

**In The Matter Of:**  
*ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION*  
*STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION*

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*April 13, 2017*

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*Sharon Hill Court Reporting*  
*4021 Robinwood Cr.*  
*Bryant, AR 72022*  
*(501) 847-0510*

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**Min-U-Script® with Word Index**

BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 13, 2017  
10:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS:

Ms. Mireya Reith	Chairman
Dr. Jay Barth	Vice Chairman
Ms. Diane Zook	Board Member
Mr. Joe Black	Board Member
Ms. Charisse Dean	Board Member
Ms. Ouida Newton	Board Member
Dr. Fitzgerald Hill	Board Member

ALSO APPEARING:

Mr. Johnny Key	Commissioner of Education
Ms. Meghan Ables	Teacher of the Year/ Non-Voting Member

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

Ms. Lori Freno	ADE General Counsel
Ms. Courtney Salas-Ford	ADE Deputy General Counsel
Ms. Jennifer Davis	ADE Staff Attorney

ADE Auditorium  
#4 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR

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A-5: McGEHEE SCHOOL DISTRICT

EXHIBIT ONE (1)  
Waivers Requested and Rationale

B-3: WAIVER REQUEST - GALE RICHMOND

EXHIBIT ONE (1)  
PLSB File

B-4: LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT

EXHIBIT ONE (1)  
Act 930 2017-18 Timeline

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P R O C E E D I N G S

A-1: RESOLUTION - MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

MR. KAMINAR: Madam Chair, Commissioner Key, let me go ahead and take just a moment to read the Resolution and then present it to you for approval and signature:

WHEREAS, More than 10,000 Arkansans exhibit profound courage and selflessness by serving in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, The school age children of these families attend public schools in the state of Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, Military families live and work in every county in the state of Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, Military children face unique challenges related to military transitions and parental deployment; and

WHEREAS, Military children and their families serve as an essential source of support and encouragement for armed service members; and

WHEREAS, Military children should be acknowledged for the sacrifices they make and celebrated for the courage they display

1 as the children of our nation's armed  
2 service members; and

3 WHEREAS, The Arkansas State Council  
4 for the Interstate Compact on Educational  
5 Opportunities for Military Children, the  
6 Department of Defense, and various other  
7 organizations nationwide recognize April  
8 as the Month of the Military Child;

9 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT  
10 The Arkansas State Board of Education  
11 recognizes and salutes military children by  
12 recognizing April 2017 as the Month of the  
13 Military Child.

14 Madam Chair, Commissioner Key, I have the  
15 Resolution right here.

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Do you have a pen?

17 MR. KAMINAR: I do.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. Perfect. Thank  
19 you.

20 MS. COFFMAN: We need a motion.

21 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes.

22 And if I could kindly ask the Board for a motion  
23 in regards to this Resolution?

24 MS. ZOOK: So moved.

25 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Do I have a second?

1 MS. DEAN: Second.

2 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Motion made by Ms. Zook,  
3 seconded by Ms. Dean. All in favor?

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

6 Motion carries unanimously. Thank you so much.  
7 And if we could give applause as well to our  
8 families and to their children.

9 [APPLAUSE]

10 MR. KAMINAR: Thank you, Madam Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you so much. We  
12 appreciate the opportunity.

13 MR. KAMINAR: Thank you, Madam Chair,  
14 Commissioner Key. And, Military Families, thank you  
15 for taking time out of your schedules today to come  
16 and be with us.

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you again. Thank you  
18 to all. And I hope you're able to enjoy the rest of  
19 your day and hopefully have some family time  
20 together. Again, thank you, not just for your  
21 service but for what you represent for our schools  
22 and our country.

23 And so in order to give the families a moment to  
24 transition out, I'm wondering if we should go ahead  
25 and take just a very brief break right now -- or how

1 are our colleagues feeling this morning?

2 Then we'll just give them momentarily a moment  
3 to move as we move on with the action agenda item.

4 A-2: CONSIDERATION OF ADE RECOMMENDATION OF PROBATIONARY  
5 STATUS FOR LEE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL AND LEE COUNTY SCHOOL  
6 DISTRICT

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: With that, I'll go ahead and  
8 ask Mr. Morris to come forward as we move on to  
9 Action Agenda Item A-2 and the Consideration of the  
10 Arkansas Department of Education's Recommendation of  
11 Probationary Status for Lee County High School and  
12 Lee County School District. Mr. Morris, you are  
13 recognized.

14 MR. MORRIS: Good morning. Willie Morris,  
15 Program Manager for the Standards Monitoring Unit.

16 As you recall, we were here before to talk about  
17 the situation in Lee County and at that time there  
18 were several issues that hadn't been resolved at Lee  
19 County. Since then, Lee County has resolved most of  
20 the issues that we found when we went to monitor in  
21 December. The only two remaining items that we had  
22 left for Lee County was the fact that they did not  
23 employ a counselor the first semester and that's a  
24 potential probationary issue; the other issue that  
25 they had left was the fact that they did not teach



1 all of the 38 units. They still had outstanding the  
2 fact that they did not teach a half-unit of drama and  
3 half-unit of social studies at the time that we sent  
4 this in to you. Since then, they have resolved the  
5 drama issue but the half-unit of social studies is  
6 still outstanding. They also have employed or  
7 transitioned one of their teachers into -- it's my  
8 understanding that they moved a teacher, English  
9 teacher, into the counselor's position the second  
10 semester; however, that did not resolve the issue of  
11 not having a counselor first semester.

12 So we're here asking for your consideration for  
13 probationary consideration for Lee County School  
14 District and Lee County High School.

15 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. And so with that  
16 I do have a couple of public comment items, but I  
17 also would entertain questions from the Board prior  
18 to public comment. Any questions for Mr. Morris?

19 Okay. Then with that I do need a motion from  
20 the Board in regards to hearing public comment, and  
21 we do have two individuals signed up. I believe this  
22 says a Mr. Walton and Mr. Williams to speak. If the  
23 Board so wishes to hear public comment we do need a  
24 motion to do so.

25 MS. DEAN: I move to hear public comment.

1 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Do I have a second?

2 MR. BLACK: Second.

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Motion made by Ms. Dean,  
4 seconded by Mr. Black. All in favor?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

7 Motion carries unanimously.

8 So with that, thank you, Mr. Morris; at this  
9 time we'll hear public comment and we may have some  
10 additional questions for you at that time.

11 Mr. Walton, you are recognized. And if you  
12 could kindly say your name and any --

13 MR. WALTON: Mr. Williams will go --

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- title or affiliation for  
15 the record and our court reporter.

16 MR. WALTON: I'll yield to Mr. Williams first.  
17 Is that all right?

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Sorry. Thank you.  
19 Yes, Mr. Williams.

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you. Wayne  
21 Williams, president of Lee County School Board.

22 You know, we're here not to deny that we didn't  
23 have a counselor first semester, but we're working at  
24 it. We're solving the problems. And, you know, I  
25 want to point out that, you know, last month we were

1 accused of being dysfunctional. Two of us are here  
2 of the dysfunctional board members. So we're working  
3 to solve our problem in Lee County, local issues.

4 And so we do have issues with even the credits,  
5 and I think with working with Mr. Hughes that we've  
6 solved our credit issue. And I know we went through  
7 the compliance part of it and it showed that we're  
8 sure that we're in compliance with the credits first  
9 semester, because I know I checked off on all those  
10 and it asked those questions. So I think we're  
11 offering all of the 38 units. It ought to be just  
12 looked at a little closer.

13 And then as far as the counselor, we could've  
14 hired a counselor first semester; we just didn't do  
15 it because of other problems. And I think that's  
16 basically mostly a superintendent problem, our not  
17 being able to find a counselor.

18 So that's where we stand now. And do you have a  
19 question of me before I turn it over to Mr. Walton?

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Since this is public comment  
21 we'll go ahead and hear from Mr. Walton --

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- and then we'll open it up  
24 to questions or conversation from the Board. Thank  
25 you, Mr. Williams.

1 Mr. Walton, you're recognized.

2 MR. WALTON: Yes. Patrick Walton, Lee County  
3 School District.

4 The question was asked as it relates to the  
5 counselor. Now we have tried to hire a counselor; we  
6 went through all of the procedures to hire a  
7 counselor. The problem that we had as a board -- and  
8 I think Mr. Williams -- I don't understand why he  
9 didn't want to go in detail about it, but we had a --  
10 we have a certified English teacher, okay, and we  
11 didn't want to move -- for the kids' sake, we didn't  
12 want to move -- we didn't see the need to move a  
13 certified teacher out of the classroom to put them in  
14 the counselor position. We have retired teachers  
15 that could have -- retired counselors that could have  
16 filled those positions. When they came for the  
17 audit, the standards audit, it was asked I believe by  
18 Dr. Wilde to the superintendent and the high school  
19 principal why did they not put a substitute in the  
20 counselor position. As the audit says, they failed  
21 to answer the question. Okay. We could've solved  
22 this and wouldn't be here.

23 We don't have a problem in Lee County, we really  
24 don't. We have a communication problem with the  
25 board and the superintendent. I work federal -- I

1 work state and I work federal, but across the board  
2 every state organization I ever -- I know about, any  
3 time a boss gives a directive to a superintendent --  
4 I mean, to a subordinate and they refuse to do it or  
5 tell you they're not going to do it, it's called  
6 insubordination. Okay. Now I can say as a board we  
7 failed to act and do what we should have done when we  
8 was -- when insubordination took place, okay, as far  
9 as back to the counselor position. Well, we're still  
10 on this now. I wrote some notes down; I don't want  
11 to go off -- get off course or whatever. That  
12 English class was left -- had been left open and it's  
13 left open now to Virtual Arkansas. Some kids learn  
14 at -- all kids learn at different levels. When you  
15 take a kid -- I'm not saying that because you're in  
16 the Delta you can't learn. Okay. We have people  
17 that are successful that comes from Lee County.

18 Lee County does a good job at what we do. Okay.  
19 But we as a board are just trying to govern; we're  
20 not trying to get involved in the day-to-day  
21 operations. We have our jobs, many different jobs  
22 and things of that nature, but order is just order.  
23 And we tried to avoid this, but I believe that it's  
24 just a tactic -- a tactic for the current  
25 administration for this to happen. Okay. And that's

1 just -- that's plain and simple. There's no other  
2 way I can say it. I mean, if we have to be put on  
3 probation by Standards -- by the Board, I mean, then  
4 we have to do that and we go and correct it. As a  
5 board, we have done what we need to do. If we have a  
6 superintendent, as any board, that's not doing what's  
7 best for the kids -- because after all, everybody in  
8 the district is there for the kids -- okay -- then we  
9 find someone else to do it, pointblank, and we've  
10 done that. Not to get off the counselor, but we've  
11 done that. On June 30th, we've already said that the  
12 superintendent's contract won't be renewed. Okay.

13 I'm trying to stay focused on the standards  
14 issue. Maybe, you know, next year -- I know we can,  
15 we can get this taken care of. I'm asking that you  
16 not put us on probation.

17 One other thing -- I wrote my notes and I want  
18 to stick to my notes -- we gave a directive to the  
19 superintendent to get this done after Standards came  
20 down, "Get this taken care of." We said, "Put a  
21 substitute" -- she was given a directive. Okay. The  
22 superintendent was given a directive to give -- to  
23 put a substitute in that position; no avail. Okay.  
24 We -- going back to what I said previously, we moved  
25 an English teacher out that was needed.

1           And I'm going to tell you something else that  
2           happened from there, and then I won't go too long.  
3           We had kids that was ready for graduation taking a  
4           course -- was it transitional English -- and it  
5           wasn't even counting towards graduation. Now those  
6           kids are double-blocked, okay, taking English just to  
7           graduate one semester.

8           Okay. What we have in Lee County is a  
9           management problem; that's what we have. And this  
10          board now, it's not that we're a problem board; it's  
11          that we believe in accountability. And the lack of  
12          -- the board previous, before us, was just a  
13          rubberstamp board, and that's not what we have right  
14          now. I think Mr. -- Attorney Lewellen told you that  
15          he had over 200 signatures on a petition. That don't  
16          represent Lee County. Okay. Marianna has 3,000  
17          people in it, so that's just 200 people. Even with  
18          the motion that was -- the legal matter that took  
19          place, the injunction, I'm not going to call names  
20          but the person that filed the injunction -- this is  
21          my second term on the school board. Okay. The  
22          person that filed the injunction is the person that I  
23          beat in the election. The first year I was  
24          appointed, the second year I was beat. Okay. I  
25          mean, the second year I won over the person that

1 filed the injunction. So it's a lot of personal  
2 things going on. But what we need to stick -- what  
3 the board is trying to do is what every board should  
4 be doing: oversight, okay, accountability. And if I  
5 was part of the audit or had anything to do with the  
6 audit that came down, even the last audit that came  
7 down, that came out like two weeks ago, I'd be trying  
8 to get rid of the board too. I would be saying  
9 negative things about the board. Take a look at it.  
10 It's a lot of things that's going on in Lee County  
11 that's going to go beyond the board. I'm talking  
12 about all monies sent to the district. All monies  
13 sent to the district, okay, is for the children,  
14 whether it's federal funds -- even funds that's sent  
15 to the district to pay salaries, okay, that's for --  
16 it's for the children because the teachers are there  
17 for the children. Everybody should be there for the  
18 children. We owe the taxpayers accountability.  
19 Okay. We owe the children accountability. That's  
20 what we're there for, not the personal gain.

21 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Mr. Walton.  
22 Normally we give three minutes for this, but we did  
23 want to give you an opportunity. And there may be  
24 some additional opportunity for following up,  
25 depending on the questions on the Board.



1 MR. WALTON: I have one other thing to say that  
2 was said --

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: You could make a final  
4 comment.

5 MR. WALTON: And I'll make it quick.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: One final comment.

7 MR. WALTON: We had a situation on the board  
8 where we hired a basketball coach. Okay. The  
9 basketball coach was hired as an interim coach. I  
10 made the mistake of amending the superintendent's  
11 recommendation. Okay. Can't do that. I went back  
12 and asked the superintendent, "Have we made a  
13 mistake?" Because what we did, we altered the  
14 stipend; we cut it in half because we were under the  
15 impression that, hey, look, if he started at the  
16 beginning of the year you pro-rate. If you move into  
17 an apartment in the middle of the month you don't get  
18 -- you don't pay the whole rent. Okay. So we  
19 thought we could do that. Now school law is much  
20 different and everything else. Okay. So I was told  
21 by somebody that I love and respect, "Hey, look, you  
22 was wrong by amending the recommendation of the  
23 superintendent." So I went back because, regardless  
24 of how I feel about anybody as a person, business is  
25 business and right is right and wrong is wrong. So

1 we tried to make it right by asking the  
2 superintendent to bring it back. Didn't do so. But  
3 yet, they stand in front of you last meeting and tell  
4 you that we did it. They never -- they failed to  
5 tell you that we tried to correct it. So it's bigger  
6 than what it appears now. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Mr. Walton.

8 Well, it seems the opportunity for us, Board, is  
9 in regards specifically to action on probation. But  
10 I did want to entertain if there was any questions or  
11 broader discussion that any board colleagues wanted  
12 to bring up in regards to the matter of Lee County or  
13 if anyone from the Department would like to elaborate  
14 on sort of what happens from here?

15 COMMISSIONER: That's --

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Commissioner.

17 COMMISSIONER KEY: That's the opening. I think  
18 if Ms. Freno or Ms. Barnes or Mr. Harvey --

19 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Mr. Walton.

20 COMMISSIONER KEY: -- could come and just lay  
21 out -- I mean, a copy of the statute is in your  
22 packet. And so if you want a legal or a Standards  
23 opinion of next steps and path forward they can  
24 address those for you.

25 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. If both of you

1 could speak we would appreciate it.

2 MR. HARVEY: Elbert Harvey, Public School  
3 Accountability.

4 Yes, from the Standards standpoint we've made a  
5 recommendation that they be placed on probation for  
6 the two issues: one, for not maintaining a counselor  
7 to maintain the ratio at the district level, which is  
8 the district probationary offense; the second offense  
9 would be not teaching the required 38 courses, which  
10 was documented by our onsite visit, and that would be  
11 a probationary violation at a building level,  
12 specifically the high school. So we'd be asking the  
13 Board to place the district on probation for the  
14 counselor and the building, the high school, on  
15 probation for not teaching the required 38.

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. And then from a  
17 legal perspective, Ms. Freno?

18 MS. FRENO: Madam Chair, Lori Freno, Arkansas  
19 Department of Education.

20 The school district effectively has already been  
21 placed on probationary status because they did not  
22 correct within the timeframe that they had. The  
23 school district had the opportunity to file an appeal  
24 of the finding of violation of Standards for  
25 Accreditation but did not do so. So at this point it

1 is just for the State Board to confirm if they feel  
2 there's evidence that there was a probationary  
3 violation, and at that point it could take the  
4 actions, or none of the actions, set forth in the  
5 law.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay.

7 MS. ZOOK: Can you --

8 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes, Ms. Zook.

9 MS. ZOOK: Can you give us the reference in the  
10 law or is that part of the attachment link?

11 MS. FRENO: That, Ms. Zook, is a part of the  
12 package that you have received.

13 MS. ZOOK: Okay.

14 MS. FRENO: And that is Section 6-15-207. If  
15 you look at Section A of that it discusses what  
16 happens in the first year that a school district is  
17 placed in probationary status. And the State Board  
18 does not have to take any action. The State Board  
19 may take action; it does not have to take any. If  
20 you go to B that refers to what the State Board shall  
21 do, must do in the second year of a probationary  
22 status. We're not there yet, so still there is that  
23 level -- there's the discretion as provided in A.  
24 And then if you look to see, those are things that  
25 the State Board can do --

1 MS. ZOOK: Okay.

2 MS. FRENO: -- if it chooses to do so.

3 MS. ZOOK: And it's my understanding that the  
4 recommendation is that we vote to either put them in  
5 probation -- I mean, affirm that they're in  
6 probation, or what is the -- is there another option  
7 or is that it?

8 MS. FRENO: Well, if this board finds that there  
9 was sufficient evidence presented that they -- that  
10 the school district did violate the Standards for  
11 Accreditation it's for this board to uphold the  
12 probationary status.

13 MS. ZOOK: Okay. Thank you.

14 MS. FRENO: Yes.

15 MS. ZOOK: That helps.

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And, Ms. Freno, before you  
17 walk away, is the Department at this time  
18 recommending any of these additional actions be taken  
19 beyond affirmation of the probationary status?

20 MS. FRENO: No, Madam Chair, it is not.

21 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Freno.

22 So with that, yes, Dr. Barth.

23 DR. BARTH: Just a question for Mr. Harvey. In  
24 recent years was there one previous time when the  
25 district was on probation for Standards for

1 Accreditation?

2 MR. HARVEY: I would have to go back and pull  
3 documentation to verify. But from my recollection,  
4 yes, they have been in probation status before.

5 DR. BARTH: And probably three years ago, two or  
6 three years ago, is that the --

7 MR. HARVEY: Yes. That would've been within the  
8 last three to four years.

9 DR. BARTH: Okay. Thanks.

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes, Ms. Newton.

11 MS. FRENO: And, Dr. Barth, if I may, just for  
12 clarification, the Section B, the second year -- and  
13 maybe I'm reading into your question -- but that's  
14 only consecutive years.

15 DR. BARTH: Yeah, understood. I was just trying  
16 to get some kind of broader history of issues related  
17 to Standards for Accreditation in this district, and  
18 I recognize it's not consecutive years. But there is  
19 some -- there has been some pattern of challenges in  
20 this arena, not the same issues but Standards for  
21 Accreditation issues; right?

22 MS. FRENO: I just wanted to make sure that --  
23 to clarify that, and obviously it didn't need to be  
24 clarified. Thank you.

25 DR. BARTH: Thank you. I appreciate it.

1                   CHAIRPERSON REITH: And I -- oh, sorry. Yes,  
2 Ms. Newton and then I'll have a question. No, please  
3 go ahead, Ms. Newton.

4                   MS. NEWTON: My question was for Ms. Freno. I  
5 know this year it's a "may," but then once we hit the  
6 second year it becomes a "shall." What would the  
7 date of the second year, when would that start?  
8 Would that start at this time next year or would that  
9 be the next school year or --

10                  MS. FRENO: That's a Mr. Harvey question.

11                  MS. NEWTON: Oh, okay. Sorry.

12                  MR. HARVEY: That would be something we would  
13 need a little deeper research. Typically, it has  
14 been one cycle of a school year and it's typically  
15 the same probationary violation. But it could be --  
16 as we look at the standard, if they're in violation  
17 of the standard again at the beginning of the school  
18 year next year, they could be found in violation for  
19 consecutive violations.

20                  MS. NEWTON: So at the beginning of the school  
21 year, if we still had problems in either one of these  
22 two areas, then we would move from the "may" to the  
23 "shall" of the -- of those -- of that list?

24                  MR. HARVEY: Yes, ma'am. It's very possible  
25 that it could move into that area. And it would be

1 not specifically -- it would be a curriculum issue,  
2 which would be under the standards outlined as  
3 curriculum; not specific classes, but the overall 38  
4 required or within the hiring of personnel, which is  
5 an area where the violation would be.

6 MS. NEWTON: So it wouldn't have to be  
7 specifically a counselor; it could be any --

8 MR. HARVEY: Yes, ma'am. It could be a  
9 superintendent, it could be a principal, it could be  
10 any of those denoted within that section -- school  
11 nurse, librarian. Yes, ma'am.

12 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. I guess if I may  
13 ask a question; then, Ms. Zook, I'll recognize you.  
14 I am trying to get at the tensions here, and I  
15 apologize. I know I missed some of our meeting last  
16 month where this was first addressed due to my  
17 illness. And for me it's the question here -- it  
18 seems like the tension of the role of who might be at  
19 fault, board versus superintendent. Or I guess I'm  
20 trying to grapple with the testimony that we've heard  
21 here today. But the evidence that this actually  
22 happened, that the failure in regards to both a  
23 counselor and the specific course -- courses, that  
24 remains the same; correct? And so I guess I just  
25 wonder if it affects roles or if the information that



1 we've been given here today is more in the realm of  
2 the other types of actions that we might take. But  
3 the evidence remains the same; I mean, there's no way  
4 around it, correct? I mean, at least as the  
5 Department has found or been able to validate these  
6 positions and those courses were not --

7 MR. HARVEY: Yes. Based upon the review, at the  
8 time of the review, that's the items that we found.  
9 And there was not a correction submitted inside the  
10 window to offer that opportunity to verify that we  
11 may have viewed something incorrectly.

12 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Regardless of who may  
13 -- and I know right now there seems to be some  
14 dissention in that, regardless of who may be at fault  
15 in regards to this; right?

16 MR. HARVEY: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay.

18 MR. HARVEY: We just made a determination that  
19 these were the facts upon the visit and they are  
20 probationary violations.

21 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Thank you.

22 Yes, Ms. Zook.

23 MS. ZOOK: When you say "next year," are you  
24 talking about the October 1 date or are you talking  
25 about when school starts? I guess my concern is

1 obviously a district having to be in probation, but  
2 my concern also are students who went an entire year  
3 without the assistance of a counselor and no  
4 opportunity for that social studies. So, you know,  
5 while the adults are going back and forth, the kids  
6 are lost and we've lost sight of the kids.  
7 Regardless of when people say "I'm doing it for the  
8 kids," the fact is the kids are the ones that didn't  
9 have the counselor and didn't have opportunity for  
10 that .5 credit in social studies. So I guess my real  
11 question is that -- is it the October 1st or is it  
12 the beginning of the year?

13 MS. BARNES: Good morning. Annette Barnes,  
14 Assistant Commissioner, Public School Accountability.

15 There are a number of factors that are at play  
16 here, and we certainly don't want to confuse any of  
17 it. It has been verified that the infractions  
18 occurred. They did not correct those within the  
19 timelines that are identified within the document  
20 that governs the accreditation of public schools and  
21 school districts. One of those, in particular, has  
22 to do with being district probation. They have  
23 timelines of being corrected by the first day of the  
24 next academic semester. It wasn't corrected by the  
25 next day of the academic semester. The ADE has made

1 the recommendation for the probations. The Board has  
2 basically voted on that. And so it is advisable that  
3 in order to address academic natures that they should  
4 -- the district must have these corrected within that  
5 timeframe; otherwise, at that point it becomes  
6 failure to correct a probationary violation and it's  
7 another -- it's the second year, two consecutive  
8 years. It could go farther than that.

9 So based on what the members have been stating  
10 to us about the efforts and the steps that have taken  
11 place we are going to continue to work with the  
12 district, as we always have, in order to meet the  
13 needs of students, in order to insure that students  
14 have the opportunity to receive the academic credits  
15 in order to be prepared for graduation on time. But  
16 at this particular stage in this conversation, if we  
17 continue it along the vein that it's going right now  
18 it becomes very subjective because it steps outside  
19 the confines of what is actually governing the course  
20 of action that we're taking today.

21 MS. ZOOK: Okay. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Barnes.

23 Yes. Any additional questions from the Board?  
24 Otherwise, I'll entertain a motion.

25 Ms. Newton.

1 MS. NEWTON: I just had one more question and I  
2 think this would be for Mr. Williams, the school  
3 board member. One of the things that Mr. Harvey said  
4 was that you were put on probation for was a lack of  
5 personnel. And I know that this is a time when  
6 districts are starting to look to hire teachers and  
7 counselors and librarians, and you've got to hire a  
8 superintendent. How are you going to approach this  
9 hiring season? And have you already started looking  
10 for a superintendent for the next year?

11 MR. WILLIAMS: Well, that's the issue. You  
12 know, we had to go out and get another lawyer when  
13 our lawyer couldn't represent us anymore with the  
14 problem we had, so that's -- with the injunction  
15 going on. I'm planning Tuesday night at the board  
16 meeting to say, "Start posting those vacancies  
17 because we need to get it done now." Because we're  
18 being held up with -- to look for a superintendent, a  
19 counselor, certified teachers in all areas, and  
20 that's a problem right now.

21 MS. NEWTON: So do you have any sort of a plan?

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Ma'am?

23 MS. NEWTON: Do you have any sort of a plan?

24 MR. WILLIAMS: A plan -- well, what we do, I  
25 suggest we post it in all the current newspapers, you

1 know, the Arkansas Democrat Gazette Democrat [sic],  
2 the papers in the other states around us. Also, you  
3 know, put it on the internet website. So we need to  
4 get it out there, saying we need those teachers.  
5 And, you know, Teacher Corp, Americorp, and TFA. So  
6 we've got to get the word out that we need teachers,  
7 and it's hard to get teachers in the Delta and it's  
8 hard to lose certified teachers, you know, or  
9 noncertified. Because talking to Dr. Wilde, with the  
10 problem we had we've created four problems now with  
11 the problem we had with the counselor and in terms of  
12 noncertified, changing students around. So we've  
13 created more problems by doing what -- those two  
14 issues with the Coach and a counselor. Imagine the  
15 other issue we'll have in losing teachers now. We've  
16 got two or three that's already resigned at the end  
17 of the year. And so I hate to lose those two, and  
18 those are certified teachers also. It's difficult.  
19 So that's why we've got to get this problem resolved.

20 And my comment, when I got up a while ago, if I  
21 may, Chairman, is -- have you talked to -- is it  
22 Johnny -- Ronnie -- Ronnie Hughes about the credits  
23 and things like that? Because he showed that we  
24 weren't in violation of our credits and I'm sure he  
25 talked to the State Department people about that.

1 You know, he's worked with the State Department.  
2 Have you talked to Ronnie Hughes? I hate to put him  
3 on the spot but maybe you should talk to him.

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: I'm sorry; could you repeat  
5 that question again? I apologize. The Commissioner  
6 and I were actually speaking to your fiscal distress  
7 at this time as well that we wanted to raise with  
8 you.

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: But could you kindly repeat  
11 your question?

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Oh. I said, have you -- I hate  
13 to put him on the spot but have you talked to Mr.  
14 Ronnie Hughes? He's coming down and helping us fill  
15 the counselor situation, been there about once every  
16 -- once or twice every week for the last two months,  
17 so -- and also beginning of the year. So maybe --  
18 he's addressed those same things and showed the State  
19 Department that we're not in -- those courses that  
20 are being offered they said that weren't being  
21 offered, the drama and the half-unit. He showed  
22 there -- it's on his master schedule where they have  
23 been offered. So maybe you need to talk to him; he's  
24 here. And I don't know why the State -- the people  
25 in the State are not listening to him, but they

1 aren't listening to him. So maybe you could ask him  
2 a question or two, if he wouldn't mind coming  
3 forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Well, with that I guess I'll  
5 refer to Ms. Barnes or Mr. Harvey here if that's I  
6 guess a conversation that's been ongoing. I guess  
7 it's usually at this level we have the Department  
8 that oversees I guess those kind of conversations. I  
9 guess if you could give some guidance to us here in  
10 that regard?

11 MS. BARNES: Well, of course, Madam Chair, you  
12 have the liberty to listen as long into the  
13 conversation as you would like. The one thing that I  
14 would state here is that, of course, the district was  
15 given the option to file an appeal regarding the  
16 recommendation that we were making. Not only was the  
17 district given that by electronic and by certified  
18 mail, contact was made because we were entering the  
19 latter part of that timeframe. And the answer that  
20 we received was that we would not be filing an  
21 appeal, and so that was the last day. I made the  
22 personal call myself in order to insure that we would  
23 have all of the agenda items prepared. I don't have  
24 -- I have no contention to hearing from Mr. Hughes;  
25 however, I don't know that it will have a bearing on

1 the fact that violations occurred or the evidence was  
2 insufficient at the time or that the district did not  
3 make the corrections within the timelines or that  
4 they made no appeal to what we were recommending.

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. And I guess with  
6 that -- actually, I would like to know, Mr. Williams,  
7 why that you all did not submit an appeal and then,  
8 instead, going through the public comment process to  
9 offer up your appeal?

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Excuse me; that's what I was  
11 going to ask Ms. Barnes. Who makes the appeal? Is  
12 it the president of the board, the board, or the  
13 superintendent? And, see, so we're -- you know --  
14 I'm new at -- somewhat new at this but --

15 CHAIRPERSON REITH: If you could kindly speak  
16 into the mic. I'm sorry. It's just --

17 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- for the purpose of the  
19 court reporter and live-streaming.

20 MR. WILLIAMS: I was going to ask Miss --

21 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you kindly.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Excuse me. I was going to ask  
23 Ms. Barnes who makes that appeal. Does the president  
24 of the board make that appeal, does the board, or the  
25 superintendent? So, see, so, you know, we weren't



1 quite aware of who makes that appeal. So, you know,  
2 if the superintendent didn't, we're going to say,  
3 "Why not?" Because, you know, I think it should --  
4 well, I don't disagree about being on probation; just  
5 -- I just don't want it to be much more severe than  
6 what it seems like it might be, you know. Because we  
7 did not have a counselor first semester but the board  
8 itself has made every effort to get a counselor and,  
9 you know, come back with the same recommendation  
10 every time when we rejected the first recommendation.  
11 We expected another recommendation, not another day  
12 for the same recommendation. So we made efforts.

13 So who makes that appeal? Does it come from the  
14 board, board chairman, or -- Ms. Barnes, who makes  
15 that appeal?

16 MS. BARNES: I did make contact with the  
17 superintendent. Now Mr. Morris would have mailed out  
18 the information to both the superintendent and to the  
19 board. But when I made the request, the final  
20 request, it does come from the superintendent,  
21 because the superintendent would submit a request to  
22 appeal to our Commissioner and then be placed in our  
23 hands to do the follow-up on the process. Yes, sir.

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

25 MS. BARNES: And then we had a conversation

1 prior to all of that, but --

2 MR. WILLIAMS: You and I or --

3 MS. BARNES: Yes, sir.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: Oh, that was December.

5 MS. BARNES: Yes, sir. In December, we did have  
6 a conversation.

7 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I want to point out too  
8 that, see, I probably initiated some of the  
9 standards, the grievances, because back in November I  
10 talked to Ms. Barnes and Dr. Wilde and I said we had  
11 some problems, you know, back then. And so that  
12 probably contributed to sending the State down,  
13 because she said we had more than just two problems,  
14 we had several. So we're concerned, you know, the  
15 board is concerned. But it seemed like -- I'm going  
16 to be bad -- I'm the bad guy at the board anyway --  
17 but it seemed like the superintendent didn't want to  
18 appeal it because of what -- the drastic action that  
19 you may take and it may benefit her on the other way.  
20 You follow me? So that's why I said could I make the  
21 appeal, you know. But we don't deny that we didn't  
22 have a counselor, but the facts leading up to not  
23 having a counselor was not the board's problem. It's  
24 not the board's fault; it's a problem with our  
25 employee.

1                   CHAIRPERSON REITH: Well, thank you, Mr.  
2 Williams. We appreciate that you're in a very  
3 complex and challenged situation. And I appreciate,  
4 Ms. Barnes, your entire team in helping to try and  
5 elucidate, as well as with Ms. Freno, in terms of,  
6 again, once again, a very complex process.

7                   And then, Commissioner, I know on top of that we  
8 were on the side -- to bring forth to the entire  
9 Board, there are some additional complexities with  
10 the fiscal distress and you might speak to that,  
11 Commissioner, briefly.

12                   COMMISSIONER KEY: Ms. Newton, when you were  
13 asking that question about the process, one of the  
14 things that I want to make sure the Board remains  
15 aware, because this district is under fiscal  
16 distress, these types of hiring decisions have to be  
17 submitted to the Fiscal Support Office through debt  
18 requests and then that approval has to be delivered  
19 back to the district. And so that's a very important  
20 part of this conversation. And again I wanted to  
21 make sure y'all were aware that we are working --  
22 it's not just the standards issue, it's the fiscal  
23 distress issue, and that team is working with them on  
24 that as well.

25                   CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. And I guess

1 we're -- oh, yes, Ms. -- is it -- Mr. Hill, Dr. Hill.

2 DR. HILL: I just wanted to ask Mr. -- can I --

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Please, by all means.

4 DR. HILL: Mr. Barnes -- is it --

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Mr. Williams.

6 DR. HILL: Mr. Williams.

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Mr. Williams or Mr. Walton.

8 DR. HILL: Can I ask a question? Can I -- I  
9 just have one question. Is the superintendent that  
10 you all are not going to retain still on the job  
11 right now?

12 MR. WILLIAMS: According to the injunction  
13 there, we had to let her stay. So until the  
14 injunction is solved she has to be --

15 DR. HILL: So who's running the district right  
16 now?

17 MR. WILLIAMS: She is there but --

18 DR. HILL: She's running it now. Okay. That  
19 was my question.

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And, Dr. Hill, she is  
21 present here today as well.

22 DR. HILL: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And for anyone on the board,  
24 now I will say nobody except Mr. Walton and Mr.  
25 Williams signed up for public comment. And for your

1 purpose as well, Mr. Williams, in regards to Mr.  
2 Hughes, the reason that he wasn't specifically called  
3 is he wasn't signed up for public comment. But that  
4 doesn't limit any of the Board -- as somebody who's  
5 present here today, just like with Ms. Murdock being  
6 present here today, if any of you all have additional  
7 inquiries -- we know that other representatives from  
8 the Lee County School District are present if folks  
9 would like to ask some questions.

10 Yes, Mr. Williams, and then I know Dr. Barth  
11 does have either a question or a motion.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Go ahead then.

13 DR. BARTH: I have a motion, so --

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay.

15 DR. BARTH: But go ahead.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Well, okay. I shouldn't, but I  
17 want to refer back to Mr. Key's comment about the  
18 fiscal distress. That's all connected with the  
19 problem we had with employees. The fiscal distress  
20 is based on another case that we had in court, see,  
21 so that's -- that was -- we were almost ready to be  
22 released until this started, see, so -- from fiscal  
23 distress. So really we're not in fiscal distress;  
24 our situation is a pretty good situation most -- both  
25 ways, academic and monetarily/financially, because of

1           what's -- you know, the last two or three years,  
2           because of the board also getting involved with the  
3           fiscal management of the district. So, you know, we  
4           have to ask those questions and the board asks those  
5           things about financial, so the fiscal distress is not  
6           an issue anymore; it's just still in court and that's  
7           why we haven't been released from fiscal distress,  
8           because of the court issue, with them releasing us  
9           from that because of an insurance issue with the past  
10          superintendent. So that's -- I did want us to talk  
11          about that, but that did come up. Okay.

12                   CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Mr. Williams.  
13                   Thank you for that additional context. And,  
14                   obviously, you know, as I think everyone has said,  
15                   this at the end of the day is about the children but  
16                   we realize there are adult complex real issues that  
17                   have to be addressed here.

18                   And so with that --

19                   DR. HILL: Can I ask one?

20                   CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes, Dr. Hill.

21                   DR. HILL: Is there anybody -- because I wasn't  
22                   here the last time either, so I was trying to get up-  
23                   to-speed to make sure. Is there -- you said there  
24                   was somebody else. Is there anybody else out there  
25                   from a community standpoint that can give us greater

1 clarity and then we can use -- because we're just  
2 hearing from the board, and then I'm talking about  
3 from the community. Is there --

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: We do know that -- and, Ms.  
5 Murdock, has been seen, I believe.

6 DR. HILL: Is she here?

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: I don't know if she's in the  
8 audience right now.

9 DR. HILL: Yes. Can I just -- I'd just like to  
10 hear from her just before --

11 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes. No. Yes, that would  
12 be --

13 DR. HILL: Ms. Murdock, would you --

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: That would be appropriate,  
15 Dr. Hill. Yes.

16 DR. HILL: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And, Ms. Murdock, if you  
18 could state your name and title for the record  
19 please.

20 SUPT. MURDOCK: Willie Murdock, superintendent  
21 of Lee County School District.

22 Good morning, Madam Chair, Board Members. Well,  
23 we're back. We did come last month at the request of  
24 several community members, Representative Murdock  
25 being one of those members who represents Lee County.

1 We do have problems. We have communication problems  
2 with the relationship with the board and the  
3 superintendent. I would like to say that many of the  
4 things that you heard this morning are very not true.  
5 We have minutes to show what's been going on. As the  
6 person in charge of personnel, I have made several  
7 personnel recommendations for a counselor early on  
8 this year. We actually hired Mr. Hughes this summer  
9 so he would come and help until we got a counselor.  
10 I have made recommendations. We have one particular  
11 teacher that applied for the position as counselor;  
12 she has been denied. We have another teacher that  
13 would cover her classes that was certified in  
14 English. The board did not want this teacher to be  
15 removed from the classroom. In Lee County we have to  
16 grow our own. We have to grow our own. We have to  
17 give our teachers and our other staff opportunities  
18 to move up. I was given an opportunity to move up  
19 from being a substitute teacher, a product of the  
20 district as a substitute teacher, and now five years  
21 superintendent of the district. I have been state-  
22 appointed. I understand that our relationship -- my  
23 relationship with the board and the current board may  
24 not be the best because I was state-appointed and  
25 they would like to hire their own superintendent.



1           That's no problem with me. June 30th is my last day.  
2           The problem is that whoever comes into the district  
3           they must be able to lead in the way that they see  
4           fit.

5                       We're not in academic distress. We were about  
6           to come off of fiscal distress. We were about -- we  
7           came off of academic distress in one year. We were  
8           about to come off of fiscal distress in less than two  
9           years. But because of the current situation with the  
10          board trying to micromanage the administrative job,  
11          that is our issue, and so we're looking for support.  
12          We do have Mr. Hughes here, who is a consultant with  
13          us, and Ms. Phylistia Stanley, our high school  
14          principal. Everybody has been working hard. Ms.  
15          Stanley has made the recommendation for me -- to me  
16          for a particular teacher. The teacher wants the job.  
17          The teacher is a good English teacher, yes, but she  
18          could be -- she could touch more students being a  
19          counselor. She wants to do the job; she's capable of  
20          doing the job. I made the recommendation and it has  
21          been denied several times. People are not busting  
22          the doors open to come to Lee County. We have to  
23          grow our own, and that's what we've decided to do is  
24          to grow our own. And so we feel that we have capable  
25          people in our district that can move up to different

1 positions. And we did have someone on our list, one  
2 of our other teachers that would take the position as  
3 the English teacher and she wanted that particular  
4 job. So if I'm just allowed to do my job then we  
5 would have -- we wouldn't be before you today. We  
6 wouldn't be in academic distress, nor fiscal  
7 distress. And so I just want to be able to do my  
8 job, and whomever they decide to hire in June that  
9 they allow them to do their job as well and not  
10 micromanage personnel and any other matters that are  
11 day-to-day operations.

12 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Murdock. Dr.  
13 Hill, thank you.

14 So with that, any final questions or comments  
15 from the Board? Otherwise, I will entertain a motion  
16 if Dr. Barth is ready with one.

17 DR. BARTH: Yeah. Obviously, things are very  
18 complex in this district but the issue before us  
19 today is I think fairly simple. And so I would move  
20 to affirm the probationary status for both the high  
21 school and the school district of Lee County.

22 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Do I have a second?

23 MS. DEAN: Second.

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Motion made by Dr.  
25 Barth, seconded by Ms. Dean. All in favor?

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(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

Motion carries unanimously.

And, again, for the members of the board, for Ms. Murdock, members from Lee County that might be listening today, again, this is the first year of probationary status and the Department did not make any recommendation of additional action, nor was additional action offered by the Board at this time.

So thank you to all and we wish you all the best of luck and hope that we can be a resource and partner. And obviously we know how hard our Department is working in this complex time and matter. So thank you all for that.

With that, I will -- I'll go ahead and convene now a brief recess until 20-to-12:00. Thank you.

(BREAK: 11:30-11:42 A.M.)

A-3: DISTRICT REQUEST FOR WAIVERS GRANTED TO OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTERS: FARMINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHAIRPERSON REITH: We will now move on with the action agenda for this morning. Moving on to Action Agenda Item Number 3, the District Request for Waivers Granted to Open-Enrollment Charters from the Farmington School District, Ms. McLaughlin, you are recognized.

1 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Yes, we have  
2 Farmington School District here to ask for district  
3 waivers. Act 1240 of 2015 allows a school district  
4 to petition the State Board of Education for all or  
5 some of the waivers granted to open-enrollment public  
6 charter schools that serve students who reside in the  
7 school district. Representatives of the Farmington  
8 School District are appearing before the Board with a  
9 petition for waivers. They have a topic for  
10 library/media specialist. The request will expire on  
11 June 6th and they have requested for five years.  
12 Present today we have Bryan Law, superintendent; John  
13 Purifoy, principal. And Clayton Williams, assistant  
14 principal, will begin the presentation.

15 Before I ask him to come, we do have -- I want  
16 to review the procedures. The school district will  
17 have 20 minutes to make their presentation. If  
18 anyone is here present to offer opposition they will  
19 also have 20 minutes. The district will then have 5  
20 minutes to respond.

21 Madam Chair, you will probably want to swear in  
22 all of those that are here to speak.

23 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you so much, Ms.  
24 McLaughlin. And I don't have anyone here on the  
25 public comment list. If someone could kindly check

1 to see if anyone is there? Thank you, Ms.  
2 McLaughlin.

3 And with that, for those speaking on behalf of  
4 the district if you could kindly stand so that I may  
5 swear you in this morning, and raise your right hand.  
6 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're  
7 about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth,  
8 and nothing but the truth?

9 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you so much.

11 With that, Farmington School District, you're  
12 invited to speak. Your 20 minutes shall commence.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you. My name is Clayton  
14 Williams; I'm the assistant principal at the  
15 Farmington Career Academies Farmington High School.  
16 I apologize for not wearing purple today but my wife  
17 is a graduate from Fayetteville, so maybe I can get  
18 some of that credit for --

19 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Fayetteville High School,  
20 that's another one of my alma maters. You're hitting  
21 it all home today. Thank you.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: -- or get a little purple for  
23 that one.

24 I'm here on behalf of the district to ask for a  
25 1240 waiver for media specialist. Just to give you a

1 little bit of background, we are currently a 9  
2 through 12 campus. We have a freshman academy. It's  
3 an academy within an academy system. In the  
4 Farmington Career Academies we applied for conversion  
5 charter status back in 2015. In the 2017-18 school  
6 district [sic], we do intend to move the 10 through  
7 12 career academy to a new facility about three  
8 minutes away, and we're very excited about that. In  
9 fact, next week we'll be making a presentation to the  
10 Charter Authorization Panel to request that amendment  
11 to move there.

12 So our formal request is basically to use an  
13 instructional assistant for the 9th grade media  
14 center that will -- for the 9th grade that will  
15 remain on that particular campus. Basically, we know  
16 that the requirements of the student population --  
17 the incoming 9th grade is potentialized at about 203,  
18 and so the requirements would be a half-time media  
19 specialist position. We have done a little bit of  
20 research and we do estimate this -- having this  
21 waiver for about five years. We're unsure because  
22 there are some building issues that we can't  
23 necessarily anticipate. Just -- and I don't know if  
24 you've got our presentation, but it's there just to  
25 kind of show -- right now this is our current campus.

1 We are excited because in buildings A and F that's on  
2 that school map these will be occupied by the  
3 Northwest Technical Institute and Northwest Arkansas  
4 Community College. We are in agreement with them to  
5 be able to sponsor the Southwestern Career Center,  
6 which will be opening up in the fall to be available  
7 for usage from all schools in southern Washington  
8 County. So we're really excited to be able to offer  
9 four pathways, I believe is what the anticipated  
10 career and technical part of that is. And then NWACC  
11 does have a presence on our campus for not only our  
12 students but also in the community as well.

13 The reason that we are only going to have 9th  
14 grade on that campus for a while is because if you  
15 look at building D, which is our main building, a  
16 part of that because of facilities agreement will  
17 have to be demolished. And then also letter B is an  
18 old gymnasium, which will also have to be demolished,  
19 and it will be converted into a community shelter  
20 area, and so basically we're only really able to  
21 house one class grade on that campus. And so we  
22 anticipate, because of that, the requirement is to  
23 have a half-time media specialist and we feel like,  
24 based upon some of the data that we've gathered, that  
25 we would be probably better able to do that job with

1 an instructional assistant. We surveyed our current  
2 9th grade and just asked them very basic questions,  
3 how often do you visit the school library, and we had  
4 about 78% that hardly ever go to the media center,  
5 and that's for a variety of reasons. And even in the  
6 second question we kind of did the check-box survey  
7 of how do you mainly use the library and they could  
8 answer multiple things. And if you kind of look on  
9 there it's mainly used for research and then also  
10 access to the internet. We do have books there,  
11 obviously, that students will go in and check out and  
12 read for pleasure. We also have a community library  
13 as well where that service -- those services are also  
14 available. But we just feel like that the -- based  
15 upon the main role of our media specialist, even  
16 currently with the 9 through 12, that this is a need  
17 for our district. So basically our kind of rationale  
18 going through this is we still want to provide the  
19 academic and support needs for our students,  
20 obviously, and we're able to better meet that as a  
21 district. We have invested in technology to be able  
22 to have Chrome carts in the classrooms, which has  
23 diminished the role and need for a lot of times  
24 taking students to the library to do research. We've  
25 been very blessed to be able to do that.



1           So with that, we want to provide fiscal  
2           responsibility for our district. A half-time media  
3           specialist would be about a \$27,000 investment per  
4           year just on salary alone, and that is only a half-  
5           time position. So we felt that by being able to hire  
6           someone there full-time that we're definitely kind of  
7           getting more bang for the buck there.

8           And let me go ahead and back-up for just a  
9           moment, that this instructional assistant would also  
10          be under the oversight of the high school media  
11          specialist and so they would be working in  
12          conjunction together to be able to meet the academic  
13          and service needs of our students. So it's not we're  
14          just hiring somebody and throwing them into a room;  
15          they would be under the oversight of the high school  
16          media specialist.

17          And also I think our survey data kind of helps  
18          support that our media center is primarily used for  
19          research for those types of things. And our staff is  
20          wonderful; they -- again, we're blessed with  
21          technology, but a lot of that is done within the  
22          classroom and it's almost like the media center is  
23          kind of done as a secondary source for that.

24          I apologize because we do have a board  
25          resolution that I was not able to include in our

1 original packet; the board met after the deadline.  
2 So I do have that. I do not have copies, but I will  
3 be more than glad to read it or to go ahead and  
4 present that.

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: I guess I would ask Ms.  
6 McLaughlin: does it need to be read into record?

7 MS. McLAUGHLIN: No.

8 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Thank you. It's  
9 adequate for us just to know that it exists. Thank  
10 you.

11 MR. WILLIAMS: Sure. Sure, sure, sure. And so  
12 basically we just believe that by having this waiver  
13 we do have students within our district that have  
14 enrolled in the Arkansas Virtual Academy and that  
15 meets the stipulations for the Act 1240. And we  
16 would ask that we are granted this waiver for five  
17 years. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: You all do have some  
19 additional time. I do not know -- I know other  
20 individuals stood; I don't know if there's someone  
21 else from the district that wishes to speak. You  
22 have about 13 minutes left.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: No.

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. No worries. There  
25 may be the opportunity then with the question period.

1 Ms. McLaughlin, was there anyone from opposition  
2 that was signed up or just in --

3 MS. McLAUGHLIN: No, ma'am.

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- general signed up?

5 MS. McLAUGHLIN: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Thank you.

7 Then, any closing comments from the district?

8 MR. WILLIAMS: I don't believe so. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Thank you so much for  
10 your presentation.

11 So with that, I'll open it now up to questions  
12 or comments from the Board, or even a motion, if so  
13 inclined.

14 Ms. Zook.

15 MS. ZOOK: So the certified media person would  
16 be there? Because I know a lot of the ways that as a  
17 classroom teacher they rely on them to help them find  
18 things to supplement the lesson within the classroom,  
19 so it's not so much like the old library system as it  
20 is someone that assists the teacher. And so the  
21 noncertified person would still have her access to  
22 the media specialist for those kinds of aids and  
23 helps?

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, ma'am. Our new facility  
25 will be about two to three minutes away. Farmington

1 is not that big of a community. But it's about two  
2 to three minutes away, and so even in your most  
3 immediate needs then the media specialist will be  
4 available. Yes, ma'am.

5 MS. ZOOK: And your staff is aware of this and  
6 comfortable with it?

7 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, ma'am.

8 MS. ZOOK: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you so much, Ms. Zook.  
10 Any additional -- yes, Ms. Newton.

11 MS. NEWTON: When do you anticipate the 8th  
12 grade being moved to the campus?

13 MR. WILLIAMS: That is a little bit of a  
14 difficult situation based upon the construction needs  
15 of our district. As I was talking to Ms. McLaughlin,  
16 we asked for a five-year waiver. If we can complete  
17 that before then, then we will hire a media  
18 specialist at that time. If it goes a little longer  
19 than five years, then we'll come back in five years  
20 and ask for an extension of the waiver.

21 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: It's not something we want as a  
23 permanent fixture; we just want it --

24 MS. NEWTON: But you're anticipating it going  
25 for several years then?

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

3 SUPT. LAW: I want to address that a little bit.  
4 I'm the superintendent.

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: If you could kindly come to  
6 the mic. I'm sorry; you'll have to state your name  
7 and title for the record. And you were one of the  
8 individuals, sir, that I swore in? I just wanted to  
9 make sure.

10 SUPT. LAW: Okay. Yes. Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

12 SUPT. LAW: Yes. My name is Bryan Law; I'm the  
13 superintendent at Farmington. And everything that  
14 was said is exactly correct. Just to add to that a  
15 little bit, we are a rapidly growing school district  
16 and we are currently building a new high school that  
17 we're building in three phases. We are in our third  
18 year now of building and we still have about two more  
19 years of building to finish that up, at which point  
20 we have built two elementary schools that feed into  
21 one elementary school; so that one elementary school  
22 is exploding at the seams. For example, this year we  
23 really thought we were going to have to feed four  
24 lunches at one time and our elementary students were  
25 going to have to start eating at 10:00 in the

1 morning, which obviously is not a good situation. So  
2 after we move away from the high school, we have put  
3 a Band-Aid on our upper grades. We're going to have  
4 to go back and look at our lower grades.

5 Financially, we just can't eat this whole  
6 elephant at one time. So we'll go back to the  
7 elementary; we will work in our 4th and 5th grade  
8 building to try to expand it, especially in the  
9 cafeteria area, at which time then we will begin to  
10 look to rebuild. After we remove these two old  
11 buildings that Mr. Williams correctly told you would  
12 have to be removed we will come back and replace  
13 those buildings. But we can't -- we can't afford to  
14 skip over the elementary problems; we have to go fix  
15 those at this time, when our 8th graders are in a  
16 very nice building that was just built about 15 years  
17 ago and there is not a great -- you know -- the  
18 greater need is in the elementary after we finish the  
19 high school.

20 MS. NEWTON: Okay. That helps. Thank you.  
21 Thank you.

22 Just one more question. You said you had talked  
23 with the teachers. Have you talked with the parents  
24 to see how they feel about the --

25 SUPT. LAW: I'll let him finish up, since he was

1 prepared, but our community is very excited about  
2 what's taking place. The conversion charter process  
3 that we went through a couple of years ago has been  
4 well received. We are building a high school that  
5 I'd love to show you, that we have built and laid out  
6 in wings to be career academies. The building is  
7 truly built for career academies and for that growth.  
8 And so I feel -- I've not heard a negative comment.

9 I'll let him speak to that, but everything I  
10 believe is very positive about the changes that are  
11 taking place.

12 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: And we didn't reach out to the  
14 entire community but, again, we did have it as part  
15 of our regular session of the school board and it was  
16 on the agenda and there was no opposition that showed  
17 up for that as well.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you all.

19 Any additional questions or comments from the  
20 Board? Otherwise, I will entertain a motion.

21 MS. ZOOK: I move that we grant Farmington the  
22 1240 waiver.

23 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And if I might just -- to  
24 clarify, the media specialist waiver? Usually we do  
25 it by waiver topic and that's what they've

1 specifically asked for.

2 MS. ZOOK: Oh, I didn't -- is there -- there's  
3 just one; right?

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: There's just the one, the  
5 media specialist.

6 MS. ZOOK: Oh, okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: That's correct, Ms. Zook.

8 MS. ZOOK: All right. For the media specialist.

9 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. Do I have a  
10 second?

11 MR. BLACK: I second.

12 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Motion made by Ms.  
13 Zook, seconded by Mr. Black. All in favor?

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

16 Motion carries unanimously.

17 Congratulations and best of luck. We look  
18 forward to hearing more about your efforts.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And congratulations on the  
21 growth. And some new teachers here that are looking  
22 for a job, just to connect the dots; I know they're  
23 all up there in Northwest Arkansas.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: We're right on it. We're right  
25 on it.



1 CHAIRPERSON REITH: This might be the most  
2 serendipitous board meeting you all could have come  
3 to. No. But thank you all.

4 A-4: DISTRICT REQUEST FOR WAIVERS GRANTED TO OPEN-ENROLLMENT  
5 CHARTERS: RIVERVIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: So moving on, Ms.  
7 McLaughlin, if you could lead us through Action  
8 Agenda Item A-4, the District Request for Waivers  
9 Granted to Open-Enrollment Charters for the Riverview  
10 School District.

11 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Yes. We have representatives  
12 from the Riverview School District today. Their  
13 topics that they are requesting are the planned  
14 instructional time, class size and teaching load,  
15 teacher licensure, and library media services. The  
16 request expires on June 11th and they have requested  
17 for four years. We have David Rutledge,  
18 superintendent.

19 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Mr. Rutledge. I  
20 do need to swear you in. And will anyone else be  
21 joining you?

22 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Mr. Luttrell, our high school  
23 principal may have some questions to be answered as  
24 well.

25 CHAIRPERSON REITH: So anyone planning to offer

1 testimony, if you all could stand up please, kindly,  
2 and raise your right hand. Do y'all swear or affirm  
3 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the  
4 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

5 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Wonderful. Thank you so  
7 much.

8 You may proceed with your 20 minutes.

9 And, Ms. McLaughlin, thank you for checking if  
10 there's anyone signed up on opposition. Thank you.

11 You may proceed.

12 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Wonderful. Thank you for the  
13 opportunity to present today.

14 As you can see, I want to take just a moment and  
15 talk a little bit about the Riverview School District  
16 because we approach education just a little bit  
17 differently than maybe some schools in Arkansas. We  
18 are a New Tech school, a whole school conversion in  
19 our high school, which means that we are a project-  
20 and problem-based school wall-to-wall in all of our  
21 classrooms. In 9 through 12 we focus primarily on  
22 projects and problem-based opportunities.

23 We are a district that is one-to-one K through  
24 12 with Apple technology. All of our students in  
25 grades K through 3 are -- pardon me -- K through 2

1 have iPads, 3 through 12 have MacBooks, and so we are  
2 technology rich. As part of our New Tech  
3 project/problem-based initiative we really seek to  
4 add technology and empower students through  
5 technology. We have -- we are in our fifth year of  
6 being a New Tech school; this is my second year as  
7 superintendent at Riverview, and so we are kind of  
8 having to reboot, if you will, our efforts in order  
9 to become a successful New Tech school. We have made  
10 significant progress in the last two years and we  
11 believe that we have worked diligently within the  
12 confines and structures that we have within the  
13 traditional standards and accreditation and so-on.

14 What we would like to do, our goal is to make  
15 this next step toward true personalization for our  
16 students at Riverview. To kind of give you some  
17 anecdotal evidence, we've had conversations early on  
18 this year especially about re-visioning our senior  
19 year. Many of our students come to us their senior  
20 year specifically needing one, possibly two classes;  
21 they need their English or they need their math, or  
22 they need both. And so in that traditional eight-  
23 period day we put them in those classes but then we  
24 oftentimes struggle to find classes that either (a)  
25 they're interested in, or (b) that's going to be

1 relevant and engaging to them once they leave our  
2 campus and move on to secondary education or into the  
3 workforce.

4 At this time we don't anticipate any fiscal  
5 impact to the Riverview School District. There won't  
6 be any additional staff hired or lost as a result of  
7 this. We're not on any type of academic or fiscal or  
8 financial distress at all. We are fully accredited  
9 with the state and we are not using any of these  
10 waivers to try to alleviate any kind of accreditation  
11 issues.

12 To kind of talk a little bit about our mission  
13 in our junior high and high school -- and this is  
14 where the waiver requests are primarily going to  
15 focus -- Riverview High School and Junior High are  
16 schools focusing on student success through project-  
17 and problem-based learning empowered by technology  
18 that provides authentic real-world experiences to  
19 personalize student education and a positive culture.  
20 I know that's a mouthful. But if you go to the  
21 graphic that's on your screen now -- and you may have  
22 seen this before and if you have, I think it's a  
23 really great graphic -- we have really in the last  
24 two years been focusing on the bottom two levels of  
25 this hierarchy of change: our purpose and mission.

1           And on the previous side we kind of stated our  
2           mission a bit, and this year we have made some  
3           significant gains in culture and relationships. And  
4           as I said at the beginning of the presentation, we  
5           feel like we have manipulated and expanded and taken  
6           advantage of all the flexibility that we can in the  
7           current structures that we have. And so in this  
8           hierarchy of change we're looking at what policies  
9           and what structures can we change in order to better  
10          meet the needs of our students and personalize  
11          education for our students. Obviously, we are  
12          working in all of these areas at all times. Next  
13          year though we hope to focus -- or this year we're  
14          hoping to focus on policies and structures that are  
15          kind of standing in our way in flexibility to really  
16          expand our project/problem-based efforts and really  
17          personalize education for students.

18                 To give you kind of an idea of what we're  
19                 wanting to accomplish at Riverview -- and we  
20                 presented this to our board in December and it was  
21                 met with a lot of positive feedback -- we want our  
22                 students to have a plan. Once they leave our high  
23                 school we want them to have every opportunity that we  
24                 possibly can give them to find their niche, to find  
25                 their path, to find a plan that they're going to be

1           successful, whether that be college, whether it be  
2           our partnerships that we're working through with ASU-  
3           Beebe, ASU-Searcy, whether it be the required  
4           coursework. If we have students coming in their  
5           senior year, and maybe they haven't been successful  
6           in their high school career and they need every  
7           period in that day, we want to be able to give them  
8           that opportunity to graduate. We want to provide  
9           more opportunities to tailor and personalize what our  
10          students receive as far as an education at our school  
11          and really meet what their desires and what their  
12          needs are. That way, we can get them into the  
13          workforce.

14                 We are a 76% free and reduced lunch school, so  
15          we do have a high poverty situation. Most of our  
16          students lack a plan sometimes when they leave. They  
17          have not had maybe the experience or the influence  
18          from home that we would like to see them have. If we  
19          can get them into internships, if we can get them  
20          into community service learning projects, most of our  
21          students are going to stay in our community. We want  
22          them to be able to find a way to function and  
23          contribute back to our communities and we believe  
24          that through all of these areas that we can do that.

25                 As far as planning for our personalization, I

1 told you we had a conversation -- lots of  
2 conversations actually about, first, reimagining our  
3 senior year and then rolling this back into what do  
4 our students need to personalize education and then  
5 what do our teachers need as well in order to make  
6 project/problem-based learning grow. We basically  
7 tasked our teachers with "what can you come back with  
8 and what can we do to;" "we hear that you're telling  
9 us you need more time to collaborate, you need more  
10 time in class, you need bigger blocks of time. So  
11 what can -- help us find a solution." And we  
12 currently are on a traditional eight-period day and  
13 many schools -- several schools in Arkansas are  
14 moving to the Flex/Mod schedule, and I'm sure many of  
15 you probably have heard presentations about the  
16 Flex/Mod schedule before. We believe that this will  
17 be a great answer to allowing our teachers in the  
18 project-based/problem-based learning environment to  
19 have larger blocks of times with students, and at the  
20 same time also create some time that is unstructured  
21 -- unstructured independent learning time that  
22 students can work collaboratively with groups on  
23 projects and as well as providing a safety-net, if  
24 you will, for some structured learning times for  
25 those students that are struggling. We really wanted

1 to build this from the ground up and build consensus  
2 with our teachers. We started having conversations  
3 about the Flex/Mod in December. Approximately 80% of  
4 our teachers, in both the junior high and high  
5 school, have either visited one or more schools that  
6 are implementing the Flex/Mod. The concepts are  
7 pretty much the same across the board. But one of  
8 the things that we really like and the feedback that  
9 we got from schools that we visited was that you can  
10 tailor the Flex/Mod to fit your kids, your schools,  
11 and your needs, and that really is appealing to what  
12 we like -- what we want to do as far as personalizing  
13 education for our students and also giving our  
14 teachers that greater opportunity.

15 As far as the Flex/Mod goals, we want students  
16 -- we want our time that we have with students to be  
17 able to serve our students, not our students just  
18 serving time. As we talked about, we have kind of --  
19 and we're not unlike many other schools, high schools  
20 in the state of Arkansas where when you have students  
21 coming in that senior year they end up being put in  
22 the classes that maybe aren't relevant to them;  
23 they're not engaged. And so we want to work to find  
24 that level of engagement, that high level of  
25 engagement, especially that senior year, and spanning



1 back into the junior and so-on to really engage  
2 students and provide them those opportunities, those  
3 experiences, whether it be taking a class on a  
4 college campus. And I know we have lots of  
5 concurrent credit offerings but one of the things  
6 that we are looking to do is actually place students  
7 on a college campus to take a college course. For so  
8 many of our students in a high-poverty area it's more  
9 about them being able to see themselves on that  
10 campus and in that environment than it is about  
11 actually taking the course. And if we can get them  
12 to see themselves in that environment we believe that  
13 we'll have more kids choose to either go to the  
14 community college or go to CTE programs that will  
15 result in employment after school.

16 So we've talked a lot about research taking  
17 place both inside and outside the classroom. We have  
18 -- we currently practice a lot of that, as well. We  
19 believe strongly, as I said, being a New Tech school,  
20 project/problem-based, that learning does not take  
21 place just in the confines of the 45- to 47-minute  
22 period that we currently have. We have students  
23 working diligently outside on their own time.

24 In this Flex/Mod schedule what we hope to do is  
25 to provide for those students who are passing, who

1 are up-to-date, who are doing what they need to do  
2 some independent learning time that they can expand  
3 on these projects, collaborate with their group  
4 members, if they choose to jump on and take an online  
5 learning course, if they choose to take a concurrent  
6 course through Arkansas Virtual. We want students to  
7 be able to take ownership of their education in this  
8 independent learning time but also have that  
9 structure in place with a structured learning time  
10 that if a student isn't being successful that we can  
11 have them in a structured setting and move them  
12 through, get them back to a good spot, and then again  
13 provide that responsibility.

14 As far as the Flex/Mod schedule goes -- I don't  
15 know how familiar you are with the Flex/Mod, but  
16 essentially what we would do is we'd take our 8-  
17 period day and divide it into basically 20- and 30-  
18 minute segments that would allow us to have classes  
19 meet as little as 30 minutes, as much as 90 minutes,  
20 so-on and so-forth, and we can rearrange and move  
21 this time as much as we need to. And there's tons of  
22 flexibility to meet the needs of our students and our  
23 teachers and then really customize what we are hoping  
24 to accomplish.

25 This would be a sample schedule potentially from

1 our junior high. As you can see, in class number  
2 two, if you will, in yellow, that class would meet --  
3 actually, it looks as though 60, 60 and 90, most of  
4 our courses, but they would not meet every day. But  
5 what the tradeoff is is not meeting every day but  
6 they would have a longer, more extended period of  
7 time during that 90-minute class period which would  
8 allow teachers the opportunity to dig into those  
9 projects and go into the learning deeper than what  
10 they currently can do in a 47-minute period that we  
11 have. We also have lunch advisory clubs and things  
12 of that nature, and we'll talk about those in just a  
13 minute as part of the larger picture of how we want  
14 to address the needs of our students.

15 One of the issues that we have across the board  
16 in grades 7 through 12 -- and I would say that we are  
17 not unlike many schools -- is we have a general lack  
18 of RTI at those levels, in 7 through 12. We do a  
19 pretty good job across the board I think in the state  
20 in K-6, but we still have students who come to us  
21 that struggle in grades 7 through 12. But being  
22 locked into an 8-period day, we have relatively  
23 little time to flex out or become flexible and meet  
24 the needs of those kids that are struggling. Some of  
25 the SOAR time, some of the structured learning time,

1 the independent learning time can be used to do  
2 exactly this. Now obviously we're focusing on Tier 1  
3 instruction, which is just really great classroom  
4 instruction, but we really want our teachers,  
5 especially in grades 7 through 12, to jump in and  
6 start working with some of those targeted small  
7 groups and even some of those one-on-one pieces with  
8 our students.

9 Each class that we have will actually have an  
10 extended learning time each week, 20 to 25 minutes  
11 built into their weeklong schedule. This will allow  
12 for parts of that RTI time to happen. If the kid  
13 doesn't need -- a student doesn't need any RTI  
14 services, then they can use that time for makeup  
15 work, they can use it for project work time, they can  
16 collaborate on a project they're working on in class,  
17 or they can jump on and do, you know, whatever  
18 they've chosen. Again, it goes back to really  
19 putting the responsibility back on the students and  
20 the ownership back on the students as to taking that  
21 responsibility for their education, which is what  
22 we're trying to accomplish.

23 During our individual learning time we'll have  
24 two pretty -- two different structures here. We have  
25 our traditional slate of courses that every student

1 is going to be able to take but we also have a block  
2 of time that's called individual learning time, and I  
3 prefaced this a little bit before. During this  
4 individual learning time it is pretty well  
5 unstructured time during the day. During that time  
6 during the day students can have extra practice; we  
7 will have instructors with office hours that, if  
8 they're struggling in a math class or struggling in a  
9 science class, then they can go and they can get help  
10 from those specific teachers. They can work on  
11 homework, they can work on projects, they can work on  
12 community service projects, whatever they are  
13 interested in, and, again, giving them some of that  
14 opportunity to drive and take ownership of their own  
15 learning.

16 The other part we've talked about already is the  
17 structured learning, the Tier 2 and Tier 3  
18 interventions. We struggle, like most schools, in  
19 grades 7 through 12 in order to find that time to  
20 really give meaningful, engaging, rich RTI  
21 interventions to those kids that truly need it. And  
22 if we're going to see those students succeed then we  
23 really need to have some of that time available in  
24 our structure 7 through 12.

25 Obviously, with the master schedule additions

1 things that we want to -- as far as personalizing  
2 learning, we want to offer virtual classes. If a kid  
3 wants to take during their independent learning time  
4 -- if they want to jump in and take an extra class,  
5 whether it be concurrent credit or if they just want  
6 to take something that we don't necessarily have the  
7 capacity to offer -- if it's a photography class, a  
8 video editing class, whether it be virtually or any  
9 other method -- then we want to support them in being  
10 able to do that. Internships are huge for us. We  
11 want to get students into our industries in our  
12 community. I'm working closely with communities in  
13 our Chamber of Commerce in Searcy and really trying  
14 to bridge the gap between the expectations that  
15 industry and education have and what our outcomes for  
16 our students are when they leave us. And so I  
17 believe getting those students into some internships,  
18 especially that senior year, and letting them see  
19 what it looks like to work in a lawyer's office,  
20 letting them see what it looks like to work in a  
21 vet's office -- ASU-Beebe has one of the only vet  
22 tech programs -- the only vet tech program in the  
23 state of Arkansas. Most of our students transition  
24 into ASU-Beebe after they leave us; it's a real  
25 opportunity for them. So we would love for them to

1 be able to step into a month-long internship with  
2 some vets in the area, just to say "is this what we  
3 like, is this a possible career path for me," and  
4 giving them those rich experiences to help them  
5 decide.

6 Obviously, advisory time -- one of the things  
7 that we focus on in New Tech is building a culture  
8 where students take ownership and responsibility of  
9 their own learning. And one of the things that we  
10 hear consistently from industry and education alike  
11 is the employability skills, the soft skills. And  
12 part of this Flex/Mod schedule is the advisory time  
13 at both the junior high and the high school level to  
14 teach those skills, to overtly teach those skills.  
15 We want to do grade checks; we want to do team-  
16 building activities; we want opportunities for  
17 students to have community service learning projects.  
18 These are the skills that our students are missing  
19 and these are also the skills that industry and  
20 education are telling us that if they're going to  
21 employ or have their kids -- our kids on their campus  
22 they need in order to succeed. And so that is a  
23 huge, huge advantage for us in this; we want to take  
24 some time and overtly teach those skills because far  
25 too often we take for granted that the skills are

1 coming from home in that regard.

2 In our junior high setting we would like to  
3 develop personalized learning plans for each one of  
4 our students. Even though they may not have an  
5 alternative or individualized learning plan from an  
6 AIP, we would like to do personalized learning plans;  
7 that way, we can address the needs of each and every  
8 student and have SOAR time where students on academic  
9 rise each and every day. The Flex/Mod schedule, just  
10 like we've said, looks a little bit different in  
11 every building. We want to give our high school  
12 students a little bit more flexibility because  
13 they're a little bit older and hopefully a little bit  
14 more mature. But at the junior high it is going to  
15 look a little bit different because they do need a  
16 little bit more structure, they do need a little bit  
17 more guidance, and they aren't quite as responsible  
18 in 7th and 8th grade.

19 So when we talk about the waivers that we're  
20 requesting it's the planned instructional time. We  
21 know one of the areas that we're going to encounter  
22 is our independent learning time, our structured  
23 learning time, and our extended learning time. Our  
24 high school courses will still meet for a minimum of  
25 132 hours per year, which will still meet the minimum



1 requirements for 60 hours per semester to issue  
2 Carnegie units. But this will also give at least up  
3 to an additional 175 minutes of either structured  
4 learning time, extended learning time, or independent  
5 learning time, depending upon the student, beyond the  
6 regular classroom. And so when it comes to the  
7 planned instructional time we want that -- need that  
8 flexibility in order to be able to move our project  
9 and problem-based learning forward.

10 Class size and teaching load -- obviously, the  
11 remediation intervention classes, the SLT (the  
12 structured learning time), we're hoping to keep all  
13 of these within the 150 guidelines or standards for  
14 accreditation, same thing for our integrated courses.  
15 We do -- as a New Tech school we integrate all of our  
16 humanities courses in grades 9, 10 and 11, so all of  
17 our social studies and language arts courses are  
18 integrated together. So we do have larger class  
19 sizes but we also have two teachers in either one of  
20 those classes to cut down on those issues. We would  
21 like in the future, as we grow our project/problem-  
22 based capability capacity, is to jump into more  
23 integration beyond just our humanities. We have lots  
24 of opportunities, whether it be combining a geometry  
25 and an art class to create a geo-art class which is

1 really successful with students and engaging. We  
2 have opportunities there, but we want to be able to  
3 take those teachers -- and, again, if we do exceed  
4 the 150, which we're going to take every measure we  
5 can to make sure that we don't -- but have that  
6 opportunity, that flexibility to be able to do so.

7 And teacher licensure -- this is the piece where  
8 we really want to have some flexibility to listen to  
9 our students. We've talked with our students; we've  
10 surveyed our students as far as what they would like  
11 to see.

12 I'm sorry; I'm probably over my 20 minutes.

13 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Right. You're at 20  
14 minutes, Mr. Rutledge. If you could, just final  
15 comments would be great.

16 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: I'll be quick.

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

18 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: We would like to be able to  
19 tailor our instruction to our RNs, CNA programs,  
20 whether it be robotics. We know with our current  
21 staff we're going to have to pull people out of the  
22 industry in the area in order to get those folks in.  
23 So, waiving the teaching license, even if they come  
24 in for a period or two a day, would be very helpful  
25 and allow some more flexibility for our kids.

1           Our library media services -- it's very simple  
2           for us. We want to be able to push our library media  
3           services person -- we are at one-and-a-half right now  
4           with our ratios. We don't anticipate lowering that  
5           number, but we want to use our library media services  
6           person to push into the classroom to teach digital  
7           citizenship, advanced research, and things of that  
8           nature to help teachers create and extend those rich  
9           projects throughout the campuses. And, again,  
10          obviously the outcomes we hope to achieve -- these  
11          are the things that the teachers have told us they  
12          need: they need more time, more collaboration, so-on.  
13          And, again, the outcomes we hope to achieve with our  
14          students is more important in that student  
15          achievement obviously is primary. Engagement,  
16          discipline, student attendance -- if it's relevant,  
17          they'll be at school -- stronger social skills and  
18          so-on and so-forth. And like I said, I apologize for  
19          going over my time.

20                 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you so much, Mr.  
21                 Rutledge. And obviously you all have put so much  
22                 work into this.

23                 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Yes.

24                 CHAIRPERSON REITH: I'm excited for your  
25                 district and for your students.

1 Ms. McLaughlin?

2 MS. McLAUGHLIN: No.

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: No opposition then.

4 And then I don't know if you have any closing  
5 remarks that you would want to make; otherwise, I  
6 know I have some questions and my colleagues --

7 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- I believe may have, as  
9 well.

10 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Sure, sure, sure. And if I  
11 can't answer them I definitely have my high school  
12 principal as well. I appreciate your time.

13 Again, I know we're asking for a lot. As a New  
14 Tech school we did weigh the options of going the  
15 conversion charter route, going the school of  
16 innovation route, and we have been working for so  
17 long within the confines of these structures we feel  
18 like we kind of push the envelope with our innovation  
19 already. And so we feel like with these waivers  
20 we'll be able to go ahead and take that next step  
21 without having to go the other route, if you will.

22 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And I guess that I'll pick  
23 up then where you left off because that was going to  
24 be my question.

25 As I see your presentation, the thing that

1 occurs to me is this should be a school of innovation

2 --

3 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Right.

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- or this should be --

5 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- a conversion charter. I  
7 don't know if I'm fully clear from your comments  
8 there about why this route versus that route. I know  
9 sometimes for some districts it's a timing issue --

10 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Right.

11 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- and a timing of  
12 applications. So, this is the one that allows it to  
13 get in --

14 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Sure.

15 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- but then there's still  
16 the intentionality of moving forward down the road  
17 that this leads into a school of innovation or a  
18 conversion charter. Are those considerations that  
19 you've all had? Is this also a timing issue for  
20 y'all?

21 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: It is kind of a timing issue  
22 for us as far as being able to make some changes for  
23 next year. However, we have had the conversations  
24 around the conversion charter piece, and really and  
25 truly what we're looking at is what do we want to

1           accomplish for our students and to what degree do we  
2           need to go to in order to be able to achieve that.  
3           With the school of innovation piece I'm not sure  
4           exactly how much -- we're looking more at the  
5           policies and structures as far as the flexibility  
6           within the day, if you will, more so than the  
7           innovation. And so the innovation we started almost  
8           five years ago with project- and problem-based  
9           learning, and so we were having kind of a hard time  
10          resolving within ourselves of should we actually go  
11          for a school of innovation when we've already been  
12          doing this for five years. What we need is just more  
13          flexibility when it comes to scheduling and a few  
14          other waivers.

15                 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And maybe I could ask for a  
16                 point of clarity here and this might -- whether it's  
17                 Ms. McLaughlin, or maybe you Commissioner, that you  
18                 might be able to assist. Is there anything they  
19                 wouldn't be able to accomplish here that they're  
20                 proposing within a school of innovation? I guess my  
21                 understanding is that a school of innovation would  
22                 allow this sort of latitude. And obviously I know  
23                 we're considering the merits of this today and so  
24                 this is also -- we have these ongoing conversations  
25                 as a board around the different types of waivers, so

1 please know there's a context as well for this  
2 question.

3 COMMISSIONER KEY: Yes. They could achieve the  
4 same result on waivers through multiple means, and  
5 school of innovation is one of those.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And so -- and in I guess  
7 working with the district I know -- Ms. McLaughlin,  
8 in working with the district were there -- I know we  
9 try in districts that come forth to give them  
10 guidance and which pathway, right, might make the  
11 most sense. Was there -- I don't know if the ADE  
12 maybe found some specific benefits for this pathway  
13 versus school of innovation or conversion charter?

14 MS. McLAUGHLIN: We did have a conversation  
15 about the timelines for district conversion and the  
16 school of innovation, which both have passed for this  
17 --

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes.

19 MS. McLAUGHLIN: -- particular application year.  
20 Next year is a possibility, if they have the letter  
21 of intent in March. And I believe that Cindy Hogue's  
22 deadline is somewhere near the first of March, as  
23 well. But we were able to -- he can apply for all of  
24 the waivers that he's applying for this year because  
25 all of the -- because the open-enrollment has those.

1 But a benefit to a district conversion application  
2 would allow a little more freedom; it's a negotiation  
3 process for more waivers if they felt that was needed  
4 for the students in their district.

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Thank you. I  
6 appreciate that.

7 So it does sound like there's some timing  
8 aspects here. And then, is this going to be an  
9 ongoing consideration or conversation for the  
10 district in terms of --

11 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely. Absolutely. As we  
12 expand it -- and hopefully at some point we would  
13 love to roll our project-based learning and New Tech  
14 into our junior high and even lower, if possible --  
15 then, yes, we'd obviously want to have those  
16 conversations around conversion charter and really  
17 digging into, you know, a more permanent solution.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And then that lends my self  
19 to the last question: one of the things that a  
20 conversion charter or school of innovation -- a  
21 comfort level they would give us, right, is the  
22 process by which this is shared with the community  
23 and teachers and such, and obviously a lot of this  
24 has ramifications for specifically your teachers.  
25 Can you talk us through a little bit of the process



1 by which this was shared with teachers and community?  
2 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely. The teachers --  
3 again, we kind of placed it back -- we survey our  
4 teachers each semester and we talk with them in a  
5 very simple survey, "what can we do to make  
6 instruction better, how has your experience been at  
7 Riverview." And consistently what we got back was  
8 "we need more time to collaborate, we need more  
9 flexibility with scheduling," and so we put it back  
10 on them to say what can we do. Okay. "Let's go out  
11 and do some research; what can we do to give you what  
12 you need within the confines of the structure we  
13 have?" And so they came back to us with this idea.  
14 And, like I said, approximately 80% of our teachers  
15 have visited either one or multiple schools in the  
16 Flex/Mod. We came back, debriefed with them, and I  
17 don't believe -- between our junior high and high  
18 school staff we kind of took an informal vote, and we  
19 do have a hundred-percent consensus on moving in this  
20 direction. I believe they feel like the more  
21 enriched time, the longer span of time, the  
22 flexibility will definitely meet our students' needs  
23 better. As far as the community goes, again, the  
24 timing issue has been part of it; however, we do have  
25 a board resolution that was passed in February to

1 support the move to the Flex/Mod and the application  
2 for the waivers that we're requesting today, and so  
3 we had no opposition at that point. We had newspaper  
4 articles, we've sent -- we send multiple fliers home  
5 talking about our intentions to move forward, and to  
6 my knowledge we have had no negative comments  
7 whatsoever.

8 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And this will be my final  
9 question and then to the question/comments of the  
10 Board. So I appreciate and it's exciting that your  
11 teachers have bought into this vision. I guess I'm  
12 just wondering if they're aware of the specific  
13 waivers you've asked in regards to them? Because  
14 obviously things like their instructional time and  
15 workload are things that are going to have a direct  
16 impact on their day-to-day.

17 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely. Yes, they are  
18 aware.

19 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay.

20 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: We've shared -- Mr. Luttrell,  
21 our high school principal has shared the waivers that  
22 we are requesting and the reasoning behind it and why  
23 we hope to achieve these waivers.

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

25 Additional questions or comments from the Board?

1 Dr. Barth.

2 DR. BARTH: Thanks. And thanks for your well  
3 thought-out and well presented vision here. Just a  
4 couple of questions. On the area of teacher  
5 licensure, you provide some examples of the types of  
6 positions that you'd fill.

7 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely.

8 DR. BARTH: My question is really, are you  
9 limiting your requested waivers to those positions or  
10 are you asking for a broader freedom in that arena?

11 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: We're actually asking for  
12 broader freedom in order to basically survey our  
13 students and react to our student desires. Now  
14 obviously we've given some examples with the CNA,  
15 criminal justice, and things of that nature, where we  
16 feel like we could take some of our existing staff  
17 and give those students an opportunity or another  
18 pathway to personalize their education. What we're  
19 asking for is if we want to offer a robotics course,  
20 if we want to offer something more advanced, we don't  
21 have someone on staff that can do that. And we'd  
22 like the opportunity as students express an interest  
23 to be able to go out into our community and solicit  
24 someone to come in, even if it's for a period or two  
25 a day, just to try to get kids engaged in whatever

1 topic that they're interested in.

2 DR. BARTH: And I think the examples are great  
3 ones and the general notion that you're -- the  
4 sentiment that you're talking about makes perfect  
5 sense, and we've approved those for other schools. I  
6 just get worried when we do --

7 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Sure.

8 DR. BARTH: -- a waiver of this sort that it  
9 does open a door.

10 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely.

11 DR. BARTH: And I guess the question is, is  
12 there any way in which you would articulate some  
13 limitations in terms of tying this waiver to those  
14 kinds of initiatives that really would be career  
15 centered and where having someone who has expertise  
16 in the area being brought in would be the type of  
17 person that we're talking about here, not a full-  
18 scale --

19 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Right. And that's exactly what  
20 our intentions are in this process. We are not  
21 looking to -- through this waiver to circumvent any  
22 kind of teacher licensure for core areas or to meet  
23 the 38 required courses at all. We are purely  
24 looking for ways to personalize education for  
25 students and give them that many more opportunities

1 to experience something that maybe we can't provide  
2 with full-time staff; we just don't have the capacity  
3 to. And so it is going to be primarily limited to  
4 CTE or those very specific areas.

5 DR. BARTH: See, you keep -- the wiggle room --  
6 wiggle words keep popping in --

7 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Sure.

8 DR. BARTH: -- and that's what gets me nervous  
9 here. I mean, if these conversations are about, you  
10 know, solidifying things I'm going to be a lot more  
11 comfortable if the "primarily's" go away and we  
12 really talk more definitively about these.

13 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: These will focus on CTE.

14 DR. BARTH: Thank you.

15 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: These will focus on CTE.

16 DR. BARTH: All right. Great.

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Dr. Barth.

18 Additional questions, comments?

19 Yes, Ms. Zook.

20 MS. ZOOK: In the guidance and counseling, I  
21 probably need guidance from the ADE staff. Is this  
22 going to be an issue with regard to accreditation?

23 MS. McLAUGHLIN: They asked for that particular  
24 -- the guidance and counseling to be removed. They  
25 are no longer asking for that waiver.

1 MS. ZOOK: Makes my job a lot easier.

2 MS. McLAUGHLIN: All right.

3 MS. ZOOK: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

5 Questions or comments?

6 Yes, Ms. Newton.

7 MS. NEWTON: The library media, you are not  
8 wanting to waive a specialist; you're only asking to  
9 waive the time --

10 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Yes.

11 MS. NEWTON: -- the specialist does specific  
12 duties; right?

13 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely. Our vision for our  
14 library media specialist is to get them into our  
15 integrated classrooms, get them into our project-  
16 based classrooms, which is all of our classrooms, and  
17 really begin to help teachers teach those research  
18 skills, the writing skills, and things of that nature  
19 that they have such -- and technology skills that  
20 they have such a rich background in and could benefit  
21 our teachers. But they can't do that there in the  
22 library.

23 MS. NEWTON: Have you talked to your library  
24 media specialists about this?

25 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely.

1 MS. NEWTON: And what was the response?

2 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: They are very excited about  
3 being able to get out into the classroom and work  
4 with teachers in a co-teaching setting.

5 MS. NEWTON: Are you going to give them any kind  
6 of help with their normal administrative duties that  
7 still need to be done?

8 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely. We do have some  
9 paraprofessionals as well, but we also have one-and-  
10 a-half media specialists as well because of our  
11 ratio. And so we don't see any reason why our  
12 library would ever close or the administrative duties  
13 would change as far as having the lack of ability to  
14 do that.

15 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes, Commissioner.

17 COMMISSIONER KEY: Just to make sure that we  
18 note here, one of the waivers that they've requested  
19 actually will not be necessary because that law will  
20 not be in effect for the next school year. So just  
21 so y'all will know, and I was going to update y'all  
22 in my report later, that the waiver for instructional  
23 time, Arkansas Code 6-18-210 under Act 867, that has  
24 been repealed. So if y'all want a legal opinion on  
25 the effective date versus your choice here today --

1 but if this is to go into effect for the next school  
2 year, then that law will not exist at that time.

3 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Very good. Very good.

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you for that,  
5 Commissioner.

6 Yes, Ms. Ables.

7 MS. ABLES: I just wanted to say I went to Kirby  
8 as a student in a Flex/Mod for a day and I'm very  
9 excited for your kids and your teachers. The  
10 teachers there love it. They actually have more time  
11 to really focus on things they need to. Teachers are  
12 getting -- students are getting individualized help,  
13 so I'm excited for you in that. And I just want to  
14 say thank-you for empowering your teachers to be a  
15 part of this process and not going to them and  
16 saying, "Here's what we're going to do next year,"  
17 and I just really thank you for that. I mean, I love  
18 to see what happens -- and share your story.

19 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: I appreciate it. We'd love to.

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Ables.

21 Any additional comments or questions? Otherwise

22 --

23 Yes, Dr. Barth.

24 DR. BARTH: One more question on the class size/  
25 teaching load issue, and it also is a question of the



1 breadth of your request there. Obviously you again  
2 articulated a really good example of why this might  
3 be necessary. Are you limiting the request to this  
4 scenario or are you asking for a broader student  
5 teaching load?

6 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: We're primarily limiting it to  
7 this request -- sorry, "primarily" -- we are limiting  
8 it to this request. Thank you. We are limiting it  
9 to this request. We do have -- in this Flex/Mod  
10 schedule it is going to change the way we do things a  
11 little bit, especially with our integrated courses.  
12 Those courses are already large anyway with co-  
13 teaching settings and so sometimes we'll have upwards  
14 of 40 to 45 students in a block setting. We are  
15 going to do our very best to maintain those numbers  
16 but we needed the latitude that if for some reason in  
17 the scheduling process -- that if we exceeded the 150  
18 then obviously we could.

19 DR. BARTH: But the request is limited to that  
20 scenario, those courses?

21 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: The integrated courses and then  
22 our SLT as well, which is the structured learning  
23 time as well.

24 DR. BARTH: Okay. Thanks.

25 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any final questions or

1           comments from the Board? Otherwise, I will entertain  
2           a motion. And I know we've sometimes done these by  
3           waiver topic, sometimes as a whole. I'm not hearing  
4           the type of questions or comments I think that would  
5           lend us to necessarily have to do this by waiver  
6           topic, although if that is the pleasure of the Board  
7           we can do so.

8           DR. BARTH: That would be my preference.

9           CHAIRPERSON REITH: That would be your  
10          preference. Okay. Then we'll proceed by waiver  
11          topic.

12          Noting that the first waiver topic, planned  
13          instructional time, I guess it's at your discretion,  
14          Mr. Rutledge, if you would like us to proceed with  
15          that one or not after hearing comments from the  
16          Commissioner. It's going to be up to you.

17          SUPT. RUTLEDGE: We withdraw that request, as  
18          long as it's going to be in law next year.

19          CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Then starting with  
20          the waiver request as related to class size and  
21          teaching load I will entertain a motion.

22          Sorry, Ms. Newton; I didn't know if your pulling  
23          your mic down was to entertain a motion or get ready  
24          to vote.

25          MS. NEWTON: I was getting ready to vote, but

1 I'll do a motion.

2 CHAIRPERSON REITH: That would be great. I  
3 would love a motion.

4 MS. NEWTON: I move to approve the class size  
5 and teaching load for the integrated courses and the  
6 SLT courses.

7 DR. BARTH: Second.

8 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Motion made by Ms.  
9 Newton, seconded by Dr. Barth. All in favor?

10 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

11 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

12 Motion carries unanimously.

13 In regards to the waiver topic on teacher  
14 licensure --

15 DR. BARTH: I'll move to approve the teacher  
16 licensure, limited to the CTE courses.

17 MS. ZOOK: Second.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Motion made by Dr.  
19 Barth, seconded by Ms. Zook.

20 All in favor?

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

23 Motion carries unanimously.

24 And just to note that we can't impose those  
25 restrictions; you offered to do so. We're just

1 verbalizing that it was done --

2 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely.

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- for Ms. Freno's purpose.

4 I saw her back there a little panicked for a second

5 and I just wanted to make sure we got that for the

6 record --

7 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Absolutely.

8 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- that it was a self-

9 imposed voluntary decision that we are clarifying for  
10 those purposes.

11 DR. BARTH: I'm sure it felt very voluntary.

12 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Yeah, it was extraordinarily  
13 voluntary.

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And then on the waiver topic  
15 on guidance and counseling, my understanding is that  
16 it's been pulled?

17 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And so then the final waiver  
19 topic is on library media services. I will entertain  
20 a motion.

21 MS. DEAN: I move to approve the waiver for  
22 library media services.

23 DR. HILL: Second.

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Motion made by Ms.  
25 Dean, seconded by Dr. Hill.

1 All in favor?

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

4 Motion carries unanimously.

5 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. Thank you so  
7 much, Mr. Rutledge.

8 And then with that, I don't know -- Ms. Davis,  
9 yes.

10 MS. DAVIS: I know that the 6-18-210 is going to  
11 be repealed but I would prefer if you go ahead and  
12 take action on the rules that go with it, because at  
13 that time even if the law is repealed it's still in  
14 the standards. And until we get those rules done  
15 then they will still be held to the 6-hour day on the  
16 10.01.4. So, eventually, once the rules are updated  
17 that will be phased out but that would kind of limit  
18 them in the meantime of having this.

19 CHAIRPERSON REITH: So, thank you. Thank you,  
20 Ms. Davis, for that clarification and for the  
21 position of the Department.

22 I will pose it back then to Mr. Rutledge. I'm  
23 assuming you would like --

24 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Yes. Yes.

25 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- for the consideration on

1 that waiver topic.

2 And to the Board, I will entertain a motion in  
3 regards to the waiver topic on planned instructional  
4 time.

5 MS. ZOOK: So moved.

6 DR. BARTH: Second.

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Motion made by Ms. Zook,  
8 seconded by Dr. Barth. All in favor?

9 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

11 Motion carries unanimously.

12 Now we are -- you can officially go, Mr.  
13 Rutledge.

14 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: Thank you very much. I  
15 appreciate it.

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you so much and best  
17 of luck with your effort. And I hope you have  
18 ongoing conversations about the conversion charter  
19 and school of innovation processes, as you were  
20 saying, a longer-term framework.

21 SUPT. RUTLEDGE: We will. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Wonderful.

23 A-5: DISTRICT EXTENSION REQUEST FOR WAIVERS GRANTED TO OPEN-  
24 ENROLLMENT CHARTERS: SOUTHEAST EDUCATION SERVICE COOPERATIVE -  
25 McGEHEE SCHOOL DISTRICT

1 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And then to my colleagues,  
2 if you could indulge me, I am guessing this next  
3 action agenda item on the McGehee School should be a  
4 fairly short presentation. I'm looking down there,  
5 but just because this is kind of covering a vote that  
6 we took last month. So I don't know if you all feel  
7 you will -- would you rather we entertain this motion  
8 before or after lunch?

9 MS. ZOOK: Before.

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Before, that's what I  
11 thought. Okay. But may I infer that it may not take  
12 the full 20 minutes? Is that correct?

13 MS. EOFF: Seven.

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay.

15 MS. EOFF: Seven minutes.

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. We're going to hold  
17 you to it. No, I'm joking. But, no, legally you  
18 have 20, but just for the purposes of logistics and  
19 lunch.

20 So, Ms. McLaughlin, if you'll introduce for us  
21 Action Agenda Item A-5 in regards to the McGehee  
22 School District.

23 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Okay. We do have  
24 representatives from the McGehee School District and  
25 Southeast Co-op appearing before the Board with a

1 petition for extension of their waivers. The rest of  
2 the Southeast Co-op received their extension renewals  
3 in February. The topic is covering only teacher  
4 licensure. Their request does expire on June 11th  
5 and they are requesting for five years. We have  
6 Thomas -- Superintendent Thomas Gathen from McGehee  
7 School District and Karen Eoff, Southeast Co-op  
8 director.

9 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you so much. And for  
10 both of you if you may kindly raise your right hand,  
11 and anyone else that's wanting to offer testimony  
12 today. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony  
13 you're about to give shall be the truth, the whole  
14 truth, and nothing but the truth?

15 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

17 If you could kindly state your name and title  
18 for the record and you may proceed.

19 MS. EOFF: Karen Eoff, director of Southeast Co-  
20 op.

21 And as we appeared before you on February 9th  
22 without McGehee, I gave you a long rationale of why;  
23 I'm going to summarize that briefly, very briefly.

24 In the Southeast Co-op and McGehee School  
25 District the demand for teachers now still far



1 exceeds the supply and because of this our mission is  
2 still the same, to put a highly qualified teacher in  
3 every classroom. That's our single most important  
4 goal. However, that challenge, we have several  
5 roadblocks. Our first year of waivers for Act 1240  
6 teachers has provided to be a pathway to grow our  
7 own. It's the best device that we have. McGehee  
8 School District hired 18 teachers last -- this year,  
9 12 were fully licensed, 6 were Act 1240 teachers.  
10 All 6 are enrolled or have been enrolled in a  
11 nontraditional or other pathway; 4 of those now meet  
12 all regulations for licensure; 2 are still working on  
13 licensure but they intend to complete their  
14 licensure; all 6 have completed ProEthica training  
15 online and at their district; all 6 have a support  
16 coach at the Co-op and also have a mentor in the  
17 school district that is working intently with them.  
18 This waiver has allowed us again to have a supply  
19 pipeline like no other. We still have provided the  
20 MAT program and other programs; we have provided them  
21 with a supply of teachers that they are delighted to  
22 have. The UAM program Masters in Arts have went from  
23 70 last year to 123 completely enrolled and 23 more  
24 that are in the process, so we are providing teachers  
25 to these programs. We're also providing additional

1 support at the school, both financially and  
2 instructionally. McGehee School District does  
3 something quite unique: they pay \$2500 a year for two  
4 years to help the teachers afford to get in the MAT  
5 program; they also pay Praxis fees in hardship  
6 circumstances; they also reimburse teachers for  
7 license. They are doing everything financially they  
8 can at that district to support these teachers. It's  
9 very plain that we support these college-educated but  
10 non-licensed teachers into becoming fully licensed  
11 teachers. We want them to enter our workforce; we  
12 want them to stay with us; we want them to be  
13 teachers for 25 to 28 years more, or 35, if they so  
14 choose. McGehee School District is doing everything  
15 they can to recruit because we will always take a  
16 fully licensed teacher first. We are only doing this  
17 in our hardship areas and when we are in hardship.  
18 They recruit everywhere that it's possible. They go  
19 on -- they went to ASU, UAPB, SAU, UAM, ATU, and to  
20 the co-op recruiting fairs. We are doing everything  
21 we know to do to find teachers and maintain them in  
22 our classrooms.

23 So we would please ask your most consideration  
24 for continued waivers under Act 1240, and we will do  
25 everything within our power to get these teachers

1 licensed.

2 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. And it was 7  
3 minutes, so that was very well timed. Thank you so  
4 much, but you do have additional time. And I don't  
5 know if -- Mr. Gathen, if you had wanted to say a few  
6 words? I know you stood up and offered -- raised  
7 your hand for the possibility.

8 SUPT. GATHEN: Yes. First of all, I want to  
9 thank the Board for your considering granting this  
10 extension of these waivers. I'll share with you that  
11 we did in fact have six waivers granted as a result  
12 of your action last year. We continue to encourage,  
13 support and expect these waiver teachers to meet full  
14 certification requirements. We're providing them  
15 with the support that they need, both within the  
16 individual school and district-wide. Consequently,  
17 as Mrs. Eoff stated, 4 of those 6 teachers that were  
18 granted waivers have already met licensure  
19 requirements, and we will continue to work with those  
20 who have not to insure that they do as well.  
21 However, we expect to have to fill one to two  
22 positions with non-certificated individuals in this  
23 upcoming year. And in anticipation of that, I pray  
24 for your support and your passage and granting us  
25 this extension of this waiver.

1 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you so much, Mr.  
2 Gathen.

3 So, Ms. McLaughlin, if you could kindly confirm  
4 that there's no opposition signed up.

5 MS. FRENO: There is none.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: There is none. Okay. Thank  
7 you, Ms. Freno, for confirming.

8 Any closing remarks? Otherwise, I'll open it up  
9 to questions and comments from the Board.

10 Okay. Questions and comments or a motion from  
11 the Board?

12 MS. NEWTON: I move to approve the waiver.

13 DR. HILL: Second.

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Motion made by Ms. Newton,  
15 seconded by Dr. Hill. All in favor?

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

18 Motion carries unanimously.

19 Thank you all so much. I'm glad we could  
20 squeeze this in before lunch.

21 Yes, Ms. Zook.

22 MS. ZOOK: I wonder if we could negotiate to get  
23 you to stay on?

24 SUPT. GATHEN: Stay on?

25 MS. ZOOK: Yeah.

1 SUPT. GATHEN: It's not a great possibility.

2 MS. ZOOK: Well, this is a negotiation; right?

3 SUPT. GATHEN: But it is a possibility.

4 MS. ZOOK: Thank you for your service.

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yeah, thank you. And thank  
6 you for pointing that out, Ms. Zook. On behalf of  
7 all of us, thank you for your leadership, both of  
8 y'all, for down in southeast. Thank you.

9 SUPT. GATHEN: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: So with that, we are going  
11 to adjourn to lunch until 1:30 p.m.

12 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:48 - 1:34 p.m.)

13 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Good afternoon, everyone.  
14 We will be reconvening the action agenda of the  
15 Thursday, April 13th meeting of the State Board of  
16 Education.

17 A-6: CONSIDERATION OF THE CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL'S DECISION  
18 OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT REQUEST:  
19 ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: We left off, for those of  
21 you who are just joining us this afternoon, on Action  
22 Agenda Item A-6 from this morning in regards to the  
23 Charter Authorizing Panel's Decision of Open-  
24 Enrollment Public Charter Schools, and this one  
25 specifically in regards to the amendment request from

1 the Arkansas Connections Academy.

2 Ms. Perry, you are recognized.

3 MS. PERRY: Yes. Virginia Perry with the  
4 Arkansas Department of Education's Charter Unit. On  
5 the phone we have Ms. Darla Gardner representing  
6 Arkansas Connections Academy.

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: So with that, Ms. Perry, if  
8 you could kindly remind us of this procedure. At  
9 this juncture it's just whether we choose to affirm  
10 or deny?

11 MS. PERRY: At this juncture it's just whether  
12 you choose to affirm or review or not.

13 CHAIRPERSON REITH: That's what I thought, Ms.  
14 Perry. Thank you for the affirmation.

15 And, yes, Ms. Davis.

16 MS. DAVIS: You either review or not review.

17 MS. PERRY: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. Thank you for  
19 the precision with the wording, review or not review.

20 So with that, I open it up to my colleagues for  
21 any questions or clarifications to get to a motion on  
22 a decision to review or not review.

23 If there are none, then I would entertain a  
24 motion.

25 DR. BARTH: I move not to review.

1 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Do I have a second?

2 MS. DEAN: Second.

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Motion made by Dr. Barth,  
4 seconded by Ms. Dean. All in favor?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

7 Motion carries unanimously.

8 MR. BRADBERRY: Thank you, Ms. Gardner.

9 MS. GARDNER: Thank you.

10 A-7: CONSIDERATION OF THE CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL'S DECISION  
11 OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT REQUEST:

12 SIATech

13 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Moving on to Action Agenda  
14 Item A-7, Consideration of the Charter Authorizing  
15 Panel's Decision of an Enrollment Charter School  
16 Amendment Request [sic] from SIATech. Ms. Perry,  
17 you're once again recognized.

18 MS. PERRY: Yes. And here to represent SIATech  
19 today is Superintendent Katie Tatum. And again, the  
20 Board has the choice to review or not to review.

21 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Perry and Ms.  
22 Tatum.

23 With that, any questions or comments from the  
24 Board? Otherwise, I will entertain a motion.

25 MS. DEAN: I move to not review.

1 MS. ZOOK: Second.

2 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Motion made by Ms. Dean,  
3 seconded by Ms. Zook. All in favor?

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

6 Motion carries unanimously.

7 A-8: END-OF-SEMESTER REVIEW OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER  
8 SCHOOLS IN THE INITIAL YEAR OF OPERATION: ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS  
9 ACADEMY AND FUTURE SCHOOL OF FT. SMITH

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And, finally, Action Agenda  
11 Item A-8, the End-of-Semester Reviews, and I believe  
12 it's of the Arkansas Connections Academy and Future  
13 School of Fort Smith.

14 Ms. McLaughlin.

15 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Yes. Data are provided for  
16 this item to meet the requirement of Arkansas Code  
17 Annotated 6-23-406 that requires the Department of  
18 Education to conduct an end-of-semester review of  
19 each open-enrollment public charter school in its  
20 initial school year of operation and report to the  
21 State Board of Education on the charter school's  
22 overall financial condition and condition of student  
23 enrollment. And in your packet you have the end-of-  
24 semester reports for both Arkansas Connections  
25 Academy and Future School of Fort Smith.



1 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. McLaughlin.  
2 Any questions from the Board?

3 MR. BRADBERRY: Madam Chair, I think we have Ms.  
4 Gardner back on the line with -- and Ms. Bale, I  
5 believe it is. If you're joining us for the charter  
6 review of item number 8, could you please identify  
7 yourself?

8 SUPT. FLANAGAN: Yeah. This is Trish -- go  
9 ahead.

10 MR. ADAMS: Bryce Adams, state relations for  
11 Connections Education.

12 MS. FLANAGAN: Trish Flanagan, superintendent,  
13 Future School of Fort Smith.

14 MS. GARDNER: Darla Gardner, school leader,  
15 Arkansas Connections Academy.

16 MR. BRADBERRY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
18 Bradberry.

19 And then with this, Ms. McLaughlin, if you could  
20 kindly clarify the motion that you'll be seeking from  
21 the Board. Obviously, I don't want to pressure our  
22 colleagues in that direction, and we'll entertain  
23 questions or comments, but I'm assuming here it's  
24 just whether to accept the review. Would that be  
25 correct?

1 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Yes. According to --  
2 historically, we provide an end-of-semester report.  
3 We will again provide an end-of-the-year report, in  
4 either June or July. And the request is for you to  
5 accept or not accept the report.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Thank you. Thank you  
7 for clarifying.

8 So with that, any questions or comments from the  
9 Board?

10 Yes, Ms. Zook.

11 MS. ZOOK: I have a -- is Mr. Rogers in the  
12 room? I wondered if I should be concerned about the  
13 red ink on Future School?

14 COMMISSIONER KEY: We can get him.

15 MS. ZOOK: Or you may know the answer.

16 MS. McLAUGHLIN: We do have representatives from  
17 APSRC that can address that, and also I have had an  
18 explanation from the Finance Department that I can  
19 address as well.

20 MS. ZOOK: Okay. Would you do that, please?

21 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Okay. Basically, this report  
22 is pulled -- it was pulled on February 28th. And not  
23 to step on the toes of the representatives from  
24 APSRC, but a lot of times the revenues are not  
25 entered until after the first of the month, and so I

1 think that's what that is reflecting. This is a live  
2 document; it is based on the personnel in the  
3 district they are entering into eFinance and it is --  
4 the numbers are always going to be changing.

5 MS. ZOOK: Okay. That is very helpful. Thank  
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Did anyone want to elaborate  
8 from Future School?

9 MS. FLANAGAN: It's difficult for me to hear  
10 exactly. Is it appropriate for me to chime in right  
11 now?

12 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes. Yes, it would. We're  
13 just on the question around the -- as Ms. Zook -- the  
14 deficits, or the red ink, as she phrased it, in  
15 regards to your first semester balances.

16 MS. FLANAGAN: Right. My -- basically, in  
17 speaking with our financial manager, he basically --  
18 he explained this to help me understand that, you  
19 know, as I think was mentioned, if I heard correctly,  
20 the report was generated by the Department on  
21 February 28th, before we had posted any revenue in  
22 APSCN. And the major swing in fund balance was -- is  
23 a hundred-percent attributed to the report being  
24 generated before we posted the revenue in closing out  
25 the month via our accounting firm. But we've never

1 had a negative account balance in our bank account or  
2 on the books.

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. So that's just  
4 an affirmation then of Ms. McLaughlin. Yes.

5 And just to confirm for the purposes of our  
6 court reporter, that was Ms. Flanagan, correct,  
7 speaking on behalf of Future School of Fort Smith?

8 MR. BRADBERRY: (Nodding head up and down.)

9 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay, correct. Thank you,  
10 Mr. Bradberry, for confirming. Thank you.

11 Any additional questions or comments?  
12 Otherwise, I'll entertain a motion from the Board.

13 MS. NEWTON: I move to approve.

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you. Do I have a  
15 second?

16 DR. BARTH: Second.

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Motion made by Ms.  
18 Newton, seconded by Dr. Barth. All in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

21 Motion carries unanimously.

22 B-1: CONSIDERATION OF ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE 2017-2018 RENEWAL  
23 GRANTS

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: We are now moving on to the  
25 afternoon portion of the action agenda. So Action

1           Agenda B, Item Number 1, Consideration of Arkansas  
2           Better Chance 2017-2018 Renewal Grants.

3                   MS. MCKINNEY: Thank you. I'm seeking your  
4           approval for the new grants for the 2017-18 school  
5           year. This is a renewal of the previous programs  
6           that are in good-standing.

7                   CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Thank you, Ms.  
8           McKinney.

9                   Any questions or comments from the Board?

10                  DR. BARTH: Ms. Reith --

11                  CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes, Dr. Barth.

12                  DR. BARTH: And this may be for the  
13           Commissioner. So the additional funds for ABC, the  
14           \$3 million -- right -- that was the final amount.  
15           And how will that play out in the year ahead in terms  
16           of -- you know -- where are we going to see those  
17           numbers? I think it was primarily for enhanced  
18           quality, especially pay, rather than new seats;  
19           right?

20                  MS. MCKINNEY: That's correct.

21                  DR. BARTH: And so at what point are we really  
22           going to see that money flow into the system here?

23                  MS. MCKINNEY: Well, I'm waiting for guidance  
24           from the Department of Education and so waiting to --  
25           I would assume after July 1.

1           COMMISSIONER KEY: With that revenue  
2           stabilization just passing, you know, we'll start  
3           that process of working with Early Childhood to  
4           determine how that looks. I think most -- a lot of  
5           that information is going to come from Early  
6           Childhood as to how we, you know, will allocate that,  
7           what the mechanism will be to getting that out to  
8           make those quality improvements. So it's just  
9           something that we haven't gotten to yet, but we'll be  
10          bringing it closer to the fiscal year.

11          DR. BARTH: Okay. And so we would see a later  
12          -- probably something along these lines later on that  
13          would just be enhancements to existing programs; is  
14          that probably how it's going to --

15          COMMISSIONER KEY: Well, maybe enhancements, but  
16          there may be funds spent for public and professional  
17          development. So, actually, Tonya Williams and I, we  
18          have not had those conversations. I'm not sure if  
19          they've had those with Ms. Williams' team, with our  
20          team. I don't know if they've happened yet. So it's  
21          still kind of new, but we'll keep you posted on where  
22          we're headed with those.

23          DR. BARTH: Great. Thanks.

24          MS. MCKINNEY: We are thinking that it would be  
25          -- you know -- we would target those districts who

1 have individuals that have been meeting the minimum  
2 criteria for staff qualifications. And then also  
3 other professional development to help individuals  
4 accomplish getting that degree or that training, as  
5 well as having even some for local innovations, like  
6 transportation or something to meet those hard-to-  
7 reach students.

8 DR. BARTH: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

10 Any additional questions or comments for Ms.  
11 McKinney?

12 Okay. With that, I'll entertain a motion.

13 MS. NEWTON: Move to approve.

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Newton.

15 DR. BARTH: Second.

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Do I have a second? Thank  
17 you, Dr. Barth.

18 Motion made by Ms. Newton, seconded by Dr.  
19 Barth. Sorry, all, for the post-lunch lull. I think  
20 we're getting our energy back. Maybe we need a round  
21 of coffee here.

22 All in favor?

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

25 Motion carries unanimously. Thank you.

1 B-2: RECOMMENDATION OF THE ARKANSAS CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND  
2 EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS, BIRTH THROUGH 60 MONTHS

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Moving on to Action Agenda  
4 Item B2, Recommendation of the Arkansas Child  
5 Development and Early Learning Standards, Birth  
6 through 60 Months. Ms. McKinney, you're once again  
7 recognized.

8 MS. MCKINNEY: Thank you. Hopefully you each  
9 have had an opportunity to go online and review the  
10 standards. I will say that it was quite a joint  
11 effort comprised of individuals from the Department  
12 of Ed., interest groups, school-based programs,  
13 private programs, Head Start. I don't think many  
14 people were left out. Additionally, we did hold  
15 public hearings around the state to get review and  
16 comment, brought them back, looked at, revised. We  
17 definitely wanted to make sure that there was a  
18 strong alignment between what happens in preschool  
19 education, as children get ready to transition into  
20 kindergarten and on up, and so we made sure that  
21 those different skill-sets were involved in putting  
22 this into place. Additionally, after we received all  
23 the review and comments then we vetted each domain  
24 out to experts throughout the nation to get their  
25 review and comment. So I feel like that we have made



1 a very concerted effort to make these as  
2 comprehensive as possible in preparing children for  
3 their next environment.

4 With that, I bring them to you because we would  
5 like to know that you (1) have reviewed them, and (2)  
6 that you would consider them for approval.

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. McKinney.  
8 This is a very exciting development and impressive  
9 document, without a doubt.

10 To my colleagues: questions and comments?

11 DR. BARTH: Just a quick comment, I mean,  
12 following on yours. I mean, this is really exciting  
13 in terms of really connecting back to the time young  
14 folks arrive in this world, how those earliest months  
15 really connect to their later learning in a really  
16 thoughtful way. I thought this was not only really  
17 fascinating but also I think very important.

18 MS. MCKINNEY: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

20 Yes, Commissioner.

21 COMMISSIONER KEY: Madam Chair, I would just say  
22 that I think this is an example of how our agencies,  
23 not just these two agencies but our agencies --  
24 Higher Ed. and Career Ed. -- are working together to  
25 align and streamline our approach so that there's no

1 gap between what Early Childhood is thinking and  
2 doing versus K-12, and then as we get into Career Ed.  
3 and Higher Ed. opportunities. So that work is  
4 ongoing. And really this is a -- that type of work  
5 is a critical component of our SPM, our Strategic  
6 Process Management, and it's our strategic plan to  
7 continue these types of partnerships.

8 And also, you know, part of what we need to do  
9 is communicate this. It's not just going to be  
10 communicated to early childhood centers and ABC  
11 programs, but also to the kindergartners and  
12 elementary level so that they know what's expected  
13 from the programs that feed their programs. So, as  
14 we know, feeder patterns is something that is  
15 critical in the work we're doing and we're putting  
16 more focus on that.

17 And, Ms. McKinney, thank you for -- and the  
18 whole team, Early Childhood, for letting us be at the  
19 table and be partners in this and working together.

20 MS. MCKINNEY: Thank you. It is currently being  
21 translated into Spanish, and the University of  
22 Arkansas is working with us and is getting ready to  
23 roll it out across the state and providing training  
24 and technical assistance.

25 CHAIRPERSON REITH: That's wonderful. You just

1 spoke to my heart there with the Spanish translation.

2 And then I guess that lends me to a question:  
3 who is the intended audience then with the training?

4 MS. MCKINNEY: Well, of course, the first  
5 training would be to those individuals, like with the  
6 ABC programs, Head Start, the various communities  
7 that are serving our early childhood program, because  
8 this is a move to transition from the frameworks that  
9 have been used into these new standards. And then,  
10 of course, as Commissioner Key indicated, also to get  
11 kindergarten teachers, parents -- I mean, I'm hoping  
12 that it will branch down to a number of different  
13 individuals.

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: That's fantastic.  
15 Wonderful.

16 Ms. Zook.

17 Oh, sorry, Commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER KEY: Just to say that if you look  
19 at the presentation, you know, how these standards  
20 are presented, it's easy -- they're easy to read;  
21 they're full graphic in nature; you know, it's not  
22 just words on paper. You know, you can actually take  
23 the words and the expectations, align them with the  
24 age range and, you know, the different components of  
25 development. And it's very user-friendly; I think

1 the audience could be anyone. I think any parent  
2 could look at this and understand what it's saying,  
3 which I think is a big plus for a government  
4 document. We don't have a strong history of doing it  
5 in an easy-to-read format.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Well, and also that this  
7 acknowledges then the whole-child approach, right,  
8 and that it's not just what's taught in school but  
9 then also at home and empowering parents from all  
10 walks of life to be able to be part of that. That's  
11 amazing. Talk about innovation in action.

12 Yes, Ms. Zook.

13 MS. ZOOK: Yes. I'm especially pleased to see  
14 that you're looking at the whole child, not just the  
15 intellectual or training academically. I'm thrilled  
16 that all the agencies are working together. I think  
17 that this will then help provide the data that we're  
18 wanting about how long does it take effect, how many  
19 years does it make a difference in a child's life.  
20 And I was pleased to see that a third of the three-  
21 year olds in the state and two-thirds of the four-  
22 year olds in the state are enrolled actively in a  
23 pre-K program. I guess the thing that we will have  
24 to rely on you all to tell us is -- and then the  
25 districts that are running their own pre-K, is there

1 a difference from kids who come from a program, a  
2 pre-K program that isn't being run by the district  
3 and those that are being run? Because I know that  
4 without the data -- in my mind, I would think if  
5 you're in the building with the elementary and the  
6 kindergarten teachers and everybody is talking in the  
7 lounge and making friends and going on that that  
8 might be something that could make even more  
9 difference, even if we see difference through second  
10 and fourth and high school. But is there a more  
11 profound difference when the district runs the  
12 program versus the kids that come in from different  
13 -- and I know I live in a very small town, in  
14 Melbourne, but we have three different kinds of pre-  
15 Ks there, as well as the Head Start and the three-  
16 year old program.

17 So I think this is a terrific start in the right  
18 direction and will help those who make these  
19 financial decisions have a -- as Ms. Chambers is  
20 always reminding us, how are you going to measure  
21 success. So I really appreciate that and thank you  
22 very much.

23 MS. MCKINNEY: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Just a final query on my  
25 part. I know we've talked about, you know, cross

1 agency collaboration here in Arkansas, but I'm  
2 assuming -- and it looks like the Kellogg Foundation  
3 helped pay for this, but there was also some national  
4 best practices that were taken into account as part  
5 of this. Was this --

6 MS. MCKINNEY: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- part of like a broader  
8 national maybe effort, as well?

9 MS. MCKINNEY: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay.

11 MS. MCKINNEY: In fact, we have a list of  
12 different experts in each one of the domains that we  
13 vetted it out to to give us feedback and comments.  
14 And then we took those comments and analyzed it and  
15 made decisions in how we would incorporate them into  
16 the standards. So, yes, it was definitely vetted out  
17 there across the nation.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. McKinney.

19 Any final questions or comments? Otherwise, I  
20 will entertain a motion from the Board.

21 MS. ZOOK: I move that we move forward with  
22 this, accept this, and compliment them for the things  
23 they're doing.

24 Sorry, Ms. Coffman.

25 DR. HILL: Second.

1 CHAIRPERSON REITH: On the complimenting too;  
2 right?

3 DR. HILL: Yes, yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. Just checking.

5 Motion made by Ms. Zook, seconded by Dr. Hill.

6 All in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

9 Motion carries unanimously.

10 Congratulations, and thank you.

11 MS. MCKINNEY: Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Please continue to report  
13 back how the rollout goes.

14 MS. MCKINNEY: We certainly will.

15 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you.

16 B-3: CONSIDERATION OF WAIVER REQUEST FOR TEACHING LICENSE -  
17 MS. GALE RICHMOND

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Moving on to Action Agenda  
19 Item B-3, Consideration of the Waiver Request for  
20 Teaching License by Ms. Richmond. Ms. Harris-Ritter,  
21 you are recognized.

22 MS. HARRIS-RITTER: Thank you so much. Just  
23 before I step up here and really talk to y'all, I'd  
24 like to hand these handouts up to y'all. There you  
25 go; thank you.

1 (WHEREUPON, Exhibit One (1) to item B3 was  
2 marked for identification and entered into evidence.)

3 MS. HARRIS-RITTER: I would like to introduce  
4 you to Gale Richmond. She is here from Forrest City;  
5 she's an elementary school teacher there, and she has  
6 submitted a written request for a waiver. She  
7 applied to renew her license and the Department  
8 notified her that she was disqualified from holding a  
9 teaching license under Arkansas Code Annotated 6-17-  
10 410, which means she had a disqualifying offense.  
11 She is representing herself.

12 The handout that I have given all of you are  
13 documents that she provided to us, and the Department  
14 is recommending that you grant the waiver.

15 I can give you just a little bit more background  
16 and then if you have questions she could be sworn in  
17 and she could answer them.

18 She's been an elementary school teacher in  
19 Forrest City for almost a full 29 years, and this  
20 incident occurred in June of 2004. She was married  
21 to someone who was convicted of sexual assault and  
22 she was found by -- her name was placed on the Child  
23 Maltreatment Registry because she left her children,  
24 her two daughters, at home with their father and an  
25 incident occurred. It's been 13 years since this



1 incident. She and both of her daughters did a year  
2 of work with DHS, from 2004 to 2005. She is -- she  
3 has no criminal history and she has done a number of  
4 courses; evidence of that has been provided to you.  
5 And if you have any questions of her -- oh, I know.  
6 There are employment references and character  
7 references. The employment references were provided  
8 by Willie Doby, who was her principal and supervisor  
9 for 20 years at Central Elementary School, and  
10 DeAngela Graham, who is her current assistant  
11 principal. She also has letters of support from her  
12 twin daughters, her pastor, and her sister.

13 And so now if you would like to swear her in and  
14 ask her anything --

15 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Ms. Richmond, if you would  
16 raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that  
17 the testimony you're about to give shall be the  
18 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

19 MS. RICHMOND: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Richmond.

21 And would you like to give opening remarks or  
22 would you like us just to answer you -- ask you  
23 questions?

24 MS. RICHMOND: You can ask questions.

25 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. So I think my

1 colleagues right now are taking a moment in reviewing  
2 these documents, but if anyone does have any  
3 questions for Ms. Richmond --

4 Ms. Zook.

5 MS. ZOOK: With my other hat of being a CASA  
6 worker I will say that often when one spouse is  
7 married to another and one has a True finding that  
8 the courts often have to emphasize that you can't  
9 just have your home like an ordinary home where one  
10 parent can or cannot be alone with the children,  
11 which almost is like single-parenting with another  
12 adult in the house. So it is not unusual that this  
13 really has to be emphasized to them, and from the  
14 sound of this letter she totally gets it and  
15 understands and if she could go back it would be  
16 handled differently.

17 So from my CASA hat to my State Board hat, I  
18 recommend that we take the ADE's recommendation and  
19 provide the waiver.

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Zook.

21 Do I have a second?

22 MS. DEAN: Second.

23 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Motion made by Ms. Zook,  
24 seconded by Ms. Dean. Any discussion? Otherwise,  
25 we'll do a roll-call -- okay -- or we'll do a vote.

1 All in favor?

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

4 Motion carries unanimously.

5 Thank you so much and congratulations, Ms.

6 Richmond. It looks like it's been a tough journey.

7 Thank you. Thank you so much. And thank you, Ms.

8 Harris-Ritter.

9 B-4: CONSIDERATION OF ACTION REGARDING THE LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL  
10 DISTRICT

11 CHAIRPERSON REITH: So with that, we are moving  
12 on to the last action agenda item of the day, B-4,  
13 Consideration of Action Regarding the Little Rock  
14 School District.

15 I will at this time ask if Ms. Freno or somebody  
16 could kindly see if there was any public comment  
17 written, and I know I haven't asked for it since the  
18 morning. And as she's doing so, for the purpose of  
19 record I am -- okay, thank you -- I'm assuming there  
20 might be some value in going ahead and reading the  
21 context of this, and then I'll recognize the  
22 presenter, Dr. Barth, since there's not a specific  
23 staff member assigned to this, as I know sometimes --

24 During the March 9, 2017 State Board meeting,  
25 State Board vice chair Dr. Jay Barth announced that

1 he would submit an action agenda item for  
2 consideration on the April State Board agenda. As  
3 per the State Board operating guidelines, Dr. Barth  
4 submitted a request to place an item on the agenda.  
5 Requests to place items on the agenda shall be  
6 received by the liaison in writing at least 20 days  
7 before the regular board meeting. State Board  
8 liaison, Ms. Deborah Coffman, received that request  
9 by email Friday, March 24, 2017.

10 By majority vote, on January 28, 2015, the State  
11 Board removed the local school board. In the absence  
12 of the board of directors the State Board directed  
13 the Commissioner to assume all authority of the board  
14 of directors as may be necessary for the day-to-day  
15 governance of the school district.

16 Dr. Barth, you're recognized.

17 DR. BARTH: Thank you. Thank you. Obviously,  
18 those of us who were on the State Board in the lead-  
19 up to the January 2015 vote, and those others of you  
20 who were observing it, know that that lead-up and  
21 that decision showed a very divided community in  
22 Little Rock. And those divisions over the last two-  
23 plus years obviously have only become more enhanced  
24 in many ways and we know that divided communities  
25 cannot provide the foundation for the great schools

1 that are needed. And so, you know, my view is that  
2 it is the responsibility of whoever -- whomever can  
3 help to begin to heal those divisions has  
4 responsibility to do so. And, of course, under the  
5 statutory authority, section (f) of the current law  
6 does give us that independent authority to consider a  
7 game plan for returning the district to local  
8 control. Obviously, the vote in May, the May 9th  
9 vote on a millage extension and the way in which the  
10 campaigns for and against that millage extension  
11 really are reinforcing these divisions. But I think  
12 it's not just about that vote, as important as it is,  
13 and I think it's a very important vote for the future  
14 of the district but I think it's a really broader  
15 issue of the divisions.

16 And so I had hoped to have a motion today to  
17 allow the planning process laid out in the new  
18 accountability legislation for Level 5 school  
19 districts to play out. Obviously, Little Rock and  
20 Dollarway will be immediately converted to Level 5  
21 schools. But I also thought it was important for  
22 there to be clarity about how and when Little Rock  
23 could begin to move towards local control, with a  
24 vision for allowing Mr. Poore and a newly-elected  
25 board to really begin to take action together on

1           behalf of the patrons of the district. I think we  
2           have heard over recent months, really since the  
3           beginning of this process, that it was -- there was a  
4           desire to return to local control as soon as  
5           possible. But I think that there is -- you know --  
6           words are important but it really is actions that are  
7           more important, and I thought that it was important  
8           for this board to consider taking that action, which  
9           we have.

10                   I think as you all know, that didn't -- that  
11           consensus was not achieved on this and you, I think,  
12           know from the media accounts how this played out.  
13           And I want to apologize to the Board for being  
14           something of a lone ranger on this, but I think you  
15           also know that because of our open meetings law it's  
16           very difficult for us to have conversations with one  
17           another and build consensus among one another. And  
18           so I made the decision to go to the Commissioner and  
19           we had some very good conversations, and I think we  
20           maybe got close but we didn't get there in terms of  
21           this kind of clarity about the future. The item was  
22           already on the agenda and so rather than pulling it  
23           off, I decided to leave it on the agenda to present  
24           an opportunity for discussion among this board in an  
25           open meeting, since we can do that here, but also to

1 give an opportunity to the Commissioner to make  
2 whatever comments he wanted to make about it.

3 And so that's really all I have today. I do not  
4 have an item, but I do continue to believe strongly  
5 that this board should give clarity to this community  
6 about the future of its schools. And I think we have  
7 reached a point where whatever -- very good things  
8 have happened over the last couple of years and I  
9 think we would be -- I think those who say nothing  
10 good has happened over the last couple of years are  
11 missing a lot about the improved fiscal practices of  
12 the district and a variety of other things that have  
13 happened in the district. But I think there reaches  
14 a point where for a district to really take the next  
15 big step the community has to be fully involved and  
16 we know that an elected school board is a very  
17 important part of that community engagement. So  
18 those are my comments.

19 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yeah, thank you, Dr. Barth.  
20 And in large part because of open meeting laws I also  
21 felt strongly about keeping this agenda item in place  
22 because this is an opportunity for us now to have a  
23 discussion here publicly together. And the  
24 Commissioner had indicated as well that in  
25 preparation for this conversation and knowing this is

1 of interest had prepared some remarks as well to  
2 hopefully elucidate this conversation. And then we  
3 know that members of our community have signed up to  
4 offer public comment, and we did vote to hear public  
5 comment earlier today and so we'll allotting a space  
6 for that as well.

7 I do want to recognize that we've had at least I  
8 think three elected officials here today. I  
9 apologize; I know normally in transition moments we  
10 recognize them. They are signed up for public  
11 comment, but I do want to thank profusely our  
12 Senators and Representatives for being here, and  
13 we'll recognize them here in short turn in regards to  
14 their remarks.

15 But as a point of hopefully framing -- and I  
16 would assume for the public as well probably wants to  
17 hear from the Commissioner. I know that when he  
18 expressed to me last night that he had comments I'm  
19 obviously eager to hear that as a frame, a point of  
20 reference for this conversation. So, Commissioner,  
21 with that you are recognized.

22 COMMISSIONER KEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
23 First, I just want to say Dr. Barth is correct; we  
24 had some very good conversations about this in the  
25 last couple of weeks leading up to today. Just I'll



1 say what I've said before: I and the Department are  
2 absolutely committed to returning Little Rock School  
3 District to local control. And as a matter of fact,  
4 in some of the conversation we had in talking about  
5 our legislative package, we believe that Act 930,  
6 which is the new accountability law that Dr. Barth  
7 mentioned, when compared to ACTAAP, provides the  
8 Department with more tools to have an expedited and  
9 methodical process for returning local control. So I  
10 wanted to share with you -- now that that bill has  
11 passed and has become Act 930, I want to let you see  
12 the timeline. Now this isn't a timeline for calling  
13 elections or anything else; this is simply a timeline  
14 for this bill or this law and how you all as a board  
15 fit in the process of this transition from ACTAAP to  
16 the Arkansas Educational Support Accountability Act.

17 So it became Act 930 in April. And as we've  
18 mentioned on some other laws that are pertinent to  
19 conversations we've had today, this law will go into  
20 effect the first of August, maybe July 31st, but  
21 right there in that timeframe. So as you see there  
22 under August, the Arkansas Educational Support  
23 Accountability Act law becomes enacted. And at that  
24 point the transition language in that bill requires  
25 that we work with the districts that are under state

1 authority and all districts that have schools in  
2 academic distress, Focus or Priority status, to  
3 develop a transitional support plan, because the  
4 supports that are needed in those schools need to  
5 continue -- the federal ESSA and directives from the  
6 Federal Department. The U.S. Department of Education  
7 has said, you know, the states cannot just leave  
8 those schools to their own ends or to their own  
9 devices; we must continue supporting those that have  
10 been identified under the previous federal  
11 accountability system. So we put all of those into  
12 this transitional plan so that we can begin working  
13 with those schools and those districts. So because  
14 that law goes into effect in August, that's really  
15 the time where we will be able to begin working with  
16 them on those plans.

17 The two districts that are currently in state  
18 takeover, Dollarway and Little Rock, will be moved to  
19 Level 5 intensive support. And then the process for  
20 exiting from state control under Level 5 intensive  
21 support, that's where that picks up. And so based on  
22 the transitional support plan, which we will have  
23 another year of data from ACT Aspire results that  
24 will be in and we'll be in the process of analyzing  
25 that data, those and any other interim assessments,

1 any other measures, including what we determine which  
2 will be the fifth indicator under the new ESSA plan,  
3 all of those pieces will work together to inform this  
4 transitional support plan. And in the fall of the  
5 year, after we've been able to develop those plans,  
6 we'll bring those back to you for evaluation. And at  
7 that point the Board will have a comprehensive  
8 picture of the systems in those districts, what's  
9 going on based on the most recent data and based on  
10 some new data that we've not previously had before  
11 us, specifically referencing school quality measures  
12 like the fifth indicator that we've been talking  
13 about under ESSA. So at that point you will be able  
14 to give us your thoughts on how to move forward with  
15 these districts. And as it moves on past the fall,  
16 as we get into the spring next year, looking at the  
17 moratorium or the pause for A-to-F will no longer be  
18 upon us, so we will come in April; we'll be looking  
19 at A-to-F report cards again. We will continue to  
20 review those transitional support plans. And then,  
21 as you see, this timeline moves us out into August  
22 and September, the beginning of the next school year,  
23 and there are some important benchmark dates there  
24 for ESSA -- and we'll talk a little bit more about  
25 that in the work session. But as it relates to this

1 conversation, you know, the Department is bound by  
2 the language that says all issues that led to  
3 academic distress must be addressed and those schools  
4 must be in academic distress.

5 Act 930 takes away academic distress. It puts  
6 in a system where you have what the ForwARd Arkansas  
7 report would have referred to as pre-academic  
8 distress; depending on what's going on in that  
9 district, levels of support that meet the needs of  
10 those districts in a more comprehensive fashion than  
11 what we've been looking at before.

12 So that's, you know, just giving you some  
13 information on the timeline that we are working in in  
14 the Department, that we'll be working with Mr. Poore,  
15 Mrs. Warren down at Dollarway, and the other  
16 districts that are currently Focus and Priority --  
17 have Focus and Priority schools.

18 The other thing that I wanted to talk about a  
19 little bit was you all may have been approached or  
20 asked questions about the bond issue. And I'm not  
21 going to sit here and give you a speech for or  
22 against or anything else; just to tell you that those  
23 questions that have been raised to me was concern  
24 about how the money would be used; if it was to pass,  
25 then the sum notion that the district wouldn't use

1 the money the way that it was outlined. And I can  
2 tell you that, you know, you all have been here  
3 through much of the time that we had Helena-West  
4 Helena under state control, PCSSD under state  
5 control, and I'll just remind you that during that  
6 time we had bond refinancing that took place, none  
7 that went to the voters but significant dollars that  
8 were recouped by refunding and refinancing bonds. If  
9 you look at Helena-West Helena using those funds to  
10 build a new elementary school right now, we, you  
11 know, used those funds -- worked with the district so  
12 they could use those funds for their intended  
13 purpose. And the same way with PCSSD; you look at  
14 the construction going on with Mills High School, you  
15 look at the construction going on at Robinson Middle  
16 School. We worked with Dr. Guess to create the plan,  
17 and it's their plan. Same thing with LRSD: Mr. Poore  
18 and his team have identified a list of projects;  
19 those projects will be funded. You know, it's the  
20 Department and the Commissioner's commitment that  
21 those projects will be funded according to the list  
22 that they have identified based on their needs, and  
23 they have a plan, a master plan that identifies  
24 those, so just to say that we're committed to using  
25 the funds for those intended projects in that plan.

1           Madam Chair, if the board members have any  
2           questions I'll be glad to tackle those. But that's  
3           -- those are the comments that I wanted to add in  
4           response and in conjunction with Dr. Barth's agenda  
5           item today.

6           MS. ZOOK: I think it might be helpful too if  
7           you will give sort of a quick review of Lakewood  
8           [sic] as to why the State Board is involved in the  
9           education of the kids throughout the state of  
10          Arkansas, and so for the people who weren't involved  
11          in education at the time might understand how these  
12          steps and structures and laws came about to begin  
13          with.

14          COMMISSIONER KEY: I don't know that we have  
15          enough time to go through that history. But in a  
16          nutshell, you know, the Lakeview decision, one of the  
17          components, the Supreme Court said that adequacy, you  
18          know, must -- the State must provide -- it's the  
19          State's duty to provide an adequate, efficient and  
20          equitable system of education for the whole state.  
21          And in that ruling they also made it clear that  
22          state's can certainly delegate that authority to  
23          local districts, which we have done for decades. But  
24          in the absence of those local boards, local entities,  
25          local patrons meeting the needs, then it's still the

1 State's responsibility. So that was clearly stated  
2 in Lakeview. And at the time this decision was made,  
3 at the time y'all made the decision on Dollarway, you  
4 know, you were acting and the Board was acting in  
5 conjunction with that duty of the State, because  
6 statutorily this board is authorized to do that, so  
7 -- and then to make sure that the corrections have  
8 taken place so that there's ongoing opportunities for  
9 success. And that's been our goal in working with  
10 any of the districts in state takeover that the  
11 decisions that are made provide the best chance of  
12 success moving forward for the district. And we've  
13 had districts that came back, and you look at Helena-  
14 West Helena would be one of those, but the way we  
15 have worked with them this last time you could see  
16 that their chance for success is much greater than  
17 what we gave them the last time. And we have learned  
18 from some of the challenges that we faced with other  
19 districts in returning local control -- and that's  
20 what has informed Act 930.

21 So a lot of what we have learned through the  
22 previous districts and working with those has gone  
23 straight into this act to help us develop a better  
24 process for the state meeting its constitutional  
25 obligation, at the same time respecting and

1 recognizing the importance of, as Dr. Barth said,  
2 that local element of involvement.

3 Does that help? Does that -- okay.

4 MS. ZOOK: No, I just thought it would be  
5 helpful to remind us.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Commissioner.

7 And I think the way I want to approach the rest  
8 of this action agenda item and conversation right now  
9 is to hear from the public as well, both in part, as  
10 Dr. Barth had shared -- I know I have felt as well  
11 obviously community voice being a part, as you were  
12 just even reiterating yourself, Commissioner, at the  
13 end, an essential part to the assurance of fair and  
14 equitable. At the end of the day, the community has  
15 to perceive it as fair and equitable for it indeed to  
16 be fair and equitable. And so I would like to  
17 recognize the community members who have joined us  
18 here today and then open it up to broader discussion  
19 and questions and conversations. I'd like to see if  
20 we can walk away, even though in lieu of a motion, at  
21 the very least with maybe some items that we can do,  
22 something that we can offer here in terms of moving  
23 forward.

24 And with that, the first that we have up for  
25 public comment is Senator Joyce Elliott. Senator,



1           you're recognized.

2                       SENATOR ELLIOTT: Thank you, Madam Chair, and  
3           good afternoon, Members. I've talked to you before,  
4           and I think every time I've come here, about the  
5           importance of and how I think it's possible for us to  
6           have a world class education system in our state.  
7           And whether our state moves to that or not I am  
8           convinced that Little Rock certainly could, but the  
9           Board is an impediment right now to our even having  
10          any ability to do that. And this is why I say so:  
11          when you took over the school district with those six  
12          out of 48 schools in academic distress, number one,  
13          that was not something you had to do, you chose to  
14          do. I respect that you could decide to do it. Now  
15          we're down to having three schools that are in  
16          academic distress and we still have the largest  
17          school district in the state under board authority.  
18          And we are not dealing just with academic distress;  
19          we're having huge decisions made in our school  
20          district at the behest of one person or two persons,  
21          with the largest school district in the state just  
22          sitting there having really no voice that is  
23          meaningful. For example, we are closing schools.  
24          And I watched the last board meeting, which I could  
25          not attend, and I know the comment was made, "That's

1           okay, we can close these schools; they will get over  
2           it. It's just like when we closed schools with  
3           consolidation." No, it's not. When we closed  
4           schools during consolidation it was because there  
5           were no other schools around that would provide the  
6           critical mass, so that they didn't have other  
7           options. We clearly have other options in this  
8           school district. We have the option -- for example,  
9           if we were going to close schools -- we have 48; we  
10          chose the three to close that are primarily in  
11          African American areas of this city.

12                 This is the kind of thing that's happening to us  
13          being under State control without representation.  
14          And during the legislative session, because I knew  
15          the Commissioner's hands were tied about what he  
16          could do, I worked with Representative Clark Tucker  
17          to offer a bill that would untie the Commissioner's  
18          hands. It was Senate Bill 274, and that bill  
19          provided in addition to the Board having the  
20          authority that you have today -- you don't have to  
21          wait until August -- the authority you have today to  
22          decide to move ahead on coming up with a plan to  
23          remove Little Rock from State authority. But Senate  
24          Bill 274 had an emergency clause on it. It passed  
25          the Senate. It passed the Senate Committee, it

1 passed the Senate. And when it got to the House side  
2 and we were about ready to run the bill there was no  
3 opposition from the Department of Education -- and we  
4 learned the night before the Department of Education  
5 had decided that they were going to oppose the bill  
6 the night before. So with that in mind I never ran  
7 the bill, hoping that the Board would use your  
8 authority to get moving on returning this district to  
9 the people to whom it should be returned.

10 It is difficult for us to think about moving  
11 ahead together, thinking world class or anything  
12 else, when we are so divided. And you might say,  
13 "Well, you can just choose not to be divided."  
14 That's convenient to say as board members, but if  
15 you're living in this city or if you don't know the  
16 history of this city it's easy to say so. But I  
17 think you have a powerful position here and you have  
18 an awesome authority and I think you need to use that  
19 authority to do something to make sure this district  
20 knows when it's going to be made whole. We know  
21 nothing. It's just we go from board meeting to board  
22 meeting and we learn nothing about the ultimate thing  
23 you say you want to do is to return the district to  
24 the people who, quote/unquote, "own the district."  
25 It is not fair; it is not right. If somebody can

1 give me a defensible reason for the State having  
2 control of a school district where 94% of the schools  
3 are not -- 94% are not in academic distress; only 84%  
4 were -- when you took it up to start with were not in  
5 academic distress. Now we have 94% not in academic  
6 distress. Make this math make some sense to me. And  
7 please don't extrapolate from anything that I say  
8 that I don't care about the other three schools; we  
9 do. But it is our responsibility to take care of  
10 those other three schools and you are the one entity  
11 between us and our responsibility to do what we  
12 should do. And I will remind you, as I take my seat,  
13 the only reason this board assumed authority was  
14 about academic distress. That was it. That's all  
15 the law allowed. And we have come up with all kind  
16 of reasons about the board and everything else; that  
17 things are better now. Well, I don't know if they're  
18 better now because of what was already in place,  
19 that's not an argument for me. The law is what's the  
20 argument for me and it says you took over this  
21 district because of academic distress. This is not a  
22 school district in academic distress, where 94% of  
23 the schools are not in academic distress.

24 So I beseech you, please follow the law and  
25 don't -- you don't have to wait until May or August.

1 The law is in place right now. We have one law at a  
2 time. 930 will go into effect in August. The law  
3 that we operate under right now is in effect. And  
4 what this proposes to do is keep moving us down the  
5 road. We keep moving -- we keep moving the bar. We  
6 move closer to it and you move the bar, and now  
7 you're going to ask us to assume authority under a  
8 brand-new law. Please don't do that. Use the law we  
9 have now and start the process. Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Senator.

11 Next on the public comment list -- I apologize,  
12 I can't read this name.

13 SENATOR ELLIOTT: Clark Tucker.

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Maybe, Commissioner, can you  
15 help me?

16 COMMISSIONER KEY: Michael Poore.

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Oh, sorry. I apologize,  
18 Superintendent Poore. But if it's all right we  
19 usually defer to our elected officials first, if  
20 that's all right, Superintendent.

21 SUPT. POORE: I didn't even know I signed up. I  
22 thought I was just signing in for being at the  
23 meeting, so -- I signed up right in behind --

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Well, for that, we may  
25 actually call on you in a minute then. Why don't we

1           commit to doing that? But in the interim,  
2           Representative Tucker please, you're recognized.

3                       REPRESENTATIVE TUCKER: Thank you, Madam  
4           Chairwoman. It's an honor to be here today. Thanks  
5           for taking the time to listen to me.

6                       I don't think there's very much I could say  
7           probably that you haven't already heard or that  
8           hasn't been argued to you. There's just a couple of  
9           points I want to make, the first I really feel almost  
10          silly saying because it certainly goes without saying  
11          but that is how important democracy is in the United  
12          States of America and in our society. And  
13          Chairwoman, you know, mentioned a moment ago -- she  
14          apologized for not getting us up here sooner. But  
15          I'm totally okay with that because I think it's  
16          important for me as someone who's elected by people  
17          in Little Rock to be here to let y'all know how  
18          important this issue is to me and to the 30,000  
19          people that I represent. You know, right now there's  
20          no one who's democratically elected who's  
21          participating in the decisions and the direction and  
22          control of Little Rock School District. And when I  
23          converse with my constituents about it they are  
24          frustrated now; that frustration is palpable. And,  
25          you know, certainly they don't always agree with

1 everything I do at the Capitol, and that's okay. I  
2 mean, that's good in a democracy. So long as the  
3 majority continues to be okay with it then, you know,  
4 that's okay, and they send me back. But, you know,  
5 the reason -- when I talk about it, especially if  
6 I've done something that they don't agree with,  
7 number one, they know -- there's really two parts to  
8 a democracy. I think we always think of the first  
9 one and that is they know they have input when they  
10 send me to the Capitol as to the policies that I will  
11 promote. But then the second part is on the back-end  
12 and that is that if I don't do what I say I'm going  
13 to do or they do something that I disagree with then  
14 they can hold me accountable for that. And right now  
15 when I converse with my constituents, even if they  
16 disagree with something, a decision that's made at  
17 this level, people expect not to always have  
18 everything go their way, but they also expect to have  
19 an opportunity to have input into that process and to  
20 have accountability on the back-side. And right now  
21 that is absent in Little Rock and that's what takes  
22 this feeling to a higher level, and I think that it's  
23 important for y'all to know that. I think it's  
24 important for me to be here to express that to y'all.

25 The second thing I would say is I really want to

1 impress upon y'all to act with a sense of urgency  
2 about the return to local control. I think if the  
3 decision today for this board -- if the Little Rock  
4 School District were not under State control right  
5 now, if we still had a school board and that decision  
6 had never taken place, and y'all were faced with a  
7 decision today as to whether to take over the  
8 district, the place it's in and the direction it's  
9 moving, I believe the answer to that would be a  
10 resounding no, that the State Board would not take  
11 over the district today given where it is and where  
12 it's headed. And I think that should really inform  
13 how you move forward with the return to local  
14 control.

15 And, you know, I understand how state government  
16 works; I know all about the regulatory and rule-  
17 making process. And I'm a lawyer in my day job and I  
18 have cases that last years and so I understand  
19 timelines. But in the timeline that the Commissioner  
20 passed out, you know, one of the items mentioned is  
21 that there's a transitional plan in November of '17.  
22 Well, that's two months shy of three years after  
23 district takeover -- and, you know, the people of  
24 Little Rock deserve better than that. And so I will  
25 just ask you to set hard deadlines, because if you



1 have a plan that's public then there can be some  
2 sense of accountability and that might give the  
3 people of Little Rock some feeling that they've had  
4 some input into the process. And so I would ask you  
5 to put together a hard plan for the return to local  
6 control and not to just act -- and the way I  
7 understand state government it generally has to  
8 operate at the pace it generally has to operate. But  
9 with this, in particular, when you've taken democracy  
10 away from a community, to act with a sense of urgency  
11 to return that democracy to that community. Thank  
12 you very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Representative.  
14 And then we finally have Ms. Ginny Blankenship.

15 MS. BLANKENSHIP: Good afternoon. I was not  
16 planning to speak publicly, ever, so please excuse me  
17 for referring to my teleprompter, as I frantically  
18 typed from my heart this morning, because sometimes  
19 you need to be brave. My name is Ginny Blankenship.  
20 My comments are my own and not those of my employer  
21 or any other organization I'm a part of. I'm neither  
22 a Democrat nor Republican. I'm neither pro-charter  
23 nor anti-charter, even though I've worked for three  
24 charter schools somehow and studied them for 18  
25 years. I'm simply here as a parent of a

1 kindergartner who is in school in Little Rock Public  
2 Schools, and his name is Samuel. Before he was born,  
3 my husband and I were originally zoned to Terry  
4 Elementary and Henderson Middle School when we bought  
5 our home. Now we're zoned to Fulbright, Pinnacle  
6 View, and Central High School. We hope to remain in  
7 Little Rock School District throughout our son's  
8 schooling because we still believe in public schools  
9 and we value the diversity of people and experiences  
10 our son is exposed to, just as my husband and I grew  
11 up in Pine Bluff. But as parents, we don't know what  
12 it's like to have a school board. I also want to  
13 speak on behalf of parents and students whose voices  
14 are too often unheard and do not have a financial,  
15 political or legal interest at stake in the outcome  
16 of this process.

17 I think that the State takeover has served as a  
18 wakeup call to many in our community, especially  
19 those who have not been as involved as we should've  
20 been before on behalf of other people's children.  
21 For me personally, I've really focused on helping  
22 Hall High School and Henderson over the past year or  
23 two. At the time I was working for the legislature  
24 and there wasn't really anything I could say but  
25 there was something I could do, and I helped get

1           6,000 books to Henderson and Hall High School in six  
2           months. Everybody, you know, has a role that they  
3           can play. In the meantime, I've joined every board  
4           or committee that will have me, even if they say no.  
5           I'm on the board of VIPs now. I'm part of Bright  
6           Futures, which Mr. Poore has brought to our district.  
7           I'm on the Little Rock Public Education Foundation.  
8           I'm trying to support Mr. Poore in making things  
9           better and trying new things. I've made a lot of new  
10          friends and allies in the process that are trying to  
11          do the same and they come from all walks of life, all  
12          over our district, and I feel like we are really  
13          making progress now.

14                 The whole district will also be helped by new  
15          legislation on reading and nonprofits and initiatives  
16          like the Arkansas Campaign for Grade Level Reading,  
17          Arkansas Kids Read, and even the Governor's own  
18          R.I.S.E. initiative. This is all very, very exciting  
19          to me and I am personally and professionally  
20          committed to doing whatever it takes to help  
21          Commissioner Key, the Governor, the Board, and ADE  
22          staff achieve success in all these measures. And  
23          yet, my district has three secondary schools that are  
24          still deemed to be distressed due to reading crises  
25          that were not addressed in earlier grades. And no

1 matter how hard our teachers, parents, and our  
2 community works at least one of those schools may  
3 still fall just below that 50% threshold for several  
4 more years, as long as the Board insists on using a  
5 standardized test score as the basis for State  
6 takeover of an entire district. But it doesn't have  
7 to be that way. I would never make excuses for poor  
8 leadership or instruction, but the reality is that  
9 when immigrant children from around the world are  
10 placed in newcomer centers, like Hall High School,  
11 many of whom still cannot read on grade levels in  
12 their native languages for many, many reasons, we are  
13 setting these children up for failure. And we are  
14 not only placing the blame on these children and  
15 their teachers at these schools, these very few  
16 schools, we are disenfranchising the entire district.

17 Despite what may have been good intentions by  
18 the State Board at the start, this takeover is still  
19 punishing me, my son, and every other child and  
20 family in the district by taking away our local  
21 control. And that is all that I heard at the Capitol  
22 this session: local control and parents' rights;  
23 local control and parents' rights.

24 This takeover is also driving away industries  
25 that no amount of economic development incentives

1 will ever come. Why would a corporation invest in a  
2 city with a school district that has been taken over  
3 by the executive branch and can't be trusted to let  
4 parents, like me and all the other great people that  
5 I've been working with across this city, take a  
6 leadership role in making things better for other  
7 people's kids, much less our economic future?

8 This takeover has led to a culture of distrust  
9 and animosity among the worst I have seen in 18 years  
10 of studying education policy and politics across the  
11 nation in my professional work. But on a personal  
12 level, it breaks my heart. It's breaking our  
13 community spirit.

14 And here's the urgency of your bravery today:  
15 many Little Rock voters really want to support this  
16 proposed bond refinance so that long neglected  
17 schools in Southwest Little Rock and other  
18 neighborhoods can finally have the facilities and the  
19 resources that they deserve, so that we compete with  
20 choices that parents have in other districts and  
21 other types of schools. But so many people do not  
22 know whom to trust anymore and I fear that it will  
23 fail if you do not take action today.

24 So I'm asking you to please help heal the spirit  
25 of our schools and insure a viable economic future

1 for our community by releasing the district from  
2 State control, which you have the right and the power  
3 to do, giving us assurance that the bond refinance,  
4 if passed, will be used as promised in helping us to  
5 rebuild a functional skilled school board that is  
6 able to work together on behalf of other people's  
7 kids, because they are all our kids and this is our  
8 community.

9 Thank you for your service. I know that these  
10 are very difficult and complicated decisions. So  
11 thank you even more for your bravery, because we need  
12 to pass this bond to refinance but first we have to  
13 re-empower this community now. Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Blankenship.  
15 And thank you all.

16 I have to admit, coming full circle, knowing I'm  
17 toward the end of my chairmanship and my time here on  
18 this board, I'm heartbroken on a lot of different  
19 levels. And one, and most of all, is the loss of  
20 faith in the institutions of this state and one  
21 especially that I serve on. I'm the girl that was  
22 born on the 4th of July, the one -- the daughter of  
23 an immigrant that fought to become a citizen. I  
24 believed in the democracy of this country and I  
25 believed the right people in the right positions

1 would make the right decisions for the better good.  
2 And I felt that the day I voted against the takeover  
3 of local control, and I still feel it here today,  
4 feeling that in this time that I've been the chair,  
5 not being able to offer more for the community, and  
6 where I with others celebrate the progress that has  
7 been made -- because, yes, I am standing with others  
8 and agreeing that progress is made. I would be  
9 remiss in not saying as well that I feel my name is  
10 going to be forever tied to decisions that are going  
11 to go down in the history of Little Rock and Arkansas  
12 as continuing structural racism in our education  
13 system and in our community. And by that definition  
14 it is racism that is not intended.

15 I feel privileged to serve with all of you, and  
16 I don't feel any one of you is making decisions from  
17 a lens of wanting to hurt others. I believe that  
18 with all my heart in having had the privilege to get  
19 to know you. But I do believe you're making  
20 decisions based on a life lens that does not reflect  
21 the life lens of so many that live in this community,  
22 individuals that still remember what it meant to  
23 fight for a vote. We get that. We get to wake up  
24 every morning and take for granted that we have a  
25 vote, and that is not so many communities. And I can

1 tell you that with my day work as well with  
2 immigrants that still feel disenfranchised from the  
3 processes that we have here that is not something  
4 that we can take for granted. And so we wonder --  
5 and this should be the biggest testament, how empty  
6 this hall is today. Almost every single conversation  
7 we have had with Little Rock has been jam-packed, one  
8 way or the other, people from all sides wanting to  
9 contribute. They have lost that much hope in us.  
10 They don't even bother showing up. And I know that  
11 leading into this conversation that they just -- why  
12 even bother. It's been a year, multiple years, but I  
13 won't deny I believe folks have legitimately tried to  
14 come and sit around the table that our  
15 superintendent, who's here today, has tried to sit  
16 around the table. But I'm sorry; when every single  
17 time members of our community come forth with just  
18 steps and they're not asking every single time local  
19 control; it's been impact studies, it's been  
20 meetings, it's been financials right now with the  
21 schools and "let's slow things down so we know for  
22 sure the districts know where this investment is  
23 going and how the money is going to be spent." And  
24 every single time you are told no, every single time,  
25 you wonder why they feel everything is stacked up



1           against them.

2                   And so I would like to beseech this board to --  
3           for those that did come forth and haven't given up on  
4           us -- and maybe it shouldn't be a surprise it's our  
5           elected officials; they're part of the system and  
6           they want to believe just as much as I think we all  
7           want to believe in our system. I'd like to challenge  
8           us to try and come up with something today, something  
9           that we can offer.

10                   A couple of thoughts that came to mind leading  
11           up to this conversation for myself: in our own laws  
12           we talk about a state of a district, the state of the  
13           district, and us being able to report to the district  
14           how they're doing and where their progress is going  
15           toward local control. And I know this is an overall  
16           general state timeline; this is not the timeline that  
17           we've been asked for for the Little Rock School  
18           District. I think we can try. I think we can try  
19           and offer more than just a broad state timeline on  
20           this. I think we can offer them more, and we're even  
21           required to in our own laws to do so. And so I offer  
22           that one option.

23                   And another one I offer up: it should not be  
24           lost on any of us that the 60th anniversary of the  
25           Little Rock Nine is coming up and there are -- and

1 this is our decision, built forever into the history  
2 of this state as part of the trajectory of that  
3 conversation, a mark that I don't think -- I know  
4 when I went to Washington D.C. and visited the  
5 National Museum of African American History -- and I  
6 wear this bracelet every day since then to remind me  
7 -- that's how Arkansas is depicted there. Our only  
8 marker in the history -- in the National Museum of  
9 African American History is the Little Rock Nine and  
10 the role that we played in segregation. We are  
11 better than that, Arkansas. We are better than that  
12 and we have more to offer than that. And so I offer  
13 when the Little Rock Nine, now eight, come to town we  
14 should sit down with them and we should understand  
15 our role in this history and have a conversation with  
16 them, for the reasons that have been suggested, that  
17 -- many of us aren't from this community, Little  
18 Rock. I know I personally was not alive at that  
19 time. I think all of us though have an opportunity  
20 here to remember where we come from and to make sure  
21 that where we're going forward is a different place  
22 than that, and I think that's something we can offer  
23 as well.

24 I think there's probably more ideas out there  
25 than I am smart enough to offer. I realize I am

1 probably not always the most educated in the room on  
2 education, and I look at Ms. Newton here who is  
3 probably the most educated in the room on education.  
4 But I like to think that all of us, heads together,  
5 our hearts are in the right place. I don't doubt  
6 that. But I really, honestly believe we have to do  
7 better because I don't think any of us can hold our  
8 head high, or should even be able to, knowing that  
9 folks don't trust us -- don't trust. And I know that  
10 that is not all of us, but there are elements where  
11 we have been lost in faith. And I'm a dreamer; I am.  
12 I'm a visionary; people tell me that. I like to hope  
13 for the best. Again, I think it's being born on the  
14 4th of July, the daughter of a Marine that fought for  
15 this country and was willing to die for it. But I  
16 really do believe we can offer better than this.

17 So I open this up here to those smarter than me  
18 and to my colleagues whom our hearts are in the right  
19 place. What can we offer? But please, let's not  
20 walk away today without offering something to Little  
21 Rock and the community, please.

22 MS. ZOOK: I wanted to start by, first of all,  
23 commending Commissioner Key. He inherited this  
24 situation. He was not the Commissioner when we made  
25 this vote, but he has admirably and with honest

1 dedication to the students undertaken the assignment  
2 that we were given.

3 By way of background, the Academic Distress  
4 Committee met with and studied documents from the  
5 Little Rock School District. We attended or watched  
6 broadcasts of the board meetings, the local board  
7 meetings. Some of us talked with volunteers,  
8 students, teachers, parents in the neighborhood, and  
9 others who had an interest in the Little Rock School  
10 District. We then brought our concerns to the full  
11 board. After this, had public meetings and hearings  
12 with the community and testimony the day of the final  
13 vote from any and everyone who wanted to make a  
14 statement -- students, parents, advocates, elected  
15 officials, and others. We also heard input from the  
16 ADE staff who had at that point already been working  
17 within the Little Rock School District for a while.

18 We then took a vote and it was the majority of  
19 the vote, 5-4. All members of the Academic Distress  
20 Committee voted yes. At least one person from each  
21 congressional district voted yes. Both members who  
22 represented the second congressional district voted  
23 yes. Dr. Barth voted no, but he is an at-large  
24 member. And the majority of the African American  
25 members voted yes. There was no racism or any other

1 sinister motive intended; just members who had  
2 studied the facts and voted.

3 This was needed for the students and the  
4 stability of the district. Subsequently, the  
5 decision was held up by the State Supreme Court and  
6 the federal court that's assigned to this district,  
7 as well as the other two Pulaski County districts,  
8 for over two decades.

9 Little Rock School District was determined to be  
10 in academic distress because 60% of their high  
11 schools and two of their middle schools, which  
12 represents over 4,000 students, were in academic  
13 distress, as well as one elementary school. The  
14 local board was constantly at odds, from our  
15 observation in attending the meetings and watching on  
16 the live-stream. They were at odds with each other  
17 and with the superintendent. They were at odds to  
18 the point that there had been over 20 superintendents  
19 in the 30-year period. There had not been any stable  
20 leadership from either since the original law in  
21 1982. I too am a student of democracy and fully  
22 believe in it. After the Lakewood [sic] decision --  
23 or the Lakeview decision -- sorry -- the decisions  
24 were made by the courts, which is democratically  
25 elected.

1           Once we intervened, we were made aware that it  
2           was even worse than we feared. Senator Elliott is  
3           correct; the decision and the law speaks to academic  
4           distress, and that's the reason we intervened. Over  
5           20% -- 20 of the schools we discovered -- and from  
6           reading the reports by ADE -- were in the bottom 10%  
7           in the state and nine were in the bottom 5%. The  
8           curriculum wasn't aligned. There were no TESS or  
9           LEADS in place. The RTI process wasn't being used.  
10          There were no standard lesson plans or teacher  
11          observations on a regular basis. The dyslexia  
12          program wasn't being implemented. There were special  
13          education disputes. There were no teacher  
14          collaboration opportunities. The TAGG groups were  
15          being -- were not being systematically --  
16          systemically addressed, to the point that 17 schools  
17          were Focus schools. The finances had to be  
18          addressed. The business systems were out of date,  
19          and there were no schools of innovation, no  
20          conversion charters to assist students with  
21          apprenticeships, concurrent credit, and career prep.  
22          All of this was not written into the law. All of  
23          this could not have prompted the Board to intervene.  
24          But once you have intervened and you discover all of  
25          these things you realize that the over 4,000 kids

1 that were in the academic distress schools and an  
2 additional 18,000 kids who were in the schools who  
3 were in Focus -- and Focus, for those of you who  
4 don't have all the terminology in your head, means  
5 that the special ed. kids, the socioeconomically  
6 challenged kids, and the Hispanic children are  
7 children that English is not their first language --  
8 were not being served at the level they should be.  
9 And, as you heard the superintendent from Brinkley  
10 last week state, if you're a Focus school, that is a,  
11 at the school base, systemic problem.

12 In addition, there were over \$200 million worth  
13 of facilities needs that had been left unattended, in  
14 spite of the fact that this district has had over a  
15 billion dollars that other kids and other districts  
16 in this state have not had as a result of federal  
17 ruling. The unattended facilities needed are  
18 restrooms in eight schools, roof replacement in 11  
19 schools, fire alarm system needs in six schools,  
20 mechanical systems need replacing in four schools,  
21 mechanical system add-on in virtually every secondary  
22 school, kitchen hoods and air systems need replacing  
23 in 20 schools, windows need replacing in 12 schools;  
24 doors, playgrounds, technology, security, parking  
25 lots all need attention in almost every school, plus

1 Southeast Little Rock needs, deserves and has been  
2 promised a new high school.

3 We returned Dollarway and West Helena-Helena too  
4 soon and then had to take them back. I think that  
5 was worse than ever giving them back to begin with.  
6 And you heard this morning the problems that are  
7 going on in Lee County because of problems. Up until  
8 the time when we had returned Helena-West Helena and  
9 Pulaski County Special School District after five  
10 years, those were the first times that you had -- or  
11 we had returned a district to local control where  
12 they kept the superintendent. But that was because  
13 we maintained control long enough to get some  
14 stability, get a community advisory board in the  
15 process and working -- and we do have that in Little  
16 Rock now. If the community is so busy with adults  
17 going back and forth that the kids get lost in the  
18 focus -- and from one perspective, as you heard our  
19 chairman say, there are people who don't have  
20 confidence and trust and are hesitant to believe  
21 anything we say; then you have the other group that  
22 believes that we say and think things are better now  
23 than they were and have been for a long, long time.

24 I paraphrase my friend Toyce Newton who said at  
25 the time that we intervened, "If you don't get Little



1           Rock right, what chance does the delta have?" We  
2           have new ACTAAP, which is now called E-S-A-A, we have  
3           E-S-S-A, and we have a superintendent who's working  
4           well with the community and the advisory board, the  
5           teachers and staff, and has earned the trust of a  
6           majority of the community.

7                        We would never vote a year or even six months  
8           out to intervene in a district, so I don't think it  
9           would be wise for us to vote six months out about  
10          returning. It won't be long until we have at least a  
11          second year in a row of the same tests, which is ACT  
12          Aspire. The only prudent thing, in my opinion -- the  
13          only responsible thing for us to do for students is  
14          get things in good academic, financial, and, lord  
15          willing, with the help of the voters, in good shape  
16          with the facilities.

17                       I too agree, we have the 60th anniversary coming  
18          up and the thing that I'm said to the most when I  
19          talk to people who either have attended Central or  
20          those who are attending now is, "We've got to get  
21          this extension so that when the nation looks at  
22          Central High School they see a great school; they  
23          don't see a school where the restrooms don't have  
24          doors on some of the stalls, they don't see a  
25          neglected area." And I know it's a national historic

1 place, but, as my grandmother said, it doesn't cost  
2 much and you don't have to get permission for things  
3 to be clean and painted and able for people to look  
4 at it.

5 So for that reason I just wanted to be sure that  
6 we had a background of information, because some of  
7 you were not here at the time.

8 And to address the closings, schools have been  
9 closed in this district under local control too.  
10 Those are management, superintendent working with the  
11 staffing, the projections. So, in fact, we had a  
12 school as soon as -- a short time ago, in 2012, that  
13 was closed and we've had many others over time for a  
14 variety of reasons. So closing schools is not  
15 something that's been unique to this district or any  
16 district just during state takeover. And thank you  
17 for allowing me that time.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Ms. Zook.

19 Although I will say, with all due respect, I  
20 don't think what makes a great school is the paint on  
21 the walls but it's the students, the families, the  
22 community, the Department, the teachers, everyone  
23 that comes together and can celebrate it. And thank  
24 you for your comments.

25 I guess I come back to the Board. A lot of

1 information has been shared, and my hope had been a  
2 discussion. I'd love to hear from all of you,  
3 especially those that weren't there at the time of  
4 the takeover, but even those that were in every  
5 sense. I'd like to think we can walk away more than  
6 sharing information but actually offering something.  
7 And, again, I offered a couple of ideas maybe around  
8 this idea of a state of a district, something that we  
9 can have in terms of community conversation, maybe  
10 some sort of commitment around trying to even improve  
11 our own historical knowledge by meeting with the  
12 Little Rock Nine when they come back. But I'm open.  
13 Again, these are ideas for brainstorming. We have no  
14 space for brainstorming outside of in the public. So  
15 before the public I offer these ideas up but would  
16 love to hear more. I think at the very least we owe  
17 that to the Little Rock School District to try.

18 Yes, Mr. Black.

19 MR. BLACK: I simply wanted to hear from the  
20 superintendent. I've not heard him yet --

21 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes.

22 MR. BLACK: -- at any time, and I'd like to hear  
23 what he has to say about this.

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Mr. Poore, you're  
25 recognized.

1 SUPT. POORE: Thank you and I appreciate this  
2 opportunity. Mr. Black, I hope you have heard from  
3 me in several presentations --

4 MR. BLACK: I have, but --

5 SUPT. POORE: -- and then hopefully also all  
6 over in terms of trying to get the word out about our  
7 school district, as I'm awfully proud to be the  
8 superintendent in this community and working with  
9 really great people and work with a great community.

10 You know, I think that, you know, one of the  
11 things that is my world when I arrived was to try to  
12 understand that, you know, when you don't have a  
13 board you have to take almost extraordinary measures  
14 to try to be inclusive and try to create  
15 collaboration and also to try to create connections.  
16 And I'm sure that I can be criticized -- and  
17 obviously even if we had a board there would be  
18 superintendents who are going to be criticized in a  
19 larger district. But I know that that has been one  
20 of my key targets was to try to be extremely  
21 inclusive, try to make sure to seek input, try to  
22 make sure to put decisions out in front of people  
23 ahead of time. And even the school closure thing is  
24 a good example of showing "here are things" and then  
25 gathering input and then modifying -- gathering

1 input, modifying. But all that being said, you know,  
2 those things -- some of those things are very tough  
3 decisions. And the opportunity to seek input and be  
4 inclusive, I know that's what I've tried to do. The  
5 other thing is that it's interesting that I've always  
6 viewed myself as being an innovator and I actually  
7 don't feel like that's really been the case in this  
8 district, although some people give me credit for  
9 that of what's going on in the district. Almost  
10 everything that has been going on in this district  
11 are things that have been discussed and talked about  
12 for a decade or more in terms of studies that have  
13 been done, and this is on things that are tightening  
14 and -- on budgets to things that needed to be done to  
15 move forward in terms of progress. And so one of the  
16 things that I felt that I needed to do was take what  
17 is in the community, what has been discussed, and try  
18 to move forward on those things. That could be  
19 things such as career paths; it could also be things  
20 in terms of what we've tried to do with reading  
21 programs; it could also be things that -- you get  
22 down into budget items. I have not brought much new  
23 to the table. That may be a difficult thing to say  
24 in front of a public setting like this, but we really  
25 needed to, in my mind, especially without a board,

1 take what has been a part of the community and try to  
2 capture it and gather.

3 The other thing that I know that is a part of my  
4 responsibility is to regain local control as quickly  
5 as possible. So in one form or fashion, as you have  
6 this discussion -- obviously, if you regain local  
7 control I guess there's a check of one of the tasks  
8 that are at hand. I know in my own eyes that the  
9 most important thing for me was to try to work with  
10 the schools. I also don't want to take credit for  
11 what happened at Fair and McClellan, because really  
12 Fair and McClellan -- when you look at the way that  
13 our system is set up, that's three years worth of  
14 data and data that I wasn't even a part of. That was  
15 data that was done on the work of teachers at both  
16 McClellan and Fair, and it's work done by community,  
17 and it was also work done by parents to change the  
18 reality there.

19 I also want to be real. And I hope this has  
20 come out in previous presentations that if you look  
21 at the schools that are remaining Henderson Middle  
22 School is probably the one that's closest on the cusp  
23 of getting to a place where it's the next one  
24 logically, using mathematics, to say they've got a  
25 legitimate shot with all the great things going on to

1 move forward. And Cloverdale and Hall's data is more  
2 challenging in terms of, you know, whether they would  
3 get over that 50% benchmark.

4 So I say those things as kind of the realities.  
5 I will tell you that it is a challenge on my daily  
6 walk with all the different trust factors that occur  
7 within this community. I got a text today that there  
8 was an individual that got up at Hall High to share  
9 that we're not going to move forward on the high  
10 school, that we're going to go move it to a new  
11 property. Wild zinger things that get thrown out on  
12 a continual basis, that's a challenge. And, you  
13 know, I guess the most important thing is having  
14 folks and trying to empower voices. I will share --  
15 a board oftentimes does take on that role, and that  
16 is a true statement.

17 So to maybe wrap up my comments, I feel like,  
18 you know, we battle over each other oftentimes, in my  
19 observations of now having my feet as a part of all  
20 of you -- not just my vision from, you know, two-and-  
21 a-half hours away, but having my feet here with all  
22 of you -- that when you look at this we battle things  
23 out in terms of adult issues, and oftentimes we  
24 forget about what it is that we're going to go do for  
25 kids. And that's what I feel like I have the most

1 control over is trying to make sure I do everything I  
2 possibly can in terms of kid issues, day in and day  
3 out, to make our district better tomorrow and make  
4 our district better for the future. Thank you.

5 MR. BLACK: Why is it necessary to close three  
6 black schools in our neighborhoods?

7 SUPT. POORE: The -- and I'm going to -- you  
8 know -- that whole question has played itself out in  
9 terms of responses that might warrant an hour, but  
10 I'm going to provide a very quick synopsis.

11 In our school district we have -- first off,  
12 there was studies that had been done about the loss  
13 of desegregation funds, \$37 million being taken out.  
14 It really equates out to \$41 million. The next year  
15 will be the last time a payment will come into the  
16 district; it has to be used for capital projects.  
17 Prior to this school year and up into this school  
18 year over \$30 million has been reduced in the Little  
19 Rock School District budget. The task at hand for  
20 this coming year was to reduce the budget by \$11  
21 million. There are a variety of different community  
22 meetings that shared options and, yeah, we received  
23 feedback in terms of things that could be looked at.  
24 When you look at the reduction and closing of  
25 schools, we have over 2100 vacant elementary seats.



1 If you go look at adding portables into the equation,  
2 now that number jumps up to 4300. The density of  
3 schools in terms of proximity of where everything is,  
4 in terms of the schools that were looked at for  
5 closure, Franklin is basically a mile away from  
6 Stephens. If you look at Wilson Elementary, there  
7 are four elementary schools that are in close  
8 proximity to Wilson. So even with the closures of  
9 1,000 seats, which is more or less the capacity  
10 levels of Franklin and Wilson, although they were not  
11 operating at full capacity, especially Franklin, you  
12 still have in theory 3,000 available seats, if you  
13 count the portables, and over 1,000 seats still  
14 available at -- without the portables.

15 Another important point is when you make budget  
16 decisions it's what else would you have cut if you  
17 don't do this. And so if you don't make the  
18 reduction in terms of school closures, which netted  
19 over -- a little over \$3.5 million -- \$3.5 million  
20 that has to be gone forever; it's not just one year,  
21 it's gone forever. The other things that were on our  
22 list were things such as privatizing cafeteria  
23 employees, as well as custodial. That in my opinion  
24 would have had a bigger impact on our community  
25 because that would have taken out even more jobs in

1 terms of people that would have now been employed in  
2 a different service agency, potentially had different  
3 health insurance benefits, had different retirement  
4 benefits -- and to be honest, these are employees  
5 that are really doing great work. You know, our  
6 facilities and some of the challenges we have there,  
7 it's not because of poor employees; it's because of  
8 poor decision-making in terms of deployment of  
9 resources, where in 19 -- excuse me -- in 2014, we  
10 had \$347 million with the capital needs identified  
11 under the Fanning Howey study. That's accumulating;  
12 we've got to take care of that. It's not because of  
13 the employees. So I did not want to cut those folks  
14 if I didn't have to, and that's why we chose to do  
15 the school closures.

16 I hope that is helpful, Mr. Black.

17 MR. BLACK: A little bit, not a lot. You know,  
18 when a community --

19 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Oh, Mr. Black, if you could  
20 speak into your mic. That's all. Thank you.

21 MR. BLACK: When a community's schools close it  
22 automatically puts them on a different economic level  
23 -- usually the case. Do you agree with that?

24 SUPT. POORE: I think that it can. I don't  
25 think that it's going to happen in this case, and the

1 reason is the proximity of Franklin and Stephens, the  
2 proximity of the other schools, with Wilson, the  
3 proximity -- the idea that -- I think the other key  
4 thing is how we repurpose those building to keep  
5 vitality in the neighborhood.

6 MR. BLACK: That's where my concern is. Why all  
7 three closures in a predominantly black community and  
8 what will become of those communities afterwards?

9 SUPT. POORE: Well, and the part of what comes  
10 after, those are things we've worked on even this  
11 week in terms of community meetings. Again, we  
12 promised the community that we would come to them  
13 with proposals to share what we could do to repurpose  
14 and allow input to come in. We've held meetings, at  
15 Woodruff on Tuesday night and Franklin last night,  
16 and now we'll use advisory members that are a part of  
17 the neighborhood associations to kind of sort through  
18 the information that was provided us.

19 MR. BLACK: It is difficult to strategize  
20 economic development when you destroy one of the  
21 major tools for development. I can look at schools  
22 where we've closed schools -- and forgive me, I can't  
23 recall their names -- can you think --

24 MS. ZOOK: Hughes?

25 MR. BLACK: Hughes is one.

1 MS. ZOOK: But that's not -- that was a -- okay,  
2 the distance was different. It wasn't a different --  
3 it went to a different town.

4 MR. BLACK: Right. I know it but I can't say it  
5 right now; forgive me for that. I can think of  
6 three. And once they lose that economic driver they  
7 become mainly simply a surplus population. People  
8 begin moving away, things go to happening. I call it  
9 the newscast; if your town doesn't appear on those  
10 towns in each county, you're in trouble; you've got  
11 problems. You want your name to appear on the paper,  
12 on that -- when they give us regional reports. I  
13 just think we need to -- all three, that's just hard.  
14 It's very, very hard.

15 SUPT. POORE: And, Mr. Black, in response, you  
16 know, I've actually received criticism that I  
17 should've closed more schools and had that be a part  
18 of the other budget reductions that make up the \$11  
19 million. Closing a school is not easy, and it  
20 shouldn't be easy. And the reality of the three  
21 schools, if you go look at -- we have a utilization  
22 chart that we provided our community through all of  
23 our processes and in every case the students are  
24 actually moving into a building that has a little bit  
25 higher facility rating, which was done by an outside

1 group -- again, the Fanning Howey study -- with the  
2 exception I think of one school where I believe it  
3 was either even or just maybe a little bit below on  
4 one of the things where Wilson students will go. The  
5 other thing that happened -- and this did not -- this  
6 was data that didn't occur until after the fact, but  
7 the students -- when we got the results back from the  
8 State, students are actually moving towards a school  
9 that's performing at a higher level academically in  
10 terms of what the test scores were last year.

11 MR. BLACK: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Mr. Black. And  
13 thank you, Mr. Poore.

14 So I turn to my colleagues again. And some of  
15 you I know live in this district; this is your  
16 district as well. Is there something we can offer  
17 Little Rock today?

18 Yes, Dr. Hill.

19 DR. HILL: Just from a broad spectrum, looking  
20 at the future of taking the timeline, the shared  
21 goals of the community, the shared goals of the  
22 advisory board, the shared goals of the State Board  
23 -- and, you know, I think there is -- we're dealing  
24 with maybe philosophical decisions based on -- in  
25 trying to get this ball down the field, trying to get

1 this ball into the end-zone, you know, trying to move  
2 this forward. And, of course, I'm only seven months  
3 into -- eight months into this situation and trying  
4 to wrap my hands around this broad issue; I mean,  
5 very complex. We're dealing with a lot of history,  
6 you know. We're dealing with a lot of sensitive  
7 issues, you know, a lot of things people don't want  
8 to talk about; you know, a lot of things people are  
9 scared to talk about. But it is things that must be  
10 discussed in order to re-establish trust and overcome  
11 fear. I think those are two dynamics that we're  
12 dealing with right now, fear and trust, and for  
13 various reasons. But I think from a strategic  
14 standpoint, you know, what can we do to come out is  
15 that I think in listening to the community, you know,  
16 the advisory board, the business community -- I mean,  
17 from Little Rock as a whole we have to establish  
18 those goals in line with what the community -- we  
19 have to have common shared goals that we're trying to  
20 work to and have a precise -- and articulate and  
21 communicate that for everyone. And right now, we've  
22 just been here for -- since August; I don't know if  
23 that has happened, to say that we all know where  
24 we're going, and I think there is vagueness all  
25 across the board. And not saying that anybody is

1 right or wrong, I mean, in this situation; I just  
2 think it's very complex. And so I think if we can  
3 articulate exactly what that looks like -- I'm not  
4 trying to be politically correct, not trying to, you  
5 know, say, well -- it's come up with some concrete  
6 goals that we know that we're working towards and  
7 everybody is trying to push down the field to get us  
8 to the end zone, which touchdown for us is going to  
9 be turn it over to -- back to community control. Now  
10 I think the devil is in the details, is how we could  
11 decide to manifest that to transpire sooner than  
12 later, if that says that. And then I know that the  
13 superintendent is challenged, you know, in doing that  
14 in many ways; the advisory community board that we  
15 have is challenged because they feel powerless, you  
16 know, in moving things forward. But what are the  
17 shared goals that the Board, you know, said that, you  
18 know -- are we doing what we said we were going to do  
19 when we took it over? Have those things been  
20 transpiring? And this is really though the first  
21 time we've had a major conversation since I've been  
22 here, you know, and so I guess it's kind of been the  
23 elephant in the room though, you know, and so it's  
24 never come up. And, you know -- and so -- and we  
25 can't talk about it, you know, which makes it very

1 complex, you know, because I can't call and get  
2 history and say, "Well, tell me" -- you know, I can't  
3 do that. So I try to go back through the papers, you  
4 know, and try to regurgitate information and try to  
5 say -- you know -- but -- and I can get it from the  
6 community, but I don't know what was transpiring.

7 But I think, you know, as a team, you know,  
8 which we want our state to look like a team -- I  
9 mean, we want to be on the same page, moving in the  
10 same direction for everybody, from the common goal of  
11 better -- to best serve our students. Now I will  
12 say, you know, economic development is critical and  
13 I'm only referencing from trying to build community,  
14 you know, from my experience down the street on  
15 Martin Luther King Drive. So those things are very  
16 viable, but also as a leader too understanding that  
17 you have to make financial decisions that can sustain  
18 themselves in order to be able to keep operations  
19 going. And I -- and, you know, and I think those are  
20 the things that the community -- we have to  
21 understand as well because, you know, we can have the  
22 best intentions, you know, for this year to say this  
23 is the right thing to do, but if financially it  
24 doesn't sustain itself then we're going to be in  
25 fiscal distress, you know, from a nonstrategic



1 movement because we were maybe caught up into those  
2 emotions at that particular time. But, I mean, but  
3 that's -- you know, that's the catch that we're in  
4 right now to try to come and say how can we move this  
5 forward and have open discussions that allow us to  
6 overcome our fear and our trust.

7 MS. ZOOK: So are you saying that the plans that  
8 the principals and the superintendent and Dr. Wilde's  
9 team have -- are working on and are clearly  
10 articulated have not been communicated to the  
11 community at-large?

12 DR. HILL: Well, I was saying I wasn't aware.  
13 As we move -- I've had some discussion -- I'm just  
14 saying does everybody feel comfortable with those?  
15 Have the Board bought into those? I mean, that's --  
16 I guess that's what I was asking.

17 MS. ZOOK: Yes.

18 DR. HILL: You see what I'm saying? I mean --

19 MS. ZOOK: Right. And that's the reports that  
20 we get at the Academic Distress Committee.

21 DR. HILL: Right.

22 MS. ZOOK: Right.

23 DR. HILL: And which I was saying from those I  
24 was not very aware --

25 MS. ZOOK: Right.

1 DR. HILL: -- you know, in the past.

2 MS. ZOOK: Right. But it's possible that the  
3 schools and the principals and the superintendent,  
4 the teachers and the parents who come know these, but  
5 maybe the community at-large doesn't know what the  
6 goal is and what the end-game is.

7 DR. HILL: I know we were in Discipline  
8 Committee this morning and I mean I heard the  
9 Commissioner talk about making sure that there's a  
10 communication plan, you know, as far as making sure  
11 those things are articulated and how it comes out.  
12 I'm not saying for sure or not, Ms. Zook. I'm just  
13 saying when I'm thinking about how this manifests  
14 itself here's some things I think we must be  
15 conscious of as we, you know, continue to try to move  
16 forward and make sure that everybody understands  
17 what, you know --

18 MS. ZOOK: Right.

19 DR. HILL: Like, for example, we set -- you know  
20 -- some people still talk about academic distress.

21 MS. ZOOK: Right.

22 DR. HILL: Okay. Well, I mean, you brought up  
23 some other things that maybe somebody didn't know  
24 about when things happened. I never knew that.

25 MS. ZOOK: Right.

1 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Mr. Hill. And I  
2 think your analogy of a team on this is definitely  
3 part of where I was hoping the conversation would go.  
4 And maybe even one of the outcomes, again, as I'm  
5 very outcome-oriented and wanting to be able to make  
6 sure there are outcomes of this conversation. Maybe  
7 it's also that there's additional conversations,  
8 right, could be part of it. I don't think it should  
9 be "it." I think we owe more to Little Rock at this  
10 point than just more discussions but I think us being  
11 committed to some discussion, even amongst ourselves,  
12 to get to a place -- even noting what Dr. Barth said  
13 of the frustration of this moment. This played out  
14 -- today's meeting played out in the media. We  
15 didn't get to play it out amongst ourselves.

16 DR. HILL: And that --

17 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And that's -- so maybe  
18 there's --

19 DR. HILL: I guess my question, is that a work  
20 session?

21 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And that may be. No,  
22 exactly.

23 DR. HILL: We've had work sessions about  
24 everything else. I mean, I'm just wondering --

25 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And, again, I --

1 DR. HILL: -- where we could have those  
2 discussions.

3 CHAIRPERSON REITH: But, no, that's -- and  
4 that's where I'm trying to get at some action. I  
5 think that could be. I think that's what your  
6 comments say to me that -- and Dr. Barth's comments.  
7 But, again, I would beseech us, I hope we can offer  
8 something else too, but I think that's also a  
9 starting point and duly noted.

10 Ms. Dean, did you -- I saw you pull your mic. I  
11 think I saw the Commissioner, as well. But, yes, Ms.  
12 Dean.

13 MS. DEAN: This is a -- it's a very personal  
14 matter for me, especially being a single mom with  
15 four kids in Little Rock School District. So the  
16 decisions we make affect me personally; they affect  
17 my children personally. Having grown up in Little  
18 Rock all my life, born and raised, born at Baptist  
19 Hospital, my family born and raised here in Little  
20 Rock -- and you speak of the Little Rock Nine that  
21 was at Central, but I have personal history with the  
22 desegregation because most people don't speak about  
23 Hall High when it was desegregated; my father was one  
24 of the first. He was of that first group, so that's  
25 something that our family we discuss and something

1 that we keep at the forefront of the struggle and the  
2 history of Little Rock and all that he endured to be  
3 one of the first to desegregate Little Rock.

4 And I do -- I do believe Little Rock School  
5 District, and any other school district, needs to be  
6 back in the hands of local control as soon as  
7 possible. However, I'd have to echo Ms. Zook in  
8 saying that I -- it concerns -- it would -- it  
9 concerns me that we don't give it -- that we don't  
10 relinquish control before it -- before we can give it  
11 to them and it be beneficial to the children and them  
12 not end up in a worse situation than they are. It  
13 reminded me of when my youngest, Caleb, broke his  
14 arm. Little Rock School District was in a very hurt  
15 and damaged situation and the children were the ones  
16 that were suffering as a result of that. And he was  
17 three years old when he broke his arm, not by any  
18 fault; he was just playing and things happen. I'm  
19 not putting blame on anyone because of what happened  
20 with Little Rock School District; there's so many  
21 different factors that go into that. But speaking to  
22 the trust and the mistrust and the distrust, when he  
23 was three years old he didn't understand what was  
24 going on. All he knew was that he was hurt and he  
25 had to have a cast. And because he was three he

1           healed -- they heal pretty quickly. But because of  
2           how bones heal, the doctor said, "You cannot let him  
3           go out and play. Even though he's feeling better, he  
4           doesn't hurt anymore, you can't let him go out and  
5           play in the backyard by himself; I'm sorry. Because  
6           if he falls the wrong way, even though it's healing,  
7           because of -- the bones heal with an extra knot over  
8           that area that breaks, so it's even more susceptible  
9           to breaking worse if it breaks before that time,  
10          before that time for complete healing and complete  
11          restructure and strengthening." So as much as he  
12          didn't like me and he was upset with me, and as much  
13          as he screamed and hollered at the doctor's office,  
14          and as much as he sat at the window and it broke my  
15          heart -- he would sit at the window with his hands --  
16          his little cast on his arm and see his brothers and  
17          sisters out in the backyard playing. I couldn't let  
18          him go out and play until it was time and he had  
19          healed and was strong enough -- that bone was strong  
20          enough to withhold being without the cast. And I  
21          feel like the ADE is the cast for Little Rock School  
22          District and it's our responsibility, not as parents  
23          or being in control of them but being responsible for  
24          their wellbeing. Because this is -- it goes back to  
25          the children; it goes back to my four children. I

1 want to make sure I'm doing everything I can to make  
2 sure my children get the best education they possibly  
3 can while they're in Little Rock School District.

4 So as unpopular as it may seem, and unfair, it's  
5 in the best interest, in my opinion, to make sure  
6 that we give Little Rock School District the best  
7 chance it possibly can to be as strong as possible so  
8 we can say, "Go for it." And that's exactly what I  
9 did with my child. I had to wait. It seemed like a  
10 long time but really, in the perspective of it now,  
11 it really wasn't such a long time; it just seemed  
12 like it at that point. But I didn't have to be  
13 afraid or I didn't have to -- I didn't have to  
14 restrict him in any way because I knew and I was  
15 confident that he was strong enough to play on his  
16 own. And I feel like that's what we need to do with  
17 Little Rock School District.

18 I want Little Rock School District to have local  
19 control, I want my school district to have local  
20 control, but I just want to make sure it's done in  
21 the right time.

22 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Commissioner? Or, no.

23 COMMISSIONER KEY: No.

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Ms. Newton.

25 MS. NEWTON: This is a very, very complex

1 situation. And I think that we all have kids first  
2 on our minds, you know, that everything that -- you  
3 know, as a teacher -- I keep going back to being a  
4 teacher. You know, everything that happened in my  
5 classroom was what was best for kids, and that's here  
6 also what is best for kids. And the very worst days  
7 that I ever had in a classroom was the days that I  
8 went in unprepared; I didn't have a plan, I didn't  
9 have a way of doing what I needed to do; I just did  
10 it off the cuff. When I did that, I messed up and it  
11 was not good for kids.

12 And I haven't had time to study it yet, and I  
13 hope to be able to spend time to study the Act 930,  
14 but from what I understand it's going to give us a  
15 methodical plan to do what we want to do and that's  
16 to give Little Rock back to the people. And if we do  
17 it any other way I think we will be doing kids a  
18 disservice. And, you know, Commissioner, you can  
19 speak more to the act, you know, things that I don't  
20 understand about it, but the way I understand is when  
21 it gets laid out and we get the rules and regs laid  
22 out there will be a way and it will be established.  
23 And, you know, that's what feels -- to a teacher,  
24 that's what feels good, to have a plan. And, you  
25 know, that's just -- you know -- I love how you said



1 that, Charisse; that was excellent. And that's --  
2 you know -- we want them to go back strong and ready  
3 to go and ready to take off and ready to do great  
4 things for the children of Little Rock, because they  
5 deserve it. And so I want them to be strong, but I  
6 want us to have a well thought-out way to do it when  
7 it gets -- when it's time.

8 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Dr. Barth.

9 DR. BARTH: I've agreed with a lot that's been  
10 said. I do very much like the Act 930 planning  
11 process and I also like the fact -- and this is an  
12 area where I think I agree with Ms. Zook is that  
13 while we focus on academic distress -- and that was  
14 the grounds for the action -- we all know that -- and  
15 even in that conversation there was an awareness that  
16 the fiscal ties to the sustainability of high-quality  
17 education, and we know, as we've seen in other cases,  
18 it ties back to Standards for Accreditation. These  
19 are all tied together. And I like -- I very much  
20 like the planning process in Act 930 that takes all  
21 of those systems into account. And that's why, you  
22 know, I wanted -- I really wanted to allow the Act  
23 930 process to play out and get those plans fully  
24 fleshed out, but also know that the district and its  
25 patrons, you know, did have some clarity about when

1 they could rightfully expect that they -- that local  
2 control would return. And I agree that we've got to  
3 be smart about this, but I think we also know in life  
4 there are no assurances, right, and we have to --  
5 there will be a moment where this board on this  
6 issue, like it has with other districts, takes a  
7 little bit of a risk. We know we want those risks to  
8 be as limited as possible, even though we need to be  
9 as smart as possible. But I think we have to  
10 recognize that ultimately we are going to have to  
11 take a little risk and trust that, as Representative  
12 Tucker articulated earlier, that democracy will work,  
13 that we will have a school board that comes into  
14 creation that is -- that works well, that has been  
15 trained, that all of those things take place. And  
16 those were the things that I was thinking about in  
17 kind of starting this conversation. I do think that  
18 there does reach a point where State takeover really  
19 mars a district's ability to really take off, because  
20 I think that if a community does not feel that they  
21 have a voice it makes them -- it makes it really hard  
22 for them to take a chance and cast a vote. And we  
23 know that the vote on May 9th is just the first of a  
24 number of votes that the patrons of this district are  
25 going to have to be asked to take to be sure that it

1 does have fiscal vibrancy moving forward. Because we  
2 know the deseg dollars are going away and that's  
3 going to have some implications for the budget and we  
4 need as much community buy-in energy as we move  
5 towards that day. So I don't know that I disagree  
6 with everything, but -- much that's been said; I  
7 think we have slightly different perspectives; I  
8 think we are placing maybe slightly different values  
9 on things. But I think we really ultimately are  
10 going to have to make -- take a risk but do it in a  
11 safe and thoughtful and well planned way as possible.

12 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Thank you, Dr. Barth.

13 And I guess picking up there then: again, I  
14 don't want to leave this conversation without feeling  
15 like there's something next. And so I guess I want  
16 to offer maybe with maybe a little bit more  
17 articulation, because where your metaphor, Ms. Dean,  
18 definitely resonated with me, the one thing I would  
19 offer is I never heard in there anywhere that you  
20 distrusted the doctors or you distrusted that the  
21 cast would work. You believed in the medicine, you  
22 believed in the doctors, and you believed in what  
23 they told you. And I think we're in a place right  
24 now where the community doesn't trust the doctor, or  
25 there's elements of the community that don't trust

1 the doctor, or they don't trust the medicine or they  
2 don't trust the process. And that doesn't undermine  
3 what you've said. We want to get to a place I think  
4 where everybody can trust the doctor and the process.  
5 I don't disagree with what you said; I just --

6 MS. DEAN: No, but my child distrusted --

7 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yeah.

8 MS. DEAN: -- the doctor. My child did not --  
9 didn't want to go to the doctor, didn't like going to  
10 the doctor, didn't want to do anything the doctor  
11 said. But because I was responsible for my child it  
12 didn't matter that my child -- I tried to build that  
13 trust as much as possible. But being the responsible  
14 party, I had to be the one to trust what the doctor  
15 said for him.

16 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And I guess with that then  
17 that for me would equate the community with children  
18 and I just wouldn't -- I think I wouldn't --

19 MS. DEAN: And as I said --

20 CHAIRPERSON REITH: I wouldn't --

21 MS. DEAN: As I said --

22 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And, again, I think that's  
23 where -- and, again, it's a very strong metaphor. I  
24 think what it does is it catapults the opportunity I  
25 think that we have here moving forward.

1           And if I could offer too: again, I think if  
2           there's a way, Commissioner, where we could adapt  
3           this for Little Rock -- put this not in just Act 930  
4           plain overall, general terms but adapt this for  
5           Little Rock and present or empower Mr. Poore to  
6           present this with the Citizen Advisory Board about  
7           what comes next so that -- I mean, this is a timeline  
8           format that they've been asking for; right? If  
9           there's a way that this could be adapted along the  
10          realities of Little Rock, for at least some sort of  
11          level of conversation there, I think that's one piece  
12          to me. Because I know -- I think the average  
13          constituent here is not necessarily listening to us;  
14          the folks that are listening to us right now are  
15          those that are getting paid to for different aspects  
16          or they're highly committed to the community. But  
17          we're missing a lot of constituents with just our  
18          live-feed. And I think if there's a way where we can  
19          turn this into something that is relatable to the  
20          Little Rock community, I feel like this conversation  
21          with timelines, something tangible, is what they've  
22          been asking for and this may be able to be a  
23          framework for that.

24                 And then the other thing I would offer, along  
25                 with what Dr. Hill was saying, is y'all are still

1           stuck with me for a couple more months as chair, and  
2           so maybe there is an opportunity here for a work  
3           session or conversation. I would -- and that would  
4           be beyond my time, but I'd love to see at least  
5           whether it's a series of work sessions or one session  
6           at some point when the Little Rock Nine come to  
7           Arkansas. I think we have an opportunity here when  
8           they come back home to have a conversation with them  
9           and I think that that's important for us to know  
10          where we come from, ask those questions, be able to  
11          have that history, to benefit from their knowledge.  
12          I know I, with Ms. Chambers, had the privilege of  
13          meeting Terrence Roberts at a NASBE event in Kansas  
14          City, and even with the few minutes we exchanged I  
15          thought that was very helpful.

16                 I could offer up what maybe another session of  
17          this might look like, not in an action agenda item  
18          but something in a session that doesn't add on.  
19          Maybe we change the session plans for the rollout of  
20          my time as chair, right, to be able to continue this  
21          conversation, and that gives us more time too.  
22          Because one of the things I think I would like to  
23          beseech -- as a community organizer, this is an  
24          opportunity for all of us to go into the schools, to  
25          go into the district, to maybe accompany Mr. Poore

1 here in the closeout here in a couple -- last couple  
2 of months, and maybe bring some more information to  
3 the table as we all try and get to a place. Because  
4 as Dr. Barth said, and even as the Commissioner said,  
5 there's times in this timeframe where this  
6 conversation will persist, right, and us being able  
7 to have some collegiality around this I think could  
8 only help the conversation. And right now we're all  
9 sort of working in silence because of the open  
10 meeting laws. Well, then let's work within that  
11 structure and maybe do something there to offer a  
12 commitment that we ourselves are going to do maybe a  
13 little additional on our part to be better informed,  
14 to contribute to where and when this issue continues  
15 to come up within this timeline and this new  
16 timeframe.

17 MS. ZOOK: You know, I agree that a general idea  
18 of what needs to be done needs to be communicated.  
19 But I think the assumption, based on the things  
20 you're saying, is that if we turn it back over to  
21 local control that there -- all the trust would still  
22 be there. And we know based on history that that is  
23 not accurate. And as far as the Little Rock Nine, it  
24 wasn't local and democratic; it was -- fortunately,  
25 we had a President who at the time was willing to

1 send in federal troops so that those children could  
2 receive an education where they chose to go to  
3 school. So I think that to assume that there would  
4 be trust automatically with a local board or that the  
5 democratic process always from elected officials in  
6 fact makes things better, when we know that -- in the  
7 case of the Little Rock Nine, were it not for the  
8 President who intervened, the local was not taking  
9 care of the children like they needed to be taken  
10 care of.

11 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And that's where I think we  
12 can have that conversation about the context and the  
13 pendulum of history and things that we can learn from  
14 each other from those moments. But I couldn't  
15 actually agree with you more that one election is not  
16 going to change everything, but it's a process. And  
17 I think our commitment to that process is what we can  
18 offer.

19 So with that --

20 MS. ZOOK: So, Jay, were you wanting to have a  
21 discussion and so it's on there and at this point we  
22 can move to move on, or what is --

23 DR. BARTH: Yeah. I mean, I have no action item  
24 in terms of, you know, policy action. That was --  
25 you know -- I think -- but I don't think that would



1           dissuade us from, as I think I heard Dr. Phil -- Dr.  
2           Hill inviting us to do -- Dr. Phil?

3           MS. ZOOK: Dr. Phil; that might be a compliment.

4           DR. BARTH: -- that we -- there is -- I mean,  
5           you know, a majority of this board was not here in  
6           2015, and that there may be some time to -- an  
7           opportunity to gain better understanding. And also  
8           intersect that -- to pick up on Ms. Reith's point --  
9           intersect that with the way that the rules of the  
10          game have changed under Act 930 and begin to  
11          intersect and pull those together. We're going to  
12          need a lot of education about Act 930 anyway,  
13          especially as we go through the rule process. But  
14          here is an -- here is a real live case of LRSD where  
15          we are going to need to see that -- this process  
16          played out in a way that really impacts a district.

17          MS. ZOOK: Okay. Then I move that we ask that  
18          Dr. Wilde and his group, along with Mr. Poore, make  
19          sure that the community is aware of what's going on  
20          in the schools and the plan there to get out of  
21          academic distress; make sure that's communicated.  
22          And that we have a work session that was thinking in  
23          terms of Little Rock School District, and I would  
24          even add Dollarway, about how this new act will  
25          impact the steps and the plans that they make at the

1 time.

2 DR. HILL: I would just -- I'm sorry; was that a  
3 motion?

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Sorry. It is. She framed  
5 it as a motion, so we need a second or -- and then  
6 discussion can pursue there or it could die for lack  
7 of a second.

8 MS. NEWTON: I second.

9 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Okay. So motion made by Ms.  
10 Zook, seconded by Ms. Newton.

11 Now discussion. Yes, Dr. Hill.

12 DR. HILL: Okay. Do you think -- and I'm just  
13 asking a question. Do you think it's best that you  
14 combine both Dollarway and Little Rock School  
15 District in a work session or however that would be?  
16 Because I think you might want to -- when you're  
17 dealing with something like this you want to just  
18 focus on one community and not try to combine them.

19 MS. ZOOK: No. And if I didn't articulate that  
20 clearly, I was saying --

21 DR. HILL: As long as they're not at the same  
22 time --

23 MS. ZOOK: Yes.

24 DR. HILL: -- is all --

25 MS. ZOOK: Yeah. Doing this for Little Rock,

1 but --

2 DR. HILL: Right, right, right, right.

3 MS. ZOOK: -- but at the same time Dollarway  
4 might like some clarity as well.

5 DR. HILL: Yeah, I just -- because if we're  
6 going to do something, I think as we articulate --  
7 because each community is different.

8 MS. ZOOK: Yes, it is.

9 DR. HILL: And so you wouldn't want to brag  
10 because somebody feels left out with this. And, I  
11 mean, you know, it's kind of like cancer; you want to  
12 be focused in on what, you know --

13 MS. ZOOK: Well, and Dollarway right now is not  
14 pressing in the same way because --

15 DR. HILL: Right.

16 MS. ZOOK: -- they know what happened when we  
17 turned them back too quickly and now they're willing  
18 as a community to be more patient because they have  
19 seen that other districts, given time, came out in  
20 better shape.

21 DR. HILL: Right. No, I just -- that was my --

22 MS. ZOOK: Okay. I agree.

23 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And correct me if I'm wrong,  
24 Ms. Freno: at the end of the day I think work  
25 sessions would be at the discretion of the Chair but

1 with consultation from the Board, is how we've sort  
2 of handled them. And that may be a Robert's Rules  
3 procedure there, but that is -- but that input,  
4 right, of both of them, and I couldn't agree more.  
5 And I think Dr. Barth lends itself to -- his comments  
6 lend itself to that as well that we have -- instead  
7 of thinking of Act 30 [sic] just as this generic  
8 change, to apply it to the real cases before us of  
9 the two --

10 DR. BARTH: Right.

11 CHAIRPERSON REITH: -- that are in our control  
12 and to use that opportunity to elucidate, not just  
13 for us, and to come to consensus, do some learning,  
14 do some sharing, but then to be able to offer for the  
15 public through that process, right, some more  
16 information about what it means for them.

17 COMMISSIONER KEY: I need to ask a question, and  
18 it may take me awhile to get there.

19 Since day-one, after the motion, Dr. Barth, you  
20 made the motion -- you came back with a motion for a  
21 Civic Advisory Committee. I'm getting to the issue  
22 of communication. That went on for a year or so, and  
23 I think --

24 DR. BARTH: That was actually not my motion.

25 COMMISSIONER KEY: Well, I mean, somebody --

1 somebody had -- well, it was an idea.

2 MS. ZOOK: It was a compromise.

3 COMMISSIONER KEY: It was -- sorry, I wasn't  
4 here then, so --

5 DR. BARTH: Somebody pulled that out of my  
6 motion to put it in the --

7 COMMISSIONER KEY: Okay.

8 DR. BARTH: -- in the main motion. But that's  
9 fine.

10 COMMISSIONER KEY: Okay. All right. So, all  
11 right. So there was an element there where folks  
12 were appointed. There was communication work with  
13 the district, feedback to this board I believe on a  
14 monthly basis. I know for awhile it was the desire  
15 of this board and it was a monthly action item, where  
16 if it wasn't the Civic Advisory Committee it was,  
17 first, Dr. Suggs, then Mr. Kurrus. And I think when  
18 Mr. Poore got here we were still on a monthly and  
19 then we backed off to quarterly. At the same time we  
20 had Dr. Wilde and his team coming and giving us  
21 reports and in the second year we appointed the  
22 Community Advisory Board, the official statutory  
23 Community Advisory Board.

24 Mr. Poore, what's the attendance of the  
25 Community Advisory Board meetings?

1           SUPT. POORE: Attendance at the Community  
2           Advisory Board meeting -- it does meet once a month;  
3           in fact, it's meeting this evening -- has been very  
4           limited. I think probably the largest audience  
5           might've been 20. The last meeting I believe we may  
6           have had less than five citizens.

7           COMMISSIONER KEY: There have been meetings; Mr.  
8           Poore has had a number of meetings outside to address  
9           specific venues. The Civic Advisory Committee had a  
10          special committee on facilities, came back with  
11          recommendations that had consideration of school  
12          closures for a number of other facilities, not just  
13          the ones. So the recommendation from Mr. Poore and  
14          his team was very limited as compared to that report  
15          from that facilities committee and the work that they  
16          did. And they I understand did a lot of studies, and  
17          we have those reports on file.

18          So when we talk about communication I don't want  
19          the public to get the impression that there has not  
20          been communication, because there has been extensive  
21          communication and conversation over the last two  
22          years. There has been extensive work by members of  
23          the Arkansas Department of Education. We have put  
24          grant funds, we have put resources in Special Ed., we  
25          have put resources in discipline. We have put

1 resources in there and we have worked in the last  
2 several months with Mr. Poore to create these  
3 opportunities for best decisions that need to be made  
4 moving forward.

5 So we put this timeline together today -- and we  
6 can certainly put together a timeline that's specific  
7 to Little Rock. But my question is to you, Members  
8 of the Board: when you get asked about this, what's  
9 your response? Is it that the Department is working  
10 closely with the district in accordance to the  
11 statute to meet the demands and address the issues  
12 that caused the academic distress? Because if we're  
13 going to talk about a team y'all are part of that  
14 team too. And that communication has to -- it can't  
15 just be one way, because y'all are the ones that have  
16 the knowledge; you know where this stuff is in the  
17 board minutes and reports; you know where to send  
18 people to. And I haven't seen that happen. Maybe it  
19 is, but I haven't seen evidence of it. I don't know  
20 that Mr. Poore has seen evidence of it. But there's  
21 a lot of information, a lot of ways to communicate,  
22 and I know he's out there on a regular basis. And,  
23 you know, to say that folks have been told no, you  
24 know, I would dispute that. I think folks have been  
25 listened to. Sometimes the answers aren't what they

1 want to hear, because we have to make tough choices.  
2 And the statute says that the Commissioner has to --  
3 y'all did this, the Board did this, granted the  
4 Commissioner the authority to assume the day-to-day  
5 decision-making operation. It didn't say that the  
6 Commissioner was the board; it's the authority of the  
7 board, and giving freedom -- whether it's to Jerry  
8 Guess at Pulaski County or John Hoy down in Helena-  
9 West Helena or Mr. Poore here in Little Rock, giving  
10 them the freedom and the flexibility to create plans  
11 and move forward and engage with the communities. It  
12 worked in Pulaski County; it worked in Helena-West  
13 Helena. You had people showing up for Community  
14 Advisory Board meetings. Those Community Advisory  
15 Boards, once they were appointed, as the statute  
16 says, to help prepare the district for return to  
17 local control. There has to be a two-way street  
18 there. And so when we have these things in place and  
19 they're not being taken advantage of, because folks  
20 would rather, you know, have another way of  
21 communicating, you know -- and that's okay, that's  
22 their right -- but when we have shown a track record  
23 of successfully returning districts back to local  
24 control -- at Pulaski County there were folks who  
25 even wanted us to keep them another year or longer



1 and we said no, we're not going to do that. Y'all  
2 said no, we're not going to do that. So why would  
3 Little Rock be any different? Why would we want to  
4 keep them any longer than any other district that  
5 we've partnered with to create the opportunities to  
6 make them successful moving forward? That's what  
7 we're doing every day, every day. Every day, we've  
8 got somebody engaged in some form or fashion with  
9 some operation in Little Rock School District and  
10 it's because the needs are great and we're going to  
11 keep working to meet those needs.

12 So if you have ideas on how we can better  
13 communicate that, I'm open. If it's timelines, we'll  
14 do timelines. If it's -- you know -- when we go  
15 through this transitional planning process, when this  
16 law goes into effect, we can have work sessions. But  
17 we need your help too to talk positively about the  
18 things that are happening that Mr. Poore and his team  
19 are doing, because there are a lot of positive things  
20 that are happening. And we're going to keep working  
21 to make those -- to take those steps.

22 And, Dr. Hill, that's -- that issue of  
23 communication, it's real. I understand that. But we  
24 also need open ears, you know, open hearts, open  
25 minds, all those things. And, you know, they -- if

1           there is a sense that there's no trust, you know,  
2           that's something we have to work on. I understand  
3           that. But we can't stop the work that needs to  
4           happen while we're trying to build trust. That work  
5           has to keep going and we want to keep doing that.

6           And Mr. Poore -- my commitment to Mr. Poore and  
7           his team is that our team at ADE are going to keep  
8           moving that -- moving that ball down the field, Dr.  
9           Hill. Because I did, I gave him three things that I  
10          needed him to do. I needed him to correct the issues  
11          of academic distress so we could then get local  
12          control and create world class career opportunities  
13          for the students here in this district, and he is  
14          working diligently to make those opportunities happen  
15          for these kids. In the meantime, tough decisions  
16          have to continue to be made.

17          MS. ZOOK: And I think another thing too, is it  
18          behooves us as board members to learn what's going  
19          on. You know, I didn't know until the other day, but  
20          it was nobody's fault but my own, that Mr. Poore has  
21          been like taking the students that will be displaced  
22          -- or not displaced, but going to a new school to  
23          those new schools and letting them get acquainted  
24          with those kids, letting the staff get to know each  
25          other, letting the parents know where the kids are

1 going to go to school, and getting acquainted. You  
2 know, all of these things that are going on that  
3 doesn't ever -- or does not ever get reported or gone  
4 about, but we have to assume the responsibility.  
5 When -- I had a lady on Facebook the other day, and I  
6 just happened to be reading the comments, and she  
7 said, "Well," you know, "what are the things that  
8 need repaired?" And I just wrote a note to her on  
9 Facebook, saying, you know, "If you'll go to the ADE  
10 website and look under it, you know, it tells you  
11 exactly the things" -- Little Rock School District  
12 website, you know, referring. And then someone else  
13 just, you know, did better than me; they just gave  
14 her a link to that place. But, you know, as board  
15 members, when we intervene in a district we -- it's  
16 not like, "Well, we intervened; now y'all take care  
17 of it." It's like we intervened, we're responsible.  
18 We're not the board but we are responsible for  
19 keeping up-to-date, making sure that we communicate,  
20 and getting feedback from ADE about what are you  
21 doing, what are you -- you know -- and, of course,  
22 those of us who are on the Academic Distress  
23 Committee have a bit of an advantage because we hear  
24 the reports from the principals. And when people  
25 talk about a plan, then I'm going, "Well, you know,

1 the plan may be slightly different at Henderson than  
2 it is at Hall and that it was at J.A. Fair and what  
3 feeder elementaries come in." And both of the  
4 superintendents have said, you know, "We've  
5 discovered we've got issues at the feeder schools,  
6 you know, the ones coming in." They don't come to  
7 7th grade on 7th grade reading level and then we just  
8 fall apart and, you know, send them backward. And  
9 like the lady asked -- oh, I was trying to --  
10 Marvell-Elaine, I said, "How did the -- you got all  
11 your kids up-to-speed at the elementary level, and so  
12 how is that translated in 7th and 8th and 9th grade?"  
13 And she said, "Reading is like a muscle; if you don't  
14 keep practicing it it's going to begin to fall off."  
15 So, you know, these are all the things that these  
16 school people know, they understand it, and it  
17 behooves us to learn. And I have found all the  
18 principals that I've talked to and the superintendent  
19 very receptive, you know, and they love it if they  
20 know that we care about what's going on or hear what  
21 they're saying. So said -- well, sort of said that  
22 to echo what the Commissioner was saying.

23 DR. HILL: Right. And I guess when I was  
24 speaking more of communication I was kind of  
25 referencing myself as a new board member to

1 understand -- I talk to you --

2 COMMISSIONER KEY: Yes.

3 DR. HILL: -- but I don't get to --

4 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Yes.

5 DR. HILL: I don't know.

6 CHAIRPERSON REITH: No communication amongst us.

7 DR. HILL: But I will say this now, are y'all  
8 familiar with Tom Joyner, the number one African  
9 American disk jockey throughout the United States?  
10 Now I think this is very interesting; it's a concept  
11 that we can apply. Carnival Cruise Line could not  
12 sell out African Americans to buy tickets on Carnival  
13 Cruise Line through a generic marketing plan. Nobody  
14 would buy. And they were spending money and money.  
15 Why do -- why are we not getting people of color on  
16 the cruise ship? And they said, you know, "We're  
17 spending all this money and we're generically trying  
18 to get people of color to come to the cruise ship."  
19 And they said, "Well, have you tried Tom Joyner?"  
20 Sold out in a moment's time, as soon as he went on  
21 and said, "Hey, I'm going to take a cruise.  
22 Everybody come."

23 I'm thinking sometime our format for  
24 communication might be to address specifically to get  
25 to communities that may feel disenfranchised from

1 information. I mean, that's what I was -- because  
2 sometimes, you know, I know some people maybe are not  
3 reading the information, some people don't go on the  
4 website to get the information, but everybody listens  
5 to the radio. I mean, you know --

6 COMMISSIONER KEY: Those are the specific  
7 suggestions that we -- that I was talking about --

8 DR. HILL: Right.

9 COMMISSIONER KEY: -- that we need. But I  
10 didn't get to my question; I was almost there.

11 And my question is to the motion: how specific  
12 do you want that timeline to be? Because that's a  
13 question that Dr. Wilde is going to come back and ask  
14 me, "Well, Commissioner, how specific --

15 MS. ZOOK: Well --

16 COMMISSIONER KEY: "-- do you want this?" So I  
17 need y'all to tell us how specific do you want this  
18 to be.

19 MS. ZOOK: -- my thinking -- and I'm just  
20 speaking for myself -- is that in light of the law  
21 that will be taking place, a general understanding  
22 of, you know, this happens and then this happens,  
23 like we're going to have two years of ACT Aspire and  
24 that will, you know, make a difference. It could do  
25 -- or do -- so it's how it's going to flow, but not

1 saying specifically by August this is going to happen  
2 and by October this is going to happen, because we  
3 don't know. We didn't vote six months out to take  
4 over somebody and we can't make a decision at this  
5 point six months out to return because we don't know.  
6 I mean, they may just zip through all of this and,  
7 you know, it'll be wonderful and miraculous, and it's  
8 November and we're going to go, "Go for it." But we  
9 don't know. We're just saying, "As you go through  
10 these steps you're getting closer to the goal of  
11 local control; everything is up to speed; the  
12 facilities plan is" -- you know, that kind of thing.  
13 But not a date-certain but a process, that's what my  
14 mind is thinking. Does that -- there's nobody back  
15 there; everybody is gone.

16 COMMISSIONER KEY: Ms. Barnes, is that something  
17 that's -- that you can communicate to the team, if  
18 this motion passes, to result in the product that the  
19 Board wants?

20 MS. BARNES: Commissioner, you can rest assured  
21 that viable members of the team are watching this  
22 board meeting. I will communicate with them, but I  
23 think they heard what's being said. And we will seek  
24 further clarification, but we will do whatever is  
25 necessary to meet the needs of the board members, to

1 meet the needs of the district, the students, and all  
2 others involved. So, yeah, they're listening.

3 COMMISSIONER KEY: Okay.

4 MS. BARNES: Dr. Wilde's office is listening.

5 CHAIRPERSON REITH: And maybe what I can offer  
6 as well, Ms. Barnes, is, you know, for all of us, as  
7 you've heard, and for those of us that have  
8 referenced timeline, we're available to you and your  
9 team as well. And I think to the Commissioner's  
10 point of feeling like we're a presence not to be an  
11 obstacle or create more work but to be part of this  
12 process, we're available to you too as brainstorming  
13 occurs and helping and doing what Dr. Hill says,  
14 thinking about different constituency groups and what  
15 kind of markers would be relevant for them. But  
16 we're available to you all as well.

17 MS. BARNES: Thank you, Madam Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON REITH: So with that, we'll take a  
19 vote on the motion. All in favor of the motion as  
20 made by Ms. Zook and seconded -- was it by Ms. Newton  
21 or Dr. Hill right now? Ms. Newton, seconded by Ms.  
22 Newton. All in favor?

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIRPERSON REITH: Any opposed?

25 Okay. Motion carries unanimously.



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With that, we will take a 10-minute break and reconvene at 4:05 for the final reporting section of this agenda. Thank you.

(The action agenda was concluded at 3:55 p.m.)

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A-5: SE EDUCATION SERVICE COOPERATIVE - McGEHEE

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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B-3: GALE RICHMOND

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B-4: LRSD  
EXHIBIT ONE (1)

## C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS     )  
                                  ) ss.  
COUNTY OF SALINE     )

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter before whom the foregoing testimony was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription of proceedings before the Arkansas State Board of Education, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on April 13, 2017, that the said testimony was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all evidence heard and proceedings had in said matter.

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

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

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: April 25, 2017.

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

<b>\$</b>				
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