written scale. I'm at a 201, but this is what my
11 teacher told me that I needed to do to gain three to
12 five more points." And so when I get it from the
13 voices of the kids and they understand their growth
14 goal number and they know the gain of maybe one or
15 two points getting them on grade level. And so
16 they're thinking to themselves, "Oh, just two
17 points?" They just don't really under -- well, they
18 do understand just two points; that's easy. But
19 that's a lot of information. One thing, Dr. Decker,
20 is when you walk into our building -- I was a school
21 leader, so I can say this -- you don't see kids
22 everywhere. When you walk into our building, you
23 hear the echo of teachers teaching, talking, sitting
24 with children individually, asking them that
25 question, "How do you know that you're moving toward

1 proficiency?" All of those are huge wins for
2 Covenant Keepers. We haven't had this experience on
3 this level before. So everything we're doing now,
4 that's what the State Department wants to know. I
5 commend them for what they're doing for us; it's been
6 awesome. That's what the State Board of Education
7 wants to know -- but not only that, that's what our
8 community and that's what our parents want to know,
9 "What are you doing to move those kids?" Our parents
10 can even tell you how we are moving kids toward
11 proficiency. So with what we're doing, the plan
12 we've rolled out with experts, as experts, we've got
13 it; we know what we're doing. Many times, the school
14 leaders would get so busy doing discipline, going to
15 meetings, tired. I don't do that. I'm in my
16 building just about every day. I'm talking with
17 teachers. I'm a huge communicator. I love to talk
18 to my teachers. Not only do I talk to them, I sit
19 with them one-to-one because I want to know what's
20 going on in the classroom. The instructional leader
21 makes the difference, and I make a difference at
22 Covenant Keepers.

23 DR. DECKER: Thank you for your answer.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Barnes.

25 MS. BARNES: I'm trying to make sure I ask the

1 question in a way that you are able to answer,
2 because I kind of need an answer.

3 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. BARNES: Have you had occasion to take a
5 look at how students are performing once they leave
6 your school? In particular, I think you -- you know
7 -- those 6th to 8th graders who may have been able to
8 stay with you and then exit to another school, have
9 you had occasion to see how they are performing or
10 have you done any type of data analysis on that?

11 DR. TATUM: I can remember the OEP report that
12 was done and it did show that the children, when they
13 leave us, they don't do as well. And so we wanted
14 that report done and it did show once the children
15 leave they don't do as well. I think it's also
16 noteworthy to mention that we have a high return of
17 kids that want to come back and get a seat, because
18 parents find that once they leave some of the things
19 that we've talked about are not controlled so they
20 can learn. So we get a lot of returning students to
21 us so they can continue to do well in our district.

22 MS. BARNES: Okay. And then I was looking over
23 some of the data that we collect with respect to
24 discipline, and you've spoken to that. I did note
25 that for the '13-14 year there were a few

1 disciplinary accounts. So can you -- I mean, I
2 understand where the school is located. I taught
3 many moons ago in the Little Rock Public Schools in
4 Southwest Little Rock, so I'm very familiar with the
5 demographics. I'm just curious as to what may or may
6 not have attributed to this new discipline, because I
7 didn't see any discipline type related of this nature
8 in '12-13 or 11-12, but I did see some reports in
9 '13-14. Can you kind of tell me a little bit about
10 that? Because I commend you; based on what I was
11 looking at in your attendance records, students are
12 coming to school and you -- according to your data
13 and ours, you have highly qualified individuals
14 working with the students now and you're doing very
15 well with that. Even in your percent tested, you
16 have a very close correlation with the number of
17 students who are expected to test and those who did
18 test. So I'm trying to get a complete picture of
19 what the learning culture really is in the school now
20 that we have, it seems to me, the pieces to make this
21 car go forward. And I commend you on your conviction
22 that we are going to do better and we are going to
23 see the progress and we are going to see the
24 improvement in the methods and measurements that
25 you've got in line. So I'm just a little curious as

1 to what is going on with this latest school year, and
2 have you seen like the few blips that I'm talking
3 about in this sheet?

4 DR. TATUM: Going back to last year, we did not
5 have a demerit system. We were still using a regular
6 student rights and responsibility handbook. And we
7 found at the re-set year -- and I call it the re-
8 start year -- I have to go there because it was a re-
9 start year -- we recognized the state of emergency
10 that we were going in then, so we began to put in the
11 demerit system. And again that demerit system has
12 really been a huge win for our kids and our parents,
13 and so we're more proactive through the individual
14 that works the data student affairs piece. And that
15 piece is where he's taken some of the children that
16 are hard to teach, he has turned them into student
17 leaders. And those leaders that come from ALC and
18 other academies, they have built a program to where
19 he has changed their mindset. So they have become
20 the teacher's biggest advocate, making sure that the
21 program is rolled out with integrity -- the
22 curriculum. They go back to the student affairs
23 individual and they have to take contract sheets to
24 their teacher so many times during the week and that
25 teacher must give them a grade, if you will. And

1 that has really been successful, helping us with the
2 discipline piece. We didn't have that last year, so
3 it was quite a bit. But this year, adding the layer
4 of student leadership council, student source,
5 student affairs, that has really done a lot of damage
6 control, if you will. And so we just don't want to
7 discipline children; we want them to stay in school
8 -- but we also are responsible for building their
9 character education as well.

10 MS BARNES: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: If it's okay with the
12 Panel, do we have anybody from our school improvement
13 office that's been working with Covenant Keepers
14 here? We don't. Okay. There's a question I would
15 like to see -- if Dr. Wilde or somebody is available,
16 I'd like to hear from them. I know that somebody
17 referenced that APSRC has been working with the
18 school district, so I might like to -- I know I have
19 Ms. Cox and Ms. Smith signed up from APSRC here to
20 speak today. Would it be possible to have them --

21 DR. TATUM: I wanted, yes, for APSRC to actually
22 come up and say something. Also, I'll come back with
23 some closing remarks about Act 1272 that was passed
24 that we're going to really look at, our situation or
25 just schools in general that has an ALE and some of

1 the issues that we're having, that we're having to
2 deal with. So, Officer Barbara, come on up -- APSRC.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Cox, were you sworn in?

4 MS. COX: No.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: You were not? Okay. I
6 will swear you in. Do you swear or affirm to tell
7 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

8 MS. COX: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

10 MS. COX: Barbara Hunter Cox, Director of
11 Teaching and Learning at the Arkansas Public School
12 Resource Center.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And, Ms. Cox, kind of
14 describe the records that y'all have been working
15 with the school I guess recently and just -- if you
16 could just give kind of an overview of your thoughts
17 in regards to what the progress has been.

18 MS. COX: APSRC has served as the external
19 provider for Covenant Keepers for this academic year.
20 Covenant Keepers, as Dr. Tatum stated, approached us
21 two years ago about taking on that role, but at that
22 time we did not feel that we had the coaching staff
23 to provide the intensive delivery that they needed.
24 As we taught this year with them, and in reviewing
25 their progress as a charter school, we committed the

1 necessary resources to make sure that the external
2 provider services were consistent. We've assigned
3 two coaches to that campus. They are there weekly.
4 They've been working on leadership and management
5 issues, as well as all of the curricular changes that
6 have occurred this year. NWEA was one of the areas
7 that we assisted them in setting up a strategic plan
8 on how data would be implemented down to the student
9 level. Covenant Keepers has made dramatic change
10 this year in every single area. I can't emphasize
11 enough the time that we spent on campus. It's a
12 different school. When you enter the campus, school
13 is occurring, as Dr. Tatum said. They have had put
14 in place a behavior management system. They've put
15 in place a structure data analysis that truly drives
16 their instruction. Our coaching staff takes the
17 direction from the Covenant leadership team of what
18 professional development they want and what areas
19 their teachers need to be provided direct PD. We
20 personalize the professional development plan for
21 that particular campus. The two coaches are here
22 today and they can answer any questions you might
23 have. We do coaching reports weekly that are turned
24 in to ADE and the school improvement office. And
25 overall, the focus is now on instruction, and I think

1 Covenant has given you several examples.

2 I would like to address, since no question was
3 directly sent to me, about NWEA. NWEA, of course, is
4 a nationally formed test, and so when you pull out a
5 subgroup you are comparing them to national students.
6 And so although the growth may be small, we do
7 believe that the growth that Covenant Keepers is
8 showing this year, we believe that it will take at
9 least two years before -- those students entering two
10 and three years below the grade level, we believe it
11 will take two years of systemic interventions, that
12 they've mentioned to you, prior to them being at
13 grade level. So the question you asked was, "Can we
14 track growth on NWEA?" Yes, we can, individualized
15 student growth. Is that proficiency? No, it isn't.
16 You're comparing the child's growth, how they scored
17 to what NWEA has as a predictor of what the growth
18 should be. And Covenant Keepers currently, they're
19 showing a year-and-a-half's growth and we haven't
20 even finished spring assessment. We believe that in
21 a two-year time period we may not remediate every
22 child, but the numbers that you saw, if they remain
23 at Covenant Keepers long-term, we believe that
24 remediation can occur in that three-year time period.
25 This is very similar to what we see with other

1 charter schools across that area of Little Rock, that
2 services Southwest Little Rock, that it takes at
3 least two years of intensive intervention to help
4 with remediating the deficits that they enter with.
5 I will be glad to address any questions or -- that
6 you might have for me.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Does anybody have any
8 questions for Ms. Cox? Okay.

9 MS. COX: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We want to take about a
11 five-minute break and then come back and we'll get
12 people from our staff made available. We'll take a
13 five-minute break.

14 (OFF THE RECORD)

15 (BACK ON THE RECORD)

16 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: We'll go ahead and start
17 back. Dr. Wilde, I see that you're there, and we've
18 got to swear in our own staff, don't we? All right.
19 Mr. Harvey, I don't know you're going to speak today,
20 but we may have some questions for you. But if you
21 would, raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm
22 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
23 the truth?

24 (ALL WITNESSES ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Dr. Wilde, the

1 question that I have is just mainly -- the Department
2 has been working with the Covenant Keepers staff. I
3 would just kind of like an overview or something of
4 that work and where you feel like that's progressing
5 or not progressing in some of the areas that they've
6 outlined.

7 DR. WILDE: Midyear, we had a change in
8 specialists that was assigned there, and in part that
9 was due to changes we were making inside of support
10 to the Little Rock school system. If you had read
11 the report, the IMO report from the second quarter,
12 the report was pretty negative in the sense of not
13 reporting any progress. We talked with Dr. Tatum at
14 that particular point to see if there was some
15 confusion going on. We had a meeting. We then
16 followed up with a team that did an onsite review.
17 It's still in draft form, and we're hoping in draft
18 form until the end of the third quarter. And what we
19 have said is, we saw a lot of progress being made,
20 even though it wasn't report in the IMO report. And
21 to their credit, they had started off the year with
22 their own plan. So last summer, they had developed
23 an improvement plan with their consultant and we then
24 did the academic review for academic distress and
25 provided them recommendations around the 1st of

1 October. Okay, they were already moving with their
2 plan and then along comes the recommendations. So I
3 think, rightly so, they stayed with their plan until
4 they had it fully implemented. I would say that
5 they, in the third quarter, have started inclusion of
6 the recommendations and are making a sincere effort
7 to implement those recommendations. Does that answer
8 what you were getting at?

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So, your overall feeling is
10 that they are willing to take guidance, and work and
11 try to -- there is a sense of trying to make a
12 general improvement of their operation?

13 DR. WILDE: And had you asked me that in
14 September, I probably would have said no. But at
15 this point, I would say that there has been a very
16 collegial effort between the unit and the school to
17 integrate the plans. So that's a -- we're much
18 improved in our perception related to Covenant
19 Keepers.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Are there other questions
21 of Dr. Wilde? Any other questions for Covenant
22 Keepers or their staff? Yes, Ms. Coffman.

23 MS. COFFMAN: For Dr. Tatum. Thank you. What
24 is your plan for the next school year? Will you
25 continue your work with the APSRC? What is your

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plan?

DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. First, I want to definitely thank the Department of Education for being willing to roll out the recommendations and to recognize that we were already on top of the game, and just the huge amount of support whenever we call. They're making scheduled dates and meeting with us on our campus, or we can come here. So the information and the support has just been phenomenal at the Department and also for the APSRC. In moving forward, we plan to stick with the plan that we've gotten, that we've worked with with APSRC. We still plan to work with the Department. I did talk to Scott Smith, the executive director, the other day, and it's perfectly okay for them to work with us. We're also applying for the C grant, just to ensure that we really give -- or get the monies or the funding in place to really help to meet the needy population. We already have started interviewing teachers for the next year. We do recognize that May 1 is the date for where we have to give the letters. We're planning to ask all of our teachers to come back, but just in the event of that we want to be prepared to put someone in place immediately. So, business as usual. We recognize the hard work that's

1 before us, but we're going to make it happen. So
2 every plan that you heard today will continue to be
3 done with fidelity.

4 MS. COFFMAN: I wanted to publicly recognize
5 what a fabulous job you do on your website. I spoke
6 to the teachers, but they do an amazing job on their
7 website of communicating with parents about the
8 expectations for the students in their class, and the
9 website is easy to read and really accessible to get
10 to the information. So I just wanted to publicly
11 recognize what a good job you're doing.

12 DR. TATUM: Thank you.

13 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

14 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions? Okay.
16 Do they have a closing or anything, Ms. Clay, or is
17 that --

18 MS. CLAY: That's not part of the procedures,
19 but you can certainly allow them to make closing
20 statements, if you'd like.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do you have anything you
22 wanted to say, Dr. Tatum?

23 DR. TATUM: Yes, I do. Just a little closing.
24 I can be long, because I told you I like to
25 communicate and talk to my teachers, so I just love

1 to talk. Looking at Act 1272 -- someone's laughing
2 back there -- I know. Okay. Just to bring into
3 record, Act 1272 that was just passed through the
4 General Assembly concerning the academic distress
5 schools, the State Board is looking at maybe open-
6 enrollment charter schools where admission and
7 enrollment are primarily focused on students who have
8 dropped out of school and identified as at-risk
9 schools. We are not potentially an ALE. We haven't
10 been though, but just to kind of put it on the
11 record, that's kind of the demographics of what we're
12 working with. So, I just wanted to put that out.
13 Again, to you all, we appreciate all the questions.
14 We know that you're making sure that we're doing
15 what's right for children in our school, and we
16 appreciate your time as well.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, if you could,
18 come up and remind us of what our potential actions
19 are here today.

20 MS. CLAY: Okay. You can make a final decision
21 here today; you can make no decision here today. If
22 you want to take the matter under advisement, you can
23 do that and revisit the issue at a later meeting.
24 Under 6-23-105 of the procedures that you've had
25 today, you have the option of putting the Charter on

1 probation, modifying the charter, or revoking the
2 charter. So there is a lot of discretion and
3 latitude of what your decision, if any, could be
4 today.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: This may be a question for
6 Ms. Hogue, before we start any discussion. When is
7 their -- I believe in the spring of 2013 they came
8 back for the renewal of their charter. When was
9 that?

10 MS. HOGUE: In three years.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So when will their next
12 charter renewal be up?

13 MS. HOGUE: This next school year.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So they'll be coming
15 back to us next year for their official charter
16 renewal?

17 MS. HOGUE: They will.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you. Now,
19 Members, you've heard the discussion today, and I
20 would entertain a motion.

21 DR. DECKER: I have a question. When you said
22 "next year," is that next school year, 2016-17 school
23 year, for renewal?

24 MS. HOGUE: The renewals take place in January,
25 so it will be in January '16, and that will be for

1 the next year.

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So they -- I'm just making
3 sure, to clarify for Dr. Decker, they'll be open --
4 they have one year, which is the '15-16 school year,
5 but they'll come back to renew for '16-17 --

6 MS. HOGUE: That's right.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: -- and subsequent years?

8 MS. HOGUE: That's right.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

10 DR. DECKER: I have just a, I guess, commentary,
11 and that is I certainly admire strongly the ambition
12 that is there, the amount of diligence that's been
13 given towards a plan, and the -- of course, just the
14 time that's being spent on it. I guess what I'm
15 struggling with though is when I look at empirical
16 evidence, it's rather difficult. I certainly
17 appreciate the comment from the school improvement
18 office. I don't have a motion, but I suppose that's
19 my comment, and what I'm kind of struggling with is
20 the data pieces of this are not what we'd like to
21 see.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other comments or -- we
23 do need to -- I guess there could be a motion to --
24 we do need some kind of motion.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: I want to ask a question also,

1 and it may be to you two. If a charter school was
2 put on probation pending future test scores, then say
3 it was a one-year period, at the end of that year we
4 would only have test scores back from one year from
5 now; we'd only have test scores back from '14-15 at
6 that point -- is that correct -- which would have
7 been the initial year for PARCC?

8 MS. BARNES: Yes, and it depends on -- yes. And
9 it depends on when that would be. We should have
10 some results back from PARCC by January for the
11 renewal time. But again, since we have to do
12 standards setting and all of that in the summer, it
13 may not be the best indicator to identify how we are
14 going to address whatever motion we make. So it
15 would need to be a little more detailed with respect
16 to what we're looking for. We have to already look
17 at how we're going to do designations. As you know,
18 we have written into our proposal requests to delay
19 making any kind of designations on our '14-15
20 assessment data with respect to federal. And for
21 state, we'll have to look at state distributions. So
22 I don't know that that would be the best way to word
23 a motion.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Let me -- Ms. Clay or Ms.
25 Hogue, and probably Annette, we'll need your help on

1 this. So, basically, the understanding that the open
2 enrollment charter renewal process will happen in
3 January, and given the fact that we've got the PARCC
4 assessment and the testing results being delayed to
5 where those won't be available till November, my
6 first question is: will we have -- when we go to make
7 the renewal decision, will we have the '14-15 data
8 available at that time? And that's probably an
9 inadequate question.

10 MS. BARNES: It's hard for me to say that we are
11 supposed to have it. But, you know, again, we can't
12 guarantee it.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And then, Kendra -- or, Ms.
14 Clay, sorry, this might be a question for you. As
15 far as a probation period, I guess I have trouble
16 seeing the difference; if we're putting somebody on
17 probation, then that would probably be for a year's
18 time, and then it would kind of coincide with the
19 renewal process. So, I don't know that there's any
20 -- is there anything procedurally different about
21 being on probation versus not, when the renewal
22 process is coming up?

23 MS. CLAY: A couple of things. It makes an
24 official notation in their file that the charter was
25 on probation for X period of time. So, you know,

1 however many years from now somebody could look back
2 and see that. It also would prohibit them from
3 getting a license to open a new school. So, there's
4 a little bit more teeth to a probation than just
5 letting the charter run its course and possibly not
6 renewing, but the end-result, it could be the same.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Of course, this is just --
8 probably just semantics, but they are already labeled
9 as being in academic distress.

10 MS. CLAY: That's correct.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So really probation
12 and not doing anything in my mind has the same
13 affect. So really we're looking at that versus an
14 outright just revoking of the charter. And what does
15 that mean procedurally?

16 MS. CLAY: A revocation of the charter, if you
17 choose to go that route you would need to determine
18 when the effective date of that revocation would be.
19 I mean, it could be anything from immediately to the
20 end of this school year to the end of the charter
21 term. So it would mean that they no longer have a
22 charter, so that they would no longer be operating a
23 school. One thing that I'll mention with probation,
24 something that has happened in the past -- and you
25 can do this anyway, outside of probation -- is when a

1 charter school has been placed on probation there
2 have been additional reporting requirements so that
3 the authorizer has some -- you know, say the
4 probation is for a year; they might have quarterly
5 reports on the progress and additional action can be
6 taken at any time during that probationary year or
7 time period too.

8 MS. COFFMAN: Can I ask another question for Dr.
9 Wilde?

10 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Sure, Ms. Coffman.

11 MS. COFFMAN: Dr. Wilde, when could we expect to
12 see the third quarter and fourth quarter final
13 reports from your office?

14 MR. WILDE: The third quarter reports will be
15 available in May, the first of May. The fourth
16 quarter will available about the end of the first
17 week of June. Okay, I know it's not my place, and so
18 if I'm out of bounds I apologize. But in terms of a
19 recommendation coming from the school improvement
20 unit, we have looked at Covenant Keepers in
21 relationship to the community in which they are
22 placed or that they serve and compared their scores
23 to schools around them. And we have reviewed the
24 parent surveys in terms of the feeling tone by the
25 community towards the school, and I would have to say

1 that they are comparable to the schools in which
2 those kids would be attending, but they're smaller in
3 size. And the community that they serve is very
4 positive about the safety of their children and where
5 they're at. So I would say that they are serving a
6 niche. I would encourage you to move to probation
7 and let there be more reporting and closer
8 monitoring, but I would say that they're making gains
9 and I would say that they're serving a niche. And
10 again, I know that's not my place, so --

11 MS. BARNES: I have a question.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. BARNES: Prior to Dr. Wilde's statement, my
14 question was going to be: so if we require more
15 reporting, does that mean automatic -- it would have
16 to be probation, or could we require more reporting
17 to the Department without probation?

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: My understanding is we can
19 ask for more reporting without probation. Any other
20 questions, discussion?

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Since there's not a -- doesn't
22 appear to be a rush on the motion, if you're okay --
23 if I can just ask some more questions that I have for
24 Dr. Tatum? Are you okay with that?

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Sure.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: As I heard the presentation and
2 looked at the data, I have a few ideas, I guess I
3 would say, or my understanding, and I want to give
4 you the opportunity to explain some of this. And my
5 first thought: you know, I continue to hear that
6 you're serving a different population than other
7 schools. And so as I look at the demographics, and
8 I'm comparing specifically with the Little Rock
9 School District, I understand that the ELL population
10 is roughly doubled from 10% in the Little Rock School
11 District to 20% in yours. The low-income numbers
12 that I was looking at here from 2013, 71% in Little
13 Rock, 81% in Covenant Keepers. In special education,
14 11% in Little Rock and 3% at Covenant Keepers. And
15 so I do see some differences within those, and
16 perhaps some of those differences balance out in
17 relation to student achievement. I'm not sure. I
18 guess I'm just not entirely convinced, and I want to
19 give you this opportunity because you're serving a
20 truly different population that would score
21 substantially different than the surrounding area.

22 DR. TATUM: A population that will score
23 differently, how? Not in a good way or -- I guess I
24 need clarity --

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Sure.

1 DR. TATUM: -- on what your question is.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: And the reason that I say that,
3 if I were looking at the scores comparably between
4 Covenant Keepers -- and I'm just looking at the
5 Little Rock District as a whole; I'm not looking at
6 individual schools there. But it does appear to me
7 that in most of the categories that Covenant Keepers
8 is scoring below the Little Rock School District as a
9 whole. And so if these populations are the same,
10 then why is there this difference? If the
11 populations are different -- that's what I'm asking
12 you for.

13 DR. TATUM: Okay.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Is there some reasonable
15 explanation, if the explanation in the performance
16 difference is because of student population? That's
17 what I'm asking you.

18 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir. And there's going to be a
19 great difference in growth because we've been
20 proactive in getting the mental health individual
21 organization on campus every day. That has made a
22 difference. The other significant piece is, the
23 first year, kids, ELL, entering our school and doing
24 very, very well because of the academic curriculum
25 and things that we do for them. And so those will be

1 really huge differences for our population to do
2 very, very well in moving forward.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I think what Dr. Saunders
4 is asking you to highlight why are your kids
5 different from the kids that are in the Little Rock
6 School District. What are those differences?

7 DR. TATUM: Well, when I begin to think about
8 the differences, and as a school leader, some of the
9 same behaviors and different things kids -- they
10 would do some of the same things. The difference is
11 not the teachers; it's the students. The difference
12 is what the teachers bring to the table to give to
13 our kids every day. We've had -- we have a
14 structured environment. We have a mental health
15 piece. We have a curriculum that is simply awesome
16 for our kids. They give more of our students the
17 hands-on they need to be able to really learn in the
18 classroom setting. Also, we're not just hiring
19 teachers. It's a strategic process to work at
20 Covenant Keepers because we want the best in front of
21 the best children. We recognize the hard work. We
22 understand all of that plays a part when you're
23 working with kids that are different. Compared to
24 schools in the area, that's not entirely the whole
25 district. As I already mentioned, the mental health

1 piece and our ESL is school-wide. We go to Dr.
2 Guerrero's -- many of our teachers go to Dr.
3 Guerrero's conference every year because we know that
4 we have a growing need of ELL's. And so our teachers
5 return very equipped to work with the children that
6 are in their classroom every single day. So, yes,
7 our children are different -- but what makes the
8 difference in why we're doing so much better is
9 because of the teachers and school leaders we have on
10 board this year. Okay. And if you would have those
11 school leaders working -- if you go back here and
12 really look at this particular piece here, we
13 currently have 22 schools classified in academic
14 distress. If you look here, we're just a margin away
15 from being here, at 50%. We're in this upper tier
16 right here. Now if you look at all the districts,
17 where they are, look where Covenant Keepers is; we're
18 at 46.64%. That's where Barbara went back, and she
19 said, "It's going to take us a series of time to get
20 these kids where they need to go." This is
21 impressive to me right here. So we're in the upper
22 tiers right here on the state assessments in literacy
23 and math over the past three years. Okay. I thought
24 that would just give a little more teeth to what
25 we're talking about. Okay. Did I answer you, Dr.

1 Saunders?

2 DR. SAUNDERS: I think so.

3 DR. DECKER: I think so.

4 DR. TATUM: Okay.

5 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other questions or
6 discussion?

7 DR. TATUM: I would like for Scott Smith -- an
8 individual that I really have learned to appreciate
9 his integrity, the charter resource program he runs,
10 and I believe in him. And way before the -- as we
11 were coming into renewal, I developed a great
12 relationship with Scott Smith. He's a tough guy.
13 And so I would like for him to speak on behalf of
14 Covenant or just what he has seen.

15 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Things were going well for
16 you till you made that comment. Is that okay with
17 panel members for Mr. Smith --

18 MR. SMITH: I'm not sure what I can add that
19 hasn't already been placed before you. But anyways,
20 just to Dr. Saunders' point, the last issue, first of
21 all, I don't think it's necessarily an apples-to-
22 apples comparison to compare a small school to a 20-
23 something thousand student district. And so I'm not
24 sure exactly which numbers are being compared there.
25 But without getting into the weeds of all that, I

1 think it's also important to note that the state is
2 in transition with regards to assessments, which you
3 obviously have picked up on and talked about. I
4 think it's also important to note that the state
5 itself is looking at how to handle schools like
6 possibly Covenant Keepers or other ALE type schools
7 or charter schools that have possibly high dropout,
8 at-risk populations out there. So I think all that
9 is obviously part of your consideration. I think the
10 important thing to note is that it is unacceptable,
11 obviously, to have anyone in academic distress, but
12 particularly I think for charter schools. And unless
13 they are showing strong evidence -- strong evidence
14 that they are moving out of it in a reasonable
15 timeframe, then that's something that you should
16 consider.

17 As it relates to what Kendra has provided, as
18 far as your standard, this school has already been
19 evidenced as having a valid reason to exist compared
20 to any other schools, based on the fact that the
21 State Board approved the charter and put it in place.
22 The issue before you today, as this relates to -- as
23 I understand it -- how they're responding to their
24 academic distress scenario and what evidence they put
25 before you to suggest that they're making that strong

1 evidence of moving out of academic distress and
2 performing well. And I think obviously that's what
3 is the central issue, especially in the transition
4 phase that the state is in, and does it make sense to
5 close a school if it might be a good example or a
6 good model of one that is making good progress in
7 this area, particularly concerning population, and is
8 showing evidence of some things that could be useful
9 or helpful not only to this school but possibly to
10 other schools in many ways. So I'd just offer that
11 for your consideration as well. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Dr. Decker.

13 DR. DECKER: A question for the school
14 improvement office. In the quarter three and quarter
15 four reports that are coming out, is there empirical
16 data related to student attendance, discipline and
17 course grades?

18 DR. WILDE: Course grades, probably not. In
19 terms of -- highlight in terms of attendance, yes.
20 What was the other area? Attendance?

21 DR. DECKER: Student discipline and then
22 attendance and then grades?

23 DR. WILDE: Yes. Those will be included.

24 DR. DECKER: In the quarter three and in quarter
25 four, and then that will continue? Next year,

1 quarter one, we'll also see data related to those
2 things?

3 DR. WILDE: Correct. And then there's also a
4 separate report -- and we specifically -- because
5 they were in priority status before moving to
6 academic distress, we are still following up on their
7 improvement plan. And there's a report for their
8 improvement plan and then there is a separate report
9 related to improvement or implementation of the
10 recommendations for academic distress. So they
11 actually have two reports that will be coming.

12 DR. DECKER: Okay. Thank you. I have a motion
13 at the proper time.

14 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any other discussion? Dr.
15 Decker, you have a motion?

16 DR. DECKER: I move to take the matter under
17 advisement until such time as the charter renewal
18 application.

19 MS. BARNES: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion to
21 take the matter under advisement until the next
22 renewal cycle. Ms. Clay, is that a proper --

23 MS. CLAY: It is a proper motion. Your
24 procedures call for taking the matter under
25 advisement until a future scheduled meeting. I have

1 a little bit of a problem with there's not an actual
2 future scheduled meeting. I would make the
3 suggestion that you're basically saying take no
4 action at this time, so that might be a cleaner
5 motion to make, because the renewal process will
6 happen regardless of what happens here today.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Do you want to modify your
8 motion?

9 DR. DECKER: I'll modify it.

10 MS. BARNES: Second.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we have a motion
12 by Dr. Decker to take no action at this time, a
13 second by Ms. Barnes. Is there any discussion?

14 MS. COFFMAN: I would just encourage the school
15 to insure that the reports that are going to come to
16 us in June are thorough and that any additional
17 documents you need to include to show the progress
18 that the students are making, certainly not
19 identifying the students in any way, but if we can
20 see how those kids are progressing, the rate of their
21 progressions, I think we would feel much more
22 comfortable in the decision-making process that will
23 occur in January.

24 DR. DECKER: I would also supplement Ms.
25 Coffman's comments with the reason for my motion was

1 in understanding that the reports that we're going to
2 be receiving soon are going to be comprehensive and
3 include these other indicators outside of assessment.
4 If I was basing the motion solely off the assessment
5 data, I think I would have a different motion at the
6 time. So my request is, is strongly look at the data
7 regarding those other metrics outside of and in
8 addition to assessment and be sure to include those
9 so we can share the whole picture of the student and
10 the progress that they're making.

11 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. We have a motion and
13 a second. Dr. Saunders, did you have something?

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I'd like to amend the
15 motion. My amendment would be to place them on
16 probationary status until the renewal process. And I
17 think at the renewal process, in looking at that,
18 emphasis does need to be placed specifically on the
19 results from the PARCC assessment in relation to
20 schools surrounding.

21 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, is that an
22 amending motion or substitute motion?

23 MS. CLAY: That seems more like a substituting
24 motion, which, if Dr. Decker is agreeable to, you can
25 proceed with a substituted motion. If not, you need

1 to vote on the motion that has currently been
2 seconded and then proceed, if necessary, after that.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So we have a motion and a
4 second, and we have a substitute motion, unless you
5 want your motion to be voted on we can do that.

6 DR. DECKER: Discussion.

7 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

8 DR. DECKER: My concern with the substitute
9 motion is I'm not sure that the procedural changes
10 that would result if we place them on probation --
11 meaning I'm not sure what we're going to obtain or
12 the impact on students as opposed to taking it under
13 advisement. That's my question.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: I do think our action does need
15 to be taking some kind of action. I think taking it
16 under advisement is more of a "no" action.

17 MS. BARNES: And that was the motion, to take no
18 action until such time as renewal, with all of the
19 concerns placed on them providing very detailed
20 reports. So the reason I'm speaking is I would
21 prefer then that we go ahead and vote on the motion
22 and the one that has been seconded. Should that
23 fail, then we could entertain the other substitute
24 motion.

25 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Ms. Clay, do we just vote

1 first on -- or do we disregard the --

2 MS. CLAY: You can just vote on the motion that
3 is -- Dr. Decker's motion that has been seconded,
4 because that is already a proper motion that has been
5 seconded at this time.

6 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. So we have a motion
7 and a second. All in favor say "aye."

8 DR. DECKER: Aye.

9 MS. BARNES: Aye.

10 MS. COFFMAN: Aye.

11 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Any opposed?

12 DR. SAUNDERS: No.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: So do I need to vote since
14 it's for a majority, since we have four -- five
15 people total?

16 MS. CLAY: You may want to do a roll-call. You
17 need three votes to pass the motion.

18 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. There were three.

19 MS. CLAY: There were three? Okay.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

21 MS. CLAY: Then it passes.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: All right. Motion carries.
23 Okay. Thank you Dr. Tatum.

24 DR. TATUM: Thank you. And I would certainly
25 invite all of you-all to come, see the great things,

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great teachers, great curriculum that's rolled out at 5615 Geyer Springs Road.

CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Dr. Tatum. All right. The next thing we have on our agenda is a work session. Do we want to take a little bit of a break before we -- okay. We'll take a -- let's take a 10-minute break and then we'll come back and begin our work session while we're waiting on -- Dr. Jones may show up for this.

(The hearing was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, LINDA PARKER, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas State Department of Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on April 15, 2015; that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

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

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

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL THIS DATE: April 22, 2015

LINDA PARKER, CCR
Certified Court Reporter
Certificate No. 198

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