

ARKANSAS
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
August 10, 2023
9:00 a.m.
A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. SARAH MOORE, Chair
MS. KATHY ROLLINS, Vice Chair
MS. ADRIENNE WOODS
MR. STEVE SUTTON
MR. RANDY HENDERSON
MS. LISA HUNTER
MR. JEFF WOOD
MS. LEIGH KEENER

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. SHASTADY WAGNER DESE Attorney
MS. COURTNEY SALAS-FORD ADE Chief of Staff/Attorney

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- Auditorium
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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2 1) School Choice Appeals - REMOVED FROM AGENDA
3 2) ARKANSAS SECONDARY MATH STANDARDS

4 CHAIRMAN MOORE: We'll start our action agenda
5 item, agenda item 2 -- 1 was removed -- are the
6 Arkansas Secondary Math Standards.

7 DR. PRIDE: Good morning. Kiffany Pride,
8 Assistant Commissioner of Learning Services.

9 All right. So I am standing before you today
10 for consideration of Secondary Math Standards for
11 high school courses. We're submitting those today to
12 the Board for approval.

13 As you know, a group of educators representative
14 of the state revised standards Algebra II, Algebra
15 III, Technical Math, Quantitative Reasoning, Advanced
16 Topics and Modeling, Statistics, Pre-Calculus,
17 Calculus, and Critical Algebra I. And so I will do a
18 little bit of a review of what happened with those
19 standards.

20 Before I do that, I do want to recognize our
21 mathematics team. They're -- wave your hands --
22 their fearless leader, Kisa Morman, and the rest of
23 her team. We have Jeffrey Nesmith, Bobbie Olles,
24 Ciara Gulley, Britny Nalley, and Kim Romain, and
25 Tahnya Price. I wanted to say their names because

1 they have done so much work on the standards. This
2 is the second part that we're bringing to the Board,
3 so I did want to recognize them. There's not a time
4 that we ask them to make an adjustment that they
5 don't do it and they say we can do it, we'll get it
6 done. So I did want to recognize them.

7 All right. So we'll do a little bit of an
8 overview -- and Kisa is back there in case you ask me
9 a hard math question; she's my help.

10 Can I start it, or will you have to start it?
11 Okay. It's probably my fault, I sent it in a pdf,
12 the PowerPoint.

13 All right. So, again, we kept our same approach
14 to revision of standards. We wanted to provide
15 strength, clarity, and support for the standards;
16 that's our three-pronged approach. And you see there
17 -- just in general we want to make sure in terms of
18 the strength of our standards that we have a logical
19 learning progression and that we're providing
20 essential knowledge, which is really the content and
21 skills that students need at each grade level. And,
22 in particular, what you're viewing are courses. And
23 then we wanted to make sure the standards were clear,
24 so we clarified the standards; that's making sure our
25 expectations are clear and that we know what our

1 students should know and be able to do. And then
2 just simplifying the language -- and I see a typo
3 there. So, and then supporting the standards, making
4 sure we have really strong explanatory front matter
5 for our educators as they dig into the standards and
6 prepare for students. And then making sure we have
7 any other ancillary materials that they may need.

8 So what are the changes in mathematics? Again,
9 making sure that we have parent-friendly language.
10 We know our parents are a very important partner with
11 us in educating their children. And so that
12 necessitates eliminating jargon. You know, sometimes
13 we like to talk jargon, but we need to make sure
14 whatever we're saying or writing down in standards
15 that everybody understands. And so that's one of our
16 changes.

17 Also, making sure that we're attentive to
18 learning progressions, making sure that our
19 expectations build over time based on the previous
20 expectations and that it's reasonable along the K-12
21 continuum. So really it just reflects how learning
22 builds over time and then make sure that -- make sure
23 -- we're making sure that we have precision in our
24 standards. We eliminated lots of redundancy. Our
25 teacher teams were excellent at that. They would

1 say, you know, this shows up several places; this is
2 where it fits best. So we did a considerable amount
3 of -- we spent a lot of energy thinking about where
4 do we have redundancy, and eliminated that.

5 In terms of Algebra II and beyond, we wanted to
6 make sure it was grade appropriate -- and that's
7 really important. And so, we did that. And then
8 just simplified the organization and structure. So
9 the nomenclature is simple; we don't have to be very
10 complicated to get to the essence of what students
11 are learning. And so we were attentive to that.

12 In particular today, if we'll turn to the next
13 slide, we're talking about -- we're bringing forward
14 to you secondary courses. And we took the -- sort of
15 the same approach as we did with the first batch we
16 brought to you. Again, I'll mention that a lot of
17 these, the organization is different in that we
18 created consistency across all of our courses in the
19 way that it looks. Technical language, again, we
20 simplified that. Reduction of verbs -- we don't want
21 it to be overly complicated; we don't want the
22 teacher guessing like which one of these should the
23 student be doing. So, we simplified those, those
24 verbs in the standards. And then reorganized the
25 plus standards. And so plus standards, when we think

1 about those -- and Kisa and I had a good conversation
2 -- and if I need to back-up, I'll pull her up -- but
3 plus standards are incorporated into the curriculum
4 to make sure that the courses are more rigorous. So
5 as you think about scaling and you think about
6 complexity within a course, those plus standards help
7 to make it more complex as needed to prepare students
8 for more rigorous courses.

9 And then also in terms of -- well, I'm waiting
10 -- can you turn it -- can you turn it one more?
11 Yeah. I think I've moved on without you turning it.

12 I was about to talk about these courses. And
13 you'll see that it shows up in the courses and the
14 highlights around the courses. And so just thinking
15 about Algebra I and Algebra II, we uncoupled some
16 standards to make sure that it was very clear what's
17 to be taught in Algebra I and what should be taught
18 in Algebra II. And so that was important in this
19 work and the team did a great job of that.

20 And then specifications, also in thinking about
21 specifications it really talks about the limitations
22 and the extent to which a particular function or
23 concept in math should be taught. And so those are
24 just parameters for our teachers.

25 And then we have Algebra III, Pre-Calculus, and

1 Statistics, and so just to -- just making sure that
2 those plus standards were in the right place and that
3 teachers knew the specifications around standards.

4 Have you got one more, Chauncey, for me?

5 So this is the list of courses that I named when
6 I first came up. Again, this is courses that are
7 available for our students in high school.

8 And then if you look at the very bottom where we
9 have middle school, high school courses, we are
10 asking in addition approval of high school courses
11 that we are able to offer Algebra I in 7th and 8th
12 grade. Currently, it's offered in 8th grade and high
13 school. But in regards to acceleration for those
14 students that are ready, it would be available
15 statewide without course code approval for all of our
16 schools. And then in terms of Geometry, which
17 currently now is offered in high school, grades 9
18 through 12, will be available statewide for all of
19 our middle school students in 8th grade. We we're
20 also asking in terms of courses that we are able to
21 extend those statewide to our middle school students,
22 in the spirit of making sure that they are able to
23 accelerate, as needed, as they are ready.

24 All right. If you'll give me the next slide.

25 So before I come to get your approval, I'll stop

1 and make sure there aren't any questions or comments.

2 SECRETARY OLIVA: Can I just --

3 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Yes.

4 SECRETARY OLIVA: If I could also just add one
5 thing -- thank you, Dr. Pride and the team, for
6 continuing to do this work. If you remember about --
7 I want to say it was around March, we did an update
8 with ELA and math standards. And at that time the
9 Board was asked to consider adopting new K-8 math
10 standards and Algebra and Geometry standards. And
11 that's because we were moving towards a new
12 assessment, moving back towards end-of-course exams,
13 and we wanted to make sure that those test items were
14 written to reflect the great work and the progress
15 that's been made with updating those standards. So
16 we prioritized those subjects in grade levels to get
17 that done. But the work, we knew, as we go through
18 kind of the math paths and look at math progressions,
19 we were going to be coming back to the Board. We
20 told the Board at that time we'd be coming back to
21 build post-Geometry and beyond. That's what we're
22 asking for the Board to consider today, so that we
23 have one nomenclature, we have clear progression,
24 clear and concise language, and very clearly
25 articulated math paths for all of our students.

1 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

2 Questions down here? Ms. Hunter?

3 Ms. McFetridge? Questions?

4 Leigh, online, do you have any questions?

5 MS. KEENER: No.

6 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. I did have a question,
7 if you don't mind --

8 DR. PRIDE: Sure.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: -- taking the time. So when
10 we're looking at these -- this list of courses, can
11 you remind me -- I know districts aren't required to
12 offer all of these courses. Is that correct? Or how
13 does that work?

14 DR. PRIDE: So they are -- they do offer those
15 courses within the 38 courses that districts offer.

16 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. So all of these have to
17 be offered?

18 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Are there some optional
20 math courses or is that something else I'm thinking
21 of?

22 DR. PRIDE: I'm not sure if you're thinking
23 about the Advanced Placement courses; they have to
24 offer one in each content area.

25 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

1 DR. PRIDE: But they offer them, and if they're
2 available -- if there's a group of students who need
3 it, they're able to take it.

4 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

5 DR. PRIDE: But they have options. If they
6 don't have a full course, they could very well offer
7 them a virtual course or some other means for them to
8 take the course.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

10 DR. PRIDE: But it is -- those are in our 38
11 required courses.

12 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Do y'all have data on
13 how many students take -- especially once we get to,
14 you know, the Algebra II, Algebra III, Technical
15 math, how many students take each of these courses?

16 DR. PRIDE: We could -- we could definitely get
17 you that information. I don't have it with me today,
18 but we do have that information.

19 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

20 DR. PRIDE: We could follow-up and send it to
21 you -- the report. Yeah.

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: As a conversation to have, to
23 see. I think it would be interesting to see across
24 the state too where students are taking those --

25 DR. PRIDE: Courses.

1 CHAIRMAN MOORE: -- options.

2 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

3 CHAIRMAN MOORE: And then I think as we're --
4 certainly, as we look to the Algebra I and Geometry,
5 allowing that at the middle school level, the data --

6 DR. PRIDE: Without the course code.

7 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Yeah.

8 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Getting more data on what that
10 looks like.

11 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

13 DR. PRIDE: Sure.

14 All right. So if we --

15 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Jeff has a question.

16 DR. PRIDE: Oh.

17 MR. WOOD: Well, I do have one questions.

18 DR. PRIDE: Okay.

19 MR. WOOD: I was wondering, Mr. Secretary, how
20 does this bridge into the issue related to student
21 success in college Algebra, when they leave some of
22 these courses and become a freshman in college?

23 SECRETARY OLIVA: Sure. I think that's a great
24 question. And you're in luck because you're getting
25 a great presentation today that's going to tell you

1 about all the math paths and share the numbers of
2 readiness for our students. So if I could ask to
3 just kind of pause --

4 MR. WOOD: Sure.

5 SECRETARY OLIVA: -- on that question, because
6 I'd like to get -- that's a deeper conversation --

7 MR. WOOD: Sure.

8 SECRETARY OLIVA: -- that I'd like to engage the
9 Board in --

10 MR. WOOD: Sure.

11 SECRETARY OLIVA: -- when I get to my update.

12 DR. PRIDE: All right. So thank you so much.

13 All right. So we're asking for approval to the
14 State Board of Education for high school courses. We
15 respectfully submit those to you for your approval.
16 And, again, those are Algebra II, Algebra III,
17 Technical Math, Quantitative Reasoning, Advanced
18 Topics and Modeling, Statistics, Pre-Calculus,
19 Critical Algebra I. And then, again, we are also
20 bringing forward the opportunity to provide Algebra I
21 in grades 7 and 8, and Geometry in grade 8 without
22 course approval for our middle schools.

23 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

24 The floor is open for any more questions or for
25 a motion.

1 MS. ROLLINS: I would just like to say thank you
2 for all of your work on this and for really
3 simplifying the standards for keeping our parents in
4 mind so they can be more involved. I think that's
5 great. So with that, I would say approve the motion
6 to accept the Arkansas Secondary Math Standards.

7 CHAIRMAN MOORE: There is a motion to approve.
8 Is there a second?

9 MS. HUNTER: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Second by Ms. Hunter. All in
11 favor say "aye."

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any opposed?

14 Motion passes. Thank you.

15 DR. PRIDE: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN MOORE: And thank you to your team as
17 well for all the hard work y'all are doing.

18 3) ANNUAL ESC REPORTS

19 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Next up on our agenda
20 are the Education Service Cooperative Reports that we
21 looked at part of them last month and decided to
22 batch them and do them now. I think our conversation
23 with co-ops was helpful yesterday, or for me. I was
24 thinking about how it ended up five years ago, but
25 I'm glad we had that -- and thank you to you and your

1 team for getting that done.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. So my ask for you guys is to
3 approve the annual reports and accept them.

4 CHAIRMAN MOORE: And do we have -- we have co-
5 ops online?

6 MS. SMITH: Yes.

7 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

8 MS. SMITH: They are on the Zoom.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

10 MS. SMITH: Many of them are.

11 CHAIRMAN MOORE: If we have specific questions,
12 either for the Agency or for the co-ops, we'll start
13 down here. Any questions? Questions?

14 MR. WOOD: I suppose I have a comment just about
15 the Arch Ford report. It's no secret that I've had
16 some concerns about the ALE program and the
17 certifications that are contained in this report that
18 they have all licensed personnel and all positions
19 that required a license or they had appropriate
20 waivers in place. And I don't believe that to be a
21 true statement based on things that we've seen that
22 have come to light over the last few months with
23 regard to the ALE program, the Crossroads ALE
24 program. Also, yesterday -- and I appreciated that
25 the director of Arch Ford was there and he answered

1 some questions pretty directly and he gave some
2 assurances that, come Monday, the program will be a
3 lot different than it -- well, I shouldn't -- I
4 shouldn't put those words in. He said that it will
5 be in compliance with our regulations for ALE
6 programs with regard to the number of teachers, the
7 student-to-teacher ratio, the percentage of time
8 that's live or synchronous instruction, the
9 geographic scope of their outreach, and a couple of
10 other things. And I felt good about that. He did
11 reference that there was a report that they had
12 provided the Department, and I believe I just got
13 that report just a little while ago, and that that
14 left me a little unsatisfied. It appeared to me to
15 just be a list of classes and a campus schedule. Is
16 that all that they've provided you?

17 MS. SMITH: I think that he's been -- working
18 with Mr. Hogan, ALE, is Mr. Hogan has been asking for
19 who are your teachers, what courses are they assigned
20 to, matching licensing with the course assigned. And
21 so what I think -- I believe you received was
22 basically an Excel document that shows scheduling and
23 who the teachers were and what courses they were
24 assigned to teach.

25 MR. WOOD: I think all I got was a pdf that just

1 had a list of classes.

2 MS. SMITH: Well, I'll be happy to get with Mr.
3 Hogan and make sure we got the right document to you.

4 MR. WOOD: Yeah. I guess my question would be
5 do you -- does the Department feel that, based on
6 information provided to the Department from Arch
7 Ford, that the ALE program will be in compliance with
8 the regulations beginning Monday?

9 MS. SMITH: Yes. And the Department also has
10 them on our like monitoring within the next week to
11 two weeks. So we're planning to be boots on the
12 ground, visiting with them. They've been working
13 very closely with Mr. Grant at Arch Ford to make sure
14 that they're ready to go.

15 MR. WOOD: Okay. Well, obviously, you know,
16 we'll be dependent on the Department's monitoring
17 and, you know, what reporting y'all do of that. And
18 I suppose at this point all we can do is, you know,
19 trust that they'll do what they've said they'll do.

20 SECRETARY OLIVA: I like to say trust but
21 verify.

22 MR. WOOD: I agree. I agree.

23 MS. WOODS: This may be out of turn, but I know
24 Ms. Alumbaugh is here. And I don't want to put you
25 on the spot, but did you sign up for a public comment

1 or are you just here?

2 MS. ALUMBAUGH: No.

3 MS. WOODS: Okay. Would you like to speak to
4 the Board? And you can say no. I just -- I know
5 you've been here and I know the first time you ran
6 out of three minutes. And so --

7 MS. ALUMBAUGH: I'm okay.

8 MS. WOODS: Okay.

9 MS. ALUMBAUGH: I'm okay with not speaking, Ms.
10 Woods. But I do appreciate you considering that.

11 MS. WOODS: Okay. Just because I know
12 everything that has gone on and you pulled that one
13 out. I just -- I wanted to give you the opportunity
14 since you came all the way here, so --

15 MS. ALUMBAUGH: I'm going to trust that they'll
16 verify.

17 MS. WOODS: That works for us too.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any other questions? I just
19 know, like I said, we have the co-ops on if anyone
20 has any more questions.

21 MS. KEENER: I have a question. Can you hear
22 me?

23 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Yes.

24 MS. KEENER: Okay. Great. So I'm still
25 learning very much about all this. In the report

1 that I see, I can see the teachers' names, the
2 teacher-of-record. I don't see their certification.
3 But like you said, trust but verify. The one thing
4 I'm not seeing is the schedule for K through 5. Is
5 that -- are those kids -- do they follow the school
6 district schedule or are they in a separate location?
7 Do they have their own schedule? I was just curious
8 about that.

9 MS. SMITH: I will get back with Mr. Hogan and
10 we will write a narrative on moving forward with the
11 Arch Ford ALE. We'll have him do a narrative,
12 especially when he goes to monitor, and we will get
13 that back to you guys.

14 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you. Leigh, did you have
15 any other questions?

16 MS. KEENER: No.

17 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. I appreciate -- I
18 understand -- I mean, this is an annual report, and I
19 appreciate that financial information being provided
20 this way -- I don't know -- before next year, having
21 that conversation. But I think something similar or
22 this would be beneficial as well.

23 MS. SMITH: Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any more questions?

25 Okay. The floor is open for a motion.

1 MR. WOOD: I would move to approve all of the
2 reports, other than the Arch Ford report.

3 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. We have a motion to
4 approve all the reports but one. Is there a second
5 to that?

6 MS. WOODS: I'll second that.

7 MS. KEENER: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any questions before a vote?

9 I'll ask a question. I'll take the chance to
10 ask a question. What are the ramifications or
11 consequences of not approving their report?

12 MS. SMITH: I'd have to ask Legal that. I don't
13 -- I don't know that there is any consequences.
14 They're required to submit an annual report to this
15 board, and they have done so and they've followed the
16 rules and guidelines outlined and provided that
17 information.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

19 Okay. Any more questions for the motion? So
20 there's a motion and a second on the floor.

21 Okay. We'll take a vote. All in favor say
22 "aye."

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any opposed?

25 The motion passes.

1 MS. SMITH: Do you want clarification from Ms.
2 Ford on that question?

3 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Yes.

4 MS. SMITH: That would be great. Sorry, I
5 didn't see you standing there. You can knock me out
6 of the way.

7 MS. SALAS-FORD: Why would I do that.

8 Courtney Salas-Ford, Department of Education.

9 Ms. Smith is correct, there is no ramifications.
10 They met their legal requirement. If you want to ask
11 for additional information, you can do that. But in
12 terms of the ALE continuing or anything like that,
13 there's nothing that stops them just because you
14 didn't approve the report.

15 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

16 4) CONSIDERATION OF EXTENSION OF ACT 1240 WAIVER: HELENA-WEST
17 HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: We'll move on to agenda item 4,
19 Consideration of the Act 1240 waiver for Helena-West
20 Helena School District.

21 MS. WAGNER: Good morning. Shastady Wagner with
22 ADE Legal.

23 I just wanted to give you our Act 1240
24 procedures before we proceed. So what we would need
25 to do is the Chair is to swear in anyone who is

1 testifying. I believe Ms. Holland is here to testify
2 for Helena-West Helena. At that point in time the
3 district gets 20 minutes. I don't believe the
4 district will take 20 minutes, but they do get 20
5 minutes. If there was any opposition, which we have
6 received none, they would also get 20 minutes. So
7 after Ms. Holland concludes, then the Board can ask
8 her questions, and then you will take your vote.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Do I need to swear in anyone?

10 MS. WAGNER: Yes, ma'am. Ms. Holland.

11 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

12 MS. WAGNER: Yes, ma'am. And Dr. McGee.

13 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. If y'all don't mind
14 standing up -- do you swear or affirm that the
15 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
16 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

17 MS. HOLLAND: Yes.

18 SUPT. MCGEE: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you. If you don't mind,
20 introduce yourself at the mic and you can start your
21 presentation.

22 SUPT. MCGEE: Madam President, Members of the
23 State Board, and Secretary Oliva, I'm Dr. McGee,
24 superintendent of the Helena-West Helena School
25 District. I'm pleased to be joined with our

1 executive director for Learning Services, Ms. Traci
2 Holland here. So we are here for the 1240 waiver
3 approval. We're going to jump right into this, if we
4 may. Next slide.

5 So our goal here is to reduce the number of Act
6 1240 waiver teachers to zero by the end of 25-26
7 school year. As you recall, last year, this time
8 last year I had just jumped into Helena, only a week,
9 maybe two weeks into the job. You're going to see
10 some data here; I think that you will be pleased with
11 the efforts that we've made and going forward.

12 So, roughly, in 2021, you see that number there;
13 there was 21 waiver teachers at start, 12 waivers at
14 the end of the year. Last year, 14 waivers, one
15 paraprofessional and five waiver teachers till the
16 end of the year. So, actually last year ended up
17 totaling -- 24 teachers was actually on that waiver
18 last year by the end of the year. This year we're
19 pleased to start with actually nine. Out of nine at
20 least two for sure will be applying for reciprocity
21 and standard licensure.

22 So that's just a replica of the number that we
23 just gave you, a data chart.

24 A breakdown by schools. You'll see Central High
25 School, the content area there. You'll see the

1 dyslexia at J.F. Wahl pre-K, the grade level
2 dyslexia. Keep in mind, our goal is to put highly
3 qualified teachers who are licensed in content in
4 each grade level who can teach the grade level
5 standards and content at a rigorous level.

6 So the last thing I will ask and -- add here are
7 some of our supports to get this number down, the
8 check-ins here, the surveys, the mentor programs that
9 we've added. We also contract with Dr. Brit Miller
10 and that will work directly with them to -- all of
11 our waiver teachers to make sure that they are
12 staying on task and on track to complete the pathway,
13 as well as our PLC process. You can see that we're
14 moving forward with leaning into the PLC process.
15 But, lastly, I will add two other things that we're
16 trying to do as well. We're partnering with
17 neighboring universities, UALR. We had looked to
18 partner with them last year; they had some turnover
19 there, but we're going to still regain that
20 conversation. We're also looking at our neighboring
21 states -- excuse me -- Mississippi, Tennessee, where
22 we're recruiting teachers that are ready to go and
23 come forward and to work in our district. And then
24 we're also contracting with the vendors, with high
25 quality instruction material vendors, such as Ninety-

1 Five Percent Group, and also looking at Solution Tree
2 that they provide that job-embedded support to the
3 content so that teachers are ready to teach at the
4 grade level content in the standards.

5 And with that, we'll take any questions.

6 CHAIRMAN MOORE: All right. Thank you.

7 Questions of the Board? Ms. Hunter?

8 MS. HUNTER: Not right now. No.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Wood?

10 MR. WOOD: What are the content areas?

11 SUPT. MCGEE: English and mainly ELA and math.

12 MR. WOOD: I was confused by -- one of the
13 graphs you had up there I believe said dyslexia. Can
14 you explain that?

15 SUPT. MCGEE: That was with the dyslexia
16 interventionist. There was -- several teachers are
17 teaching the intervention curriculum, Take Flight,
18 that we're using at J.F. Wahl and Central High
19 School.

20 MR. WOOD: And how many?

21 SUPT. MCGEE: Two.

22 MR. WOOD: Two?

23 SUPT. MCGEE: Uh-huh.

24 MR. WOOD: What are their qualifications to do
25 that?

1 MS. HOLLAND: One on each campus.

2 SUPT. MCGEE: One on each campus. Correct.

3 MR. WOOD: Okay. And what are their
4 qualifications there?

5 SUPT. MCGEE: Most of them have bachelor
6 degrees. One, I know, has a bachelor's degree in
7 English, and the other one just has a bachelor's
8 degree.

9 MR. WOOD: Uh-huh. Okay.

10 MS. HOLLAND: This program that we've moved to
11 with dyslexia requires certified personnel, rather
12 than just like paraprofessionals, to be the
13 interventionists.

14 MR. WOOD: Sure.

15 MS. HOLLAND: So one of the -- from last school
16 year we moved one paraprofessional who had a college
17 degree. So we were able to move her to begin that
18 Take Flight dyslexia program. So that's why we've
19 got her on a 1240 waiver and she's working through
20 becoming CALT certified -- and both of them are
21 actually. So they've got their bachelor's degrees
22 and they are working through Vicki King at the State
23 through a couple of cohorts to be able to become CALT
24 certified, Certified Academic Language Therapists to
25 be able to utilize that program.

1 MR. WOOD: How long is that process?

2 MS. HOLLAND: It's two years.

3 MR. WOOD: Two years.

4 MS. HOLLAND: Uh-huh.

5 MS. SMITH: If I can just clarify that -- so the
6 legislation around creating several hundred Certified
7 Academic Language Therapists in our state -- there
8 was legislation passed on that two years ago. And so
9 the state actually has funded certification programs
10 across the state. It is a two-year process. While
11 folks are going through their training they actually
12 have to be directly working with students, and that's
13 the progress monitoring piece. And that is part of
14 the instruction too. So while you're in the program
15 you're also at the same time working with the kids
16 that your program is working with. So it's kind of
17 this give-and-take. It's probably the most rigorous
18 literacy training for dyslexia that we have in our
19 state.

20 MR. WOOD: What efforts were made to fill those
21 positions with qualified individuals?

22 SUPT. MCGEE: We made a strong conscious effort,
23 recruited again with universities. We contacted
24 several in-state universities, as well as reached out
25 to our neighboring districts -- universities,

1 Mississippi Valley, University of Memphis, as well as
2 Arkansas State, University of Arkansas. So we did a
3 lot trying to recruit. We also added -- even tried
4 to add incentives and a special incentive package to
5 recruit them, to give a sign-on bonus as well. We
6 actually had several teachers that was licensed, but
7 because of -- we were strategic in making sure
8 everybody has taught in their content area, some have
9 left the district, leaving an opening late in the
10 summer. So this is part of the problem that we've
11 had. So, but we're going to continue to look and be
12 creative where we can offer incentives for teachers
13 that can teach in these highly -- content areas, but
14 necessarily not a reason.

15 MR. WOOD: Uh-huh.

16 MR. SUTTON: This is a similar problem that
17 other districts in and around Helena, all the way to
18 the river, Mississippi River -- all the districts are
19 having real difficulty in finding certified staff. I
20 understand your problem.

21 SUPT. MCGEE: But I will say to the Board that
22 we have done a great job, even -- again, like I
23 stated, that we're making sure everyone is teaching
24 their licensed content area.

25 MR. SUTTON: Right.

1 SUPT. MCGEE: We recruited teachers who are
2 coming from the universities who only have to pass --
3 one teacher that we just hired -- hopefully signed-
4 off on today. She only has to take her last test and
5 she will be applying for standards. So we're going
6 to -- we definitely have the intention of screening
7 those applicants and really with intentionality to
8 make sure that we have highly qualified staff who can
9 teach our high-quality instruction materials at grade
10 level.

11 MR. SUTTON: What's the total number of teaching
12 positions in the district?

13 SUPT. MCGEE: Oh, you just had to ask me that.

14 MR. SUTTON: Roughly.

15 SUPT. MCGEE: Thirty-six at the elementary -- 36
16 at the elementary, 34 at the high school.

17 MR. SUTTON: Okay.

18 SUPT. MCGEE: And I will tell you, right now
19 we're licensed, fully staffed, one teacher available
20 only at J.F. Wahl. And hopefully Secretary Oliva
21 will sign-off today.

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: More questions?

23 MS. ROLLINS: How are you supporting your new
24 staff members then? I know you talked about
25 mentoring. You want to talk a little bit more about

1 that?

2 SUPT. MCGEE: So we're going to be piloting a
3 mentor program in the district where we're going to
4 partner with and we're going to streamline --
5 intentionally streamline the teachers who -- our
6 veteran teachers to make sure that they are highly
7 qualified to train. We also want to partner them and
8 work with our Solution Tree vendor contract, as well
9 as work with neighboring vendors to come in and work
10 with them to make sure they are ready to teach a
11 grade level. So they'll have a mentor teacher;
12 they'll have support from the vendor, the curriculum
13 vendor, as well as support from Solution Tree.

14 MS. ROLLINS: Okay. And that means you're
15 joining the PLC process?

16 SUPT. MCGEE: We are heavily embedded in the PLC
17 process.

18 MS. ROLLINS: Good. How is that going? How is
19 that received?

20 SUPT. MCGEE: It's going extremely well.

21 MS. ROLLINS: Great.

22 SUPT. MCGEE: Extremely well. We just kicked it
23 off on Monday. Dr. Sherry Kremer, School
24 Improvement, came down, did a great job. The board,
25 the local board is invested in it as well. Many of

1 you have known that we brought in Dr. Janelle Keaton
2 to train the board on how to function in the PLC
3 process. It's going extremely well.

4 MS. ROLLINS: Okay.

5 SUPT. MCGEE: It is a learning curve for our
6 staff and, you know, we have a lot of work to do.
7 And I want to commend my staff for their commitment
8 to this work because we have been working tirelessly.
9 Probably, to be honest with you, seven days a week.
10 It's just a work-in-process. But it's going
11 extremely well.

12 MS. ROLLINS: That's good to hear. Thank you.

13 MR. HENDERSON: Yeah, I have a question -- part
14 of a question and also a comment. My comment is, you
15 know, I do -- I understand some of the challenges, as
16 Mr. Sutton noted, in that area as far as retaining
17 and maintaining certified teachers. But my comment
18 is I want to compliment you guys, looking at the
19 previous school year, looking at the trends, y'all
20 were able to sustain more teachers with
21 certifications. Can you elaborate on that a little
22 bit? And I know you talked about the outreach and
23 vigorous stuff that you guys are doing. But can you
24 elaborate a little bit on that?

25 SUPT. MCGEE: I tell you the biggest thing that

1 we've done is really intentionally changing the
2 culture and the climate and really making Helena-West
3 Helena appealing, a safe, collaborative environment
4 where everyone can feel valued, but keeping the
5 student as our focal and primary focus and educating
6 all of our scholars. And shifting that culture has
7 really been a big focus the last year for us. And I
8 want to commend Stacy Smith and the rockstar that's
9 back there, Sheila Whitlow, who helped me last year
10 to really make -- shift that culture. While we've
11 made a lot of progress, that is still an ongoing
12 process to get all the staff onboard and -- from the
13 top, all the way down, from the board role to the
14 classroom -- to really intentionally -- to really
15 just focus on students. It's what I call creative
16 conditions where all of our scholars district-wide
17 can become independent thinkers. And we're pushing
18 that because it's going to take all of us. You guys
19 are no strangers; we know that Helena has a history.
20 But we really -- and I said this last year, I said
21 this is doable. It is still the same terminology.
22 It's still doable, is what I've been using. It's
23 just -- it's going to continue to take time and we
24 want to continue going in the right direction.

25 I will tell you that I am very confident that

1 we're headed in the right direction to really be more
2 student-focused and really focusing on instruction --
3 instruction, teaching at grade level -- grade level
4 with highly qualified teachers where that instruction
5 is at a rigor. I'm very pleased with the new math
6 standards that you just approved, because we've been
7 pushing and we want to elevate our scholars. We have
8 several students that -- and I'm giving you some
9 kudos and I'm giving you some highlights of our
10 district. We have several of our scholars, our 9th
11 graders that have scored at least a 27 on the ACT;
12 they'll be 10th graders next year.

13 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

14 SUPT. MCGEE: I'm going to give you another
15 highlight. Last year, ACT Aspire -- and you can pull
16 this for Helena -- our 3rd graders ready and
17 exceeding for math was 34%. We didn't -- we only had
18 78 3rd graders. That's huge for our district.

19 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

20 SUPT. MCGEE: So that was huge. So we're seeing
21 a lot of growth in our data. So it's just going to
22 continue to move forward and just keep working. But
23 I will tell you this, again -- and I'll close, my
24 last two words -- it's doable. But it's just going
25 to continue to take time.

1 MS. ROLLINS: I have one more question.

2 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Certainly. Question.

3 MS. ROLLINS: As you probably saw, we had co-op
4 reports in this meeting. How closely are you working
5 with the co-op? Are you reaching out for help from
6 them?

7 SUPT. MCGEE: Very closely. I serve as the one
8 that's directly on the board, working constantly with
9 our co-op director, really pushing in working with
10 them to collaborate. The intentionality last year
11 was to make sure that they were visible within our
12 schools -- but not just visible, we wanted them to be
13 intentional with the work that needed to be done.
14 And I was pleased with our efforts to collaborate to
15 make sure that visibility was ongoing. So the
16 partnership is very strong with our co-op, as far as
17 Helena-West Helena School District. And we're going
18 to continue to work together.

19 MR. SUTTON: Which co-op?

20 SUPT. MCGEE: Great Rivers Educational Co-op
21 Service.

22 MR. SUTTON: Do they provide the ALE program?

23 SUPT. MCGEE: No. No, they do not. I will tell
24 you that we're constantly -- we right now have our
25 own ALE program. I will tell you that -- Mr. Wood,

1 that has been a focus for me to improve our ALE
2 program. And I've reached out to Dr. Gardenhire,
3 with our new restructure staff; Dr. Andrew Shrader is
4 leading that work to renovate and restructure our ALE
5 program to make sure that we are teaching and focus
6 on instruction, but also the support that they need
7 there, so that we can get and address our kids.

8 MR. SUTTON: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: More questions?

10 Leigh, did you have any questions, online?

11 MS. KEENER: No.

12 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Thank you so much.

13 With that, the floor is open for a motion.

14 MR. SUTTON: I'll make a motion to approve the
15 waiver.

16 CHAIRMAN MOORE: There's a motion to approve.
17 Is there a second?

18 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN MOORE: There's a second to approve the
20 waiver. All in favor say "aye."

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any opposed?

23 Motion passes.

24 Thank you. Thank you all for being here today.
25 Good luck as you start school next week.

1 5) CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO RELEASE FOR PUBLIC
2 COMMENT DESE RULES GOVERNING SCHOOL SAFETY

3 CHAIRMAN MOORE: We're going to move to item
4 number 5, Consideration of Request for Approval to
5 Release for Public Comment the Rules Governing School
6 Safety.

7 MS. WAGNER: Good morning. So --

8 MR. SUTTON: Good morning.

9 MS. WAGNER: Good morning. You guys all
10 received a copy of the rules this morning. So what
11 we are requesting is that you approve those rules to
12 go out for public comment pending Governor office
13 approval. That's what we are requesting.

14 CHAIRMAN MOORE: So, questions on the rules?
15 I'll start down here. Ms. Hunter?

16 MS. HUNTER: No.

17 MR. WOOD: What's the broader process for this?
18 So we release these to the public for comment pending
19 Governor's office approval, they go out. Is that 30
20 days, 60 days?

21 MS. WANGER: It's a 30-day process.

22 MR. WOOD: Thirty days. And then, it comes back
23 to us for consideration of any revisions for proposed
24 amendments or anything like that? Like how long does
25 that sit in front of us?

1 MS. WAGNER: Okay. So what will happen is if we
2 get anything that results in substantive change to
3 the rules, which we very well may from public
4 comment, we will actually send them back to the
5 Governor's office again. They will come back to you
6 again to go out for another set of public comment.

7 MR. WOOD: Okay.

8 MS. WAGNER: So it will be a two-step phase.
9 Now if we don't receive anything that negates
10 substantive change, then they will come back to you
11 again for final approval. Once you have finally
12 approved them, then they will go to Arkansas
13 Legislative Council to review there. After they are
14 approved by the full ALC, then they go to the
15 Secretary of State's office and then are effective 10
16 days after that.

17 MR. WOOD: Okay. And who is involved in putting
18 together these rules?

19 MS. WAGNER: So we have been working with -- Dr.
20 May looked at these rules, subject matter expert
21 there at CJJ; so working with them. And then our
22 Safe Schools Unit as well. Of course, the Arkansas
23 School -- Safe Schools Committee, we had talked about
24 rules after LEARNS had come out, different things
25 that needed to kind of be changed and fleshed out.

1 So there was communication with that committee as
2 well as I was working through and drafting the rules.

3 MR. SUTTON: So is this the first set of rules
4 or is this amended?

5 MS. WAGNER: These are the first set of rules.
6 These are brand-new rules.

7 MR. SUTTON: Okay.

8 MR. WOOD: Does the commission that Governor
9 Hutchinson started, does that -- is that still in
10 existence?

11 MS. WAGNER: No. That commission has -- it
12 submitted its final report -- I believe in October --
13 oh, she's over here -- in October of last year. So,
14 but we did look at that report and review that report
15 as we were drafting these rules.

16 MR. WOOD: Okay.

17 MS. SALAS-FORD: Mr. Sutton, I just wanted to
18 add one thing to your question. So after the
19 commission released its report last year, we did
20 draft these rules and we actually brought them to
21 you; you gave approval to release them for public
22 comment; we took them out for public comment. Before
23 they were finalized that was when the legislature set
24 aside funding for the school safety grants, and so we
25 ended up promulgating emergency rules to immediately

1 address the needs of that grant. So you have seen
2 these before; they just were never finalized in this
3 form. And so we kind of, after the '23 session, had
4 to go back, add some additional revisions. And so
5 now you're seeing that updated version and that's
6 what we are asking for final approval on.

7 MR. SUTTON: Thank you.

8 MS. ROLLINS: I have a question -- and maybe
9 just a reminder. What are the schools operating
10 under at this point, starting this school year? Is
11 there already some laws and regulations that they're
12 operating under? Because this seems like it needs to
13 be enforced now.

14 MS. WAGNER: Yes, ma'am. So the Safe Schools
15 Initiative Act -- any of the acts that are listed at
16 the top of the rules, they're all -- those are all
17 alive right now. They're all effective.

18 MS. ROLLINS: Okay.

19 MS. WAGNER: So these are just to clarify
20 things, is really what the rules serve as.

21 MS. ROLLINS: Okay.

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: More questions to my right?

23 Ms. Keener? Secretary Oliva?

24 SECRETARY OLIVA: I'll just kind of add to the
25 importance of this work. And as we've worked with

1 the legislature and navigated through this process,
2 and as we've been working with school districts and
3 talking about improving learning, that's always the
4 expectation is to improve learning and outcomes. But
5 at the end of the day, safety is our number one
6 priority. There is nothing more important that we
7 can do as a school, a school district, a state board
8 policy than making sure we're putting in place the
9 proper procedures and safeguards to keep our students
10 safe. Every parent that sends their child to school,
11 each and every single day, deserves the expectation
12 that their child is going to come home unharmed. And
13 while these rules may seem a little overwhelming, and
14 there's definitely a sense of urgency around getting
15 this right, a lot of these practices and procedures
16 are already in place in our school districts and our
17 leaders emphasize the importance of keeping students
18 safe when they're in our care.

19 A lot of this work codifies what was passed in
20 legislation and strengthens and builds on that
21 foundation. When it comes to school safety, you
22 never arrive; there's always new practices, new
23 research, and new approaches that warrants ongoing
24 conversation. But what I really appreciate about the
25 LEARNS bill and the priorities -- when we talk about

1 the S in safety, LEARNS includes safety. And a large
2 part of that is being reflected in these rules today.
3 And it's not just about hardening facilities and best
4 practices and fencing and cameras, but it really
5 tackles and takes a look at that system of care
6 around mental health. And if there's one consistent
7 theme that I've heard talking with school district
8 leaders and superintendents around the state,
9 especially post-pandemic, is that they're seeing a
10 need for more services for their students and for
11 their faculties. And when we talk about building out
12 that system of care around mental health, it's how do
13 we make sure that every child has access to quality
14 mental health education and how do we make sure that
15 every child has access to the quality mental health
16 services that are needed for them to be -- in order
17 to be set up for success in the classroom when
18 they're under our purview and out in the community.
19 And part of this, which is something I think is
20 really important to get this moving, to get right is
21 mental health training and awareness for all faculty
22 and people that come in contact with students, so
23 that they can recognize signs and symptoms, know what
24 to look for -- and then, more importantly, know who
25 to call and what to do about it.

1 So we're engaged in this work. There is nothing
2 more important than getting it right. We'd love to
3 get public comment and feedback in moving this
4 forward.

5 In my previous role, before joining the State of
6 Arkansas, I had to sit on a taskforce that I served
7 on for four years where we examined why 17 people
8 were murdered in a school -- and I don't ever want to
9 go through that again. And we don't need to bring
10 that here, and we need to keep moving this forward.

11 MR. SUTTON: It may be in here; I just don't see
12 it. Is there a ratio of the number of resource
13 officers per student? How does one determine whether
14 or not they need one or five?

15 MS. WAGNER: So there's not a ratio that's
16 published anywhere, and we don't publish numbers of
17 School Resource Officers anyway because that's a
18 safety concern. So as to how many districts have,
19 that's really determined on a district-by-district
20 school-by-school basis.

21 SECRETARY OLIVA: And I would add to that --
22 it's hard to come up with a formula or ratio, because
23 every campus is unique.

24 MR. SUTTON: I know.

25 SECRETARY OLIVA: And some schools are designed

1 with safety in mind and some schools may have
2 multiple buildings and be spread out over multiple
3 acres. So --

4 MR. SUTTON: Right.

5 SECRETARY OLIVA: -- we would encourage school
6 districts who now have a named school safety
7 specialist to work with our agency. But also work
8 with their local sheriffs and bring in the emergency
9 responders, emergency operation centers, and develop
10 that plan. And make sure that every piece of that
11 campus is protected and with the proper amount of
12 adults that they can determine at that local level as
13 well.

14 MR. SUTTON: Have the -- via the LEARNS Act, are
15 districts going to receive additional funding for
16 school safety?

17 SECRETARY OLIVA: So this past fiscal cycle --
18 and I don't remember the exact amount, but there were
19 hardening grants that went to all of the school
20 districts. And in fact we're in the process of
21 allocating those funds. I want to say the majority
22 of the funds have been allocated -- and to me, I
23 think that's the first step. And a lot of the threat
24 mitigation grants around hardening is important work.
25 And I've traveled this whole state; I've been to a

1 lot of school districts, I've been to a lot of
2 campuses. And there is a lot of work to do in making
3 sure there's a single point of access, that there's
4 fencing around campuses and buildings, that we can
5 make sure the threat mitigation component -- and even
6 adding cameras and radios and adults that are safety
7 focused -- we have a lot of wonderful initiatives
8 happening throughout the state. The CGI team, the
9 training and support they do, the passion and
10 conviction that they have around this work I think is
11 almost leading the nation when you look at kind of
12 building up those systems. But then we've also got
13 to build it out to scale. And we're going to hit the
14 ground running when it comes to school safety and
15 continually be reflective and look at how we can
16 invest in ways to make sure that our campuses are
17 safe.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Keener, online, questions?

19 MS. KEENER: Yes. I was just wondering -- I
20 understand that early childhood often has a separate
21 sort of rules and regulations, the number of tornado
22 drills they had to run, the number of fire drills,
23 things like that. Are we going to see some alignment
24 between the two or does pre-K still have their own
25 separate schedule, if that makes sense?

1 MS. WAGNER: So we have not put pre-K into these
2 rules. These rules are just K-12. But that is
3 definitely something that we could discuss going
4 forward and maybe that's something that we could
5 change.

6 MS. KEENER: Okay.

7 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you. More questions?

8 Then with that, then the floor is open.

9 Reminder, this is for approval pending Governor's
10 office approval to release for public comment. Is
11 there a motion?

12 MR. WOOD: Sure. I'll make the motion to
13 approve the release for public comment, the DESE
14 Rules Governing School Safety, pending Governor's
15 office approval.

16 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. There is a motion to
17 approve. Is there a second?

18 MS. HUNTER: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Second by Ms. Hunter.

20 All in favor say "aye."

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any opposed?

23 The motion passes. Thank you.

24 MS. WAGNER: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN MOORE: That is the end of our action

1 agenda. We'll go ahead and do the Consent Agenda,
2 and then take a break for Ms. Sharon to pack up.

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4 (The meeting was concluded at 10:16 a.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
 COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, State Board of Education, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on August 10, 2023; that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

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

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

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: August 25, 2023.

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