

In The Matter Of:
ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 15, 2023

Sharon Hill Court Reporting
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ARKANSAS
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 15, 2023
10:30 a.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

SECRETARY JACOB OLIVA
MS. CAPRI BELL SALAAM, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. STACY SMITH, Assistant Commissioner
MR. ANDRES RHODES, Chief Legal Counsel

LOCATION:

PINE BLUFF CONVENTION CENTER
1 Convention Center Drive
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1) PINE BLUFF SCHOOL DISTRICT REVIEW

CHAIRMAN MOORE: We're going to start with our first agenda item, the Pine Bluff School District. I believe Ms. Stacy Smith is going to come speak first.

And just to let everyone know, we're going to have a couple of presentations, and then after that point we will have public comment. So if you did sign-up to speak, we will be asking you to speak after the presentations. Thank you.

MS. SMITH: Good morning. Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner, with Sheila Whitlow, Associate Deputy Commissioner, who tried to sit in the back of the room and I told her she couldn't; she had to come on up.

This is an exciting day. And I hope that this morning when you were on your tours you saw some things that gave you hope for this community and for this school district, and I hope you saw evidence that they are heading in the right direction. This has been a long time coming. Yesterday, when we were having our work session and we mentioned five years, you guys have been here for this journey and so you know some of the ups and downs that we have had.

I'm quickly going to -- the clicker doesn't

1 work, so I'll be saying Next on the slides for the
2 folks who are operating the slides for us. But I'm
3 going to quickly kind of give you an overview of the
4 last kind of five years and a breakdown, and then get
5 specifically into the exit criteria. And then we
6 will let the district present some things to you as
7 well.

8 Okay. So on this very first slide here the
9 district was put in State authority in 2018 and '19.
10 They were first identified in fiscal distress in
11 September of 2018, and then they -- the appointed
12 superintendent came back to the Board and requested
13 additional support for Level 5 because we identified
14 that there was much more going on than just the
15 fiscal. So that first year there was a reduction-in-
16 force; there was lots of literacy audits and
17 curriculum audits to try to figure out where we were.
18 At that time there was a mix-match of curriculum and,
19 in some areas, there were no texts or books
20 available. You -- we found classrooms that were just
21 stuffed with items and weren't sure where they were
22 supposed to be, but nothing -- there was a lack of
23 consistency across the district.

24 In year '19 -- 2019-2020, Dr. Jeremy Owoh, who
25 was appointed the year before, was -- continued to

1 be the superintendent. During that school year,
2 there had been -- from the previous school year, when
3 we first took over, there was 30 audit findings, and
4 so there was lots of work on the fiscal side that had
5 to be done. That was the original -- that was our
6 first big push for professional development, really
7 pushing in on R.I.S.E. Arkansas with the Science of
8 Reading, getting folks trained. There was a struggle
9 during that time period on what our expectation was
10 for the staff and the faculty in terms of what the
11 expectation was for participating and what their
12 responsibilities were in the classroom. So it was
13 just a disconnect. Everyone has worked very hard
14 over the last couple of years to kind of get
15 everybody where we need to be. At the end of that
16 year is when Covid hit.

17 And that next school year, 2020 to 2021, Barbara
18 Warren was appointed superintendent of both Dollarway
19 and Pine Bluff. And so that was in the conversation
20 of -- that was Dollarway's final year and we had to
21 make a decision about what was going to happen with
22 that school district; and so, she was literally
23 leading both school districts as the superintendent.
24 That was a really challenging year in terms of we had
25 been doing all this work on curriculum and then all

1 of a sudden, we had very large virtual numbers for an
2 entire year where we were all of a sudden shifting to
3 try to find curriculum that matched what we were
4 trying to do. The school district did a very
5 aggressive limited on transition plans, and so
6 students really went through -- even those that were
7 attending in person really were sitting in a single
8 classroom all day basically on a computer having
9 virtual instruction. So it was a very difficult year
10 in terms of instruction and just academics.

11 The following year, 21-22 was when everybody
12 pretty much got brought back. A very limited number
13 continued to do virtual. It was everyone is back,
14 we're going back to our regular schedule, kids are
15 changing classrooms, we're going back to school.
16 That was probably the hardest year, and that was
17 probably the hardest year for this community in terms
18 of turmoil and just even question about the State's
19 role in their school district. There was -- the
20 district had already been granted partnership funds
21 for new facilities, and so conversation around where
22 is the new high school going to be. And there were
23 proposals for different sites and that really caused
24 a huge division and a lack of trust between what our
25 role was and what was happening in this community.

1 It was also a year in which the school district lost
2 seven enrolled students and two students that had
3 currently dropped out for -- to gun violence in one
4 year. You had students who walked out of class. It
5 was everybody looking around, saying, We've got good
6 kids in this school, these are great kids, we want to
7 make sure they're safe, and looking around in our
8 situation in which we were in and recognizing that
9 our school campuses were not where they needed to be
10 in terms of safety. I have to commend the city.
11 They rolled up their sleeves and worked with us,
12 Chief of Police, the Mayor, different folks coming
13 together to say, What can we do to make this -- and
14 address these problems.

15 In 22-23, Barbara Warren started the year as our
16 superintendent that school year, and we made a change
17 at semester when we appointed a limited-authority
18 board. Lots of progress made in the 22-23 school
19 year. Lots of the initiatives that we had started
20 with school safety were absolutely in place. Fencing
21 was put up. The grounds themselves -- you started
22 seeing things being painted and cleaned up and dead
23 bushes being picked out. There just became this
24 sense of pride. There was a point that we almost had
25 to point everything out, and then it got to the point

1 where we didn't have to do that. Like there was a
2 sense of This is what we're supposed to be, this is
3 our school, and we are proud of what we have.

4 The limited-authority board, when they came in
5 place, they took on the challenge of determining the
6 high school and were we going to do a millage and
7 where was it going to be. And they successfully
8 passed a millage in the community, overwhelmingly.
9 That's huge. When the limited-authority board also
10 came in it was the task of Can you show consistent
11 governance, can you show that you are a cohesive body
12 working together to support the school in moving them
13 forward. And they have overwhelmingly showed that.

14 This next slide, this gets into the overall
15 indicators for school districts when there are Level
16 -- or that when they're in Level 5. And these were
17 some of the indicators that were put in place the
18 first year in which they were -- had that
19 classification: looking for collaborative teams
20 working together, grade level teams, content teams,
21 to looking at and monitoring instructional practices
22 in the classroom. Early on, the first couple of
23 years within the district, lots of student engagement
24 was at an all-time low. Lots of -- you walked in
25 classrooms and you wouldn't see students actively

1 engaged. That's not the case. And I hope today when
2 you were walking around you saw student engagement
3 and you saw folks instructing and kids actively
4 participating.

5 Indicator 3 had to do with leadership and
6 providing feedback to teachers on their instruction,
7 administrators walking in classrooms. When you've
8 heard me present before on Pine Bluff, we've talked
9 specifically about the requirements of how many times
10 we expect administrators doing walk-throughs of
11 classrooms. That's never been lowered. And their
12 central office is a part of that.

13 School curriculum, making sure that there is
14 curriculum in all subjects throughout the classroom.

15 And Indicator 5, that the school is managing a
16 safe and supportive, collaborative school district.
17 And I definitely saw evidence of that this morning on
18 my tour.

19 So as we move forward to evaluate that, we've
20 been taking evidence of that over our time in the
21 school. And that's why we came to you a year ago, in
22 September of last year, to say, We think they're
23 ready for a limited-authority board. You gave us
24 permission to do that in October. We announced the
25 call for folks to turn in applications in November.

1 We had board -- Dr. -- Ms. Newton helped lead the
2 interview committees for establishing a board in
3 November. And then, in December, they were named.
4 So this process in terms of us recognizing they were
5 progressing and meeting these goals, that journey
6 started a year ago.

7 So we wanted to formalize and make sure that we
8 captured the evidence in a manner in which it was
9 scored, and that's where Sheila Whitlow comes in and
10 the OCSS team. So I'm going to let Sheila talk to
11 you about, on the next slide, how the OCSS team went
12 forward with the evaluation and what artifacts they
13 were looking for, for the report that was attached to
14 the agenda.

15 MS. WHITLOW: Good morning. I'll raise it just
16 a little bit.

17 So we were charged with verifying that what we
18 were seeing -- as you know, and as Stacy stated, we
19 had members of our team consistently onsite at the
20 schools during this past five years. But what we
21 wanted to do is go in and verify that what we were
22 seeing was what was happening, and also looking at
23 that exit criteria. So we formed a team of six;
24 there were three teams of two. And what we tried to
25 do was balance it so we had one team member, someone

1 that's been working in the district -- because I want
2 to say this as part of the Office of Coordinated
3 Support and Service -- we get very close to the
4 districts that we serve. And so we wanted to make
5 sure one of the members was an objective member as
6 well, someone that hadn't been working with the Pine
7 Bluff School District. So all of our teams had
8 someone that was new to the district. So the teams
9 then took on two schools each and it was over a span
10 of two days that we were visiting the schools and
11 then looking at the data.

12 So what we did was, to collect some quantitative
13 data for you and to really use that as we look at the
14 exit criteria, we developed a survey. And that
15 survey was developed based on the exit criteria, so
16 the questions aligned with those five indicators that
17 Stacy just shared and the objectives as well. So
18 during that time we -- I think it was 66 on there --
19 66 full interviews using that tool. So we had those
20 interviews, but then we also had a lot of informal
21 interviews where we talked to just people as we were
22 walking through the hallways and collected a lot of
23 anecdotal information from those comments -- from
24 those interviews, as well.

25 And so as we were there, the teams visited

1 classrooms -- and I want to just say, echo what Stacy
2 said -- it was a big difference from the first year I
3 was here because we saw students engaged, positive
4 interaction between the teachers and the students; we
5 saw them using their high-quality instructional
6 material; we were witnessing dyslexia interventions;
7 we were in special ed. classrooms and we saw teaching
8 and learning going on in all those places. Was it
9 where it needs to be? No. Does the district know
10 that? Absolutely. And they have a plan for that,
11 and you're going to get to hear that today as well.
12 We also attended collaborative team meetings and we
13 saw them developing CFA's and those common formative
14 assessments, looking at their curriculum. They were
15 planning in those meetings as well. And then we also
16 looked at safety, because we know that was an
17 important part, and we looked at external doors, were
18 we able to just walk in -- and we were not. Do the
19 classroom doors -- were they locked, and they were.
20 We also spent some time in the mornings to see how
21 are they gathering in the secondary, but also car-
22 rider duty, bus duty, were teachers where they needed
23 to be -- and in some cases, they were not, and we
24 shared that with the district as well and those are
25 going to be addressed. We also were at car-rider in

1 the afternoon and some of us didn't schedule our time
2 just right and we were in car-rider traffic. So it
3 was a wonderful two days. And for me, it was
4 wonderful because I saw that transformation and
5 getting to go back and see the changes was very
6 motivating.

7 And so, that's how we gathered the data that
8 Stacy is going to share with you this morning.

9 MS. SMITH: Thank you, Sheila.

10 MS. WHITLOW: Uh-huh.

11 MS. SMITH: And you didn't even cry, look at
12 you.

13 MS. WHITLOW: But I will later.

14 MS. SMITH: All right. On Indicator 1, again,
15 this is about the collaborative team times. You can
16 see here their overall score was a 3.35. Again, the
17 committee actually sat in meetings for grade level
18 teams; they looked at assessment data; they talked to
19 the teachers in the interviews about do your teams
20 meet regularly, can you show me evidence. Principals
21 were responsible before the visits to actually turn
22 in schedules and evidence that this work was also
23 happening. And so this was overwhelmingly something
24 that this district has been working towards for five
25 years, working collaboratively together to achieve.

1 And this morning, I know in the pre -- during
2 the pre-K visit, we saw similar lessons and content.
3 So we knew that some adjustments were matching up and
4 that they themselves were having opportunities to
5 come together and discuss.

6 On the next slide, for Indicator Number 2, this
7 is the awareness of predominant instructional
8 practices. The district is looking at that classroom
9 observation in the data, school leaders providing
10 feedback. One of the things I wanted to emphasize
11 there was when you look at that objective 2.3, about
12 school leaders providing forthright feedback on
13 individual teaching practices, the 3.37, that came
14 from teachers. When they were surveying staff about
15 do you have feedback from your administrators, that
16 score came from teachers. That's a very high score.
17 There is an expectation that administrators are in
18 classrooms and that we are providing feedback to
19 teachers. We've got to continue to build capacity in
20 our administrators on what to look for for
21 instruction so that we can continue to raise the
22 rigor and the elevation of what we expect instruction
23 to look like in a classroom. But that's big. And
24 that was overwhelmingly said throughout the
25 interviews.

1 On the next criteria, for 3 -- this one, again,
2 is about evaluations, teachers, instruction,
3 curriculum, observations, folks being where they're
4 supposed to be -- had a total score of 3.06. Again,
5 meeting. If you look at what a 3 means, a 3 means
6 Met with Direct Support. And the reason why we still
7 have that direct support in there is because our team
8 is still in there. All right. But we don't -- in
9 the beginning, where we were constantly questioning
10 about what you're doing, where it is right now, we're
11 not prompting that; we're checking in, we're checking
12 with -- we're just -- we're like monitoring that it's
13 still going, if that makes sense. They have taken
14 the ownership of this work.

15 On the next slide, for Criteria 4, on school
16 curriculum, making teachers -- be sure teachers have
17 curriculum that is the same, this is huge. I mean I
18 can remember even having a meeting with city
19 officials who -- we were in like year three and four,
20 and they were saying, I'm getting calls from teachers
21 to say they don't have textbooks and what are y'all
22 doing about that; I'm getting calls from people that
23 said that this -- they were using this curriculum and
24 y'all pulled it away from them and now they've got
25 this one. And all that was true because we were

1 trying to get everybody on the same page, using the
2 same materials and supplies and staying with the
3 training that had to happen. They're there now. So
4 folks have materials, teachers have resources, and we
5 have curriculum that's aligned to our standards, and
6 we have literacy curriculum that's aligned to the
7 Science of Reading.

8 On the next one, for Indicator 5, safe,
9 supportive and collaborative school, and that
10 finances are led to push to that direction and
11 priorities are made in that area. This is an area,
12 again, that -- they were on fiscal distress, so this
13 kind of aligns with that. But we have the fiscal
14 distress plan that also will go over it a little bit
15 deeper. But this was more than just is our fiscal
16 operations running; this was what is our setting and
17 how are we using our funding to make sure the right
18 stuff is happening. And I can confidently say that
19 that is something that has been leveraged correctly.
20 I do know that the current limited-authority board
21 asks lots of questions about where the money is being
22 spent, what's happening, why are we purchasing that,
23 what does that contract look like, and that's part of
24 their role.

25 So on this next slide here, when we talk about

1 the reoccurring theme for interviews, these were
2 things that Sheila and her team said came out over
3 and over and over again when they conducted their 66
4 interviews. And those were 66 full interviews and
5 just informal conversations with teachers when they
6 were popping in for classroom visits or folks in the
7 hallway. Transparency at the district level
8 resulting in trust, over and over and over again.
9 And I can say that that was also a transparency thing
10 involving the state authority and what our intention
11 was and what was happening. And to me, the pivotal
12 role here was when this board determined that they
13 were ready for a limited-authority board and we
14 started allowing their appointed board to start
15 making some of those decisions and recommendations
16 too. And also, Jennifer Barbaree was a big role in
17 that.

18 2, Climate and Culture -- and I had to put like
19 three stars next to it. It's a different place than
20 it was five years ago. It is a different place. If
21 you watched any of the video that was playing
22 beforehand, you could feel the excitement in that
23 video, that kids had taken ownership of those pieces,
24 they passed a millage, they won a state basketball
25 championship, they've got kids taking concurrent

1 credit. They have taken pride in what they're
2 building for collective safety and security. And
3 they are taking ownership of their school district.

4 Unified District, Streamlined, Clear Process --
5 the systems in terms from central office and HR,
6 everything from payroll to class schedules, do kids
7 have the right credits and courses all had to be put
8 into place. We're still working on business office
9 and procedures in that area. But it is -- it has
10 grown and it is so much better today than it was.

11 The other one, Shifting to be Student Focused --
12 everything here is about students. Everything.
13 Expectations are clear, reasonable, and manageable.
14 This is what staff was saying to our folks when we
15 were interviewing. And this last one, over and over
16 again, they kept talking about how their
17 administration team actually -- their administration
18 is participating in their common planning times.
19 That's huge.

20 And then you can see some of the comments that
21 they took: "The district is more unified than I've
22 ever remembered," and I put seasoned employee; she's
23 been there like 30-plus years. "There is a real
24 sense of urgency from the district team, but they're
25 also providing the support." That was a teacher.

1 into the fiscal distress. I'm going to ask Dr.
2 Saunders to come up and kind of quickly walk you
3 through the fiscal distress piece. And remember,
4 that was the initial reason they were -- authority
5 was assumed. Okay.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Good morning, Board.

7 And if we can go to the next slide. So starting
8 with the -- looking at the 22-23 school year and the
9 onsite support that we had with the district,
10 multiple times we met with the district as far as
11 working on things such as staffing, attendance,
12 revenue, expenditures, coding, processes, procedures,
13 and policies. Frequent calls, we put that down. I
14 think that if you look at the spring semester that
15 Dr. Barbaree and myself -- we probably had a standing
16 meeting on 80% of the days, that began at 6:45 in the
17 morning and lasted approximately 30 minutes about
18 every day, and -- trying to get stuff together,
19 working on things. And made lots of progress. So I
20 think there's strong collaboration there and both of
21 us working in the same direction.

22 And we also had monthly support with the
23 district regarding revenues and expenditures, down to
24 individual line items throughout their budgets and
25 tracking coding, aligning their budgets and their

1 expenditures.

2 Meeting the Fiscal Distress Plan -- continued to
3 work on that and meeting all the criteria within
4 that. A lot of changes from the 22-23 school year
5 that came as a -- about as the realization of where
6 are we at, what do we need going forward. And you
7 know that the merging of campuses occurred, so
8 buildings -- instead of having multiple small
9 buildings, combining them to have single buildings.
10 Also looking at the staff across the district and
11 seeing what they could afford, what was the right
12 size. So a lot of those discussions, and I believe
13 we began a lot of that planning in January. And
14 looking at enrollment projections, based upon past
15 trends, for the next 10 years and what staffing would
16 need to be with that. I think one of the key things
17 is key staff in key positions. All the procedures
18 and policies, you know, do not matter if you don't
19 have the right people in the right place. And I know
20 Dr. Barbaree has done a great job, I think, with her
21 Assistant Superintendents and placing key people in
22 the business office in those positions to carry on.

23 Next slide. One thing that the district is
24 aware of and will need to continue to be aware of
25 that you can see on the graph is the enrollment. You

1 do see a decline throughout the years. You see the
2 jump in 21-22; that is from the two districts merging
3 together. But then you see the drop in the 22-23
4 school year, as well. So that's something that the
5 district is aware of and must constantly monitor and
6 make the right staffing adjustments.

7 Looking at their net legal balance, on the next
8 slide you can see what that has been since 2017-2018,
9 the net legal balances, the unrestricted balance that
10 we really look at, looking at the fiscal integrity of
11 the district. You will see a decline with the
12 closing out of the 22-23 year, a little decline.
13 Most of that is because of one-time expenditures.
14 And with the right-sizing of the staffing adjustments
15 that were made for this next year I'm comfortable
16 that they will continue to be safe in that area.

17 Aside from the net legal balance, you also have
18 the building fund balance, which you can see on the
19 next slide. And right there you can see that has
20 continued to increase, and I think it will be right
21 about the same at the close of the 22-23 school year.

22 Next slide. You can see the ratings where they
23 had met with district support in various areas across
24 the fiscal arena. One of the areas marked with a 2
25 was review audits and correct findings, put in place

1 safeguards to prevent repeat findings. And as you
2 have staff turnover and you have key personnel coming
3 into place, it takes time and you're always looking
4 at the internal controls and the procedures and
5 policies, and adjusting those to make sure that they
6 are effective. Matter of fact, we do have an onsite
7 support with the district scheduled I believe in
8 about a week-and-a-half, to come down and help them
9 with that again as we have helped them in the past.

10 Next slide. You can see in these criteria the
11 ratings. They had straight 3's all across there, for
12 an overall rating of 2.80.

13 Next slide. You can see that the school
14 district in fiscal distress can petition the State
15 Board for removal after the Division has certified in
16 writing. We have certified in writing, as I have
17 here, to the district that they have met the criteria
18 to be released from fiscal distress. So, that
19 criteria has been met; hence, the board is
20 petitioning -- I'm sorry -- the district is
21 petitioning to State Board at this time.

22 Next slide. Now, if the district is released
23 from the fiscal distress they are not totally on
24 their own. We still work closely with them. As a
25 requirement under the law, we continue to monitor

1 their fiscal operations for three years. That would
2 be with their request. We do look at, you know,
3 where they're spending their money, how they're
4 spending their money, and monitoring that as it goes
5 forward. A lot of that -- also, we work with them on
6 a budget and we constantly review and adjust the
7 budget to, one, make sure that it's accurate, and
8 insuring that the expenditures are going in the
9 direction that they need to go for the district to be
10 successful.

11 So continue to the next slide, please. Oh, I
12 had one missing there.

13 So, any questions from the Board?

14 DR. MOORE: Board Members, any questions at this
15 point in time?

16 Thank you.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Thank you.

18 MS. SMITH: I do want, real quick, just to --
19 the OCSS team is kind of in the back. If you guys
20 will stand -- and, Jamie, I'm including you. OCSS
21 team, if you'll stand. These are folks that have
22 actually been in the schools for a while.

23 [APPLAUSE]

24 MS. SMITH: Dr. Barbaree was actually a part of
25 that team before she was appointed as superintendent.

1 But I just wanted to recognize them and the ones who
2 actually did the evaluation.

3 At this time I'm going to turn it over to Dr.
4 Sederick Rice for their presentation from the Pine
5 Bluff School Board to the Board. And then after
6 that, Dr. Barbaree will actually come up and get more
7 into some of the academics and pieces of where
8 they're heading. All right.

9 DR. RICE: Good morning. I want to say good
10 morning to Secretary Oliva, today to your Board.
11 It's a pleasure to speak with you this morning.
12 We're excited that you are here. I am excited to be
13 here as a Class of 1990 graduate of Pine Bluff High
14 School, Zebra for life.

15 And so what I want to do this morning is to talk
16 briefly about board governance and what that
17 experience has been like for me serving in this
18 capacity. I'll give you a little bit of background:
19 I ran for school board once, I believe it was 2015,
20 and I lost that race. Then I ran again, and right
21 before the election the school board was taken over.
22 So the third time was the charm and that time I was
23 appointed. So I'm excited to be here. I'm excited
24 to share some things with you about what we've been
25 doing in this process, as I've learned how important

1 our role has been in terms of this conversation about
2 Level 5-Intensive Support, conversation about
3 returning to local control to our district.

4 Next slide, please. I first want to thank the
5 local members who helped to bring this to bear, to
6 help put together a limited-authority school board,
7 as well as the ADE when we began having those
8 conversations. It was a good process; we were
9 vetted, we were interviewed. And I just want to say
10 that we're working with a dynamic team and I'm
11 excited to continue to do that.

12 Next slide. This is our board. And I've been
13 -- I've had the privilege of working with these
14 individuals who have a plethora of knowledge. They
15 have wonderful backgrounds, they are sharp, they are
16 intelligent. And I'll say again, as I've said
17 before, this is one of the most accomplished boards
18 in the state of Arkansas, based on their credentials,
19 based on their experiences. And we work very, very
20 well together.

21 And so now I want to talk about kind of what
22 that board governance is like -- and really I'm
23 speaking to you as a board, but I'm also speaking to
24 our community so that we know where we go and how we
25 go going forward.

1 Next slide. The first thing we've got to do is
2 we've got to learn from our mistakes. And as we
3 think about this and we think about board governance
4 -- and we've been working together for several
5 months, we have to learn and understand the history
6 of that board work and understand what mistakes were
7 done. And we began to develop a mantra; we began to
8 develop some standards that we use based on Arkansas
9 School Board Association, and I'm proud to say that
10 we've continued to operate by those standards. Now,
11 again, as I'm presenting these -- not just for you,
12 but it's also for our community -- so we know how to
13 have best practices for board work going forward.

14 Next slide. Next slide. All right. That first
15 mantra is School board members make decisions that
16 have significant and long-term consequences for their
17 students, schools and communities. What does that
18 mean? That means that the work that we do are
19 serious and we have serious board members that are
20 doing that work. You know, I talk to people all the
21 time -- and I'm a certified school teacher as well.
22 You know, a lot of people think they can just walk
23 into the classroom and teach. That's not the case.
24 There are a lot of individuals that think that they
25 just -- they can serve on a school board and really

1 deal with school governance. That's not the case, as
2 well. And so we understand the seriousness of our
3 work. We understand, you know, what we have to do to
4 make sure that we're doing the best for our
5 community, but more specifically our students.

6 Next slide. As members of the board, we should
7 promote the best interest of the school district as a
8 whole. And to that end, we shall adhere to the
9 following educational and ethical standards --
10 educational and ethical standards, that's what we
11 focus on all the time when we're working; we're
12 thinking in terms to make sure we're making the best
13 decisions going forward.

14 Next slide. We make decisions in terms of the
15 educational welfare of all children in the district,
16 regardless of ability, race, creed, sex, or social
17 standing. We know that we have a district that has
18 levels of high poverty. We know we have a district
19 that has levels of high need. It's not an excuse,
20 but it gives us an opportunity to really dig in and
21 really work hard as a board to find the best
22 opportunities, to get the best contractors, to get
23 the best units to help us to make sure that those
24 students learn.

25 Next slide. We recognize the decision must be

1 made by the board as a whole, make no personal
2 promise, and take -- and not take private action that
3 may compromise the board. I'm proud that we do that.
4 We work together. We know how important our
5 decisions are and we don't make -- want to make
6 mistakes from the past. We're going to understand
7 what our true role is in terms of supporting the
8 superintendent, in terms of looking at the bigger
9 picture of student success.

10 Next slide. This is a big one. We delegate
11 authority for the administration of the school
12 district to the superintendent. I watch a lot of
13 boards and meetings in Arkansas, and of course across
14 the state -- across the country. And if you want a
15 dysfunctional board, then have the board members to
16 step out of their lane. And what we've worked hard
17 to do is to not step out of our lanes -- to not step
18 out of our lanes. We understand that Superintendent
19 Barbaree is the CEO of our district. Board members
20 don't get into operations, and that's for you to
21 understand and for our community to understand. We
22 don't get into operations. We have specific tasks.
23 We have plenty to do. We're supporting
24 Superintendent Barbaree in that regard and that means
25 in terms of decisions that are made, we play a role

1 in that. Even working with our community partners.
2 You know, we're working on a successful millage
3 campaign now. We have contractors we're working
4 with. We understand that we contribute, we have
5 things to bring to bear. But we don't get into
6 operations, and we're proud of that. I'm proud of
7 working with a board that understands that.

8 [APPLAUSE]

9 DR. RICE: Now, again, that's for our greater
10 community because, again, whether I'm serving or the
11 current board is serving, your board members have to
12 stay in line. You have to be aligned. You don't get
13 into operations. And we're proud that we're doing
14 that.

15 Next slide. We attend all regular scheduled
16 board meetings insofar as possible and become
17 informed concerning the issues we consider at those
18 meetings. We don't have an issue with not having a
19 quorum. We don't have board members walking out and
20 breaking quorums where we can't conduct business.
21 We're proud of that. We know what we are tasked to
22 do. We try to be as flexible as we can to make sure
23 that it is convenient for board members to
24 participate. And we work hard to make sure we're
25 informed when we're making those decisions.

1 Next slide. We make certain the board remains
2 responsive to the community. We're open. You know,
3 board members are available. I posted my phone
4 number I think when I first got on the board in
5 January, and I was thinking I was going to get all
6 these calls. I probably got two calls since that
7 time. And what that tells me is that we're
8 responsible enough that people understand we've been
9 transparent, we've been sharing, we know what to do,
10 and the community has responded to that.

11 Next slide. We remember always that our first
12 and greatest concern must be educational welfare and
13 academic performance of all the students attending
14 the public schools. Our only purpose here is student
15 success. That's what we do on a day-to-day basis; we
16 make decisions based on student success, and we're
17 proud of that.

18 Next slide. All right. So how do we maintain
19 board governance now and in the future. We have some
20 -- a few points that we can share with you, and I'm
21 going to kind of catch-up in my notes so I don't have
22 to keep staring back and forth to the board. The
23 first thing is go back to number one: we delegate the
24 authority of the operation of the school district to
25 the superintendent. That's primary, that's key. We

1 want to leverage the knowledge and expertise of board
2 members. We appreciate those contributions,
3 appreciate those backgrounds. You know, again,
4 whether I'm serving or someone else is serving, when
5 the community looks for new board members think about
6 the knowledge and expertise that they bring to the
7 table. We want to foster strong collaboration and
8 communicate more effectively with community
9 stakeholders. That includes, you know, our city;
10 that includes our city partners; that includes our
11 nonprofit groups -- just making sure we're open and
12 communicating. One of the goals we're going to do is
13 appoint standing committees; I think that's important
14 for us going forward -- finance, governance, policy,
15 and academic excellence. And what that's going to
16 allow us to do is, at least from the board's
17 standpoint, is not have so many direct asks to the
18 superintendent; but have these committees where
19 community partners can participate and then, you
20 know, we can work together and then make those
21 recommendations to the board. So we're working
22 before the board members -- before the board
23 meetings, so that when you have the meeting those
24 meetings are more effective and streamlined. We want
25 to use our recommendations to inform decision-making

1 processes so that everybody feels involved. And,
2 again, we make sure that as board members we do not
3 slide into that role of operations. We know we have
4 a superintendent, and the superintendent controls
5 that.

6 Last but not least, this is my favorite one:
7 training, professional development, and work
8 sessions. That's been the biggest blessing for me to
9 learn, to train, to grow with this board, to grow on
10 my own when I did -- when I do independent study.
11 And it's important for you to know and for the
12 community to know, your board members need to have a
13 high level of training. This is a wonderful job, but
14 it's a hard job and you need to be informed.

15 Next slide. All right. So let's talk about --
16 keep hitting the button. Keep on going. Okay. Stop
17 right there.

18 So we think about -- we want to talk a little
19 bit about our community support, who has been
20 supporting us during this regard -- parents,
21 students, teachers, administrators, community
22 leaders, legislators, city officials, business
23 leaders, retired educators, clergy. We've had lots
24 of support in this process, you know, even as
25 recently as support for -- we're thinking about

1 building a new high school; the Pine Bluff Urban
2 Renewal Agency has done some clean-up around the
3 site. And we're also getting -- trying to get into
4 talks with Community and Economic Development to talk
5 about blight and what we can do to improve the area
6 around the high school so that everybody is onboard
7 with that. And they're confident that where we're
8 building is going to be a good site for students to
9 learn and grow.

10 All right. Next slide. These are alumni.

11 Now what galvanized our student support -- or
12 our community support was the \$65,000,000 millage,
13 and that was what brought us all together in terms of
14 the bigger picture. We had to have those community
15 partners, we had to have that buy-in, we had to have
16 that support going forward. And so this was my first
17 millage campaign. It might be my last millage
18 campaign, but it was my first one. And we really --
19 we really dug in. I learned so much when we got to
20 talk to parents, teachers and students, and the legal
21 side, and the ballot and those types of things. And
22 it was just a wonderful experience as a board member
23 to really try to do these things to support our
24 community.

25 Next slide. All right. Now I can't go any

1 further without talking about the processes and
2 talking about the success of that millage campaign
3 because of our millage campaign committee. Our
4 campaign committee came together, brought together
5 some dynamic people from our community that was able
6 to raise money, raise those fundings. They had that
7 intelligence; they had the connections to be able to
8 do that. The committee decided we needed a
9 consultant to help us to do that, and that was
10 important because we began to show the seriousness of
11 this campaign. We wanted to show our community how
12 serious we were about this millage, because we did
13 have people that didn't support this cause -- and
14 I'll talk about that a little later. But I want to
15 thank our millage campaign committee for really
16 helping us to work, for us to get after those
17 community partners so we had complete buy-in for what
18 we were trying to do.

19 Next slide. Now this is a slide I want to
20 include -- you can't see the wording on the right,
21 but during the campaign we had a lot of back-and-
22 forth. We had to argue -- not argue, but really make
23 the case for the millage. And this was a turning
24 point because there was some information --
25 misinformation that was going out there. And you see

1 our superintendent, Jennifer Barbaree; she did an
2 interview -- and we actually transcribed the
3 interview -- and we wanted to target everything that
4 people were saying to make sure that they understood.
5 We used this to share on social media. The interview
6 was about an hour and we were able to get that
7 message out there to make sure that people had an
8 opportunity to hear the real message. Because there
9 was another message going out there and we wanted to
10 make sure that that message was clear. So I want to
11 thank Dr. Barbaree for doing this interview. And I
12 want to thank the news, Pine Bluff Commercial, for
13 setting this interview up for us because we were able
14 to get the real message out about what we were trying
15 to do; still trying to change hearts and minds about
16 the millage, and people had, you know, their belief
17 about why they didn't want to support it.

18 Next slide. All right. So we did have some
19 opposition, and in that opposition, we had to try to
20 figure out a way to deal with that opposition. Now
21 the opposition was, you know, we don't want to pay
22 any more taxes. The opposition was, you know, we
23 don't know if a new high school is going to change
24 student learning or help with student success. But
25 the biggest opposition was why should we pass a

1 millage when we don't have local control. Now there
2 was nothing that we could do, except continue to
3 present the arguments. We couldn't make any
4 guarantees. We were just saying, as a board, we're
5 working; as a community, we're working. We can't
6 guarantee you what's going to happen next, but we've
7 got to have faith. I went on the bandwagon saying we
8 can't live by a spirit of fear; we've got to have
9 faith. We've got a great superintendent, a dynamic
10 superintendent. We've got a great board. We've got
11 community partners. We're doing the work. And so in
12 that regard we had that opposition, and that's how we
13 dealt with it. We know that opposition probably
14 understood that our buildings were, you know, older
15 and needs to be replaced. They understood that, you
16 know, a new high school would energize our community,
17 not just academically but economically. But the big
18 stickling point was why do you pass a millage of this
19 size and not have local control. And so that's where
20 we started. We dug in. As they -- as the opposition
21 dug in, we dug in. Our millage campaign dug in, we
22 dug in. And at the end of the day, I said this, that
23 at some point we still have to come together as a
24 community, after we win, because we had to win. And
25 you see the bigger picture now. We had to win. We

1 had to win.

2 [APPLAUSE]

3 DR. RICE: And so that effort has pushed us.
4 But at the end of the day, as a community we still
5 have to come together. And today is about that.
6 Again, we're here to make that argument, you know, to
7 receive local control, to get your feedback, and to
8 hopefully demonstrate that we're ready for that.

9 Next slide. All right. And, of course, the
10 millage passed and we were happy about that and
11 successful.

12 Okay, next slide. But we have one more; we
13 still have to start thinking about local control.
14 We've got that out of the way. Now, what about local
15 control? What happens next? And so, now if you
16 noticed in the slides, I always had that gray shirt
17 on. Every time I've been successful I've had that
18 gray shirt on. So I'm not a superstitious person but
19 today, I've got my gray shirt on.

20 [APPLAUSE]

21 DR. RICE: So be mindful of that, the gray
22 shirt.

23 And so we're still making our argument. We're
24 here today to do that and we're going to continue
25 with that, hopefully, you know, demonstrating to you

1 that we're ready for this next step.

2 Next slide. All right. In order to talk about
3 local control we've got to talk about our elections.
4 Because if you grant us back local control, then
5 we've got to give the school board seats back to the
6 people. It's been an honor to serve in an appointed
7 capacity, but we've got to get back to the democracy
8 of how this thing works. All right.

9 Next slide. So here's our plan. You know,
10 we're looking for -- to get ready for the vote of the
11 public. What we're looking for -- continuity,
12 capacity, and confidence. Continuity in a sense that
13 we want to make sure that we always have board
14 members that have experience on. We don't want to be
15 put in a position where everybody is brand-new. You
16 know, we still have some work to do in the district
17 and we've got to continue to work. We want to make
18 sure we have some experience on that. Capacity, make
19 sure that those board members are equipped to serve
20 in that capacity. That's going to be up to the
21 community. But we're trying to present the model
22 that these are the best practices you're looking for
23 in a board member, these are what they should do,
24 they're required to do training, understand what
25 their roles are. We're going to continue to

1 emphasize that going forward, and I think we'll be
2 okay. We have some great people in our community
3 that are willing to serve and I hope that the current
4 board continues to serve going forward. And also
5 confidence, we want to build community confidence.

6 Next slide. So here's our plan. Current board
7 members, we want to do a five-year term. We agree to
8 draw lots. We're going to draw lots, maybe invite
9 the local Judge to come down. We're going to draw
10 lots to see when individual board members should run.
11 Right? One board seat will be open in 2024, one
12 board seat 2025, one board seat 2026, two board seats
13 2027, and two board seats in 2028. But I think this
14 will give us the continuity that we need to make sure
15 that as a district, even coming out of local control,
16 we still have more work to do and we're willing to do
17 that. But we'll make sure we have those individuals
18 who are experienced, who've already been trained, and
19 encourage those other board members to do the same.

20 Next slide. Now what are our future priorities
21 after that? And I'm going to bring my slide up. I
22 apologize for the -- for those colors; I used AI
23 PowerPoint and I'm not a good colors person, so this
24 is what the PowerPoint selected. What do we want to
25 do? We want to support Superintendent Barbaree in

1 the district's strategic plan. We want to evaluate
2 Superintendent Barbaree. We want to set goals and
3 objectives of Superintendent Barbaree over the year
4 as a part of that process. We want to help to
5 maintain fiscal management and fidelity of Pine Bluff
6 School District funds; that includes, again, getting
7 those reports and seeing where we are in making the
8 best decision with the funding that we actually have.
9 We want to help maintain high academic standards and
10 approve student success outcomes. That comes from
11 our votes. That comes from our evaluation of
12 contractors and the things that we're actually going
13 to do, what the teachers want, what they need, what
14 the teachers -- what the students need,
15 administrators need in going forward. We want to
16 make sure that we help recruit and retain certified
17 teacher populations to promote student success. And,
18 finally, board members will continue professional
19 development training -- the ASBA, ADA, et cetera.

20 And that's my presentation. Thank you.

21 [APPLAUSE]

22 SUPT. BARBAREE: Next slide, please. Okay.
23 Wow, what an exciting day. Today is the day we've
24 all been waiting for. We have. We've been waiting
25 to show you our progress and I'm going to do my very

1 best to do this without getting choked up, because
2 this means a lot.

3 This is -- this is -- this is a family. Pine
4 Bluff is a family. We've come together as a family.
5 We're -- we're here and we're here all together. The
6 support that you see here is -- it's demonstrated
7 even greater online. And there's been a lot of nice
8 things said about me and a lot of nice things said
9 about the others. But what's not -- what you don't
10 know and what I have to explain to you is this wasn't
11 done by one person; this -- this progress and this
12 change was done by community. It was done by a
13 community of educators; it was done by a community of
14 the Department; it was done by very strong leadership
15 in the district. No one person can make these
16 changes and no one person can get this done without a
17 team. And so I would like to say thank-you so much
18 to the Office of Coordinated Support and Services.
19 Thank you so much to our DESE team. And thank you so
20 much to Assistant Superintendent Kelvin Gragg and
21 Assistant Superintendent Phillip Carlock and all of
22 our building principals, because they've made a
23 difference in this. And this is the progress you're
24 going to get to hear about today.

25 Next slide. Today, I'm going to begin with

1 academics. You know why? Because now we're focused
2 on academics. This is the year we can say academics
3 is our number one priority and that's what we're
4 looking at every single day. This is the focus, and
5 it's not the focus that we could've said five years
6 ago. The focus five years ago was building
7 procedures; the focus five years ago was keeping kids
8 safe, getting the money right. So those systems now
9 are pretty solid in place so that we can be in the
10 buildings. I don't know -- you heard Ms. Smith
11 present that the teacher said the principals are in
12 the classrooms and that district administrations are
13 in their classrooms. We're there because that's the
14 priority, because we have the other systems in place
15 that we have other people that can make sure other
16 things are running. So I want to say I'm proud of
17 that.

18 In order to talk about academics I want to show
19 you -- one of the big pushes in our professional
20 learning communities, we have built district capacity
21 regarding professional learning communities.

22 If you don't mind, would you click on that first
23 red link that says Professional Learning Communities?

24 Maybe I can show you. What we've created is a
25 one-page document -- I would say we; I have very,

1 very talented people working in our district that
2 work on these things. If it pulls up -- I love
3 technology; I don't know about you guys. But what it
4 is is it gives you a timeline of how professional
5 learning communities have been within the district.
6 You're not going to be able to see it very largely,
7 but you'll have access to this. I would say in 18-19
8 you had two districts; you had Dollarway and Pine
9 Bluff School District. Dollarway School District had
10 a professional learning community; they were
11 beginning that. Pine Bluff School District was not
12 at the time. And what I mean by that is they were
13 beginning at Dollarway to meet and create a guiding
14 coalition, create collaborative team meetings. The
15 next school year you'll see that, in the 19-20 school
16 year, Pine Bluff got onboard with utilizing
17 professional learning communities. Dollarway School
18 District was, as well. But it gives a seg-way into
19 the fact that both districts were starting to speak
20 the same language. And at that time they started
21 looking at their curriculum, looking at standards,
22 and beginning to identify central standards, talk
23 about what we need in the classrooms. That was a
24 start in the 19-20 year. And then that spring the
25 whole world shutdown. We had Covid and the pandemic

1 happened; so it was a huge blow to just the
2 beginnings of the PLC process. After the Covid year,
3 the '20 spring, when we get back to school in 2021 --
4 you heard Ms. Smith talk about it -- it's true; we
5 didn't have kids onsite. We had very few kids
6 onsite, and the ones that were were doing virtual
7 learning as well because we had to mitigate all the
8 things. I'm not sure if you are aware or understand,
9 but there was a true fear and a true concern post-
10 pandemic in Pine Bluff. We were affected
11 traumatically in the district. There was loss of
12 life, there was family members' loss of life, our
13 parents were afraid, our students were afraid that
14 something terrible was going to happen regarding the
15 pandemic. And so learning, again, was not the focus
16 at that time. It was how can we get kids back in
17 school; how can we make sure that our teachers are
18 safe and not sick, so that they can be here to
19 educate our students. After the pandemic, we had to
20 reboot. After that, it was a big reboot on -- okay,
21 so we had all these little things in place for PLC.
22 And so now we brought it back to the table and said,
23 Okay, let's make sure that we have that common
24 language, that we're working together in teams, and
25 that we look back at our curriculum and say, Okay, we

1 professional learning community process would be, you
2 know, what do we want our students to know and be
3 able to do. That's question one. So, what do we
4 have in place that does that? Well, first and
5 foremost, we have curriculum resources that are
6 aligned to the Science of Reading and they're aligned
7 across the district. So we have resources that are
8 high quality. Second, we have essential standards
9 identified. We're calling them priority standards
10 now based on the new way that we look -- talk about
11 ELA standards and math standards. But now we've
12 identified our priority standards, and within that --
13 that was a big bulk that was done last year. And
14 now, this year, we've transitioned to where we have
15 solid pacing guides. Our district personnel has
16 worked very closely with instructional facilitators
17 and people at the building level to say, Okay, this
18 is our pacing guide across the district from pre-K to
19 12th grade. And you saw it this morning, our pre-K
20 works through the professional learning community;
21 they have priority centers identified; they also have
22 common formative assessments.

23 And so that's where we move into critical
24 question two, or pillar question two, how will we
25 know that our students have learned it. Just this

1 week, with our building principals we had training.
2 Our meetings are trainings for everyone involved.
3 And so we're training principals on how are we
4 providing feedback to teachers regarding their common
5 formative assessments; is this a good assessment
6 that's going to tell us that students have learned?
7 If it's not, what feedback are you giving to teachers
8 so that they can create a better assessment. That
9 was done this week. It's beautiful. I call it a
10 beautiful mind. It's a beautiful thing that we're
11 seeing take place.

12 The third question is what do we do when they
13 haven't learned it. And what you're going to see in
14 our data is we are really taking that seriously. We
15 know that a lot of our students are struggling in
16 reading. And so, what did we do? Last year it was
17 implemented across the district to have -- we call it
18 WIN time. W-I-N stands for What I Need. And so from
19 kindergarten through 12th grade, last school year, it
20 was a non-negotiable that every student participated
21 in a 30-minute intervention at Pine Bluff High, at
22 the junior highs, at the elementaries. They were all
23 given a specific diagnostic test and they were placed
24 in intervention groups based on skills. It was
25 skill-based intervention groups and those groups were

1 utilizing professional texts, specific curriculum.
2 Those curriculums had assessments that were part of
3 that curriculum. They were directed by certified
4 teachers, paraprofessionals, but it was all face-to-
5 face. Our interventions weren't -- I mean we still
6 have intervention programs that are online that we
7 use to help with students, but these interventions we
8 made sure were done face-to-face because we knew that
9 the teacher is the most important part of that and
10 they could track the data for the students. Because
11 of that WIN time we grew our students last year in
12 reading across the district, and we know that, and we
13 have data that shows that. And also because of that
14 we implemented that stronger approach this school
15 year as well. We have What I Need as well. Now it
16 is actually a course; we're using course codes and
17 making sure that our students are having that at the
18 secondary level as well. This is something that our
19 district is proud of.

20 As far as the fourth pillar question for our PLC
21 process is how will we extend their learning. This
22 is something that as a team we came back and said, We
23 need to focus on this this year. We didn't spend as
24 much time on talking about what enrichment programs
25 we have, what type of career and tech focus are we

1 insuring that we're providing at the high school for
2 our students, and so we need to do the work on this
3 one. This is the one that we're growing as far as
4 our PLC process. And so I know that I spent a lot of
5 time on that, but I want you to know how important
6 that was as a growth for our district over the year.
7 Do I believe we're functioning as a PLC at Pine Bluff
8 School District? Yes. Do I believe that we can
9 continue to grow and learn? Yes. That's what those
10 trainings are about. But what we are convinced is is
11 that this process will continue to move us forward,
12 and so we're going to continue with the PLC process.
13 I want this to be in place when we're not here
14 anymore. I want this, because we know this is the
15 process that's going to work for kids.

16 If you don't mind, can you go back to the
17 PowerPoint? Okay, then that's fine. Thank you.

18 I'm going to be fast. I'm supposed to be fast.
19 I'm going to do my very best. But we're going to
20 spend some time on this. It's very important.

21 I want you to know, as far as high-quality
22 instruction materials -- Ms. Smith did address that.
23 But something that we're proud of that has been
24 actually used as a model for the state, as far as
25 Science of Reading, we really looked into what

1 reading curriculum that we have that's going to be
2 aligned to the Science of Reading and support our
3 students. And so on the link that says Reading Rope
4 Curriculum, this is something that we did as a
5 support system. And if you're not familiar, we used
6 Scarborough's Reading Rope for the Science of Reading
7 to help explain -- and it actually was originally
8 made for parents, to explain, you know, a skilled
9 reader has to have all these things in an effort to
10 make sure that they are a skilled reader. And all of
11 these things -- we call them the bottom of the rope
12 and the top of the rope; we have some fun language
13 for that. But there is specific parts of that that
14 need to be addressed using certain curriculum. And
15 we know -- we started buying all this curriculum
16 because we knew we needed it, but people didn't
17 understand what was it used for. And so we decided
18 to create a reading curriculum rope and talk about
19 the different skillsets. So if a parent or a teacher
20 --

21 If you'll click on the reading rope curriculum.

22 If you walk into a classroom -- and this is very
23 good support for our building principals too -- if
24 you walked into a classroom and you saw a teacher
25 utilizing the 95% group curriculum, then you would

1 know that that teacher at that time was teaching de-
2 coding, the bottom of the rope. They were teaching
3 -- or phonological awareness, because 95% has
4 phonological awareness with it. So we identified
5 what curriculums we have that are helping with
6 insuring that we're teaching both parts of the rope.
7 And so as a -- if you walk into the classroom and a
8 teacher is using Benchmark Workshop, well, that's top
9 of the rope and we know that then they're teaching
10 about comprehension, talking about vocabulary. Those
11 are what you should see. So it helps the principal
12 understand when I walk in how am I providing
13 feedback; are we teaching kids how to read using --
14 pulling the words off the page; are we teaching kids
15 great vocabulary and what that means in our reading
16 so that we can be a skilled reader. And I say we use
17 it across the state; when I -- back in -- you know,
18 well, before I became superintendent at Pine Bluff,
19 we shared this -- I supported Pine Bluff School
20 District and we shared this in our Principals
21 Assessor Training for the Science of Reading. And so
22 other districts are now creating ropes with their
23 curriculum. Again, we're being the model, Dr. Rice;
24 so, proud of that.

25 The next -- on the slides, after you see this,

1 this was just a more digital version. And I'm going
2 to tell you I didn't create this graphic; we have
3 some very talented people in the district that work
4 on things like this and we have a lady that did this
5 for us last school year. So it's -- I'm proud of
6 that.

7 On this slide -- back to the slide-deck, the
8 next bullet just says All Subject Curriculum
9 Resources. I'm not going to take you there, but I
10 want you to know that now -- reading was our focus as
11 far as making sure everybody had correct reading
12 curriculum. And now, across the district we have new
13 math curriculum that everyone has consistency; new
14 science curriculum; history curriculum. Well, we're
15 looking -- and these are curriculum resources that
16 are consistent. But what we're really looking into
17 now is more training for our science. We're working
18 with -- our director of Curriculum Instruction is
19 working with our certified -- or our career and tech
20 education to insure that we've got up-to-date, newer
21 curriculum for our career-focused classes as well.
22 Some of you that were at the high school with me
23 today saw Personal Finance and we know that that
24 curriculum needs to be updated and that's in the
25 works. And so we're still growing and we're still

1 working towards insuring that we get where we need to
2 be for that.

3 As far as the PLC process and the curriculum,
4 again, it's important that we provide that common
5 language. It supports collaborative learning. It's
6 a support system, because our teachers need high-
7 quality resource materials, and it's mitigating the
8 chance of those learning gaps. I know, at Broadmoor
9 Elementary, we have this curriculum and this common
10 language; those students are still getting the same
11 information at Southwood and at 34th and at James
12 Matthews.

13 The last bullet on the PowerPoint -- it just --
14 it died. Cool. I like that. Yeah.

15 So the last bullet that I'll talk about, until
16 we get that up there -- it doesn't have links. Mine
17 was too fancy, I guess. So we talk about building
18 and district level focus walks. So there is an
19 expectation that building principals are in the
20 classrooms; there's an expectation that district
21 leaders are in the classrooms so that we know what's
22 going on. I told the principals this week -- one of
23 the -- one of the best compliments I've received
24 recently is somebody told somebody, who got back to
25 me, that Ms. Barbaree is at the schools asking kids

1 questions. And I said, Yes, I am. And I like that
2 because the kids tell the truth and the kids tell you
3 what they need and it's important for that. And so
4 we have specific instructional focus walks for the
5 Science of Reading. Our director of School
6 Performance does some of these walks with our
7 building principals to insure that they know what
8 they're looking for when they're looking for the
9 Science of Reading; they provide feedback. Her
10 schedule is so full of just principals asking now,
11 Hey, you came by the first time; can you do this
12 again with me so that we can get in the classrooms
13 and see what we're seeing. We also have
14 instructional rounds. Every principal is required to
15 do a specific number of focus walks. But it's not
16 really about the number -- and that was something
17 that we struggled with. I didn't want to say you had
18 to do 10; I want to say, What good feedback did you
19 give on those 10 that you did. And so we're looking
20 at the feedback that the principals are giving to our
21 teachers. And then it's a standard procedure; we did
22 it in the spring and we're going to continue it, that
23 we have district level focus walks. So the fourth
24 Wednesday of the month, if you guys want to come on
25 down, come on down; you'll be with our district

1 leadership team the fourth Wednesday and we'll be
2 walking the classrooms. And keep getting that common
3 language; we have a tool where we're looking for
4 learning targets, looking for the standards. There
5 are certain things that we're doing for that. But
6 all this data that we're collecting we're using it
7 for professional learning. We're using it to see
8 what do we need to be providing the teachers, what do
9 we need to grow -- what do we continue to need to do
10 to grow our students.

11 I'm going to need you to get that PowerPoint
12 working.

13 The next slide is our test data. It's our
14 summative test data. I'm not sure if you guys have
15 access or a printed-out version, but it's this.
16 Okay.

17 MS. SMITH: You all have this presentation in
18 your binders.

19 DR. BARBAREE: Okay. Thanks, Ms. Smith.

20 So our summative test data, we have a chart here
21 that the assessment team from DESE helped us with.
22 And I want you to notice that over five years you can
23 see very quickly that there's been improvements. You
24 can also see the not great -- it's not great success
25 as far as the percentage-wise because this is a

1 percent of proficiency for math, science, and
2 reading. Pre-pandemic in reading, our students were
3 at a 14% proficiency rate pre-pandemic; post-
4 pandemic, again, that presented many challenges. The
5 year back, the 20-21 school year we were working from
6 home. Our teachers were learning how to do blended
7 learning and our test scores dropped across the
8 board, as it did across the state -- but ours did, as
9 well. But I need you to follow -- take your eyes to
10 that bottom right corner of the 22-23 school year in
11 our reading, because that's where our focus was for
12 our WIN time, and we're at a 15% proficiency rate --
13 15.4, which is actually higher than when the school
14 was taken over. It's actually higher than it was
15 post-pandemic. And so it's absolutely not what we
16 want our test scores to be and I was challenged by
17 that. Someone said, So you're proud of that? I
18 said, No, I'm not proud of that number; I'm proud of
19 that growth because our teachers worked very hard and
20 our students worked very hard to get that. So we
21 know our focus is going to continue to be growing
22 that and providing that day-to-day instruction in the
23 classroom.

24 The next slide is actually a little bit deeper;
25 it's a dig little deeper into those reading scores

1 because that was such a large focus last school year.
2 And so I'd like to try to talk to you about just this
3 is a breakdown of grade level cohorts. So if you're
4 looking at the chart -- and on the left side it's
5 just percent of readiness; on the right side it's
6 percent of students that were in need of support.
7 And so I just kind of want to talk to you -- I'll
8 start with just 3rd grade and just explain that. In
9 2022, the test reading -- the reading test scores for
10 3rd grade you see were 16% proficient. Those 3rd
11 graders, when they became 4th graders -- so in 2023,
12 they were 4th graders; so if you follow the diagonal
13 line, we grew those students by 2%. So if you look
14 at all the green highlights, that's where we've grown
15 students as a cohort. So those are actual kiddos,
16 sitting in seats. You're looking at numbers of kids
17 that have grown based on the things. Now, of course,
18 the white indicates we had a deficiency; we didn't
19 grow. And so this data we utilize very close; we
20 look at it to utilize -- or to decide how are we
21 going to and what made it work and what was good for
22 our kids. The right side is a big deal because we
23 talk about In Need of Support and how many students
24 were In Need of Support. And so we actually could
25 say we had a growth in proficiency, but we actually

1 had a larger growth of moving students out of In Need
2 of Support. Now that didn't mean we got them to
3 proficiency yet, but we got them to close. So we're
4 moving them out of In Need of Support. If you look,
5 the biggest gains were our 8th grade students last
6 year. When they were in 7th grade, they were at a 9%
7 proficiency rate. When they got to 8th grade and
8 took the test in 8th grade last school year, they
9 were at 27% proficiency rate. They grew by 18%. We
10 also moved 19% of students out of Need -- In Need of
11 Support. It's huge. That should get an applause.

12 [APPLAUSE]

13 SUPT. BARBAREE: These are our students. And so
14 our team came back together and said, What did we do?
15 And I'm going to give total accolades to our building
16 principals. We had two -- we were still functioning
17 at two -- a middle school, a junior high. And the
18 building principals took the lead in saying, This is
19 a non-negotiable; we're going to continue to have the
20 WIN time at secondary level. Those 7th grade
21 students, we looked at the fact that those -- when
22 they were in 7th grade they had this ELA teacher and
23 those -- and both campuses that ELA teacher was their
24 teacher in 8th grade. So it was like a looping; so
25 that was part of it too. The relationship was

1 the Schools on the Move. These were two -- we had
2 two schools -- and actually I'll talk about three.
3 But we had two schools that gained five ESSA's points
4 based on ESSA School Index, and so they were schools
5 moving towards excellence. Again, we're growing
6 them. It's a process. But because of that, we had
7 two schools that moved letter grades and it's a huge
8 deal to move letter grades. And we're not proud of
9 our letter grades, but we're growing our letter
10 grades; so that's something that we want to
11 celebrate.

12 [APPLAUSE]

13 SUPT. BARBAREE: And I know I've spent a lot of
14 time on -- a lot of time on academics, because it is
15 huge. It's a big piece of what we're working towards
16 and what we're doing.

17 But the next slide, when -- it is super
18 important to talk about how important our teacher
19 quality is. Another large focus is our teacher
20 quality. And teacher quality is the single most
21 important school variable that influences student
22 achievement. We have made some very tough changes,
23 tough decisions, hurt feelings, and it's just a lot
24 of things that happened with our faculty that we
25 wanted to make sure that we were continuing to

1 support. And so in efforts to right-size, which Dr.
2 Saunders talked about -- in efforts to right-size the
3 district I leaned into the school board, and I said,
4 I need your support with this because we're going to
5 have to eliminate positions across the district;
6 we're going to have to non-renew positions across the
7 district, and we're going to have to re-assign
8 teachers. And all of that is negative, nobody wants
9 that; so how can we do that in a positive manner?
10 And the board supported that and we were able to do
11 it. And so I'd like to celebrate the fact that this
12 school year we have 73% of our classroom teachers are
13 licensed for the classrooms.

14 [APPLAUSE]

15 SUPT. BARBAREE: Now that we have them, we need
16 to support them and we need to continue to keep them
17 and all the things. So certain support systems that
18 we have in place, of course, is our PLC process. The
19 teachers no longer have to work in isolation; they're
20 collaboratively working and then they have those
21 support systems. We have district leadership that
22 continues to coach and have relationships with our
23 building principals, with classroom teachers. We
24 have specific directors. So when we talk about key
25 people, we have a director of Retention and

1 Recruitment; she's constantly working to make sure
2 our teachers are on the right track to be licensed,
3 those that are not. And those that are, she's
4 looking for avenues and support systems so that we
5 don't lose them and so that we can continue to keep
6 them.

7 We utilize the Office of Coordinated Support and
8 Services. It's a great team. They have -- each one
9 has a wealth of knowledge and they're in the
10 buildings and the classrooms and supporting teachers
11 as well.

12 We have -- thank you -- four state literacy
13 coaches in our district. We have four elementaries
14 and we have one at every elementary. I think other
15 districts will be mad at me for saying that, but
16 we're fortunate enough to say we have that and it's
17 working. I see them. They're onsite, four to five
18 days a week. They're providing lessons to our
19 classes. They're talking with teachers. Those are
20 things that are taking place right now and that's --
21 it's awesome.

22 Not only did we purchase the 95% Group
23 curriculum, we also with the support of the board
24 purchased the Coaching and Support from 95%. So the
25 actual people who do the curriculum and wrote the

1 curriculum come into our district and teach teachers
2 and provide lessons and model that. They're also
3 working with our principals' instructional
4 facilitators. It's a non-negotiable that when
5 they're there that our facilitators and our
6 principals are in the classroom watching this as well
7 so that they can continue to provide that feedback.

8 We utilize Arkansas River Educational Co-op.
9 Not only are they there just to -- for moral support
10 for everything we do, our co-op is supportive of Pine
11 Bluff School District. If there's something great
12 going on, I get a text message from the director that
13 says, Hey, good job. If there's something that's
14 coming up, I get a text message from the director of
15 our co-op that says, Hey, can I help you with that;
16 is there anything. And so Ms. Cathi Swan is here
17 today -- and so, thank you.

18 [APPLAUSE]

19 SUPT. BARBAREE: And we have a slew of retired
20 teachers, and some of them are here today as well --
21 yes, our retired teachers.

22 [APPLAUSE]

23 SUPT. BARBAREE: These ladies have been meeting
24 with me since the beginning, saying, Ms. Barbaree,
25 what can we do to help. And I said, Come, teach

1 these teachers how to be like you; come in and mentor
2 our teachers. And so they've all signed up and
3 they're in our buildings and in our classrooms. And
4 Ms. Mattie Collins actually takes students across the
5 country to colleges. The Ivy Center for Education is
6 a strong supporter for our district. And so we have
7 a lot of support for our teachers through our
8 community and through just what we're providing in
9 different ways.

10 There you go. Hey --

11 [APPLAUSE]

12 SUPT. BARBAREE: And just so you know, that's
13 just a chart about what we just talked about. But I
14 did want to say from '22 to '23, as far as right-
15 sizing, we went from 272 teachers -- classroom
16 teachers to 194. That's a lot of teachers that were
17 affected. And we have a board member that was
18 concerned about that, and so she reached out and had
19 opportunity for unemployment and different people to
20 talk to, different ones that weren't going to get
21 jobs, to say, Hey, there's some other opportunities
22 in the city and the community for you. So that was
23 -- our board is well-versed, and so they're very
24 helpful in so many ways.

25 Moving to the next system that I want to share

1 with you -- these systems are not listed in rank
2 order. All of them are necessary for student
3 success.

4 Go one more. One more. No, back one. There
5 you go.

6 But we know that Bloom Hierarchy of Needs says
7 for a student to learn they have to feel safe, for a
8 teacher to teach they have to feel safe. And just --
9 you know this, but -- and the community knows this,
10 but there was valid concerns for safety at Pine Bluff
11 School District. Valid. So in those efforts, we
12 have created safe and orderly environments. We've
13 increased district security. Last year was a big
14 focus on district security, and then this year we now
15 have a security team and our team consists of a
16 district police officer, we have six commissioned
17 officers, we have 16 security officers, we utilize
18 the Pine Bluff Police Department -- very great
19 relationship with Chief Richardson and Sheriff Woods.
20 They provide patrol cars. We ask for specific things
21 to go around the campuses, to make sure that everyone
22 is onboard and insuring that our students are safe.
23 We've equipped our security team with uniforms and
24 communication devices so that everybody can see them
25 and everybody can hear them, so that we know

1 everybody is on the same page and taking care of each
2 other. We have partnered with Group Violence
3 Intervention, and this is huge. This is an
4 initiative that started in Pine Bluff, that Governor
5 Hutchinson supported and provided money for, that the
6 Department of Ed. provided money for. So this team
7 works very closely with our educational team in
8 identifying groups and identifying students that are
9 part of groups or that may become part of groups and
10 what interventions do we have in place to help with
11 this. And so we had a great town hall meeting this
12 fall that the City put on and that's part of that.

13 We have wraparound services. Our district
14 employs seven social workers. We have nine
15 registered nurses -- nine, that's a big deal. Around
16 the state, that's a good thing. We have four health
17 aids. Our director of nursing, she's always pushing
18 things to me, Ms. Barbaree, let's do this, let's do
19 this. She's there for our kids and she's there for
20 the support. We have a health-based unit --

21 Are you coming to take the mic? Am I going too

22 --

23 MS. SMITH: Not yet. Not yet.

24 SUPT. BARBAREE: Okay. Okay. All right.

25 We have a community -- we have a school-based

1 health center and we partner with local education
2 agencies. But I want to also share that we do
3 everything we can so our students don't go hungry.
4 We are a CEP school; that means every student eats
5 free for breakfast and lunch. Those are -- our Child
6 Nutrition director and assistant superintendent
7 constantly look at how we can continue to get these
8 grants to do this. We have breakfast in the
9 classroom at the elementary levels, second chance
10 breakfast at secondary; we have a fresh fruits and
11 vegetables grant. And something that I was really
12 proud of that I didn't feel like got enough media was
13 that this summer we did the Seamless Summer grant;
14 that meant that every person, 18 and under, in
15 Jefferson County could come to one of Pine Bluff
16 School District's sites and eat breakfast and lunch
17 for free this summer.

18 As far as student support continued --

19 You can go to the next page -- the next slide.

20 We are working very -- one of the focuses now
21 for student support is mainstreaming our students.
22 We know that we have students that were being
23 educated offsite and we want to bring them back to
24 our campuses. We want to insure that we have the
25 facilities to be able to support all their learning

1 needs and that our teachers are trained to do that.
2 Because of that, we've entered in the Effective
3 Practices for Inclusive Education Cohort; we're one
4 of the schools. And we had our first training this
5 week; it was awesome. And I'm looking forward to
6 continuing to work with Easter Seals and our special
7 ed. department to make sure that we're bringing kids
8 back on campus.

9 We provide afterschool tutoring. We receive a
10 21 CCLC grant at two elementary schools for this
11 coming school year. We partner with the Boys and
12 Girls Club as part of that too. Our athletes -- and
13 I know you saw some of them at the high school today;
14 they were dressed very nicely. We have a football
15 game tonight and they're wearing their ties. But our
16 athletes are actually students first. Our student
17 athletes and our coaches pride themselves in that.
18 We have a great GPA across our basketball team and
19 our football teams -- girls, as well. And I'll say
20 that our football coach, Coach Williams, does a
21 really great job at insuring that our kids are
22 getting tutors and tutoring. We worked again this
23 summer. We had tutors working at football camp and
24 football practice, just to make sure that our kids
25 were getting that.

1 The next slide, as far as student support
2 continued, I just wanted to highlight a real strong
3 push that we're very proud of, is the services that
4 we're providing for our students with characteristics
5 of dyslexia. At the beginning, when we look back, we
6 weren't even providing those services ourselves at
7 the district. We were outsourcing that with our co-
8 op, because we didn't have the trained personnel.
9 Currently, we have 10 certified Take Flight
10 instructors at our district. We have one that's
11 going through training, so that's 11. She's not
12 finished with hers. But we also have three
13 paraprofessionals that are trained in Barton
14 Interventions. So our students are enrolled in these
15 courses. Our district dyslexia specialist is here
16 and she constantly talks to me every morning, saying,
17 Ms. Barbaree, I got that kid's schedule changed,
18 she's going to be in those classes; Ms. Barbaree, I
19 met with the high school counselor, we're going to
20 make sure that the kid's getting academic reading.
21 So she works every day at the buildings to make sure
22 that our students are getting what they need. I'm
23 proud, to say the least.

24 The next slide -- the system that cannot go
25 unnoticed would be our stakeholder engagement. I'll

1 try to go quickly. Our district worked very closely
2 last school year with the community to create a
3 district strategic plan, and that strategic plan was
4 done with community involvement. They had community
5 stakeholder meetings, they had focus groups. But out
6 of that plan there were five goals that were created,
7 and those goals are awesome in the fact that
8 everything we've been working towards match our
9 goals. So our goals in Pine Bluff School District
10 are paths for student success, what are we offering.
11 The second one is to provide safe and supportive
12 schools. Our third goal is to improve facilities.
13 Way to go, passing a millage. Our fourth goal is to
14 prepare educators. And our fifth goal is community
15 confidence. And I believe we're working towards all
16 those. And the community confidence is huge. We
17 passed a millage and we couldn't have done that
18 without our community. We couldn't have hired the
19 teachers and non-renewed teachers without the support
20 of everyone.

21 We promote a positive presence on social media.
22 I hope you had a chance to view some of the loops
23 that was going through. But our students, we're
24 coming together. We had Dollarway and Pine Bluff
25 High and the two junior highs coming together, and

1 the kids were nervous about bringing everybody
2 together. And I'm going to be honest, I think the
3 community was more nervous than the kids. Our kids
4 are doing great, by the way. Everybody keeps saying,
5 What's it like, bringing those two schools together.
6 I don't know. It's just school. We're just -- we're
7 just having school. It's awesome. And so when we
8 did that, we were talking about how can we continue
9 to celebrate our positive things. And at a
10 conference I went to I heard a superintendent say
11 that he was trying to hashtag or he was trying to
12 show one million magic moments, how can we show a
13 million magic moments of great things for your
14 district. And so we took that and we decided we're
15 going to have a million magic moments for Pine Bluff
16 School District and we're going to hashtag it The Red
17 Zebra. And our students came up with that and it was
18 fun. And, currently, we're not at a million; we're a
19 little under 1,000, but we're working towards it. We
20 just started -- we just started in May -- or March,
21 maybe. I think that's when we started it -- or
22 March. So I'm hoping somebody is hash-tagging The
23 Red Zebra right now because this is a magic moment
24 for us.

25 We -- our students created a public service

1 announcement for curfew and to stay safe. They're so
2 talented. They rapped that, they wrote that, they
3 came up with the beat for that. It was awesome. We
4 have a very positive relationship with the radio
5 station and the Pine Bluff Commercial. I.C. Murrell
6 met me the very first -- my first day, in January,
7 and I said to him, All right, I'm going to interview
8 with you, but you've got to make me look good. And
9 he said, Oh, Ms. Barbaree, I can't -- you know, I can
10 only report the news. And I promise you, he has
11 supported and provided so much coverage for our
12 district in a positive way. So it's meant a lot and
13 I appreciate that.

14 [APPLAUSE]

15 SUPT. BARBAREE: Deltaplex -- hey, I was on
16 Deltaplex radio this morning. He texted me this
17 morning and said, Hey, you have 10 minutes. I know
18 you've got a busy day. Do you have 10 minutes just
19 to share about your day today? And I said,
20 Absolutely, I do. Our community wants to hear and I
21 just appreciate the radio and the Commercial and the
22 news outlets that continue to show the things that
23 we're doing in Pine Bluff.

24 We welcome stakeholder engagement. Our mayor
25 and the community is putting a banquet together for

1 our state championship basketball team. They will be
2 getting their rings this fall, and so we're going to
3 have a big banquet for that. We have Volunteers in
4 Public Schools, a strong presence. And, again, our
5 retired teachers.

6 And I know I'm going over my time. So the next
7 slide I'm going to speed right through
8 transportation. I want you to know that facilities
9 and transportation is very important. We've merged
10 and reconfigured schools for efficiency. We
11 developed a new plan for a high school. We're
12 receiving partnership money as part of this plan. We
13 have a millage increase. We're getting input from
14 our community and we have little committees -- we're
15 putting together committees for the design phase. We
16 secured all our buildings with remote access on every
17 campus. We put a fence around Pine Bluff High, which
18 was a -- some things that the people did not want,
19 but we knew that it was what was best for kids. And
20 so right now we're saying it's a large vast place,
21 but we're securing it as best we can. We've
22 purchased 10 new air-condition buses -- air-
23 conditioned buses; however, they're not here yet.
24 We're still waiting on them. It would've been nice
25 to have them when we had those 100-degree days.

1 We've assigned responsibilities so that we have
2 an organizational chart so that, moving forward,
3 there are people responsible to insure that these
4 things continue to get taken care of.

5 We have plans to sell our facilities that we
6 don't -- that we still own, and we have sold some.
7 And we're pursuing qualified maintenance personnel,
8 as well as bus drivers. Do any of you guys have a
9 CDL? Because we pay okay. We do. We could use some
10 bus drivers. That's something that is a true concern
11 for us, as far as getting kids to and from school.

12 The next -- the last system that I want to
13 address with you all is district operations and
14 fiscal governance. And I don't have to say a whole
15 lot about this because you got to hear from Dr. Rice
16 and the board about the governance that they provide.
17 It's been an amazing task to think about the
18 challenging questions that they've had, the
19 information that they just didn't know, that they --
20 you know, that they've inquired about, that they've
21 said, Hey, can we come together, can we do this. So
22 as far as learning about the district and how the
23 district works, we've worked in partnership so that
24 governance is there. I continue to -- we continue to
25 work towards that and grow that in-depth. But our

1 goal is is when we're not here that these systems are
2 still in place so that Pine Bluff School District
3 will always have its district in local control.

4 This year, we've hired a new business manager.
5 And Dr. Saunders was nice when he didn't say this,
6 but we've had five business managers in the last two
7 years; so there's where we've got to fix things. And
8 so by bringing on a new business manager, which, by
9 the way, I stole from Stacy -- so, thank you. She's
10 -- Ms. Jamie Reed is in the back and she's worked
11 very hard on our cycle nine report. And I don't know
12 if you noticed that spike in the legal balance there;
13 it's because we were able to redistribute money that
14 was being spent in certain areas that could be spent
15 somewhere else. So we ended with a positive net
16 legal balance. We actually had to move money to the
17 building fund this year, which was awesome. It
18 wasn't somewhere we thought we would be.

19 The next thing is we've created with Jamie's
20 assistance and the district's -- and the Department's
21 assistance is a written standard of operating
22 procedures. These are things that if we're not
23 there, these people know that this is how we're going
24 to function and get through things. Along with that
25 right-sizing, we have reduced certified salaries by

1 21% this school year. That is a fiscal savings of
2 3.9 million dollars that we're not spending in
3 salaries. And that is with the LEARNS Act raise.
4 Our teachers all received that raise. But it's
5 because we've right-sized and we've figured out where
6 the key personnel are and looking at the budget.
7 What you need to know is we are down 286 students
8 this year and funding. We are a declining enrollment
9 school. But those 286 students equate to \$2,178,748.
10 Well, we've reduced our expenditures. So, like Dr.
11 Saunders said, if we continue to pay attention to
12 those numbers -- now my hope is is that we get those
13 300 kids back, and we're still right-sized for them
14 at this time.

15 But I can't say enough for the support that
16 we've received. And as I end here, I want to thank
17 the board, but I'd also like to thank you,
18 Commissioner Oliva. I mean, as you've come in this
19 semester, you've also asked some tough questions and
20 really eyed our board packets and paid attention.
21 And so by you doing that and serving as our board,
22 it's helped us understand another way of creating
23 that governance and that positive process.

24 So there's my presentation of our systems and
25 the progress we've made and I'd love to entertain any

1 questions -- and Dr. Rice, come back up -- and
2 entertain any questions you may have.

3 [APPLAUSE]

4 SUPT. BARBAREE: We'll still need that
5 PowerPoint in a minute. Yeah, there you go.

6 DR. RICE: Just briefly, Pine Bluff community,
7 please stand with me.

8 Next slide. With confident humility, we are
9 requesting to regain local control of the Pine Bluff
10 School District to operate as a school board, with
11 all the powers and authorities prescribed by the
12 Arkansas Department of Education and State of
13 Arkansas.

14 Next slide. We are requesting continued fiscal
15 support from DESE, to support Superintendent Barbaree
16 and fiscal managers in the district to help maintain
17 appropriate oversight, insure accountability, and
18 sustain fiscal confidence for all Pine Bluff
19 community stakeholders.

20 Next slide. And this is what I want to end with
21 for the board. Now, if all goes well, we become the
22 model. This is our journey. You see how I kind of
23 set it up as a research paper. Now, we're on a
24 roadshow; so when we go to trainings we have a story
25 to tell, The Monumental Journey of the Pine Bluff

1 School District: From State Control, with a limited-
2 authority board, to Local Control, full-authority
3 board, and the passage of a \$65,000,000 millage. I
4 don't know many school districts who have done that.

5 Next slide. There's a story and lessons
6 therein, that the Pine Bluff School District can
7 share and model to other school districts. I've
8 gotten calls from Mississippi, and Texas, asking us
9 how did you do it.

10 And that's where I'll end.

11 Next slide.

12 SUPT. BARBAREE: No. There you go.

13 DR. RICE: Okay. I'm done.

14 [APPLAUSE]

15 MS. SMITH: And go to the next slide real quick.
16 I want to see if they do. Okay.

17 So, next slide please. For recommendation from
18 the Department of Education to the State Board, the
19 Division respectfully requests that the State Board
20 find that the district has met the criteria to exit
21 Level 5 Intensive Support and remove the Level 5
22 classification, and allow the district to receive
23 Level 5 [sic] directed support. We also request that
24 you find that the district has corrected all issues
25 that has caused the classification of fiscal distress

1 and remove the district from fiscal distress
2 classification. We recommend also that you accept
3 the Pine Bluff limited-authority board's proposal for
4 the future board elections. And remove all
5 limitations from the limited-authority board so that
6 they may return full administration of the district
7 to the local board.

8 And if you have any questions or need
9 clarifications, any of us are happy to answer those.

10 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you very much.

11 Board Members to my right, first, questions down
12 here?

13 MS. WOODS: I just have one.

14 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Ms. Woods.

15 MS. WOODS: I just want to make sure I
16 understood, Dr. Rice, when you talked about your plan
17 for the proposed school board elections.

18 DR. RICE: Uh-huh.

19 MS. WOODS: So is the proposal that all of you
20 remain in place, with one person coming up for
21 election in 2024?

22 DR. RICE: That's correct. All of us come up in
23 November 2024. That's the -- that was the original
24 -- that's our plan.

25 MS. WOODS: All of you would go for '24, and

1 then you --

2 DR. RICE: No. No. One.

3 MS. WOODS: Just one person?

4 DR. RICE: One person in 2024.

5 MS. WOODS: And I would just love for you to
6 speak on like why -- why that plan?

7 DR. RICE: Well, we thought about it, and we
8 went back and forth at first. We know that we have
9 to make some changes to our policies. Our original
10 policy says three years. But we were looking at
11 other school districts and also thinking about the
12 continuity, the capacity, you know, that confidence
13 that we want to -- we recently had a board member
14 [sic] and we decided together as five years. We also
15 -- we're looking at the timeline, and it was
16 something that I missed in terms of seeing how it
17 lays out. So the plan that we've given would allow
18 that five-year term. If we chapter down and we say,
19 okay, that two board members will start serving in
20 2024, some board members would miss out on that. And
21 then, we would have one year where we wouldn't
22 actually have an election because of the way that it
23 was scheduled. And so when we came back together and
24 put our minds together, we decided that this was the
25 best strategy going forward. We had to extend it out

1 a little farther, but that way, all of those board
2 members starting in November 2024 would have
3 opportunity to serve that five-year term.

4 MS. WOODS: Okay.

5 DR. RICE: And we had a work session with ASBA
6 to get feedback from that -- from them, as well.

7 MS. WOODS: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Questions? Questions down
9 here? Ms. Rollins? Mr. Wood?

10 MR. WOOD: I do. I do have a question, but I'll
11 wait my turn.

12 What authority do we have to set the future
13 procedures with regard to elections? It seems to me
14 that once we return them to local control they'll set
15 their own policies. Would that not be correct?

16 MS. SMITH: So during your order today, during
17 your recommendation or your motion that you make, if
18 there's something that you want to adjust on that,
19 that would be what you would put in your motion.

20 MR. WOOD: And would they be obligated to abide
21 by that?

22 MS. SMITH: If that's what the direction -- if
23 that's the condition for being released.

24 MR. WOOD: Okay.

25 MS. SMITH: And if I'm saying something wrong,

1 Attorneys, make sure -- come, correct me.

2 MR. RHODES: (Shaking head from side to side.)

3 MR. WOOD: Okay. Good to know.

4 Then it's worth the discussion, I suppose, about
5 the elections. I do have a concern about the
6 proposed timeline. That's really -- of all the
7 things that I heard today, that was the only thing
8 that really struck me. I'm a former school board
9 member in Little Rock, so I understand the discussion
10 about the elections. And I understand the sentiment
11 of continuity. But I have come to appreciate that
12 more important than continuity is the public's voice
13 and engagement in the process as often as possible
14 and as large a turnout as possible. And I can say
15 that in your odd-year elections people are going to
16 get elected to the school board with dozens of votes,
17 and in your even-year elections people are going to
18 get elected to the school board with thousands of
19 votes. And that is a tremendous difference. And I
20 believe that elections should be held in even years,
21 when we vote for President and Governor, vote for
22 school board also because you have the most people
23 coming to vote in those elections. It would mean
24 three being up for election in one even year and four
25 being up for election in the next even year. But I

1 believe that if there is -- you know, in the worse
2 case scenario, that if four people are removed at one
3 time, that's because the people of the community have
4 chosen that those four people don't need to return to
5 the school board. And continuity is not more
6 important, in my opinion. I'm just one opinion and,
7 in my opinion, continuity is not more important than
8 the people's voice there. So I would actually ask --
9 I guess I'll make the motion maybe in a bit and the
10 Board can speak whether they agree on -- in a vote on
11 that. But I would ask that we amend that to be three
12 people being elected in the next even year, and then
13 four people being elected in the even year election
14 following that.

15 MS. SMITH: I do want to comment about that.
16 They -- I know this board did meet publicly, talking
17 with these conversations. I know they brought in
18 ASBA with those conversations. I saw several
19 different scenarios that were presented to me -- with
20 two, two, one; one, one -- I mean, just the different
21 ones. The one message that kept coming over and over
22 and over again -- and this was even with ASBA
23 consulting -- is right now, we have a functioning
24 limited-authority appointed board that had 31
25 applicants that applied to be a part of the board.

1 That's 31 folks were vetted, they were interviewed,
2 they went through a process to get on the board.
3 This last eight months, they have demonstrated the
4 ability to show consistency and active learning and
5 participation in what it means to be a board member.
6 You have to remember, the previous board failed. And
7 so making sure that we had consistency as we move
8 forward -- it is your decision if you decide to do
9 the conversation around how many at a time, so to be
10 able to have that consistency and slowly move back to
11 a completely elected board. But that was part of the
12 conversations.

13 I'm going to step back and let these folks
14 address that, if they have any comments.

15 SUPT. BARBAREE: Well, the comment I have is
16 when we met and had the work session, you know, our
17 board was just concerned how can we continue with the
18 stability that we have, when they've only been
19 appointed for -- since January. They haven't had --
20 they're still learning, and that's what I kind of
21 talked about earlier. When I say they're still
22 learning, we're still having financial training;
23 we're still looking at academics. You know, they're
24 doing building and facility walks with the new high
25 school project. Not that another board member coming

1 on couldn't do that. But just in efforts to insure
2 that those systems get built strongly it was
3 important to say we were going to have consistency
4 across the board.

5 Where we consulted with ASBA, their
6 recommendation was the one-one-one-two-two. And then
7 our board had conversation to do -- like what Ms.
8 Smith said, the different combinations. Our policy
9 is that we would have the November election; so
10 that's when it is -- I know it's an odd year, but
11 there's no more having a spring or -- a spring and a
12 fall; you can only have the one. And so we chose to
13 do the November election, because more people do vote
14 in the fall, rather than the spring. So that's just
15 parts of the conversation that we had. I just think
16 that the board really was solid on trying to keep
17 them together as long as they could so that we could
18 see the tasks that we had placed get done, you know.

19 MR. WOOD: Regardless of the slight disagreement
20 on the election part, I want to say I'm excited to
21 vote for your return to full local control and --

22 [APPLAUSE]

23 MR. WOOD: And to your credit, Dr. Barbaree,
24 oftentimes, superintendents come to us and the
25 information they provide is a little surface level

1 and sometimes answers to questions are lacking depth.
2 But you're demonstrating a tremendous depth of
3 knowledge in your capacity to lead this district and
4 --

5 [APPLAUSE]

6 MR. WOOD: And I feel very confident about the
7 future of the Pine Bluff School District. So --

8 SUPT. BARBAREE: Thank you.

9 MR. WOOD: -- good job.

10 SUPT. BARBAREE: Thank you.

11 [APPLAUSE]

12 MS. WOODS: I want to make just a quick comment
13 to say my question was in no way meant to insinuate
14 that the board is not doing great. Y'all have done
15 tremendous work. As we --

16 [APPLAUSE]

17 MS. WOODS: As we are sitting here, talking
18 about I think probably in favor of local control, I
19 just wanted to get out there where did that come from
20 and just make sure that we have done our due-
21 diligence in making sure that we are truly giving the
22 community back their school and that they have a
23 voice in everything that we do.

24 SUPT. BARBAREE: Thank you. Thank you.

25 [APPLAUSE]

1 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any more questions? Mr. Bragg.

2 MR. BRAGG: Thank you. I am totally impressed
3 with progress you've made. I know there have been
4 difficult years in the past. But I'm especially
5 encouraged by the support of the community and I
6 definitely believe that, you know, they should be
7 returned to local control. I share some concerns,
8 but I also think with the progress you've made in
9 such a short period of time there's value in
10 continuity. And, you know, you --

11 [APPLAUSE]

12 MR. BRAGG: You've come a long way. And I think
13 having this team in place to secure the ongoing
14 improvements would -- is important. So, but I
15 commend you on your efforts.

16 SUPT. BARBAREE: Thank you. Thank you.

17 [APPLAUSE]

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Keener? Ms. Hunter?

19 MS. KEENER: I do have one question, and it's
20 only because I'm new and I'm just learning. But I
21 want to insure that every section of the district is
22 represented. When the limited-authority board was
23 appointed was there one from every zone?

24 SUPT. BARBAREE: (Nodding head up and down.)

25 MS. KEENER: Okay. And so to insure that that

1 continues, that one area isn't over-represented, that
2 would be great.

3 SUPT. BARBAREE: No. Thank you. We have seven
4 zones. And so the Department utilized support for
5 geographic regions, and so they created those seven
6 zones; so each board member has their own zone.

7 MS. KEENER: Perfect.

8 SUPT. BARBAREE: Yeah. You're welcome.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Hunter.

10 MS. HUNTER: Yeah. So, well, I'm just going to
11 say Bravo. I mean, I live in Jefferson County. I
12 think most of you know that. And this is just -- and
13 I'm a graduate of Pine Bluff High School, full
14 product of the Pine Bluff school system, a long time
15 ago. But --

16 [APPLAUSE]

17 MS. HUNTER: -- this actually has just made me
18 so proud and has just -- I mean, I'm crying with you.
19 It is -- it is incredibly emotional, an emotionally
20 charged subject. And whenever you get so emotional
21 you know it's important to you. And there is nothing
22 more important than our children and their futures.
23 So --

24 [APPLAUSE]

25 MS. HUNTER: -- thank you.

1 SUPT. BARBAREE: You're welcome. Thank you.

2 MS. HUNTER: Thank you for your leadership. And
3 I am exhausted after listening --

4 SUPT. BARBAREE: I'm sorry.

5 MS. HUNTER: You are -- so much. But, so that
6 aside, so could we -- and this may be more to Stacy,
7 but I mean I really want to understand. When local
8 control is turned over, there is this years -- years-
9 long process where they're going to send us reports
10 quarterly. But, you know, I think about this exit
11 criteria document that you went over. I mean, are we
12 going -- I mean, maybe you don't do the exit
13 criteria. But are we going to monitor that, see
14 progress and growth on that? Because, you know,
15 right now, it's a 3.13 overall, which is about 78%.
16 And, you know, personally, I'd like to see better
17 than a C. So could you just talk a little bit about
18 that?

19 MS. SMITH: Yeah. So in the rules -- outlined
20 in the rules, it does say that the Department will
21 continue to monitor in those areas that were outlined
22 in the exit criteria. It's the district's
23 responsibility to make sure that they're providing
24 quarterly reports to the Department. But our team
25 will still be there, monitoring, and it will be the

1 district's responsibility to continue to report to us
2 their progress in those areas. But we're not going
3 away. Our team is still there and we will still be
4 pushing in, specifically looking at these criteria
5 and others. There was many other things which
6 Jennifer shared with you today in her 20-minute
7 presentation. Applause on that. I'm going to talk
8 to her about time management at some point.

9 There's so much in there of work that was done
10 that is not on that exit criteria or sheet.

11 MS. HUNTER: Right.

12 MS. SMITH: Right. And so those are the areas
13 for your reports that you'll continue to get. We'll
14 invite Jennifer back, with a time -- a stopwatch in
15 front of her, over the next year, for her to be able
16 to come back and say, This is where we're at. We'll
17 have the board come back. So you will hear from
18 them. Those reports will go on the State Board
19 agenda and you'll hear from them.

20 MS. HUNTER: Right. Thank you. And I just -- I
21 really want to see like data, you know, not -- and I
22 love narratives and I love all that. But, you know,
23 real measurable progress.

24 MS. SMITH: I said this to you at dinner last
25 night, they write books and they make movies about

1 schools that transform. But we're talking about a
2 district and we're talking about a community. And
3 I'm going to tell you, all the elements for a
4 blockbuster are in place right now. And if they can
5 continue to do what they've done in the last eight
6 months, there will be movies and books written about
7 Pine Bluff.

8 [APPLAUSE]

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Henderson?

10 MR. HENDERSON: Yeah, I really don't have a
11 question but I do have a comment. You know, when you
12 talk about school board elections, I guess my view is
13 a little bit different. I think having this board in
14 place creates a foundation. When you're trying to
15 build a home, foundation is very important and I
16 think it's value in that.

17 And also, I just want to commend the board, the
18 leadership of the board, the superintendent, as well
19 as the community. I know that it's been a lot of
20 rough decisions being made. And the one thing that I
21 really admire -- it was mentioned several times --
22 the WIN. And, you know, when I think about WIN, I
23 think about teamwork, I think about the ability of
24 what you guys have been able to accomplish. I'm very
25 proud; I'm happy to sit here to listen at all the

1 into public comment and then we'll open it up -- back
2 up to discussion before any motion could be made.
3 Does that sound okay with board members?

4 Public comment, our procedures -- each person
5 who signed up to speak will get three minutes.
6 Unfortunately, we will kind of cut you off if you go
7 too long. We're sorry about that, but want to make
8 sure everyone gets heard. We'll set a timer up here
9 and just kind of nudge you as your time is on there.
10 So many individuals in this room have worked so word
11 and have so much to share, and we so appreciate that.

12 I'm going to start on the list as it goes down.
13 First signed up was Jacquelyn Gilbert.

14 MS. GILBERT: Good morning, Arkansas State Board
15 Members. My name is Jacquelyn Gilbert. And to all
16 of the panel guests, to our limited board, to the
17 members of the community, I am a graduate of Pine
18 Bluff High School. I went through the Pine Bluff
19 School District. I would not be where I am today if
20 it were not for the diligence and the excellent
21 education that I had in Pine Bluff School District.
22 I am an Army veteran officer, retired professor, and
23 a business owner here in Pine Bluff. And this is
24 extremely passionate for me for the local school
25 district to have local control, because I wouldn't be

1 where I was if we didn't have local control when I
2 graduated in 19-umm. So as a concerned stakeholder,
3 I would like to make a recommendation that the Pine
4 Bluff School District stakeholders, who diligently
5 worked to get the limited board, return to local
6 control. And we'd like to have elections. As a
7 person who is an active voting member here, local
8 control is important. And as an Army veteran, being
9 able to vote is even more extremely important,
10 especially when I was overseas and somebody told me I
11 couldn't. So I am really interested -- all of the
12 limited board members are wonderful. I am so proud
13 of them. But I also want to make sure that everybody
14 has a voice. There were 31 applications, and of
15 those 31 applications those persons could have been a
16 part of this board. And the democratic society, like
17 you mentioned earlier, we vote for our elected
18 officials for our school district. And for them to
19 continue with their work, let us make the choice to
20 vote them also. We don't have specific term limits
21 for our board members; so if we did, then they would
22 be gone. Consistency is what everybody has been
23 talking about, but what about my voice. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you. And next we have
25 Charlene Wright.

1 MS. WRIGHT: I would like to say good morning.
2 And I see new faces; I see some smiling, because I've
3 been here numerous times. And as I sit here, I'm
4 trying, as they say, not to have emotion. Because as
5 I reflect back from 2018 to 2023, we have been
6 concerned stakeholders from the consolidation aspect,
7 annexation, from the appointment of the limited
8 board, instead of the strategic learning -- strategic
9 planning committee, and also the school zone. And I
10 was also a part of our Pine Bluff School District
11 stakeholders in opposition to the millage; not that
12 we were opposing a new school, but we felt that with
13 the LEARNS legislation -- an aspect said that if we
14 were not returned to local control, then our
15 \$67,000,000 could be allocated possibly to a charter
16 school or to Watson Chapel school. So we were not
17 opposing a new school; that's not what we were doing.
18 Even though some thought it was (inaudible), rumors,
19 they were unlearned in the LEARNS legislation, what
20 it could do. We are in complete support for local
21 control. But as I look back -- because even as I --
22 I didn't do one because I was really -- I'd usually
23 be very -- I'm overwhelmed because this is a day of
24 reckoning that -- I have been here -- we have been
25 here for years making comments, those of you -- like

1 I say, I see a lot of you for the last -- since 2021,
2 we've been here allocating, making awareness. And
3 even with the opposition, we created an awareness
4 throughout the community that we had a Level 5
5 Intensive Support deadline of November 8th. So even
6 though the millage passed, our opposition, we still
7 were winners. Because since, you know, our community
8 became aware -- hey, this is a situation we need to
9 be aware of. So, today, I'm saying this has been a
10 long journey and I really appreciate -- I think my
11 husband had to step out -- at times there were only
12 two of us here, but we stayed encouraged for our
13 district, that where there were two or three, the
14 Lord was in the midst. And we came here, strugglers,
15 fighting for our district. And we are here today
16 fighting for our district. And as Mrs. Gilbert
17 stated, and as Mr. Rice -- Dr. Rice stated, I am a
18 democratic person. I appreciate the limited board.
19 But I also feel in a democratic process that we
20 should have a voice. I'm -- you know, if we don't --
21 I'm really for getting rid of all seven and letting
22 them run again. But I could even say give us -- let
23 them -- let's do three this year, or four. But I
24 really feel that with them as leaders, some of them,
25 that we could still be successful. And I am a proud

1 graduate of Pine Bluff High School, from 1975, and
2 also I taught in the district 28 years, from 19- --
3 that's it, give it up; that's a handclap.

4 [APPLAUSE]

5 MS. WRIGHT: I went there and labored from 1979
6 to 2007, and came back again as a math coach, and
7 when they got out of their little predicament at Jack
8 Robie and moved on to Pine Bluff High School. So I
9 am a fighter for the Pine Bluff School District and I
10 know that with the leadership of some of the limited
11 board members -- but we should also have a democratic
12 voice in some of them being replaced. Or even let
13 them, like they say -- and I was part of the push for
14 a limited board. Our stakeholders didn't know that
15 that was part of the annexation governance, but I
16 made them aware. I've been -- you know, some of them
17 might say I'm a rebel-rouser or whatever. But you
18 have to have struggles to get people on the right
19 page, and I've been there to making them aware. I
20 was one of the co-chairpersons for the limited board.
21 I've spent resources, time, energy -- in our home, it
22 became a table, a war room. And so, yes, I'm warring
23 and I will be back again.

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you, Ms. Wright. That is
25 time. If you want to wrap up, you can have a few

1 more seconds.

2 MS. WRIGHT: Okay. I do appreciate you all. I
3 appreciate our limited board, I appreciate
4 Superintendent Barbaree, and all. But they know that
5 I'm for the Pine Bluff School District return to
6 local control. And I feel that this has created an
7 awareness and that there are other stakeholders that
8 can also provide the consistency that our district
9 needs on a path to success.

10 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

11 Up next, we have Julius Wright.

12 MR. WRIGHT: Good afternoon, Arkansas State
13 Board Members and Secretary Jacob Oliva and all
14 others present. I am Julius Wright, a concerned Pine
15 Bluff School District stakeholder. And as a
16 concerned Pine Bluff School District stakeholder, I
17 have been a member of the Unified Stakeholders
18 Committee, our Pine Bluff School District committee,
19 and the Pine Bluff School District stakeholders from
20 consolidation, as well as a member of the Pine Bluff
21 branch of the National Association for the
22 Advancement of Colored People.

23 As a concerned Pine Bluff School District
24 stakeholder, I would like to communicate our support
25 of the new Atlas Teaching and Learning Assessment

1 System. In our review of the new Atlas NW summative
2 assessment, we feel that the changes would achieve
3 equality for all students at the end of the course
4 exam for Algebra I, Geometry, and Biology. This is
5 significant as all students will be assessed on their
6 current subject content. This will impact the
7 achievement rate of the Pine Bluff School District
8 students, as well as all students in Arkansas, state
9 of Arkansas. The 9th and 10th grade students
10 enrolled in Algebra I, Geometry, and Biology for the
11 past seven years was not assessed in their student
12 enrollment and the current content area. This will
13 profoundly equalize the achievement of ESSA report
14 grade of the Pine Bluff School District schools, as
15 well as all Arkansas students in the 8th, 9th and
16 10th grades in Algebra I, Geometry, and Biology.

17 We also support the Atlas because it will
18 provide equal access to all teachers to review every
19 item in the test bank to create formative assessments
20 in preparation for the students to be successful of
21 their summative assessment. It will provide equality
22 and achievement and ESSA report grades, whereas all
23 teachers did not have equal access to the test bank,
24 nor release items of the ACT Aspire assessment for
25 the past seven years. This created a disparity, low

1 achievement, created failed status quo, and dominos
2 for the LEARNS legislation. We concerned Pine Bluff
3 School stakeholders are concerned if the ELA
4 indicator will include a writing assessment because a
5 past administrator did not grade the writing
6 assessment. But the writing assessment included the
7 ELA indicator, which includes reading, English, and
8 the writing assessment, which was not graded. We
9 want to know if this practice, not grading the
10 writing assessment, will be discontinued in the ELA
11 indicator.

12 In closing, we, the Pine Bluff stakeholders, are
13 in support of the Arkansas teaching and learning
14 assessment system, and hope that it achieves equity,
15 advanced policies and practices that eliminate
16 discrimination, and accelerate the wellbeing and
17 education of all students. Thank you for allowing me
18 to have comments this morning -- or this afternoon on
19 behalf of Pine Bluff School District concerned
20 stakeholders. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Wright.

22 Up next, we have Gregory Mattics.

23 MR. MATTICS: I didn't write a speech. Welcome
24 to Pine Bluff. Good afternoon. I'm not even here in
25 support of all these guys. They do great work. But

1 we're here for one thing: 4,000 people who are
2 America's future. Every child out there, whether
3 they're in Jefferson County, Pine Bluff, Watson
4 Chapel, Sheridan -- I don't care; that's America's
5 future, and we're here for them. We're going to do
6 the best we can. I support the women and men that
7 have made all of this great progress. I'm like her,
8 though, I'd like to see something better than a C.
9 But, please -- and I was one of the opposition
10 members, but I changed my mind and I think I
11 collectively changed a whole bunch of people's minds
12 to vote for the millage. Would you please return the
13 school district to local control? And come back with
14 a CDL.

15 [APPLAUSE]

16 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Mattics.

17 Up next, we have Eugene Hunt.

18 MR. HUNT: Madam Chair and the entire Board and
19 to all of those who are here, I simply signed up to
20 encourage the Board to return local control, given
21 the presentations made by the Pine Bluff School Board
22 and Dr. Barbaree. And I just do believe that --
23 well, in fact, I know we're ready for local control.
24 Thank you.

25 [APPLAUSE]

1 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

2 And next, we have Jesse Turner. Jesse Turner.

3 MR. TURNER: Good afternoon. I think protocol
4 has been established. I'm here today on behalf of
5 the Pine Bluff Interested Citizens for Voter
6 Registration, as well as the Pine Bluff Faith
7 Community Coalition Ministerial Alliance.

8 We support education. We support seeing this
9 board return to local control. As pastors and
10 ministers in Pine Bluff, we're doing something that
11 is rare around this nation. We're adopting schools.
12 We're in the schools. We are walking hallways and
13 assisting administrations, not only Pine Bluff, but
14 both districts. So today is a historical day and we
15 are here as representation of the pastors in our
16 city, because I don't believe there's one Pine Bluff
17 pastor who would say no to returning local control.
18 We are all here together for our children. Without
19 education, they are a lost cause. We believe, as
20 Frederick Douglass said years ago, it's better to
21 build strong children than to repair broken men. And
22 we believe with this board who is working together to
23 move things forward, the superintendent, and all of
24 the residents who are here, who really want to see
25 our kids succeed, that a vote to give control back to

1 local authority will be a great day in Pine Bluff.
2 Thank you.

3 [APPLAUSE]

4 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

5 Up next, we have Trammell Howell. I apologize
6 if I said your name incorrectly.

7 MS. HOWELL: Trammell.

8 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Trammell. Okay. I'm sorry.

9 MS. HOWELL: Good evening, again, everyone. You
10 know, it's good to see you guys and I always thank
11 you for giving us the time to let you know how our
12 community is still 110% behind our school, limited
13 school board, and our Superintendent Barbaree, along
14 with Ms. Stacy Smith and her team. And, once again,
15 this is just a great day.

16 [APPLAUSE]

17 MS. HOWELL: It's a great day to be in this
18 community and with us. And I'm always so emotional
19 and because it's about our kids. It's about our kids
20 here. My kids have graduated and gone now, but I
21 still live in this community; I still know so many
22 kids that are beautiful, that just want the best for
23 all of us.

24 So with that being said, I said, you know, this
25 has been a long journey. This has been a long

1 journey for us, because I was one of the 100 that
2 said, Please, take our school district over. I was
3 one of the ones speaking the loudest, Take us,
4 because we needed help. Now I'm still one of the
5 loudest, saying that we are ready, whether it be --
6 I'm not standing to say that we're coming; it's like,
7 no, we're here. We're here. And we're here because
8 we are here for the betterment of our school
9 districts, for our kids, for our community. We are
10 here to continue. No, we know we're not where we
11 need to be, but we know that we're making progress.
12 And we know if we continue this progress that it's
13 nothing but up from here and there's nothing but
14 excellence from our community, and with us all
15 working together and continuing to work together that
16 we're on this journey together.

17 And I have to truly thank Ms. Stacy and Ms.
18 Barbaree because they truly stepped up. When I was
19 truly confused and we felt like we weren't getting
20 anything done they --

21 [APPLAUSE]

22 MS. HOWELL: -- stepped up for us. So with
23 that, I just want to thank you guys. I'm glad you
24 got a chance to come to Pine Bluff and actually see
25 our school and our students, to see that that new

1 school -- when you come back -- when you come back,
2 you know, it will be better -- bigger and better than
3 anything. And our students will continue to be high
4 progress in every area. So, we just thank you.

5 [APPLAUSE]

6 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

7 Up next, we have Ms. Rosalind Mouser.

8 MS. MOUSER: Good afternoon. Rosalind Mouser.

9 I moved here in 1965, second grade, Pine Bluff School
10 District; 1976 graduate of Pine Bluff High School. I
11 returned in 1984, and have practiced law in this city
12 since then.

13 So every day, you and I, and everyone in this
14 room, if the Lord grants us the life, we get up every
15 day to make a good difference, a bad difference, or
16 not to do anything. And one of the ways we got to
17 where Trammell Howell stood in front of you and said,
18 Please take us over, help us, is too many people,
19 like myself, chose the third option: do nothing. I
20 had no child in the public school and I really wasn't
21 focused until Go Forward Pine Bluff brought Trammell
22 Howell to a board meeting. And she's passionate;
23 right? We're all trying not to cry, but she's very
24 passionate. And I went home and told my husband,
25 who's also practiced in law a lot longer than I have

1 [APPLAUSE]

2 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

3 Up next, we have John Fenley.

4 MR. FENLEY: Hello. I'm a fairly new transplant
5 to Arkansas, from Utah. I got here about three-and-
6 a-half years ago. I wasn't really aware of the
7 problems that were happening here. But I came to
8 learn more about the way Pine Bluff operates, and it
9 is disappointing to me that there is so much lack of
10 transparency and corruption.

11 I fear -- my biggest fear is that the money that
12 the school district has is going to go into
13 developers' pockets and not into fostering the
14 passion that children really need in order to
15 succeed. My mother was a kindergarten teacher; she
16 had a -- she has a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology,
17 with an emphasis -- she did her dissertation on
18 Criterion Reference Testing. I was taught from a
19 young age the difference between right and wrong and
20 the power that passion can have. And growing up, in
21 Utah, our schools had occasional problems, buildings
22 were old. That was not an impediment to learning.
23 Walking around a bucket where the ceiling was leaking
24 didn't affect me as a child. The passion that you
25 have as a kid -- I don't think that any of the

1 children here know or understand the difference
2 between state control and local control. I actually
3 don't. But what I see is a power struggle. And I
4 hope that the people that are in control here are --
5 have the true best interest of the children in mind,
6 because that's what's right. I hope that they're not
7 tap-dancing in the hallway after this because they're
8 going to get to put a whole bunch of money in their
9 pockets without oversight. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

11 Up next, we have Alfred Carroll.

12 DR. CARROLL: Good afternoon. And I'm going to
13 stick to what I've got on my telephone, and then
14 we'll all be all right.

15 Good afternoon and welcome. Dr. Carroll, 39-
16 year veteran educator, Pine Bluff School District;
17 18-year Jefferson County Justice of the Peace,
18 District 1.

19 To this accomplished school board,
20 Superintendent, these champions of the community --
21 and I say champions because they've been here.
22 They're here this morning and they've been here for
23 years and throughout most -- throughout generations,
24 trying to improve the quality of life in Pine Bluff
25 and the education of our young people.

1 I was going to talk about the school board and
2 return to local control, but everybody has done that.
3 So let me talk about -- mention the student and
4 community financial literacy engagement activity that
5 I was a part of yesterday at Pine Bluff High School's
6 gym. Twelfth grade students interacted at multiple
7 stations with community leaders, writing checks,
8 balancing checkbooks, engaging in financial literacy
9 conversations, and making real life financial
10 decisions. It was a great teaching and learning
11 activity. Sorry you guys missed it. I'm looking
12 forward to its repeat. And it was exciting to
13 interact with young people. I only had one problem;
14 I had one problem that I shared with many of our
15 female students. They did not have a scenario where
16 they had a broken fingernail. Boy, they had some
17 gems of fingernails on their hands. No literacy
18 decision about I broke a fingernail, that's going to
19 be \$50. Can I afford that this week or have I got to
20 wait? But it was a great activity. And I want to
21 compliment Pine Bluff High School's administration,
22 the teachers, the 12th grade students that
23 participated, the students at-large as I came up on
24 the campus, the security personnel that were on the
25 campus, those administrators and teachers that were

1 out on the campus monitoring the students. And I
2 especially want to thank the Jefferson County
3 Extension Office and Mrs. Pia Woods, its director.
4 That was a great activity to help our young people
5 with financial literacy. And I just wish that you
6 guys could've been a part of that, to actually see
7 some of the things Superintendent Barbaree was
8 talking about. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

10 [APPLAUSE]

11 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Just -- was anyone else signed
12 up? Okay. That's all I have on my list.

13 So at this point in time let's go back to board
14 members and see if there's any further questions or
15 points of discussion.

16 I'll start down here. Mr. Henderson?

17 MR. HENDERSON: No.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Woods?

19 MS. WOODS: I just want to say that I hate that
20 it's characterized as us giving control back, because
21 it's very clear that you took it back. I hope that
22 history and the media reports it that way, because it
23 has almost nothing to do with us and everything to do
24 with what you guys did.

25 [APPLAUSE]

1 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Salaam?

2 MS. SALAAM: I don't have a question. But the
3 presentation, the data, made me excited, of all the
4 growth of our students and the community coming.
5 After Covid, just seeing the progress, it just -- it
6 really makes me excited. And I especially enjoyed
7 the tour today and getting to see the children,
8 teachers, interaction with administration. It was
9 great.

10 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

11 Ms. Rollins? Mr. Bragg? Mr. Wood? Ms. Keener?
12 Ms. Hunter?

13 MS. HUNTER: So I don't know if this is
14 appropriate to ask this question. But I'm kind of
15 going back to the conversation earlier about the
16 election cycle. And, you know, I very much support
17 the idea of even-year elections for the reasons that
18 have already been stated. And so as I looked at the
19 slide that you had in your deck, was -- I'm just
20 trying to compromise here -- was there a discussion
21 about six-year terms and then like do two, two and
22 two on -- in '24, '26 and '28? I mean, I guess it
23 would be two, two and seven -- something like that,
24 where it's not elections every year?

25 DR. RICE: Yeah. We started -- we started with

1 that -- started -- I think the original model was two
2 in '24, two in '25, two in '26, and then one. And
3 then in talking with the ASBA and then talking again
4 with the board members, in terms of looking at --
5 trying to make sure that we had board members within
6 that five-year cycle. And we didn't -- you know, of
7 course, we don't know the election dates, but just,
8 you know, mathematically, can we make sure that when
9 someone is elected that we -- you know, within those
10 five years that we don't have a gap where we miss a
11 year. And so that was the -- kind of our first
12 approach to doing that. And, you know, we presented
13 that to the community, and the community supported
14 that. You know, they wanted many of us to continue
15 -- well, really, all of us to continue to serve until
16 such a time that, you know, the vote would have to
17 take place in the public. And so, you know, that was
18 our mindset going forward.

19 MS. HUNTER: Thank you.

20 DR. RICE: Thanks.

21 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Board Members, any further
22 discussion?

23 Okay. I will take a moment to again reiterate
24 what everyone has said about the hard work that's
25 gone on by teachers, by administrators, by staff, by

1 community members to support students. And like I
2 said, there's no hope like -- seeing three and four
3 year olds this morning learning and having fun and
4 cheering each other on is an awesome way to start the
5 day, and even better to continue to hear from you all
6 and the hard work.

7 Board Members, I think as I sort of consider the
8 options on the table with you all, I think back to,
9 unfortunately, over my tenure here and over the past
10 two decades we have seen districts yoyo-ing in and
11 out of state control. And I don't think anyone in
12 this room wants that to happen again. We want this
13 district to be on the path to success moving forward
14 and we want every student to have the utmost
15 opportunity to achieve and reach great heights.

16 So as I'm thinking about this proposed board,
17 I'm thinking about how are we setting up the district
18 to succeed. And in the cases where we have seen
19 districts, you know, spend a year or two, and then
20 come right back to the State, why has that occurred.
21 And it seems to be a trend that that's occurred,
22 because there have been very rapid transitions where
23 superintendents have come and gone; we see a lot in
24 this part of the state of superintendent turnover
25 happening very quickly. And with that, comes lots of

1 changes and then things that have been built upon
2 wash away. And so, I think that's sort of ringing in
3 the back of my mind is how do we learn from lessons
4 of the past and how do we try to support this
5 district as we move forward.

6 Those are my comments. So, any others at this
7 time? Or we'll open up the floor for a motion.

8 MS. ROLLINS: I agree that an elected school
9 board certainly is extremely important. But I also
10 understand the work of the board. I was a school
11 board member for many, many years. And the fact that
12 you're working so well together is extremely
13 important if you're going to move this district
14 forward.

15 So I would make the motion that we accept the
16 proposed school board election service format that
17 you've presented us today.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. There is a motion on the
19 floor.

20 Legal, does there need to be anymore pieces of
21 this motion? I know we received a letter from the
22 State, saying that the district has corrected its
23 criteria. Is that Legal? Mr. Rhodes. Thank you.

24 MR. RHODES: Thank you, Board. So I will
25 probably give you the slide in a minute, just so that

1 you're able to make a proper motion, because --
2 that's right. So you may be able to just re-work
3 what I effectively state as your motion. But
4 effectively what you would be ratifying and voting on
5 is that the district has met the criteria to exit
6 Level 5 Intensive Support, remove the Level 5
7 classification, and allow the district to receive
8 Level 4 directed support; that you find that the
9 district has corrected all issues that caused the
10 classification of fiscal distress, and remove the
11 district from fiscal distress classification; that
12 you accept the Pine Bluff limited-authority board's
13 proposal for future board elections; and that you
14 remove all limitations from the limited-authority
15 board and return full administration of the district
16 to the local board.

17 So that can be one motion or you can have
18 separate motions.

19 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

20 So as we have a motion on the floor right now,
21 we will accept a second to that and then additional
22 or -- would you like to amend your motion so this
23 includes --

24 MS. ROLLINS: Yes. I think amend this motion to
25 include I guess everything on your recommendation.

1 Do you want me to read all this again?

2 MR. RHODES: No, no, no.

3 MS. ROLLINS: You did so well.

4 MR. RHODES: I think it would be cleaner for you
5 guys to do that. But if you want to vote to do what
6 Andres said, I'm sure that's probably fine. The
7 transcript will be a little odd, but -- but again, as
8 long as it is voted on that you're doing each one of
9 those four things, then it won't be a proper motion,
10 one set of motions.

11 MS. ROLLINS: I'll go ahead and read it, just to
12 --

13 MR. RHODES: Okay.

14 MS. ROLLINS: -- make sure that we're all on the
15 same page. And, Dr. Moore, do you want to take --
16 break these up or --

17 CHAIRMAN MOORE: No. I mean your motion will be
18 --

19 MS. ROLLINS: Okay.

20 CHAIRMAN MOORE: -- these portions.

21 MS. ROLLINS: We find that the district has met
22 the criteria to exit Level 5 Intensive Support,
23 remove Level 5 classification, and allow the district
24 to receive Level 4 district support. We also find
25 that the district has corrected all issues that

1 caused the classification of fiscal distress, and
2 remove the district from fiscal distress
3 classification. Accept the Pine Bluff limited-
4 authority board's proposal for future board elections
5 and remove all limitations from the limited-authority
6 board and return full administration of the district
7 to the local board. That is our motion -- my motion.

8 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. There is a motion on the
9 table. Is there a second?

10 MS. HUNTER: Second.

11 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Second by Ms. Hunter.

12 We'll do a roll-call.

13 MR. WOOD: Dr. Moore, before we vote can I --

14 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Yes. Discussion.

15 MR. WOOD: -- can I make a motion to amend the
16 motion?

17 CHAIRMAN MOORE: If there is a motion to amend
18 the motion, we need a second to that. Is that
19 correct?

20 MR. RHODES: Correct.

21 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Is there a second to
22 amend the motion?

23 MS. WOODS: Do we get to know what the motion
24 will be? I'll second it for you, Jeff.

25 MR. WOOD: Sure. Listen, I'm doing this because

1 I don't want to vote against the bigger motion.

2 Okay.

3 MS. WOODS: That's my problem.

4 MR. WOOD: I don't want this to kill out. I
5 don't want to vote no. So I want to make my peace in
6 a proposed amendment to the proposal -- and it can
7 pass or fail -- and then I want to vote to return
8 this district to local control. So with that, I'm
9 going to move to amend the motion to direct the Pine
10 Bluff School Board to adopt four-year terms for the
11 members of the board of directors and for them to
12 draw lots for three members to be elected in 2024,
13 for four to be elected in 2026, and for them to be
14 elected on even years thereafter.

15 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. So there's an amended
16 motion. This is it. We vote first to amend the
17 motion. Is that correct? And then --

18 MR. RHODES: So if that were to pass, then you
19 would have a separate vote to actually adopt. All
20 right? Because they're simply amending the item to
21 be voted on at this time. But just to clarify,
22 because I don't think that was clarified before -- 6-
23 14-102, which is the annual school election date
24 statute, does state that there are annual school
25 elections that shall be held on particular dates.

1 And it does say that it could be even-numbered years
2 -- it could be the preferential primary day or the
3 general election. And then odd-numbered years it
4 would be the second Tuesday in November or the second
5 Tuesday in May. So it is anticipated that there are
6 annual school election dates. Now positions are not
7 the only things that go on school board election
8 dates, but it tends to be the primary driver for an
9 election. So while it may be preferential to have
10 perhaps a majority of the seats to be held on even-
11 numbered years, there is statute that anticipates
12 that there will be odd-numbered year elections.

13 MR. WOOD: But not for members of the board; it
14 doesn't have to be. That annual school election, it
15 can be --

16 MR. RHODES: It can be for multiple --

17 MR. WOOD: If there are no board of directors up
18 for election, it's just an annual election to approve
19 the current millage.

20 MR. RHODES: That's right. There could be
21 multiple items or one item, and it doesn't
22 necessarily have to be the seat. But, again, it does
23 anticipate that you have an annual school election
24 year. Part of the reason why you do have different
25 plans for certain elections, having one seat as

1 opposed to two or three, is to have staggered terms.
2 If you do have a situation where you have multiple
3 seats in one year, multiple seats in another, then
4 you could have a situation where you may have an
5 entirely -- like half of the board being new one year
6 and then to have a complete turnaround the next year,
7 and then there is no carryover and you may not have
8 stability, which is probably what's going back to
9 what they're proposing. So, again, you can amend the
10 motion; just everybody be aware that there is an
11 anticipation for an annual school board election.

12 CHAIRMAN MOORE: At this point I think is there
13 any discussion on that amendment?

14 Okay. So do we need -- to clarify, do we need
15 -- our first vote is whether to accept the amended
16 part of the motion?

17 MR. RHODES: The first -- that's right.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: So we are, right now, voting on
19 Mr. Wood's proposal, a different plan for board
20 elections.

21 MR. WOOD: Dr. Moore, for clarification, did I
22 get a second to my motion?

23 MS. WOODS: I'll second it.

24 MR. WOOD: Okay.

25 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. So there is a motion --

1 an amended motion and a second.

2 MR. RHODES: Correct.

3 CHAIRMAN MOORE: At this point, this first vote
4 will be roll-call and then it will strictly be on the
5 timeline for election of a board member. After that,
6 there will be another vote on the return of local
7 control.

8 MR. RHODES: If the amendment is successful,
9 then you would have a subsequent vote on the amended
10 motion.

11 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

12 MR. RHODES: If it fails, then you would --

13 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Then we go back.

14 MR. RHODES: Then to the original motion --

15 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

16 MR. RHODES: -- that was read by the vice chair.
17 Correct.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. So to clarify, this vote
19 right now is not the vote on local control; it is a
20 vote on what does that board look like?

21 MR. RHODES: Correct.

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: And that is Mr. Wood's --

23 MR. BRAGG: Question.

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Yes.

25 MR. BRAGG: So just to be clear, are we in

1 conflict with the statute if we designate even-
2 numbered years?

3 MR. RHODES: Not directly.

4 MR. BRAGG: Okay.

5 MR. RHODES: And it's anticipated that there
6 will be an election under -- the statute sets the
7 dates on which that election needs to occur; it does
8 not mandate that seats be up in each subsequent --
9 like in each annual election.

10 MR. BRAGG: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Any more questions?

12 Okay. So this first vote, again, is on the type
13 of election that will occur. We will do a roll-call.

14 Ms. Rollins.

15 MS. ROLLINS: No.

16 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Woods.

17 MS. WOODS: Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Hunter.

19 MS. HUNTER: No.

20 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Henderson.

21 MR. HENDERSON: No.

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Wood.

23 MR. WOOD: Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Keener.

25 MS. KEENER: No.

1 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Bragg.

2 MR. BRAGG: No.

3 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. So that amended --
4 amended -- the amendment fails.

5 And now, back on the table is the initial motion
6 --

7 [APPLAUSE]

8 CHAIRMAN MOORE: -- to return to local control
9 and have the proposed school board election as
10 stated.

11 MR. RHODES: That's correct. So we're going
12 back to the vice chair's motion.

13 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. And we have a motion on
14 that. Did we get a second? Yes, we got a second.
15 So now we're voting on that motion?

16 MR. RHODES: Correct.

17 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. And not to restate the
18 whole part of it, but that will be again the return
19 to control to the limited-authority board with the
20 proposed plan.

21 MR. RHODES: That is the motion for all the four
22 statements that you read from.

23 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Yes.

24 MR. RHODES: Correct.

25 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. So we will be voting on

1 Ms. Rollins' motion. Now is a roll-call.

2 Ms. Rollins.

3 MS. ROLLINS: Yes.

4 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Woods.

5 MS. WOODS: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Hunter.

7 MS. HUNTER: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Henderson.

9 MR. HENDERSON: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Wood.

11 MR. WOOD: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Keener.

13 MS. KEENER: Yes.

14 CHAIRMAN MOORE: And Mr. Bragg.

15 MR. BRAGG: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN MOORE: With that, the motion passes.

17 [APPLAUSE]

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you. Thank you, all, for
19 your continued support. This is just the start of I
20 know a lot more work by so many members in this room.
21 We thank you for that, and we're excited for the
22 future of your students and this community.

23 [APPLAUSE]

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Board Members, we'll take a
25 break right now before we have some few action items.

1 So, let's see. What time is it? Oh, it's already
2 1:10. It's 1:10. We'll come back at 1:20 or one --
3 okay, so we have some lunch. So we'll come back at
4 1:35, 1:40. We'll come back at 1:40.

5 (LUNCH BREAK: 1:10 p.m. - 1:48 p.m.)

6 2) REQUEST FOR A ONE (1) YEAR STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION
7 WAIVER FOR CALICO ROCK

8 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Welcome back. A little smaller
9 audience now. But we're glad we have work to
10 continue to do. So we're going to look at action
11 item number two, a request for a one-year Standards
12 of Accreditation waiver for Calico Rock. We have Dr.
13 Sutherlin.

14 DR. SUTHERLIN: So, Matthew Sutherlin, Director
15 of Standards and Systems Support.

16 Calico Rock is requesting a one-year Standards
17 for Accreditation waiver for 1-A.5 Class Size for the
18 2023-2024 school year. The request is to exceed the
19 maximum number of students in fourth grade by one
20 student. The district has also requested to exceed
21 the class average by three students for third grade
22 for a total of 25. But just keep in mind that you
23 can have an average of 23 and a maximum of 25 in
24 third grade. But since they only have one class,
25 they're having to request this waiver for that,

1 because they can't reach that average.

2 And they should be on the Zoom, if the Zoom is
3 connected.

4 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

5 Questions of board members? Mr. Henderson?

6 MR. HENDERSON: No.

7 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Woods?

8 MS. WOODS: Can you clarify what you said just
9 one more time?

10 DR. SUTHERLIN: So they can have an average of
11 23 students --

12 MS. WOODS: Okay.

13 DR. SUTHERLIN: -- but they can have a maximum
14 of 25. But since they only have one class, they
15 can't get to that average.

16 MS. WOODS: The average. Okay. And how many
17 are in the -- they're going up to 25?

18 DR. SUTHERLIN: They're going up to 25.

19 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Salaam, do you have
20 questions?

21 MS. SALAAM: No.

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Rollins?

23 MS. ROLLINS: No.

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Bragg?

25 MR. BRAGG: No.

1 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Mr. Wood? Ms. Keener?

2 MR. WOOD: Well, I will say, I appreciate that
3 in their waiver request they pointed out the academic
4 success of this teacher. So, you know, it makes me
5 feel very good about the request.

6 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Hunter?

7 MS. HUNTER: No.

8 CHAIRMAN MOORE: I do have a question. I know
9 we approve these for various reasons every year.
10 What is the rationale behind a Standards of
11 Accreditation waiver versus a 1240 waiver?

12 DR. SUTHERLIN: So it's only for one year.

13 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

14 DR. SUTHERLIN: And then after that year, they
15 can't get that waiver again.

16 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

17 DR. SUTHERLIN: It's part of a consecutive year.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. So if they were to have
19 this issue -- say that this class moves up to fourth
20 grade next year --

21 DR. SUTHERLIN: They would need to make
22 accommodations in terms of human capital to
23 accommodate that.

24 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay.

25 DR. SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

1 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Any further questions?

2 Then, the floor is open for a motion.

3 MR. HENDERSON: I'd like to make a motion to
4 grant the waiver request for Accreditation of Calico
5 Rock.

6 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. A motion by Mr.
7 Henderson to approve the request. Is there a second?

8 MS. HUNTER: Second.

9 MR. WOOD: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN MOORE: The second by Ms. Hunter.

11 All in favor say "aye."

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIRMAN MOORE: All opposed?

14 The motion passes. Thank you.

15 DR. SUTHERLIN: All right.

16 3) REQUEST FOR A ONE (1) YEAR STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION
17 WAIVER FOR MOUNTAINBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

18 DR. SUTHERLIN: So the next item is Mountainburg
19 School District is requesting a Standards for
20 Accreditation waiver for the 2023-2024 school year
21 for third grade. So in your description it does say
22 second grade, but I think there was some confusion in
23 the letter whenever I was reading over it. So it's
24 just for third grade. And the third grade is over
25 the maximum number of students by one student for all

1 classes and three students for just social studies
2 and science.

3 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Questions, to my right?
4 Mr. Henderson?

5 MR. HENDERSON: No.

6 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Ms. Woods, Ms. Salaam?
7 Questions down here -- Ms. Rollins, Mr. Bragg,
8 Mr. Wood, Ms. Keener, Ms. Hunter?

9 Okay. With that, do we have -- we don't think
10 the district is on?

11 DR. SUTHERLIN: I think they're probably -- I
12 didn't see them on.

13 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. Yeah. We didn't see
14 them on Zoom.

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

16 MS. ROLLINS: I make the motion that we approve
17 their waiver for Mountainburg School District.

18 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Okay. A motion to approve the
19 waiver by Ms. Rollins. Is there a second?

20 MS. WOODS: Second.

21 MS. HUNTER: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN MOORE: A second by Ms. Woods.

23 All in favor say "aye."

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIRMAN MOORE: Any opposed?

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The motion passes.

DR. SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MOORE: Thank you.

(The action agenda was concluded at 1:53 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas State Board of Education, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, on September 15, 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: September 25, 2023.

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

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