

In The Matter Of:

*DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION*

March 11, 2021

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P R O C E E D I N G S

V. G.U.I.D.E. FOR LIFE STATE BOARD RESOLUTION

CHAIRMAN DEAN: Next we have the International Social-Emotional Learning Day State Board Resolution, and that will be presented by Lisa Tyler, Susan Jobe.

Good morning and welcome.

MS. JOBE: Good morning. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DEAN: You're welcome.

MS. JOBE: March 26th is being celebrated as the second annual International Social-Emotional Learning Day. And in honor of this day, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education is requesting that the Arkansas State Board of Education proclaim the third week of March as G.U.I.D.E. for Life Week.

CHAIRMAN DEAN: Awesome. Wonderful. I think we have that resolution. Would you like to read the resolution?

MS. JOBE: Sure.

WHEREAS, The Arkansas Department of Education's vision is to lead the nation in student-focused education by ensuring that every Arkansan is equitably prepared, supported, and inspired to succeed in school, career, community, and life; and

WHEREAS, It is our mission for all Arkansas students to graduate with a strong foundation of

1 academic knowledge, experience, proficiencies, and
2 soft skills in order that they are actively literate,
3 critical thinkers, and actively engaged in their
4 communities in positive ways; and

5 WHEREAS, The Arkansas Department of Education
6 has identified five guiding principles that support
7 educators, business leaders, communities, and
8 students in their efforts to help all Arkansans
9 develop these critical skills; and

10 WHEREAS, The G.U.I.D.E. for Life program, with
11 the support of Arkansas educators, is designed to
12 give students a plan they can follow to achieve
13 personal success; and

14 WHEREAS, By incorporating the G.U.I.D.E. for
15 Life concepts throughout the school experience,
16 educators can help cultivate these real-world skills
17 for success in all Arkansas students;

18 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT

19 In honor of the second annual International
20 Social-Emotional Learning Day, the Arkansas State
21 Board of Education encourages schools to celebrate
22 the G.U.I.D.E. for Life program during the week of
23 March 15-19, 2021.

24 CHAIRMAN DEAN: All right. Thank you. Thank
25 you so much.

1 This is a great resolution. It kind of goes
2 back to what we were talking about before is
3 educating the whole child, not just academically but
4 to have those soft skills and be able to communicate,
5 be great communicators, as we were talking about
6 earlier with Superintendent Poore.

7 So thank you so much and we appreciate your time
8 today.

9 MS. JOBE: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Thank you.

11 If you'll let me sign that before you take it.

12 SECRETARY KEY: I know this is on recognitions,
13 but being a resolution I think we do need a vote --

14 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay.

15 SECRETARY KEY: -- by the Board for adoption.

16 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Do we have a motion for
17 adoption?

18 MS. McFETRIDGE: I move for adoption.

19 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. We have a motion by Ms.
20 McFetridge to adopt the resolution.

21 Do I have a second?

22 DR. MOORE: Second.

23 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Seconded by Ms. Moore.

24 All in favor say "aye."

25 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

1 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Any opposed?

2 Seeing none, motion passes.

3 (OFF THE RECORD FOR RECOGNITIONS AND CONSENT AGENDA)

4 (BACK ON THE RECORD)

5 X.1: STATE BOARD REVIEW OF PLSB 20-121 ETHICS HEARING

6 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION - TIFFANY GANT

7 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Now we are down to our Action
8 Agenda. This first one is Ethics Hearing Committee
9 Recommendation for Tiffany Gant, and the presenter is
10 Ms. Amy Douglas.

11 Good morning.

12 MS. DOUGLAS: Educator Gant is here. Let me go
13 get her from -- her attorney is not here --

14 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay.

15 MS. DOUGLAS: -- but she is present.

16 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay.

17 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

18 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Did we lose her?

19 MS. DOUGLAS: Mr. Dugan is going to look for
20 her.

21 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay.

22 MS. DOUGLAS: She was here, but it seems like
23 she stepped out. If you guys want to go to the next
24 thing --

25 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Yes.

1 MS. DOUGLAS: -- and come back and see if we can
2 find her.'

3 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Let's do that.

4 X.2: CONSIDERATION OF CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL DECISION -
5 AMENDMENT REQUEST FOR LISA ACADEMY

6 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Next on the agenda is the
7 Consideration of Charter Authorizing Panel Decision
8 for LISA Academy, and that's Ms. Tracy Webb. I know
9 she's out in the hallway.

10 There she is.

11 Good morning, Ms. Webb. Welcome.

12 MS. WEBB: Good morning. Tracy Webb from the
13 Charter Office.

14 Today we have a consideration of a Charter
15 Authorizing Panel decision for LISA Academy. They
16 have requested to add a new campus for a hybrid
17 school, additional waivers for the new campus, and to
18 increase the enrollment cap. LISA's charter was
19 originally approved in 2004 and serves students in
20 grades K-12. The enrollment cap for this year -- I'm
21 sorry -- for this year is 3,432 students.

22 So the decision for the Board today is to review
23 or not review the cap decision.

24 I also want to clarify on the list of waivers
25 that are attached those are new waivers for LISA, in

1 addition to what is already approved for the whole
2 school. So the waivers that are attached are just
3 for the hybrid school.

4 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay.

5 MS. WEBB: And today we do have -- Dr. Bogrek is
6 on Zoom if you have any questions.

7 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Welcome, Dr. Bogrek.

8 SUPT. BOGREK: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN DEAN: All right. I'll start here with
10 Ms. Newton. Do we have any questions or comments for
11 LISA Academy?

12 MS. NEWTON: I just had two clarifying
13 questions.

14 The increase in the cap of 1,050, that was
15 strictly for the hybrid?

16 SUPT. BOGREK: Yes.

17 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

18 SUPT. BOGREK: Just for the hybrid school.

19 MS. NEWTON: Okay. And then the hybrid is going
20 to be K-12 instead of K-9 next year?

21 SUPT. BOGREK: Yes.

22 MS. NEWTON: Okay, that was all I had. Thank
23 you. Good luck.

24 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. And Dr. Moore?

25 DR. MOORE: I do. I don't plan to review, so I

1 do have a few questions, if that's okay for you-all.

2 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay.

3 DR. MOORE: When you're planning this school are
4 your teachers going to be solely with this school or
5 are they going to be some of the teachers at your
6 existing school? And what will that relationship
7 teaching online and in-person look like?

8 SUPT. BOGREK: Mr. Sahin.

9 MR. SAHIN: I'll answer this question. This is
10 Sahin. I'm the assistant superintendent at LISA
11 Academy.

12 So, yes, we are going to have dedicated staff
13 for hybrid, for the hybrid school.

14 DR. MOORE: Okay. I think this is a unique
15 situation that probably was born out of this past
16 year and I think it's a great opportunity that
17 parents would be able to take advantage of that
18 primarily online but also having the site visits. If
19 a parent was far enough in the state that they
20 couldn't reach a site, would -- could they still
21 enroll in the program, in the school?

22 MR. SAHIN: Yes. So, yes, they will still --
23 they are going to be able to apply for our school.
24 But one of our requirements, you know, to belonging
25 for our parents and their student is to come on-site.

1 So we are going to ask our parents and students to
2 come to our -- either the satellite learning services
3 or campus learning services twice a week -- I'm sorry
4 -- once -- twice a month or once a week. So they
5 will be able to enroll but they will need to come to
6 a learning center.

7 DR. MOORE: Okay. I think I saw -- I think it's
8 great that you would provide lunches to those
9 families. I think you're ameliorating some of the
10 concerns that we've had this year.

11 And my last question is will technology be
12 provided by you all for families that lack internet
13 services?

14 MR. SAHIN: So we are going to provide
15 Chromebooks to all of our students. Also, if the
16 parents don't have the, you know, internet service we
17 are going to provide hotspots.

18 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

19 MR. SAHIN: You're welcome.

20 CHAIRMAN DEAN: All right. Thank you, Dr.
21 Moore.

22 Ms. Chambers? No?

23 MS. CHAMBERS: No questions. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. Ms. Woods?

25 MS. WOODS: No.

1 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. Ms. McFetridge?

2 MS. McFETRIDGE: Can you help me understand what
3 your satellite learning centers will be? Are they
4 outside of your regular buildings that you now have?

5 MR. SAHIN: Yes. So what we're going to do is
6 that first year we are going to start -- this is
7 going to be a combination of virtual school and
8 traditional learning. So we would like to reach out
9 to as many families as we can in the state of
10 Arkansas, so we are going to start with campus
11 learning centers; so we are going to ask our students
12 to come to onsite. And then if we have enough
13 applications or interest in the other regions of
14 Arkansas, then we are going to open satellite
15 learning centers. The satellite learning centers are
16 going to do the services like for enrichment
17 services, support services, and financial services,
18 or some of the services that cannot be given
19 virtually, like occupational therapy or dyslexia --
20 some portions of dyslexia. So we are going to these
21 learning centers. The learning centers are going to
22 be a separate building; they are going to be usually
23 office buildings, maybe churches, a safe place for
24 our students and for our teachers.

25 MS. McFETRIDGE: So you don't have these

1 facilities identified yet; is that right?

2 MR. SAHIN: I'm sorry, Ms. McFetridge, I cannot
3 hear you. I think you are muted.

4 MS. McFETRIDGE: So you haven't identified the
5 satellite buildings as yet; is that correct?

6 MR. SAHIN: Not for the first year, no.

7 MS. BARONI: If I may, I'm Luanne Baroni. I'm
8 assistant superintendent for LISA Academy.

9 Just to clarify that, for the first year we plan
10 to use campuses that already exist for our learning
11 centers.

12 So, in central Arkansas we'll be using our
13 building at 21 Corporate Hill Drive, which is where
14 our 6th grade academy/middle school is currently. We
15 have additional space in that building that will be
16 dedicated to the hybrid school administration. We'll
17 also be using the Springdale campus, on Holcomb
18 Street in Springdale, the first year. So the first
19 year we plan to operate out of those two locations as
20 our learning centers. And then as we determine
21 demand across the state we will then look at
22 facilities for those, and they will most likely be
23 leased portions of buildings, as Mr. Sahin said, in
24 churches, community centers, other safe locations,
25 where we can lease the space that we need to provide

1 those services in those satellite areas.

2 MS. McFETRIDGE: Thank you very much. I
3 appreciate that.

4 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Mr. Lookadoo?

5 MR. LOOKADOO: (shaking head from side to side.)

6 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Well, okay.

7 Well, if we have no further questions or
8 comments then I'll look for a motion.

9 MS. McFETRIDGE: I make the motion not to
10 review.

11 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. We have a motion to not
12 review by Ms. McFetridge.

13 DR. MOORE: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Seconded by Dr. Moore.

15 All in favor say "aye."

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Any opposed?

18 Seeing none, motion passes.

19 Okay. Do we -- did we find Ms. Gant?

20 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay.

22 SUPT. BOGREK: And thanks so much. We really
23 appreciate you.

24 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Oh, yes, thank -- I'm sorry --
25 thank you. Thank y'all for joining us today, and

1 congratulations.

2 X.1: STATE BOARD REVIEW OF PLSB 20-121 ETHICS HEARING
3 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION - TIFFANY GANT (cont.)

4 MS. DOUGLAS: Good morning. Amy Douglas with
5 PLSB.

6 Today we are here for a hearing, a State Board
7 review of an evidentiary hearing regarding educator
8 Tiffany Gant.

9 I have passed out to those that are present --
10 I'm not sure if the email was forwarded by Ms.
11 Williams this morning. But her attorney, Mr. Valley,
12 is in court in Hernando, Mississippi, and is asking
13 for a one-month continuance on this case. I have not
14 spoken to Ms. Gant this morning, but he did send that
15 email this morning and I spoke to him yesterday.

16 So, whatever pleases the Board.

17 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. Do we have any questions
18 or comments?

19 MS. WOODS: I know this is like the third or
20 fourth time we've continued this. Is there any issue
21 on the part of Ms. Gant? Is she currently teaching
22 or --

23 MS. DOUGLAS: To my knowledge, she is not
24 teaching.

25 Correct?

1 MS. GANT: I am not currently teaching.

2 MS. DOUGLAS: She is not currently teaching.

3 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. So what's the pleasure of
4 the Board?

5 MS. NEWTON: It seems like we've continued it
6 several times. I'm okay with continuing it one more,
7 but I think this would probably be the last time that
8 I would be willing to do that.

9 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. Any other comments or
10 questions?

11 MS. WOODS: I do think since she's hired an
12 attorney we need to let him be here for this.

13 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Yeah, I would agree.
14 So with that, do we have a motion?

15 MS. WOODS: I'll move to continue.

16 CHAIRMAN DEAN: We have a motion by Ms. Woods to
17 continue.

18 MS. NEWTON: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Seconded --

20 MS. CHAMBERS: Could we --

21 CHAIRMAN DEAN: I'm sorry; Ms. Chambers?

22 MS. CHAMBERS: Does that motion include this is
23 the last time we would continue?

24 SECRETARY KEY: I don't think you can do that.
25 I wouldn't advise doing that, anyway. Let me -- I'll

1 just say I mean that could be the opinion and that
2 may be what y'all end up doing, but I would just --
3 this action I would suggest just be a continuance. I
4 think our folks at PLSB can contact Mr. Valley and
5 make sure he understands the opinion or the sense of
6 the Board is that this has been extended several
7 times and it needs to be brought to a conclusion.

8 MS. DOUGLAS: Absolutely.

9 MS. CHAMBERS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Thank you.

11 So we have a motion on the floor by Ms. Woods.

12 Do I have a second?

13 MS. NEWTON: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Seconded by Ms. Newton.

15 All in favor say "aye."

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Any opposed?

18 Seeing none, motion passes.

19 MS. DOUGLAS: I will send him notice for the
20 April 8th State Board meeting.

21 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. Thank you.

22 Thank you, Ms. Gant, for joining us today.

23 Okay.

24 MS. GANT: Thank you for your time.

25 CHAIRMAN DEAN: You're welcome.

1 X.3: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL TO ALLOW ADE DEVELOPED COMPUTER
2 SCIENCE AND COMPUTING YEAR 1 COURSES TO BE TAUGHT TO 8TH
3 GRADERS BY ANY ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

4 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. Next we have
5 Consideration of Approval to Allow ADE Developed
6 Computer Science and Computing Year 1 Courses to be
7 Taught to 8th Graders by any Arkansas Public School
8 District. All right. And we have Mr. Anthony Owen
9 presenting.

10 Good morning, welcome.

11 MR. OWEN: Thank you. Good morning. Anthony
12 Owen, Arkansas Department of Education, Office of
13 Computer Science.

14 I'd like to start just first by saying congrats
15 to Superintendent Poore, a well-deserved honor, and
16 it's been a pleasure for our office to work with him
17 on various projects over the past few years.

18 By the way, I do like Cracker Barrel if anybody
19 wants to take me there.

20 That said, I also want to quickly just let
21 everybody know that we did announce our results of
22 our all-region coding competition last Friday. So if
23 you have not seen those, please go out and look at
24 those. But I want to draw attention to one specific
25 thing. I want to give accolades to all the students.

1 This was the first year that we had a team of one
2 student who made it into the top 17 teams across the
3 state. So we were very impressed by this student,
4 Brayden Pierce, from Bryant High School, who is also
5 an Eagle Scout at Troop 17 Boy Scouts. So I didn't
6 realize that until my wife pointed it out to me a
7 couple of days later; she was like, "You know
8 Brayden." I'm like, "Oh, okay." So by the way, I
9 was not in the scoring; another group does that. I
10 just verify it. So, but congrats to all those teams
11 and they will progress to the state competition on
12 May 1st of this year. So, good luck to each of them.

13 That said, the motion before you that we're
14 requesting today is that -- this is not without
15 precedence. Let me start by saying that. I brought
16 to this board -- not this particular board but to the
17 State Board of Education the first time that we
18 considered Algebra I, for a blanket approval, to be
19 taught at 8th grade across the state without
20 additional requirements placed on the school of
21 filling out paperwork. We do have a process for this
22 where schools can already apply for each of these,
23 and basically they submit the information through our
24 course approval system and we look at it. And pretty
25 much as long as they have a teacher that they've

1 indicated that is going to be a proper license it's
2 approved; there's no real in-depth look at what
3 curriculum they're using or anything of that nature,
4 because we don't have regulatory authority to do
5 that. They have to teach the standards.

6 So what we're asking is that all of our year-1
7 courses that you all approved in December and
8 January, that come into effect this fall, would be
9 automatically approved for any school district to
10 offer to 8th grade students without going through
11 that course approval process.

12 To be completely transparent, this is getting
13 out in front of Senate Bill 107 a little bit. Senate
14 Bill 107 language within that bill says that the ADE
15 will identify at minimum four courses that will --
16 that we will basically do this for, that we will say
17 that can be taught to 8th grade or without additional
18 approval. We just went ahead and selected all nine
19 of our first year courses because, as you recall, our
20 nine first-year courses that we developed all had the
21 same set of standards; they're just taught through
22 various lenses for that first-year course. So it
23 really wouldn't make sense to adopt four and not the
24 other five.

25 And I'm happy to answer any questions.

1 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Okay. Thank you.

2 I'll start with Mr. Lookadoo.

3 MR. LOOKADOO: I don't have any questions, but I
4 think this is good and I'm excited to give those 8th
5 graders that chance to earn that credit. I think
6 that's wonderful. So thank you for your work.

7 MR. OWEN: Thank you. We're excited for this
8 because, one, it will give schools additional
9 flexibility in determining where -- if Senate Bill
10 107 passes and is signed into law, where they
11 establish that high school credit that will be
12 required under that bill. But also, you know, 8th
13 graders -- at earlier and earlier ages, our students
14 are starting to determine their pathways in life.
15 And I -- you know, the Office of Computer Science
16 believes that we should be allowing these students to
17 start determining those high school credits when
18 they're ready for that and when they have enough
19 knowledge to start making those decisions --

20 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Right.

21 MR. OWEN: -- of where they want to go.

22 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Dr. Hill arrived to the
23 meeting at 11:12 p.m.)

24 MR. OWEN: And this provides them additional
25 opportunities for those upper level courses for those

1 students who want to go beyond just that first year.

2 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Yeah. All right.

3 Ms. McFetridge.

4 MS. McFETRIDGE: I just want to say I think this
5 is so exciting and I do appreciate all of your work.

6 MR. OWEN: Thank you.

7 MS. McFETRIDGE: Yeah.

8 MR. OWEN: Happy to do it. Blessed to do it.

9 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Ms. Woods.

10 MS. WOODS: I don't have any questions. I just
11 wanted to tell you I love every time I see you on our
12 agenda. I think everything that you bring to us is
13 very, very neat and I'm thrilled to be a part of it.

14 MR. OWEN: Thank you. Again, I'm very blessed
15 to be where I am and happy to do it.

16 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Ms. Chambers.

17 MS. CHAMBERS: I love to see a technical person
18 celebrated this way. It's awesome. I do love this.
19 I'm dating myself, but they put something like this
20 in place when I was a kid and you could take math and
21 science in 8th grade and you could start, just what
22 you said. And it accelerates the path, actually I
23 think supports all the good -- further supports all
24 the good that we're trying to do in the state. So
25 thanks for what you're doing.

1 MR. OWEN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Dr. Moore.

3 DR. MOORE: Yes, thank you.

4 So do you know -- how many -- do you think there
5 are many middle schools that were prepared to teach
6 these courses? What does that look like?

7 MR. OWEN: So, you know, the licensure will not
8 change. The licensure requirements will still remain
9 that they have --

10 DR. MOORE: Okay.

11 MR. OWEN: -- the teacher has to have the 528
12 computer science licensure, which is actually a 4-12
13 licensure range. We call it the high school
14 licensure, but we've put it that 4-12; that way any
15 teacher could test into it if they can meet that
16 content knowledge Praxis. So they either have to
17 have the 528 of 5016 approval code or 5014 technical
18 permit that has been around for, you know, four or
19 five years now. We just launched a 5013 technical
20 permit, which is open to classified staff members
21 that have at least one year of experience directly
22 with students and they meet certification or training
23 requirements. They can get a technical permit to
24 teach the first-year courses only. So what we see is
25 -- the potential of this is that a school that might

1 have a technology resource teacher or an IT person
2 who has a background in technology but they're at
3 that middle school, they could go out and apply for
4 this technical -- this 5013 technical permit and
5 potentially be allowed to teach that at the middle
6 school level. But the licensure doesn't change for
7 these; the licensure remains the same. To your
8 question directly, because I know I didn't answer
9 exactly what you asked, I think this will not be
10 extremely widely used initially. But I think as our
11 schools start developing more and more pathways and
12 options for students and we start seeing an increase
13 in interest by our communities and need by our
14 industries, we're going to see schools start fitting
15 the needs of what our students have to what they're
16 actually doing within the school. Also, just it
17 should be known that if a middle school does take
18 this option at the 8th school -- 8th grade for a
19 student, that does replace that student's coding
20 block requirement.

21 DR. MOORE: Okay.

22 MR. OWEN: It also replaces those embedded -- CS
23 embedded standards requirement, because all of those
24 standards are already part of those year-one
25 standards. So it's not like we're just adding

1 something to them; they're also able to take
2 something off those students.

3 DR. MOORE: That was actually going to be my
4 next question. Are there pre-requisites, like, you
5 know, could a student with no prior coding class
6 enter these?

7 MR. OWEN: As a year-one course they should be
8 able to. Yes.

9 DR. MOORE: Okay. And I think I -- I mean I
10 think it's a fantastic opportunity. There are
11 sometimes concerns that students enroll in an 8th
12 grade course that will go on their transcript for
13 college without realizing the gravity of that. Do
14 you think this will be communicated well with
15 counselors and those teachers so students understand
16 that going in?

17 MR. OWEN: You know, obviously schools that
18 elect to use this option they're going to have to
19 communicate to their schools the repercussions of
20 this. You know, and we had one superintendent that
21 was really stressing for this being an option for his
22 school, which is part of the reason this legislation
23 was revised to include this. But he's looking at
24 putting in every 8th grade student to meet that
25 graduation requirement. But he said, "We're going to

1 make sure my 8th grade students know if you don't
2 pass in 8th grade you're going to be taking another
3 course in high school" -- which I hope they take more
4 courses in high school anyway, but I just don't hope
5 that they're repeat courses. I think our office and
6 ADE can help, especially in our communication when we
7 put this out over Commissioner's Memo or whatever
8 communication we have, that we stress the importance
9 of reminding students that if they're utilizing this
10 option that it does have high school transcript
11 repercussions.

12 DR. MOORE: Right. And do you foresee a large
13 number of districts placing this on 8th grade for
14 that? I would want that to be a student choice at
15 that point in time, when it's on a transcript.

16 MR. OWEN: We as an office aren't recommending
17 it being mandatory for 8th graders.

18 DR. MOORE: Yeah.

19 MR. OWEN: We are giving options to schools.
20 And I don't know every school district's situation or
21 superintendent's situation, how they're going to
22 manipulate their schedule, but there may -- or
23 "manipulate" is not the best word, but finagle their
24 schedule for students. But we believe that -- one,
25 yes, we believe every student should have at least

1 one Computer Science credit before they graduate, as
2 the Senate Bill 107 outlines. But we also believe
3 that students should have some flexibility and
4 schools have flexibility of how they implement that
5 graduation requirement, which is part of this
6 request.

7 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

8 SECRETARY KEY: And, Dr. Moore, this gives me an
9 opportunity to plug, as we've been plugging for
10 several years now, our Student Success Plans.

11 DR. MOORE: Yeah.

12 SECRETARY KEY: These are decisions that should
13 be made, especially for 8th graders, in conjunction
14 with that development of the Student Success Plan
15 that we expect every student to have by 8th grade.
16 So, you know, those are the conversations that you're
17 talking about that they would need to be made to
18 understand, and the parents or guardians, that, hey,
19 this is -- it's -- this -- it gets real here because
20 you're talking about high school credit and
21 transcripts.

22 I'd just point out --

23 Ms. Chambers, you made a comment about technical
24 and it's very true.

25 But many of you may not know -- Anthony is a

1 good example. Mr. Owen is a good example of somebody
2 who has a great passion and expertise in Computer
3 Science and is obviously pushing this initiative to
4 levels that I don't think anyone really expected in
5 2015, when we started this. But he's also an
6 attorney, you know, he's been to law school, he's
7 been a teacher. You know, so the point is -- and
8 I've tried to explain this to some school leaders
9 that may not understand why we're wanting a required
10 graduation credit for Computer Science. It's because
11 in the world we're in now we want students to be
12 prepared for what they're going into. It doesn't
13 mean we want them all to be computer, you know, app
14 developers, game developers, game designers,
15 programmers. It's -- you know, when you have a house
16 built now and everything in that house can be
17 controlled through an app from your phone, you need
18 to understand at a basic level how some of those
19 things work, especially when it comes to your
20 finances and cyber-security and all those things. I
21 mean, look, it's like we want -- we don't expect all
22 of our students to be experts in math when they
23 graduate, but we do expect them to have a basic level
24 of understanding in those math concepts that we've
25 outlined as a state. The same -- and that's the

1 concept here, the Governor's idea on computer
2 science; it's giving them that basic ground level
3 understanding and it is flexibility. So providing
4 this for 8th graders, this flexibility that is, as
5 Anthony said, not without precedent. But we see it
6 as opportunity though too with 400 to 800 million
7 jobs that will be going away due to automation over
8 the next decade or so, according to McKinsey; you
9 know, what are those -- how are those -- those jobs
10 are going away, but they will be replaced. What will
11 they be replaced with, and who will the workers be,
12 and what skills will they need to replace the workers
13 that are, you know, are moving out. And it's this
14 type of thing. It's -- you know, you look at this
15 list and -- data science, cyber-security, networking,
16 robotics, mobile app development. You know, those
17 are the things that our young people need to have
18 that understanding of and then maybe generate the
19 interest in moving on into the deeper learnings in
20 those fields.

21 MR. OWEN: Thank you, Secretary. Well said.

22 MS. NEWTON: Congratulations.

23 MR. OWEN: Thank you, Ma'am.

24 MS. NEWTON: I know it's been a lot of work on
25 your part and it's exciting for our state.

1 One of the things that I've thought about all
2 through this is the demand for Computer Science
3 teachers is probably through the roof in districts;
4 you know, there's just not enough people to go
5 around. And so one of the things that you said just
6 a few minutes ago -- that is one of my husband's
7 favorite sayings is "first I ever heard of that" --
8 is that 5013 technical permit. And that's exciting
9 to me because I think that most districts have an IT
10 person; you know, there's very few districts that
11 don't have somebody on staff. And so that's kind of
12 exciting that that would open that door for a
13 district to be able to, you know, have someone on
14 staff to be able to get these classes taught.

15 My question though is are you seeing much --
16 because the teachers are in such high demand -- and I
17 know it's not till next year, so you may not even
18 know yet -- is there much sharing between districts
19 of a teacher? You know, there's one teacher and
20 they're in such high demand maybe two or three
21 districts might go together and share that teacher.
22 Are you seeing any of that?

23 MR. OWEN: So we have not seen empirical
24 evidence of that yet. We have had discussions with
25 various schools that have inquired if that's an

1 option. Of course, that remains an option for them.
2 The legislation does require the school district to
3 employ a teacher as a district employee, a certified
4 teacher. But that doesn't have to be their only
5 duty; that doesn't have to be their only
6 certification; and it doesn't also say they have to
7 be only an employee of that district.

8 MS. NEWTON: Right.

9 MR. OWEN: But they have to employ a certified
10 CS teacher. I think those are things that as Ms.
11 Freno's team and our office and the Secretary's
12 office works through rule promulgation, once this
13 legislation -- if it's passed, those are the types of
14 questions that we're going to need to clearly outline
15 what that means, what -- and, of course, those rules
16 I'm pretty sure have to come back to y'all for
17 consideration at some point. But those are things
18 that we're already talking about internally,
19 considering what this looks like within a school. We
20 don't want this to be an extreme burden on any
21 school. This needs to be looked at as an opportunity
22 for our --

23 MS. NEWTON: Right.

24 MR. OWEN: -- for all of our students and all of
25 our schools. And there was one Senator -- and I

1 apologize for not remembering his name -- but I was
2 watching the Senate Bill 107 vote -- and I think
3 Secretary may reference this here in a second -- but
4 he held this booklet up and he turned to the page
5 that shows a discrepancy between male and female
6 enrollment. Well, we're at 28%. And he asked
7 Senator English, he said, "Senator English, I'm
8 looking at this and this is saying that only 28% of
9 our enrollment at a high school level is female. Is
10 that not a perfect reason of why we should pass this
11 bill?" And I thought that was the best question that
12 was asked all day because it once again demonstrates
13 that CS is an equalizer for our students, but we have
14 the responsibility in making sure that they have
15 equal access to it --

16 MS. NEWTON: Right.

17 MR. OWEN: -- across the board.

18 MS. NEWTON: Yeah. And on the communication
19 front, what kind of communication are you doing to
20 districts and teachers and getting it down to their
21 level on the different avenues for certification?
22 And I'm sure there's support at the state level for
23 them for -- sometimes there's financial barriers and
24 different things. What kind of communications are
25 you doing on that level?

1 MR. OWEN: So our team -- you know, we have the
2 team of nine CS specialists that I can't brag on them
3 enough because without them this initiative -- you
4 know, it's not me; it's -- you know, it's really the
5 team that has got out there and moved us from around
6 about 50 certified teachers in 2015 to over 550 now
7 certified teachers across Arkansas. And it's that
8 team that continues to build those numbers. We're
9 looking at our summer training this summer, which we
10 provide free of charge to teachers; we don't charge
11 anything for any of the training. If an educational
12 consortium has a fee, we reimburse that educational
13 consortium so the school is not even having to pay
14 them for that. We have three of those high school
15 training. And I'm pretty sure I can go ahead and
16 speak to this a little bit because I think the
17 Secretary has mentioned it previously. The Secretary
18 has authorized funding, SR-2 funding to establish a
19 computer science educator academy. We're preparing
20 -- we're finalizing the RFP and communications that
21 will go out about that within the next couple weeks.
22 We are -- we will be looking for a post-secondary
23 partner to award post-secondary graduate credit for
24 teachers that go through that. That will be a free
25 resource. Now we're looking at whether we can pay

1 travel and things of that nature, but the training
2 itself is going to be free. The other thing that my
3 team did, we were the first unit that I'm aware of
4 last year that shifted all of our trainings to an
5 online model and so we were able to reach teachers
6 across the state where they were. This summer we are
7 switching back to some face-to-face. But instead of
8 going to every single co-op across the state and
9 providing every training face-to-face to everyone,
10 we're picking different areas and then we're making
11 hybrid instructional models. So we'll have face-to-
12 face with a group that is appropriate under Covid
13 guidelines, whatever they may be at that point. And
14 then we will provide that training with support staff
15 on the Zoom platform for people who can't be there
16 face-to-face, maybe because they have health issues
17 or just travel or whatever. So our office is really
18 responsive to trying to meet teachers where they are
19 and not let finance be a barrier to teachers in any
20 form or fashion.

21 MS. NEWTON: That's great. Thank you. Thank
22 you.

23 DR. HILL: I just want to echo everybody else
24 and just let you know anything that we can do to help
25 with the digital divide in the underserved community

1 through the churches or whatever please feel free to
2 call on our support. I do recognize that is an issue
3 as we're out in what I do daily in the underserved
4 communities. It's just not putting -- it's just not
5 getting deliverables there but helping support to
6 execute deliverables, you know, with the technology.
7 So anything that I can do to assist anywhere in the
8 state please feel free to call on me.

9 MR. OWEN: Thank you, sir.

10 And I will mention on that thread, because I did
11 mention it earlier about the teacher academy, we are
12 part of that. And all the details haven't been
13 finalized but we are allowing priority application
14 status to areas with the most need --

15 CHAIRMAN DEAN: That's great.

16 MR. OWEN: -- and also both -- and needing an
17 individual or individuals to teach in that area, but
18 also the most needs socio-economically.

19 DR. HILL: I echo what the Secretary mentioned
20 because oftentimes even the communities don't
21 understand the strategic plan, as he mentioned the
22 importance. And that's why sometimes going through
23 the churches and other educational entities that's
24 there every week, you know, rather than just once a
25 semester to make those announcements to re-emphasize

1 the goal and objective of what this technology
2 enhancement is going to do for their children long-
3 term. I think that creates a sustainability model to
4 support your goals to those underserved communities.
5 So I appreciate that. And anything that we can do,
6 please let us know.

7 MR. OWEN: Thank you, Dr. Hill. And I would
8 love to have a follow-up conversation with you
9 because we're always looking at ways to reach our
10 parents and students more directly.

11 One more thing before whatever happens, I want
12 to give special thanks to Ms. Lori Freno. There were
13 a lot of people that worked on the Computer Science
14 Advancement Act legislation. The Secretary mentioned
15 that I am a lawyer, but they call it "practicing law"
16 for a reason and I don't get to practice a whole lot.
17 But Ms. Freno has been a great resource and honestly
18 a great colleague in a lot of this work that we do,
19 because I'm ignorant on a lot of stuff. I'm a Bar
20 certified attorney; I'm a member of the Arkansas Bar
21 and have been for five years. But because I'm not in
22 a position that practices on a regular basis there's
23 a lot of it that I'm ignorant about. So I just want
24 to say thank-you to Ms. Freno for her support and her
25 helping guide me through some of this.

1 MS. FRENO: Thank you. It was a pleasure to be
2 involved in all of this, and I had a good time.

3 CHAIRMAN DEAN: We are definitely fortunate to
4 have Ms. Freno as part of the team here. We
5 appreciate her expertise and her keen eye. So it's
6 definitely good to have her on that project as well.

7 And I just want to say I just think this is --
8 this is -- also that we are, as you said before,
9 meeting people where they are. As we're talking
10 about meeting the teachers where they are, this is an
11 opportunity to meet students where they are. As a
12 parent of four, you realize that your students, your
13 kids, they all have different levels of where they
14 are and different talents and skills and things that
15 they gravitate more to. So I think this is just an
16 opportunity for students to succeed. It's just
17 another opportunity to meet children where they are
18 for those that are ready to jump in at 8th grade and
19 get those courses out of the way, because that's just
20 something that they can do, rather than holding them
21 back and making them wait as other students would.
22 We are giving them the opportunity to succeed at an
23 earlier age and at an earlier grade.

24 So I appreciate all the work that has gone into
25 it and looking forward to the dividends and the

1 benefits that our state will get from this. So thank
2 you so much to the team, and to you as well.

3 MR. OWEN: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DEAN: And with that, if we don't have
5 any other questions or comments then I will look for
6 a motion.

7 MS. CHAMBERS: I would move to approve the
8 computing year-one courses to be taught to 8th
9 graders.

10 And, Anthony, you'll always be technical to me.

11 MR. OWEN: Thank you, Ma'am. Happy to be so. I
12 don't care what you call me as long as you call me.

13 CHAIRMAN DEAN: All right. So we have a motion
14 by Ms. Chambers.

15 MS. McFETRIDGE: Second.

16 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Seconded by Ms. McFetridge,
17 motion to approve.

18 So all in favor say "aye."

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Any opposed?

21 Seeing none, motion passes.

22 Congratulations and thank you, Mr. Owen.

23 MR. OWEN: Thank y'all so much. Have a blessed
24 day.

25 CHAIRMAN DEAN: You too.

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Well, with that, lunch is ready. So what we'll do is we'll stop, take a break, and we will meet back here at 1:00 and move on to our second part of our action agenda. So we'll convene until 1:00.

(The Action Agenda was concluded at 11:33 a.m.)

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