

In The Matter Of:

*BEFORE THE DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION*

June 29, 2020

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Original File BOE Special - 6-29-20.prn

Min-U-Script® with Word Index

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

JUNE 29, 2020
11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

(VIA LIVESTREAM/ZOOM DUE TO COVID-19)

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS:

MS. DIANE ZOOK, Chairman
MS. CHARISSE DEAN, Vice Chairman
MS. OUIDA NEWTON
MS. KATHY McFETRIDGE
DR. SARAH MOORE
MS. SUSAN CHAMBERS
MS. ADRIENNE WOODS

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

MR. JOHNNY KEY, Secretary of Education
MR. STACY McADOO, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

DESE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. COURTNEY SALAS-FORD Attorney

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E X H I B I T S

EXHIBIT ONE (1)
Public Comment Emails and Letters

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 A-1: CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS FOR ACT 1240 WAIVERS, AND
3 CHARTER WAIVERS, FOR LEAs TO IMPLEMENT THE ARKANSAS READY FOR
4 LEARNING MODEL

5 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: As you well know, we have heard
6 from several -- I think about two-and-a-half or three
7 percent of the Arkansas educators via email; then we
8 got some public -- those for public comment. I trust
9 all of you received those over the weekend, and the
10 ones that came in after 5:00 last night, and have had
11 a chance to look at those and read them. If anybody
12 did not, we'll have time during the process of the
13 meeting.

14 Mr. Sutton, who will be the new board member,
15 starting July 1st, is watching on livestream. So we
16 welcome him.

17 And without further ado, we will start with the
18 first action item. It will be presented by Dr.
19 Pfeffer; right? And Ms. Salas-Ford and Ms. Coffman
20 are both here if you need further information or
21 explanation of these items.

22 Dr. Pfeffer.

23 DR. PFEFFER: Good morning, Madam Chair, Members
24 of the Board. Ivy Pfeffer, Division of Elementary
25 and Secondary Education.

1 And I'm just going to kind of go back over the
2 Arkansas Ready for Learning model and provide you
3 with a little bit of information of how we got to
4 where we are today and the decision that we're asking
5 you to make.

6 So over the past month we've implemented
7 Arkansas Ready for Learning, and there are different
8 components to Arkansas Ready for Learning.

9 And I was going to see -- will we see the
10 presentation, Dan?

11 MR. DAN DAVIS: [inaudible on livestream]

12 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So if we go to slide 2 --

13 MR. DAN DAVIS: [inaudible on livestream]

14 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

15 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Be sure it's turned on.

16 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: There we go.

18 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

19 So as we have been rolling out Arkansas Ready
20 for Learning, there have been some different
21 components to it. The very first piece that we
22 worked on was the Back-to-School PLAYBOOK, and
23 Secretary Key introduced that to you all during the
24 State Board meeting, and I hope that you've had the
25 opportunity to listen in on some of the sessions. I

1 think last week at our ADE Summit every single
2 session around the Back-to-School PLAYBOOK was
3 completely full; so educators have really gravitated
4 towards this resource. I've heard from a number of
5 teachers and administrators --

6 SECRETARY KEY: Dr. Pfeffer --

7 DR. PFEFFER: -- about their plans --

8 SECRETARY KEY: -- would you pause for a second?

9 DR. PFEFFER: Uh-huh.

10 SECRETARY KEY: Dan, members are saying they
11 can't see the slides.

12 MR. DAVIS: [inaudible on livestream]

13 SECRETARY KEY: Okay. Adrienne, I don't know if
14 you heard Dan, but he needs to be set up so he can
15 share a screen.

16 DR. PFEFFER: I think -- okay.

17 SECRETARY KEY: Oh, we've got it now. Good.
18 Thank you.

19 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So you see the Back-to-
20 School PLAYBOOK graphic there in the middle
21 addressing unfinished learning. And as most of you
22 remember, that was developed in collaboration with a
23 statewide guiding coalition of teachers who have been
24 involved in the PLC process; again, wonderful
25 resource. I think they're still adding to it, and

1 it's going to definitely be a game-changer when we're
2 able to return to school this Fall.

3 Other supports that we've released under
4 Arkansas Ready for Learning have been the Summer Re-
5 Entry Guidance. And so that's a link, and we'll make
6 sure that this presentation is available to everyone
7 after. But you can see the guidance that has been
8 provided to schools around some limited summer
9 activities, returning to on-site activities. And we
10 kept that very tailored to the types of things that
11 students and educators would need to be involved in
12 in the summertime, and really encouraging districts
13 to think carefully about the activities that they
14 host to try to keep the risk of the virus spread as
15 low as possible. We also released the Planning for
16 Re-Engagement document, and that's what you see on
17 the left. And that Planning for Re-Engagement
18 centers around a student-focused education with each
19 of the six systems being addressed with guiding
20 questions, with suggestions of what districts might
21 need to consider for a safe return to school.

22 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: And these are all available for
23 anyone in the public, all stakeholders, to access at
24 the website; is that correct?

25 DR. PFEFFER: Yes, ma'am, on our Arkansas Ready

1 for Learning website.

2 Okay. So, Dan, you'll probably have to advance
3 the slides now.

4 Okay. So, why Arkansas Ready for Learning?

5 When we started thinking about the return to
6 school, our very first focus was on students and
7 student learning. One of the challenges that we
8 faced, although educators did a phenomenal job in the
9 spring of keeping students engaged and keeping
10 connected to students, was thinking through all the
11 needs for students. But one of the issues that we
12 had was the continuation of new learning, because we
13 weren't prepared. No one foresaw this coming; no one
14 could have been fully prepared for the interruption
15 that we were going to experience. We've learned a
16 lot from the experiences we've had and we -- through
17 the work, through professional learning communities
18 and highly reliable schools, we know that our -- our
19 commitment has really become stronger in our belief
20 that all students can learn any time, anywhere, if
21 given the right supports. And so in thinking about
22 that -- that idea of we cannot continue to go forward
23 and we cannot continue to have as an excuse "well, we
24 can't continue teaching because we don't have the
25 right tools" or "we can't continue learning

1 opportunities because not all students can be here in
2 a physical place," we can't continue to make excuses.
3 We've got to take what we've learned, we've got to
4 make plans, and we have to do better.

5 And so the next slide talks about what is
6 Arkansas Ready for Learning. And what it is, it's
7 really a plan for the return to onsite instruction
8 for the 2020-2021 school year that allows flexibility
9 for learning options in case interruptions occur. We
10 know that we've got to be prepared for interruptions;
11 however, if those interruptions occur, they cannot
12 detract from the continuation of teaching and
13 learning.

14 Arkansas Ready for Learning is also support for
15 districts to prepare for the start of the new school
16 year -- and, most importantly, it's an opportunity
17 for teachers, parents, students, and the community to
18 engage in the planning with school districts.

19 As part of Arkansas Ready for Learning, we've
20 made it very clear that we expect every district to
21 establish a Ready for Learning committee. That
22 committee should have educators, it should have
23 support staff, it should have parents, it should have
24 members of the community, and I believe, most
25 importantly, it should have students. And just as

1 you've received all of these public comments with
2 people sharing their concerns, we want schools to
3 make sure that they're providing an avenue and an
4 opportunity for those concerns to be heard and for
5 people to help understand what it is that we have to
6 expect from every district. And those expectations
7 are on the next slide.

8 So if we're going to really live up to our
9 promise and our belief that all kids can learn, no
10 matter where they are, if they have the right
11 supports, that's only going to be happening -- that's
12 only going to happen if we have a system of blended
13 learning. And we need this system of blended
14 learning because blended learning is going to allow
15 the student to continue learning grade level or
16 content standards through an educational path that
17 leverages both technology-based and face-to-face
18 instructional approaches. So with blended learning
19 districts have flexibility to implement onsite or
20 remote teaching and learning and to pivot, as
21 necessary. So we've started using the word "pivot" a
22 lot, because we know when we're dealing with a
23 situation like Covid-19 that there are unknowns from
24 day-to-day. Used to, one of our biggest
25 interruptions to onsite learning were snow days. But

1 -- and I can remember, you know, being young, you
2 didn't have radar, long-term forecasts, and the
3 availability of weather, you know, radar just right
4 there at your fingertips; and so, you know, you never
5 really knew what was going to happen. If it snowed,
6 you didn't know how much; you didn't really know what
7 to expect. You know, in the last few years we've
8 gotten a lot better at being able to predict and to
9 plan for snow days and -- but with Covid-19 there's
10 not that level of predictability. Because when data
11 comes in you've got -- districts are going to have to
12 really be able to look at what is the impact of a
13 confirmed case in our school district, how far-
14 reaching might this confirmed positive case be within
15 a building; if it's in a classroom, is it in the
16 entire district, is it within the entire community.
17 So our districts, teachers, parents, and students are
18 going to have to have support to be able to adapt and
19 they're going to have to be able to adapt sometimes
20 at a very quick pace.

21 And so, how do we plan for this to happen?

22 So if we'll go to the next slide, you're going
23 to see a visual that many of you have seen before,
24 and that is because we're not asking districts to
25 implement a whole new process; we're not asking them

1 to create a whole new plan. We're asking them to go
2 back to a very foundational piece that was
3 established through our Every Student Succeeds Act
4 plan for Arkansas, and that is for every school and
5 district to engage in the Plan-Do-Check school
6 improvement planning process. If we think back to
7 Spring of '20 -- or if you go back to Spring of 2019,
8 when schools implemented school level plans for the
9 past school year, none of those school level plans
10 anticipated Covid-19; none of those school level
11 plans anticipated us not being able to be onsite for
12 those last three months of school. Going forward,
13 that is something we have to think and plan for. We
14 have to think about and plan for, if disruptions
15 occur, how do we continue on with not just keeping
16 students connected and engaged but actually continue
17 teaching and learning.

18 And so we want districts to engage in this
19 process of Plan-Do-Check just like they would've
20 before, but with the thought in mind that, you know,
21 our students are going to be learning using new
22 tools. Our teachers are going to be using new tools
23 to teach and they may be doing it in more
24 nontraditional settings. So in order to make this
25 happen, we know that districts are going to have to

1 be provided with flexibility.

2 So in the next slide, there are two different
3 avenues that we could look at to provide the
4 flexibility that schools are going to need. And,
5 again, we know that with the blended learning system
6 it gives us the option of being in a classroom, it
7 gives us the option of being offsite or in different
8 locations throughout a school setting, but maybe more
9 in line with guidance in terms of physical
10 distancing.

11 But in terms of getting flexibility, in the
12 Spring we utilized the Governor's Executive Order
13 that allowed the Division to waive some of the -- or
14 suspend statutes and rules that were needed, and
15 there were some that had to be suspended during the
16 end of the school year. Going forward though, we
17 felt like that the more streamlined process to insure
18 that there's uniformity, transparency, and alignment
19 to district planning would come through this Act 1240
20 waiver process. But rather than just asking each and
21 every district to figure out what flexibility they
22 needed, then come back and implement a whole separate
23 plan, that's why we wanted to take this opportunity
24 to identify the types of waivers that we felt are
25 needed in order to fully implement the Arkansas Ready

1 for Learning model. So, implement that blended
2 learning system, implement those flexible -- the
3 flexibility, whether we're onsite or offsite, and to
4 also do it in terms of the process that's already
5 established; for schools to -- each school to have a
6 school level plan; and then a district plan of
7 support which is a document that is developed, that
8 is approved by the school board, placed on a
9 district's website.

10 And in identifying the waivers that would be
11 part of this streamlined process, we also looked at
12 existing schools -- schools of innovation, district
13 conversion charter schools -- that already had
14 waivers in place that would be needed. And so we
15 identified waivers that would be very tailored and
16 very focused to meet the needs of what we feel like
17 are going to be a successful Ready for Learning
18 model.

19 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: So the administrators can make
20 real-time decisions as opposed to any delay in
21 meeting the needs of a student?

22 DR. PFEFFER: Yes. Yes. So those decisions
23 that need to be made, that could change from day-to-
24 day or week-to-week, and especially now in just
25 establishing what that plan is going to look like and

1 to bring together all of the necessary stakeholders,
2 the flexibility is what they're going to need.

3 So my last slide just talks about what districts
4 are doing in terms of opting in. So that's what
5 we've asked districts to do is to look at the waivers
6 that we identified and we've asked them to opt-in,
7 but they're having to give assurances and support.
8 So our commitment to the districts is that we're
9 going to provide the flexibility they need. Their
10 commitment is they have to provide these assurances
11 as they develop their district support plan -- and we
12 have an entire team that's going to be working to
13 review those support plans. We're going to -- and
14 those district support plans will have to be on the
15 website; they'll have to be approved by the local
16 boards. So we expect there to be a lot of
17 communication and collaboration.

18 And I wanted you all to see all of the things
19 that districts are going to have to insure that they
20 do, and all of this will be done transparently. It
21 will be bringing together opportunities for all of
22 those affected to see the plans, to be part of the
23 plans, and just the realization that what we're
24 facing over the next school year is much bigger than
25 any one person can handle; it's much bigger than any

1 one superintendent, any principal, or teacher can
2 handle alone. It's going to take a committed,
3 collective effort in order to insure that our kids
4 really do have the opportunity to continue learning,
5 no matter what those circumstances might be.

6 So I'll pause there to see if you have questions
7 for me. And if not, Ms. Salas-Ford is going to go
8 over a little more detail with regards to those
9 specific waivers.

10 MR. DAVIS: (inaudible on livestream)

11 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Let's go back to Zoom so that
12 Dr. Pfeffer is on -- will be on the Zoom, so will the
13 Secretary. And that way the board members can see
14 each other, as well as hear any questions that either
15 the presentation prompted, any of the emails
16 prompted, or your review of the specifics of this
17 plan.

18 So I will start with -- do we have somebody that
19 wants to jump in first?

20 MS. NEWTON: I have a question on the [sound
21 cuts out]. On the -- with PD that the districts are
22 going to give --

23 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: You're going to have to get
24 closer to the microphone.

25 MS. NEWTON: Okay. On the training that the

1 districts are going to do on how to train teachers on
2 using blended learning, is that going to be just
3 districts or you have people at the co-ops or how --
4 because I mean we're all -- they were all feeling
5 their way through this [sound cuts out] looking for
6 people that [sound cuts out]. So what help are you
7 providing and where is that help coming from?

8 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Did you hear the question?

9 DR. PFEFFER: I did.

10 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Ms. Newton, I think that it's
12 going to be a combination. Part of it is going to
13 depend on the type of blended learning support that
14 districts choose. However, our team digital that has
15 been providing training in the past has really ramped
16 up the support that they're going to provide to
17 districts on kind of the how-to model of planning
18 through what does your approach look like for blended
19 learning. And we also have -- our team has been
20 helping out with some of those trainings. We have
21 kind of a taskforce right now put together to be
22 analyzing the needs. All of the co-ops -- or, excuse
23 me -- all of the districts completed a survey
24 recently and we've aggregated those results, and
25 those are now available. And so our co-ops are

1 taking those results and working with us to help plan
2 out what are those support needs in their districts.
3 So in some districts the blended learning training
4 may need to be around a specific digital platform or
5 an LMS system. In some cases it may need to be
6 taking digital content and putting it onto a
7 platform. And in some cases it just may need to be
8 really good lesson-planning and thinking through how
9 to blend that face-to-face and online and keep
10 students engaged. So we really do have kind of a
11 combination approach. Analyzing that survey data is
12 going to, I think, be the most effective thing, and I
13 think we're going to have to continue that training
14 well into the school year as districts really get
15 started and see what their responses are from
16 students and needs from parents.

17 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Did that answer your question,
18 Ms. Newton?

19 MS. NEWTON: Yes. I just -- you know, I know in
20 a regular classroom setting it's sometimes hard to
21 keep all students engaged. And so I just think
22 teachers are going to need help and guidance and just
23 -- in planning effective lessons that will engage
24 students across [sound cuts out] platform.

25 DR. PFEFFER: And that support is also available

1 through the PLAYBOOK resources. And I'm going to
2 speak for the group, but I think I remember a
3 conversation where they talked about that they would
4 continue providing that ongoing support and
5 conversation around the implementation of those
6 lessons. And so I think that's where the PLAYBOOK is
7 so helpful, because it's designed to be that bridge
8 or that entry, part of that re-entry; So when we talk
9 about onsite instruction, you know, that re-entry, as
10 everyone hopefully is returning to school for onsite
11 instruction, but also realizing that some of the
12 educational delivery will be used in a combination of
13 face-to-face and technology delivery.

14 DR. MOORE: May I ask a question?

15 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Yes. Dr. Moore.

16 DR. MOORE: Thank y'all for presenting. I know
17 there's a lot of hard work behind this. I wanted to
18 ask, as far as --

19 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: You're going to have to get
20 closer to your microphone, Dr. Moore.

21 DR. MOORE: Sorry. Can you hear me now?

22 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Yes.

23 DR. MOORE: As far as the districts that have
24 applied for these waivers, what has gone through
25 their school board so far -- or is that --

1 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I think they vary as much as it
2 is districts. Because I know some districts are
3 already deciding which teachers feel comfortable and
4 are apt at teaching online, and they will be the ones
5 for those students. The teachers that feel
6 comfortable and will be coming to the buildings, they
7 feel comfortable with that. And then others are
8 having -- I know several of the schools that are
9 having board meetings that have them on Zoom, then
10 they connect me to that; so I know there's some
11 districts that are having meetings every single day.
12 Now obviously not 200-and-something, but --

13 DR. MOORE: So what is, Dr. Pfeffer, the
14 requirement --

15 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Is there a requirement?

16 DR. MOORE: Didn't you say in your presentation
17 that there was some requirement potentially?

18 DR. PFEFFER: So the process works that we
19 identify the waivers that could potentially be needed
20 in order to implement the Ready for Learning model,
21 and the school district would submit. So it did not
22 require that -- we did not require that it would go
23 through a board meeting for the application process.
24 Because, remember, this is just the district sending
25 in an application that they were going to develop a

1 plan. And so these are the waivers that they can
2 look at including in their District Plan of Support,
3 and then that District Plan of Support will be
4 approved by their local board and posted on their
5 website. We've made the entire process very
6 transparent though, and I believe that I saw a
7 Commissioner Memo -- correct? All the districts --
8 [clearing throat] -- excuse me -- submitted an
9 assurance document. So that is very public, as well.

10 DR. MOORE: How many districts submitted the
11 application?

12 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I think you have --

13 DR. PFEFFER: 260. Yes.

14 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: 260. That would include --

15 DR. MOORE: Okay. I saw the list. Does that --
16 are there any that have not?

17 DR. PFEFFER: So I'm going to let Ms. Coffman
18 come up and answer that.

19 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

20 MS. COFFMAN: Deborah Coffman, Arkansas
21 Department of Ed. -- Division of Elementary and
22 Secondary Education.

23 238 districts, 25 charters -- 22 charters
24 applied. So, 260 total.

25 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Right. And we have 200 -- and

1 how many -- 70-something; right?

2 MS. COFFMAN: Two hundred -- let me total it up.

3 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I think we have 28 charters.

4 MS. COFFMAN: 263 districts and charters.

5 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay.

6 MS. COFFMAN: 260 applied.

7 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay.

8 MS. COFFMAN: The three that did not, one is the
9 Division of Youth Services, which has an LEA number
10 which --

11 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Right.

12 MS. COFFMAN: -- does not need these; they can
13 still implement Ready for Learning without the
14 waivers.

15 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Right.

16 MS. COFFMAN: And the two virtual charter
17 schools, who also don't need the waivers but can
18 implement Arkansas Ready for Learning.

19 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay. Did that answer your
20 question?

21 DR. MOORE: Yes. Thank you.

22 And then I --

23 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Do you have another question?

24 DR. MOORE: Yes, I do. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay.

1 DR. MOORE: Dr. Pfeffer, when we were looking at
2 the last slide that you had, talking about the
3 district's plan utilizing a Learning Management
4 System, I assume that most districts are already
5 using from the Fall some sort of Learning Management
6 System and this is not a steep new uphill climb for
7 them. Is that the case? Or is this something new
8 that will be put in place in most districts?

9 DR. PFEFFER: So I don't have an exact number of
10 districts that already had a Learning Management
11 System prior to now. We -- as part of blended
12 learning, a district will have to have some sort of a
13 Learning Management System in order to be able to
14 digitally deliver content. So the State has provided
15 support for districts in digital curriculum and a
16 Learning Management System, should the district
17 choose to use that, or they could use something that
18 they already had in place. The survey results
19 indicated that Google Classroom was probably the most
20 commonly used Learning Management System. So, you
21 know, it's going to depend on what the district
22 chooses to use and -- but, yes, that is an option
23 that we've provided for them as well.

24 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Someone else?

1 MS. McADOO: Yeah, I have a question.

2 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay. Ms. McAdoo.

3 MS. McADOO: So --

4 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I saw Ms. McAdoo first, and then
5 we'll come to you, Ms. Woods.

6 MS. McADOO: So based on what I just heard, the
7 overwhelming majority of the districts in the state
8 have applied for these waivers. And today, you all
9 are going to vote to approve on applications that
10 have already been submitted. Is that the plan? They
11 applied before --

12 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Yeah, they applied in the
13 process of their planning, because they wanted to
14 know what their playing fields looked like before
15 they got any further into the planning process for
16 that district.

17 DR. PFEFFER: And I think what's important is
18 that in the application the districts are insuring
19 that they're going to have a continuity of teaching
20 and learning. They're going to be providing a
21 guaranteed and viable curriculum. They're going to
22 be identifying how they're going to address
23 unfinished learning from the prior year. They're
24 going to be describing the Learning Management System
25 that will be used. They're going to provide evidence

1 that they are scheduling training and providing
2 training for teachers, for students, parents. And
3 they're going to be providing their communication
4 plan for what school is going to look like in the
5 Fall for their district.

6 MS. McADOO: But I guess my question is --
7 today's approval is of the entities collectively;
8 like it's not about one particular school's plan --
9 or is it? Are you all about to go through all 260 or
10 so plans and approve them individually, or are you
11 approving them all?

12 DR. PFEFFER: The ask would be that the State
13 Board approve this collectively. This is in many
14 ways similar to what the U.S. Department of Education
15 did for states in the Spring in, you know, creating a
16 list of waivers that states could seek, and they
17 could do it in a streamlined process so that states
18 could have a guarantee of what they were having to
19 work toward. And we were able to move much more
20 nimbly through the response to school district needs
21 based on that.

22 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: But the Department and those
23 looking at standards and those in the other sections
24 of the Department will continue to be interacting
25 with these districts to be sure that students are

1 being considered, first and foremost, and that the
2 information coming from the Health Department is in
3 fact being considered and implemented so that we're
4 looking at the safety and health of everyone in the
5 building, at the school, and -- as well as the
6 learning of the students.

7 MS. NEWTON: Ms. Zook, can I --

8 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Sure. Ms. Newton.

9 Wait just a minute. Just a second.

10 Ms. McAdoo, did you have follow-up or did -- are
11 you good for right now?

12 MS. McADOO: No, I'm good. I'm just leaning in
13 because I'm having a hard time hearing parts of
14 what's being said.

15 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I understand.

16 Ms. Newton.

17 MS. NEWTON: Ms. Zook, the way I understand it
18 -- and correct me if I'm not understanding this --
19 but what I understood was that we were going to be
20 asked to look at these waivers and approve them, but
21 then the districts would use these waivers and go
22 back and create their plans. We're not approving
23 district plans today?

24 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: No.

25 MS. NEWTON: Okay. All right.

1 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Woods.

2 MS. WOODS: Yes. Can you hear me?

3 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Yes.

4 MS. WOODS: Yes, okay. Dr. Pfeffer, I wanted to
5 go back and talk about your Ready for Learning
6 committee that you mentioned. Can you just kind of
7 give a broad overview of what's going to be expected
8 of this committee and how -- are they going to
9 operate more as a consulting board or will they
10 actually have some input into what curriculum comes
11 out?

12 DR. PFEFFER: So I think that that probably
13 depends on the individual districts. Overall, it
14 would be -- I would expect that it would be a
15 consulting board, because we have six systems that
16 we're asking districts to be thinking through in the
17 planning for re-engagement. So, for example, as
18 districts are planning for return to school they're
19 having to think about facilities and operations;
20 they're having to think about their academics;
21 they're having to think about transportation. And so
22 taking those -- that planning document with
23 guidelines and resources, that Ready for Learning
24 committee then would need to have conversations
25 about, okay, you know, the recommendation is we have

1 students socially distanced as much as possible in
2 classrooms. However, in our classrooms we cannot --
3 we simply cannot space desks out six feet apart; the
4 most we can do is four-and-a-half feet. That
5 committee would need to have conversations and help
6 the district think through, okay, so what should be
7 our response here; do we want to try to stagger
8 schedules; do we want to try to find some unused
9 spaces and make our class sizes smaller. Those are
10 the types of conversations we would expect to be
11 having in the committee. As far as the academics,
12 when you start talking about what that's going to
13 look like, if you're trying to run a seven-period
14 instructional day with a traditional bell schedule,
15 that's going to be very difficult to do and keep high
16 school students physically distanced. So do we want
17 to look at creating more of a block schedule for our
18 students so that maybe they spend more time in fewer
19 classrooms and have fewer transitions through the
20 day. Those would be the conversations that would be
21 taking place, and then from there that helps the
22 superintendent and local board in making those final
23 decisions.

24 MS. WOODS: Will teachers get to have input and
25 say into who their representatives are on the

1 committee?

2 DR. PFEFFER: So we didn't define the specifics
3 of that committee; that would be left up to each
4 district. I cannot imagine a committee that would
5 not have a representative voice from not only
6 teachers, but also support staff. I think it would
7 be very hard to have a discussion around facilities
8 if you were not involving custodial staff, just like
9 it would be very hard to have a discussion of
10 academics if you were not involving your teachers.

11 MS. WOODS: Okay. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. McAdoo.

13 MS. McADOO: I have a whole lot of thoughts, and
14 they're just kind of all everywhere.

15 Based on -- we received a whole lot of emails
16 from the public with regards to this. An
17 overwhelming majority of them were teachers
18 expressing dissent about not having input or voice in
19 this process. Can someone kind of talk a little bit
20 about that, please?

21 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Well, sort of as an offhand,
22 that would be -- this might be the one time when a
23 district that's working with Secretary Key as their
24 board would be in good shape because he knows that
25 these things need to be done and the teachers,

1 students, custodial staff, all of those people need
2 to be involved, as well as parents. But Secretary
3 Key has a response.

4 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. So I would point out
5 that, yes, there were a lot of email comments that
6 came in on this. But if you look, it was not from --
7 you know, we didn't get 260 districts represented in
8 these comments. So what that tells me is that there
9 are -- there are districts that are doing well in
10 getting teacher engagement and input, and there are
11 districts that need to work on it a little bit more.
12 So, you know, that -- this is an ongoing process.

13 Many of the comments that we received, that I
14 read, were definitely more concerned about the fear
15 of starting school in general in August than they
16 were about this particular waiver process.

17 I think we have the -- we have Courtney that is
18 going to talk in a few minutes about the narrow focus
19 of these waivers. It appears that many of the
20 teachers that we received comments from are under the
21 impression that this is a very broad set of waivers
22 that is going to create a number of potentially
23 negative working conditions or efforts to try to
24 undermine some things that really this is not, you
25 know, what these waivers are about. So at whatever

1 point in time I think Courtney can help do that.

2 But, yes, I mean we certainly are aware of the
3 concerns and the fears out there. And I was just
4 thinking, Ms. McAdoo, before you asked that question
5 that it might be good if we --

6 Dr. Pfeffer, if you could kind of talk about the
7 outreach and the feedback and the Zoom calls or the
8 conference calls that we've had on this? Because we
9 did reach out to representative groups to get
10 feedback on this process. So that might be helpful
11 for the Board and the public to understand that, you
12 know, what we -- the efforts we've made to try to get
13 different -- a variety of input on this process.

14 DR. PFEFFER: Yes. Thank you, Secretary Key.

15 And I was just thinking again about -- so we're
16 here today because the need for the flexibility is
17 part of -- just part of this overall Arkansas Ready
18 for Learning process. And just, again, going back to
19 the fact that we cannot have another year where we
20 make excuses for why kids aren't continuing to be
21 taught. We have to do better, because we've had the
22 time and the benefit to start the planning. And so
23 if we're going to expect every district to have a
24 system of blended learning that allows every student
25 continue to learn grade level or content standards

1 through technology-based and face-to-face approaches,
2 whatever the district -- however the district assigns
3 that, that is the expectation. So in order to make
4 that happen we have to be ready to allow them to do
5 that within certain parameters. So in designing this
6 we set up collaborative conversations with -- and we
7 have a superintendent working group that has been
8 part of helping to review guidance and act as thought
9 partners in terms of providing us with district
10 needs. We also worked with the Teacher Leader
11 Advisory Group. I think we had three phone calls,
12 three conference calls set up with the Teacher Leader
13 Advisory Group, which consists of former Teachers of
14 the Year, current Teachers of the Year, Milken Award
15 winner, and others that have been part of teacher
16 leader groups, and we got feedback from them. And
17 some of the waivers that we initially proposed in --
18 after having conversations, after they asked some
19 really good questions, we were able to say "those
20 probably aren't necessary in order for districts to
21 do what they're going to be asked to do" -- which is
22 different than they've ever been asked to do before.
23 And so we've -- we involved them in those
24 conversations. We've also been having regular calls
25 with co-op directors who then talk not only with

1 superintendents, they talk with principals and
2 teachers in their respective areas as far as what is
3 it that you're going to need.

4 So we tried to make this a very inclusive
5 process, very transparent all the way through. We
6 worked with the Arkansas School Board Association,
7 asking questions about, you know, districts
8 developing policies, what would the implications be
9 for certain types of waivers if they did or did not
10 have those.

11 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I did wonder about that.
12 Because I know a lot of school board members go
13 through part of their training -- required training
14 for each year during the summertime. So they will be
15 able to help with that.

16 Did that answer your question, Ms. Woods?

17 Okay. Secretary Key.

18 SECRETARY KEY: I think it was Ms. McAdoo that
19 asked that last question.

20 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Oh, I'm sorry.

21 MS. McADOO: I did.

22 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah.

23 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I apologize.

24 SECRETARY KEY: And I think it might be because
25 of the questions -- the nature of some of the

1 questions we're getting now, Madam Chair, it might be
2 good if we let Courtney Salas-Ford come and talk
3 about some of the nuts and bolts part of this. Dr.
4 Pfeffer gave kind of the narrative. Ms. Salas-Ford
5 can give us the nuts and bolts that might address
6 some of the other questions that may be pending right
7 now in the minds of the board members.

8 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay. And your Zoom camera is
9 here --

10 MS. SALAS-FORD: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: -- and your livestream is up
12 there. So if you want to address the board members
13 in particular, this is your camera.

14 MS. SALAS-FORD: All right. Well, good morning,
15 everyone, Board Members, Madam Chair. Courtney
16 Salas-Ford for the Division.

17 And, yeah, I'm just going to follow-up on what
18 Dr. Pfeffer laid out for you all, and the process and
19 the plan -- sorry -- the process and the plan that we
20 have gone through.

21 So as she stated, any district that was
22 interested in seeking these waivers had to sign and
23 submit an assurance document, which was attached to
24 this agenda item. Every assurance document looked
25 exactly the same. So by that, districts were making

1 a commitment to the requirements that were set forth
2 in that assurance document to have, as Dr. Pfeffer
3 stated, a viable curriculum, to have training for
4 teachers, and a communication plan for students and
5 parents so that everyone was on the same page. I
6 know in reading through many of the public comments
7 that were received over the weekend that was a
8 recurring theme that I saw, was a need for
9 communication and a need for a plan. And even though
10 some of those things -- some of the other public
11 comments were not directly tied to the waivers, I
12 think that is one way where these waivers are
13 actually helping is that it is requiring districts to
14 have those communications, have the Ready for
15 Learning team, like Dr. Pfeffer stated, and have a
16 plan of communicating what is going to be required
17 and what school is -- you know, may look like, what
18 we plan for it to look like upon returning to school
19 in August.

20 One of the requirements for school districts is
21 to develop their district support plan. And as set
22 forth in our rules governing the Educational Support
23 and Accountability Act, there's involvement that's
24 required and state board -- excuse me -- local school
25 board involvement that's required in developing that

1 district support plan. The district support plan is
2 actually based on a review of school level
3 improvement plans, as set forth in the Standards for
4 Accreditation. In order to develop a school level
5 improvement plan, districts have to be getting input
6 from their teachers and from their staff. I'm trying
7 to find it here. Yes. They have to have staff and
8 community participation. They have to have an annual
9 meeting where they explain policies, programs, and
10 goals to the community. So we are not in any way
11 trying to eliminate input. We certainly are not
12 trying to eliminate personnel policy committees. We
13 believe all of that input and stakeholder feedback
14 will still be had. Many school districts that I've
15 talked to have already had school board meetings
16 prior to submitting their assurance; some are
17 waiting, you know, to have it later. But there is
18 still plenty of opportunity for involvement.

19 The other piece of the --

20 MS. WOODS: Quick question.

21 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. McAdoo.

23 MS. WOODS: I'm sorry. So I know that you --

24 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Oh, Ms. Woods. Sorry.

25 MS. WOODS: Sorry. So I know that you're --

1 everybody is getting the input from teachers and
2 staff. But how I read these waivers, they don't
3 actually have to take any of that participation into
4 consideration when developing policies. Is that
5 correct?

6 MS. SALAS-FORD: I mean, yes. Essentially, a
7 school district could completely disregard all of the
8 feedback that it receives. I certainly would hope
9 that that wouldn't occur. And that is something that
10 could occur, even without these waivers.

11 And I'll just go ahead and jump specifically to
12 -- the waivers that I believe we received the most
13 comment on were 6-17-204(b), 205(b)(2), 2304(b), and
14 2305(c)(2), because these are what allow a school
15 district to make changes to policy and incorporate
16 them into current year contracts without submitting
17 it to the PPC first or having a teacher vote. So,
18 typically, under normal circumstances, without these
19 waivers if a school district wanted to make a change
20 to policy and incorporate it into the current year
21 contract they would have to submit it to the PPC 10
22 days before the school board voted on it. Hopefully,
23 you know, they would take into consideration input
24 from the PPC; but if they completely disregarded it,
25 that's still within that local school board's

1 purview. The other requirement would be that a
2 majority of classified or certified staff --
3 depending on a policy, approved by a majority that it
4 be submitted to the local board. Again, that's
5 something that we are proposing waiving under this
6 streamlined process, primarily because of the
7 timeline. I believe -- and I've heard from many
8 districts that they still intend to submit it to the
9 PPC -- changes to policies to the PPC; they still
10 intend to share this information with their teachers
11 and staff and get feedback. But because of the
12 timing in trying to prepare for school to return in
13 August, many teachers are not on staff during the
14 summer; they're not reachable because they're not on
15 contract. It provides them flexibility to go ahead
16 and start planning, but then still go ahead and get
17 that communication and input prior to submission of
18 the district support plan in September.

19 MS. McADOO: Well, and that was the question --

20 SECRETARY KEY: Only for the --

21 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Wait. I've got two people
22 speaking at once.

23 Secretary -- I'll get to you, Ms. McAdoo, in
24 just a second, but the Secretary --

25 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah.

1 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: -- has some input into what was
2 just said.

3 SECRETARY KEY: Just clarify though the narrow
4 focus on the blended learning --

5 MS. SALAS-FORD: Correct.

6 SECRETARY KEY: -- and --

7 MS. SALAS-FORD: Correct. Yes.

8 So we -- in identifying these waivers, we
9 specifically narrowly tailored them to situations
10 necessary to implement the blended learning model,
11 the Arkansas Ready for Learning model. That's why,
12 you know, you hear me rattle off all these numbers
13 and letters. We didn't include in waivers entire
14 sections of code. We did not include entire sections
15 of rules or standards. These are the very specific
16 items that we included -- and, for example, on the
17 one for incorporation into contracts, it's only for
18 policies that are necessary to implement the blended
19 learning model.

20 As Dr. Pfeffer stated, part of our preliminary
21 work was communications with the Arkansas School
22 Boards Association. They created a draft resolution
23 -- and it's not required that districts adopt this --
24 but for districts who choose to adopt the resolution,
25 it actually states that it would only apply to

1 policies or procedures that conflict with state and
2 federal laws and waivers. Again, it's not to go in
3 and make broad changes to all of the personnel
4 policies or even student policies. This is
5 specifically narrowly tailored to those policies that
6 may conflict with the blended learning model. Some
7 examples of those include teacher/parent
8 communication. There are many school districts that
9 have policies about how that communication has to
10 occur and how many times. Districts may want to
11 change that. Because of the virtual type of setting,
12 they might want to increase that or change the
13 methods in which teachers communicate. Along those
14 same lines is interaction between teachers and
15 students. Many school districts have policies about
16 teachers not interacting via social media or other
17 virtual means with students, obviously because of
18 potential concerns. But when you're looking at a
19 virtual type setting, many of those things may be
20 necessary; so there may need to be changes made.
21 Planning time is a common personnel policy that's in
22 place in school districts. Under these waivers,
23 districts may need to modify that planning time
24 policy to reflect that teachers teaching virtually,
25 it's practically impossible for a district to insure

1 that they're getting that planning time when they are
2 not in control of that teacher's day while that
3 teacher is teaching remotely.

4 So, again, these are just some of the very
5 specific policies that districts may need to change,
6 and only for those policies would the process of
7 submitting to the PPC and getting a majority vote be
8 necessary in order to incorporate into current year
9 contracts.

10 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: And I think --

11 MS. WOODS: I -- sorry.

12 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay. Ms. McAdoo was first, Ms.
13 Woods, and then we'll come right back to you.

14 MS. McADOO: Yeah, because I was actually trying
15 to speak a few minutes before Ms. Woods spoke several
16 minutes ago.

17 So I guess my thought here is, as a teacher, as
18 a classroom teacher, one of the only structured
19 protocols or structured ways that teachers are
20 allowed an opportunity to officially have a voice now
21 is through PPCs. And what I'm hearing you say is
22 that they don't -- because of time we don't even have
23 to go through the PPC; so I can understand why
24 teachers would feel that they are not having an
25 opportunity to be seen or heard. And I can

1 understand -- and in full disclosure, I was on the --
2 one of the groups a month or so ago, when these were
3 presented, and what I said then was that I thought
4 that this was very dangerous. I thought it was very
5 dangerous -- and actually my exact words were
6 "dangerous and reckless" -- because I think that it
7 just opens up so many opportunities to squash teacher
8 buy-in, teacher participation, teacher voice. And I
9 think that not only are students very important in
10 the educational system, but teachers are just as
11 valuable. And I still stand by those words that this
12 is dangerous.

13 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay. Before I come to you, Ms.
14 Woods, let me word a question to Ms. Salas-Ford.

15 I know each of these assurances is -- there's a
16 preface statement on each one --

17 MS. SALAS-FORD: Correct.

18 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: -- that says only for the
19 purpose of implementing the Arkansas Health
20 Department's requirements or guidelines regarding
21 health and safety. So if the PPC is meeting
22 regularly, which they do, and a rogue person --
23 superintendent, principal, or whatever -- decides to
24 do, they would need to demonstrate "this is for this"
25 or "oops, you're right, it's not for this." So the

1 PPC will still meet and have voice; it's just that
2 the principal or superintendent or the board needs to
3 demonstrate that the reason for that is thus-and-so.
4 And I would presume, in the majority of cases, maybe
5 not all, that as a teacher if I know that someone is
6 doing this to protect my students and me that I can
7 live with it for a semester or whatever. I don't
8 know what they would feel, because there's never a
9 hundred-percent of people feel any way. But I think
10 because of that caveat, before each of these waivers,
11 that that in fact would give many a sense of relief
12 or comfort in knowing they're doing this for my
13 safety, for the safety of my kids -- or no, I don't
14 see how this fits into that at all; I need to get my
15 PPC to address it. Am I understanding that
16 correctly?

17 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yes, certainly. And, again,
18 when we were identifying these waivers, as Dr.
19 Pfeffer stated, we looked at current charter schools
20 and virtual schools that had waivers; we looked at
21 schools of innovation and public conversion charters
22 to see what types of waivers did they have that
23 allowed them to have that virtual type of operation.
24 And we took those and we narrowed it down and
25 narrowed it down and narrowed it down, and then even

1 more specifically narrowed it down with, like you
2 said, the language on each one that prefaces it to,
3 you know, implementing ADH requirements or guidelines
4 or only on virtual days with two students or parents
5 -- or teachers teaching virtually. These are not
6 intended to be broad waivers, and anything outside of
7 this very limited scope would still go through the
8 PPC policy. Yes, superintendents and boards would
9 still need to explain how the change in policy is --
10 for the purpose of implementing these requirements or
11 guidelines again we anticipate districts in their
12 district support plan to be explaining how they're
13 using these waivers. As Ms. Coffman stated, almost
14 every school district applied but some may choose not
15 to use them, even the ones they are granted. Once
16 they begin the planning process, to use a term we use
17 a lot around here, you know, it's kind of like having
18 those tools in your tool bag; districts will have
19 these tools. But if they determine after their Ready
20 for Learning committee meets and they do talk to
21 their PPC and they talk to their local school board
22 that they don't need them, they don't have to use
23 them or they may only use them in a limited capacity.
24 Again, I know some districts have stated, even with
25 the waiver, they still intend to take things to the

1 PPC, but because of the summer timeframe it may not
2 be the full 10 days; it might have to be, you know,
3 less days. I don't believe that any district will
4 just completely out, you know, their PPC, keep them
5 out of the process, much like we couldn't have done
6 this process without getting input from the various
7 groups representing teachers, representing
8 administrators, representing school boards.
9 Districts need that same input from their teachers,
10 from their support staff, from their parents in order
11 to develop a plan that is going to work for their
12 district.

13 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Mr. Secretary.

14 SECRETARY KEY: And just to follow-up with what
15 Courtney just said, what the State Board gives the
16 State Board can rescind. And just to make sure that
17 the board members understand, if there -- because a
18 lot of the questions that came from some of these
19 teachers were, you know, how do we hold school
20 districts accountable. If we determine -- if the
21 State Board determines that they are using these
22 waivers inappropriately, those waivers can be
23 rescinded. And so I would say that is a great
24 deterrent for districts to try to do things that are
25 outside of the narrow focus that these are designed

1 to address. So that's one thing that we will be
2 watching very closely and will bring back to you as a
3 board if we determine that there was an issue.

4 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: So that gets to something I was
5 going to get to later, which is the role of the State
6 Board throughout this process, depending on what the
7 State Board votes today. But there will be things
8 that will be coming up all during the year that will
9 be brought to the State Board on behalf of the
10 teachers and students.

11 Now, Ms. Woods.

12 MS. WOODS: Thank you. So I have read over
13 these statutes multiple times over the last several
14 weeks, so I understand that you did, you narrowed it
15 down to essentially the six statutes that these
16 waivers are falling under. And it's my position that
17 the law exists to protect us. And so when
18 circumstances and situations arise that were not
19 conceived of when the law was enacted, it's up to us
20 as the enforcers to insure that there's fairness and
21 that justice and ultimately basic commonsense
22 prevails. And so I guess my question is, I know that
23 the intent of the waivers are good and I know that we
24 don't anticipate school districts abusing them. But
25 the practicality is these waivers do give just sort

1 of carte blanche access for school districts to do
2 whatever they want, correct, at the end of the day?

3 MS. SALAS-FORD: I do think that's a little bit
4 of an over-generalization to say that they have carte
5 blanche --

6 MS. WOODS: Okay.

7 MS. SALAS-FORD: -- to do that. And there are
8 still accountability measures in place that if a
9 district -- you know, we can't prevent all bad actors
10 in any case.

11 MS. WOODS: Right.

12 MS. SALAS-FORD: And so in those cases we have
13 other methods of enforcement. Districts have to,
14 again, submit their support plan, and our
15 accountability unit will be reviewing those; there
16 will be a team to provide feedback, to request
17 additional information from districts. If there is
18 any district that does not submit a support plan,
19 doesn't include the necessary components, or even
20 following submission of the support plan -- isn't
21 following it, they can be recommended to the State
22 Board for revocation or modification of the waivers.
23 If you have individual certified staff who are not
24 complying, we have our Professional Licensure
25 Standards Board process where they can be

1 investigated for violation of the Code of Ethics. We
2 have our Standards Complaint process where if someone
3 believes a school district is not following the
4 Standards of Accreditation a complaint can be filed
5 that way. And, again, many aspects of the school
6 level improvement plan and district support plan are
7 included in our Standards for Accreditation.

8 Additionally, because I know there's a lot of
9 concern with the school districts that are under
10 state control -- their district support plans have to
11 be approved by the State Board. So those will
12 directly come to the State Board for review,
13 presentation by the school district, if necessary,
14 and if there's questions, and then approval by the
15 State Board.

16 So while these waivers do give the districts
17 great flexibility and the potential to make drastic
18 changes, there are several procedural safeguards in
19 place to prevent that or at least to address it if it
20 does occur.

21 MS. WOODS: As far as rescinding the waivers if
22 a school district is found to be [sound cuts out],
23 what does that process look like? I mean can they --
24 who do the teachers go to, who do people -- who in
25 administration can come? What does that process look

1 like?

2 MS. SALAS-FORD: So teachers can go to their
3 local administration; they can go to their local
4 school board; again, they can file a complaint with
5 our Standards for Accreditation unit; they can file a
6 complaint with the Professional Licensure Standards
7 Board. If a concern is brought to the Division, we
8 will work with them to address and try to help
9 identify the appropriate avenue for addressing that.
10 Again, if it's one of the districts who are receiving
11 Level 5 Intensive Support or under State control,
12 that's something we would want to bring to the State
13 Board at any time. And so that's any -- anyone can
14 make a complaint, can raise a concern. And then we
15 would help them identify the appropriate avenue --
16 and if that is to the State Board, we would make that
17 recommendation for you to have that placed on your
18 agenda. You can, you know, again, have the school
19 come and answer questions, make a presentation, and
20 then you have that ability to, again, either modify
21 or revoke the waivers that have been granted.

22 MS. WOODS: Can they report anonymously?

23 MS. SALAS-FORD: No. All of our complaint
24 avenues --

25 MS. WOODS: Right. Okay.

1 MS. SALAS-FORD: -- under law require
2 identification of the complainant.

3 MS. WOODS: Understood. Okay. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. McAdoo, were you finished
5 for the time-being or did you have other questions as
6 a result of those responses?

7 MS. McADOO: No, that was it.

8 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Not right now, okay.

9 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Zook.

10 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Mr. Secretary.

11 SECRETARY KEY: If I may clarify, I would say
12 Courtney is correct; all of the official complaint
13 processes are not subject to anonymity. But we have
14 had occasions where -- and this has nothing to do
15 with what we're talking about here -- but we have had
16 occasions where someone who was concerned about
17 something going on that may be a standards violation
18 would contact the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner,
19 the Chief of Staff, any number of people, and we send
20 those to Ms. Coffman and her team. And she's very
21 diligent about looking at those and protecting the
22 anonymity of the people who -- you know, the person
23 that has sent that email. So I don't -- I didn't
24 want -- Courtney was correct; I didn't want just to
25 leave it --

1 MS. SALAS-FORD: You know lawyers, we are very
2 black-and-white.

3 SECRETARY KEY: Yes. So, Ms. Woods, I hope you
4 understand that there are anonymous ways that
5 concerned citizens, teachers, principals, whomever,
6 can notify the Department, and we do follow-up on
7 those.

8 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Well, and the State Board
9 members, as you know, all of our email addresses are
10 public. And over the seven years I've been on the
11 Board there have been people who either send it to me
12 anonymously or they ask me to keep their identity --
13 and then as a board member, you can say, "These kind
14 of concerns have been brought to me. Do we need to
15 put it on the agenda? Does it need to be addressed
16 in some way?"

17 So we don't want anyone to fail to bring a
18 concern. But some people, rightly or wrongly, have
19 frustrations or are suspicious or don't have the
20 level of trust about talking to their teacher or
21 their principal or their superintendent because they
22 think that someone will take it out on their child.
23 And we want to do everything we as a board can do,
24 and I'm sure the Department, to be sure that no
25 student or teacher ever suffers in any way from

1 bringing a legitimate concern to us.

2 MS. WOODS: Thank you.

3 MS. McADOO: I guess I --

4 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: All right. Ms. McAdoo.

5 MS. McADOO: So while we're talking about the
6 process of emails and sending concerns to people,
7 will the public have access to the comments and the
8 emails that we all received? And will those people
9 receive replies or follow-up based on the things that
10 they were concerned about?

11 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I started at the beginning, when
12 I started getting emails, responding. I don't know
13 if anyone else did. And then because I wanted to get
14 them all read and time to think about them and take
15 notes about them I didn't respond to those I got at
16 the end. Not because I didn't read them, and not
17 because I didn't take it seriously, but I just, quite
18 frankly, ran out of time in order to give a
19 legitimate -- rather than just, you know, "I got your
20 email" kind of response, but really a genuine and
21 well thought-through response.

22 So anyone who wrote to me, or the ones that they
23 had the Department forward to us, and all the public
24 comment, those were read and taken to heart.

25 And I know one question was have any of y'all

1 ever taught school. And, of course, you and I both
2 have, Dr. Moore has, Ms. Newton has, Charisse has as
3 a home-school parent, and Dr. Hill; so the majority
4 of this board as it sits right now have taught in one
5 capacity or another, so for people who wondered that.

6 I also want to point out that for those people
7 who could not watch this on livestream today that
8 this will be posted probably as early as tomorrow --
9 and if not, by Wednesday. So any member of the
10 public can come and watch this process, hear all
11 these explanations, learn how to go to the website,
12 and access -- and sometimes more information
13 clarifies some of the questions. Because a lot of
14 emails that I got were "this seems vague" or "this
15 doesn't seem specific" or "this seems" -- you know,
16 along that line. And, hopefully, this meeting today
17 -- this stuff is on the website and will help with
18 that, because we talk in lawyer terms and education
19 terms, which isn't always helpful to our parents.

20 So, does that make sense or help you with at
21 least where I am, Ms. McAdoo?

22 MS. McADOO: It does with the second part. But
23 the first part of the question was like if we were
24 having a face-to-face meeting right now, those public
25 comments -- the audience would come up and they would

1 express them so everyone would hear it, their
2 comments. And my question is will the public be able
3 to see those comments that were emailed? And then, I
4 had -- my mind went -- well, I'll stop there and let
5 you answer that.

6 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Well, I understand what you're
7 saying. If I'm watching livestream and a person
8 comes to the microphone and makes their comments, as
9 opposed to us getting these in writing --

10 MS. McADOO: Correct.

11 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: -- and we're aware of them as a
12 board and it will have an impact and an influence on
13 how we ultimately vote, but the public didn't get to
14 hear the concerns and passion that were in these that
15 were for public comment -- am I understanding
16 correctly what you're asking?

17 MS. McADOO: My question is will the audience --
18 is there a way that those emails that were public
19 comments -- will they be accessible to the public to
20 read, I guess is the --

21 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Zook, let me help.

22 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Mr. Secretary.

23 SECRETARY KEY: Yes. Ms. McAdoo, yes, we can
24 put those as attachments to the board minutes of this
25 meeting, that -- and that would -- just as it would

1 be part of a record from -- you know, from our -- I
2 can't remember the word now; it's --

3 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Transcript.

4 SECRETARY KEY: Thank you. When the proceedings
5 of the meeting are transcribed and public comments
6 may be part of that. I'm not sure if that always
7 gets transcribed the way that they are presented,
8 but I know that there's a video record of those. So
9 since there's no video record, there's no -- I think
10 there is transcription, but there's no public
11 comment, we can attach these printouts or scans or
12 however the easiest way to technologically do it, we
13 can make sure that they are part of the board
14 proceedings and then link those as we do all the
15 other minutes and videos and that sort of thing.

16 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Our geniuses in that department
17 are in the Zoom meeting and none of them have
18 panicked with that commitment. So I'm assuming that
19 can be done. And I do think that's a good thing that
20 you pointed out, Ms. McAdoo, because it is important
21 for people to know what other people have been
22 thinking and those who took the time to put in
23 writing their public comment, I think they have a
24 right to be heard by all those who can hear them if
25 we were in a live meeting. Thank you.

1 MS. MCFETRIDGE: Ms. Zook, I have a question.

2 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. McFetridge.

3 MS. MCFETRIDGE: Yes. One of the things I'm not
4 really clear on is when we talk about teacher
5 contracts, under 6-17-204, 6-27-205, is anything got
6 to do with staff/teacher illnesses or on the virus?
7 And are we giving as a Department any guidance to our
8 districts on how to handle like quarantine items for
9 teachers and staff and about sick pay over this?

10 MS. SALAS-FORD: Well, I can speak for the Legal
11 Division on that. You know, because we represent the
12 State Board and not local school districts, we don't
13 typically provide legal advice to school districts on
14 these issues. I know the School Boards Association
15 at their recent law conference had an attorney that
16 presented -- an attorney who represents many school
17 districts present on the different types of leave
18 that is available. We certainly assist in any way we
19 can in providing information about, you know, FMLA
20 and the Families First Coronavirus Assistance Act,
21 ADA accommodations. But most districts would need to
22 consult with their local legal counsel on actual
23 decisions and applying those to their staff.

24 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Does that answer your question?

25 MS. MCFETRIDGE: So the Department really isn't

1 giving any guidance on that; is that correct?

2 MS. SALAS-FORD: Again, we can make resources
3 available, but we can't inform districts of decisions
4 to make or not. They need to seek local counsel on
5 that.

6 MS. McFETRIDGE: All right. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Secretary Key.

8 SECRETARY KEY: If I may add, Ms. Zook -- Ms.
9 Salas-Ford is correct, we don't give legal advice.
10 But as far as guidance on procedural concerns with
11 respect to operational decisions based on -- you
12 know, if you have a positive case in a building, you
13 know, we're working on those with the Health
14 Department. You know, so there are operational
15 decision-making -- there's operational decision-
16 making that we can give guidance on, and we're
17 working on that with the Health Department. But as
18 far as personnel guidance and requiring districts to
19 use certain types of leave if teachers have to be
20 out, we don't do that. But one of the components of
21 this is to -- of the flexibility here is to allow --
22 if there is a situation where there is some type of
23 building closure or quarantine of a wing or something
24 like that, then if these waivers are in place then
25 you may have a staff member who's impacted who has

1 not been a direct contact but may get -- as a result
2 of an operational decision can continue to do the
3 teaching, as Ms. Salas-Ford talked about earlier,
4 with -- from -- you know, remotely. When we talk
5 about a teacher teaching remotely, that could take
6 different forms; it could be a teacher at home or it
7 could be a teacher that is somewhere else in the
8 district, in a district facility. But even if
9 they're not in their building, they could still be
10 somewhere teaching remotely.

11 So the operational decisions are part of what we
12 continue to work on with respect to how districts can
13 handle a situation, depending on the level of
14 community spread, depending on the number of close
15 contacts, direct contacts, indirect contacts, all of
16 the things that the Health Department has learned
17 from their contact tracing processes over the last
18 several months.

19 So hopefully that gives both sides of it from a
20 policy and a legal standpoint, contractual
21 standpoint. There's also an operational standpoint
22 that we can give guidance and we're working on that.

23 MS. McFETRIDGE: That helped a lot. I
24 appreciate that. That really helps clarify that need
25 for the flexibility. I appreciate that.

1 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Thank you.

2 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yeah. And if I may just add,
3 that helped remind me about some of the comments I
4 read through. I've been focusing on the PPC and the
5 contract portion, but there were also concerns raised
6 about the Class Size waiver. And, again, the intent
7 with that waiver is to help school districts to
8 address situations, like Secretary Key stated, where
9 a teacher may need to be quarantined or work remotely
10 from home. And so the intent is not to allow more
11 students to be packed into a classroom. It's to
12 accommodate when some students are virtual and some
13 students are in the classroom; the teacher might be
14 in a different location. I know we saw many
15 instances this spring where, you know, one teacher at
16 a school could be teaching multiple classes at
17 different schools because there was a teacher short-
18 term, not available, illnesses, you know, things like
19 that.

20 So, again, it's about offering that flexibility
21 to be able to pivot, you know, quickly and not delay
22 the education being provided to students and not
23 delay learning from students because of, I'd say, you
24 know, laws or rules that make it prohibitive or
25 restrictive on districts to not be able to address

1 those quickly.

2 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: And sort of as an aside to that,
3 I do know that several of the businesses who are --
4 and then also involving the internet providers -- are
5 working with others in the business community, and
6 they're also going to have a meeting with people here
7 at the Department, to talk about the internet, the
8 accessibility, as well as if you have access -- the
9 affordability. Because there is a two-prong thing
10 there; I may have all the internet in the world, but
11 I don't have enough money in my budget to use that
12 money to get more access, and I have three children
13 who need to be on the internet at the same time. So
14 those kind of things our stakeholders are in fact
15 aware of and are working with, because this takes a
16 whole state of people; it's not just the Department,
17 it's not just parents, teachers, students. It takes
18 all of us working together to rise to this occasion.

19 Others?

20 MS. CHAMBERS: Yes, if I could.

21 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Chambers. Sure.

22 MS. CHAMBERS: Thank you. I'm learning that I
23 wouldn't be good at Jeopardy at all.

24 So the points have been so important that have
25 been made. Starting with Secretary Key, I do

1 appreciate that these are in context a narrow set of
2 things, policy changes, that we're talking about.
3 But I think to teachers or to those that are going to
4 live with the interpretation of those policies this
5 feels broad, because we don't know yet the impact
6 that it's going to have on individuals. And so when
7 I think about all the questions that I have, tied
8 back to all the emails that I read, most of them are
9 dependent on an answer from a district; it can't be
10 answered here. It's how the districts go forward and
11 develop these (inaudible) plans.

12 So to what we were talking about earlier as it
13 relates to process, I think a lot of questions will
14 go away for a lot of these teachers and a lot of the
15 individuals that reached out to us as plans are made
16 known. But as we get to September, when all these
17 plans are due to be turned in, is there some way of
18 evaluating them? I do think most districts will do
19 exactly the right thing and engage their teachers and
20 engage the community and things will be okay. Some
21 may not be as adept in that. And the fact is this
22 isn't going to be set. We're going to come out with
23 a plan, and the virus is not going to care, and we're
24 going to have to continue to evolve and to innovate.
25 And so I think there will need to be a continued

1 support for the interpretive process for the
2 districts, one.

3 Two, I think that means as we're asking teachers
4 and districts to work differently I think we're going
5 to have to work differently. I think we're going to
6 have to ask different questions and listen
7 differently, and even the rhythm of our meetings and
8 the agendas are going to have to be different so that
9 we're doing what they need us to do and to be as they
10 go through a very fluid period of time.

11 So the question -- so that's the observation.

12 The question is, Ms. Salas-Ford, Secretary Key,
13 are there opportunities that we've identified -- over
14 the next 30, 60, 90, 120 days at the very least, do
15 we know what role we can play to give recourse to
16 individuals within a district that have concerns
17 after the plans are solidified? So the plans are
18 published in September. Will we evaluate and/or will
19 individuals have an opportunity to raise their hand
20 and say "I have concerns; not that I have the
21 details, I have concerns?" And will we have an
22 opportunity to play and support differently as the
23 environment requires of us?

24 And I hope that makes sense.

25 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yeah, I believe so. And, yes,

1 as we talked about, when districts are submitting
2 their district support plans I believe many will
3 submit earlier than September 1, but even up until
4 September 1. When our accountability team is
5 reviewing those and helping to identify areas where
6 there may need to be more detail or more improvement,
7 asking about the communication and feedback that
8 districts may or may not have had, there's an
9 opportunity there for technical assistance to be
10 provided. There's also the opportunity if severe
11 deficiencies are identified for referral to the State
12 Board to have further discussion about that. And
13 even after, you know, September 1, to again refer it
14 back to the State Board if we are hearing lots of
15 concerns from individuals about a particular
16 district's plan. Every district is required to post
17 their support plan on their district website. And so
18 parents and teachers who go back and read the plan
19 and have questions, you know, hopefully would address
20 those with the local board. But then also could
21 certainly contact the Department and address those as
22 well.

23 Did that kind of answer your question?

24 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Did you have a follow-up?

25 MS. CHAMBERS: It does. And until we actually

1 see the district plans and we know how they're being
2 interpreted and executed and how successful they are
3 it's probably hard to anticipate what that might mean
4 to the Department of Education or to us. But I'm
5 curious how we can stay attuned and be a sounding
6 board when things aren't working, because it won't
7 all work; we won't get this right; there's so much
8 that's influx and will change. And it's just how do
9 you think we might embrace that, what might our role
10 be relative to that.

11 MS. SALAS-FORD: Right. And I think that's the
12 nature of our Standards and Systems Support Unit is
13 to have those ongoing communications and
14 conversations with districts and providing assistance
15 and support in not only development of the plan, but
16 in just day-to-day operations and insuring they're
17 meeting the Standards for Accreditation, of our
18 Learning Services teams that provide assistance in
19 curriculum and assessment. So I believe that ongoing
20 communication is there.

21 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Mr. Secretary.

22 SECRETARY KEY: I'm tangled up here. Sorry. I
23 had to take my glasses off to see my screen, but I
24 have to put them back on to see anybody else out
25 here, so -- and then with this mask it gets really

1 complicated.

2 So I would say, Ms. Chambers, that we -- this is
3 a time that we look -- as an agency, we're looking to
4 improve processes that we should already have in
5 place, and by extension I would say that the State
6 Board as well becomes part of that. Because, you
7 know, the moment you are appointed to the State Board
8 you become a recipient of concerns, emails, you know,
9 questions and that sort of thing. And, you know,
10 part of what we need to do to help support you all in
11 that role is, you know, having the openness for you
12 to come to us, contact us, and say "this is the
13 question I'm getting." I think we're going to see
14 that intensify over the next few months. That comes
15 in pockets, depending on what's happening or what has
16 happened individually in districts, over the years.
17 And, you know, probably the most recent example of
18 that has been, closer to a statewide issue, is -- are
19 issues of dyslexia. Okay. So, because people who
20 felt concerned that their children were not being
21 served well with their local school districts, they
22 knew they had someone to reach out to in Ms. Zook
23 that has expertise in that area -- or concern that --
24 then Ms. Zook would bring that to us. Another
25 example over the recent years has been with Ms.

1 Newton on some of the math issues. And I know that
2 people look to her as having been -- or as being a
3 math teacher, and then now being on the State Board,
4 you know, they have reached out to her and we've had
5 the opportunity to work through her to get some
6 clarifications. So what you're going to see is that
7 all the members of the State Board are going to be a
8 recipient of some level of concern over the next few
9 months.

10 And then that's where I want to take us back to
11 our ESSA plan and our Plan-Do-Check and the things
12 that we have tried to put in place since the passage
13 -- since the adoption of the ESSA plan. And what
14 we're seeing is the opportunity for districts to --
15 because of Covid they need to really focus on that
16 Plan-Do-Check. Right now, what we're doing here
17 today is part of Planning. We are working to try to
18 help districts with this flexibility from the
19 waivers, and as we -- if y'all approve those today,
20 then that becomes part of the planning process. As
21 we get into August and September, that's the Doing.
22 And if at any point in that time a district is not
23 doing that well, then it comes back up to the Check
24 and that's where we are part of that process, you are
25 part of that process. And then we engage each other

1 in an appropriate way to make sure that we're
2 providing feedback to the district that says,
3 "District, you know, this is a report we're getting;
4 we need to check on this." And if we find that they
5 are somehow violating the premise of what we're
6 saying here today and the narrow focus of these
7 waivers, then we bring that recommendation to you to
8 say, "Look, this district needs to be called to
9 account. It's -- maybe it's not severe enough that
10 it's a revocation; maybe they need to be corrected."
11 But that's why we're talking about the -- and Dr.
12 Pfeffer brought up that Plan-Do-Check cycle. If it
13 gets to the point that we feel like it is to the
14 level of revocation, then we bring that to you. But
15 it would be our hope that we could guide districts to
16 help them make corrections, working with their
17 stakeholders, before it got to that point. Now if we
18 get someone that -- or a district that is completely
19 out of line with it and refuses to accept correction,
20 then that elevates the process.

21 So I just keep bringing this back to our ESSA
22 plan. That's what we're doing here, only we're doing
23 it in a context of a pandemic, which is nothing that
24 we imagined when we passed that ESSA plan; but it's
25 something that fits in the work now that we're doing.

1 And it's more important than ever that this Plan-Do-
2 Check process be followed and be engaged at all
3 levels, and I think that's where you all are going to
4 be able to help us with that.

5 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I also think that based on the
6 emails and the public comments that we got that had
7 this been coming up in early April it may have been
8 from a totally -- the majority from a totally
9 different part of the state. But now because
10 northwest Arkansas is experiencing a surge in the
11 number of cases, the vast majority of the emails that
12 we got were from northwest Arkansas, primarily
13 Washington County; whereas, if we'd have done this in
14 April it might've been Jefferson and Pulaski County
15 primarily. So it's all over the state as people are
16 in the middle of experiencing -- different
17 superintendents and boards will find the need to
18 implement or not implement different ones of these
19 waivers at the time, in real-time.

20 So that was some of my takeaway from the emails
21 that we received and the public comment emails.

22 MS. CHAMBERS: Well, and, Ms. Zook, if I can
23 make one last comment, please, to that point?

24 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Sure.

25 MS. CHAMBERS: And I so appreciate what

1 Secretary Key just said. I think when you're talking
2 about waivers and you're talking about the degree of
3 uncertainty we're all facing and so many aspects of
4 our lives, you obviously and understandably have
5 people feeling very vulnerable. And so to something
6 else that Mr. Key said earlier about trust, where we
7 already have strong trust and relationships, folks
8 may not feel excited about the times that we're in,
9 but they feel better about the process that they know
10 we will work through. And I think it's just so
11 important for everyone to know there is a place for
12 them to bring their concerns, if and as things aren't
13 worked through, plans aren't put in place that they
14 believe are healthy and in the best interest of kids
15 and teachers. And so I do think it was so important
16 that Secretary Key reinforced we are going to expect
17 the best of everyone and good things will happen.
18 But there is a place and there is a responsibility we
19 have at the State Board of Education to address
20 issues in this very hard situation where things are
21 not as they should be. So, thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Thank you, Ms. Chambers.

23 MS. NEWTON: Can I --

24 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Newton.

25 MS. NEWTON: Just talking specifically about the

1 function of quality issue --

2 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Could you get closer to your
3 microphone?

4 MS. NEWTON: I'll try. Okay.

5 Talking specifically about the personnel policy
6 issue, is it my understanding the reason that you're
7 putting this one forward is the time issue, the 10
8 days -- that the Board didn't have that 10 days to
9 bring this issue before teachers and that 10 days was
10 an issue? So I'm having a little bit hard time
11 understanding why 10 days -- we wouldn't have 10 days
12 to make sure that teachers had a voice in the
13 planning part.

14 But my other question, along with that, is if we
15 went ahead and approved the waiver, how long is this
16 for? Because if they're doing their plan and having
17 to submit it by September 1st, would there be a need
18 for this waiver after September 1st?

19 MS. SALAS-FORD: So I'll answer your second
20 question first because it's easier. These waivers
21 are in place for one year, from July 1st of this year
22 to June 30th of next year. Any district that would
23 want to extend the waiver or ask for different
24 waivers than what's identified here has to go through
25 the traditional waiver process and bring it to the

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Board.

Back to your first question about the Personnel Policy Committee and the reason for those waivers -- while we, you know, hope that many districts will sit down on the front-end and look at everything and have a plan, and have a plan that works, as we experienced in the Spring, there may be times where they didn't anticipate something that might happen; they might not anticipate a change to a policy that's needed. And so if it should occur that they need to make a change in policy, 10 days doesn't sound like a lot until you're in an emergency, until you're in a crisis situation where all of your administration is suddenly sick or all of your teachers are suddenly sick or need to be quarantined. So it would be 10 days that they would have to submit it to the Personnel Policy Committee prior to voting on it by the board, which also requires notice of the board meeting. Then there's the voting aspect where a majority of the staff would have to vote to approve that for incorporation into the current year contract. And you could possibly end up in a situation where if the personnel did not vote for it then a school district can't incorporate the change in policy and it could prohibit them from

1 implementing needed changes to how education is being
2 provided.

3 And so, again, it's not about I guess providing
4 just these open, you know, avenues for districts to
5 make changes; it's about them being able to respond,
6 if needed, to emergency changes to scenarios or
7 situations that we're not anticipating or would not
8 have anticipated prior to this pandemic. And there
9 is a level of trust that we have to instill in
10 districts that they will do the right thing, but that
11 knowing there's accountability and avenues in place
12 should we need to address some.

13 MS. NEWTON: Okay. That was helpful. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay. Secretary Key.

16 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. Just following that,
17 Courtney, a little bit, the practical effect of the
18 incorporation, then there's also an option for
19 teachers on their contracts that are connected to
20 this as well. Is that correct?

21 MS. SALAS-FORD: Correct. Any -- we did not --
22 and when we were looking at the available waivers,
23 one of them that was proposed that we did not choose
24 to incorporate was -- after incorporation into the
25 contract teachers have a 30-day right-of-rescission

1 that they could choose not to continue with their
2 current year contract, and that is still in place.

3 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Do I have further questions?

4 MS. DEAN: I have a question.

5 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Dean.

6 MS. DEAN: Ms. Salas-Ford, if I'm not mistaken,
7 just if you would remind me, the community engagement
8 plans are a part of that district's plan that has to
9 be submitted, or is that separate? Could you refresh
10 my memory on that?

11 MS. SALAS-FORD: So I do know under Standard
12 5(a)(1) the plan for parent, family and community
13 engagement does have to be developed, has to be
14 posted on the district website by August 1. I don't
15 know -- and maybe Ms. Coffman can help me address
16 whether it's included in the district support plan.

17 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Coffman is coming to the
18 microphone.

19 MS. COFFMAN: Deborah Coffman.

20 Yes, one of the seven components that are
21 required in Ready for Learning in the district
22 support plan is providing a written communication
23 plan for interacting with parents, students, and the
24 community, in parenthesis "how will the stakeholders
25 know the expectations day to day." That comes right

1 out of the assurance document.

2 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay.

3 MS. DEAN: Okay. Thank you.

4 I'm concerned about the level of support and
5 training that will be available at a district level
6 for parents who -- as obviously said, this will be
7 new -- this is new for everyone; it's new for parents
8 that will be assisting and teaching from home more,
9 in case of an emergency where learning will have to
10 take place in the home environment. So that's a
11 concern of mine.

12 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Coffman.

13 MS. COFFMAN: Also included in the assurance
14 document one bullet ahead of what I just read to you
15 is the other component of "the plan must address how
16 the district will effectively use technology for
17 parents and students." And so part of that
18 explanation is what support are you providing so that
19 parents and students will be able to use the
20 technology effectively.

21 I'm hearing from districts. I've read every one
22 of these applications, talked to many school
23 districts, and they're having these conversations and
24 they're planning for these. And some of our school
25 districts are planning to have days where they're

1 practicing using the technology with parents, with
2 students.

3 So I'd say give them a little -- a little faith
4 here. We've got some pretty amazing people in the
5 state.

6 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Yeah. And I think because our
7 most recent experience was like all of a sudden keep
8 the learning going, no new learning, 3, 4 and 5 weeks
9 before you find out if a parent has access to
10 internet, how many children do they need -- that
11 learning curve has taught the districts what it is
12 they're going to need to do between now and when
13 school starts, and then even after school starts how
14 they will keep doing that. So good or bad, we
15 learned in March, April and May, and to this point in
16 June, and we can benefit from that learning as the
17 districts plan forward. Does that make sense?

18 MS. DEAN: (Nodding head up and down.)

19 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay.

20 MS. DEAN: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Do I have any other questions?

22 DR. MOORE: Yeah.

23 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Dr. Moore.

24 DR. MOORE: Yes. I hate to go back to this,
25 because I know we've touched on it. But, Courtney,

1 could you go in just a little bit more detail, the
2 second set of waivers are supposed to pertain to only
3 virtual -- teachers in virtual instruction. But I
4 know we received a lot of emails that there may be
5 some -- this might be a change to everyone at any
6 point in time. Could you give us a little bit more
7 on that subject?

8 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yeah, of course.

9 So, yes, the second portion of the waivers has
10 not only limitation language that applies to all
11 waivers, but then these have additional language
12 limiting them specifically to summarize a virtual
13 type of setting. So whether it be that the entire
14 school is virtual because of necessary closures,
15 whether it's a teacher who has had to be quarantined
16 or cannot be onsite, whether it's students -- so the
17 specific virtual situation only. So if half the
18 students are virtual and half are onsite, this only
19 applies to the virtual; the same for teachers. And
20 so that's, you know, school day. If students are at
21 home, much like we saw in the Spring when we had to
22 make sudden changes, a six-hour school day is not
23 feasible, nor is it probably the best type of
24 environment for students who are at home to try to be
25 engaged, you know, with a teacher for six hours per

1 school day. Any students who are onsite, however,
2 will still have that six-hour school day.

3 There's that one.

4 The Duty-Free Lunch and Planning Time specific
5 to teachers -- again, only to teachers who are
6 offsite. If a teacher is onsite, they will still be
7 entitled to receive their duty-free lunch and their
8 planning time. Now we know that things might look
9 differently, and so some scenarios we have discussed
10 are, you know, students having to eat in a classroom.
11 It may be that a teacher has to stay in that
12 classroom with those students because we don't want a
13 large group of students being in the cafeteria. Just
14 because the teacher has to do that during the
15 students' lunch time doesn't mean they still won't be
16 entitled to a duty-free lunch sometime during that
17 day. If you have teachers who are maybe onsite one
18 or two days a week and then teaching offsite for the
19 other two to three days a week, for the time that
20 they're onsite -- again, duty-free lunch and planning
21 time must be provided, and districts will need to,
22 you know, look at planning time on a proportionate
23 basis to see how much time they must get while
24 they're at school. But the time that they're
25 offsite, it would be very difficult and just not

1 feasible for a district to try to insure a duty-free
2 lunch or planning time. They are less in control of
3 the teacher's day when that teacher is teaching
4 offsite. So it's going to depend on not only how the
5 school is operating, but individual teachers,
6 individual students. And, again, what we will be
7 looking for from districts in their support plan is
8 telling us how do they think they might be using some
9 of these. Do they plan on all teachers doing both
10 methods? Do they plan on some teachers being solely
11 offsite and some onsite? But then, also, kind of a
12 contingency plan of if you suddenly have to have a
13 majority of your teachers in quarantine or offsite
14 what that will look like.

15 Does that address --

16 DR. MOORE: Yeah, I think that's really helpful
17 and I think it is important. As I remember, the
18 districts will not -- they won't have to use these;
19 they will hopefully use these in the best interest of
20 their teachers and students. And this does not mean
21 that, you know, the teachers teaching online
22 instruction they're teaching all day long and get no
23 break at all?

24 MS. SALAS-FORD: Right.

25 DR. MOORE: That is not the intention --

1 MS. SALAS-FORD: Correct.

2 DR. MOORE: -- as I read it.

3 MS. SALAS-FORD: Correct.

4 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

5 MS. NEWTON: Along that same line --

6 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Newton.

7 MS. NEWTON: Along that same line, I think from
8 the emails that I read, talking about the duty-free
9 lunch and the planning time was not -- the offsite
10 was not what was concerning, but the phrase in there
11 that says "when necessary to implement ADH
12 requirements or guidelines." I think that little
13 statement there made it seem like that a school could
14 apply that onsite. Does that make sense?

15 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yes. And we did add that
16 language after having discussion with some of the
17 multiple groups that Dr. Pfeffer addressed at the
18 beginning because -- specifically because of the
19 situation, like we talked about, where the teacher
20 onsite might have to eat lunch with their students or
21 that their duty-free lunch is not what they typically
22 expect it to be; it might be at a different time in
23 the day. Again, districts are going to have to
24 justify those decisions, not just say "well, none of
25 our teachers are getting lunch because they have to

1 clean their classroom during their duty-free lunch."
2 That's not the type of situation that we envisioned,
3 nor do we expect that that's the type of situation
4 that school districts would do. They are going to
5 have to justify based on their use and their
6 circumstances, looking at their staff and their
7 students in drafting that plan of how they think it's
8 going to look and work in their school district.

9 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: And I think too, because we do
10 have virtual charters that have been up and going,
11 not only in Arkansas, but across the United States,
12 is teachers taking opportunity to communicate with
13 those teachers to "how do you do this, how would you
14 plan for that; you know, help me as I work through
15 that." So regardless of what you think about virtual
16 charters, they in fact have had this experience and
17 many parents -- thousands actually in Arkansas have
18 chosen that for their children.

19 Do I have other questions, observations,
20 comments?

21 Do I have a motion?

22 MS. DEAN: I move to accept the waivers.

23 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: We have a motion.

24 Is that the properly worded motion, to accept --
25 Approve the waivers -- yes, we have a properly

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worded motion.

Do I have a second?

MS. CHAMBERS: Second.

CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Second by -- motion by Ms. Dean,
second by Ms. Chambers.

Do -- let's have a roll-call, please.

Or do I have any further discussion?

Seeing none, could you call the roll, please,
Mr. Secretary?

SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Woods.

MS. WOODS: (inaudible)

CHAIRMAN ZOOK: You need to take yourself off
mute as you vote, please.

SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Woods --

CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I can see your mouth; I still
can't hear you. There you go.

MS. WOODS: Here we go.

CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Did you vote yes or no?

MS. WOODS: No.

SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Chambers.

MS. CHAMBERS: Yes.

SECRETARY KEY: Ms. McFetridge.

MS. McFETRIDGE: Yes.

SECRETARY KEY: Dr. Moore.

DR. MOORE: Yes.

1 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Newton.

2 MS. NEWTON: Yes.

3 SECRETARY KEY: I'm sorry; can you --

4 MS. NEWTON: Yes.

5 SECRETARY KEY: Thank you.

6 Ms. Dean.

7 MS. DEAN: Yes.

8 SECRETARY KEY: So we have 5 yeses, one no, two
9 absent.

10 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay. Motion carries.

11 FURTHER DISCUSSION

12 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Is there any -- are there any
13 other things that need to come before the Board at
14 this time, before we entertain a motion to adjourn?

15 DR. MOORE: I do have a question.

16 Oh, Susan, you can go first.

17 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Chambers, go ahead.

18 MS. CHAMBERS: Just quickly, Secretary Key, I
19 know there's so much that is fluid and can't be
20 known. But as it relates to the virus and the
21 implications for health and safety, what kind of
22 communication will be coming out from the State and
23 from this Department in particular?

24 SECRETARY KEY: Okay, I missed the last part.
25 What type of what?

1 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Communication.

2 SECRETARY KEY: Communication?

3 MS. CHAMBERS: Communication or insight about
4 the implications for the start of school and the way
5 school will be conducted.

6 SECRETARY KEY: So, you know, we have -- the
7 Ready for Learning plan is definitely part of that
8 communication. With respect to any changes to that,
9 we are adjusting that -- those documents as we get
10 additional guidance from the Health Department. And,
11 you know, part of the -- I think the next big
12 communication is going to come after the Department
13 -- the Health Department looks at kind of an
14 operational decision-making tree, based on, you know,
15 what level of risk or at what level of spread is
16 happening in a community, to help and then to guide,
17 you know -- kind of a scenario guiding system where
18 they know exactly if you get a positive case in your
19 building, in your district, you know, what is the
20 contact tracing procedure; who are -- how are the
21 notifications to take place; do you notify the -- you
22 know, who in the Health Department has to be
23 notified; who locally has to be notified; how do you
24 take care of all that with regard to any press
25 inquiries and things like that. So there's going to

1 be communication on that in the coming weeks, we
2 expect.

3 If you are -- if you're referring to a public
4 communication, I guess, you know, our communication
5 with school districts is through the Commissioner's
6 Memos. That is the official way we communicate, and
7 we continue to provide updates in that manner.

8 And then as far as any types of public releases,
9 then we send those out through our distribution lists
10 to all the press outlets all over the state.

11 So those are ways we've been communicating; we
12 continue to communicate that way. And, of course, at
13 the Governor's option, some of those things that we
14 are doing he may choose to talk about in one of his
15 press briefings. But that's -- we provide
16 information to him and he lets us know, you know,
17 which part of that -- like, for instance, when Dr.
18 Pfeffer went up to talk about Ready for Learning a
19 few weeks ago, we made that information available,
20 and then the Governor decided "that's something that
21 I want to talk about to a statewide audience." And
22 we have found that that is the most effective way of
23 getting out information very quickly across the
24 state, and that's something that -- as we identify
25 things that we feel like are something for him to

1 consider, we give that information to him and then he
2 makes the ultimate decision on -- of how he wants to
3 address that.

4 So we'll -- we will continue in that vein at
5 this point, because we feel like that up to this
6 point that has been very helpful and effective in
7 getting information out.

8 One thing we learned is that sometimes even
9 though we talk about things, we put out the facts,
10 social media doesn't always follow our timeline; it
11 doesn't always follow our released information the
12 way we'd like for it to. So we are monitoring that
13 and then responding to that, as necessary, when we
14 see that there are some confusing things out there.
15 And that's why we noticed that in the last few days
16 some of the things we address today were specifically
17 in response to some of the concerns that we saw
18 coming out on social media and through the feedback
19 from teachers and other patrons around the state.

20 MS. CHAMBERS: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: And, once again, I remind that
22 these minutes in this meeting will be archived, and
23 so the entire public will be able to access those and
24 maybe get clarification on some things they were not
25 otherwise. All of the public comments will be linked

1 so that everyone can read and see and hear the kinds
2 of comments that were made. It's unfortunate that we
3 have had to adjust it this way, because we do like to
4 hear from the public, but, you know, it couldn't be.

5 And before we adjourn, I'd like to welcome Dr.
6 Pride on as the new Assistant Commissioner for
7 Learning Service and wish her well with that, as well
8 as Ms. Smith and Dr. Hernandez as they transition.
9 There may be others. If there are, I apologize for
10 -- I'm not overlooking -- sometimes when you start
11 naming people, you accidentally overlook somebody.
12 But it's not because of the lack of importance.

13 So, do I have a motion to adjourn?

14 DR. MOORE: I have one more thing, Diane. I'm
15 sorry.

16 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Sure. Dr. Moore.

17 DR. MOORE: Commissioner, I did want to know is
18 there -- do y'all have scheduled meetings with
19 superintendents in the near future and as y'all talk
20 and look at this? A great number of concerns can be
21 ameliorated through great leadership in our
22 districts, with clear communication plans, and I
23 would hope that y'all are conveying that as you meet
24 with superintendents.

25 Second to that, a lot of the emails we got are

1 regarding PPE and other things, funding. And I think
2 -- I don't know how -- we, myself included, need to
3 better stress to members to go to their local boards,
4 as local boards are discussing how to implement CARES
5 funding and work with these superintendents.

6 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. Thank you for that.

7 We are having the ongoing communication with the
8 superintendent group that's part of Senator -- or,
9 excuse me -- Secretary Ward's re-engagement
10 committee. It is a subcommittee within that.
11 There's also one for Higher Education. So that -- we
12 don't see -- there's no foreseeable end to the
13 meetings of that group; because we know that things
14 are changing and that's the group that helps us
15 understand, you know, how -- well, the feedback, the
16 process questions, and things like that.

17 There's also the ongoing -- I expect ongoing
18 communication and feedback through the TLAG, the
19 Teacher Leader Advisory Group, that we'll be working
20 with.

21 And then Ms. Saracini has started a -- I guess
22 -- I'm not sure if that's what they call it, but it's
23 kind of a teacher self-care working group that
24 Educator Effectiveness is working with in trying to
25 help provide resources and give an understanding of

1 the things teachers are facing as they get ready to
2 go back to school, and these preparations, and to
3 help -- to guide us in understanding what types of
4 resources need to be put out there for them.

5 We also continue to have regular meetings with
6 the co-op directors. Right now, we're doing that
7 twice a week, regular Zoom meetings with them. And
8 that's one of the ways that we get information out to
9 the districts and get feedback from the districts.

10 And I think our next meeting with the TLAG group
11 -- Ms. Saracini is working on that to happen next
12 week, next Friday.

13 So we anticipate more opportunities for a wide-
14 range of stakeholders that -- and we get requests
15 frequently for -- to appear on Zoom. I had an
16 opportunity a couple of weeks ago to be on Zoom with
17 the Arkansas Academy of Pediatrics, I think was the
18 name of it; so the medical community. Just a number
19 of community groups are asking for our input and
20 involvement, and then some dialogue so that they can
21 understand what's happening. And then we can get
22 feedback from them to understand kind of what
23 concerns are coming up with other groups that maybe
24 we're not typically engaged with on a regular basis.

25 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Did that --

1 DR. MOORE: That's great. Thank you all.

2 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Newton, did you have
3 something?

4 And I will also encourage the leaders in each of
5 these districts to realize that you can't go through
6 the motions of putting it in a newspaper or sending
7 it out online because we still have a lot of people
8 who don't have access to either of those, either by
9 choice or circumstance. So, you know, there's
10 nothing that I have found as a teacher and
11 administrator beats going to the home and having a
12 conversation, if -- and social distance and wear your
13 mask, but, you know, it's summertime and there's
14 porches and yards. And just don't presume you've
15 reached everybody just because you put it online or
16 put it in a newspaper. You have to get down to the
17 individual parent level and answer -- be willing to
18 answer their questions.

19 MS. NEWTON: Ms. Zook, can I make a comment real
20 quickly?

21 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Ms. Newton.

22 MS. NEWTON: First, I want to thank the staff of
23 the Department for their hard work in the last few
24 months. I know it's been difficult and they've spent
25 countless hours doing this, and it didn't happen

1 magically; it was a lot of sweat and tears, I'm sure.
2 So thank you for all of your hard work. It's very
3 much appreciated by us and I'm sure the educators in
4 Arkansas.

5 I do have one -- if someone from the Department
6 can answer this question -- this is an email that
7 I've been getting and that I wanted to make sure that
8 -- I'm sure that there are others asking the same
9 question about the face-to-face RISE training. Could
10 someone from the Department speak to the other
11 opportunities that are available for RISE training,
12 besides face-to-face? I don't know if Ms. Smith is
13 on where she could speak to that?

14 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Yes, Ms. Smith has just
15 appeared. She's been on; she just hasn't -- we just
16 haven't seen her smiling face.

17 Ms. Smith, would you -- this may be your last
18 question for the -- in your new -- in your old
19 assignment.

20 MS. SMITH: Stacy Smith, Assistant Commissioner
21 for Learning Services.

22 So, yes. So, RISE Academy K-2 and 3-6 are face-
23 to-face, but we have multiple pathways for teachers
24 to get Science of Reading training. And one of the
25 pathways is Pathway D, and you can find that on our

1 RISEArkansas.org page. And Pathway D is the AETN
2 videos that we have made as a state, plus three
3 additional face-to-face days. But those face-to-face
4 days, we've made them all virtual PD. So there is an
5 actual virtual pathway for teachers that they can use
6 through PBS and through their educational cooperative
7 and not have to do the face-to-face RISE Academy --
8 and they both support each other. And, you know, if
9 they chose to do that pathway this year and wanted to
10 come back and do the RISE Academy in the future, they
11 could. But it does fulfill the requirement.

12 There's also a Pathway N, which is the Letters-
13 Edition 3 training. There is a cost associated with
14 that, that either an individual teacher would have to
15 pay for or the district if they did that pathway.

16 But Pathway D is free, based on their
17 educational cooperative and through the Arkansas PBS.

18 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

19 MS. SMITH: You're welcome.

20 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: I see there was a question about
21 whether or not the Board would be notified about
22 Friday's meeting on the Teacher Leadership Advisory
23 Group. You can direct those questions -- or if you
24 want to be included, you can direct that to Ms.
25 Saracini.

1 Mr. Secretary, we're going to wear your mask
2 out.

3 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah, that's okay. I just now
4 saw the question.

5 No, because inviting you makes it a public
6 meeting and --

7 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Oh, that's right.

8 SECRETARY KEY: So because of -- I think one of
9 the things we need to be sensitive to is some of
10 these conversations are going to be sensitive in
11 nature, concerns that are shared. Obviously, we
12 believe in open meetings, we believe in dialogue.
13 But we also believe that there needs to be a safe
14 space created in some of these cases for teachers to
15 have -- and stakeholders in general to be able to
16 have frank conversations, and I just think we need to
17 respect that.

18 Now things that come out of that meeting that
19 are of interest to the State Board members, we'll
20 certainly bring those out and those things can be
21 made public. But -- and it should be made public and
22 have been made public. But it's not an open meeting
23 as we typically think of for a State Board meeting.

24 CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Okay. Thank you for that
25 clarification.

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Anything else?

Do I have a motion for adjournment?

MS. DEAN: So moved.

CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Second?

MS. WOODS: Second.

CHAIRMAN ZOOK: Motion made by Ms. Dean, second
by Ms. Woods to adjourn.

All in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN ZOOK: And, Ms. Dean, I officially
leave this for you.

MS. DEAN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ZOOK: See y'all later.

(The meeting was concluded at 1:00 p.m.)

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EXHIBIT ONE (1)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, State Board of Education, on June 29, 2020 (via livestream); 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: July 4, 2020.

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

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