

Transcript of the Testimony of

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Bushman Court Reporting

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ARKANSAS DIVISION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

DECEMBER 16, 2020
9:00 a.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

DEBORAH COFFMAN, Chair/DESE Asst. Commissioner -
Public School Accountability

PANEL MEMBERS: (VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE)

TOYCE NEWTON, Former State Board of Ed. Member
DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS, Former State Board of Ed. Member
PHIL BALDWIN, CEO, Citizens Bank
SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY, Division of Career & Technical
Education - Associate Director for Career Readiness

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MARY CLAIRE HYATT, DESE Attorney

ALSO APPEARING:

TRACY WEBB, DESE Coordinator of Monitoring and Systems Support
TRIPP WALTER, ASPRC
JOANNA LEER, ASPRC

LOCATION:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

AGENDA ITEM I:

CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Good morning. The December 16th, 2020 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the meeting and request that each person speaking today please state your name and title, for the record, and ask you to clearly speak into the microphone for the benefit of the audience and the --live streaming and the recording audience. A transcript of this meeting will be posted on the DESE website.

So, with that said, good morning, Ms. Webb.

MS. TRACY WEBB: Good morning.

CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Item Number 1, please.

AGENDA ITEM II(1): CONSIDERATION OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER RENEWAL APPLICATION - ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

MS. TRACY WEBB: Okay. Item Number 1 is a Consideration of Open-Enrollment Charter Renewal Application for Arkansas Connections Academy. The school is a virtual open-enrollment charter school that serves students in grades K-12 and has an enrollment cap of 3,000 students. The charter was originally awarded in November of 2015, and expires on June 30th, 2021. The district is requesting a

1 renewal for five years.

2 Today we have Superintendent Darla Garner (sic)
3 and the State Account Relations, Mr. Bryce Adams, on
4 Zoom, as well as several members of their team, to
5 present the application.

6 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Good morning, Arkansas
7 Connections Academy.

8 DR. DENNIS BECK: Good morning. I've --

9 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: I ask that all of the
10 members that are speaking on behalf of the school, if
11 you will raise your right hand? Do you swear or
12 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
13 be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
14 truth?

15 (CHORUS OF AFFIRMATIONS)

16 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay, thank you. And do
17 we know who's starting?

18 DR. DENNIS BECK: Me.

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay. You'll have
20 approx -- 20 -- approximate 20 minutes for your
21 presentation. Thank you.

22 PRESENTATION:

23 DR. DENNIS BECK: All right. Well, good
24 morning. And, first of all, thank you for this
25 opportunity to present this morning. I'm Dr. Dennis

1 Beck; I'm the board president of ARCA. Also with us
2 today, from our school board, is Virginia Walden
3 Ford, the board treasurer and subject of the new
4 school choice movie. Ms. Virginia.

5 Thank you for your time today and for
6 considering ARCA's charter renewal application.

7 My day-job is as a professor of Educational
8 Technology and Online Learning at the University of
9 Arkansas in Fayetteville. I teach teachers how to
10 use technology in their classrooms and all of my work
11 focuses on how to teach online. I've published on
12 digital educational equity, for special education and
13 culturally and linguistically diverse students, in
14 fully online schools. I've been at the U of A for
15 over 10 years.

16 Several years ago, I was surprised to learn that
17 there was only one full-time online charter school in
18 the state of Arkansas, and that started my journey in
19 co-founding Arkansas Connections Academy. I've
20 learned so much in the process, and I'm pleased and
21 thankful that, through ARCA, Arkansas has another
22 quality full-time online learning school. This is
23 even more important during the Covid-19 pandemic, as
24 so many students have needed us, and we've been able
25 to help so many other schools and school districts,

1 across the state.

2 As school board president, I've had the
3 privilege to watch our school leader transform our
4 school from a small online program, with a few
5 hundred students, into a vibrant school with nearly
6 3,000 students. I want to introduce to you who has
7 made this possible. I'm proud to introduce our
8 school leader, Darla Gardner, who will lead the rest
9 of the presentation. Ms. Gardner.

10 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Thank you, Dr. Beck. Good
11 morning, everyone. I'm Darla Gardner. I am the
12 school leader at Arkansas Connections Academy. And
13 I'm thrilled to be here today to discuss our charter
14 renewal and also to share some exciting things with
15 you that have been happening since we opened in 2016.

16 On your screen you see our learning triad and it
17 really is student-centered. Our learning coaches
18 work together with our teachers; they truly are
19 partners. Our learning coaches are typically the
20 students' parents; not always; sometimes the parents
21 will assign another adult -- an aunt, an uncle, a
22 grandparent. And we really just work together with
23 them to personalize the student's instruction and
24 help them be the very best they can be. It's always
25 interesting, because every year, since we've -- we've

1 grown a lot -- and we'll talk about that in a few
2 minutes -- I always meet with our new teachers, and,
3 right now, I've been doing that recently. And every
4 year I always hear the same thing, "Darla, I had no
5 idea that I would know my students so well." "I knew
6 them more in our virtual world than I did in the
7 brick-and-mortar world." And another thing I hear is
8 that, "Maybe, in the regular classroom, I would talk
9 to parents twice a year, at conferences, and now I
10 have parents that I speak with every day." So it
11 truly is a partnership and a collaboration to work on
12 that student success.

13 The curriculum also plays another role in that.
14 And we have asynchronous and live lesson instruction,
15 and those live lessons are -- have a variety of
16 purposes. Some of them are for dyslexia instruction,
17 some are whole group instruction, some may be
18 targeted small group interventions, and, you know, we
19 always have the fun pieces, too, for show-and-tell,
20 just to build student engagement, and to help
21 students interact with one another.

22 We began, in 2016, with right at 200 students
23 and 11 staff members. And, if you look at the map,
24 on the screen, we literally do have students all over
25 the state. And I'm excited to announce that we do

1 have almost 3,000 students currently enrolled with us
2 and we have 115 staff members all over the state, as
3 well. Our growth has been tremendous. We have seen
4 consistent growth every year since we opened, even
5 pre-Covid, but, of course, this year we've seen --
6 we've seen an enormous growth. We do have 12% of our
7 students that are on an individualized education plan
8 and 8% have a 504 plan.

9 The picture on the screen is one of our field
10 trips from last year. We're very -- we get very
11 excited about our field trips at Arkansas Connections
12 Academy. Last year, we actually had 50 field trips
13 and events planned, for our families, all over the
14 state of Arkansas. To name a few: Professor Bowl;
15 Huckabee Nature Center; we had a virtual talent show;
16 Mystic Caverns; Museum of Discovery; I know I'm
17 leaving something out. We average around five a
18 month. Of course, we have not been having our field
19 trips so far this year. We're waiting till Covid's
20 over to have those in-person trips. But it's always
21 a fun time for families to meet with one another,
22 students to share, and also to meet with our staff.

23 Students come to us for a variety of reasons.
24 Some need flexibility; some want to accelerate their
25 learning, they're gifted students; we have some

1 students that have medical needs; we have athletes
2 and performers. Actually, right now we do have a
3 brother and sister that are figure skaters and they
4 compete nationally, so they need the flexibility of
5 our program to maintain their practice schedule and
6 their competition schedule.

7 Something did happen, that's new, that I wanted
8 to share with you. We -- it was our first graduating
9 class, since we started with the 9th grade and we
10 added a year -- a grade level each year. And we were
11 unable to have our large graduation ceremony. We did
12 get it approved to have individual graduation
13 ceremonies for those students and families who were
14 interested. And one of our seniors showed up with
15 her family, and her toddler, and we celebrated
16 graduation with her. And her mother was in tears; I
17 know I was in tears; and her mom thanked us; and she
18 told me, she said, "I really thought this day would
19 never happen." And it did. And it just -- it made
20 our hearts warm, and that is why we do what we do.

21 There are two indicators that we think are
22 really important for our school. One of that is our
23 state report card, and that's across the top of the
24 screen. And our state report card for the previous
25 three years has been a "C". We've been just below

1 the state average. Although this isn't the score
2 that we want to have, we are proud of the score,
3 given our unique student population and the
4 challenges that we see many of our students face.
5 The other indicator is just below that, and that is
6 our parent satisfaction survey results. We send out
7 a parent survey in March and it's -- when I say we
8 send it out, it's actually completed by a
9 third-party. So we were very excited when we
10 received these scores in the spring and pleased to
11 see that 93% of our families give ARCA an "A" or "B",
12 86% agree that their child's attitude towards
13 learning has improved, since enrolling with us, and
14 then 97% of our families are satisfied with the
15 helpfulness of their teacher. Exciting stuff.

16 In addition to the previous factors, the report
17 card and our parent satisfaction survey, we also have
18 our charter goals. And, across the left side of the
19 screen, you see our current charter goals. On the
20 right side of the screen are our proposed goals,
21 moving forward. Since our charter was initially
22 approved, there's been changes in ESSA guidelines and
23 state assessments and we just want to make sure that
24 our goals align with those updated requirements. On
25 goals 1-3, on the left side, we are proposing the

1 changes, so that they will look at the actual precise
2 score instead of just a percent total proficient.
3 And then, goals 4-6 on the left, our proposal is to
4 combine those to goal 4 on the right. That is just
5 combining them, so that we have a value-added growth
6 score that's going to meet or exceed the state
7 average. The two goals that are highlighted in
8 yellow are goals that we want to add, moving forward.
9 The first one is a school quality and student success
10 indicator, and we think that is incredibly important.
11 It has components such as science achievement,
12 reading at grade level, on-time credits, student
13 engagement, and there are a few others that have to
14 do with the ACT. So we want to include that, moving
15 forward. And then, the last highlighted goal, is
16 that 85% of our full academic year students earn a
17 quarter of their required credits to remain on-track
18 to graduate. This doesn't mean that we do not want
19 all of -- 100% of our students to graduate, because
20 we do and we have supports in place to make that
21 happen. We have a very strong 12th grade advisory
22 team; we have credit recovery; we have summer
23 programs; we really have processes in place so that
24 we're trying to get all students across that finish
25 line.

1 There's always room for improvement at ARCA and
2 we are constantly reviewing our goals and our
3 progress. And this isn't just something that the
4 leadership team looks at once a month; this is
5 weekly; and it's the entire school. Our entire staff
6 is involved in our planning and our processes and our
7 review of that progress. We have a quarterly meeting
8 that is school-wide to review all of our goals.
9 Where are we at; what are we doing to maintain or to
10 achieve that goal; what isn't working; and what do we
11 need to fix and do differently? Another piece of
12 that is our staff is -- every staff member is in a
13 weekly PLC meeting and they all have smart goals;
14 it's tracked; they're data rich; they're
15 student-driven. It's amazing to hear the
16 conversations that are happening within those PLC's.
17 That's another thing that we're very proud of, at
18 ARCA, is that we implemented professional learning
19 communities year-one, when we opened, and we've been
20 able to use professional development funds every
21 summer to send staff to Solution Tree's conferences,
22 to really get engrossed and to understand the impact
23 that PLC's can have on student achievement.

24 There's a couple of other things that we
25 implemented this year. The first one is we were able

1 to hire an interventionist. We knew that that was
2 going to be critical, coming off of the spring and
3 students being out of classes, and, with our
4 enrollment, we knew that we needed to make sure that
5 we find out exactly where a student is and get them
6 the interventions and get them the needed resources
7 immediately. So we have an interventionist on staff
8 with us now. We have intervention groups regularly
9 happening. This year we also had a -- have a
10 brand-new benchmark. We went to the NWEA MAP
11 Assessment and we're giving that three times a year.
12 So that was a great tool to have right at the
13 beginning of this school year. Our students all took
14 that benchmark assessment, then we were able to pull
15 that data in PLC's to get students additional
16 resources and the help that they need.

17 Another -- the other piece that we really look
18 at is really grabbing all resources that we can
19 across the state, and even outside of the state, to
20 make sure that we're better, that we're increasing
21 our ability to assist students. And one of the
22 resources that we've taken advantage of are the APSRC
23 administrator trainings. We have new administrators
24 this year, with our growth, and they attend that
25 training. And, last year, APSRC did present to our

1 entire staff about the ESSA guidelines and how the
2 calculation of our report cards, and things that we
3 really need to make sure that we're paying attention
4 to, to implement that's going to be best for student
5 achievement.

6 I love this picture. This is a picture of our
7 current staff. And we had a fabulous photographer
8 that was able to take individual pictures and put us
9 all together, since we were not able to meet in
10 person this school year; so it is socially distant.
11 But, with our staff, like I said, we have 115
12 teachers. And we also do a survey with our staff
13 twice a year, and these are a couple of comments from
14 that survey. "We're very proud of our staff." "We
15 feel -- we feel like we're one big family."
16 Actually, I'm going to brag a little bit, because we
17 average a 91% staff retention rate, which I think is
18 incredible, with our growth and the challenges that
19 we're -- that we've been faced with, in education,
20 this year.

21 This is another proud moment. We've had the
22 opportunity -- it's been a challenging year for
23 educators across the state of Arkansas, and ARCA has
24 had the opportunity to work with many district or
25 state -- state departments, as well as other

1 districts across the state, in best practices in
2 virtual learning. And we received this letter as a
3 thank you, from the State Department, because we had
4 teachers that created videos for teacher evaluations,
5 in TESS, that just kind of show what -- it kind of
6 explained what you're looking for when you're having
7 a live lesson or a virtual session with a student.
8 So we're proud of being able to contribute to help
9 all students in our state. We also -- I've met with
10 a Parent and Family Engagement Committee. ARCA also
11 presented at Data Quest on RTI practices and virtual
12 education. So it's something that we're committed
13 to, not only for ARCA, but for all kids in the state.

14 And I want to -- I'm going to -- you know,
15 graduation sums up the entire year. That's the
16 celebration for the year. So I'm going to end my
17 presentation today with just a small clip of -- or, a
18 small video that was added to our virtual graduation
19 this year. So we will --

20 I will end there, Bryce.

21 Thank you.

22 (THEREUPON, a video was played and the
23 proceedings resumed as follows, to-wit:)

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Gardner.
25 Does that end your presentation?

1 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Yes. I'm sorry; I was
2 trying to get off mute. Yes, it does.

3 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay. Before we get
4 into the waivers, I just need to ask a couple of
5 clarifying questions. On your goal page -- it's page
6 13 in your application -- in the first three new
7 goals, you broke down your weighted achievement by
8 grade levels. However, your school is -- in our
9 accountability system as a K12 school, so your ESSA
10 report card is a K12 report. So I was just
11 interested in how you plan to calculate these goals?

12 MS. DARLA GARDNER: I'm going to -- Matt Wicks
13 is joining us and I'm going to let him explain the
14 calculation piece of that. I think he'll be able to
15 explain that better than I am.

16 MR. MATTHEW WICKS: Hi. Matthew Wicks, Director
17 of School Accountability at Pearson Online and
18 Blended Learning, and I support ARCA and other
19 Connections Academy schools on accountability
20 measures.

21 That's a really good question. It was my
22 understanding is that the requirement, when it came
23 to proficiency related measurements, that they needed
24 to be broken down by grade bands. But, as your
25 question indicates, at the report card level, they

1 report it as one measure, which for ARCA is a K12
2 school. So what our plan was to do was to take the
3 individualized data that we get from the -- that the
4 school receives from the State Department of
5 Education and break those calculations down ourselves
6 for the three different grade bands, and then compare
7 those to -- by looking at other schools that are
8 either an elementary school or middle school, we will
9 know what the state average is, even though, on the
10 ARCA report card, the state average will be for the
11 9-12. But that way we can see what the state average
12 was for elementary school; do the calculation
13 ourselves based on the information and do that
14 comparison. Does that answer your question?

15 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: It does. The concern is
16 that there are different -- each grade span --
17 elementary, middle, and high school grade spans are
18 calculated statistically by those grade spans. And
19 so, in your work that you're doing onsite, it's
20 important that you're following the guidelines of
21 those different statistical cut-scores, in your
22 reporting. So it was just -- it's a caution.
23 Because, when I look at the other parts, like
24 value-added growth score, I mean that's certainly
25 something where the school can make a large

1 improvement. You are -- your growth score is quite
2 low at 75.65 for 2019. So there's obviously a lot of
3 room that can be improved there. Your SQSS score is
4 quite -- already above the state average, which is
5 great and we'd love you to improve that.

6 And then, on the number six, Darla, you said
7 this, but I didn't understand what you said -- when
8 you said 85% of F-A-Y -- and what is F-A-Y?

9 MS. DARLA GARDNER: That's Full Academic Year.
10 So the students that are with us the entire year.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So, once again, that is
12 not -- so this one was confusing to me, because if
13 you're counting full-year graduation or full academic
14 year to say "Are they on-track at each of these
15 points," that's on-time credits. If you're looking
16 at graduation rate, of course, that's a totally
17 different calculations and we do have federal
18 guidelines on how that's calculated.

19 So the way I'm reading this is your sixth goal
20 is to insure that all of your students are on-time at
21 each of the grade levels. Is that correct?

22 MR. MATTHEW WICKS: This is --

23 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Yes. Sorry, Matt.

24 MR. MATTHEW WICKS: Yeah. This is Matt. Just
25 to -- it is a little bit confusing. What it's

1 basically looking at is these students, are they
2 making the appropriate progress? So that even if we
3 receive a student that comes in behind credit, we
4 want to hold ourselves accountable for at least
5 making sure that, at minimum, they're earning
6 one-quarter worth of their credits that year.
7 Ideally, we also want to try to catch them up, but,
8 at minimum, we want to make sure that during the time
9 that they're with us that they're making the
10 appropriate level of progress.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you for that
12 clarification. Ms. Hyatt, If you'll -- Ms. Hyatt, if
13 you'll walk us through the waivers, please.

14 WAIVERS:

15 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Good morning. Mary
16 Claire Hyatt, Arkansas Department of Education. I'll
17 do this how I did yesterday, where I will address the
18 waivers where we kind of need to work through a
19 couple of things first and then give you an overview
20 of the other waiver categories. And I'm going to
21 grab my pen really quickly. Sorry. Okay. So the
22 first one, it's really just a clarification, so that
23 we can have a clean record. On their School Calendar
24 waivers, they have a waiver of the six-hour
25 instructional day since they are more self-paced. I

1 wanted to make sure that we still had 6-16-102(a)(5),
2 which is the recess provision. And I think, yes, but
3 how it was written in the application I got a little
4 confused. So if I could just get a confirmation
5 there?

6 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Yes. This is Bryce Adams,
7 State Account Relations for Pearson Online and
8 Blended Learning, helping out with the waivers here.
9 And that's correct, the intent is to keep that
10 (a)(5).

11 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Thank you. Okay. So on
12 their Teacher Licensure waivers everything looks good
13 to me. My only question was, is whether they needed
14 a waiver for PE licensure, because there is a
15 separate provision for PE licensure. Those
16 provisions are 7.09 and 7.10 in the rules governing
17 Nutrition and Physical Activity. So if there's -- if
18 it's necessary to add the PE licensure piece, we can
19 do that. I just need to know.

20 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Yes.

21 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Okay. The next -- and
22 we've talked about this with most of the schools --
23 has to do with the School Counselor piece. So they
24 have asked for a waiver of Counselor Licensure and
25 Counselor Ratio. As you know, the School Counseling

1 Improvement Act that was passed in 2019 has a
2 provision in there that requires the school's
3 Comprehensive School Counseling Plan to be
4 administered by a licensed school counselor. So if
5 the school counseling plan is not going to be
6 administered by a licensed school counselor, a waiver
7 of 6-18-2003(a)(2)(a) is necessary.

8 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: The school does not require a
9 waiver on these. The counseling plan is administered
10 by a licensed counselor. And the school also meets
11 the 90/10 percent requirement for time spent. The
12 only waiver that's necessary, under school
13 counselors, is the ratio.

14 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: So you don't need a
15 waiver of the guidance counselor licensure piece at
16 all?

17 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Correct.

18 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Okay.

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ratio is the ratio of
20 counselor to students?

21 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: That's correct.

22 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: That's correct.

23 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: The next piece -- I
24 think also just a little bit of clean-up -- has to do
25 with their attendance waivers. They were rescinding

1 these. But there's a small piece, which is in
2 6-18-213(a)(2), which has to do with counting
3 attendance for virtual students, essentially. I
4 believe they still need that waiver since their
5 students are virtual and not in a classroom. So if I
6 could get a confirmation that that piece was intended
7 to stay?

8 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: We agree. That was a good
9 catch.

10 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Okay. On the class size
11 and teaching load waivers, there is a necessary
12 waiver of Standard 1(a)(5) and Section 3 of the class
13 size rules, if you're not meeting class size. I know
14 we talked about teaching load does not apply to the
15 virtual schools, but class size does not have that
16 same language in there. So if that is not being
17 followed, we'll need to add those two pieces.

18 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: And we agree with that. Yes.

19 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Lastly, just to add to
20 your recess waiver, we'll need to add Section 7.11 of
21 the rules governing Nutrition and Physical Activity.

22 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Agree, as well.

23 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Okay. Just a couple of
24 questions on two pieces. They're pretty much the
25 same question; have to do with personnel policies and

1 salary schedules. It was clear, from the rationale
2 in the application, that they do have personnel
3 policies, that they're just different than what's
4 required by the law. So they have narrowed their
5 waivers to the pieces that they need, which we
6 definitely appreciate. One of the questions I have
7 has to do with the requested waiver of Section 6 of
8 the rules governing Documents Posted to School
9 District Websites. So 6.01 requires you to have
10 personnel policies and salary schedules that match
11 what's in the law, so it's obvious why a waiver is
12 necessary there. But the rest of the section just
13 requires you to post things and requires us to
14 monitor that. So I wasn't exactly sure what the need
15 for the waiver of that is, because you're able to
16 have personnel policies or schedules that are
17 different and still post them on the website.

18 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Right. So it's unrelated to
19 the personnel policies and it, instead, is specific
20 only to the salary schedule. The school does have
21 personnel policies and posts those on the website, as
22 well. As far as the salary schedule goes, it could
23 be an issue with the definition and we may just be
24 thinking of different things. But, when I picture a
25 salary schedule, I think a table that has years

1 experience and you can follow the table to find out
2 how much a teacher is compensated -- and that's not
3 the way that the salary structures work. So, right
4 now, Arkansas Connections Academy does post the
5 identified salary information on its website, but
6 does not have a salary schedule, per se, in the form
7 of that kind of minimum teacher salary schedule, like
8 you would see in the code.

9 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: That makes sense. So is
10 it fair to limit the waiver of Section 6.02, 03, and
11 04, just for your salary schedule? So maintaining --

12 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Yes.

13 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: -- the requirement to
14 post the personnel policies, but waiving the
15 requirement to post the salary schedules, since they
16 don't exist in the same way?

17 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Yes, that's the intention.

18 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Okay. And I had the
19 same question under Personnel Policies, but, since
20 we've cleared it up, I'll skip right over that. The
21 next one has to do with CPR. We've talked about this
22 several times in the past couple of meetings. There
23 were some schools that were granted a waiver of CPR,
24 I believe, before it was a graduation requirement, or
25 before it was prohibited to grant waivers of

1 graduation requirements. I'm not exactly sure what
2 happened, because it was before my time here. We're
3 not permitted to grant waivers, through charter or
4 through the 1240 waiver processes, of graduation
5 requirements. CPR is a graduation requirement, so I
6 don't believe it's permissible to waive that. We did
7 have that conversation. Bryce and I talked about
8 that when we had our meeting with the school, but in
9 their application they have requested a continuation
10 of the waiver. So it's my position that it would be
11 prohibited for the panel to grant that.

12 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: And this is one that the
13 school can rescind now. Connections has always had
14 CPR instruction. At issue was only the hands-on
15 component, since it's a virtual school. But we will
16 look for ways to work with DESE, in the future, to
17 figure out how to do that psychomotor component to
18 CPR and add that into the curriculum. Maybe we do it
19 through a live lesson. We'll figure that one out.
20 But this one is okay to rescind.

21 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Great. Thank you. And
22 that is the last of the legal issues that need to be
23 cleaned up. I'll give you a brief overview of the
24 other waiver areas, and then if you have any
25 questions we can address them. So they do have the

1 waivers of the library/media, library/media
2 specialist; superintendent licensure; Alternative
3 Learning Environment; they have the eye and vision
4 screening; school nurse; Fire Marshall program; being
5 a virtual school; food services; gifted and talented;
6 they also have a waiver of the general business
7 manager -- I believe that's because they use their
8 CMO for the business manager. You contract that out;
9 is that right, Bryce?

10 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: That's correct.

11 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: And then board of
12 directors, since they are appointed, not elected;
13 principal licensure; displaying the flag, since they
14 are a virtual school. And that's about it. Are
15 there any questions for me?

16 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: What about -- do we --
17 they have the right one for period of silence?

18 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: I believe so. That
19 waiver is pretty typical in the virtual context.

20 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Right.

21 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Since all of the
22 students aren't --

23 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: On waiver number 23 it
24 mentioned period of silence, but then it talked about
25 the pledge of allegiance.

1 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Yeah. Wait, 25 is
2 pledge of allegiance, 23 is period of silence, is
3 what I have.

4 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: They just had the same
5 answer on both one -- both.

6 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: She's looking at their
7 application (INAUDIBLE).

8 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: But the code is correct?

9 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: What? Yeah, I believe
10 that it is. We might just have had a copy-and-paste
11 issue or something. But, yes, I have 23 is the
12 period of silence, and 25 is the pledge of
13 allegiance, and the correct code sections there.

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay. I also read the
15 explanation and that's where it didn't match.

16 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: I see.

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And then did you address
18 curriculum? Was it just the CPR thing? Oh,
19 instructional materials, that's the other one.

20 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Instructional materials,
21 right. So we did have them confirm, in their
22 application, that all of the instructional materials
23 are free for the students. I'm trying to find it in
24 my notes really quickly. Sorry. So the law piece
25 that's here, it has to do with -- there's a provision

1 in the code that requires schools to provide teachers
2 a certain amount of funding, per student, in their
3 classroom or a set amount. I think it's \$500
4 dollars, whichever is greater. In the virtual
5 context, typically, we see schools asking to waive
6 that, because they are in a virtual classroom
7 setting, not a traditional classroom setting, or
8 because they have provided the teachers with
9 everything they need. Bryce might want to speak more
10 to exactly what Connections does.

11 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: That's right. So everything
12 that the teachers need, for their classrooms, is
13 already provided. Everything that students need, for
14 their study, is shipped to their home address in a
15 big box. It's all provided at no cost to the
16 students, no cost to the teachers. And it's all --
17 matches up with the Arkansas Academic Content
18 Standards.

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Hyatt.
20 Panel, let's start with our questions. Ms. Newton?

21 QUESTIONS FROM PANEL:

22 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I don't have any
23 questions.

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

25 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Yes, thank you. The

1 only question I have is just a question about your
2 enrollment. And you all have increased enrollment
3 tremendously each of the last four years that I'm
4 looking at, and I'm just curious as to what you see
5 coming at you in the future year, especially given
6 the Covid situation. And is there a capacity limit
7 that you are concerned about with that, moving
8 forward?

9 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Darla, do you want to start
10 with that one or you want me to --

11 MS. DARLA GARDNER: You can start with that.

12 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Sure. So I've shared my
13 screen again, to -- so everybody can take a look at
14 the enrollment growth that's happened over the last
15 four years. You can see that it's -- it's actually
16 pretty steady. This is not just a Covid explosion of
17 enrollment; it's been strong and steady growth. They
18 ended last year -- the year be -- as Covid was just
19 starting, at 2,000 students and they're now at their
20 3,000 cap. System-wide, because we support a number
21 of virtual schools across the country, we suspect
22 that there will be some families that, once the
23 vaccine is available, once things are sort of back to
24 normal, will return to the brick-and-mortar. But
25 we're starting to see signs that there are a lot of

1 families that have really fallen in love with the
2 virtual model. They didn't have access to it before.
3 So we think that there's going to be enrollment
4 headed both directions. We also have seen really
5 good retention rates across Arkansas. So I would
6 anticipate that the school should hold steady or
7 continue to grow. We are not anticipating or
8 planning around a massive infl -- or, outflow of
9 students. One of the best parts about virtual
10 schools, too, is that they scale very well. All
11 Darla has to do is identify the top teachers from
12 around the state, hire them up, we get them
13 onboarded, we help them with professional
14 development. But she's not constrained by building
15 capacity in the same way that brick-and-mortars would
16 be.

17 MR. PHIL BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you, very much.
18 I was just curious about that. Two comments: One,
19 the 91% staff retention rate is outstanding. That's
20 hard to do for any of us, and that was a real
21 strength of your program. It tells me a lot about
22 the morale of your team. And then, the final
23 comment, would be someone needs to come and teach me
24 that graduation dance that your students did. That
25 was -- that whole video was fantastic. Thank you.

1 DR. DENNIS BECK: I'll get my son to do it. I'm
2 pretty sure it was a Fortnite dance.

3 MR. PHIL BALDWIN: Thank you.

4 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Baldwin.
5 And just -- on page 42 is the enrollment cap request
6 to increase to 7,000, over the next five years. Dr.
7 Williams?

8 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Good
9 morning and thank you; great presentation. A couple
10 of questions here. This really looks great. What's
11 your projection? Why the 7,000? What do you see
12 driving that? That's the number that, when I looked
13 at this, that kind of gave me pause, here, for a
14 minute, especially with the number of high schools
15 across the state -- the large high schools all going
16 virtual also; we have the Arkansas Virtual Academy.
17 And so there's a lot going on out there in the
18 virtual realm. So can you help me understand your
19 thinking on this?

20 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Sure. We agree. And we love
21 to see it. I love seeing all of the districts
22 offering this, as well. I think that there are a lot
23 of students that will like to stay with their
24 districts in the virtual setting, and there are some
25 that are going to like facets of our program, or

1 other statewide on -- programs better and come enroll
2 with us. And I think that there's room for all of us
3 to help students in this way. The numbers
4 specifically come from what we've observed over the
5 last four years, which is a near doubling each year
6 of enrollment. It starts out with an increase to
7 4,500, starting next year. We saw almost 7,000
8 applications this year alone. Again, I think that
9 might taper off a little bit, as things get back to
10 normal, but we do think that this could be a new
11 normal, where there's new demand across the state for
12 virtual learning. After that initial burst, the
13 enrollment cap increases much more slowly. We think
14 that Darla has done such a good job that there's room
15 -- if there's interest, there's room for all of these
16 families and we'd much rather say yes to enrollment
17 than have students turned away. So that's the
18 thinking behind it, just based on what we've
19 observed, growth inside Covid, and outside of Covid,
20 and based on the school's capacity and where they're
21 at.

22 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.
23 Thank you. I just want to follow-up one oth -- I
24 noticed on your -- the ESSA grade that you had a "C"
25 for the last -- not including this year, but the last

1 -- from '19, '18, and '17 school years, ending then.
2 What are you looking to do to improve on that?

3 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Well you can ask any staff
4 member at ARCA and we'll tell you we're an "A". We
5 are an "A"; our report card is an "A". We are doing
6 everything I mentioned earlier, as far as the new
7 MAPS Assessments. I think it's been critical to
8 really grab students and get them the resources they
9 need and the interventions easily. So that was --
10 that's one of our big initiatives this year, being
11 able -- and also having our interventionist. So I
12 think, not only is it the partnership between stu --
13 the parents and the teacher, it's also making sure
14 that we're providing all of the resources that --
15 that that student needs, from the very beginning and
16 as quickly as we can.

17 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Wright-McMurray?

20 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Good
21 morning and, again, thank you for your presentation.
22 Very informative; it helped me to learn a lot more
23 about your school. Some of my questions pretty much
24 have been asked. Dr. Williams beat me to the punch
25 on the question about the grade. And I was looking

1 at that you have a "C", but it seems like your
2 percentage of your "C's" have been declining. And I
3 also was looking at your ACT and ACT Aspire scores
4 for your upper grades. It looks like that percentage
5 of those that have been, you know, ready or exceeding
6 is declining also, but it seems to be going along
7 with your increased enrollment. So I was just trying
8 to get a sense that as you are increasing your
9 enrollment and enrolling more students, but your
10 percentages are going down, have you had discussions
11 about how to mitigate that, so you won't continue to
12 see that decline, as you add more students to your
13 school?

14 UNKNOWN: Are you there?

15 MS. DARLA GARDNER: (INAUDIBLE), and I'm -- not
16 necessarily. I think, too, it's also important to
17 note that year-one we only had through 9th grade,
18 then the next year we had 10th grade. So some of
19 those factors that make up the report card weren't
20 factoring in, because we didn't have the graduation
21 rate; we haven't had the full K-12 until this past
22 school year. That was our first graduating class,
23 too. So I think it looks -- I think there certainly
24 is a correlation. For us, it is getting --

25 UNKNOWN: Do you have the (INAUDIBLE) on?

1 MS. DARLA GARDNER: -- making sure that we have
2 staffing in place in the very beginning of the school
3 year, with our growth, and that's something that we
4 were able to do quickly this year. I think we've
5 hired right at 40 staff members, so -- and many of
6 them were brand-new to virtual learning. So making
7 sure that we have the resources in place, we have
8 staffing in place, from the very beginning. And then
9 just the education of new families, getting them
10 on-boarded; getting those resources and those
11 interventions in place; making sure we get our hands
12 on those student records as soon as we can.

13 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Any other questions from
15 Panel Members?

16 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes. This
17 will be for ADE. In looking at the virtual schools,
18 in general, throughout the state, what's the average
19 enrollment? Do we have any idea what the average
20 enrollment is for virtual schools?

21 (NO RESPONSE)

22 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: I'm sorry;
23 I may be putting somebody on the spot on that
24 question. That just kind of came out of the blue
25 there.

1 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Webb is pulling it
2 up.

3 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.
4 Thank you.

5 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: While we're waiting on
6 Ms. Webb to have a chance to pull that up, I'd like
7 to come back and ask the question about growth. And
8 looking at the overall student growth, as in on the
9 ESSA school index, it's a couple of standard
10 deviations below the expected. Can someone kind of
11 speak to how you're monitoring that students are
12 growing a year or more, or how they are growing
13 toward meeting grade level expectations, and what
14 you're doing to monitor that? And, as you're getting
15 this large increase of students, how are you even
16 doubling down on that to make sure that those kids
17 are meeting those expectations?

18 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Okay. We've always had a
19 benchmark exam, and the benchmark exam that we had
20 last year we realized wasn't giving us the necessary
21 information to monitor that growth. Because our
22 students do take the benchmark three times a year,
23 right at the beginning of school, then in the winter,
24 and then right before state testing. So we use that
25 to monitor growth within the PLC's, each of the

1 benchmark scores, knowing that we needed to improve
2 that benchmark assessment. That's why we switched
3 the NWEA to MAP testing this school year. We're very
4 excited about it; it's giving us a lot of data; a lot
5 of great information. And our students took that in,
6 like, lessons; we've got their scores; families
7 already have their scores; and we know exactly where
8 they need to be scoring when we take it again, in
9 January. And that's scheduled and ready to go. And
10 then our PLC's will be grabbing that information and
11 teachers will be looking at their specific students
12 to make sure that we've got them ready for state
13 testing and, not just testing, just for being
14 academically successful this school year, with us.

15 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you.

16 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: I'd like to
17 follow-up with a question. This is just more me
18 learning now than anything. How do you all structure
19 -- you know, you're throughout the whole state. I
20 see you have a principal, you have an assistant
21 principal. How are you -- do you have the state
22 divided up into -- with your assistant principals?
23 Just how does that work?

24 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Well, actually, we have an
25 elementary, middle school, and high school, which you

1 would typically see in a district.

2 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

3 MS. DARLA GARDNER: And, you know, they manage
4 those staff members and student engagement for their
5 grade level areas.

6 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay. So
7 it's by grade and not by geographic -- geography,
8 basically?

9 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Yes. Yes.

10 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yeah, okay.

11 MS. DARLA GARDNER: By grade, not by -- and we
12 have a pretty robust student engagement process in
13 place that -- well, as you can imagine, with students
14 across the state, you know, we want to make sure
15 that, you know, all of our students are engaged and
16 there's very clear processes that they follow through
17 on, to insure that engagement.

18 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay, good.
19 Thank you.

20 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I have a --
21 I'm sorry; I have another question. And I'm going to
22 preface it by saying I'm not just asking it, because
23 you're sitting it in front of me, because I had this
24 question yesterday, as well. But, as we're thinking
25 about growing and adding more students, but we still

1 see that we have some things that we need to work out
2 with the students that we currently have. How do we
3 think through -- and whoever can help me with this --
4 it may be the Department. I'm not -- or, I'm the
5 Department -- maybe thinking through -- how do we
6 think through when is the best time to continue to
7 grow, if we're still trying to figure out how to get
8 it right with the students that we have? And I guess
9 I'm asking that question, because, you know, we don't
10 have a large majority of our students that are ready
11 or exceeding, but we're adding more students to the
12 pot, and we're still trying to get it right with the
13 students that we have now. So I guess I'm just
14 trying to get a sense of how -- when do we figure out
15 when is the right time and how do we help to make
16 those decisions, when is the right time to add more
17 students, when we're still trying to figure out how
18 to make it best for the students we currently have?
19 I don't know if I'm asking that question correctly,
20 or right, or if it makes sense, but --

21 MS. DARLA GARDNER: I understand what --

22 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- that's
23 just something I'm struggling with.

24 MS. DARLA GARDNER: I understand what you're
25 saying. And I think that -- I think if you ask that

1 question to any district in this state there's always
2 -- we're always improving; we're never going to have
3 it all right. The student population changes every
4 year; the needs change of our students; and I think
5 that goes for every -- for every school. For us, we
6 have students that come to us for a very short time;
7 we have students that come and stay with us for a
8 long period of time. So I think that just the
9 dynamics of our population also makes that
10 challenging. I'm confident that our processes have
11 been in place, since we opened at ARCA, as far as
12 student -- student engagement. Their -- the tools,
13 we've needed to improve, and we've improved upon
14 those tools, and we're making those changes, and
15 we're tracking down the resources that we need across
16 -- from wherever we can get them. So I'm confident
17 in our processes. I think, you know, there's always
18 -- there's always a new and improved way, or
19 something exciting, and our PLC's, and us
20 investigating the best practices for students, and
21 making those changes. We're not afraid to change at
22 ARCA. And the staff will tell you that, you know, we
23 come up with a great idea and we think this is going
24 to be solid, and this is the answer, and we're not
25 afraid to say, "Oh, that did not work. What do we

1 try -- what can we do now?" And we do that
2 frequently. So I don't know. Bryce, you may want to
3 elaborate on that, but I think that our foundation is
4 solid, our staffing is solid, our knowledge in
5 virtual learning is solid. I think it's just
6 verifying that we have the tools in place.

7 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Yeah, I think all of that is
8 correct.

9 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you.

10 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: It's all about continuous
11 improvement.

12 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Well I want
13 to pick up a (INAUDIBLE) --

14 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: Oh, go ahead.

15 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Oh, please,
16 go ahead. I'm sorry. No. I was just saying that's
17 just a question that I just have. I'm just trying to
18 get my mind wrapped around how that process works.
19 And so -- but, please, go ahead.

20 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: The only thing that I'll add
21 to that -- I mean, I agree with everything she said
22 about continuous improvement and trying new things --
23 is that full-time virtual/online public school is
24 relatively new, including in the state of Arkansas.
25 So we're still working out trying to gain all of the

1 best practices. And we think that -- among the
2 virtual options in Arkansas, for the students who
3 absolutely want a virtual option, we think that
4 Arkansas Connections Academy is the best place for
5 them. We think that the comparison against other
6 models, similar models is very favorable. And so, if
7 they're going to choose into the virtual school, we
8 think that this is a very good place for them and
9 would rather say yes than no.

10 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you.

11 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I have a question,
12 if --

13 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Newton, before you
14 -- before we get to your question, let's let Ms. Webb
15 come and answer Dr. Williams' question.

16 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Okay.

17 MS. TRACY WEBB: So the -- we have two
18 open-enrollment, 100% virtual, charter schools in
19 Arkansas. The first one is ARVA, Arkansas Virtual
20 Academy. I'm going to give you a three-year span.
21 So in '17-'18 they had 2,055 -- it's on -- 2,055; in
22 '18-'19 they grew to 2365; and then, in '19-'20 they
23 had 2,463. Currently, as of today, they are at
24 3,995, and their enrollment cap is 5,500. For
25 Arkansas Connections Academy, in '17-'18 they had

1 785; the next year they grew to 1,210; and in '19-'20
2 they had 1,636 students; today they have 2,834, with
3 an enrollment cap of 3,000. Everybody get those; do
4 you need anything repeated?

5 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Thank you.

6 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Newton?

7 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Okay. That leads
8 right into my question, too, about the increase in
9 enrollment. In the last legislative session there
10 was a law passed that young people that were
11 court-involved were -- and I can't remember exactly
12 how it reads, but that were looking at expulsion in
13 their local districts are now allowed to enroll into
14 virtual charters. And I was wondering if you've seen
15 a significant or a notable increase in the numbers?
16 And, also, is there some problems that -- or issues
17 or challenges that arise, based on that population,
18 and their unique set of challenges sometimes? And,
19 if so, or likely so, is there an opportunity to
20 connect with resources in the telehealth, or mental
21 health, or with agencies that are charged with the
22 responsibilities, within the local judicial
23 districts, to be able to service those young people?
24 So I'm asking -- and, locally, of course, with court
25 involvement, you can -- and the agency I've been

1 involved with over the years -- there's a connection
2 between our agency and the court, to best be able to
3 serve and connect services, and to make sure that
4 there's an intersection, of services, that serves the
5 family and young people. So I know that's a new
6 population, and, with it, is inherent some new
7 challenges. So that's my question.

8 MS. DARLA GARDNER: And I haven't seen a
9 considerable influx of those students. I will say
10 that we work closely with many different FINS
11 officers across the state of Arkansas, and juvenile
12 court probation officers, just communicating with
13 them, collaborating, helping students be successful.
14 Our counseling department has done an incredible job
15 of making sure that we are staffed and all of our
16 counselors have all the resources available. It's
17 been challenging, you know, consolidating all the
18 resources from the different counties across the
19 entire state, to have at our fingertips, because we
20 do. Each state -- or each county seems to be
21 different in their processes, as far as FINS and the
22 resources available. But, over the last -- or, since
23 we opened, our counseling department has done an
24 incredible job of gathering those, getting those
25 resources together, so that we can contact -- and we

1 do. We contact the juvenile court or a FINS officer
2 for help, you know, with student engagement; to help
3 a student. Sometimes they contact us. And we make
4 sure that we just work hand-in-hand with them. So I
5 don't know if that answers your -- no, I haven't seen
6 an influx -- not a considerable influx of students
7 facing expulsion that have enrolled at ARCA.

8 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I think that would
9 be an opportunity to explore, in terms of
10 conversation, because their contacts are by judicial
11 district; so there are likely five, six, seven
12 counties in a district. And, also, the Division of
13 Youth Services, coordinating young people leaving
14 their facilities, coming back in at -- because they
15 almost never are connected back to the public
16 schools, for a variety of different reasons. And, of
17 course, the public school is not necessarily anxious
18 to get that young person back and to assist them.
19 And so they fall in the -- in the gaping holes, not a
20 crack -- a gaping hole they fall into, in terms of
21 coordinating. So I would suggest maybe --

22 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Okay.

23 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: -- some contact with
24 the Department of Youth Services, as it relates to
25 those young people that are institutionalized, and

1 also with the judicial districts, and the Judges that
2 serve those districts, that -- they've got an
3 association of Judges that -- and I know our Judge,
4 in this area, advocated with our legislator to
5 address this problem; that's how the legislation
6 happened. But other Judges may or may not be as
7 adept or savvy about it. It certainly could be a
8 segue, or an interest, or a pipeline, a cont -- has a
9 continuous educational flow, allowing young people
10 not to -- not to fall through the holes that they
11 generally fall into.

12 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Okay, thank you. That's
13 great information.

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Panel Members, any
15 additional questions?

16 (NO RESPONSE)

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Any discussion before we
18 have a motion?

19 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: You know, I
20 like what -- everything that they're doing. You
21 know, my only concern is the enrollment cap, that
22 current request. I'm kind of struggling with those
23 projections right now, whether lifting it up that
24 high, this soon, is the right way to go. So, anyway,
25 I just wanted to just put that out there. Seven

1 thousand, I believe that's what it is. I'm flipping
2 between different screens, here, looking at the --
3 from the application to the various documents here.
4 So that's really the only thing that kind of is
5 giving me pause is what is the right level of -- I
6 guess let me follow-up with a question. Are you all
7 looking -- currently, you have this many
8 applications, nearly 6,000-some applications; how did
9 y'all determine which students actually enrolled?

10 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Any student can enroll with
11 us.

12 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.

13 MS. DARLA GARDNER: So we do not
14 pick-and-choose. We'll just enroll until we're full.

15 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay. And
16 do you go with first come, first served? Do you have
17 to do a lottery, if you have more --

18 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Yes.

19 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: -- students
20 enrolled? Uh-huh. First come, first served?

21 MS. DARLA GARDNER: We'll have to do a lottery.

22 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.

23 MS. DARLA GARDNER: Yeah, once we reach the cap,
24 then we go to a lottery.

25 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay. So,

1 currently, you have not reached your cap yet?

2 MS. DARLA GARDNER: No, we have not.

3 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay. Uh-
4 huh.

5 MR. BRYCE ADAMS: To add to that, they're about
6 -- what -- 100 students shy of the cap right now.
7 They were at 2,000 students last year, about 2,900
8 this year, with a cap of 3,000. So, under the
9 current cap, I would anticipate a lottery coming up
10 next year. The 6,000 applications encompasses all
11 the applications. So there are probably some
12 families that are shopping around and some families
13 that are absolutely committed to enrolling, and that
14 number encompasses that spectrum of families'
15 interest. The only other thing that I'll add is that
16 the 7,000 enrollment number doesn't kick in until
17 year-five. The enrollment request is stair-stepped
18 up to that level of growth. So that number, while it
19 appears, you know, a big jump from today -- and would
20 be a big jump from today -- that doesn't happen
21 tomorrow; that happens in 2025.

22 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.
23 Because I was thinking more along the line of 5,000.
24 I know you need an enrollment increase; that's a
25 given to me. I'm just trying to determine what would

1 be the -- we might create an arms race here, which is
2 -- you know, it's left up to parents and students to
3 make that call though. That's not necessarily, at
4 least from my perspective, for us to make that call.
5 Okay.

6 DR. DENNIS BECK: You know, I'd like --

7 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes.

8 DR. DENNIS BECK: I'd like to make a quick
9 comment on that, too. I just really -- I wanted to
10 -- I think one of the reasons we're asking for that
11 cap, that specific number, is because we are an
12 open-enrollment charter school and that we want to
13 allow any parent who chooses to have their child
14 enroll at ARCA be able to enroll at ARCA. And we
15 know that we have a lot of room to grow, not in terms
16 of numbers right now, but in terms of our current
17 student body. But, just like a geographic school
18 that has a huge increase in population and thus
19 enrollment needs to adjust, we want to have that
20 flexibility to adjust to handle the needs of the
21 parents, and really -- who are putting their trust in
22 us by choosing us. So thank you.

23 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.

24 Thank you.

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Hearing no additional

1 discussion, I'll accept a motion.

2 MOTIONS AND VOTE:

3 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I'll make the
4 motion. I move that the application for this
5 charter, Arkansas Virtual charter -- is that correct?
6 -- be approved.

7 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Second.

8 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: A motion --

9 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: And that's the
10 increase -- for the increase in five years.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay. I have a motion
12 by Ms. Newton, second by Dr. Williams, to approve the
13 renewal application as submitted --

14 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: For Arkansas
15 Connections Academy. I'm sorry.

16 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Yes. Any discussion?

17 (NO RESPONSE)

18 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All those in favor?

19 (CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Any opposed?

21 (NO RESPONSE)

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Motion passes. Panel
23 Members, if you'll take a moment to enter your vote
24 on the voting sheet.

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Dr. Williams, if you'd

1 like to share your comments?

2 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes. Oh,
3 mute? It's off. Yes, I would. I appreciate the --
4 Ms. Newton making that motion. I couldn't find the
5 name of the school in all of these documents I had
6 up. So I was a little slow out of the gate there.
7 My comment is that I support the motion. The
8 Arkansas Connections Academy is contributing to --
9 it's continuing to provide a virtual education option
10 for students and parents. Other than looking for
11 continued improvement, there are no major concerns.

12 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Baldwin?

13 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Yes. I voted in
14 favor of the renewal request. I do think y'all are a
15 successful program and you fill an alternative
16 educational need that many students have. I do want
17 to just add, beyond my vote comment, as you go forth
18 and go, you did hear, I think, some good feedback
19 from the Committee on the challenges of growth. And
20 I know, in my business, it's a challenge to grow. So
21 just -- you all have done that already, but just know
22 that that presents -- as you get bigger and bigger,
23 it presents some unique things to overcome.

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms.
25 Wright-McMurray.

1 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sorry. I
2 couldn't find my mute button. I put that I recommend
3 approve. I appreciate the support Arkansas
4 Connections is providing, especially during the Covid
5 pandemic, and I look forward to their plan to achieve
6 higher academic outcomes for their students.

7 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Newton?

8 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Okay, I'm trying to
9 get my screen out of the way so I can read. It
10 disappeared. Oh, no, here it is. Applicant has a
11 solid plan to move forward, taking into account the
12 administrative and student needs, and also taking
13 into account academics and growth.

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you.
15 Congratulations, Connect -- ARCA. We will submit
16 this information to the State Board at the next
17 meeting for their review or not-review.
18 Congratulations, and thank you for serving our
19 students.

20 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: I've got --

21 MS. DARLA GARDNER: I just want to thank you
22 all, very much. We're excited.

23 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Another
24 quick comment. What really stood out to me, also,
25 was the fact that your teachers were serving as

1 models, doing that taping and so-forth for other
2 teachers in the state, and working with the
3 Department of Education. That was something that I
4 -- I just went back in my notes and I made a note of
5 that. That really stood out that some good things
6 are happening in the virtual realm and your teachers
7 are role models. Thank you.

8 DR. DENNIS BECK: Yes. I agree, Dr. Williams.
9 And I've -- I, personally, am very proud of our
10 teachers and our administrators and how well we've
11 done since our initial certification. And look
12 forward to more growth -- and not just in numbers,
13 but especially in quality -- in the next five years.
14 So, thank you, so much. I really appreciate it, and
15 want to thank you on behalf of our entire school
16 board, and parents, and families at ARCA. Thank you.

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Beck.
18 We'll take a quick 10 minute break and let everybody
19 get a cup of coffee and stretch.

20 (Thereupon, a break was taken and the
21 proceedings resumed as follows, to-wit:)

22 AGENDA ITEM II(2): CONSIDERATION OF DISTRICT CONVERSION
23 CHARTER RENEWAL APPLICATION - CROSS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL: A NEW
24 TECH SCHOOL

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Webb, if you'll

1 introduce Item Number 2, please?

2 MS. TRACY WEBB: The next item is the
3 Consideration of a District Conversion Charter
4 Renewal Application for Cross County High School: A
5 New Tech School. The school is a traditional
6 district conversion charter school that serves
7 students in grades 7-12 and has an enrollment cap of
8 500 students. The charter was originally awarded in
9 January of 2011, and expires on June 30th, 2021. The
10 district is requesting renewal for five years. Today
11 we have Dr. Nathan Morris, Superintendent; Dr. Matt
12 McClure, Chief Learning and Financial Officer;
13 Stephen Prince, High School Principal; and Mindy
14 Searcy, Executive Master Teacher and Federal Programs
15 Coordinator, onsite, to present their application.

16 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: If all parties speaking
17 on behalf of Cross County High School will stand and
18 raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm that
19 the testimony you're about to give shall be the
20 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

21 (CHORUS OF AFFIRMATIONS)

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Morris,
23 you're recognized. You'll have 20 minutes. And I
24 ask that every person speaking please state your name
25 and title for the recording.

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DR. NATHAN MORRIS: Absolutely. Good morning. My name is Dr. Nathan Morris; I'm the Superintendent at Cross County Schools. This is my fourth year at the school district. I'm very excited and honored to be speaking with you all here this morning on behalf of our district.

Today, as we were just introduced, you'll hear from Mr. Prince -- Mr. Stephen Prince, on much of our academic success. You'll be hearing from one of our high school teachers, Ms. Erica Lacy, on some of the rigors and the co-instruction/co-taught classes that go on in our high school building. You'll also hear from Mr. Wes Hooper, with our College and Career Access program, one of our college advisors, and you'll hear about some of the award-winning events that we do to help students after their high school graduation and into their career field. And you'll also hear from Ms. Mindy Searcy, our district Executive Master Teacher, about the work that we do with NIET and the TAPP program that helps advance our teachers, and helps to grow our teachers, to therefore grow our students. And, during the question-and-answer session, you might hear from Dr. Matt McClure, our Chief Learning and Financial Officer.

1 PRESENTATION:

2 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Good morning, and thank you
3 for the opportunity for us to present today. Cross
4 County High School, A New Tech High School -- a New
5 Tech School -- has been a conversion charter since
6 2011. During this time, we have worked on creating
7 the best school for our students and teachers. Over
8 the years, we have celebrated many successes and
9 tackled areas for growth. With the focus on
10 balancing traditional and -- traditional instruction
11 with innovation practices, Cross County High School
12 is a school that understands the needs of its
13 students, teachers, and community. As part of the
14 New Tech model, teachers assess learning outcomes,
15 oral communication, written communication,
16 collaboration, knowledge and thinking, and agency, in
17 every class, helping to address the need for
18 real-world 21st century skills attainment.

19 The school adopted Kagan Structures,
20 building-wide, to improve how we engage students in
21 active learning and collaboration, as well. In an
22 effort to build on 21st century skills, these
23 learning outcomes are assessed, beginning in
24 kindergarten and scaffolded through elementary
25 school, to ensure a smooth transition to high school

1 expectations. We take that a step further, through
2 project-based learning and integrating co-taught
3 courses that provide a rich and rigorous curriculum,
4 utilizing connections and opportunities for teacher
5 collaboration.

6 Our college and career program ensures students,
7 beginning in 7th grade, have experiences necessary to
8 make informed decisions and to explore options for
9 post-secondary experiences, whether that be college,
10 completion of a technical program, enlistment in the
11 military, or going straight into the workforce.

12 The data, over the last five years, speaks for
13 the academic growth we have experienced, while we
14 continue to work on our areas of refinement. Looking
15 at the slides, you'll notice that during the
16 2019-2020 school year, despite not taking the ACT
17 Aspires test, our ACT interim assessments have shown
18 our students are moving in the right direction. And,
19 based on the growth of the 2020 interim scores, our
20 school was rated a value-add of 4. And, speaking of
21 value-add, Cross County High School has seen several
22 years of successful growth. You'll notice the trends
23 are trending very nicely, other than a couple of
24 years, and you'll see those two years we did not get
25 a value-add score we would like to see. So we

1 analyzed the data to implement school-wide strategies
2 that are field-tested, with students, for
3 effectiveness, and then rolled out, through our
4 cluster meetings -- those are our PLC's -- to address
5 academic deficits. And, as you can see, each year,
6 after a dip, we increased our growth again.

7 Even though we did not give the ACT Aspire
8 during the 2020 year, we have seen many areas of
9 improvement in previous years. You'll notice a lot
10 of positive growth from 2018 to 2019, especially in
11 math. Subsequently, we have also seen our letter
12 grade rating improve and our ESSA School Index scores
13 improve. Beginning with a rating of a letter grade
14 "D" for 2017, we immediately began tackling the areas
15 to begin working on the work. In 2018, we received a
16 "C" rating, with less than a percentage point from a
17 "B" rating, while maintaining a "C" for the 2019
18 school year, as well. We really feel that with the
19 work our teachers and students put in, and the growth
20 we saw on the recent interim exams for 2020, that we
21 would hope we would have a "B" rating.

22 Our schools have also seen other areas to
23 celebrate, our ESSA value-add score. Our ESSA
24 value-add score in 2018 was 81.99, exceeding the
25 state's average of 79.74. The average with our 2019

1 ESSA value-add score being 79.35, in line with the
2 state's 79.69. In 2018 and 2019, we saw our
3 five-year graduation rates above the state's average,
4 with more students coming back to obtain their high
5 school diploma. And our 2018, four-year, graduation
6 rate exceeded the state average, as well. In 2018,
7 our on-time credit points scoring from the SQSS
8 section of ESSA equaled 82.4 out of 100, with an
9 increase to 93.69 out of 100 for 2019. That's a
10 testament to the various programs, engagement levels,
11 and rigorous monitoring in early intervention
12 processes utilized with our students.

13 Reading scores, overall, are not where we'd like
14 to see them, even with the positive growth you've
15 seen. But reading is an area that affects us in many
16 areas. In addition to implementing school-wide
17 strategies each year, we are the recent recipient of
18 a SOAR grant that will afford us the opportunity to
19 adopt and implement a reading curriculum for grades 7
20 and 8, train all core content teachers and leadership
21 team members in Structures, so they will have -- they
22 will be better addressed, the struggling readers in
23 daily instruction. This will also help us address
24 the learning gaps that we see from grades 6 to 7,
25 when those students transition to high school.

1 Currently, the high school has seven teachers
2 trained to provide instruction using Structures.
3 And, with the help of this grant, we will add seven
4 more teachers to this list, giving us a total of 14
5 out of 24 teachers trained in this model. We will
6 list -- this list includes each 7th and 8th grade
7 math, social studies, science, and an English
8 teacher. In addition to each special education
9 teacher, other teachers already trained include those
10 who provide dyslexia interventions, using either
11 Structures, Phonics First, or Barton Reading.

12 I would like to now turn it over to Erica Lacy,
13 English teacher and TAPP mentor teacher, to discuss
14 the impact of project-based learning.

15 MS. ERICA LACY: Hi, I'm Erica Lacy and I serve
16 as a mentor teacher; I'm also one of three New Tech
17 trainers for the high school. Since our school
18 became a New Tech school, in 2011, we have embraced
19 everything about project-based learning. Our
20 students collaborate on meaningful projects that ask
21 them to think critically, communicate both verbally,
22 and in writing, and problem-solve. As part of the
23 New Tech model, our school implements co-taught
24 classes. I teach the senior Capstone course, which
25 integrates English and philosophy, as well as the

1 sophomore bio-lit course that combines biology and
2 English. All of our courses incorporate projects
3 that assess the school-wide learning outcomes of
4 written communication, oral communication,
5 collaboration, knowledge and thinking, and agency.
6 Because our school continues to implement the New
7 Tech model with fidelity, our students leave Cross
8 County with 21st century skills. Echo is the
9 learning management system for the New Tech network
10 and it provides both students and parents with
11 immediate access to lesson plans, project plans, and
12 students' grades. This system has helped to better
13 prepare our staff for the transition to virtual
14 learning in the spring and this semester.

15 And now, Mr. Hooper will discuss the impact of
16 the college and career program.

17 MR. WES HOOPER: I'm Wes Hooper and this is my
18 third year as the College Access Advisor with the C-3
19 program. The C-3 program began in 2014, in order to
20 provide students with the necessary resources so that
21 they can reach their full potential. Our vision is
22 simple. All students will have informed options and
23 meaningful opportunities throughout their lives. In
24 order to achieve this vision, we began the program
25 with a part-time college advisor whose job was to

1 meet with students on an as-needed basis. The
2 students focused solely on college access and applied
3 to one post-secondary experience. In the past six
4 years, we've expanded our program to include two
5 full-time college advisors, two career advisors, and
6 three alumni advisors, working with our former
7 students on college campuses. We have monthly
8 meetings scheduled with juniors and seniors that are
9 geared toward both college and career. Every senior
10 also applies to at least three post-secondary
11 experiences. Understanding that post secondary
12 planning should begin early, we ensure that every
13 student in grades 7-12 gets the opportunity to visit
14 at least one college campus each year. Every junior
15 takes part in a virtual internship project that has
16 been nationally recognized for our commitment to
17 social justice. During that project, students delve
18 into career exploration, through research and
19 hands-on applications. One of the biggest components
20 of a virtual internship is the development of
21 soft-skills. The culmination of our project is our
22 students, using those skills, at a networking night
23 event, held at the Clinton Presidential Library.

24 In order to meet our vision, we understand that
25 it takes not only the student, but their family, as

1 well. We host family planning sessions, where
2 students can bring their families and learn about
3 college and career topics. We also celebrate our
4 students when they've received acceptance letters and
5 scholarship offers.

6 Lastly, test prep is a very important component
7 in achieving our vision. We want our students to
8 understand the best strategies that can be used when
9 taking the ACT or SAT test. The scores on the test
10 help determine the types of choices the students will
11 make about their post-secondary life, and we want to
12 ensure that they have access to the best choices.
13 Once they've made their choice, we host a college/
14 career/military signing day, in which every senior
15 gets the opportunity to be celebrated by announcing
16 their plans for their post-secondary lives.

17 One of our core beliefs is that there should not
18 be an opportunity gap for students, regardless of
19 their race, their class, or their privilege. For
20 students, like Isabella and many others, we've been
21 able to bridge that gap.

22 And now I'm going to turn it over to Ms. Mindy
23 Searcy, our district Executive Master Teacher.

24 MS. MINDY SEARCY: Good morning. I'm Mindy
25 Searcy, and I am the Executive Master teacher for the

1 district. I'm charged with the responsibility of
2 making sure we implement the TAPP system throughout
3 our district, with fidelity, by providing support to
4 our principals, master, and mentor teachers.

5 The TAPP system -- okay -- the TAPP system is an
6 educator-led comprehensive school model focused on
7 attracting, developing, and motivating, and
8 retaining, high-quality teachers. We are currently
9 the only school district in Arkansas implementing
10 TAPP. The TAPP system has literally provided us with
11 the blueprint that we needed to transform our school.
12 My purpose is not to promote the TAPP system, but to
13 better allow you to see how it is who we are as a
14 district.

15 One unique aspect of the TAPP system is its
16 emphasis on true teacher leadership. When we first
17 adopted the TAPP system 11 years ago, I started out
18 as a master teacher. TAPP allowed me to advance
19 professionally without having to leave the classroom.
20 I was able to provide support to the other teachers
21 in my building, lead professional development, and
22 increase my qualifications. I later became principal
23 of the elementary school, and while I was principal
24 we received our first letter "A" rating. The
25 knowledge I gained as a master teacher better

1 prepared me as principal. I know that our current
2 mentor and master teachers are receiving that same
3 kind of development. Our master teacher, at the high
4 school, is responsible for the second element of the
5 TAPP system: Ongoing applied professional growth.
6 In our PLC meetings -- which we refer to as "cluster"
7 -- teachers are taught high-quality instructional
8 strategies aimed at meeting student learning needs.
9 Each week we look at both qualitative and
10 quantitative characteristics of student work and we
11 use that data to drive our instruction. With student
12 work as our primary focus, teachers never leave our
13 cluster meetings questioning what the purpose of that
14 meeting was. In cluster, the master and -- the
15 master teacher and the mentor teachers also determine
16 what individual teacher support is needed. Just like
17 a teacher gives students differentiated support, the
18 leadership team provides teachers with differentiated
19 support to meet their individual needs. In order to
20 grow them as teachers, this support includes
21 modeling, co-teaching, conferencing, and planning.

22 A highlight of our cluster meetings is the
23 implementation of our school-wide strategies. During
24 the summer months, the teacher leadership team
25 analyzes standardized test results and identifies the

1 areas our students struggled in the most. After
2 extensive research, a strategy is chosen or developed
3 that targets the area of greatest need. That
4 strategy is then field-tested on a group of students.
5 This process allows us to see what works and what
6 doesn't work with our students. Then, how to teach
7 the strategy is modeled, for the teachers, during our
8 cluster meetings.

9 We have had many successes after implementing
10 school-wide strategies. We developed two strategies
11 in '17-'18 called "Say Something" and "Race." These
12 strategies led to a 10% increase, school-wide, in
13 reading, and 12% increase in math. Because of these
14 gains, we were recognized as Beating the Odds by the
15 Office for Education Policy at the University of
16 Arkansas, by showing high growth despite the fact
17 that our district serves a high percentage of
18 students in poverty. In '18-'19, we addressed math
19 by implementing a fraction/cents strategy. We raised
20 our test scores 5% school-wide. And, in '19-'20, our
21 focus was on comparing passages in literacy and
22 implementing number talks in math, to strengthen
23 justification.

24 Not being able to take the ACT Aspire was a
25 disappointment for us. Our interim data showed

1 significant gains. We believe we would have moved to
2 a "B" rating, if we were able to give that test.

3 Currently, our master teacher is field-testing a
4 vocabulary strategy for this year which was
5 determined by the I-Ready data we collected at the
6 beginning of the year.

7 As you can see, cluster group meetings are vital
8 to the success of our school. Our teachers are all
9 working toward a common goal. I've been known to
10 say, "It's where all the magic happens." As you can
11 see on this chart, the support increased teacher
12 effectiveness in our school. Not shown on this chart
13 is our percentage for the '19 school year -- '19-'20
14 school year, and we were able to -- we had a 95%
15 rating of effective teachers. This effectiveness is
16 partially measured by our observation process. Our
17 teachers are observed four times a year, using the
18 NIET instructional rubric. Each teacher gets an
19 observation from the principal, master teacher, and
20 two mentor teachers. There is no better person to
21 get feedback from than teachers who have their own
22 classrooms, working in the trenches. After each
23 observation, the teacher receives feedback from the
24 individual evaluator in a post-conference meeting.
25 In the post-conference, the evaluator shares points

1 of reinforcement to highlight the teacher's
2 strengths, as well as points of refinement, where the
3 teacher has growth areas. Our teachers are never
4 stagnant; they are constantly working on ways to
5 improve their instruction.

6 Ms. Holman, who is a tradition -- who is a
7 nontraditional teacher, who we are able to -- we were
8 able to hire her because of our licensure waiver,
9 stated, "Every observation gives me a chance to
10 improve upon one specific area of my teaching. After
11 a post-conference, I know what I need to focus on,
12 while I'm planning, and while I'm instructing
13 students. The conversation has been key to becoming
14 a reflective educator," in her opinion.

15 This says so much about what our TAPP system is
16 doing. As teachers grow in effectiveness, they are
17 able to tap into the final element of success:
18 performance-based compensation. TAPP allows us to
19 provide additional compensation to teachers based on
20 new roles and responsibilities, their accomplishments
21 in the classroom, and the performance of their
22 students. No teacher at Cross County ever loses any
23 part of their salary or base-pay because of TAPP;
24 they can only earn extra compensation. Our teachers
25 love being acknowledged for their expertise,

1 performance, and professionalism. The bonuses we are
2 able to give out, because of TAPP, is a huge
3 motivator for our teachers and allows us to retain
4 our most effective educators.

5 Overall, TAPP makes increasing student
6 achievement our common goal. The focus on
7 data-driven instructional decisions has molded the
8 culture of our school into one of healthy
9 competition, where teachers and their students strive
10 for greatness.

11 At this time, we will take questions.

12 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Hyatt?

13 WAIVERS:

14 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt,
15 Arkansas Department of Education. There are only two
16 quick little clean-up things that need to be done
17 with the waivers. The first is on the 120 Clock
18 Hours. During our meeting, it was my opinion that
19 they didn't need the waiver. After reviewing the
20 rationale again and having some internal
21 conversations with our Learning Services Unit, I do
22 think that they need the waiver after all. So that
23 was my fault. So to confirm they do need Standard
24 1(a)(2) -- if I could just get a confirmation from
25 someone.

1 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Yes.

2 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Just for the record,
3 their representative said yes. The second issue has
4 to do with their alternative pay waivers. They just
5 need to add the rules governing the alternative pay
6 program, to fully effectuate their waiver of the
7 statute. So if I could get confirmation that they
8 will add the rules governing the alternative pay
9 program?

10 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Yes.

11 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Let the record -- can I
12 have your name?

13 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Stephen Prince.

14 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Just for the record, Mr.
15 Prince agrees that, yes, they will add it. Those are
16 the only remaining legal issues. I'll just tell you
17 what their other waiver areas are, so if you have
18 questions. They have the waivers of duty-free lunch
19 time for teachers; the planning period for teachers;
20 the gifted and talented program; teacher licensure;
21 the library/media program; their school calendar; and
22 class size and teaching load; in addition to the ones
23 that I've covered in my original comments. Are there
24 any questions?

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: When you looked at

1 waiver number one, on class size and teaching load,
2 one of the questions that came up, as I was reading
3 the explanation, were the embedded courses. And so
4 my question: Are we waiving the embedded course
5 approval process or do they have all of those courses
6 approved -- pre-approved by Learning Services?

7 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: So we're not waiving it.
8 In waiver one, the waivers for class size and
9 teaching load would just exempt them from the class
10 size and the teaching load. It does not exempt them
11 from having to go through the embedding process to
12 embed courses or to ask for an additional waiver,
13 which they have not.

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay. And then my
15 second question is, on page 17, waiver number three,
16 on the school calendar. There is a waiver to allow
17 them to continue to have an early start. And so I
18 was just wondering, what is the early start?

19 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: That might be a question
20 they would be better suited to answer. So I'll move
21 out of the way.

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Could you -- Mr. Prince,
23 could you just kind of talk to us about your early
24 start?

25 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Sure. In typical years, we

1 do start early, the first week of August, on a
2 typical year. And that provides us an opportunity to
3 get our students in there, enrolled a little bit
4 sooner, and, hopefully, help address any kind of gaps
5 from the summer. And we can get in there and get
6 started a little sooner with the students.

7 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. And, while
8 you're here, will you talk about embedded courses?

9 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Yeah, I'm glad you brought
10 that up. Yes. So the meaning behind that
11 explanation is that's our co-taught classes; so those
12 classes are taught by two teachers together. And so
13 the class size is for -- because we have both classes
14 -- both of those classes together -- for instance,
15 biology and English 10 are taught together by both
16 teachers, so the content is taught by the English
17 teacher and the science teacher, and merged together.
18 But the class size waiver is because they have all
19 the tenth graders together at one time.

20 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So are the classes --
21 the embedded -- are they embedded?

22 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: They're not embedded by the
23 way you mean needing a course approval for.

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay.

25 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Yes. So they are still

1 taught. They still teach their standards, however
2 they need to teach their standards, and the courses
3 are still scheduled separately; they're just together
4 in one room, creating projects to cross-curricular --
5 some cross-curricular projects.

6 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So they're -- are they
7 still meeting the 120 Clock Hours?

8 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Yes.

9 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay.

10 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Yes.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you.

12 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Uh-huh.

13 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you for that
14 clarification.

15 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: You're very welcome.

16 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: This is
17 Sonja. I had a question about waiver 10, and I
18 wasn't sure if we got there yet or not.

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay. Go ahead, Ms.
20 Wright-McMurray.

21 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I was just
22 wanting to get a little bit more details on a change
23 there.

24 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: I believe -- I believe
25 they rescinded that waiver. That's what I have in my

1 notes. If you look --

2 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

3 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: -- at the top, where it
4 says "waiver number 10", to the right, --

5 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah.

6 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: -- there should be a
7 box.

8 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah, I see
9 it. Thank you.

10 COURT REPORTER: Have her repeat that.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Laura, did you need her?
12 Okay.

13 COURT REPORTER: I didn't hear what she said
14 before "thank you," but -- I think it was just --

15 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Sonja, can you repeat
16 what you said, for the record?

17 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Oh, sorry.
18 Can you hear me?

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Barely.

20 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Oh. Can
21 you hear me better now?

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Yes, ma'am.

23 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay,
24 sorry. Yes, thank you, Mary Claire. I saw that.
25 Thanks.

1 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All right. Let's start
2 our questions. Ms. Wright-McMurray, since you're up
3 do you want to start with questions?

4 QUESTIONS FROM PANEL:

5 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Well I
6 thought you guys did a very good presentation. It
7 sounds like you guys are doing some really good
8 things at Cross County. I do have a question for Mr.
9 Hooper about the C-3 program. And so it looks like
10 you guys are doing quite a bit of robust work on the
11 college side. I just wanted a little bit more detail
12 on what's happening on the career side of that
13 program.

14 MR. WES HOOPER: Okay. So it's been our goal,
15 in the past, to mostly focus on college, but this
16 year, and in the past year, we have pushed more
17 toward career, so we're doing things like job
18 shadowing; we're doing the virtual internship; we're
19 pushing kids toward welding academies and things like
20 that. We know that in the past year, nationally, one
21 in five students, who we thought would have
22 matriculated to college, actually didn't and, for
23 low-income schools, it's actually one in three. So
24 we've had to combat that issue and we're doing that
25 by getting our college -- I mean our career advisors

1 out and talking with kids before they graduate,
2 saying, "Hey, is there somewhere you want to go?" or
3 giving them possibilities for on ramps into a post-
4 secondary experience, like a technical school or
5 something like that.

6 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Are you
7 guys working much with your C-3 coordinator that's in
8 that area; that -- that -- I think that would be
9 Crowley's Ridge for you guys?

10 MR. WES HOOPER: It is my understanding that we
11 are. That might be a better question for Mr. Prince,
12 since I'm mostly on the college side. But, yes,
13 we're working with Carolyn McNeely in the C-3
14 program. There's talking -- or, the CTE program.

15 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

16 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Yeah, I can piggyback on
17 that just a little bit. Yes, Carolyn McNeely is our
18 representative at Crowley's Ridge and she and I work
19 very closely together to put projects together for
20 the high school. One of the current projects that we
21 have right now is for our welding program in Ag, and
22 we are getting a cart, for laptops, so we can expand
23 the use of our plasma cutter and students can --
24 instead of using one computer, now we're going to
25 have a classroom set, so they can design their --

1 their designs for the plasma cutter now and not have
2 to wait in line for the computer. So that's just one
3 of the recent projects that we've put together.

4 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Good. I --
5 this sounds like you guys are doing a lot of great
6 work. I just wanted to make sure there was a good
7 balance. It looks like you guys are developing those
8 partnerships in the area. So, thank you.

9 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Newton?

10 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I don't have any
11 questions.

12 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Dr. Williams?

13 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Great
14 presentation. You're doing a great job of keeping
15 the teacher retention. That kind of stood out to me
16 during the presentation. Can you give me a little
17 bit of the demographics of your student make-up. I
18 -- you know, I tend to go on your website and check
19 out the schools, and all of that, while I'm here and
20 I did not see a lot of diversity in your schools. So
21 if you'd just kind of give me -- I know as a teacher
22 -- I used to be a teacher myself -- we educate who
23 shows up; so that's a given. So that's not the issue
24 here. But could you talk a little bit about your
25 demographics, socioeconomic, and ethnicity and

1 so-forth?

2 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Sure. Absolutely. Yes.

3 So we have about 300 students in the high school,

4 grades 7-12. We are approximately 73%

5 free-and-reduced lunch on a given year, on average.

6 And, yes, you are correct; there is not a lot of

7 diversity in our school districts. Currently, I

8 think -- just ball-parking, with going from memory --

9 I think there's about 9% African-American students,

10 less than 1% Hispanic, and the remaining population

11 would be Caucasian students.

12 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

13 Okay. Good deal. What's your special ed make-up?

14 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: I believe our special ed
15 percentage is 12%.

16 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay. Oh,

17 good job, then. Just one other comment. I

18 appreciate the work that you all are doing with your

19 students. Wherever I saw a dip I also saw you came

20 up the next year, so that shows a lot of work is

21 being done.

22 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Absolutely.

23 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Thank you.

24 MR. STEPHEN PRINCE: Thank you.

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

1 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Yes, really just a
2 observation, as opposed to a question. But, in
3 looking at your letter grades -- and I appreciated
4 the depth of discussion that you all provided on
5 going from a "D" to a "C" and then a high "C". And
6 then with the improvements that you're making, it'll
7 be good for us to see the "B" grade, which I expect
8 you will achieve next time you come back before us.
9 So, congratulations, on that. Good presentation.
10 Keep up the good work.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Are there any additional
12 questions from the Panel?

13 (NO RESPONSE)

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Hearing none, any
15 discussion?

16 (NO RESPONSE)

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Then I'll accept a
18 motion.

19 MOTIONS AND VOTE:

20 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I move
21 approve.

22 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Second.

23 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: I have a motion by Ms.
24 Wright-McMurray to approve the renewal application
25 for Cross County High School: A New Tech School,

1 seconded by Ms. Newton. Any discussion?

2 (NO RESPONSE)

3 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All those in favor?

4 (CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Any opposed?

6 (NO RESPONSE)

7 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Motion passes. If
8 you'll give us just a second, our Panel will submit
9 information in their voting sheets. Mr. Baldwin?

10 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Yes, I voted to
11 approve the request. It looks like this is a
12 successful program that is improving its quality each
13 year.

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms.
15 Wright-McMurray?

16 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I put I
17 recommend approval. I was impressed by the level of
18 work being done to address identified academic
19 challenges. I was also encouraged by the work being
20 done to support students' college and career
21 readiness.

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr.
23 Williams?

24 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes, I --
25 make sure I'm not on mute -- okay. Good to go. I

1 support the motion. Excellent presentation. Great
2 job of retaining good teachers. Also, where there's
3 a drop in an achievement, improvement follows.

4 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. And Ms.
5 Newton?

6 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I voted for the
7 motion. The comprehensive plan was easy to follow
8 and to understand.

9 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Congratulations. Job
10 well done. I have been onsite to see this work in
11 action and it's just as impressive onsite as hearing
12 about it today. So keep up the great work. This
13 information, as you know, will be shared with our
14 State Board at the next month's meeting and they will
15 review -- vote to review or not review at that time.
16 So thank you for coming today.

17 MR. STEPHEN PRICE: Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Webb, is your desire
19 to break for lunch or move to Item 3?

20 MS. TRACY WEBB: It's here.

21 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay. Panel Members,
22 we're going to break for a 30-minute lunch; come back
23 at 11:30 and be ready for Item Number 3. Thank you.

24 (Thereupon, a lunch break was taken and the
25 proceedings resumed as follows, to-wit:)

1 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All right. Thank you,
2 everyone, for coming back. And, Ms. Webb, if you'll
3 introduce Item 3.

4 AGENDA ITEM II(3): CONSIDERATION OF DISTRICT CONVERSION
5 CHARTER RENEWAL APPLICATION - DON TYSON SCHOOL OF INNOVATION
6 (SPRINGDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT)

7 MS. TRACY WEBB: The next item is a
8 consideration of a district conversion charter
9 application for the Don Tyson School of Innovation in
10 the Springdale School District. This school is a
11 district conversion charter that serves students in
12 grades K-12 and has an enrollment cap of 8,000
13 students. The charter was originally awarded in
14 November of 2015 and expires on June 30th, 2021. The
15 district is requesting a renewal for five years.
16 Today, on Zoom, we have Principal Kelly Boortz,
17 General Counsel Kendra Clay, and the Student Council
18 President, McKenzie Kilmer, to present the
19 application.

20 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: I'll ask that all
21 parties speaking on behalf of Don Tyson School of
22 Innovation raise your right hand. Do you swear or
23 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
24 be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
25 truth?

1 (NO RESPONSE)

2 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: I need to hear an
3 audible.

4 (CHORUS OF AFFIRMATIONS)

5 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. All right.
6 And our presenter, if you will state your name and
7 title, you'll have 20 minutes. And if you have --

8 PRESENTATION:

9 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: Good morning. My name is
10 McKenzie Kilmer. I'm the Student Council President
11 at the Don Tyson School of Innovation. And let me
12 start off by saying it is an honor to be here with
13 all of you today and to talk about the Don Tyson
14 School of Innovation application for the charter
15 renewal. I will be joined by Ms. Kelly Boortz, who's
16 the Principal at the Don Tyson School of Innovation,
17 as well as Kendra Clay, who is the Springdale Public
18 School's general counsel member.

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Do you have
20 a PowerPoint?

21 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: We do; yes, we will be
22 sharing that right now.

23 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

24 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: To start us off we do have
25 a short introduction video that we will show you.

1 (THEREUPON, a video was played and the
2 proceedings resumed as follows, to-wit:)

3 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: So at the Don Tyson School
4 of Innovation our mission is to inspire students to
5 imagine their greatest dreams through innovative
6 education. So we want all of our students to exceed,
7 not only academically, but also workforce and in the
8 industry. And we can do this through our vision,
9 which we have: Accelerated; advanced; college; and
10 industry. So our accelerated vision allows students
11 to complete high school, with time for internships
12 and apprenticeships with local industries; our
13 advanced allows students the option of advanced
14 placement programs; our college allows students to
15 earn an associates degree or general proficiency
16 certificate; and our industry allows students to earn
17 certifications that are recognized in businesses and
18 the industry.

19 Personally, I decided to go the college route
20 and I am taking college courses through the Northwest
21 Arkansas Community College. I will graduate with
22 about 33 hours of college credit under my belt, and,
23 of course, this will allow me to go to college and do
24 things I've always wanted to do, like studying abroad
25 and going to Greece. I'm really excited for that

1 opportunity and I'm beyond grateful to have been a
2 member of the Don Tyson School of Innovation. I've
3 been here for, roughly, about five years now and I've
4 seen my personal growth, as I reflect on the past
5 five years, and how I have changed as a student, and
6 how I've grown. I went from having a 14 on the ACT
7 to a 34 this past year; so it has been a tremendous
8 growth for me.

9 The way the school is structured is incredible.
10 And to present more about that I would like to
11 introduce Ms. Kelly Boortz, who is our Principal.

12 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Thank you, McKenzie. I would
13 like to share our 2020 enrollment and demographic
14 information for our school. We are serving grades
15 K-12, through virtual, and 6-12 we offer a blended
16 model, as well as a full face-to-face opportunity
17 here on our campus. So this year face-to-face and
18 blended we serve about 1200 students for grades 6-12
19 on campus. In our Virtual Innovation Academy, we
20 serve 1200 -- over 1200 K-5 students and about 1300
21 6-12 students. And, of course, with Covid-19 that
22 virtual enrollment, truly, you know, exploded this
23 year. Thankfully, we had a solid foundation with
24 virtual. This will make our fifth year of having the
25 virtual options for students, here, at Don Tyson

1 School of Innovation. Our total enrollment is 3,772
2 students. And then we also outline our demographics
3 and you can see the different populations that we
4 serve in Springdale. And then our free-and-reduced
5 population is about 51%; English language learners,
6 about 19%; and then students with disabilities, we're
7 around 8%. We are recognized as an "A" school, so we
8 are certainly proud of that accomplishment.

9 The Don Tyson School of Innovation educational
10 model is a very nontraditional approach to learning.
11 As McKenzie stated earlier, when she was sharing our
12 mission and our vision, we do focus on college and
13 career. And so, beginning in 6th grade, when
14 students start on our campus -- and we also do this
15 through the Virtual Innovation Academy -- they take a
16 class called College and Career Readiness. And so we
17 have some courses embedded into those classes and
18 they're designed, beginning in 8th grade, that
19 they're meeting those graduation requirements. But
20 we truly do focus and help prepare students for
21 college or career, or both, depending on what their
22 focus is; we call it CCR. They develop a student
23 success plan; it's focusing on career awareness,
24 employment, executive skills. And, also, with our
25 younger students, we really focus on teaching them to

1 be a student here, because it is a nontraditional
2 environment, with open-zone learning. But, as you
3 will see in this graphic, just some of the things
4 that we do focus on with our learning model. We are
5 shifting to a competency-based model where students
6 are demonstrating mastery. And then one of the
7 foundations of our school are those community
8 partnerships, where students have the opportunity to
9 do internships. We have Real World Wednesday, where
10 community comes to our school each week, which that
11 looks a little bit different this year. We are an
12 Inquiry Learning Model school. And certainly
13 technology integration and some of the other things
14 that were the initial vision of the school -- which
15 in 2020, and Covid-19, and the shift that we all had
16 to make to accommodate learners who needed to be or
17 wanted to be completely virtual or were shifting to
18 remote, has proved beneficial to us. Those
19 foundations were already in place as we adjusted to
20 what this school year would look like.

21 This is just a quick glance into our programs of
22 study on campus. We have a lot going on here. And
23 we opened our Phase 2 portion of the campus this fall
24 and that allowed us to add industrial maintenance,
25 which was a partnership with Tyson and includes other

1 local industry partners. We expanded our diesel
2 program, which is a partnership with Northwest
3 Technical Institute. And we also opened a culinary
4 program, and we are partnering with Brightwater to be
5 able to offer an associates degree for our culinary
6 program, as well. We expanded our fine arts
7 programs, our computer science program, as well as
8 our fine arts. So it's an exciting year. It looks a
9 little bit different, but it's been exciting just to
10 see students take advantage of these additional
11 opportunities on our campus.

12 We do have some proposed new goals for our
13 charter. We still feel that it's important that our
14 goal is to exceed the state and district percentage
15 of students meeting or exceeding the college and
16 career readiness standards, as measured by state
17 assessments for math, ELA, and science. Goal 2 is
18 DTSOI will annually increase the number of students
19 who will earn college credit. So we have a great
20 partnership with Northwest Arkansas Community
21 College. Like McKenzie stated earlier, students can
22 earn an associates degree. Many students choose to
23 do that, but some students choose to do AP course
24 work or they just take a combination of AP and
25 concurrent classes. So that will continue to be a

1 focus for Don Tyson School of Innovation.

2 Goal 3, we will annually increase the number of
3 students who participate in career and industry
4 experiences. So we do have that accelerated and
5 advanced model here, and it's not designed for
6 students to graduate early; it's designed so that
7 students have the opportunity to do internships and
8 have that real-world work-based learning experience.
9 And so we plan to continue focusing on that. A lot
10 of our internships that we had developed, we had to
11 take a step back this year, just with Covid and some
12 limitations that we had with some of our community
13 partners. We have created an internship with
14 Northwest Medical and students would go actually work
15 and serve in different areas of the hospital, in the
16 mornings, and come to class in the afternoons, or
17 would do that opposite. But this year we weren't
18 able to have students in the hospital environment,
19 due to Covid-19, but we still have internships
20 throughout our community and we will continue to
21 increase those. And after Covid-19, hopefully,
22 lessons in our community -- we can go back into the
23 hospital and have students doing internships there,
24 in conjunction with the CNA program that we have
25 through NWTI, Northwest Technical Institute, here on

1 our campus.

2 Goal 4, we will continue to transition 100% of
3 our graduates directly to post-education or careers.
4 So we have our CCR for seniors -- we call it Senior
5 Seminar -- and that is the focus of that class and
6 they work throughout the year in preparing students
7 for post-graduation plans.

8 We will go specifically over the waivers, I
9 know, a little bit later in the program, and Ms. Clay
10 will speak to those at the end of this presentation.
11 But the waivers that we are requesting to continue
12 with allow for flexibility, personalization, and
13 adaptability, and that leads to deeper student
14 inquiry and application of learning, access to
15 industry professionals and real-world experiences,
16 student and family choice for schedules, and learning
17 models. And I think that family and student choice,
18 right now, being able to offer them a virtual option,
19 a face-to-face option, or a blended option, has
20 really been comforting to families to be able to make
21 the choice that is most beneficial to them.

22 So Don Tyson School of Innovation, even before
23 2020, we had that blended model, which a lot of
24 families have shifted to during this time. Our block
25 scheduling allows for students to come on "A" days or

1 "B" days and really flex their schedule and design a
2 learning model that works for them and their learning
3 style.

4 Again, we focus on college and career. And this
5 slide just gives you some insight into our career and
6 industry certifications that we provide through many
7 of our programs on campus, and just gives you some
8 insight into the number of students enrolled in some
9 of those programs. This slide also reflects the
10 Northwest Technical Institute and the programs that
11 we have on campus that serves, not only Don Tyson
12 School of Innovation students, but students in
13 surrounding communities, as well as our district. A
14 list of the certifications that are provided through
15 our career and technical programs are listed there,
16 as well. And, again, I'm going to speak to community
17 partnerships. What we do here on our campus would
18 not be possible without the support of our community
19 and those businesses that partner with us to allow
20 students to be in their facilities, learning
21 hands-on, and also coming into our school to continue
22 just talking about opportunities. And we also
23 partner with them for them to tell us what their
24 needs are and then we design our learning programs
25 around what they're looking for. Or if they're

1 looking for specific skills, those might be addressed
2 through our College and Career Readiness classes, as
3 well.

4 Again, we are an accelerated and advanced
5 learning model. This slide represents the number of
6 students who are in advanced placement classes, and
7 then the number of students enrolled in college
8 courses. So most of our students are choosing the
9 concurrent route, although we do still have that
10 strong aspect of AP offerings here at our campus.
11 And so I want to just elaborate a little bit on the
12 Northwest Arkansas Community College courses; that we
13 have students enrolled in 450 concurrent classes.
14 Many of those are offered here on our campus, and
15 then students take online classes as well. And, if
16 they take an online class, we give them an
17 environment to support their learning. So they have
18 something called an NWACC Lab; if they have an online
19 class, they're able to go to that NWACC Lab and work
20 on their college class, and have the flexibility of
21 not having to add other classes on their schedule;
22 that that concurrent class can count for that dual
23 credit. And so there are different levels of
24 recognition through NWACC. This year we'll have
25 (INAUDIBLE) students completing their associate's

1 degrees. We do an early college experience and we
2 have 25 students who will complete that. And then
3 the Certificate of Proficiency in General Studies, we
4 have 29 students in that area. And then you can also
5 see our enrollment in partnership with Northwest
6 Arkansas -- Northwest Technical Institute -- I'm
7 sorry. We have CNA, diesel, pharmacy tech, on our
8 campus, and then we have students who travel to other
9 Northwest Arkansas Technical Institute locations
10 across the northwest Arkansas area.

11 So that just gives you an insight to our college
12 and career focus and our accelerated and advanced
13 pathway as well.

14 At this time I'm going to turn it over to Ms.
15 Clay. She is going to talk more in depth about the
16 waivers.

17 MS. KENDRA CLAY: Good morning. My name is
18 Kendra Clay. Ms. Boortz, could you stop your
19 screen-sharing? There we go, so I can see everybody
20 better that way. My name is Kendra Clay and I'm
21 general counsel for Springdale School District. I'm
22 happy to be here today on behalf of Don Tyson School
23 of Innovation. And it's good to see so many familiar
24 faces out there in the Zoom universe.

25 Just a little bit of clarification that I'd like

1 to offer on our waivers before Ms. Hyatt does her
2 presentation; I think this will help with her work.
3 Waiver Number 2, we would like to add Standard
4 1-A.4.3. And we may need to have further discussion
5 on this. I'll defer to Ms. Hyatt, of course. My
6 thought process was that if we have a waiver of
7 6-16-102 then the plan required in 6-16-102 would not
8 be required because we had a waiver. I understand
9 that there has been some discussion, and that may not
10 be the direction that the panel and the department
11 wants charters to go at this point, and so we will
12 defer to the direction of the panel on that. That
13 waiver is specific to elementary schools and recess.
14 This is the first year that DTSOI has housed
15 elementary students, and they are only housing those
16 students in the context of K-5 virtual students.

17 On Waiver Number 5, I can confirm that that
18 licensure waiver is used on occasion for core
19 teachers. That was part of the discussion that Ms.
20 Hyatt brought to our attention. So I'll make that
21 confirmation for the record.

22 And then, finally, on Waiver Number 11, DTSOI
23 would like to add 6-16-130(a) in order to fully
24 effectuate the waiver for elementary and middle
25 school students and, as part of the process, that

1 narrows the use of that waiver to what it is
2 currently used for, which is only middle school
3 students and elementary students. We would like to
4 rescind Standards 1-A1.3.6 and 1.A.3.

5 And I can confirm on the Fine Arts waiver, as
6 well, that although the -- how the waiver was
7 initially granted it appeared as if DTSOI had a
8 waiver of the Fine Arts graduation requirement.
9 DTSOI has always required and will continue to
10 require their graduates to have the required Fine
11 Arts credits for graduation.

12 So that concludes my portion of the
13 presentation. We will be happy to answer any
14 questions that you have. And we would also like to
15 extend an invitation for any of the panel members who
16 have not been to DTSOI, or maybe just have not been
17 to DTSOI in awhile, we'd love to have you and show
18 you around. Like Ms. Boortz said, there's a
19 brand-new wing that is housing some really, really
20 cool programs that our students would love to show
21 you.

22 So that is the end of our presentation. We'll
23 be happy to answer questions.

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Kendra.
25 Great to see you. Ms. Hyatt?

1 WAIVERS:

2 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt,
3 Arkansas Department of Education. Kendra mostly
4 fixed all my comments, except for just one or two.
5 So I'm just going to address those and then I'll
6 generally cover the areas of waivers for you and
7 answer any questions.

8 One, I think is just a typo, but on their school
9 calendar waiver it's listed as 1-A.5.2. It should be
10 1-A.4.2, since the 2020 change in the standards. I
11 think they submitted this before the change. So can
12 you just confirm?

13 MS. KENDRA CLAY: Yes, we confirm that change.

14 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: And on the recess
15 waiver, I will say -- and I talked with Kendra
16 yesterday, and then I researched this a little
17 further -- it does say in the charter rules that you
18 must either have a plan approved by the Department to
19 receive a waiver or be approved to operate as a
20 virtual school to receive a waiver. So we can waive
21 it now and then we can work with Don Tyson to either
22 get a plan approved or see if they fall under the
23 exception for a virtual program. So we can do that
24 after the recess waiver is approved, but that is
25 incorporated into the charter rules, just for

1 clarification. That's the last kind of legal
2 comment. I'll briefly just tell you their other
3 areas of waivers. They have the eye and vision
4 screening, but I believe that is just for their
5 virtual students; teacher fair dismissal; public
6 employee fair hearing; they do have a waiver of
7 salary schedules, but it's specific to their industry
8 professionals that they have coming in to teach
9 specific courses; they do have a waiver of the basic
10 language of instruction, in case they need to offer
11 instruction in a different language; gifted and
12 talented; they have an attendance waiver, just so
13 that they can count attendance for their virtual
14 students; counselor licensure; principal licensure;
15 class size and teaching load; library/media; and the
16 120 clock hour provision. Are there any questions?

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Yes. On Waiver Number
18 2, school calendar, there was quite a description or
19 explanation that left me feeling a little vague about
20 when you plan to start the school year, will you put
21 in a third semester? Can you kind of speak to that?

22 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: So I don't think this year
23 there will be a third semester. But in really
24 working with the partnerships through NWACC and
25 realizing that the associate's pathway -- if students

1 pursue that, we would have to have a summer session
2 or a third semester to be able to make that
3 attainable for students. So, in some of the specific
4 programs and pathways that we are designing, we
5 foresee that that third semester may be necessary in
6 supporting students to be able to do some of that
7 programming. So that would just be one example. We
8 just have students starting that program this next
9 school year. We have the culinary classes, but as
10 far as starting the associates degree program with
11 culinary, we just foresee that in the next couple of
12 years that we would have to offer that. And then,
13 another program that comes to mind that we might do
14 that is our industrial maintenance program that we
15 started this year. We are already at capacity for
16 that program, so down the road, by adding a third
17 semester, we may be able to increase the number of
18 students that are able to access some of the skills
19 and certifications that they earn through that. So
20 those are just some examples of how we might use that
21 in the future to be able to offer that semester -- or
22 a third semester option.

23 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So will that determine
24 your start time for the beginning of the school year?

25 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: I think we would still follow

1 the Springdale Public School Calendar. We would just
2 do more of, you know, that summer session and not --
3 other students would still have the same start time;
4 it would just affect students doing a session in the
5 summer, and not really affecting their start-date or
6 end-date on -- based on a school calendar year.

7 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. On Waiver
8 Number 9, so I think I know what this means, but I
9 think I'd like to have you explain it for the record.
10 The last sentence in the explanation ends with "DTSOI
11 has not accounted for virtual students' daily
12 attendance." And so I'm assuming that, yes, you have
13 accounted for attendance, but that you do not do an
14 attendance check-in daily?

15 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Correct. So, you know,
16 virtual is that asynchronous learning piece, so
17 students truly, you know, learning at, you know, the
18 time that is best for them or best for their family.
19 So it's just that daily attendance piece that we're
20 not, you know, taking attendance at a certain time
21 every day. You know, their attendance is accounted
22 for in the work that they're doing and staying on
23 progress at certain points.

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: That's what I expected
25 your answer to be. Do you have a policy -- an

1 attendance policy for your remote students for how
2 attendance is calculated or determined?

3 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Yes. So I think the way that
4 I think best describes that attendance policy, for
5 our K-5 learners, we have a synchronous session with
6 those students. So, you know, those students are
7 accounted for and they have a schedule that they
8 follow every week. And then, for our 6-12, learners,
9 truly, it's engagement, and so, you know, if a
10 teacher sees that a student hasn't engaged or --
11 through our learning management system we can see
12 when a student logs in, how long they spent time in
13 the learning management system, and so our teachers
14 monitor that. And we also have an advisory program,
15 with our Virtual Innovation Academy, and so the
16 engagement and learning management system statistics
17 and analytics are closely monitored, so that we do
18 have accountability, as far as attendance goes, for
19 virtual.

20 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Baldwin,
21 would you like to kick-off the Panel questions?

22 QUESTIONS FROM PANEL:

23 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: I sure would. I
24 have no questions. A really good presentation and
25 the grades that you're achieving, as a educational

1 organization, are outstanding. Thank you.

2 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Thank you.

3 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Newton?

4 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I -- no, I don't
5 have questions. I have congratulations on the
6 set-up. I've watched the school during development
7 and now see the fruits of their labor. One -- well,
8 I do have one question. Is there another model like
9 Tyson School of Technology -- Innovation, in the
10 state?

11 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: I am not aware of one. There
12 may be -- and if there is, I would love to know about
13 it, because I would like to learn from them. And I
14 know that just being involved in this charter panel
15 discussion today and learning from the other schools
16 who have presented, so if there is, you know, one
17 that is close to our model, I would definitely love
18 to know about that.

19 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I'd like to know --
20 I'd like for you to know if there's some national --
21 some school nationally that fits the model, because
22 it certainly sounds like you guys are on point as it
23 relates to the advanced courses, the college
24 curriculum, the -- and all of the different parts
25 seem to fit together. And I just -- you know, I

1 always am in a position of wanting to have a best
2 practice in our state shared with other states. And
3 it seems that these components certainly lend
4 themselves to want -- lends itself to want to think
5 that there would be a model. This would be a model,
6 and especially with the diversity of the student
7 enrollment.

8 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Yes. I -- you know, I can't
9 speak enough about the relationship that our school
10 district and our school has with community and
11 industry. I do think that the success of our school
12 and the schools in Springdale, you know, are just
13 reflective of the strength of community and industry
14 partners.

15 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Absolutely. But,
16 you know, we would assume or we would understand, or
17 we would think, or hope, that those partnerships are
18 there in other communities. But, in my experience,
19 I've found that people -- southern folks do
20 partnerships better than other -- a lot of other
21 people, in most instances. And I guess that's just
22 our nature to get along, to make it better for
23 everybody.

24 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Yeah.

25 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: But I don't think

1 that -- I once was in El Paso with the Gates
2 Foundation, in early high school -- early
3 college/high school. And, you know, there's some
4 things that you talk about that weren't there; at
5 that school, they'd been around a lot longer. So I
6 think we need to take advantage, hopefully, of being
7 able to spread the message to say the innovation
8 piece of it is strong, and, in addition to
9 innovation, the partnerships that many people search
10 for -- and (INAUDIBLE) excuse me -- and suffer as a
11 result of not having, are there, and how you maintain
12 those things with the diversity of communities,
13 diversity of races, and economics and all of that
14 taking part to form a cohesive chain of partnership.
15 Does that make sense to --

16 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Yes.

17 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: It does me? I don't
18 know.

19 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Yes, it does.

20 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Newton.
21 Dr. Williams?

22 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes. First
23 -- first of all, just an outstanding job all the way
24 around. Just noted excluding 2019-2020 school year,
25 you had all "A's" the previous three years to that,

1 19 programs of study. Love your four goals that you
2 talked about there. So this is just, overall, just
3 an outstanding school. I've tracked the school,
4 obviously; my kids attend school -- attended --
5 they've both graduated college now -- in the
6 Springdale School District.

7 One question I had is that what's your total
8 enrollment? And can you just -- I was trying to
9 track it when you was talking about it -- how many
10 are virtual and how many are onsite?

11 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: I think I'm going to have to
12 just get my slides, so I make sure I am giving you
13 accurate information here. So our total enrollment
14 is 3,772. So our face-to-face enrollment for grades
15 6-12 is just over 1,200.

16 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.

17 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: And then our Virtual
18 Innovation Academy, K-5, we have just over 1,200
19 students for K-5. And then 6-12 we have over 1,300.

20 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okey-dokey.
21 Okay, that's good. I'll just -- just noting that,
22 just mainly just for my own education purposes, as we
23 look at the enrollment for virtual schools, I just
24 wanted to kind of get an idea in my mind of what's
25 what. Overall, just an outstanding job. I have no

1 other questions and you all seem to be -- y'all seem
2 to -- you all are a model program for other schools.
3 I just love the balance between the career readiness
4 piece and the actual college preparatory piece, also,
5 creating pathways for students. I would suspect that
6 you all will be developing a stronger relationship
7 with NTI as we move forward.

8 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: We are, yes.

9 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay.

10 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I have one other
11 thing I want to ask. I noticed through the news,
12 here, where I live, in this area and other school
13 districts, they're struggling keeping young people
14 engaged in school, period, whether it's onsite or
15 virtual. In fact, the courts are being inundated
16 with young people coming and parents coming to court,
17 because they're just not signing on, they're not
18 coming. So is that an issue with you or not?

19 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Yeah. I mean we have
20 definitely seen an increase in that, as far as, you
21 know, students not being engaged, due to the large
22 number of students who have shifted to virtual. We
23 started off the year realizing that we would have to
24 have a very strong response to intervention program,
25 just because students who may not be fitted for

1 virtual learning are going to be virtual learning
2 because of a family situation, and virtual learning
3 was a necessity, maybe not even a want, or the best
4 learning environment for that student.

5 So we have -- we meet weekly with our counseling
6 team and teachers to look at those students who are
7 not engaging. And, you know, we have teams that go
8 out every day to do home visits and we really have
9 tried to work with families to determine, if, you
10 know, this learning model is not working, is there a
11 better option that we could do for blended or virtual
12 to support that student.

13 One of the really unique things about our
14 virtual program is that we do have virtual students
15 that come on our campus once-in-awhile to tutoring
16 and lab hours. So some of the students who have
17 struggled, we have encouraged families to bring those
18 students to tutoring. Obviously, they're not going
19 out into the larger school environment, so if a
20 family is concerned just about exposure, just trying
21 to create that safe place for them. So we just have
22 an active team that's working continually, doing home
23 visits, working with families -- you know, and that
24 is true for our virtual, blended, and face-to-face
25 students. So I think this year, more than ever,

1 those relationships and communication pieces with
2 families, and truly trying to support them where they
3 are, and the learning model that they've chosen for
4 this moment in time, that we are supporting them
5 through this year and working to keep students
6 engaged.

7 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Thank you.

8 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

9 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Great
10 presentation. You guys did a great job with that. I
11 do want to take a moment to commend your student body
12 president, McKenzie, for making that big jump from a
13 14 to a 34. That's awesome. I'd love to see -- was
14 that -- is there any kind of ACT prep work that you
15 guys did onsite or if she's just that phenomenal of a
16 student, that made that jump?

17 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Yeah. I'll let McKenzie
18 speak to that. Okay, she's going to step over; she
19 can't do audio on her computer right now.

20 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

21 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: Thank you for that
22 comment. That's really sweet. But, yes, I do credit
23 all of it to the Don Tyson School of Innovation. We
24 do offer ACT prep here on campus --

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: McKenzie, can you move

1 closer to the microphone, please?

2 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: Yes.

3 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: We're having trouble
4 hearing you.

5 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: Can you hear me better
6 from here?

7 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Yes. Yes, much better.
8 Thank you.

9 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: Okay. So we do offer ACT
10 prep here on campus. And so my 11th grade year I
11 took College and Career Readiness and, through that,
12 I practiced for the ACT. I took prep. And I think a
13 lot of our classes also structure us in the way that
14 we can succeed and do well. And so, yes, I did have
15 that practice online, but I also had the
16 encouragement from my teachers, and peers, and that's
17 truly what motivated me.

18 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you
19 for that. Well, congratulations, again and --

20 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: Thank you.

21 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- good
22 luck in your future. And you did a wonderful job
23 presenting today.

24 MS. MCKENZIE KILMER: Thank you.

25 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: And the

1 school is doing a great job with creating a true
2 balance between college and career readiness. So I
3 feel confident that you guys are really meeting the
4 needs of all of your students, wherever they are.
5 So, great job.

6 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Thank you.

7 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: So just --
8 could I just add another comment, that I noticed that
9 the -- and I put this in context of what I see from
10 other schools too. You received a letter grade of an
11 "A" for the three prior years to this academic year.
12 And what was impressive to me about it is the
13 diversity of your school population.

14 You know, I'm very familiar, obviously, with
15 east Springdale and strong Latino population are over
16 there, and also the Marshallese, Pacific Islanders.
17 And it's an "A" grade, and I noticed in each area of
18 the ESSA categories that you all exceeded the state
19 expectations in all of the areas, regardless of
20 socioeconomic status and diversity. Job well done.

21 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Thank you.

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Any additional comments
23 or questions from the Panel? I'm ready for a motion
24 when you are.

25 MOTIONS AND VOTE:

1 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: So moved to
2 approve as presented.

3 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Second.

4 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Second.

5 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: I have a motion by Dr.
6 Williams, a second by Mr. Baldwin, to approve the Don
7 Tyson School of Innovation charter renewal for five
8 years. Any discussion?

9 (NO RESPONSE)

10 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All those in favor?

11 (CHORUS OF AYES)

12 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Any opposed?

13 (NO RESPONSE)

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Motion passes.
15 Congratulations.

16 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Thank you.

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And if you'll give us
18 just a second we'll let our panel members enter
19 information into their voting sheets. I think pretty
20 much you've heard their expressions, but if they have
21 any additional words, I'll just ask them to share
22 those with you.

23 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Okay. Thank you.

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Dr. Williams, any
25 additional words?

1 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes. I
2 support the motion. Outstanding presentation. There
3 are a lot of good things happening throughout the
4 2019-2020 year; I call that the Covid year. Don
5 Tyson School of Innovation received an "A" grade for
6 the three prior years; has strong community
7 engagement; has 19 programs of study; and has
8 excellent goals. I couldn't think of anything else.

9 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Thank you.

10 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

11 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Yes. I approve the
12 charter renewal as presented. This is obviously an
13 excellent program. It has a lot of different avenues
14 that it's touching students with, and it looks to me
15 like it's achieving success in all those different
16 forms.

17 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Thank you.

18 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Newton?

19 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I voted for the
20 motion. The school is a model that addresses the
21 career needs of students, as well as future
22 educational advancement.

23 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

24 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I'm trying
25 to see if I had anything different than I've already

1 said. I did add that I believe they're providing a
2 high quality of instruction for all their students.

3 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Panel. Thank
4 you, Don Tyson School of Innovation. We appreciate
5 the innovation and certainly all of your efforts to
6 meet each child, their needs, and the needs of their
7 families. So thank you, so much, for your work.

8 MS. KELLY BOORTZ: Thank you to the Charter
9 Panel for the opportunity today. And we would invite
10 you to come visit us any time. We love to show
11 people our school and what amazing things our
12 students are doing.

13 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. We
14 appreciate that invitation. All right. Ms. Webb,
15 are you ready for Item 4 -- or, Panel, do you need a
16 quick stretch break?

17 (NON VERBAL RESPONSES)

18 AGENDA ITEM II(4): CONSIDERATION OF DISTRICT CONVERSION
19 CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION - HOT SPRINGS WORLD CLASS
20 HIGH SCHOOL

21 MS. TRACY WEBB: The next item on the agenda is
22 the consideration of district conversion charter
23 school renewal application for the Hot Springs World
24 Class High School. The school is a district
25 conversion charter that serves students in grades

1 10-12 and has an enrollment cap of 1,200 students.
2 The charter was originally awarded in November of
3 2015 and expires on June 30th, 2021. The district is
4 requesting a renewal for five years. Today we have
5 Assistant Superintendent Dr. Taryn Echols and High
6 School Principal Kiley Simms to present the
7 application.

8 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And, Panel Members, this
9 school is one of the schools on your review list for
10 later on. So this will be your opportunity to have
11 any conversations or ask any questions. All right.
12 All of those persons speaking on behalf of the Hot
13 Springs World Class High School, if you will raise
14 your right hand? And I can go back to my sheet that
15 gives me my oath. Do you swear or affirm that the
16 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
17 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

18 (CHORUS OF AFFIRMATIONS)

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. You have 20
20 minutes, and if you have a presentation you may share
21 it.

22 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am, I'm going to
23 share my screen right now.

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And if you'll also make
25 sure that you -- anyone who's speaking state your

1 name and your title.

2 PRESENTATION:

3 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am. So I am Taryn
4 Echols, Assistant Superintendent, Hot Springs School
5 District. And I'm going to get my presentation up
6 for you all today. There we go.

7 It's always great to hear three other
8 presentations before us, so I am absolutely excited
9 to talk about Hot Springs School District and our
10 high school, Hot Springs World Class High School.

11 So, as Ms. Coffman -- or, Dr. Coffman stated, I
12 am Taryn Echols, Assistant Superintendent. And today
13 I have with me Ms. Kiley Simms, our principal at the
14 high school.

15 In our presentation what you all will learn
16 about Hot Springs is our original charter goals
17 versus new goals that our school has decided upon;
18 student impact from our conversion charter over the
19 last four-and-a-half years; we're going to talk
20 through some community partners; we will briefly
21 discuss waiver requests; and then, we will talk
22 through what we plan on doing, moving forward, if we
23 are given the opportunity to continue our conversion
24 charter.

25 The basis of Hot Springs World Class High School

1 functions on the mission, which is to do whatever it
2 takes to guarantee high levels of learning for all
3 students, to graduate prepared for career success in
4 a global society. We really function on three basic
5 premises, which is our academies. We have three
6 nationally recognized career clusters: Business and
7 industrial technology, education and healthcare, and
8 liberal studies. We focus a lot on the International
9 Baccalaureate program. Our district is the only K-12
10 IB district in the state of Arkansas. And you will
11 see, throughout our presentation, the growth that
12 we've had in both our diploma program and our
13 career-related program.

14 And, lastly, our career pathways, we really
15 focus a lot on our students being 100% college and
16 career ready, and we will talk more about how we do
17 that throughout the course of our presentation.

18 So we really wanted to give you guys a broad
19 view of what has happened over the last five years.
20 I know Ms. Coffman talked about us being on the list,
21 and I will address that after this slide. But I'm
22 just wanting to give you all a brief overview.

23 In 2016 -- that was our initial year of
24 implementation -- small progress was made. A new
25 schedule at the high school was implemented and we

1 really had limited data to pull for comparison. So
2 at the start of 2017, I became the high school
3 principal at Hot Springs World Class High School and
4 I brought on two new assistant principals, Ms. Simms
5 being one of those. We introduced the Professional
6 Learning Community model to the staff, as well as
7 started to attend the National Career Academy
8 Coalition conferences. We took time to visit the
9 academies at Jonesboro, to really focus on what our
10 original charter application stated, which was for us
11 to become a premier academy model at Hot Springs
12 World Class High School.

13 We created an Instructional Facilitator for
14 Careers position and started to implement our first
15 internships. Throughout the next year, in 2018, we
16 really re-branded our academies, started to host
17 academy nights, and really put a focus in on our
18 curriculum and instruction, because that was an area
19 that was very limited; hence, you will see that on
20 the next slide, when we talk about the three
21 consecutive years of a letter grade of a "D" from our
22 ESSA School Index.

23 In the year of 2018, we implemented a block
24 schedule to restore some of that instructional time.
25 And Mrs. Simms is going to talk, through 2019 to the

1 current year, 2021.

2 MS. KILEY SIMMS: Good afternoon. My name is
3 Kiley Simms; I'm High School Principal at Hot Springs
4 World Class High School.

5 In 2019, two of the three of our leadership
6 members -- leadership team members moved to other
7 positions within our district. But we were able to
8 continue to progress from the previous two years by
9 providing fall college hops and by refining our
10 pathway offerings to match student interest data and
11 community needs data. Instructionally, we had our
12 first full year of our power standards implementation
13 and we implemented our IB Excellence in Equity
14 Program, which is a process that increases the
15 accessibility of our IB courses to all students. And
16 despite the challenges that we encountered last
17 spring, 58% of our students certified in CTE areas;
18 we increased the number of IB diplomas and
19 certificates earned, as well.

20 Additionally, in certifying -- in our second
21 year of certifying students, 26 students earned the
22 bi-literacy seal, the largest number of students, in
23 our area. We continue the momentum to this -- to the
24 present school year, enrolling 190 individual
25 students, which is a little over 25% of our 10-12

1 population in IB courses. We continue to enroll high
2 numbers of students in National Park Technical Center
3 and we have over 50 students taking concurrent credit
4 coursework through just the college site at National
5 Park College. This has been possible through
6 collective planning between our counseling team, our
7 school staff, our students, and our families, who
8 continue to focus on laying out a pathway to
9 graduation that is individualized to each student's
10 needs, talents, and desires.

11 This year we continue our focus in refining our
12 PLC work, especially in being responsive to the
13 learning that was left unfinished in the spring, and
14 in making our students responsible for the delivery
15 of the academy process. We know that empowering
16 teachers and students to drive our school will yield
17 success.

18 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: So I hope that I will be able
19 to answer all of your questions based off of this
20 slide. This goes through and gives you our ESSA
21 Index over the course of three years, taking off the
22 '19-'20 school year. In 2016-'17, the school earned
23 a letter grade of a "D", and you can see the overall
24 score, along with weighted achievement, growth, and
25 SQSS.

1 The next school year, 2017-'18, the school
2 earned an overall letter grade of a "D", but the
3 overall index was at 60.99, which was .11 difference
4 from being a "C" school. And so a lot of work went
5 into that next year; we had lots of conversations
6 with our staff about where we needed to put our
7 energies in order for us to continue to grow as a
8 school. We took the approach of educating our whole
9 staff on the ESSA Index, meaning all of the
10 components of the ESSA Index, not just the weighted
11 achievement. We educated our staff on the graduation
12 rate and what our graduation was -- what our
13 graduation rate was and why we were stagnant in the
14 growth of our graduation rate. We talked about we
15 did see growth in weighted achievement; we did see
16 growth in our growth index; and we saw growth in
17 SQSS. So, honestly, I can tell you, in 2018-'19, I
18 was very disappointed that we did not move to a "C",
19 but we did find out why we did not do that.

20 In 2017-'18, we moved to a block -- or, in
21 2018-'19, we moved to a block schedule and so that
22 attendance -- we were not taking our attendance and
23 entering it correctly in eSchool. This was a problem
24 at our high school and it was a problem at our junior
25 academy. Both of those schools saw a decline in the

1 SQSS on attendance. If you look, you can see that
2 there was a increase in weighted achievement and
3 there was an increase -- a slight increase in growth.
4 So we are doing the right things, in our buildings,
5 to grow our students and we are taking an active
6 approach to looking at our overall school
7 accountability index. I probably can talk you
8 through that, inside and out, at the high school
9 specifically, but -- as well as all of the rest of
10 the schools in our district. Unfortunately, though,
11 this is what we're held accountable for, and we're
12 not going to shy away from it. But what we're going
13 to talk to you about, through the remainder of our
14 presentation, is the work that we are doing for our
15 students and the work that we are doing with our
16 students, in order to continue the conversion
17 charter.

18 At the beginning of the charter, there were
19 seven goals that were written. And I can tell you,
20 coming in as high school principal, one of the first
21 things I did was talk to my staff about the goals,
22 because they hadn't read through the application; so
23 we spent a lot of time that first year really going
24 through our seven goals. And so Ms. Simms and I are
25 going to talk you through what we've done, how we

1 evaluated those goals, and what we plan on doing to
2 ensure that these measures are increasing, as we look
3 forward to another five years of our conversion
4 charter.

5 The graduation rate -- we did not meet that
6 goal. The goal was to increase the graduation rate
7 by 2% each year. If you look in your -- the
8 application, Ms. Simms put a pretty thorough
9 explanation as to some of the indicators of, you
10 know, the problems we had in reaching that goal.
11 Some of that was because our students were
12 reclassified, due to previous administrators, and so
13 we really had to come in and set some protocols and
14 policies in to ensure that we were tracking our
15 students accurately. We did a lot of job-embedded
16 professional development with our counselors, with my
17 two assistant principals, and with our instructional
18 facilitator, so that they knew exactly what it meant
19 to calculate a graduation cohort. That was an
20 identifiable problem, across the board, and so we
21 have put in policies and procedures that are starting
22 to build upon the impact that we've had in that first
23 set of cohort students that started with me, in
24 '17-'18.

25 Increasing the college-going rate -- we have

1 increased our college-going rate from 37.4 to 38.5
2 percent, according to our last school report card.
3 But the components that I want to highlight is that
4 our African-American sub-population increased from
5 23-points -- 26.3 percentage points to 40.2
6 percentage points, and then economically
7 disadvantaged students increased from 29.5 to 38.1
8 percent.

9 We also have put in more efforts and practices
10 in place to increase our student exposure and comfort
11 with continuing their education. We did some very
12 unorthodox things. Instead of doing all college
13 visits, that were done on the college campus, we
14 reached out to some universities and they actually
15 came to us. It was very fun to have the University
16 of Arkansas at Pine Bluff to come to our campus two
17 years in a row, with the M4 Marching Machine of the
18 South, but they also brought all of their department
19 chairs; and so students were able to talk to students
20 and academic liaisons from the University. So that
21 was a fun thing for our students to do, but it also
22 exposed them to what college life would be like.

23 Increase pathway completers -- our pathway
24 completers have increased from 34.4% to 58%.
25 Obviously, that data was not available from the

1 report card, but we collect data in-house to reflect
2 the 58% increase.

3 I will spend a little bit of time talking about
4 our math and literacy scores. I've been on the call
5 this morning since 9:00, so I'm sure that that will
6 be a question that you all will ask us about. We
7 have seen growth in our students, not necessarily on
8 the number of students who are ready or exceeding,
9 but we've seen academic growth in the students moving
10 from one indicator to the next.

11 Ms. Simms and her team -- I put out a challenge
12 for them to write for the SOAR grant this year and
13 they received \$99,000 dollars for the SOAR grant to
14 be implemented at the high school over the next three
15 years. And so we are targeting specific literacy
16 components in order for us to meet the needs of our
17 students, where they are, and we are doing that same
18 focus with our mathematics achievement.

19 Increase the number of IB career-related
20 certificates -- so we increased those numbers from
21 zero to ten earning IBCP certificates. And, overall,
22 the program has grown from 61 students to 106
23 students taking at least one IB course, and that is a
24 direct reflection of our IB Equity to Excellence
25 program that we implemented three years back.

1 Our ACT scores really have remained stagnant.
2 Ms. Simms has put in some ACT prep courses this
3 school year that we are really working on with our
4 students to be able to take tests. You know, taking
5 the test is a skill. And, obviously, if you see, you
6 know, our math scores on the state test and literacy
7 scores on the state test are not where the state
8 average is, our students have to learn the skill of
9 test-taking. And so we have put in some protocols in
10 preparation for our students in order for them to be
11 successful.

12 So Mrs. Simms is going to talk you through some
13 highlights and she will talk you through what her and
14 her team have decided upon as goals, for the
15 remaining time of our session today.

16 MS. KILEY SIMMS: So right now we are a 7-12
17 super campus. This is our first year that the junior
18 academy and the high school are on the same site, so
19 we recognized that we had a greater opportunity to
20 ensure that students who were in 7th grade had a
21 comprehensive plan throughout their senior
22 experience. So our student success plan captures
23 this, for students and families, in a living document
24 that prepares students for success in all areas,
25 academic, career, interpersonal, and emotional.

1 We also built an ambassador team to deliver the
2 message of our academies to younger students and to
3 the larger community. These students were selected,
4 not only because they are going to represent our
5 school well, but they are also responsible,
6 knowledgeable, and are able to community the whys and
7 the hows of our academy process.

8 We have created a live data wall to gauge
9 student progress in real time. We realized that if
10 we were going to commit to the PLC process, that
11 time, all pieces of data that we have for each
12 student was going to be our next step. We sort data
13 cards by ACT Aspire or NWEA score, depending on the
14 grade, but we also include other data markers, as
15 well, and that allows teachers to get a very
16 student-specific and holistic view, including
17 strengths and areas for growth, with the intention to
18 move each student according to his or her need.

19 We have strengthened our partnership with
20 National Park Technical College and with National
21 Park College. Our student enrollment at the tech
22 center has been the highest growing population in our
23 county for the last three years, and that's even with
24 this year's placement cuts caused by Covid-19
25 restrictions. Our enrollment in concurrent credit

1 course work has almost tripled in the last three
2 years, as students, both learn more about concurrent
3 credits, and become confident in their academic
4 abilities.

5 And, finally, we have more than doubled our
6 enrollment in IB courses from 2016 to present. We
7 did this by increasing the number of IB electives, by
8 educating our staff, and by really empowering our
9 students to just take that next step and to try
10 something new.

11 We offer three academies to our students. The
12 first is Education and Healthcare. Per student
13 survey data, this is the largest area of desire for
14 them. Twenty-five percent of our student body
15 enrolls in medical professions at National Park
16 Technical Center, which is huge. We know, especially
17 right now, we learned, with the pandemic, that that
18 area is just growing exponentially. But then our
19 students also really want to work with childcare and
20 education. So what our students tell us is they want
21 to work with people, and we are really proud of that
22 specific academy.

23 Our Business and Industrial Technology Academy
24 fits into our community's specific needs for tourism
25 and industry certifications, and for our growing need

1 for aerospace technology.

2 And, finally, our Liberal Studies Academy
3 encourages students to pursue their passions. Our
4 area has a great visual and performing arts sector,
5 with things like Cutwell 4 Kids, the Cultural
6 Alliance, our artists and galleries, down on our
7 historic Central Avenue, our children's theater --
8 pocket theater, muses, etcetera. And our students'
9 interests and passions are encouraged and supported
10 in this academy.

11 And we mentioned a little bit about our PLC
12 process, but three years ago we made the best step
13 ever, and that was bringing Learning by Doing and the
14 Solution Tree PLC process to our school. Since 2017,
15 we have implemented Steps at a Time and, as we
16 determine where our data shows that we need to make
17 improvements, we bring our staff together and we
18 create action plans. And something that we have
19 found by incorporating our staff into creating these
20 goals, they are just very intrinsically motivated by
21 the work they do in their classrooms every day.

22 And this picture is actually of the teachers
23 working with NWEA data and our data cards for our
24 wall.

25 This is a list of our community partners. Our

1 community partners provide students with many
2 opportunities, whether it be just job shadowing,
3 internships, career advice, part-time employment. We
4 believe that on-the-job, real-world training will
5 help our students plan for their lives beyond high
6 school, saving them time and money in the end.

7 Our community is so eager to help in anything we
8 ask of them; they support us in. So they know that
9 we are raising and educating our future workforce, so
10 they're super supportive of us.

11 We've mentioned a few times that our IB course
12 registrations have doubled, but here is our metric,
13 just to kind of show that progress. In the past five
14 years, we've over -- more than doubled our course
15 registrations, and this just means that students --
16 these are unique students who are enrolled in at
17 least one IB course. This has been possible by
18 educating the staff on what IB is and what IB is not.
19 Our students have become more knowledgeable in what
20 IB is; they are more eager to try this more rigorous
21 course work. And something that we really appreciate
22 is, after we went through our Excellence in Equity
23 training modules, we set some goals and our staff has
24 been so happy to accept any student who really wants
25 to try the rigorous course work, regardless of label.

1 So students with IEP's, 504's, and LPAC's, we just --
2 we want all students to have the access to this
3 high-quality education, and we make sure that
4 education is scaffolded for them, and we have seen
5 great gains in our students and our IB courses.

6 So we have worked to increase exposure for our
7 students. The first, Dr. Echols has mentioned, with
8 our college visits and career fairs. Over the past
9 four years we have worked to increase our students'
10 visits. Every student in grades 10-12 go -- each
11 year, goes on at least one college visit. They might
12 start out going to National Park Technical Center,
13 National Park College, but our juniors and our
14 seniors typically visit three or four college
15 campuses. They sign up for those and they go on Bear
16 Day to UCA, Lion Fever Day, and they really get to
17 see what the college campus looks like. I feel like
18 that has been a very helpful thing for our students
19 to grow the number of students who we do have
20 attending college after high school.

21 We also have a guest speaker program. Covid-19
22 has put a damper on the actual visits to campus, but
23 we are conducting those virtually this year. Guest
24 speakers come and talk about their particular career
25 field. Students can sign up, if they're interested.

1 And what we've found is these smaller presentation
2 settings have encouraged our students to ask
3 questions and to engage with the community partner,
4 rather just -- than just kind of sitting and
5 listening. We are -- we're super happy and proud of
6 our guest speaker panels that we have.

7 And then, finally, our students have access to
8 internships and externships and, of course, CTE
9 certifications, that will help them prepare for the
10 workforce. Although many students don't enter their
11 desired workforce directly after high school, because
12 they go do -- they go to college, these career-based
13 experiences allow students to determine whether or
14 not their intended career field is actually right for
15 them. And --

16 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: I'll (INAUDIBLE) now --

17 MS. KILEY SIMMS: -- go ahead. You can go --

18 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: -- that our waivers for the
19 conversion charter, I think we will host this
20 conversation after we get done. So we just put this
21 slide in here just to address the waivers that we
22 were continuing to ask for.

23 MS. KILEY SIMMS: And we did streamline our
24 goals to show how we view moving students forward is
25 done in kind of larger chunks. Some of the goals

1 that we had were very individualized, and we take a
2 more holistic view to students and student progress.
3 So our first goal was centered on marketability. We
4 want 90% of students who graduate to have a
5 value-added diploma. This is something that Dr.
6 Echols started talking about a few years ago -- four
7 years ago, when she was the principal. And we have
8 identified a value-added diploma as having or
9 representing at least one of the following: CTE
10 certifications; concurrent credit hours; IB course
11 credit; a bi-literacy seal; or internship or
12 externship experience. Basically, anything that will
13 give our students a boost when entering the
14 workforce.

15 Our second goal focuses on college preparation.
16 Our goal is that by 2025 at least 38% of students
17 will have taken at least one college prep class.
18 Right now, our class is averaging 26%. We chose this
19 goal metric of 38%, because the national enrollment
20 for AP and IB class work -- course work is 38%. We
21 want our students to access these courses at rates
22 similar to other high schools. We believe it is
23 important for us to equip our students with the
24 skills and the ability to be successful in college,
25 if that is the path they choose.

1 Our third goal is that our ESSA report card will
2 show growth in tested areas. With the integration of
3 our PLC process and data wall, we are focusing on
4 each student to ensure that each student grows. We
5 know that as we focus on growing student ability, one
6 student at a time, we will make headway in
7 achievement.

8 And then, finally, our fourth and final goal
9 centers on service and leadership, and increasing
10 engagement in on-time credits, ACT scores, computer
11 science credits, and community service learning.
12 We've incorporated these goals into our student
13 success plan, so we're able to support students in
14 their completion. It is important for us to grow
15 well-rounded citizens who will remain in our
16 community and who will enrich our community with
17 their skills and talents.

18 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: So our district truly is
19 diverse, dedicated, and unified, and it really is a
20 place for everyone. So at this time I'm going to
21 stop sharing my screen and open the conversation for
22 questions and/or discussion.

23 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Echols.
24 And as Ms. Hyatt is preparing to come up, I will --
25 want to just bring attention and recognize your

1 school. Our accountability system, ESSA School
2 Index, is built on certified data. And I just think,
3 on page 5, you've eloquently described that if you
4 put in accurate certified data our accountability
5 system puts that back out to you accurately. And so
6 I appreciate that you've taken the time to study our
7 accountability system and understand it well enough
8 that you're putting in place those written standard
9 operating procedures --

10 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: -- that are needed. And
12 I thought the sentence that said "the data" -- in
13 regards to graduation rate, "the data reflects the
14 leadership of four principals, all who have had their
15 own methods."

16 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And I think that speaks
18 to, when there are not standard written operating
19 procedures for this type of high-impact data, you're
20 going to have those kinds of errors that stay with a
21 school.

22 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: (INAUDIBLE).

23 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: But it's such a good
24 lesson. And, as I was reading through this, I just
25 made comments on my paper, "great job," because

1 that's truly how school districts get it right
2 consistently, year, after year, after year, when
3 there are not errors in the data they report to the
4 Department. So, thank you, for doing that, but
5 mostly thank you for saying it, so that --

6 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: -- others can learn from
8 that.

9 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: And, you know, it's not just
10 work that we do with our high school; I lead that
11 work across our district with our six campuses. I
12 really wanted them to know and understand the ESSA
13 School Index, because clean data is great data. And
14 if we have clean data and the people that are
15 inputting that data understand why it's so important
16 for it to be clean, then there are no excuses brought
17 to the table as to why we have errors in what we're
18 presenting to the state.

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you.

20 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I have a question
21 regarding data, I think.

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Go ahead, Ms. Newton.

23 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I'm not an educator,
24 so I don't understand it from that endpoint, but I'm
25 looking at the letter grade --

1 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

2 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: -- and I know that
3 one of the other presenters talked about how relevant
4 high school completion was in that calculation. I'm
5 wondering whether pathway completion and other
6 measures of success -- not completion of high school
7 -- I'm sorry -- going to college. I know some --
8 you mentioned a number of young people that went to
9 college. But is there also -- is it -- is their
10 letter grade also impacted by the number of young
11 people that complete career pathways? And, if not,
12 it's not.

13 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Right.

14 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: So I think that's --
15 you know, I think -- and people are saying now that
16 we really need to look at the options for young
17 people and not necessarily only encourage college,
18 but the career pathways with the opportunity to
19 finish quicker, to make more money, to incur less
20 debt, and all those things. So I'm wondering about
21 how it's weighted, or if it's weighted, or if it's
22 included. But I think it's equally important, to me,
23 the college entrance people, as opposed -- and some
24 of your young folks will be able to complete a career
25 pathway in high school. So I just -- so for what

1 it's worth, that's just kind of a jumbled something.

2 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: The ESSA School Index is very
3 robust. You know, it's pretty straightforward with
4 weighted achievement; it's pretty straightforward
5 with value-added growth; and it's pretty
6 straightforward with the graduation rate. Where
7 schools have the opportunity to shine, I believe, is
8 in the SQSS, especially on the secondary level,
9 because there are several indicators. But one of the
10 components -- the component that you just described
11 is not in there, but there are other components in
12 SQSS that allows schools to really focus in on areas
13 that they can grow students. One of those areas is
14 reading achievement and science achievement. And,
15 you know, if your students are not reading fluently
16 on grade level that is going to be displayed.
17 Another area is ACT readiness; another area is
18 computer science; and community service learning. So
19 there are several indicators in SQSS. But the key
20 for us -- and I can only talk about Hot Springs
21 specifically -- the key for us was educating all of
22 our staff and our counselors on all of the varied
23 components of the ESSA School indicator. Oftentimes,
24 our educators really believe that it's simply focused
25 on your weighted achievement; how you score on the

1 ACT summative assessment. But the way the ESSA
2 School Index is created right now, you really have to
3 know the system. And so that's what I spent the
4 last, probably, two years doing is trying to educate
5 our staff on the system of SQSS and that
6 accountability measure; that it's not just one
7 component; it's several different components, which
8 is why we have to be able to, you know, really
9 promote a whole-child education, not just the
10 academic component. We really have to be focused in
11 on the whole child, with social-emotional learning
12 and with academic indicators.

13 I hope that answered your question.

14 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Yes and no. I still
15 don't see the correlation between the accomplishments
16 being measured -- maybe in different ways or
17 different weights or something. But it's equal to or
18 exceeding, so some kids go to college just to
19 accumulate debt -- or they don't go there with that
20 intent, but the outcome is that. So you've got
21 different obstacles and barriers created by the debt
22 when they get out. So, you know, whether they -- or
23 they could be in career pathways and be gainfully
24 employed, and productive, and learn so many other
25 things, and, you know, go from an apprenticeship to a

1 journeyman, to apprenticeship to whatever that next
2 level is -- you know, a class-1 -- you know, whether
3 it be a welder, or pipefitter, or plumber, or
4 whatever. So I'm just wondering, if we stop to think
5 -- and it may not be from your end --

6 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: (INAUDIBLE).

7 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: -- it maybe from the
8 (inaudible) end, maybe from the educational --
9 Department of Ed, or the national education system,
10 to look at how we measure whether it's equitable.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Let me address that, Ms.
12 Newton.

13 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Ms.
14 (INAUDIBLE), have -- I'm sorry; go ahead.

15 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So, from the beginning,
16 when we started our stakeholder meetings for ESSA,
17 our stakeholders did ask us to include CTE in our
18 accountability system. At that time we did not have
19 accurate, consistent, and reliable, data. We have
20 been working toward that ever since, and now, with
21 the approval of our Perkins 5 plan, we now are using
22 similar metrics in Perkins 5. And so what has been
23 the recommendation is to give our schools a little
24 time to take their Perkins 5 data and begin to live
25 with it and learn from it. And, once they've built

1 up some deep understanding, as Dr. Echols has so
2 eloquently described, about the ESSA School Index,
3 that that would be a time to come back, as a state,
4 and consider how we would include that in an
5 amendment to our ESSA School Index. So it has been
6 on our list from the beginning, but our school
7 districts need to make sure that they're getting good
8 accurate data and understand it before we start
9 changing our accountability system. But it is
10 certainly on our radar -- number one on our radar.

11 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Okay.

12 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Hyatt, if you'll
13 come and speak to us about waivers, please?

14 WAIVERS:

15 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt,
16 Arkansas Department of Education. There's only one
17 outstanding legal issue. Everything else has been
18 resolved. They've asked for a waiver of school
19 counselor licensure. The remaining issue is just
20 determining whether the district's comprehensive
21 school counseling plan is administered by a licensed
22 school counselor. If not, there's the need for an
23 additional waiver; if it is, there's not.

24 MS. KILEY SIMMS: My fault. I apologize for not
25 writing that clearly. We have three school

1 counselors. All of them are certified; one has only
2 K-9 certification, the other two do have K-12
3 certification. And our district's comprehensive
4 school counseling plan is administered by a certified
5 counselor.

6 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Okay, great. Thank you.
7 So just a little overview of the waivers that they
8 have that will be continuing: They'll have the 120
9 clock hours for high school credit; also the method
10 of counting attendance, not -- they still have to
11 count attendance, but it's the method by which they
12 count attendance; library/media licensure; teacher
13 licensure; class size and teaching load; and salary
14 schedule -- oh, no, it's not salary schedule; it's a
15 teacher licensure waiver.

16 So that's all. Those are the only ones. Are
17 there any questions about those?

18 (NO RESPONSE)

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Dr. Echols, before we
20 start our general questions, would you look at page
21 18 on the new goals? In your slide, the way you
22 addressed your new goal around progress, I'm assuming
23 through achievement and growth, and then more of
24 engagement, made sense to me. When I read what was
25 written on page 18 it didn't quite make sense to me

1 to separate those two, but it made sense when you --
2 on your slide. And so I'd like for you to -- because
3 you can't just do one, as you've so well described --
4 you can't do one thing and let the other things slack
5 off and expect to raise your letter grade.

6 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes.

7 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So would you kind of
8 address what your thinking is here? I'm just --
9 because I was just thinking through this and I'm
10 thinking -- I think the way it's worded it would be
11 very hard to measure. But, when I saw your slide, I
12 thought, "Okay, now that's measurable."

13 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Ms. Simms, do you want to
14 talk through that?

15 MS. KILEY SIMMS: Yes, I would be happy to. I,
16 unfortunately, sometimes over-think, so maybe the
17 written portion on our application might've been a
18 little wordy. But our goal was to -- we still want
19 to have our students' weighted achievement and growth
20 -- we want to be accountable for that. We know that
21 we are responsible to our students and our community
22 for making sure that they are prepared. So we --
23 that's that third goal there, is we want to make sure
24 that our students grow in weighted achievement.

25 The last goal, the fourth goal, is really

1 targeting the SQSS component of our ESSA report card,
2 and we have work to do there. It's -- we have
3 student engagement or attendance that we need to make
4 sure that we clean up. We want to make sure that we
5 are responsible for growth in science achievement,
6 on-time credits, community service learning. We want
7 to make sure that our students are doing all of the
8 holistic things that it takes to become a good
9 citizen and a well-rounded individual. So that was
10 our rationale behind that separation.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. I was just
12 trying to make sure we could measure the goal.

13 MS. KILEY SIMMS: Yes, ma'am.

14 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. All right.
16 Ms. Wright-McMurray, if you'll kick-off any
17 questions?

18 QUESTIONS FROM PANEL:

19 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I was just
20 trying to get back to look at my notes. On one of
21 your slides -- and I'm trying to -- I don't remember
22 how you addressed the topic, but it may have been in
23 relationship to the college-going. And you indicated
24 that your African-American population and your low
25 SES increased.

1 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

2 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So were you
3 referencing that to say how that was impacting your
4 college-going rate, one way or another, or were you
5 just saying that was something that had increased in
6 your school district? I'm just trying to -- I was
7 trying to get a sense of what you were referencing
8 there.

9 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: (INAUDIBLE) on the charter
10 goal analysis -- and that was one of our charter
11 goals was to increase our college-going rate. And so
12 what we did is we looked at the metric from our
13 school report card, the last school report card that
14 we -- that came out. And so, if you look at the
15 overall increased college-going rate, it went from
16 34.7 to 38.5. What we did is we went and pulled out
17 those sub-populations just to show that we are
18 addressing areas of need. You know, our district is
19 a community eligibility district, and so our set --
20 -- percentage is about 78%. But if you look at the
21 high school, as a whole, the high school is
22 over/above 80% in free-and-reduced lunch or low
23 socioeconomic status. But we really try to do a good
24 job of ensuring that all of our students are
25 benefitting from the flexibility and waivers from our

1 conversion charter, and so that's why we chose to
2 just highlight those two. Because typically if you
3 go back and look at our weighted achievement data,
4 our sub-pop being economically disadvantaged, and our
5 sub-pop being our African-American students, are
6 traditionally low. But one of the things -- and I
7 can just talk to you -- talk you through this,
8 because I was the high school principal there. If
9 you go back and really study our data, there has been
10 an increase every year since 2017-'18 in just about
11 all areas on our ESSA indicators and through our sub-
12 populations. They aren't astronomical growth; you
13 don't see a jump from 15% to 20%, but we are seeing a
14 steady growth in our students. And so that's why we
15 wanted to highlight those components there on the
16 college-going rate. Our goal is to continue to
17 increase the college-going rate, but we also want to
18 make sure that we focus on being career ready as
19 well, which is why we have the other indicators in
20 our conversion charter goals for the following five
21 years.

22 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So
23 that helps me answer that. When you said that, I was
24 just trying to get a connection of what you were --
25 were referencing there.

1 MS. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes.

2 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: But -- so I
3 guess my next question is, so it looks like you guys
4 are doing -- you know, you did -- done some really
5 great work with trying to figure out where you were
6 getting off on reporting and getting that information
7 inputted. And it sounds like you were also trying to
8 provide some more PD opportunities for your staff
9 with PLC's and things like that. Can you speak a
10 little bit about what are some of those other
11 tangible pieces that you're trying to implement, to
12 address where you currently are with your outcomes
13 for your students, and how you are doing some things
14 beyond the PLC or beyond just, you know, trying to
15 re-tune how you're reporting? What are some of the
16 tangible things you're doing to help your students to
17 see that growth?

18 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Sure. I mean, and I will
19 tell you I believe the professional learning
20 community process is the only process. I started
21 that work, reluctantly, from the staff, when I became
22 principal in that building. And Ms. Simms can tell
23 you we spent a lot of time with job-embedded
24 professional development on instructional practices
25 that really work. And so, that following year, we

1 really fine-tuned our curriculum, which was knowing
2 what our essentials were, teaching to those
3 essentials, and really identifying how we're going to
4 measure student achievement.

5 As the three schools before us have stated, I
6 was very disappointed in the spring, because I do
7 feel like the work that we have been doing at the
8 high school with our professional learning community
9 and just the targeted work that we've done in
10 mathematics and literacy, that would have shown on
11 state testing in the spring.

12 So, to give you some examples of some tangible
13 things that we've gone back and put into place this
14 year, we added in the strategic and academic reading
15 courses for literacy, and we have really -- our math
16 teachers are on an extended contract and that has
17 been something that has happened in Hot Springs over
18 the last five years. With that extended contract,
19 they have 10 additional days to identify how they're
20 going to focus in on mathematics achievement
21 (INAUDIBLE).

22 I know that, after we get finished with this
23 call, you are also going to see the reference
24 document that I sent in for another conversion
25 charter school in our district. Being very

1 transparent, the students that are at our high school
2 right now were not necessarily exposed to grade level
3 content. They were using a program at our junior
4 academy -- and I don't really want to identify that
5 program -- because some schools are still using it.
6 But what was happening was our students were put into
7 this program, and it was growing them, but they
8 weren't getting grade level skills. So we really
9 worked hard at the high school on focusing in on
10 power standards, essential standards, and working
11 through the Plan/Do/Act cycle of the CF -- of the PLC
12 process, identifying what indicators need to happen.
13 The high school right now is working through the RTI
14 process. Since we are on a 90-minute block, for the
15 most part, throughout the day, Ms. Simms and her two
16 assistant principals have put in a pretty structured
17 protocol of when RTI needs to happen within the
18 course of the class period. So that targeted
19 intervention happens between 20 and 30 minutes of the
20 90-minute block. They have a pretty structured
21 direct-teach I do/we do/you do plan cycle for their
22 students in the classroom and they check-up on that
23 daily. We -- and by "we" I mean my superintendent
24 and the other assistant superintendent -- started to
25 implement monthly meetings with all administrators

1 across our district that are data-focused and
2 data-centered. And so they talk to us about that
3 data monthly. I send them the agenda ahead of time
4 and we really target and specifically have
5 conversations about student achievement, centered
6 around the ESSA School Accountability. But I also go
7 out and do those sessions for their individual school
8 teachers, so that that's not left up to our building
9 principals. I do that presentation, from the
10 district perspective, to ensure that everybody is
11 education on why it's so important for us to move our
12 students, not just academically, but socially.

13 MS. KILEY SIMMS: Can I add to that, please?

14 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Sure.

15 MS. KILEY SIMMS: We also use what we developed
16 as a district, an instructional model, based on
17 Marzano's, you know, work -- well, collaboration, the
18 HRS and high-reliable -- the high-reliabile -- high-
19 reliability schools model. And we have refined that
20 to our model. We use those classroom walk-through's
21 to target problems of practice, and so that becomes
22 our data cycle, for our educators, in our process,
23 through identifying where we need to target
24 instructionally. So that has really helped to have
25 our whole staff -- our teaching staff -- become

1 accountable for what is going on in the classroom and
2 they're involved in identifying the problems of
3 practice, and writing solutions for them.

4 We have also implemented Kagan processing
5 strategies for students. We did recognize a real
6 need for students to take what they were learning in
7 direct instruction, and then to process that aloud,
8 and then prepare to do that more formal assessment
9 work.

10 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.
11 Thank you. Yeah, you named all the great things. So
12 thank you for walking me through that. I appreciate
13 it.

14 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: And, you know, I want to just
15 explain that we may know -- there's a difference in
16 being able to name-drop and being involved in the
17 work. So I want you to know that the high school and
18 myself are very involved in the work of professional
19 learning communities and high-reliability schools.
20 We have made it a district -- not necessarily an
21 initiative, but if it does not align with
22 professional learning communities, high-reliability
23 schools, we don't incorporate it into our day-to-day,
24 not into our budget, not into our professional
25 development analysis. It's not something that we

1 spend our time on. And, obviously, when you have
2 been a "D" school for three years in a row something
3 is not happening. And so we have identified those
4 areas and we are pressing forward with making sure
5 that -- you know, our staff still feels like they are
6 doing the right work, but we're helping lead them in
7 that right work.

8 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yep. No,
9 you named enough details to where I knew you weren't
10 just name-dropping. You got below the surface enough
11 to where I know it wasn't just a bunch of
12 name-dropping. Thank you.

13 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Dr. Williams?

15 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank
16 you. A couple of things. I want to make sure I have
17 the proper context for this. You know, I'll use an
18 analogy. We could stand in the same room, but we --
19 if we look out different windows, we'll see different
20 things.

21 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

22 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: So I'm
23 taking that this is the only high school for the Hot
24 Springs School District?

25 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes, sir.

1 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay. That
2 really helps me a lot. How many principals have
3 y'all had since the conversion charter school?

4 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Three -- four.

5 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Three.
6 Four. Okay. And there's a lot of things that I --
7 first of all, let me just say leadership matters.

8 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes.

9 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: And, I
10 mean, that's just the way to sum it up. Because, as
11 I listen to you, it's like -- and I think see the
12 superintendent is on the call, here, so I think
13 that's great too; because I'm glad that she could
14 hear this also. One, leadership matters. Two, it
15 sounds like you all are rebuilding the foundation.
16 You know, you've got the right bricks and you've got
17 the right mortar, but it's like you're re-laying the
18 foundation of expectations, not only for students,
19 but for teachers, also, is what's coming through on
20 the presentation. Also, I -- when I -- I used to
21 work at the University of Florida, before coming back
22 to Arkansas, and had a chance to get very familiar
23 with the IB program at one of the schools in
24 Gainesville. And I see that the number of students
25 taking IB courses have increased.

1 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

2 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Really, the
3 next level, to me, is how many students are passing
4 the courses for the IB program. So, as I listen to
5 this, I'm just going to put it out there -- I just
6 wonder whether the IB program is the right program.
7 It's fairly rigorous to get an IB degree. It takes
8 more than just one class. So that's just food for
9 thought there. I was trying to put the IB piece in
10 the proper perspective here. And you all will get
11 there. You know, as I listen to you and -- you, Dr.
12 Echols, and Ms. Simms, I'm sure that, just listening
13 to you, you all are going to get to where you need to
14 be. But that's something that also just kind of
15 stood out to me, whether the -- looking at your
16 student population, and all the work that you have to
17 do just to get them on track, is whether the IB
18 program is the right program. Matter of fact, I
19 would like to hear you comment on what you all think
20 about that.

21 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Absolutely. I'm pulling up
22 information for you right now, as I speak, about our
23 IB program. I can speak -- I'll start, and then, Ms.
24 Simms, if you want to follow-up with me. Hot Springs
25 has had the International Baccalaureate program in

1 the district for sometime.

2 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

3 MS. TARYN ECHOLS: Probably more than 15 years.
4 The PYP program at Park Magnet School has received
5 numerous accolades. You know, part of the struggle
6 that we had, as a district, was the continuation of
7 that program through the Middle Years Program, MYP.

8 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

9 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: So, when we had our last
10 visit, IB allowed us to do a school-within-a-school.
11 And so right now our IB program is middle years, 7th
12 grade through 10th grade, because we reconfigured our
13 district. I think this is the second year that we've
14 been under the reconfiguration. So all of our
15 elementary's now are K-6. Those four elementary's
16 feed into our -- I mean, yeah, I said K-6 -- but four
17 elementary's feed into our junior academy now, which
18 is 7-9. And then, our high school, we actually came
19 last year to do an addendum to the high school, for
20 it to be 10-12. Those students take those courses,
21 the MYP classes, starting in 7th grade. That is an
22 area -- and I will have to agree with you, the IB
23 program is the right program, but you are absolutely
24 correct that leadership matters, not necessarily to
25 the standpoint of the building principal, but to the

1 standpoint of the teachers who are teaching that
2 curriculum.

3 So we have done -- this is my second year in my
4 role as assistant superintendent and we've done some
5 very intentional work on making sure and ensuring
6 that our teachers understand the MYP program and
7 curriculum, with fidelity, as that relates to our
8 IBCP program and IBDP program. So what we were
9 seeing, in Hot Springs, is that not many students
10 were taking those DP courses --

11 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

12 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: -- once they got to 11th
13 grade, which is why we wanted to branch off to the
14 career-related program. We have such a strong
15 partnership with National Park Technical College that
16 a lot of our students can't do both. They can't do
17 DP --

18 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yeah.

19 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: -- and do the college courses
20 at National Park, so they were having to choose.
21 And, obviously, a lot of them were choosing National
22 Park. So, for us, the CP program was an addition
23 that supported our students. Because if our students
24 leave us, in 12th grade, with that certificate from
25 National Park Technical Center, they can attend

1 National Park for free -- and that is a huge impact
2 --

3 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Oh, huge,
4 yes.

5 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: -- (INAUDIBLE). Yes. So I
6 do feel like the IB program is worth it for us. We
7 are working currently on increasing the number of
8 students who are in the diploma program. But
9 ultimately we want our students to be exposed to that
10 college level course. So, for us, the number
11 measurement is not 50% of our students to graduate
12 with that IB diploma program; it's for our students,
13 like Ms. Simms said, to be exposed to that rigorous
14 level of college course work.

15 Excuse me. You asked me a question and I'm
16 looking for the data all at the same time. So I'm
17 trying to make sure that I'm talking through it all
18 at the same time.

19 So, last year, we had 23 students go for IB
20 diploma program and we had 13 out of the 23 earn
21 their diploma. We had 13 students go for an IB CP
22 certificate; 10 of those 13 earned their certificate.
23 So, yes, we have increased the number of students
24 that are exposed to the courses, but, really, you
25 know, it takes a finite type of student to really

1 want to do the diploma program.

2 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Absolutely.

3 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: And, you know, we have real
4 school here, in Hot Springs, and so we want to make
5 sure that we're educating all of our kids. And if
6 IB, the diploma program, is not for them, we do have
7 that extra option of the CP program, or we have the
8 option of them going through National Park to do the
9 Tech Center courses or concurrent credit.

10 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay. Good
11 answer.

12 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: I hope that answers your
13 question.

14 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes.
15 Knowing that it's a school-within-a-school model, and
16 it's not the lead program within the school --

17 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes.

18 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: The schools
19 I was familiar with are ones that they are really IB
20 schools. Uh-huh.

21 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes. So our Park Magnet
22 School, the PYP school, is a full PYP school. Every
23 child in that school is exposed to the content and
24 curriculum through the Primary Years Program. Once
25 we reach 7th grade, we really tailor it to the

1 school-within-a-school.

2 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay. Good
3 answer. Thank you.

4 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

5 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

6 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: All right. Thank
7 you. So just a couple of questions. And I enjoyed
8 the last discussion, and you may have answered my
9 question in that. I was trying to decide. And I'm
10 not an educator, so you all know a lot more about all
11 the details of this than I do. But, just in looking
12 at your new goals, I had a couple of questions, and
13 one was on Goal Number 2, which is the 38% of
14 graduates will have taken at least one college
15 preparatory class. And I guess I would think that if
16 that's Goal Number 2, that may be your second most
17 important goal -- and maybe it's not presented that
18 way, but maybe these others are -- maybe they're all
19 equally important. But, when I looked at 38%, I
20 really thought that's not a very high number and I
21 know it's more than you currently have. But if you
22 step back from maybe the current reality of your
23 students, and of your situation, what would be the
24 ideal percentage that you would like to have in
25 there? I mean, would it be -- I like the one above

1 this, said 90% of students will graduate with a
2 value-added diploma. And I guess I'm wondering why
3 is it not 90% of graduates who are taking one college
4 preparatory class; so that's question one.

5 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Ms. Simms, do you want to
6 answer that?

7 MS. KILEY SIMMS: I can start, yes. So the
8 national average for students who are taking AP/IB
9 courses is 38%. And not to say that I would like to
10 settle on the national average, because that's
11 definitely not my vision or my goal, but I did -- we
12 felt like that was a good starting point. In our
13 Excellence in Equity course work, we actually set a
14 five-year goal that 85% of our students would take IB
15 courses -- an IB course, and that's why we began to
16 expand our IB electives. We added IB chemistry, IB
17 sports, exercise, and health, IB literature and
18 language, and IB dance, to really try to capture some
19 of our students' interests and help them get
20 interested in taking these advanced level courses.
21 But that metric is there, because that is the
22 national average, and that is what we do want to make
23 sure that we prepare our students -- not to be
24 average, but we want our students to have that -- not
25 only access, but to take advantage of what we have to

1 offer.

2 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

3 So question two is, you talked a lot in the beginning
4 about the challenges with record keeping and making
5 sure that you had the right system in place. And I
6 guess I wanted to ask -- and, when I think of
7 systems, I think of to train the people, and I also
8 think of the technology systems that enable you to
9 retain information. Do you feel like you're in good
10 shape with that now or is that still an effort that
11 you're having to work on?

12 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: I would say I think that we
13 are in good shape, but we still have to have people
14 that are doing the right work, and I mean you'll find
15 that all across the state, when it comes down,
16 specifically, to the graduation rate. Those cohorts
17 are so important and it's so important for the people
18 in the buildings to know when students enter your
19 school and when students exit your school. One of
20 the unique challenges that we face is that our school
21 is highly mobile. We feed into JDC, which is a
22 juvenile detention center; we feed into Ouachita
23 Children's Center, which is a -- kind of a group
24 home, 45-day max stay. So any time those students
25 enter our cohort, we have to make sure that we track

1 them, because we can't go based off of just "Well,
2 I'm leaving to go to another school." If they never
3 enroll in that school, and then they don't graduate,
4 we end up taking the hit for that. So it's educating
5 our people on all of the factors that go into the
6 graduation rate cohort. I think I have done a pretty
7 good job of educating our people on that, but it's a
8 continuous thing that we talk about every year.

9 Ms. Simms can tell you that we have more of a
10 backwards plan approach now. We start hosting
11 conversations about graduation rate in the summer, in
12 July, based on the current year's seniors that are
13 coming up. We have people that are tracking that
14 data now. We put a lot of those systems in place
15 when I became high school principal, and we've really
16 refined them over the last -- I guess this will be
17 four years now -- refined them over the last four
18 years. But, as Ms. Simms stated to you, with a
19 change in leadership -- there was someone before me
20 and someone after me, other than Ms. Simms and I.
21 So, when you have change in leadership, sometimes
22 that takes out some of the protocols and policies
23 that you've put in place. And so she -- this is her
24 -- end of her first full year as high school
25 principal. She has worked very hard on making sure

1 that our staff is well-versed in that language,
2 again, and ensuring that they are sticking to the
3 policies and protocols of great record keeping for
4 our students.

5 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Okay. Okay, thank
6 you.

7 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

8 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: And then, my last
9 question, is in looking at your new goals that you
10 have, on page 18, up here, the way I interpret this
11 is that you are planning to put in place the things
12 that need to be put in place to up -- to increase the
13 letter grade by 2025.

14 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Absolutely.

15 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: So you think it's
16 going to be a five-year process to get to a "C" or do
17 you think you'd get there quicker?

18 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: No. No, sir, I don't think
19 that. I mean you might be able to tell this from our
20 call today -- I know this might be your first time
21 meeting me -- but I am very ambitious and we have
22 very high expectations for our schools, because the
23 community that we serve deserves that. And so Ms.
24 Simms and her team, they know the expectation that I
25 have and that expectation trickles throughout the

1 school campus. Most of the teachers that are in that
2 building started with me. I think they have maybe
3 had to hire five teachers over the course of the last
4 four years, since I started off as principal there.
5 So all of the teachers that are there truly do
6 understand where we are. I can tell you that it was
7 very gut-wrenching for them to receive that "D" both
8 years in a row. But they understood why, because I
9 explained it to them. And so, last year, I think
10 they all shared the same disappointment that we
11 didn't take that assessment, but it gives them the
12 opportunity this year to go out and shine and produce
13 the quality that we expect. So, no, sir, I don't
14 think it's going to take until 2025 for us to
15 increase our letter grade, but, you know, we're doing
16 great work. And I don't want the letter grade to
17 overshadow the great work that is being done by our
18 staff on a day-in and day-out basis. There's a lot
19 of things that goes unseen, that we can't talk about
20 in a presentation, that our staff does for our kiddos
21 on a daily basis. So, you know, it's a balance for
22 us of ensuring our staff that, "Yes, we don't want to
23 be a 'D' school, but I still value the work that
24 you're doing and pouring into our students on a
25 day-to-day basis." So my anticipation is that we

1 will move a letter grade this coming school year,
2 with state accountability, even despite of the
3 pandemic. You know, it is what it is. And, you
4 know, we didn't want to shy away from that when we
5 talked through our presentation on today.

6 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: That would be
7 fantastic.

8 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes.

9 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: That'd be good.

10 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I don't have a -- I
11 have a commentary.

12 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

13 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I was on the board
14 when the letter grades were established. And I
15 wonder -- listening to different schools and
16 different positions, nobody wants to be a "D" or an
17 "F", and some people would, you know -- scoring it at
18 -- themselves at a "C". I'm wondering -- and I don't
19 expect an answer -- but how schools feel -- or
20 whether they feel this is really meaningful to them.
21 I know there has to be measurements that have to be
22 -- but looking back, would the department say, would
23 the superintendents or the leadership of the school
24 say, "You know, it's capturing some things, but it's
25 not telling the story." So I just wonder, Ms.

1 Coffman, at some point, if we -- you know, somebody
2 would have dialogue whether or not the letter grades
3 are truly telling the stories for the schools; is it
4 helpful to some and more of a hindrance to the
5 majority; or do -- you know, that some can support
6 their existence by the letter grade, maybe. And, on
7 the same hand, somebody in the same shape could, you
8 know, have -- you know, have different stories. So
9 is it really, truly, giving us a measure of what --
10 and if it is, what variables, or what impacters, or
11 what influencers can switch a grade from a "C" to a
12 "D" or from a "D" to a "B", and not really be the
13 measurement that we're looking for?

14 And, like I say, I'm not an educator. A lot of
15 things I -- I come from a social work background, so
16 I think that comes through with the questions I ask.
17 But I'm truly concerned that -- to know -- if I look
18 at my child's report card it may reflect what -- the
19 town I live in. But is it apples to apples and
20 oranges to oranges, across the state, or is this as
21 close as we can get? So that's -- I'm not asking for
22 an answer, just some thought. If somebody could give
23 me some hints --

24 MS. TARYN ECHOLS: Can I give an answer?

25 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: You know.

1 MS. TARYN ECHOLS: Would you mind if I gave an
2 answer?

3 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: You know, they may
4 say, "You just don't really understand and you'd
5 never understand, or this is what it is, and go and
6 do social work and let us do school stuff and data."
7 But I'm wondering if it truly gives -- if I'm a
8 parent and I get -- I'm thinking my son is doing
9 really well and -- but the school he's in gets a "B",
10 or an "F", or -- you know, so not to respond, or the
11 opposite. So I could respond to what I needed to do
12 and I can say, "Well he's doing good, because he's
13 got an 'A' in it, but he's in a 'B' school, but he's
14 got an 'A'." What does it mean generally? And how
15 do lay people understand and evaluate? You know,
16 people will say, "Go online, you can read these
17 graphs and this" -- you know, that's never been --
18 that never hit me. Or, you can -- "I will send you a
19 report and you can see what your child does in
20 comparison to other kids." And you can't -- it
21 doesn't -- you don't -- you just don't get it. So
22 I'm thinking the -- you school people get it, maybe,
23 but the lay people have a more difficult time in
24 understanding this and what does it really --
25 earlier, we had an "A" school --

1 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

2 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: -- and they really
3 look good. But does that -- compared from that
4 school to this school -- you know, because it's --
5 the name is Tyson, so you would assume that some
6 things go along with that, that might not be in Hot
7 Springs. But, at the same time -- I'm finished. I'm
8 finished, because I'm rambling.

9 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Ms. Coffman, would you --

10 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS:

11 (INAUDIBLE).

12 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: -- mind if I responded to
13 that?

14 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Before she
15 responds, Ms. Coffman, I'd like to respond first,
16 just to have some context here. Let me tell you what
17 the letter -- we constantly need to look at the
18 variables that go into calculating the grade. They
19 need that. That's a given. From -- any statistician
20 would tell you that; and even common sense would tell
21 you that. But I'll tell one thing that the letter
22 grades have definitely done, they have provided a
23 sense of urgency for schools. Used to, schools did
24 not focus on the school; schools focused on the kids.
25 It was all about what the kids were not doing. Now

1 it's about what the schools are doing or not doing,
2 and that is a major educational shift. You know,
3 used to, schools would just go along and have school.
4 I used to be a teacher. I was in schools that we
5 never really -- it was always about why this class
6 wasn't doing this or why that class wasn't doing it,
7 why this group of kids coming up aren't doing this or
8 aren't doing that. Now we look at each other. We
9 look at the school as a unit. And I love the
10 leadership that we have on this call right now. It's
11 what can we do for our faculty to help our students.
12 And, for me, letter grades have brought that to the
13 forefront of "We really need to do something."
14 Before anyone was calling out a school it was
15 basically business-as-usual and you really didn't --
16 and even for school leaders -- I hate to use this
17 term, but I can't think of a better term -- there was
18 not a fit; there wasn't anything that you could point
19 to and just flat-out say "we've got to do better, and
20 here's why we've got to do better." Now I love what
21 I hear about the data, what they're looking at now;
22 it all makes sense. They could even pinpoint to what
23 classes, what subjects they need to work on. That's
24 what the -- now we may need to adjust the grades for
25 this and that, but we've never had this type of a

1 focus on what actually goes on in the school, in the
2 classroom, and so-forth. So that was my commentary
3 on that. But I agree, you know, the grades may not
4 -- the variables may not be the right mix. Dr.
5 Echols?

6 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Sure. You know, like I told
7 you before, the ESSA School Index is very robust. So
8 it gives schools the opportunity to pinpoint several
9 indicators that you need to focus on, or whether that
10 is your graduation rate, all of the components of
11 SQSS, or growth in students, or weighted achievement.
12 However, I do not agree that that letter grade
13 defines the work of our teachers, and I do not agree
14 that that letter grade defines the holistic academic
15 experience that our students receive at our school.
16 But we're not excuse-makers, and so what we've done
17 with that letter grade is we have created a plan and
18 that plan is being implemented daily. Dr. Nehus
19 holds me accountable for my role as assistant
20 superintendent; I hold our principals and assistant
21 principals accountable for their roles in
22 implementing the things and structures that we have
23 put in place to ensure that our students have a very
24 vast educational experience. Because, at the end of
25 the day, that's what we're here for is to provide an

1 educational experience for our students. And, as we
2 stated in the mission, we're willing to do whatever
3 it takes to do that.

4 So I hope that that gives you the
5 perspective of a school. We wear that and we
6 internalize that letter grade. I know I did, when I
7 was high school principal. Now I do that for six
8 schools in the district as assistant superintendent.
9 I internalize that for every one of our campuses,
10 because, whether you're an "A" school or an "F"
11 school -- if you're an "A" school, obviously, you're
12 going to wear that "A" proudly. But when you're a
13 "D" school, it's a tough pill to swallow, when you
14 know the work that has gone on internally --

15 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

16 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: -- within the building. But
17 we don't make excuses for that; we pull up our boots
18 and we keep going, because our school community
19 deserves that. So, whether that's providing more
20 job-embedded professional development, whether that's
21 me getting into a classroom and co-teaching with a
22 teacher, we do it all. But those are things that we
23 can't put in a presentation.

24 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Thank you.

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Newton?

1 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Yes.

2 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: You know I can't let
3 this conversation pass without speaking to it. So
4 anytime you have one data metric -- for example, a
5 letter grade, that should -- that can never tell the
6 full story.

7 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.
8 Right.

9 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: What that should do is
10 start a conversation. And so if you have an "A"
11 student going to a "C" school, then, what I would
12 hope that you would want to do, is start a
13 conversation with the school. And I think if you
14 started a conversation like that with Dr. Echols,
15 then she would certainly explain, as she has done so
16 well today, is she's not just satisfied with knowing
17 she has a "D"; she has unpacked that, why do I have a
18 "D"? Are all of the metrics -- and we do have many
19 indicators that come together, many different data
20 points that fold into that final letter grade. But
21 she has unfolded those, looked at every one of those
22 -- and even those don't address every part of the
23 story. So I think, over the last two days, we've
24 heard from charters that just say, "Our first
25 priority is to have a safe learning environment."

1 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

2 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And safety is not one of
3 the indicators, but it's one of the critical
4 indicators if you're a parent looking for the right
5 place for your kid. So our school report card is
6 quite comprehensive, so beyond the letter grade. And
7 then -- and we've built our reporting that way. You
8 can go to that school accountability, at-a-glance,
9 you see the letter grade. Do you want to know more?
10 You can look at the equity going on in that school.
11 Do you want to know more? Open up the full ESSA
12 Index; that tells you a lot. If you want to know
13 more, go to the school report card. You're going to
14 find out about finance and teacher certification, and
15 you're going to find out a whole lot more. But if
16 you really want to know the most, you need to start a
17 conversation with the people in the school -- the
18 kids, the teachers, the administrators, the other
19 parents and families that support that school. And I
20 think that's the only true way to have the
21 multi-colored picture of a school. But the letter
22 grade is just -- it's the conversation starter.

23 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

24 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: But who does the
25 onus fall on, Deb? And I'm not trying to be

1 controversial; I'm just saying, you know, you hear
2 something, you know it, but to break it -- got to
3 dissect it. You're saying we need to dissect, but
4 the average parent -- and I advocate for parents,
5 because they are the ones that are more confounded
6 when they leave a conference -- parent/teacher
7 conference -- than they were before they went in.
8 So, is -- you know, I know -- and I -- sometimes I
9 feel like I have just enough information to be
10 dangerous. So, you know, even though I may have a
11 little bit more information than someone else, I
12 still don't have enough. I'm just wondering if you
13 ref -- if -- what's your impression; what does this
14 say; how does it interpret? You know, if an industry
15 -- and I'm belaboring this beyond where it should go
16 -- but an industry is anticipating coming into my
17 hometown and they look at letter grades, you know, as
18 it relates to the quality of employees they're going
19 to get, the quality of education their kids are going
20 to get, what does it say? You know, and that's --
21 you know, it did not spell out. But I'm just
22 wondering if we're all looking at apples and oranges
23 -- and clearly, we're not, and because there's so
24 many levels that we have to peel back to be able to
25 know what's what. And so I don't know how we get the

1 information out or the word out. It just -- if
2 you've got a "D", that's doesn't mean -- you know, my
3 kids would come home from school -- I was thinking
4 about this when you were talking about letter grades
5 -- they'd come home, "Well, Mom, I got a 'D', but I'm
6 just two points from a 'C'," and I said, "That
7 doesn't matter to me; you got a 'C'." Y'all remember
8 having those conversations? They'd just have this
9 point they want to drive, "I'm one point from an
10 'A'," you know, or one point from, you know, from --
11 you know, whatever.

12 So that's what I -- and that's somewhere else,
13 another time, another place, another conversation.
14 But I think it would be helpful, in communicating
15 with parents, and other community people, what it
16 really means.

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Agreed. And I think, as
18 our educators become more refined in their
19 understanding, they are passing that along to parents
20 as well.

21 (CHORUS OF UH-HUH'S)

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And I don't want to
23 belabor the thought, but I can just share with you,
24 at our State Board meeting, last Thursday, our Parent
25 Engagement Committee shared data during a taskforce

1 meeting that in the previous year we saw very few
2 school districts submit a parent engagement plan that
3 even addressed reading, and this year well over 100
4 of our districts had very explicit information, about
5 reading, in their parent engagement plan. So I
6 think, as educators, like Dr. Echols and like Ms.
7 Simms -- as they're assimilating this conversation,
8 putting this vocabulary into this conversation, it
9 just can't help but spread. So thank you, for that.

10 UNKNOWN: Yes, ma'am.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Any other questions or
12 discussion before we have a nomin -- a nomination --
13 before we have a motion?

14 (NO RESPONSE)

15 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All right. I will
16 accept a motion then.

17 MOTIONS AND VOTE:

18 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: I move to approve.

19 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I second.

20 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: I Second.

21 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: I have a motion from Ms.
22 Newton, a second by Ms. Wright-McMurray, to approve
23 the Hot Springs World Class High School charter
24 renewal for five years. Any discussion?

25 (NO RESPONSE)

1 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All those in favor?

2 (CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Opposed?

4 (NO RESPONSE)

5 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All right. Motion
6 passes.

7 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Thank you, so much.

8 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And we'll pause for a
9 moment for our panel members to put in their
10 comments. Dr. Williams?

11 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Yes. You
12 know, the --before I read this, and just a thought,
13 we appreciate all the work that you all are doing, in
14 trying to pull all these different pieces together.
15 So I was listening to you talk about it. It -- my
16 grandfather used to say "it's more than a notion."

17 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Yes.

18 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: To get this
19 done. My comment, support the motion. There's work
20 to be done academically. And I have in --
21 parenthetically, three years of a "D" grade,
22 excluding 2019-2020. The current leadership has a
23 handle on what needs to be done and has developed a
24 plan.

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

1 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sorry. I
2 couldn't get the unmute button. I recommended
3 approval. Although the school has received a "D"
4 rating over a three-year period, I believe the
5 leadership has made changes and has a plan to improve
6 their outcomes; they have implemented strategies that
7 will address their current concerns.

8 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Baldwin?

9 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Well that's about
10 exactly what I said. And I do think the difference
11 is leadership. And I think you guys have convinced
12 us that you're on top of it and that you're going to
13 fix this, and I think we believe that you will.

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. Newton?

15 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Yes. I'm for the
16 motion. My explanation is very thorough plan to
17 maintain progress leading toward continued
18 improvement, impressed -- it should be in cooperation
19 between administration, staff, and student body.

20 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All right. Well, Dr.
21 Echols and Ms. Simms, thank you, so much for an
22 excellent presentation. Congratulations to you for
23 your --

24 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Thank you, so much. We --

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: -- approval. This

1 information --

2 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: We look forward to --

3 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: -- will be shared with
4 the State Board next month, and they will vote to
5 review or not review. And I just want to say you
6 have been a great model of explaining what school
7 improvement is all about. So thank you for your
8 work.

9 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Hard work. Hard work, but
10 it's the right work. So we appreciate you all, so
11 much, for giving us the opportunity to show you what
12 hard work can do in the community that we serve.

13 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, so much.
14 Panel, let's take a quick 10-minute break and then
15 we'll come back and complete our review. Thank you.

16 DR. TARYN ECHOLS: Thank you.

17 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Well done.

18 (Thereupon, a break was taken and the
19 proceedings resumed as follows, to-wit:)

20 AGENDA ITEM II(5): CONSIDERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL
21 REVIEW DATA

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All right. I think
23 everyone is back. Ms. Webb, if you'll introduce
24 Number 5.

25 MS. TRACY WEBB: So last month we did a review

1 of charters and, when looking at the data on the
2 spreadsheets, we had seven district conversion
3 schools that were identified and thirteen
4 open-enrollment schools -- that was eight charters
5 that had thirteen schools between them all -- that
6 were identified as having at least two "D's" or "F's"
7 -- consecutive "D's" or "F's" in the last three
8 years. From those seven district conversions, we
9 have had two that have surrendered their charter,
10 effective immediately. And so that was Harrisburg
11 School District, Harrisburg College and Career
12 Preparatory School -- and I've included the letter in
13 the agenda -- and, also, the Blytheville School
14 District has Blytheville High School, A New Tech
15 School; they also surrendered. Blytheville had
16 intended not to renew at the -- their charter was up
17 at the end of this school year, but they decided to
18 go ahead and surrender their charter now. And both
19 letters are included in the agenda.

20 So the additional information that we -- so that
21 leaves, really, five district conversion charters
22 that we collected additional data on. So the
23 additional data included a set of questions that you
24 requested, from the last meeting, that included:
25 What factors contributed to the "D" or "F" letter

1 grade; what the challenges were; and what is the plan
2 for addressing those challenges. And so you'll find
3 that in the agenda as well. Those were all listed
4 consecutively in one document for your review.

5 Excuse me.

6 In addition, there was also some documentation
7 regarding the open-enrollment charters. We get a
8 report every year of the students that are enrolled
9 in a charter school, how many are enrolled in each
10 district. So, for instance, Arkansas Virtual Academy
11 could have students from all over the state, and so
12 they had lots of different school districts. So we
13 chose the ones that were -- the most students lived
14 in and included those in the sheet to show you the
15 letter grades for those school districts. So we did
16 that for each of the open-enrollments that were
17 identified. So there were thirteen schools that had
18 that information, in the agenda, for you to review.
19 So if they only had two or three students that lived
20 in a district that attended that charter, we didn't
21 include those; we only included those that were above
22 -- I believe it was ten. They had to have ten or
23 more students attending the charter, from a district,
24 to include that in the review information. Does that
25 make sense? Okay.

1 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Webb.
2 Panel, if we'd like to start with the open-enrollment
3 charters, there are eight listed for review. Two of
4 those, the Future School of Fort Smith and the
5 Imboden Area Charter, we have already talked to them,
6 and hopefully you got all your questions answered.
7 So that would leave six for you to look at today.
8 For lack of a better way to go through them, were
9 there any questions that you had or any concerns you
10 had after reviewing Academics Plus, Scott Elementary
11 School?

12 (NO RESPONSE)

13 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And probably the two
14 documents that you'd be looking at are -- is the
15 open-enrollment comparison data and the
16 open-enrollment response to questions.

17 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Well I have to say,
18 in looking at this, I was -- you know, you guys are a
19 whole lot more familiar with educational standards
20 and expectations and there was a lot of information,
21 in this, that I got lost in. And, really, all I was
22 trying to do is figure out -- get a comfort level
23 that they know what their challenges are and that
24 they have the resources and the ability to overcome
25 that. And there was so much data, I couldn't tell.

1 I couldn't answer those questions. So I'll probably
2 throw you off, I mean, a lot on this.

3 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: I think one of the
4 things that I was encouraged by on all of the schools
5 is -- having read through these, is that each one has
6 really identified specifically the areas that they
7 were struggling in, and have put forth plans within
8 their school improvement plans and district support
9 plans to address those. I think one of the
10 challenges we face today is that, because of the
11 impact of Covid-19, we have -- we did not assess for
12 the 2020 school year and therefore, have new data for
13 2020. We will also have that same level of concern
14 even with 2021, even though we, as a state, do plan
15 to move forward with our statewide assessment, and we
16 do plan to calculate the ESSA School Index for the
17 2021 school year. But, until we do that, we don't
18 know the impact of Covid-19 on our learners.

19 So, just listening to Hot Springs, just a minute
20 ago, I'm just encouraged, you know, that they were
21 thinking that, by all accounts and all the metrics
22 they have, they're improving. But, as I look at all
23 of these, we really don't know, and we won't know
24 until that data comes in, just what the impact of
25 being out of school and having remote -- that quick

1 remote learning in the spring, and then all of the
2 various types of learning options that they have
3 provided this school year to the students, they -- I
4 mean, I think they've all tried to do their very,
5 very, best, but they've certainly encountered lots of
6 unknown situations that just their simple -- I know,
7 let me rephrase that word -- what their normal
8 rigorous efforts for school improvement are, are
9 unknown yet what the outcomes of those will be,
10 because of the impact of Covid-19, and our school
11 districts still having to pivot, due to illnesses
12 within the school or probable close contacts. So
13 there's still so many unknown variables, as Ms.
14 Newton pointed out, that may not show themselves with
15 a numeric value, but they certainly have a huge
16 impact on student learning.

17 So I felt confident, as I read through these,
18 that our schools had really put a lot of great
19 thought into their work.

20 Ms. Wright-McMurray, I see you nodding your
21 head; did you read similar?

22 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I do. I'm
23 glad that we're thinking on the same page. I almost
24 feel like, by us asking this additional step, it
25 motivated them to start thinking through, "What do we

1 need to be working on to address these concerns?"
2 And then, the two schools that decided that this is
3 something they needed to do differently, I think they
4 made that decision on their own. So I think that us
5 taking this step has addressed my concerns and I feel
6 like that they've outlined that in their responses.

7 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: You know,
8 here's -- am I off mute? Yes, I am. Okay. I
9 thought the questions were extremely helpful, by
10 their response to the questions, because what I
11 really wanted to see is whether they had a good
12 understanding of what's going on. And I tell you
13 what, I think we made a great decision about Hot
14 Springs. Their response is much more detailed than
15 some of the other responses, as listed out here, and
16 that's really what I'm looking for for the schools,
17 is that they understand and own what needs to be
18 done. Uh-huh. No one wants to have a low letter
19 grade and -- but, in just looking at their response
20 to the questions, they are really detailed. I saw a
21 lot of -- a lack of understanding of certain things,
22 in reading some of the response to questions. You
23 know, so my next question would be what can we, or
24 the Department of Education, can do to assist these
25 school districts in some way? That -- it may be

1 something as simple as following up to make sure that
2 they have the resources or are aware of the right
3 training. I tell you one thing that stood out to me,
4 in the discussion, was Dr. Echols, and she referenced
5 some program that she didn't name that was not quite
6 as successful for her school -- for -- it may have
7 been the middle school, but it was one of the -- a
8 feeder school instead of to the high school -- that
9 some other districts may be using. And I wonder
10 whether they are having some of the same issues, but
11 are not aware of it.

12 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: You know, I was
13 thinking the same thing. And I use analogies a lot,
14 but you can't put motor oil -- the same oil in a car
15 that you put in a lawnmower.

16 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Absolutely.

17 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: So it's about the
18 weight of different things. You know, sure,
19 everybody understands that you've got to have
20 gasoline, but then gasoline -- it has to be a higher
21 octane, in some cars, or it just screws them up. So
22 I think having -- I don't know if it's professional
23 development, or if it's what, but we can just make
24 some assumptions. Dr. Echols was very, very,
25 impressive in terms of understanding what happens.

1 And I think the one before -- the pre -- one of the
2 presentations before talked about the impact on
3 graduation rates and this, that, and the other, but
4 do you understand all of it? Like I said, the weight
5 of the oil, the octane of the gasoline, and just what
6 it takes to make something run. You know, because if
7 your car is sputtering it may be that you need to
8 raise your octane and you may be overdoing something
9 on the other end. So I think just having a well-run
10 machine, as it relates to there are some basics --
11 and I'm completely out of my expertise -- but there
12 are certainly some basics that apply to everybody,
13 and then some others that may be adjusted according
14 to -- you know, you don't want Imboden doing the same
15 thing that Hot Springs does, because something's
16 (INAUDIBLE) and vice-versa. But, somewhere out of
17 that, they can pull -- and that's what the technical
18 assistance, I think, could say is, "You know what,
19 Imboden, you really don't have to worry about this,
20 because, you know, you're okay with this part. But
21 you need to concentrate on that." So it's just where
22 you put your energies, where you put your resources,
23 depending on, you know, what you're driving. So that
24 I think would help -- be helpful in -- just in
25 response to the questions, see the differences. You

1 know, this is -- you know, the seriousness of the
2 response is one thing, but then the appropriateness
3 of it, based on where you need to go, is something
4 totally different. I don't know where that comes
5 from or how -- you know, I don't know whether it's
6 the school -- one school, this class/school mentoring
7 this class/school, with the number of students, and
8 the courses. You know, culinary -- you'd be hard to
9 find another school in the state that offers a
10 culinary certification program. So, you know, who
11 are they going to talk to if they have a problem?
12 But I -- that's just -- I think understanding what --
13 to what extent and, you know, and, you know, what it
14 takes for different people is going to be a different
15 thing -- different schools, rather.

16 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: You know, Toyce, I
17 like the comment you made about technical assistance
18 and peer assistance. Is there a structure in place
19 at ADE or somehow between the schools, themselves,
20 that they -- if they had a couple of years of "D's"
21 that they are automatically eligible for some type of
22 TE -- you know, technical assistance, some type of
23 help? Is that in the budget anywhere?

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So some of our school
25 districts have qualified for additional funds and

1 additional training. And so I think you've heard,
2 from several of them, talk about they've been
3 involved in PLC training. And that is really a
4 collaborative effort to examine student data. And
5 "student data" being, not just test data, but
6 everything they know about kids.

7 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

8 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And so, as I read
9 through here, I'm -- what I'm seeing is these schools
10 are trying to get all of their teachers trained in
11 reading, through the RISE. They're really
12 concentrating on examining their student data and
13 making student appropriate interventions based on
14 that data. They talked about that quite a bit. And
15 then, so I feel like they've put the appropriate
16 professional development in place to improve. And,
17 if you think about school improvement, really there
18 are three factors in school improvement. You either
19 have to teach at a more rigorous level -- and one of
20 -- several of the schools addressed that; they said,
21 "We're not teaching at the rigor of our academic
22 standards," and they recognized that, and they talked
23 about how they were realigning their curriculums and
24 putting in better instructional methodologies. So
25 you either have to teach at a higher level -- your

1 teachers have to receive training in order to better
2 understand what the rigor is. And the third thing is
3 kids have to be more engaged in learning.

4 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

5 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: And what I saw
6 consistently, through these, is those were the
7 highlights of what they had recognized and are
8 addressing.

9 The other thing that I'm really super excited
10 about, and I believe Covid-19 really brought this to
11 the foresight, is the need for parent engagement in
12 the learning process. And I heard examples from all
13 of our schools of more thoughtful, more focused
14 parent engagement. And they're not talking about,
15 you know, what are the compliance rules that they
16 have to meet; they're talking about real engagement,
17 real conversations with parents, check-ins with kids,
18 check-ins with parents, meeting their needs very
19 specifically. And I saw that addressed in these
20 plans as well.

21 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Well, you know what?
22 We -- I'm just going to brag on Phoenix. I'm retired
23 and do some consulting work for them, but the parent
24 engagement is a big piece of what we try to do,
25 because we realize until we do that, and unless we do

1 that, things are not going to have a major change.
2 But they've gotten a grant from DHS, through the
3 CARES Act, and Christy has decided to buy 40
4 Chromebooks. And I said to her, "Forty Chromebooks?
5 Don't kids have Chromebooks?" She said, "Yeah, but
6 parents don't." So when you go into the parent
7 engagement -- so I thought that was a unique
8 opportunity for us, then, to get those to the
9 parents, so that our staff -- or their staff -- I
10 keep saying "our" -- their staff can work with
11 parents of what your kids are working on. Because
12 kids may be at school with their Chromebooks, or
13 whatever. But I thought that was ingenious to come
14 up with an idea, like that, that would -- that would
15 solidify and encourage -- you know, so we only get
16 40, because that's what the grant -- but I thought,
17 in terms of parent engagement, that's not coming to
18 PTA meeting now, and it might not be for a long time;
19 it might not be a phone call; it might not be for a
20 long time. But we work with our providers here, our
21 internet providers; we have -- Southwestern Bell has
22 a program, AT&T, you know, for \$5.00 dollars for
23 broadband access for parents. So there's some things
24 like that I think that are going to make some
25 difference in the measures. And, you know, 40 is a

1 drop in the bucket, but you just think about the
2 things that parents -- they could be learning some
3 things along with their kids and, you know, get ahead
4 of the curve, to be able to help the kids out or just
5 help themselves out, in the long-run.

6 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: To add to that, Ms.
7 Newton, one of the other things that I think has
8 changed as a result of this year is I hear less
9 conversation about parent attendance and more of
10 parent engagement in the learning. And so, while
11 having events at school -- and it's great for parents
12 to attend, they can't always attend. And --

13 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Well, you know, and
14 I think the efforts, Deb -- you know, to be perfectly
15 honest -- have to happen outside of the school
16 system, because school personnel, that is not what
17 they do. And we find it increasingly difficult to
18 have that funded through different entities, or
19 whatever, when we say "that's a pivotal part of it;
20 it's going to impact." But you can't measure the
21 effectiveness of -- the possibility of the
22 effectiveness by saying we had 20 parents come to the
23 school, and listen to what they thought -- it turned
24 out to be Greek, like some of the stuff that I hear,
25 the acronyms and all that. But I'm just saying

1 that's a big piece, it's a critical piece, and, in
2 light of what's going on, it's just -- it's
3 necessary.

4 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Probably one of the
5 other items that I saw really addressed well is this
6 idea of recruitment and retention of highly qualified
7 teachers. And, as you read through here, what you
8 saw is that, while many of these charters have asked
9 for waivers of teacher licensure, they're really
10 working to get good people in the classroom and get
11 them licensed. And so they're not just saying, "Oh,
12 I've got a waiver; I don't have to do that;" they are
13 taking the steps to try to get the people that may be
14 coming in on a waiver, get them licensed during the
15 time that they're working there at the school, and
16 that's really an advantage for our students.

17 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: So, given
18 this information, what are our options of just,
19 really, you know -- I tell you, getting this
20 information is extremely helpful to me. One, it kind
21 of validates the fact that the districts are doing
22 the things they need to do to improve education, is
23 what really comes out. They understand what they
24 need to do. So I'm -- as I read some of these that
25 -- especially the -- kind of the -- well, they all

1 have "B's" here -- I'm trying to figure out ways to
2 help versus looking at whether they need to continue
3 with their charters or not. That's kind of where
4 I've moved. I was thinking if they're not getting it
5 done, with a charter, then can we justify them
6 keeping a charter. I just try to call it the way I
7 see it. What I see now in reviewing this
8 information, especially their answers to the
9 questions, is that they understand; they have a
10 decent handle on what's going on. I would like to
11 know, maybe from ADE in the future, is can they
12 validate -- are they in agreement with what the
13 districts are saying. It's not -- nothing we need
14 immediately, but, when you read these answers, does
15 that make sense to the Department of Education?

16 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: But, you know, the
17 flipside of the coin, too, is how do we measure it?
18 Can you -- you know, at some point we'll have to
19 measure; someone will have to be able to measure
20 improvement. So if we get these now, the
21 explanations now -- is it at semester, or at nine
22 weeks, or whatever -- so it's corrective action. If
23 this is suggestive of them making corrective action,
24 then how -- what do you -- what will you show us in
25 six months, you know.

1 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

2 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: What will you show
3 in this period of time; you will have improved 100 --
4 you know, two one-hundredths of a point or something.
5 But, to say that, and it looks good and sounds good,
6 but we've got to have a way to -- or somebody, not we
7 -- but someone has got to see if it's actually
8 happening. You know, your kids say they study more;
9 did they pass the test; were -- are they -- did they
10 make a high "F", or a low "D", or whatever, you know.
11 So that's the other part of it is because some people
12 could put things down on paper that answer all your
13 questions, but it --

14 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

15 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: -- by the same
16 token, it doesn't materialize in improvements.

17 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: I saw that.

18 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: At the state level we
19 only have the statewide data and we only can
20 calculate that one time a year. And so the next time
21 that we will have a metric statewide to provide to
22 these schools will be in October of 2021.

23 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: So you can't do
24 anything in the interim or individually with the
25 schools?

1 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Oh, certainly, we can
2 work with them, but we would not have a state metric
3 that would --

4 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Right. Right.
5 Correct.

6 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: -- be comparable to a
7 letter grade or anything, because you would have to
8 have all of those components. What you're going to
9 see come out in early January will be graduation
10 rates. So you'll -- we will -- we have continued to
11 calculate graduation rates. But the other components
12 of the ESSA School Index are not calculated again
13 until October of 2021.

14 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: And, you know, my
15 fear is that it's going to get worse before it gets
16 better.

17 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Yes.

18 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Then, what? Given,
19 you know, some of the stories you hear or the
20 frustrations you hear from teachers or students or
21 parents. So I -- you know, the idea that this will
22 -- the situation we find ourselves in will improve,
23 our concern's is it's not likely, as far as I can
24 see.

25 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: That's why we need data,

1 so we know for sure.

2 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: You know we
3 -- sure. Absolutely. You know, I can't remember
4 which district it was that we were -- I remember
5 talking about looking at them in two years. You
6 know, one year is going to be for a true measurement
7 of improvement; this year, you know, we're just going
8 to probably -- when we test this year is just find
9 out what the loss is, more than anything, than,
10 necessarily, what the gain has been. And then, the
11 following year it's going to kind of get things back
12 to normal almost. And then the next year would be
13 the year that I really expect to see some changes.
14 Just to be fair. If you're going to give folks a
15 letter grade we've got to at least be fair about how
16 we go about doing it. Now it doesn't mean we don't
17 assess now; that's not my point. But I mean we just
18 need to take it into proper consideration of what
19 we're doing. And I want to give this board -- this
20 panel credit. I think that we've been doing a great
21 job of finding that right balance between -- even
22 though the grades say it's this -- Hot Springs was a
23 great example. We understand. We got into the
24 details with the leadership in such a manner that we
25 have confidence in what the leadership can do. But,

1 speaking of the grades, even with these districts,
2 there's almost three things that jump out at me:
3 One, when they get a "D", graduation rate is usually
4 an issue; and how well that they are performing from
5 a percentage of proficiency in reading; and the math
6 areas; are kind of the two -- the three things that
7 really jump out at me when I see a "D" grade. So I
8 tend to go straight to what are you doing -- what
9 causes it, what are the deficiencies, and what are
10 you going to do to improve it, is what I'm looking
11 for.

12 I think they are understanding what's missing.
13 It would be great to know that they have a plan in
14 place to address these issues, would be my next step
15 as a panel member; would be some type of validation
16 that they have a plan that reflects what they put
17 down in their answer to the questions; that they are
18 addressing the issues and any other issues that ADE
19 may also identify.

20 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: As you read through
21 these, most of these also linked their school
22 improvement plan and their district support plan.
23 And what we do see is that they are consistent in
24 what they've said they're going to do --

25 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

1 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: -- with what they've
2 submitted us, as well, in addition to this. So I
3 think that alignment is already there.

4 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Okay, good.
5 In that case, then, is there anything else for us to
6 do, from an action, related to individual schools,
7 other than review them when they come up during their
8 normal cycle?

9 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Well and we will review
10 again next year, after we have a new set of data.
11 So, in November of 2021, we will come back and look
12 at all of these charters again.

13 Ms. Hyatt, if you want to come up and address
14 the rest of that question?

15 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Mary Claire Hyatt,
16 Arkansas Department of Education. In the past, if
17 there were particular schools that you were concerned
18 about you would call them in for a review; so you
19 don't necessarily have to wait until their renewal
20 hearing to call them in for a review. We have done
21 that with a couple of schools in the past. You can
22 just state the kind of things that you want to know
23 about at the hearing, any major concerns that you
24 have, any information you want them to present. And
25 then, at the next panel meeting, we could bring them

1 in for a review, where they could give you a
2 presentation that addresses those things. And then,
3 of course, you have a wide variety of actions
4 available to you at that time, including putting them
5 on probation, accepting the presentation and doing
6 nothing about it, asking them to work closely with
7 the Department in particular areas, and revoking the
8 charter.

9 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Webb, if you would
10 come up as well. Ms. Webb works directly with our
11 charters; she oversees that office.

12 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

13 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: But she oversees our
14 state and federal monitoring, as well. And so I know
15 that you've started doing risk assessments and
16 starting with monitoring. Do any of these, on either
17 list, open-enrollment or district conversion, stand
18 out as something that is beyond our normal risks, or
19 things that we'll be monitoring for; any that you're
20 like, "Oh, I have heartburn about these?"

21 MS. TRACY WEBB: No. I mean, there are probably
22 a couple that were identified on our risk assessment,
23 at the top that we have currently done a desk review
24 on; that we can dig deeper on, to look at those.
25 Given the situation, you know, I don't know that

1 we're ready to send a full team onsite to those
2 campuses, but we've collected the data that we could
3 from our desks. We could also do some virtual
4 monitoring or we could ask them some deeper
5 questions; maybe not be onsite, but we could ask
6 those questions to the charters to gather some more
7 information.

8 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: But if you saw
9 something, then certainly we could bring it back to
10 this panel?

11 MS. TRACY WEBB: Absolutely. Absolutely.

12 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So, today, we just need
13 to have a motion -- Ms. Hyatt, do we need a motion if
14 we're going to review or not consider any -- what do
15 we need for the record?

16 MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT: Sure. So if you're not
17 going to do anything, you don't need to make any
18 motion. If there's a school that you would like to
19 call in for a review, that would need a motion, as
20 well as you to state kind of the general things that
21 you would like to hear or have them address at a
22 review. And you would need to do that by school, if
23 there were multiple schools; otherwise, nothing.

24 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: So at this time, Panel
25 Members, what is your will?

1 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: My individual will
2 is to do nothing. I don't know if there's going to
3 be a motion. But, I'd -- looking at, you know,
4 where, you know, the schools are now, in a state of
5 confusion and chaos, and to further exacerbate that
6 by bringing them in, and all the anxiety that goes
7 along with that, I think if we can, that we could
8 just wait and call them in individually if we -- if
9 you guys have a concern that you need for us to
10 address. I would look for that recommendation from
11 the ADE.

12 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: I agree
13 with that, you know, especially during this -- we're
14 in the middle of Covid and I think the schools are
15 doing the very best that they can right now. I see
16 what Ms. Newton was saying wholeheartedly.

17 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Ms. Wright-McMurray?

18 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sorry. I
19 couldn't get to that un-mute button. No, I agree. I
20 think I'm comfortable where we are right now and
21 there's no action that needs to be taken further than
22 what we've done thus far.

23 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

24 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: Yes, I agree also.
25 I -- you know, truthfully, I think that, by asking

1 the question, action was taken, and the reports that
2 they put together were extremely thorough, which
3 meant they took them seriously; and then you had
4 Blytheville and Harrisburg that probably made a
5 decision, that needed to be made, on their own,
6 because of our questions.

7 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

8 PANEL MEMBER PHIL BALDWIN: So I think we have
9 shown good oversight, and I agree with the panel that
10 anything else is probably not needed right now.

11 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: All right. Any further
12 conversation or discussion?

13 (NO RESPONSE)

14 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: If not, I'll accept a
15 motion for adjournment.

16 AGENDA ITEM 111: ADJOURNMENT

17 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: So moved.

18 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Second.

19 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Motion by Ms. Newton and
20 a second by Dr. Williams. All those in favor?

21 (CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you.

23 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: Boy, that's
24 the fastest motion we've got all day.

25 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: Merry Christmas,

1 everybody.

2 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Happy holidays.

3 PANEL MEMBER SONJA WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Nobody had
4 a problem finding the un-mute button on that one.

5 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you, so much for
6 your work over the past two days. I think we've made
7 excellent decisions and have been extremely thorough.
8 So, great work. See you --

9 PANEL MEMBER TOYCE NEWTON: You know it's -- I
10 have to say this is extremely taxing to do this
11 online, for me. Other people might be more
12 comfortable; I'd much rather see people. And maybe
13 that time will come soon again.

14 PANEL MEMBER DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS: I agree.

15 CHAIR DEBORAH COFFMAN: Thank you all. Thank
16 you so much. Have a happy holiday.

17 (THEREUPON, the meeting was adjourned on
18 Wednesday, December 16, 2020, at 2:36 p.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION
BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DIVISION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL
DECEMBER 16, 2020
9:00 a.m.

I, Laura L. Carnahan, a Certified Court Reporter in and for the aforesaid state, certify that I reported the proceedings by StenoMask Method in the aforementioned case; that said recording has been reduced to a transcription by me, or under my direct supervision, and the foregoing pages numbered 1-202 constitute a true and correct transcript of the proceedings held, to the best of my ability.

WITNESS my hand and seal as such Court Reporter on this 12th day of January, 2021.

Laura L. Carnahan



LAURA L. CARNAHAN

Supreme Court Certified Reporter No. 569