

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

FEBRUARY 13, 2024
9:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. MATTHEW SUTHERLIN, Chairperson - Coordinator of Standards Systems Support and Charter
MR. PHIL BALDWIN, Retired Bank Executive
DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY, Associate Director - Division of Career and Technical Education
DR. TINA MOORE, ADHE - Director of Workforce Development
MR. FREDDIE SCOTT - Family and Community Engagement, School Choice and Parent Empowerment

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

MR. STEPHEN REYNOLDS, Attorney Specialist - Elementary and Secondary Education
MS. DORIE SUMMONS, DESE Charter Schools Director
MR. TRIPP WALTER, APSRC - Staff Attorney
MR. SCOTT SMITH, APSRC - Director
MS. TIFFANI GRAYER, Director of School Performance and Monitoring
MR. JEFFERY FETTERS, Coordinator of Monitoring

LOCATION:

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P R O C E E D I N G S**I. CALL TO ORDER**

CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Good morning. The February 13th, 2024, meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I would like to welcome everyone to the Department of Education and ask that you please silence all of your electronic devices. The goal is to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing, so therefore I ask that each person speaking please state your name and title for the record. I ask that you continue to speak clearly into the microphone throughout your presentation for the benefit of the Panel, this audience and the viewing audience. This meeting is being livestreamed and recorded and a transcript of this meeting will be posted on the DESE website.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Good morning, everybody. Good morning to our Panel Members.

We have a consent agenda item before us today. If there's no questions, I'll accept a motion to pass the consent agenda.

MS. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So moved.

DR. MOORE: Second.

CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. I have a motion and a

1 second. All those in favor?

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

4 All right. Motion passes.

5 **III. ACTION AGENDA**

6 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. I'll call Mr.

7 Reynolds to do proceedings.

8 MR. REYNOLDS: Good morning. Stephen Reynolds,
9 staff attorney for the Department. I'll just go over
10 the procedures real quick. Anyone who plans to
11 provide testimony during the hearing must be sworn by
12 the Chair. Applicant shall have 20 minutes to
13 present its case to the Panel. The Chair may grant
14 additional time. Any party speaking in opposition to
15 the Applicant shall have 20 minutes to present their
16 case to the Panel. The Chair may grant additional
17 time. To my knowledge, we have received no
18 opposition to any of the matters before you today.
19 The Panel may issue a final decision at the hearing
20 or take the matter under advisement until a future
21 scheduled meeting. The Panel may defer its vote to
22 prove or disprove a charter application renewal or
23 amendment in order to allow a public charter school
24 or applicant to make modifications or receive
25 technical assistance to correct deficiencies in the

1 application or request.

2 And I think Dorie is going to present each
3 charter.

4 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you very much.

5 **III.1. BENTONVILLE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED STUDIES CHARTER**

6 **AMENDMENT REQUEST**

7 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Ms. Summons.

8 MS. SUMMONS: Good morning. Dorie Summons,
9 office of charter schools. Bentonville School for
10 Advanced Studies Charter submitted an amendment
11 request. The charter is requesting to change the
12 school district from where the charter will be
13 located from Bentonville School District, change the
14 name from Bentonville School for Advanced Studies to
15 School for Advanced Studies Northwest Arkansas and
16 waive Arkansas code requirements for school board of
17 directors meeting regarding the monthly board of
18 directors meetings, the board of directors meetings
19 being called by electoral petitioners and remote
20 attendance at board of director meetings. And Ms.
21 Deanna Rowe and her team are present for questions.

22 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you very much.

23 Will all those who plan to testify on the part
24 of the charter please stand. Do you swear that the
25 testimony you are about to give is the truth, the

1 whole truth and nothing but the truth?

2 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right.

4 MS. ROWE: Good morning, Chairman Sutherlin and
5 Members of the Panel. I'm Deanna Rowe. I'm the
6 executive director for the Arkansas Schools for
7 Advanced Studies. With me today is Shannon Chavez
8 she is our vice president of compliance services for
9 BASIS Ed our management company. As was mentioned,
10 we have found -- we are requesting a name change for
11 our school. Specifically, because we have found a
12 location that's going to allow us to open timely. We
13 had a lease agreement signed for the historic Lane
14 Hotel in Rogers that's going to be vacated and
15 turnkey ready for us in the fall. So we're super
16 excited about that. So, for the record, we need to
17 change our school district from Bentonville to
18 Rogers. And then because of the new location and in
19 alignment with our application, which said we plan to
20 serve Bentonville, Rogers and the surrounding areas,
21 we think it's appropriate to change our name to
22 reflect the population that we'd like to serve as
23 opposed to the location of the school at least for
24 the first campus; right? When we open a second
25 campus, we would need to differentiate more and so we

1 might come back at that point in time and say, now
2 it's time to call this Rogers again and this one this
3 other thing. But right now, we would like to leave
4 it at the Schools for Advanced Studies Northwest
5 Arkansas.

6 The other part of our request today is for the
7 waivers. They look a little complicated when you go
8 through the process, but they're really very
9 simplistic and twofold. The first thing that we
10 would like to do is get a waiver from the requirement
11 for quarterly board meetings. And this is because as
12 we came before you originally, we identified that our
13 board is made up of seven members, three of whom are
14 representatives of boards that -- board members for
15 other sponsored entities, so -- of our parent
16 organization. So we have a board member who resides
17 in Arizona for our Arizona schools, one in D.C. and
18 one in Texas. The remaining four members and the
19 majority of the board will all be local board members
20 here. However, we all know that there are sometimes
21 complications in travel in -- the opportunity, just
22 in scheduling, to be able to have your board members
23 in person. And we find that we can have better
24 engagement when we have the opportunity for virtual
25 participation as well.

1 So we're asking not only that we have the
2 opportunity to have virtual board meetings, but also
3 that our board only need to meet quarterly. And the
4 reason for the quarterly meetings as opposed to the
5 monthly meetings is because when we look at the role
6 of our board members, it is in fact to adopt your
7 annual budget and any policies for the year, to
8 review timely expenditures, to provide academic
9 oversight and operational oversight, as well as
10 provide -- be an advisor. The board is an -- serves
11 in an advisory capacity both to me, as the executive
12 director, but to our school management company as
13 well.

14 We have found in our experience operating in the
15 other regions that quarterly meetings allow us, when
16 thoughtfully created and timely scheduled, to give
17 the board members the opportunity to engage
18 specifically in the intent that -- for which they
19 were created. When we think about the other part of
20 a board meeting, parental engagement or stakeholder
21 meetings or opportunities, the school is designed for
22 that parental engagement stakeholder meetings.
23 Specifically, we are scheduled to have monthly coffee
24 chats both in person and virtually so that families
25 and stakeholders can engage with school leadership.

1 They will have an open-door policy with teachers and
2 school leaders so that by appointment families and
3 individuals can come in and address any concerns that
4 they might have. We'll have a monthly newsletter.
5 And then another part of our community engagement
6 also includes these monthly community seminars. So
7 while the board has its roles and responsibilities,
8 we really believe that public engagement and parental
9 communications are best held at the school level with
10 the teachers and the school leaders. And this would
11 certainly provide -- we -- we've set up options or
12 possibilities for those engagements to happen.

13 The last part of our waiver goes to executive
14 session. If we're going to allow board members to
15 participate virtually, we want them also to be able
16 to engage virtually in executive session. We have
17 experience with the right technology and the right
18 policies in place, you can protect what needs to be
19 held private and you can also have public engagement
20 when it's appropriate.

21 So that's our plan. That's our request. I'm
22 happy to answer any questions you may have.

23 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you. We'll have our
24 legal review and then we'll open it up for questions.

25 MS. ROWE: Sure, thanks.

1 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

2 MR. REYNOLDS: Stephen Reynolds, staff attorney
3 for the Department. I'll go over the legal review
4 real quick. So the Charter is specifically asking to
5 waive 6-13-619(a)(1)(A), 6-13-619(a)(1)(C),
6 6-13-619(c) and 6-13-619(d). I don't have any legal
7 concerns with the waiver request for the first five.
8 So 6-13-619(a)(1)(A), 6-13-619(a)(1)(C),
9 6-13-619(b) -- or 6-13-619(c), 6-13-619(d)(2)(A) and
10 6-13-619(d)(4). I don't have any legal concerns with
11 that.

12 The only concern that I had -- so I spoke with
13 Ms. Rowe on the phone, and we agreed that they don't
14 need the waiver, because of the policies that they
15 have in place, for 6-13-619(d)(1) and (d)(2)(B)(C),
16 which are the remaining parts of that statute. But
17 she clarified that she was seeking a waiver for
18 6-13-619(d)(3) and in my legal review I've set out
19 exactly what that statute requires, and then I put a
20 recommendation from the Department that if the CAP
21 chooses to grant the waiver of 6-13-619(d)(3), that
22 it places certain conditions on the waiver. There
23 were three conditions. I'm going to pull the first
24 one now that I've learned that most of your board is
25 local. But the remaining two conditions that --

1 essentially are the board member attending remotely
2 keep their camera on during the executive session;
3 and then the board member attending remotely that's
4 participating in executive session, just attest that
5 nobody else is in the room. And that is basically to
6 prevent the appearance of impropriety. So the
7 Arkansas FOIA is read narrowly when it comes to
8 executive session. And this statute, in two
9 different places, says that one board member
10 shouldn't attend executive session remotely, but if
11 -- even if they're physically present, they can't
12 leave the room and then come back in while executive
13 session is going. And so this is -- was just a
14 recommendation to the CAP from the Department to make
15 sure that if they're going to have board members
16 attending remotely -- or attending executive session
17 remotely, that everything is squared away.

18 And I think Tripp might have some words for the
19 charter.

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you.

21 MR. WALTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair, Members of
22 the Panel. My name is Tripp Walter. I'm a staff
23 attorney for the Arkansas Public School Resource
24 Center. And I'm here assisting BASIS with their
25 waiver request today.

1 As Mr. Reynolds said, I would like to follow up
2 on this just a little bit. First of all, hopefully
3 to somewhat allay the Panel's concerns, this is not
4 an unprecedented waiver request. As I had shared, I
5 think with Mr. Rhodes on Friday, there are at least
6 several open enrollment public charters we found that
7 have the entire waiver of (d) (4) including the
8 section that that Mr. Reynolds just spoke to you
9 about. I don't want to diminish the impact of what
10 Mr. Reynolds said, but I am respectfully --
11 respectfully requesting, on behalf of BASIS, that the
12 waiver be granted without any of the conditions he
13 stated. Not that they aren't --not that they aren't
14 legitimate concerns, but just as with the other
15 charters who have this waiver, I think it is
16 appropriate to allow BASIS the flexibility to be able
17 to so to speak self-police this. I couldn't agree
18 more with what Mr. Reynolds said about the importance
19 of FOIA law and making sure that that's -- that's
20 complied with. And I think if you will note in Ms.
21 Rowe and BASIS' response or rationale that that is
22 their intent. I've had specific conversations with
23 her earlier this morning about her ability to oversee
24 the process and ensure that all appropriate rules and
25 the FOIA law are complied with. So that's why I'm

1 standing before you this morning to make those
2 additional comments.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

4 All right. We'll open it up for questions.

5 So Dr. Moore?

6 DR. MOORE: Hello. I was trying to pull up your
7 original charter, but I hadn't got -- I just now got
8 to it. And I just wondered if you could speak a
9 little bit to -- I know that you were intending to
10 serve Northwest Arkansas broader than just
11 Bentonville alone. But if it was in Bentonville,
12 obviously Bentonville would be your primary draw of
13 students and as you move into Rogers the -- the
14 number of Hispanic students in Bentonville was 12
15 percent while in Rogers it's 48.1 percent. So I just
16 wondered if you had considered any additional ways to
17 meet the needs of maybe students who will need
18 additional services for that if you -- because often
19 we have language barriers with some of those
20 students, so that's why I'm asking.

21 MS. ROWE: Yes, thank you. That's right. One
22 of the things that we contemplated with the location
23 in Rogers was that specific population and how we
24 might do that. And even as part of our lease
25 agreement, it's built in that we will have a Spanish

1 speaking front office person registrar who is able to
2 support communications with Hispanic population as
3 well. And we're also looking at our marketing
4 materials to ensure -- as we're mapping where our
5 students are coming from, we're obviously looking at
6 areas where we haven't had a response yet and seeing
7 what kind of marketing might work and what that
8 population might need to be sure that they are aware
9 of who we are and what we have to offer so that they
10 can choose us if they want to.

11 DR. MOORE: Wonderful, thank you.

12 MS. ROWE: Uh-huh.

13 DR. MOORE: That was my only question.

14 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin?

15 MR. BALDWIN: So going back to the waiver --

16 MS. ROWE: Uh-huh.

17 MR. BALDWIN: -- question on the board meetings
18 and the quarterly versus monthly and remote and all
19 that, is this -- is the remote process that you're
20 asking us to approve consistent with what you use in
21 your other schools? Is this something that you're
22 used to using and that is working elsewhere?

23 MS. ROWE: Yes, sir, absolutely. We currently
24 have remote participation in Arizona and Washington,
25 D.C. and in -- in Texas. And I am police or master

1 of ceremonies depending upon how you want to look at
2 my role, but I ensure that the policies of the
3 various states as they change -- and we do have those
4 crossovers. So it's very important that board
5 members recognize which state they're in, what the
6 rules of engagement are and so it's my job to make
7 sure that calls to the public, all of those things
8 that are happening -- cameras are on; yes, we can
9 hear you; no, we can't hear you. Okay. Your camera
10 is going to be on in your computer, but I need you to
11 participate via phone as well because your audio is
12 not coming through on your camera. So we orchestrate
13 all of that. We have a great technology team that
14 helps us to make sure that we are able to do that.

15 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. And you -- you have -- a
16 follow-up question, you also use this for executive
17 sessions in your other -- in your other schools? So
18 you're used to the, you know, the difference between
19 an executive session and a public board session?

20 MS. ROWE: That's correct.

21 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

22 MS. ROWE: That's correct. Just as you make
23 sure that in a public setting that the public has
24 left the room in. In a virtual setting, you either
25 move everybody to a separate room or you check your

1 list and make sure that -- that everybody is -- there
2 is only the people who are supposed to be on there
3 are on there. And then it goes to the integrity of
4 the individual who served on your board and
5 understands what executive session is. You're not
6 going to have somebody else in the room. I'm not
7 opposed to, you know, having a policy. And we would,
8 in fact, you know, say in -- when we engage in
9 executive session, you are not, you know, it would be
10 expected that you're the only person in the room. I
11 mean, that's standard operating procedure for us.

12 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

13 MS. ROWE: Uh-huh.

14 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And I'd be remiss if I didn't
15 introduce our newest board member before I ask his
16 questions. This is Mr. Freddie Scott. And so he's
17 joining us as our newest member.

18 So, Mr. Scott, do you have any questions?

19 MR. SCOTT: Certainly. Thank you, Matthew.

20 Ms. Rowe, I -- first of all, I appreciate all
21 this you shared about your plan especially involving
22 engagement with the parents as well as the community.
23 That's huge. When it comes to -- I had a little
24 pause in regards to initially hearing about the
25 waivers. From a Board perspective, as we all know,

1 primarily boards should hold the superintendent
2 accountable for, as you stated, academics, for
3 finance, for operations; and in there is -- this --
4 this is more best practices since legal has addressed
5 some things. But typically in -- early on in the --
6 in the years, the combination of readiness monthly
7 meetings affords the board members an opportunity to
8 really have that handled and addressed fantastically.
9 So my initial pushback was about the quarterly
10 meetings.

11 MS. ROWE: Uh-huh.

12 MR. SCOTT: So again the early years, my initial
13 thought was if indeed you could handle that monthly
14 and showcase the engagement numbers of the board
15 members and their understanding holding you
16 accountable for the first year or so, then you can
17 come back and request that assuming all is well.
18 It's a very new obligate because your first time
19 you're in Arkansas. You have realized much success
20 in other states. So that was just my initial
21 pushback on the board waivers. But hearing some of
22 the legal arguments, I'm okay except for the
23 precedent it would set going forward. The key there
24 is the engagement of the team, which is the staff as
25 well, as the families, as well as the community of

1 course, the board members -- us volunteer board
2 members from the community as well. So that's a
3 statement more so than a question, but I appreciate
4 hearing from you in regards to how you can increase
5 engagement, in particular for the board members
6 preferably monthly versus quarterly.

7 MS. ROWE: Sure. I appreciate the statement and
8 the opportunity to address that. So first and
9 foremost, I'd like to say that while we'd like the
10 waiver because we intend to hold meetings quarterly,
11 certainly we also hold meetings as needed; right? So
12 there are situations that can come up during a school
13 year where you need to have your board engaged in
14 certain matters. And so we would -- we would call a
15 meeting at that time as well. I think the other
16 thing is our structure of our school operations. So
17 as the executive director for the board, I also serve
18 in that superintendent role. But we contract with
19 BASIS Ed as our school management company to oversee
20 the operations of the school on a day-to-day basis.
21 I have regular communication with the BASIS Ed
22 management team. Not only do I have weekly meetings
23 with them, but then I translate those weekly things
24 into monthly reports to the board. So it's not that
25 they're not engaged, they have that information just

1 as families have information at the level that they
2 need in a monthly newsletter. The board gets
3 information in a monthly manner in a letter from me
4 updating them on any information that they need to
5 have related to the operations of the school. But it
6 would be one way communication; right? It's not
7 something that I need them to give me feedback on.
8 If I need feedback -- again they serve in an advisory
9 role. So if I have a situation that rises to a level
10 where I need board feedback, my first call is to my
11 board chair; right? And then we determine whether or
12 not we need a meeting of the board for that matter.
13 So because we have the school leadership and then we
14 have school management, whom I communicate with who
15 regularly, they're communicating down to and out to
16 the school level. I'm communicating to the board
17 members. I believe the quarterly meetings, at least
18 from the get-go with the opportunity to call meetings
19 a needed as well, will be sufficient for us, and it's
20 how we've launched in each of the new regions.

21 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

22 MS. ROWE: Uh-huh.

23 MR. SCOTT: Just two other questions. Do you
24 expect to have any chance of receiving any federal
25 funding?

1 MS. ROWE: We would hope to, yes.

2 MR. SCOTT: Okay. So that being said, one
3 element to receiving federal funds, especially if
4 it's Title I funds, is -- and I love the engagement
5 aspect of what you bring to the table, but to
6 actually have a dedicated person on staff that's
7 overseeing, at the school level, engagement. So
8 engagement facilitator is what they're called from
9 the district perspective an engagement coordinator.
10 Someone who is overseeing. So that person is hired
11 typically just to receive additional funding over
12 beyond the normal to oversee the -- what's called the
13 parent and family engagement planning and submission
14 to the state annually.

15 MS. ROWE: So this would be a perfect
16 opportunity for you to hear from Shannon.

17 MS. CHAVEZ: Good morning. I'm not quite as
18 tall as Deanna, so -- good morning. So as the
19 compliance person for the management company, one of
20 the areas that I oversee is, just as a blanket term,
21 grants compliance and that has to do with those
22 federal grants/formula grants that our schools get in
23 various iterations. We do have some schools that are
24 Title I schools and so that is included in there.
25 What we do at the outset, of course, is, you know, if

1 Title I funding is awarded, -- of course, that being
2 if it's school wide, Title I funding and, you know,
3 engagement funding -- we work with our finance team
4 to make sure that that is included and presented to
5 the board. We do -- Deanna shared a little bit about
6 the management company presenting to the boards. We
7 actually compile a comprehensive report for each
8 quarterly meeting where we go through in detail all
9 these different areas, compliance being one
10 academics, a full report of how the schools are doing
11 academically, enrollment, staffing, all of those
12 things are included each time. And then separately,
13 we always have a separate agenda item, a finance
14 item. And so I'm both reporting as part of the
15 management report on what grants we've gotten, you
16 know, what types of actions we may need to have the
17 board take or that we're going to take on the side of
18 what would be considered sort of a district level
19 side and then what that would mean for the school.
20 And then also that information obviously in terms of
21 federal grant dollars is incorporated into budgets
22 and presented to the board separately when it's
23 talked to about the budgets. But when it comes to
24 actually managing those federal grants themselves,
25 like Title I or IDEA funding, the grants compliance

1 team that works for me as well as the grants finance
2 team that works for the VP of finance, they work
3 together to make sure that we are properly managing -
4 - you know, submitting applications appropriately.
5 Obviously, properly managing cash management and
6 other reports to the state agencies that we are
7 participating in, any monitoring activities. I just
8 got an e-mail last night from one of my specialists
9 saying that the Title I monitoring for one of our
10 Phoenix schools is in cycle right now and so
11 preparing to work with the school on what they need
12 to do for that.

13 And so first and foremost, what we would do if
14 we were awarded Title I is I would say to Ms. Rowe,
15 we need an agenda item for -- in front of your board
16 to out -- set out all the policies that we'll need.
17 And one of those, of course, as you know, is the
18 family parent engagement policy and how, you know,
19 what all the criteria are that are in that. And
20 including like how -- you know, what is expected of
21 the school, what is expected of parents, what is
22 expected of students as it relates to getting that
23 Title I funding. And then obviously putting that
24 into effect in the school.

25 Depending on the amount of money and the amount

1 of outlay of time, we would work with business
2 manager or operational person on the campus, and they
3 typically are the person who is managing that at the
4 campus level while we're managing at the, like I
5 said, sort of district that network level. And
6 working directly with state education agencies to
7 make sure all the funding is flowing properly and
8 that we are meeting all of our compliance
9 requirements.

10 MR. SCOTT: Great. Thank you for sharing that.
11 My last question, I believe, is in regards to --
12 congratulations first of all on the facilities
13 utilization agreement you have. New area, new
14 facility, I don't want to make any assumptions and
15 that is from an inspection's perspective, all is
16 well? Safety, fire, the works?

17 MS. ROWE: So the great thing about occupying a
18 facility that's already been occupied by a charter
19 school is those boxes have all been checked -- uh-huh
20 -- which it -- again makes it very easy to be turnkey
21 and saves us a lot in the start-up and operational
22 cost.

23 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

24 MS. ROWE: Uh-huh.

25 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And so we thank you for
2 walking us through the waivers, but I'm still a
3 little fuzzy. So I'm trying -- and I was trying to
4 follow the different codes and trying to get a sense,
5 do we actually need the request for remote for
6 general board meetings? We -- are we -- because I
7 think part of what I heard is that we really didn't
8 need that waiver? Is that what you were -- I'm
9 trying to get a sense of exactly what do we need?
10 What do not need?

11 MS. ROWE: So do we need it, do we not? I think
12 part of Mr. Reynolds response -- correct me if I'm
13 wrong, but I want to make sure we're on the same page
14 -- that's important -- is that he didn't think we
15 needed the waiver because we would have a majority of
16 our members who are here in Arkansas. However, those
17 individuals may find that their business takes them
18 elsewhere as well and/or if I have a -- I have a
19 board member -- I might have a board member who
20 resides in Little Rock. And if I'm asking them to
21 drive to Rogers, that's a four-hour commute. That's
22 an eight hour -- that's their entire day; right? And
23 so we would like them too to be able to participate
24 virtually if that would allow them to engage because
25 they might say I have this two-hour chunk, but I

1 can't give you this eight-hour day. I'll take your
2 two-hour chunk and I'll coordinate it with my other
3 six members, two hours chunks to make sure that I
4 have full board engagement; right? I think that goes
5 to how we -- and why we can meet quarterly too is I
6 can pretty much count on the same seven people -- my
7 entire board; right? I have -- I don't just have a
8 quorum. I have 100 percent participation in my board
9 meeting when I have that flexibility. So I would
10 like the virtual option regardless.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So -- so maybe let me
12 rephrase my question.

13 MS. ROWE: Okay.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So for my clarity, better
15 understanding, as it is right now, we require our
16 charters to have their board meetings -- everyone has
17 to be in person; is that the requirement now? And so
18 if we -- if people do have to, like, Zoom in or
19 whatever, can they do that now?

20 MR. REYNOLDS: No, no. So the specific code
21 section sets out a few different things. So it's
22 6-13-619(d). Part of the waive -- part of that code
23 section is the charter -- well, the school board has
24 to have a policy for board members that attend
25 remotely. They have to have a policy to ensure that

1 board members can be seen and heard by the public,
2 and the public can see and hear the board members.
3 The third part of that is that board members can't
4 attend executive session remotely. They can't vote
5 on anything that happened in executive session in
6 their tenure remotely. The only part that I -- so
7 the first two parts, they don't need a waiver for
8 because they already have policies in place. And so
9 that -- I just struck those from the waiver request
10 because they don't need the -- they don't need the
11 waivers.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Can I stop you for
13 a second?

14 MR. REYNOLDS: Uh-huh. So are we considering
15 the part that you have stricken? Are we --

16 MR. REYNOLDS: No.

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Is that --

18 MR. REYNOLDS: Well --

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So we're not considering
20 that?

21 MR. REYNOLDS: My understanding is that when our
22 conversation -- because they already have those
23 waivers -- or they already have those policies in
24 place -- that they -- that the requests would be
25 limited to the waivers that they actually needed. So

1 (d) (2) (A) (iii) and (iv) and those are the ones -- so
2 one of those is the executive session issue. That's
3 the only thing that I had a concern with.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So as we are making
5 our decision today, our decision is only going to be
6 limited to executive session? It's not going to be
7 to the open part of their board meetings?

8 MR. REYNOLDS: Right. Everything else on the --
9 everything or else on their application, I have no
10 concerns with.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So there's a shaking of
12 the head behind you. So I'm just trying to make sure
13 we're on the same page.

14 MR. REYNOLDS: Okay.

15 MS. ROWE: I'm sorry. I was -- I was confused
16 as to whether you were seeking clarity on where his
17 concerns are versus the overall request.

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: My -- I need clarity on the
19 waiver that's being asked --

20 MS. ROWE: Okay.

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- because as it was
22 presented by Mr. Reynolds, it sounds like that part
23 of your waiver that references when you have your
24 open board meetings -- I'm trying to be clear on do
25 we need to have a waiver for remote attendance

1 because it sounds like that that's already something
2 that would be allowable to take place. But I do
3 understand when it comes to executive session because
4 those are closed meetings, and you want to ensure
5 that those are protected. So I'm just trying to be
6 clear of exactly what waivers you do need, which ones
7 you don't and which ones we're going to be making
8 decisions on today. I hope that's better. If not,
9 --

10 MR. REYNOLDS: Yes.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- I can try it again. So
12 --

13 MS. ROWE: And I think Tripp and I are in
14 agreement that we want the waivers as requested
15 without the conditions as they're being presented.
16 I'll let legal counsel do their job again.

17 MR. WALTER: Mr. Chair, Tripp Walter, APSRC.
18 Part of that subsection (d) waiver, Dr. Wright-
19 McMurray, (d) -- part of (d)(4) is that you can only
20 have up to three times per calendar year for a board
21 member to appear remotely.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

23 MR. WALTER: So that's why that's wrapped into
24 that (d)(4) request. Secondly, I believe that -- and
25 I'll -- I don't want to speak for Ms. Rowe, but I

1 believe that the rest of what is now listed, I guess,
2 in red on Mr. Reynolds write up
3 6-13-619(d) (2) (A) (iii) and (iv) is what we're -- is
4 what we're requesting.

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. That helps me
6 because I was trying to follow, and I got kind of
7 lost when you started rattling off all the different
8 numbers and alphabets and all that. So that's clear
9 for me now. Okay. So thank you. And so just for my
10 clarification, the ask of our legal team for just the
11 additional, you know, clarity to make sure that when
12 you go into executive session, that is being accepted
13 by the charter or they're not wanting to include that
14 in. And if you could just --

15 MR. REYNOLDS: Yeah. So --

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I mean, I understand you
17 want to have your autonomy, but I'm just trying to
18 get a sense of why would that not be a good idea to
19 include that in your language?

20 MR. REYNOLDS: So the -- the three conditions
21 that I had listed on the -- the legal review, the
22 first one, I'm striking from the record because I've
23 learned since the start of this meeting that most of
24 their board resides in Arkansas. And so it would be
25 unreasonable to make them fly out of the state just

1 so they could attend the board meeting remotely.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So the remaining two
3 conditions I would recommend that the CAP attach to
4 the waiver.

5 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC. The reason we
6 spoke on this, I guess, is twofold. Dr. Wright-
7 McMurray -- and let me make sure, hopefully I have
8 already -- nothing of this is meant to avoid or get
9 around those requirements. Those requirements, I
10 think, essentially more or less flow from a FOIA law.
11 And I think that's something Mr. Reynolds has stated.
12 It is certainly, and I think Ms. Rowe has already
13 spoken, it is certainly BASIS' intent to comply
14 completely with the FOIA law. The reason that I
15 spoke as to not including those is not that BASIS is
16 trying to avoid anything, but you've got -- the FOIA
17 law says what it says about the requirements. That's
18 going to be completely complied with. You've got
19 several other charters out there who hold these very
20 same waivers, who have not had any restrictions on
21 the waiver placed on them. So all I'm asking on
22 behalf of BASIS is just for them to have the
23 opportunity to, I think I used the words earlier,
24 self-police. I think Ms. Rowe has given extensive
25 information about how she will be present, and she

1 will make sure to oversee everything and just asking
2 that the board and the school be operating with the
3 laws in place already.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'll defer to Mr. Baldwin.

5 MR. BALDWIN: I appreciate this conversation,
6 you know, because one, we want to understand what
7 we're doing. So what I think hear -- and I'm not
8 good at -- at the code numbers. I don't know the
9 code numbers, so when you guys get up and read the
10 code numbers it doesn't help me.

11 MR. WALTER: Yes, sir.

12 MR. BALDWIN: I would really rather it be
13 English --

14 MR. WALTER: Sure.

15 MR. BALDWIN: -- when we're talking about what
16 the waiver is. So ignoring the code numbers, what I
17 see as a noneducator and not knowing all the rules
18 and regs, is that you're asking for what we have read
19 in the document and our -- and the DESE legal team
20 would like some stipulations added. And you're
21 saying that there are other charters that don't have
22 stipulations that have been approved already. You're
23 just asking that we -- that we go that way --

24 MR. WALTER: Yes, sir.

25 MR. BALDWIN: -- on this? Okay. Is that -- is

1 that fair?

2 MR. REYNOLDS: That is correct.

3 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

4 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott?

5 MR. SCOTT: Thanks for clarifying. I think one
6 of the things we were talking about doing was
7 mitigating the risk when it comes to executive
8 sessions and virtual. So I would love -- I would be
9 more comfortable at some point when those specific
10 policies are provided, and we can actually see that
11 the risk is indeed mitigated, and we feel more
12 comfortable about that. And I appreciate the
13 fairness in bringing that to our attention too about
14 fairness with other charters that have that as well.
15 But being able to see a -- a plan of action that
16 speaks to how to mitigate that risk in regards to
17 executive session, I think would be a good thing for
18 me.

19 DR. MOORE: I -- I have an --

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore.

21 DR. MOORE: -- additional clarifying question.
22 So -- so our legal when you said, at this point,
23 we're only requesting the last two, are you referring
24 to in the red part of the legal review,
25 6-13-619(d) (3) where there are three different parts

1 of that? We'd only be doing the last two? Or could
2 you just clarify what?

3 MR. REYNOLDS: Yeah. So the code sections that
4 they're requesting for waivers. So the -- the code
5 sections they are asking to be waived, the ones in
6 red on the legal review, that's -- after Ms. Rowe's
7 conversation, that's what we agreed to limit the --
8 the request to. The conditions I'm talking about are
9 over on the notes section and it's the last two
10 paragraphs. So it's the board -- that the board
11 member attending remotely keep their camera on during
12 the entirety of the executive session. And that
13 they're -- the board member attending remotely
14 participates in executive session attests no other
15 persons present. Those are the conditions that I was
16 -- that the Department is --

17 DR. MOORE: Okay. That -- that's what I
18 thought. So that's what I'm trying -- if that's all
19 you're asking, regardless of what other charters -- I
20 don't see how that -- how is that a big deal that --
21 I'm not being, like, trying to be a smart aleck. I
22 literally don't understand how that they keep their
23 camera on and that they attest no other person is
24 present, how -- why is that a big issue?

25 MR. REYNOLDS: I think Tripp would probably be

1 the --

2 DR. MOORE: Okay.

3 MR. REYNOLDS: -- person to speak to that.

4 MR. WALTER: The issue so to speak is not that
5 those aren't viable things, but they're not contained
6 within the letter of the law. So all I'm asking on
7 behalf of BASIS is that they be -- is that they be
8 allowed to operate under the letter of the law. All
9 the procedural safeguards that are required by the
10 statute and perhaps more importantly here, the
11 Freedom of Information Act, which is the base of all
12 this, will be strictly complied with rather than
13 having an additional checklist of things that they
14 have to comply with as well. The parts about the
15 person being -- being in the room by himself or
16 herself, all those other things to make sure of, I
17 think this Ms. Rowe has expressed to you that -- that
18 she will take that upon herself personally to make
19 sure that all the requirements in law and the fact
20 that the integrity, if you will, of the executive
21 session won't be breached whether it be remote or in
22 person.

23 DR. MOORE: So my lack of knowledge of the legal
24 parts of FOIA, what does FOIA require for something
25 like this?

1 I thought y'all were both like, I'm not
2 answering that.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Just walking away.

4 MR. REYNOLDS: A lot is the answer. So FOIA
5 requires that executive session be permitted only for
6 the purpose of considering for employment,
7 appointment, promotion, demotion, discipline and
8 resignation of an employee. The only people that are
9 allowed to be in executive session is whoever is in
10 the top administrative position of the public agency
11 involved, the immediate supervisor of the employee,
12 the employee or the potential employee. And so the
13 purpose for the request is essentially to, as Mr.
14 Scott said, mitigate the risk of someone being in the
15 executive session that's not supposed to be there, or
16 something being talked about in the executive session
17 that's not supposed to be talked about under FOIA.

18 DR. MOORE: Okay. So FOIA doesn't have any
19 safeguards for remote?

20 MR. REYNOLDS: It just says -- it just says
21 don't do it. I mean, that's what FOIA says.

22 DR. MOORE: Okay.

23 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And -- and I would say the
24 line of questioning here is good because I think this
25 body we're charged with -- you know, there have been

1 decisions made in the past, but then we need to
2 revisit those decisions too and see what the best
3 possible, you know, way to proceed would be. And I'm
4 -- I'm not seeing anything -- and this is just from
5 my perspective -- I'm not seeing anything that is
6 that arduous enough having to have your camera on and
7 state that no one is in the room.

8 MR. REYNOLDS: I think -- I think that's fair.

9 And Ms. Rowe, my understanding is you guys
10 already have policies in place to mitigate those
11 risks? And you can go ahead and speak to that.

12 MS. ROWE: So I think what we're really talking
13 about is best practices; right? And best practices
14 would say you do these things; and we're going to
15 create policies and do board training that's going to
16 say these -- this is the scope of things. Will these
17 two things be a part of that? Yes. But should they
18 -- will we have other things that are a part of our
19 best practices? Absolutely.

20 And so -- so when we think about it in terms of
21 what's the broader scope here? Are we going to do
22 what we're supposed to do just as we're going to do
23 what we're supposed to do in every other aspect of
24 our operations of our school? We're going to do what
25 we're supposed to do here as well. I agree we can do

1 those things and probably could have been out of here
2 15 minutes ago if we had just agreed to do those
3 things. I think on principle though, when you think
4 about are those -- is that the exact wording? Is
5 there some little flexibility or nuance that I'd like
6 to add? Is there a subparagraph to that? Do you
7 guys want to know and see that as well or is it just
8 simply, follow the law, do what you're supposed to
9 do? And yes, it would absolutely make sense.
10 Cameras are on; cameras are always on. Microphones
11 are on. You can see; you can hear. They can see
12 you; you can see them. We can hear you; you can hear
13 us. That happens; right?

14 And so the privacy matter, again, goes to
15 professional conduct and expectations. So it's
16 really a matter of do you want to get into this and
17 that's your call; right? I'm going to follow the
18 rules. I'm going to be transparent in my operations
19 and I'm going to make sure my board does what it's
20 supposed to do.

21 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Other questions?

22 MR. BALDWIN: So we're having -- we're having a
23 discussion about technology and about the application
24 of technology and, you know, what is appropriate,
25 what's not and trying to apply that to rules that are

1 written before we had all the technology. And, you
2 know, I would just say from my perspective that --
3 that I think we have to use common sense. And I
4 don't think we can ever define the rules as precisely
5 because technology changes every day. And so you
6 trust folks, or you don't.

7 You know, we have technology that we use here at
8 the Charter Panel that's new. And when I got on the
9 Panel, we didn't have zoom and we didn't -- we were
10 all here in person. And so I would hate, you know, I
11 would hate to see us get down into the details of how
12 a school runs. I think that's -- our purpose is to
13 stay above that. So I'm just -- I just wanted to say
14 that I -- I hear what everybody has said. I'm
15 comfortable with the request. I think they have
16 better safeguards and governance than probably 90
17 percent of all the charter schools that we look at.
18 So it just seems like we're maybe going to add more
19 to them than we should, but that's just my opinion.

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Other thoughts?

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I personally just think
22 it's a good practice to have it where it is outlined
23 so that if there is a question and it comes back, you
24 have something that you can reference to say that we
25 did have this as a part of our process. When you

1 verbally just say that and then there's an issue,
2 then you don't have anything to reference back to.

3 So I do appreciate the comments that there have
4 been other charters that have come through that this
5 has not been stipulated for them, however, they may
6 have come through before it came to my mind. So more
7 than likely if it would have been brought before me
8 in this manner, I probably would have asked them to
9 do the same thing. Because, as we realize, things
10 change, technology changes, so we have to kind of
11 change with it. And so maybe those charters came
12 through at times when we were not as Zoom heavy, but
13 because we are now, we have to be aware of that. So
14 those are my thoughts.

15 I don't feel like that what's being asked from
16 our legal team is that restrictive. I would probably
17 have more concern if there were things that would
18 prevent you from carrying out your daily activities,
19 but I don't feel like that's the case here. So those
20 are just my thoughts.

21 DR. MOORE: Similarly, I would agree with Dr.
22 Wright-McMurray. I -- as far as this being a best
23 practice, I agree that this is the best practice
24 which should be implemented. And we're not putting
25 it just on top of what the school's already doing. A

1 waiver is being asked and we are looking to grant the
2 waiver with these stipulations because of an
3 extenuating circumstance. And I think we would be
4 establishing precedent that I have no problem with to
5 apply later in charter reviews that may have not had
6 that if it was needed, or when charters ask for it.
7 I would be comfortable setting that precedent.

8 MR. SCOTT: Yes. I'll be in agreement as well
9 and I believe it is the best practice. And at the
10 day, I believe we're asking for a policy statement
11 which typically comes from the governing board
12 anyway. And so not so much to drill down into the
13 weeds of the detail, but a policy statement that
14 speaks to that. And from an accountability
15 standpoint, it -- should it surface in the future, we
16 can just go back to that policy.

17 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Other comments or questions?

18 Mr. Walter.

19 MR. WALTER: I just want to make one final
20 comment. Certainly, I understand and appreciate the
21 Board's position. From a strict legal perspective,
22 to boil it all down, my concern is what would be
23 asked with following the DESE legal division's
24 request is adding a requirement that currently is not
25 in law. So I just wanted to --

1 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So --

2 MR. WALTER: -- reiterate that point.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: I do know that we have waivers
4 where we put stipulations on those waivers where it
5 -- it's not part of the law necessarily, but it is a
6 stipulation such as class size, teaching load, things
7 of that nature where only certain classes can go
8 over.

9 MR. WALTER: Well, yes. But the --

10 MR. SMITH: I'm sorry to come to the
11 conversation late. Scott Smith, APSRC.

12 I think you have broad standard authority there;
13 right? I think the point that Tripp's trying to make
14 legally ultra vires is the concept. You can't create
15 law where law doesn't exist, so you can't create an
16 existent -- an obligation that is not otherwise in
17 law.

18 In some areas, you do have specific legal
19 authority to create standards, classroom sizes,
20 things like that. So that's your authority. I think
21 the point he's making here is you probably don't
22 necessarily have the legal authority to create this
23 additional obligation that you don't have authority
24 to make is the point he's getting to.

25 DR. MOORE: So that would mean our option then

1 is either to approve the waiver as is or just not
2 approve the waiver?

3 MR. SMITH: No. I think just on this one point
4 he's talking about. But you certainly have the
5 obligation to approve it or not approve it.

6 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

7 DR. MOORE: I'm confused because I thought -- I
8 thought Tripp was trying to say that we can't
9 introduce the language into --

10 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Right.

11 DR. MOORE: -- a waiver; we can't put
12 stipulations.

13 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: That's -- that's what he was
14 saying --

15 DR. MOORE: Yes.

16 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: -- in relation to that, but
17 what we're talking about now is whether or not we
18 actually approve the waiver as part of the amendment.
19 So we can either, like you said, choose to approve
20 that waiver as part of the amendment. It all depends
21 on what the motion is, you know, if there is a
22 motion.

23 DR. MOORE: Could our legal please speak to
24 that? I'm not a lawyer and I'm very confused right
25 now.

1 MR. REYNOLDS: Essentially, what you would be --
2 I mean, essentially what you would be approving is a
3 condition of the waiver to do what they've already
4 said they're going to do in their policy.

5 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. So what you're saying
6 is they've already said they're going to do this in
7 their policy?

8 MR. REYNOLDS: It's -- it's not a -- the
9 condition of the waiver is not more language in the
10 waiver.

11 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Right.

12 MR. REYNOLDS: It's not -- I mean, it's just the
13 -- it's the CAP saying, we will grant you this waiver
14 if you do these things.

15 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: But as -- as Scott said, do we
16 have that ability? Is that within our -- our
17 purview?

18 MR. REYNOLDS: I think it's just a -- it's a --
19 it's more -- I mean, you're not -- I -- my
20 understanding is you're not creating new law. You're
21 just simply placing a condition on the grant or
22 waiver.

23 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Do those conditions have to be
24 based in law, though?

25 MR. REYNOLDS: I'm not sure about that. I'll

1 have to --

2 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And that -- I think that was
3 the point that Scott was making is --

4 MR. REYNOLDS: So then, I guess, it's -- your
5 choices then would be grant the waiver as is or not
6 grant that specific code section. Grant the rest of
7 the --

8 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

9 MR. REYNOLDS: -- waiver without that specific
10 code section.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm thoroughly confused.

12 MR. SMITH: I think the point is, if the Panel
13 is okay, we will work it out with the Department and
14 make sure they're good with whatever arrangement and
15 that the Panel is good. So we don't want to lose the
16 waiver request at the end of the day, and we'll make
17 sure that we have reached an agreement with them on
18 this subpoint within the bigger context out there.

19 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And I do think had we had
20 policy in front of us, we probably -- this wouldn't
21 even have been an issue. I think, you know -- and
22 you're talking about that as being part of your
23 policy. So --

24 MR. REYNOLDS: Yeah. I would be comfortable if
25 -- if I saw language in a policy that says this is

1 how we're going to run the meetings, I would be --

2 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

3 MR. REYNOLDS: I would have no concerns at all.

4 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

5 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah. That's -- that's --

6 DR. MOORE: Same.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah. That's good.

8 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: How do we feel on this end?

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So just for my

10 clarification, it would be --

11 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- it is going to be in

13 your policy that that's how the executive session is

14 ran?

15 MS. ROWE: I am happy to provide a copy of our

16 policy around executive session so that everybody is

17 comfortable with what we do, and you can see that. I

18 apologize. We are learning as we go through this

19 waive -- waivers are new -- new to us. If I had my

20 way, I would have just struck "physically present"

21 and not struck the entire sections of it. But -- but

22 we're figuring it out and I guarantee you the next

23 time we come through here with a waiver request, it

24 will be sufficiently detailed and anticipate some of

25 these questions. But I have no problem providing you

1 with our policy or with the legal team with what our
2 policy will be. And I guarantee it will capture the
3 things that are important to him.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And --

5 MR. BALDWIN: And it covers what we're talking
6 about? The policy? Your policy?

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And that provides me more
8 -- because as I was understanding the explanation it
9 was that it would be written nowhere, and it would
10 just be -- we're just going to tell them this is what
11 we want them to do, and I was not comfortable with
12 that. So that's where I was confused and wasn't
13 comfortable that we were just going to be word of
14 mouth telling people to do such; and then if there's
15 an issue, there's nothing that we can refer back to
16 that says that they were told to do these things.
17 Okay.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Other comments or questions?

19 MR. BALDWIN: I appreciate the clarification.

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yes.

21 MR. BALDWIN: And working together and I do like
22 the knowledge now that there's a policy behind this.
23 And I think that's the right way to do it. I think
24 -- I think it's on you to run the school and we are
25 not to run it, so I'm happy for that.

1 MR. SCOTT: I totally agree. My final comment
2 is that it would be a board approved policy that you
3 provide to us; and I'm very comfortable with that.

4 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Reynolds.

5 MR. REYNOLDS: So I'm comfortable with, I mean,
6 it's up to the CAP, of course. But I'm comfortable
7 as long as we can get written policy that they get
8 the -- you grant the waiver request as -- as it is.
9 Just on that one, I would ask for that one
10 stipulation that --

11 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And we have on the record that
12 those things will be included. So I think we're
13 good.

14 MR. REYNOLDS: All right.

15 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you. All right.

16 Any other discussion? I'll entertain a motion.

17 DR. MOORE: I'll make a motion that we approve
18 the -- I'm making sure I call -- it's not Bentonville
19 School for Advanced Studies anymore.

20 MR. REYNOLDS: I think it was the School for
21 Advanced Studies Northwest Arkansas.

22 DR. MOORE: Thank you. I had to find it. So I
23 make a motion that we approve the amendment request
24 for the School for Advance Studies Northwest Arkansas
25 and the waivers as requested assuming board policy is

1 provided to address our concerns.

2 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. I have a motion. Do I
3 have a second?

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

5 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All those in favor?

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. We'll take just a
8 few minutes -- and congratulations -- and we'll fill
9 out our voting sheets.

10 All right. We'll start with Dr. Moore.

11 DR. MOORE: I vote to approve the School for
12 Advanced Studies Northwest Arkansas amendment request
13 and associated waivers given an expected board policy
14 that addresses our concerns about remote board
15 participation. I'll look forward to the new
16 opportunities this charter will provide students and
17 families in Northwest Arkansas.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I'm in favor of the charter
20 amendments and waiver request and believe the
21 educational standards for the Schools of Advanced
22 Studies Northwest Arkansas will benefit student
23 learning in the area.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

25 MR. SCOTT: Yes. I voted for the amendment

1 request because the plan to create an appropriate
2 board approved policy that mitigates potential risks
3 and sets the school on a pathway towards quality and
4 success.

5 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for, I support the
7 School of Advanced Studies requests to change
8 locations and waive and meeting -- board in-person
9 meeting requirements, inclusive of executive
10 sessions.

11 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you very much.
12 Congratulations.

13 MS. ROWE: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

14 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yes. Thank you again.

15 All right. Ms. Summons.

16 Pause for just a moment. We'll take about a
17 five-minute break.

18 **III.2. PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT CHARTER**

19 **RESCISSION LETTER FOR DRIVEN VIRTUAL ACADEMY**

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Ms. Summons, we
21 are ready.

22 MS. SUMMONS: Pulaski County Special School
23 District will be rescinding the charter for Driven
24 Virtual Academy at the end of the '23-'24 school
25 year. All associated waivers will be rescinded at

1 that time.

2 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

3 Any discussion? If not, I'll accept a motion.

4 MR. BALDWIN: I move approval of the rescission.

5 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Do I have a second?

6 MR. SCOTT: Second.

7 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. I have got a
8 motion and a second. All those in favor?

9 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

11 Motion passes. We'll fill out our sheets real
12 quick.

13 All right. We'll start on this end with Dr.
14 Wright-McMurray.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for, I support
16 Pulaski County Special School District's request to
17 rescind their charter and all associated waivers for
18 the Driven Virtual Academy.

19 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

20 MR. SCOTT: I voted for the request to rescind
21 the charter and the associate waivers as they are the
22 best in understanding their readiness to proceed.

23 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

24 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I support the request to
25 rescind the charter and all related waivers.

1 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore.

2 DR. MOORE: I accept Pulaski County Special
3 School District's charter rescission request for
4 Driven Virtual Academy and all associated waivers.

5 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
6 much.

7 **III.3. BATESVILLE HIGH CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT REQUEST**

8 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Ms. Summons.

9 MS. SUMMONS: Batesville High School Charter is
10 requesting a waiver of Arkansas code and standards
11 for accreditation for the following items: class
12 size and teaching load, flexible schedule, teacher
13 licensure, gifted and talented and library media
14 specialist. And we have Ms. Jennifer Douglas on
15 behalf of the district with us this morning.

16 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you.

17 So, Ms. Douglas, if you'll stand and raise your
18 right hand. Do you swear the testimony you're about
19 to give the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
20 the truth?

21 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

22 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. You may begin.
23 Thank you very much.

24 MS. DOUGLAS: Good morning. Hi, my name is
25 Jennifer Douglas. I'm assistant superintendent for

1 Batesville School District. We are here because we
2 requested a conversion charter in 2020 and it was
3 implemented in 2021 and our waivers will currently
4 expire before the charter renewal.

5 So just to catch you up, our mission and vision
6 for the Batesville High School Charter is to prepare
7 all Pioneers for success. Pioneer Nation, we are the
8 largest school in Independence County. We have six
9 schools across our district, and we do implement the
10 Community Schools model. Our enrollment currently in
11 grades 9-12 is 974 which is up a little more than
12 fifty since we were here requesting our charter. We
13 are 57 percent free and reduced lunch at the high
14 school with 40 percent minority. And we pride
15 ourselves on our community business and industry
16 partnerships.

17 Our purpose in our charter is to create an
18 equitable and sustainable opportunity for all of our
19 students and to grow the workforce for Independence
20 County. Our personalized pathways are funneled
21 through our CAT process so that we want all students
22 to be able to explore careers throughout elementary
23 and junior high school, and then plan and discover
24 Pioneer academies in the high school so that they
25 will be prepared to either be college and career

1 ready or enter -- and enter the workforce or go on to
2 a two- or four-year degree.

3 These are some of the Pioneer academies we
4 brought to you in the original charter. Since we
5 have been here, we have implemented our medical
6 pathways. We currently have 70 students enrolled in
7 our medical pathways. Those are some of the bulleted
8 sub-pathways within the overarching medical pathway,
9 whether it's medical assistant, surgical tech, a
10 pre-professional pathway or sports medicine.
11 Aviation was also one of our original pathways that
12 we requested, and we currently have 35 students
13 enrolled in our aviation pathway. And then video
14 journalism was also one of the original request and
15 we have 55 students currently enrolled in that. And
16 then since that time, we've also added an engineering
17 pathway in partnership with Intimidator or Toro
18 group.

19 In addition to that, we had implemented E3
20 internships and apprenticeship programs annually. So
21 far, we've had roughly 25 students participate in
22 paid internships throughout the county. And this
23 past year, we entered in a partnership with Citizens
24 Bank to have banking in the high school and so we
25 also have students employed at our bank that is

1 inside Batesville High School. We have multiple
2 business and industry partnerships, and we also
3 partner with the National Apprenticeship Training
4 Foundation and then we work with UACCB also through
5 their workforce development pathways; and you can see
6 the number of students we have participating in each
7 of those. In addition to all of these internships
8 and apprenticeships, we also try to provide executive
9 functioning skills as we take students through those
10 works -- those workforce opportunities, so that we
11 better prepare them for what the workforce is going
12 to expect.

13 Our waivers requested -- we are simply asking to
14 have all of our current waivers that we have extended
15 just until the end of the charter -- when the charter
16 would be renewed with the addition of class
17 size/teaching load. Superintendent Michael Hester
18 and Interim Principal Kevin Bledsoe asked that this
19 specific waiver be added, which is the one at the
20 top, reason being we have seen some growth in our
21 enrollment at the high school. And there are similar
22 schools that are conversion charters that have this
23 waiver and they feel like it would be -- better
24 service if we did -- if we had, you know, if we were
25 close for the class size/teaching load to be able to

1 go to 180; and instead of 28 in the classroom, they
2 could go to 30. I do believe, according to our legal
3 review, we would also need to add standard 1(A).5.
4 And so we would like to request that that be added,
5 but the first one up there would be the only one that
6 would be in addition; all the rest of those are
7 current waivers that we -- we hold with our charter.

8 I do want to let you know these are some of the
9 progress to our goals. I didn't put all of our goals
10 up here, but one of our goals was to increase the
11 students who will score ready or exceeding in
12 literacy and math by five percent annually. While we
13 are still working to achieve that goal, Batesville
14 High School Charter did receive top percent -- top
15 ten percent growth recognition this year through the
16 Arkansas Department of Education's reward funding.
17 We also -- our goal is to increase the number of
18 students earning college credit -- concurrent college
19 credit and certificates of proficiency annually. We
20 have met that goal. And in addition to that, we also
21 now offer two concurrent classes through Lyon College
22 on-site for students. We have met our goal of
23 completing at least one career development event each
24 year in 9-12 and we will continue to -- to meet that
25 goal. And then also increasing the number of

1 students participating and completing internships or
2 entrepreneurships by ten percent annually. I feel
3 like we're on target to meet that goal. We kind of
4 took a dip during COVID where businesses weren't
5 necessarily as comfortable having students come into
6 their business, but we're back to normal now and we
7 have 26 this year; and I do look for that to
8 increase.

9 So I will answer any questions you guys have.

10 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So we'll have our legal review
11 now and then right after that, we'll ask questions.
12 Thank you very much.

13 MR. REYNOLDS: Stephen Reynolds, staff attorney
14 for the Department. Like Ms. Douglas said, there's a
15 couple of waivers that the charter needs to add to
16 their application, but I'll go through the legal
17 review so -- and I'll just go down the list. The
18 class size and teaching load is waiver topic No. one
19 and they've requested 6-17 -- Arkansas Code §
20 6-17-812 and standard for accreditation 1.A-6.
21 They'll need to add 1.A-5 and the rule -- the DESE
22 rules governing class size and teaching load to fully
23 effectuate that waiver. I don't have any legal
24 concerns with the waiver. Waiver topic No. two is
25 Arkansas code § 6-16-102. I have no legal concerns

1 with that waiver. Waiver topic No. three is teacher
2 licensure. The charter is requesting to waive
3 Arkansas code § 6-15-1004, 6-17-309, 6-17-401
4 et.seq., 6-17- 902, 6-17-919, standard for
5 accreditation 4-D.1 and 4-F.1. The charter will need
6 to add waivers for Arkansas code § 6-17-418 and
7 6-17-908 to fully effectuate that waiver. I don't
8 have any legal concerns with that waiver. Waiver
9 topic No. four is school counselor, the charter is
10 seeking to add standard for accreditation 4-E.1.
11 They'll need to add 4-E.2 to fully effectuate that
12 waiver. And I don't have any legal concerns with
13 that waiver. Waiver topic No. five is gifted and
14 talented. The Charter is seeking to waive our
15 Arkansas code § 6-20-2208(c)(6) and 6-42-109 and
16 standard for accreditation 2-G.1. I have no legal
17 concerns with that waiver. And waiver topic No. six
18 is library media specialist. The charter is seeking
19 to waive Arkansas code § 6-25-103, 6-25-104, standard
20 for accreditation for 4-F.1, 4-F.2 and 2-D.1. I have
21 no legal concerns with that waiver.

22 I marked all of the waivers that the charter
23 already has in red on the legal review. And my
24 understanding is because they were granted a
25 five-year charter in October of 2020, that their

1 charter and their waivers will all expire on -- at
2 the end of the '25-'26 school year. And that's it.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

4 Questions? Dr. Wright-McMurray?

5 DR. MOORE: I have a question that may be for
6 our legal. I could just be overlooking it. But I
7 see on your sheet in the legal review, the counselor
8 one; but on their charter but on their charter
9 amendment request, I'm not finding the counselor.

10 MR. REYNOLDS: So that's just an organizational
11 thing. We broke out -- when we do our legal reviews,
12 those two standards apply to the school counselor.
13 So we just made a separate topic for that because
14 sometimes charters ask for school counselor waivers;
15 sometimes they don't. But they're all related to --
16 they're all related to licensure.

17 DR. MOORE: Oh, okay.

18 MR. REYNOLDS: But we broke them out because
19 sometimes you just need teacher licensure; Sometimes
20 you need teachers and counselors; sometimes you need
21 -- so -- superintendents and principals are also
22 broken out like that.

23 DR. MOORE: Okay.

24 MR. REYNOLDS: It's just an organizational
25 thing.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay. So is the school counselor --
2 do you have school counselor, or do you meet all the
3 requirements for a school counselor?

4 MS. DOUGLAS: We do and on our original request,
5 we do -- we actually have two full-time school
6 counselors, a career coach and an academic dean who
7 is also a certified school counselor. And so in our
8 original charter, we removed the two counselors, and
9 we are happy to do that again. Like, the two
10 standards for accreditation that are in regards to
11 school counselor, we are not asking for that because
12 we have more than enough certified counselors.

13 DR. MOORE: Thank you for addressing that.
14 That's just a big priority especially doing such
15 career focused education, that's so important. Thank
16 you.

17 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

18 MR. BALDWIN: So is the only -- is the only new
19 waiver, the class size waiver? And all these others
20 currently exist? Or are we just --

21 MR. REYNOLDS: So all the ones that are marked
22 in red, are the ones that already exist. And so the
23 ones that are remaining in black on your sheet, those
24 are the ones that actually -- would be actually
25 adding.

1 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. You're good with all those?

2 MR. REYNOLDS: Uh-huh. I don't have any -- and
3 did you say -- did you say you already have a school
4 counselor?

5 MS. DOUGLAS: No, we don't. We're not asking
6 for the school counselor waiver.

7 MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. So they're not asking to
8 include the 4 -- standard 4-E.1 and 4-E.2.

9 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So as far as teaching load is
10 concerned, are you planning on compensating for
11 teaching load?

12 MS. DOUGLAS: They haven't to this point.
13 Currently -- I mean, currently we do if they're over
14 150.

15 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Right.

16 MS. DOUGLAS: The superintendent's request is to
17 go up to 180 with the class size up to 30. And we
18 have charters in our area that are similar to that
19 and so that is his request.

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. Thank you.

21 Mr. Scott.

22 MR. SCOTT: Yes. In regards to engagement
23 within the community, could you describe that. Upon
24 approval of the waivers what would that future state
25 look like relative to engagement?

1 MS. DOUGLAS: From where we started?

2 MR. SCOTT: As you move towards, I assume,
3 continuous improvement.

4 MS. DOUGLAS: Right.

5 MR. SCOTT: So if waivers are granted, what does
6 that future state look like?

7 MS. DOUGLAS: Well, we currently have all of
8 those waivers minus class size/teaching load, so we
9 would continue with our current practice. We are a
10 community school model, so each one of our campuses
11 has a site coordinator. And we work with our
12 community partners whether it's through lunch and
13 learns or meetings with business partners to start
14 the engineering pathway like that we did with Toro or
15 host career fairs or have internships where our
16 students go out into the community. In the past, we
17 had a student who interned with Wade's Heating and
18 Air and then went to work for them after he
19 graduated. So we have a large team of people from
20 the counselors to site coordinators to career coaches
21 that work with community partners on various levels,
22 whether it's to bring banking in our schools -- at
23 the elementary levels, we have a partnership with
24 First Community Bank to teach financial literacy and
25 banking in schools. So we have a large team that

1 builds those partnerships. We work very closely with
2 our chamber of commerce to build those partnerships
3 and build a community around not only Batesville High
4 School Charter, but the school district as a whole.

5 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

6 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thanks for your
8 presentation. So just for a couple pieces of
9 clarity. Looking under teacher licensure, so they're
10 needing to add two additional waivers? Do you see
11 the -- again, I'm not familiar with the codes, so I'm
12 not quite sure what exactly those are saying.

13 MR. REYNOLDS: So 6-17-418 is the requirement
14 for -- to teach Arkansas history and then 6-17-908 is
15 basically, you have to pay teachers out of the
16 teacher salary fund.

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So -- so just
18 wanted to clarify that when we're talking about our
19 CTE courses because I know that you had spoke to
20 that, are you, when possible -- or when it's
21 appropriate -- using the technical permit process to
22 be able to find appropriate teachers for those
23 courses?

24 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

1 MS. DOUGLAS: We have our CTE coordinator on
2 site and I oversaw that in the past and help her as
3 well. But, like, our prime example is our aviation
4 instructor is a retired pilot that is doing our
5 coursework; and he's doing an amazing job. But when
6 at all possible, yes, we go through the CTE process.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

8 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes, ma'am.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And just for my
10 clarification, so the six waivers that we see here
11 are the only waivers that are associated with the
12 charter?

13 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes, ma'am.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And the reason why I ask,
15 I know this -- it's been a bit, but we had a few
16 charters that came before us and had the -- had
17 waivers related to digital learning. And so I know
18 that we wanted to be really careful if there was a
19 time restriction on those. And so I want to just
20 kind of being careful if they're carrying forward all
21 their waivers, I wanted to be sure that wasn't
22 bundled in there somewhere. But I didn't see it, so
23 I just wanted to be clear on that.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Reynolds.

25 MR. REYNOLDS: So these waivers will, I mean,

1 they'll be added to their current charter. And so
2 their charter expires in '25-'26. So these charter
3 -- these waivers would expire with the charter
4 because it's a district conversion charter. And then
5 to your point, all of the waivers that are listed on
6 the legal review are being requested with the
7 exception of the school counselor standard 4-E.1 and
8 4-E.2 is my understanding.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So digital learning is not
10 --

11 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So -- yeah. Digital learning
12 would be a completely separate process.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

14 MR. REYNOLDS: Yeah.

15 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Any other questions or
16 comments?

17 I do have one question and that is for your
18 4-D.1, for your licensure waiver, what -- what's the
19 intent? Is it just for career focus, which is like
20 your aviation course that you have, or is it across
21 the board?

22 MS. DOUGLAS: Currently, we have across the
23 board waivers for licensure.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay.

25 MS. DOUGLAS: And we -- we do encourage teachers

1 to try to get on to that path, but -- to, you know,
2 obtain an Arkansas license. But currently we have it
3 for all areas.

4 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. And those that are in
5 core areas, are they all AQT?

6 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

7 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. All right. Thank you
8 very much.

9 Any other questions? If not, then I'll
10 entertain a motion.

11 MR. BALDWIN: I move we approve the Batesville
12 High School Charter amendment request as presented
13 including the waiver request as presented.

14 DR. MOORE: I second the motion.

15 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. I have a motion and
16 second. All those in favor?

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

19 All right. Motion passes. Congratulations.

20 Give us just a few minutes to fill out our
21 voting sheets.

22 Dr. Wright-McMurray.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for, I support
24 Batesville High School's request to amend their
25 existing waivers.

1 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

2 MR. SCOTT: I voted for the Batesville High
3 School Charter request because it will remove
4 barriers and set the charter on a better pathway for
5 the benefit the community.

6 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I voted to approve the
8 Batesville High School Charter amendment request
9 including all waivers. Batesville High offers a
10 high-quality and innovative educational program in
11 partnership with local businesses and throughout
12 Independence County.

13 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And Dr. Moore.

14 DR. MOORE: I vote to approve the Batesville
15 High School Charter amendment request and associated
16 waivers. As a former Pioneer -- Go Pioneers -- and
17 Batesville High graduate, I am pleased to see the
18 college and career readiness opportunities and
19 learning experiences now available to students in the
20 Batesville area. The CTE options will allow students
21 to pursue multiple CTE pathways to a diploma as
22 established in the LEARNS Act.

23 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Congratulations.
24 Thank you so much.

25 All right. Next up we have our charter review.

1 Do we want to take a quick break, or do we want to go
2 on through? Five minutes? Five-minute break.

3 (WHEREUPON, after a break was taken, the
4 proceedings were resumed as follows, to-wit:)

5 **III.4. CHARTER PERFORMANCE DATA**

6 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. We'll come back to
7 order. And we're going to have a presentation on
8 charter performance data from Ms. Tiffani Grayer and
9 Mr. Jeffery Fetters.

10 MS. GRAYER: Thank you, Dr. Sutherlin. My name
11 is Tiffani Grayer. I'm the director of school
12 performance and monitoring within the office of
13 public-school accountability here at DESE.

14 I'm responding to some questions that were posed
15 at our last Charter Authorizing Panel meeting. I
16 have given you guys some data -- some historical data
17 on the D and F charters and their longitudinal data,
18 their school ratings, all the way back to 2017/2018.
19 And I've also given you -- within this presentation,
20 I thought you might be interested in some of the
21 shapes and spreads of our distributions. I found
22 that quite interesting and some breakdowns of some
23 percentage datas of charters. And then I also have
24 some very specific datas on the charters that are
25 here today, so we'll get into that as well. If

1 there's any slides in particular that you have
2 questions on or if you want me to go through this a
3 little quicker, I'll be responsive to your needs here
4 today.

5 So first of all, this is -- this is all schools,
6 traditional schools and charters, all together. This
7 is the distribution between 2022 and 2023. And as
8 you can see it kind of fits that normal curve. Most
9 of our schools are at a C. We have a little bit less
10 falling in that A and D range and then a very minimal
11 amount of schools receiving As and Fs. But when you
12 isolate that to only our charter districts for the
13 last couple of years, you see that that distribution
14 is skewed right to where the bulk of our charters are
15 receiving Ds, a lesser amount are receiving Cs and
16 then you're kind of evenly distributed between your
17 As, Bs and Fs.

18 So a question was posed by Dr. Moore about
19 percentages of D and F charters as opposed to all
20 schools. So in 2022, we had 11.28 percent of D or F
21 schools out of all schools, they -- 11.28 percent
22 were charter schools; and in 2023 that percentage
23 increased a little bit to 12.8 percent. As you can
24 see, if you look at the D or Fs, we had a few more --
25 yes, Mr. Baldwin.

1 MR. BALDWIN: Can we ask questions as we go?

2 MS. GRAYER: Of course, please.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Sure, sure.

4 MR. BALDWIN: So I, you know -- when you guys
5 come to present your numbers, it's always a high
6 point for me because I love looking at numbers.

7 MS. GRAYER: Yes, sir.

8 MR. BALDWIN: And so this page is answering some
9 questions that I've always had about charter schools
10 compared to the non-charter schools and how it all
11 fits. And so just a -- just a couple of quick
12 questions and maybe a thought also.

13 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

14 MR. BALDWIN: So I was actually surprised that
15 you had 2023 numbers, so that was a pleasant
16 surprise. Are those new numbers?

17 MS. GRAYER: Those numbers came out in October.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah. In October, so -- so '22
19 and '23 are post-COVID results?

20 MS. GRAYER: Yes, yes.

21 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So that -- yeah. So that's
22 good. The -- when you have -- when you have the
23 numbers come out, how soon do the schools see those?
24 Have they seen these percentiles?

25 MS. GRAYER: Yes, they became -- they became

1 public in October.

2 MR. BALDWIN: In October.

3 MS. GRAYER: This year we will have a delay
4 because of the change in the state assessment. So we
5 will have to go through standard setting for
6 performance level descriptors as well as standard
7 setting for A through F. So this year, we'll have a
8 delay. I believe accountability results will come
9 out February 2025, so it will be delayed this year.

10 MR. BALDWIN: And is that --

11 MS. GRAYER: But --

12 MR. BALDWIN: Is that --

13 MS. GRAYER: -- after that it will return to
14 normal.

15 MR. BALDWIN: Is that all public or is that just
16 to the schools that --

17 MS. GRAYER: Both.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Both?

19 MS. GRAYER: Yes, sir.

20 MR. BALDWIN: So here would be a thought for you
21 that I'd love to see. So --

22 MS. GRAYER: Sure.

23 MR. BALDWIN: So when I look at this, you know,
24 I guess I wonder about the Ds and Fs, and I wondered
25 what percent -- so as a percent of charter schools --

1 and I think you just told us it's like 11 percent.

2 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

3 MR. BALDWIN: But what is the percent of
4 non-charter schools that are Ds and Fs to total? To
5 kind of see --

6 MS. GRAYER: So that would be the complement, is
7 what we would call that in mathematics. So you would
8 just take 100 and subtract the 11.28 or the 12.87 and
9 so that would be the non-charters.

10 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So I think a chart that
11 shows those comparisons would be --

12 MS. GRAYER: Sure.

13 MR. BALDWIN: Because one of the things I've
14 always wondered is are we doing what we need to do?

15 MS. GRAYER: Absolutely.

16 MR. BALDWIN: And then the other thought is, I
17 know there's different kinds of charter schools, so I
18 -- I wouldn't mind seeing separate analysis of
19 conversion charters, virtual charters and
20 open-enrollment charters to see if there's a
21 performance difference --

22 MS. GRAYER: I --

23 MR. BALDWIN: -- for --

24 MS. GRAYER: -- think that's a --

25 MR. BALDWIN: -- for those.

1 MS. GRAYER: I think that's a great idea.

2 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah.

3 MS. GRAYER: Jeffery, are you taking notes back
4 there?

5 MR. FETTERS: Yes.

6 MS. GRAYER: All right. We have got you. Yeah.
7 Okay. And so --

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sorry.

9 MS. GRAYER: Yes. Absolutely.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sorry. If I could just
11 piggyback a little bit off of that. So when I look
12 at the schools that are falling in the C/D/F range --

13 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Also, thinking about the
15 type of school, I'm curious to see the population of
16 students that those schools are serving.

17 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And are they -- although
19 they may be following in the C/D/F range, is that
20 attributed to the school itself, or is it attributed
21 to the populations which they're serving in that even
22 though we may see that letter grade, that may not
23 give the full story of the work that's being done at
24 school for those students. because of the population
25 that you're serving.

1 MS. GRAYER: So --

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I hope I'm asking the
3 right question.

4 MS. GRAYER: You bring up that excellent point,
5 Dr. Wright-McMurray. There are about 16/17 schools,
6 most of them being charters, that are actually exempt
7 from letter grades by rule and law. And those go
8 unaccounted for in this entire discussion. We do
9 currently issue them an ESSA school index score
10 because they are not exempt from any federal
11 accountability, but we have exempt them from state
12 accountability, currently. Going forward, we may be
13 rethinking what could we do to issue them a rating,
14 but currently those schools are exempt. So when we
15 have conversations about D & F and if you would look
16 at their ESSA school index score, some of these
17 schools if they were not exempt from rating, would
18 fall likely in the D or F category.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Why do we exempt and who -- who
20 exempts them? Is it the State Board?

21 MS. GRAYER: That -- that is in rule. It's --
22 it's just like Dr. Wright-McMurray was stating,
23 charters that have an ALE, charters that are serving
24 special, like, are serving at risk -- students that
25 are at risk of dropping out, like, more credit

1 recovery focused charters. Those are the types of
2 charters that are currently exempt from our school
3 rating system here in Arkansas.

4 DR. MOORE: So, Tiffani, I have an additional
5 question related to the comparisons here --

6 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

7 DR. MOORE: -- because I did not know, like,
8 what percent of schools are charter schools of the
9 total schools. I can look at the ADE data center
10 site and see that district-wise it's around ten
11 percent as far as schools, what percent of schools
12 are charter, do you know?

13 MS. GRAYER: I do not know off the top of my
14 head. So --

15 DR. MOORE: APSRC, do y'all know? Because I
16 know that the district is ten percent --

17 MS. GRAYER: So --

18 DR. MOORE: -- schools may be about that as
19 well.

20 MS. GRAYER: -- it would be easy enough. It
21 would be the sum of --

22 MR. SMITH: (INAUDIBLE)

23 DR. MOORE: Say that again. I'm sorry.

24 MR. SMITH: Seven/eight percent.

25 DR. MOORE: Okay.

1 MS. GRAYER: Yeah. And it would be easier -- I
2 mean, it would be the sum of what's on -- like,
3 12 + 31 + 24 + 13 + 13, and then you'd sum the greens
4 --

5 DR. MOORE: Right.

6 MS. GRAYER: -- take the proportion. I could
7 easily find that figure, but --

8 DR. MOORE: I'll do it at lunch.

9 MS. GRAYER: -- this is old data. This is old
10 data on 2023 results. So if there were any new
11 charters that opened up for this school year, they
12 wouldn't have any accountability data.

13 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you. Just because
14 seeing the, like, 11 percent/12 percent numbers, they
15 don't really mean anything to me unless I know what
16 percent of schools are --

17 MS. GRAYER: Are charters?

18 DR. MOORE: -- charters.

19 MS. GRAYER: I have got you.

20 DR. MOORE: Like, it doesn't mean anything.

21 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And then just -- on my
23 same question before, sorry.

24 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I also -- again because

1 you know I -- I also love to, you know, highlight our
2 shining starts. Do we have schools that I previously
3 referenced that are in the A/B range because I'd like
4 to have that information as well. If there are
5 schools that are designed to serve some of our
6 students that need additional support to have
7 success, are they falling in the A/B range and would
8 like to have opportunities to see what they're doing
9 to be able to --

10 MS. GRAYER: Yeah. So we can definitely dig
11 into the schools that are exempt from ratings and we
12 could -- we could look at what they would score. A
13 rating that they would receive if they were to have
14 been given a rating. We could definitely do that
15 analysis.

16 MR. BALDWIN: I think what you see is we're --
17 we're excited about more granular data to see how the
18 charters are performing. As you hear us talk and
19 share our ideas, how long would it take you all to
20 put this together?

21 MS. GRAYER: We have most of the data and I'm a
22 mathematician by heart, so it doesn't take me long to
23 run the numbers. We could definitely bring that to
24 the next Charter Panel meeting if that -- if that
25 would be your desire.

1 MR. BALDWIN: Now I heard -- oh, I'm sorry.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sorry.

3 MR. SCOTT: We'll let you finish up.

4 MR. BALDWIN: I've heard the secretary say a
5 few times that he's looking at the new ways to
6 measure performance. Is all this going to be out of
7 date soon? Or is that just an ongoing discussion?

8 MS. GRAYER: We'll be running accountability
9 three different ways almost next year because we're
10 going to have a new way A to F system. We're going
11 to be looking at running ESSA under a new formula,
12 but we're also going to be running ESSA under an old
13 formula because we have a lot of schools right now
14 that are federally identified and we're going to talk
15 about that here in -- more in just a minute. But to
16 exit under federal identification, we're going to be
17 using the old score or the old formula just for
18 comparability. So that the schools that are
19 currently federally identified, they will exit under
20 that old formula just for more fairness.

21 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And I can give you the exact
22 percentage it's ten percent for charter schools.

23 MS. GRAYER: Thank you.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

25 MS. GRAYER: Thank you, Matthew.

1 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

2 MS. GRAYER: Dr. Sutherlin. Sorry.

3 MR. SCOTT: So -- so --

4 MS. GRAYER: So --

5 MR. SCOTT: -- real quickly. I'm sorry.

6 MS. GRAYER: Yeah.

7 MR. SCOTT: Ms. Grayer -- Tiffani, I love the
8 discussion we're having here. One thing that jumps
9 out at me is that we sometimes just use the word
10 charter and don't differentiate district conversion
11 versus open enrollment.

12 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

13 MR. SCOTT: So as we go down this pathway OF
14 digging into the data, love the fact that we can also
15 have some differentiation there, No. one. Number
16 two, it would be ideal if we had a better
17 understanding of the length of the contracts. For
18 example, some have been existing just launched and
19 some have been around for a while. So having some
20 intel on that would be helpful as we move forward as
21 well.

22 MS. GRAYER: That's great. Yes, we will try to
23 do a better job in the future of distinguishing
24 between open enrollment and district conversion and
25 all of this is really good feedback for us.

1 DR. MOORE: Clarifying question --

2 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

3 DR. MOORE: You said earlier but I just don't
4 recall what you said, does this include the
5 conversion charters?

6 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

7 DR. MOORE: It does?

8 MS. GRAYER: This --

9 DR. MOORE: Okay.

10 MS. GRAYER: -- is all charters.

11 DR. MOORE: So all means all?

12 MS. GRAYER: So --

13 DR. MOORE: Sorry.

14 MS. GRAYER: -- we're getting we're kind of
15 getting used to a new mindset of kind of
16 distinguishing between the two and charters being
17 looked at differently than traditional schools. So
18 we're kind of getting used to the new lingo --

19 DR. MOORE: Okay.

20 MS. GRAYER: -- in house too.

21 DR. MOORE: So when you said ten percent, did
22 that include --

23 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: That's --

24 DR. MOORE: -- conversion as well?

25 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: That includes conversion.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay.

2 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

3 DR. MOORE: So ten percent applies to this as
4 well? Thank you.

5 MS. GRAYER: Yes. Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. GRAYER: So this includes all grade spans,
7 this data that we've looked at so far, but to me the
8 data got even more interesting when I started
9 breaking the data down by grade span. So next we're
10 going to look at just elementary schools. And when I
11 say grade span, there's lots of different grade
12 ranges that can fall into grade spans, and we have
13 those charts available on the school performance
14 website. But generally you're going to be looking
15 at, you know, this could be anything from a K-1, K-2,
16 K-5 these are anything that falls into that
17 elementary grade span. So here are the all schools
18 and -- guys, the reason that we're seeing the normal
19 distribution when you get to all schools -- first of
20 all the normal -- this distribution pre-pandemic was
21 skewed to the left where we had more A, B and C
22 schools, but this is also due to the law of large
23 numbers. When you start getting more and more
24 schools involved in the sample size then you are
25 going to -- your distribution will start to normalize

1 naturally. But when we shrink that number down and
2 have a smaller sample size, that's when you'll start
3 seeing some skewness occurring.

4 So when you look at the elementary charters,
5 this really kind of opened my eyes to see -- you
6 know, if you remember back there were 12 charters
7 that were Fs out of all charters. And so this is
8 really telling of where the charters are needing
9 their support; it's at the elementary level. And
10 that could also be an effect of the pandemic. If you
11 think about the students that missed the
12 instructional time, that was really at the elementary
13 level. So when we're thinking about what do students
14 need, what do schools need? I mean, this is where I
15 think we really need to hone in our efforts and
16 supports is at the elementary level with our charter
17 schools.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Do you see the same -- so this --
19 this is a disturbing graph -- maybe the most
20 disturbing graph --

21 MS. GRAYER: Yes, it is.

22 MR. BALDWIN: -- that you have in here.

23 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

24 MR. BALDWIN: So my thought is, once again
25 comparing to all schools, when you look at

1 non-charter schools, do you see the same spike up for
2 the -- for the Ds and Fs in elementary? Or is it
3 different for the non-charters?

4 MS. GRAYER: Well, I don't think it would be the
5 same because you would only have 52 there that would
6 be non-charter. And for the Ds, that would be around
7 90 that would be non-charter --

8 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

9 MS. GRAYER: -- in the D range.

10 MR. BALDWIN: So then the question is, why --

11 MS. GRAYER: Right.

12 MR. BALDWIN: -- are the charters experiencing
13 that?

14 MS. GRAYER: That's right.

15 MR. BALDWIN: And maybe it goes back to
16 Dr. Wright-McMurray's question about population
17 served --

18 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

19 MR. BALDWIN: -- and that would be interesting
20 to know why.

21 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

22 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

23 MS. GRAYER: And, I mean, I think that would
24 take a deeper dive into, you know, are there
25 high-quality instructional materials being used, are

1 they educators receiving high-quality professional
2 development? I think those are the types of supports
3 and -- that we need to look at, particularly at those
4 ten charters. And you guys have the list of charters
5 that are D and Fs, but I think that's the type of
6 things that we need to look at: wraparound services
7 for students with special needs, ELL's, anyone with
8 an IEP, those types of services, what are they doing
9 at those schools for the students that need -- that
10 are at risk for academic failure.

11 MR. SCOTT: I'm thinking back to
12 Dr. Wright-McMurray's point and let's not lose sight
13 of the schools that are performing well.

14 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

15 MR. SCOTT: And perhaps there's some lessons
16 learned.

17 MS. GRAYER: Absolutely.

18 MR. SCOTT: So we can actually leverage as well.

19 MS. GRAYER: Yes. Yes. So what's going on at
20 those three A elementaries or the three B
21 elementaries and what can we learn from what's going
22 on within those schools.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Do these graphs surprise you guys
24 and professional educators?

25 MS. GRAYER: It surprised me --

1 MR. BALDWIN: Did it?

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah.

3 MS. GRAYER: -- when I ran the data that it --

4 DR. MOORE: Especially at the elementary level;
5 that really does surprise me.

6 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Not so much as it just
8 makes it even clearer the amount of work that needs
9 to be done because we have to remember that our
10 kiddos that are in elementary that's the foundation.
11 And if that's broken, then that's when we see our
12 challenges at middle, high school and beyond. So --
13 yeah. It's very disheartening --

14 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- to see that kind of
16 data. So -- but I guess my -- so back to that other
17 question. So by saying that we have the three that
18 are As, what opportunities are available for the
19 three As to share with the Cs, Ds and Fs what they're
20 doing to be an A. The I -- again -- it goes back to
21 my other question, do they have -- are they
22 comparable? So if they go and talk to the Cs and Ds
23 and Fs, can they apply what they're sharing with
24 them? Because do they have populations of students,
25 do they have the same resources that the other ones

1 would have that they will be able to mimic?

2 MS. GRAYER: Yeah. So as far as the K-8
3 accountability system, there's not vast changes that
4 are happening. Where I think there would be some
5 comparability that could happen with our K-8 system,
6 you know, the main focus is, has and always will be
7 on the achievement and growth of students. So if
8 they're focused on good teaching and learning within
9 their buildings, that -- that was the focus of our
10 ESSA school index and our A to F and that will be the
11 focus going forward. We're just streamlining and
12 taking some of the distractors out of the system. So
13 if they are truly focused on good instruction, then
14 that will transfer well into the new system.

15 DR. MOORE: And I think it could also be
16 interesting and I know we looked at the chart before
17 of the schools that were D and F schools --

18 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

19 DR. MOORE: -- I think a lot would speak to
20 potentially the location and the surrounding
21 non-charter schools. If you were looking at that
22 comparable, I think you might see -- it might not be
23 as shocking to us if we saw the similar geographies
24 because a lot of our charters are purposely put in
25 areas where students are being underserved.

1 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

2 DR. MOORE: And so it could be unfair to
3 charters to look at this without looking at the
4 geography and the students that are being served --

5 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

6 DR. MOORE: -- as well.

7 MS. GRAYER: We also have a project going on
8 right now and we're kind of expanding on our Schools
9 on the Move idea and we're going out and doing some
10 on-site videos kind of similar to the -- what do they
11 do at the Schools of Innovation? They do the video
12 series with the Schools of Innovation. It's a
13 similar project that we're doing with Schools on the
14 Move where we can actually go on site, talk to the
15 instructional leaders and find out what -- what are
16 the best practices that they're using at the
17 different schools that have made great strides. That
18 might be something that Charter Panel might be
19 interested in for some of these A schools or B
20 schools is to go out and actually kind of interview
21 the schools, find out what they're doing and come
22 back with some videos that we could host on the
23 website for some of the struggling charters to view.

24 So let's look at middle school again. You're
25 kind of seeing that more even distribution -- that

1 normal distribution going on. Far less Fs at the
2 middle school overall, amongst the whole state. When
3 we look at the charter breakdown, only one charter is
4 falling as an F in the middle school grade span; lots
5 of Cs and Ds; only two As here, but there were zero
6 in 2022, so that's an improvement. Improvement in
7 Bs.

8 But a lot of the comparability -- there's
9 overall more charters obviously because there's more
10 As, more Bs, more Cs, more Ds, same number of Fs. So
11 that's because there's not always the same number of
12 charter schools each year. Some of them will rescind
13 their charters; they'll -- will open up new charters,
14 that type of thing. So the net -- the percentage of
15 D and Fs have increased in 2023, but that percentage
16 is a little bit swayed just because that --
17 obviously, a new charter opened somewhere and got
18 into that category.

19 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

20 MR. BALDWIN: So I just -- I just had another
21 thought.

22 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

23 MR. BALDWIN: And I apologize for all this -- I
24 just --

25 MS. GRAYER: Oh, you're good.

1 MR. BALDWIN: I enjoy -- I enjoy what you're
2 showing us because it's the beginning of doing
3 something --

4 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

5 MR. BALDWIN: -- that needs to be done. So, you
6 know, my thought in looking at charter middle schools
7 is -- I'm wondering, are the ten -- you know, there
8 was three -- there was eight Cs, and you go up to ten
9 Ds and then you drop down to Fs. So I'm wondering if
10 some of those ten Ds are going to be Fs the next time
11 you run the -- are they on the way to F or maybe are
12 they on the way to C? And so sometimes as bankers
13 you put an arrow to show the trajectory of the
14 growth.

15 MS. GRAYER: Okay.

16 MR. BALDWIN: So if you -- if a bunch of these
17 charters are on the way to F, that would be good to
18 know right now before they get to D and F. Or are
19 they going the other way which would also be good to
20 know. And it would be good to know for actually all
21 the things that -- having that directional arrow.

22 MS. GRAYER: Okay.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Maybe think about that.

24 MS. GRAYER: Yes, sir. That's something that's
25 going to be hard to predict because our A to F rating

1 scales have been the same since 2018. We have not
2 changed the scales, but the scales will change this
3 year.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah.

5 MS. GRAYER: So it's going to be very hard to
6 predict. Like, in past years, if I went and talked
7 to a school, I would say, "Oh, you're 3.97 points
8 away from the next letter grade." There's no way for
9 me to tell you that this year because we're changing
10 the cuts.

11 This is the high school. This is all of our
12 schools in the state of Arkansas. More Cs than
13 anything. It's a little less normal because you have
14 far fewer Bs and Ds, and then very few Fs. And very
15 few As.

16 MR. SCOTT: Tiffani, forgive me. This slide
17 before, it was one school --

18 MS. GRAYER: One school --

19 MR. SCOTT: -- was an F?

20 MS. GRAYER: -- was an F.

21 MR. SCOTT: Both years? Do we know if it's the
22 same school?

23 MS. GRAYER: We can get that information.

24 Jeffery, do you know off the top of your head?
25 Can you look at that spreadsheet?

1 Jeffery will find out for you.

2 So on the high schools -- charters again, only
3 one F charter high school for both consecutive years.
4 We've got far more Cs and Ds. We took a decline in
5 the number of Bs, but the Cs, you know, it looks to
6 me like we had a decline from B to C in the high
7 school charters. The D's kind of maintained and the
8 As went up a little bit. So some of the Bs may have
9 went to A, but it looks like most of them went in the
10 opposite direction. Maybe a D went to a C.

11 Again, I would say that the -- the elementary
12 again would be my -- my greatest concern just because
13 the number of Fs.

14 DR. MOORE: So maybe also, next time y'all share
15 -- you know, I'll geek out on the math part with you.

16 MS. GRAYER: Yes, ma'am.

17 DR. MOORE: But on this, it may be interesting
18 to look at percents instead of raw numbers since the
19 raw numbers are changing year to year.

20 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

21 DR. MOORE: It might make it easier for
22 comparison to see the percents.

23 MS. GRAYER: Okay. And we -- these percents are
24 the number of charters that are D and Fs out of all
25 schools. We also looked at percentages of schools

1 that are D and F out of all schools and then of the
2 charter schools, how many were D and F. So --

3 DR. MOORE: So, like, go back to that previous
4 graph.

5 MS. GRAYER: So this is different data.

6 DR. MOORE: So on that I'm saying, like, the bar
7 graph part --

8 MS. GRAYER: Uh-huh.

9 DR. MOORE: -- 5, 8, 11, and 6, those are all
10 raw numbers?

11 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

12 DR. MOORE: Yeah. I'm saying for the bar graph
13 to be percents might make it visually easier to
14 compare.

15 MS. GRAYER: Okay.

16 DR. MOORE: So -- because right now I can't
17 really tell that they're -- the fact that it goes up
18 doesn't necessarily mean it goes up if -- the fact
19 that there are more schools now so. So --

20 MS. GRAYER: Right. I have got you.

21 DR. MOORE: Percentagewise.

22 MS. GRAYER: So I think this data is on the next
23 slide maybe.

24 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

25 MS. GRAYER: So I -- and so, Jeff -- Jeff and I

1 debated, we were like I think she wants this.

2 MR. FETTERS: This is my slide.

3 MS. GRAYER: And I was like, no, I think she
4 wants this. And I was like, well, we're going to
5 give her both --

6 DR. MOORE: Love it.

7 MS. GRAYER: -- because you can look at the
8 problem two different ways.

9 DR. MOORE: Yeah.

10 MS. GRAYER: So the percentages that I gave were
11 out of all schools how many charter -- out of all the
12 D and F schools, how many were charters? So these
13 are the percentages that are on the slides. Jeff was
14 looking at it --

15 MR. FETTERS: Isolating charters and saying
16 almost half of all charter schools -- right now.

17 MS. GRAYER: Yeah. Out of all the charter
18 schools, how many were D and F. So if you look at
19 all the charter schools in 2020, 63 percent of all
20 charters were D and F. And that is open enrollment
21 and district conversion. Out of -- or -- I'm sorry
22 -- 46 percent. Out of all charter schools --
23 elementary charter schools, 63 percent of those are D
24 and F. Out of all charters -- middle schools, 46
25 percent are D and F. And out of all high schools, 39

1 percent are D and Fs. So we looked at the problem
2 two different ways and gave the data from two
3 different perspectives.

4 MR. BALDWIN: So I think having the granular
5 information on this could be really important because
6 you could, you know, if you just see this and say,
7 well, 63 percent of all charter schools are D and F,
8 we just need to stop doing charter schools and go
9 back to something else. And I think -- I think that
10 would be a bad outcome for that -- for that
11 percentage. So having that granularity and looking
12 at the population served and all the things that we
13 talked about, I think would give a different -- would
14 cause a different outcome, I think. So I'm excited
15 that you all are going to dig into that.

16 And then the other -- the other thought I had
17 when I see this, you know, we -- the Charter Panel,
18 we do a lot of work on charter amendments and waiver
19 requests; that's mainly what do.

20 MS. GRAYER: Yes.

21 MR. BALDWIN: I think there's -- I think there
22 is a consideration possibly for the Panel to expand
23 itself. I don't know how that's done. But get into
24 more of this, I think this is the more, you know,
25 high-level responsibility of a state panel, to help

1 with this if we can. You know, I know you all at
2 DESE do this too. So there's a distinction, but I
3 would love -- I think you can see by the interest of
4 the Panel that we would all love to be part of
5 something like this, something proactive, positive,
6 helpful, you know, for the school.

7 MS. GRAYER: Well, we are always pleased to --
8 to help in any way. I'm also hoping with the
9 streamlining of our assessment system that we'll have
10 more streamlined interim assessment data that we can
11 progress monitor throughout the year. Everybody K --
12 K-10 basically is going to a streamline assessment
13 system and will also -- so we'll be able to kind of
14 progress monitor from the state side on all of our
15 districts. I think that'll help a lot. They'll have
16 -- even have, you know, the interim assessments and
17 the classroom formative tools that they can use. So
18 I think that will help us, you know, not just be
19 looking at some of the data, but also looking at that
20 formative data throughout the year.

21 So next up we have just a quick overview of the
22 districts that you've called here today and any
23 school performance related issues that -- that these
24 districts may have.

25 So Arkansas Lighthouse Academies is the first

1 district. This district has been identified for
2 directed support for 2023, and that directed support
3 has to do with their number of -- or percentage of
4 students for the district that are in need of support
5 for reading. So any district in the state of
6 Arkansas that has over 50 percent or more in need of
7 support for reading falls into level 4 directed
8 support. They had 50.55, so with some work, they may
9 reduce that percentage in the upcoming year --
10 they're right at the line -- and fall maybe into
11 coordinated support. That would be the -- the
12 desire.

13 Jacksonville -- actually, that should not even
14 be on there anymore. Oh, yes, should. Jacksonville
15 Lighthouse Elementary Academy was notified this year,
16 2023, for targeted support and improvement for their
17 students with disability subgroup. And what targeted
18 support and improvement means for a school is that it
19 has a subgroup of students that has been consistently
20 underperforming based on the state's definition. And
21 consistent underperforming means that for the current
22 year and two prior years, that subgroup has fell in
23 the bottom one percent of all Title I schools.

24 So there's about 840 Title I schools, so if you
25 took ten percent of that, that'd be 84; one percent

1 of that would nine roughly. So we line up all the
2 ESSA school index scores, look for ninth school and
3 anyone whose ESSA school index score for a subgroup
4 fell below that score, they would get notified.
5 Okay? I think we notified 53 schools this year and
6 we notified -- for students with disabilities -- we
7 notified four schools for economically disadvantaged
8 and two for African American.

9 This is their longitudinal data. As you can see
10 pre-pandemic, the letter grades looked a little bit
11 better here. It's just been post-pandemic that the
12 Lighthouse Elementary has been in that F status; and
13 the high school has fell into the D status. So --
14 and that's tracking all the way back to 2017.

15 For Founders, Founders High School Online was
16 cited this year for standard 1-C.1.1. They did not
17 test 95 percent of their all students group for ELA
18 and math during the spring of 2023 statewide
19 summative assessment. Their elementary online and
20 their high school online, neither one of those
21 schools met their participation requirements, and
22 both have been placed on a participation plan of
23 support for this school year because of their all
24 students group. What that entails is that we will
25 request that they test within the first two weeks of

1 the testing window, that they start doing their make
2 ups immediately following; we are going to request
3 that they do their assessment corrections during the
4 first week of the corrections window; and that they
5 attend all required trainings by the assessment unit
6 and by the school performance unit. So that we can
7 help them meet that 95 percent threshold this year.
8 This is their first year of being cited. And then we
9 have their historical data as well. And Jeffery did
10 a really good job of putting this together for me.
11 It shows that in 2019, the -- these schools were not
12 in operation.

13 For Friendship, Friendship as a district was
14 identified in 2023 for directed support. They had
15 56.49 percent of their students in need of support
16 for reading. And we also have their historical
17 school rating data here; and as you can see, they
18 also did not have any pre-pandemic ratings data
19 because they were not in operation at that time.
20 That's one of the tricky things about looking for
21 historical information on charters is sometimes you
22 just don't have it.

23 Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas was
24 also identified in 2023, for directed support. They
25 had 60.58 percent of students in need of support for

1 reading. And we also have their historical data
2 which for one school, Ivy Hill was in operation
3 starting in 2019; Nichols and Prodigy, we only have
4 data going back to 2022. We may have ESSA data prior
5 to that, but in 2020 we had no data because we did
6 not have a statewide summative; and in 2021, it's
7 important to remember that we waived the letter
8 grades, but we did run an ESSA school index score
9 that year.

10 That's all I have. Any other questions?

11 DR. MOORE: I'll just point out, like, to my
12 comment earlier, it's important to look at the
13 context of the charters and what community they're
14 serving. From one of the examples that you showed
15 that the elementary had an F and the high school had
16 a D. I believe that was the order. I looked at the
17 public school in that area and it was the exact same
18 --

19 MS. GRAYER: Yeah.

20 DR. MOORE: -- letter grades.

21 MS. GRAYER: Yeah.

22 DR. MOORE: And our hopes is that charters would
23 increase that student achievement, of course. That's
24 our hopes. But it wasn't -- I just want to make
25 clear that it's not like the public schools

1 outperformed --

2 MS. GRAYER: Absolutely.

3 DR. MOORE: -- either way. So just to be fair.

4 MS. GRAYER: For sure.

5 MR. FETTERS: But I do think it will be
6 interesting, to your point --

7 MS. GRAYER: Say you're name and your role.

8 MR. FETTERS: I'm sorry. I'm Jeffery Fetters,
9 school performance and monitoring. Thank you. Mr.
10 Baldwin's point about getting granular with the
11 methodology. It may be interesting to see virtual
12 platforms are performing at a better rate amongst
13 those 63 percent of elementary schools. So we'll
14 look at that and give you more information about not
15 just populations, but maybe, is it ALE, is it a
16 district conversion, something like that. So we will
17 get that information. Thank you. And great idea.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And to Mr. Baldwin's earlier
19 point, it might be interesting to look at the waivers
20 in relation to performance as well.

21 MS. GRAYER: Yes, that is a good idea.

22 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Other comments?

23 Thank you very much.

24 MS. GRAYER: Thank you for inviting me here
25 today and we look forward to coming back and bringing

1 you more data to review.

2 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thanks.

4 **III.5. FOUNDERS CLASSICAL ELEMENTARY ONLINE CHARTER REVIEW**

5 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. So next on our
6 agenda, we have Founders Classical Elementary Online
7 charter review. Will those who plan on speaking
8 please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear
9 that the testimony you're about to give is the truth,
10 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

11 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

12 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. You may begin.

13 MS. PROVENZA: Good morning. Thank you, guys,
14 for having us here. My name is Susan Provenza, and I
15 am the state director for Founders Classical
16 Academies of Arkansas with Responsive Ed Arkansas.

17 So at the December CAP meeting, there were a lot
18 of questions about data and letter grades and how
19 that was all going. And so that's why I'm here is to
20 help address some of those questions and answer some
21 of the questions that you guys posed in that meeting.
22 So here's kind of the outline of what I plan to cover
23 today with regard to those questions.

24 So the purpose of our charter is to provide
25 students across the state with a high-quality college

1 preparatory virtual education that includes best
2 digital learning practices and adequate wraparound
3 support on their journey to high school graduation
4 and further higher education. We also want to
5 provide flexibility to students and families in their
6 pursuit of a college preparatory education; and we
7 want to increase the impact of Founders Classical
8 Academies across Arkansas through an innovative,
9 high-quality virtual education experience.

10 Our pillars within Founders are knowledge, we
11 believe that the pursuit of knowledge is a never
12 ending and -- is never ending -- and we've set the
13 foundation for students to be lifelong learners.
14 Virtue, we believe knowledge alone does not make a
15 good citizen. The shaping of a student's heart is
16 more important than the shaping of their mind. I
17 like to say there are a lot of really well educated,
18 smart individuals out there making terrible
19 decisions, and we want our students to have the heart
20 to make great decisions. And then liberty, we
21 believe liberty is necessary for citizens to live and
22 participate in a free and just republic.

23 The mission for Responsive Ed Arkansas is to
24 provide hope to students through educational options
25 that promote a free society and cultivate moral and

1 academic excellence. And similarly, the mission for
2 Founders Classical Academy is that we seek to provide
3 a well-rounded education that is distinctively
4 classical, and it does three things: it promote --
5 it pursues knowledge, it promotes virtue, and it
6 prepares students for prosperous lives in a free
7 society.

8 So when you're looking at our Founders,
9 Classical Academy Online Elementary School, we
10 received an F for last year in terms of our letter
11 grade. This was the first year for this campus. And
12 at that campus we served grades 4-6.

13 So obviously, as was stated earlier, you know,
14 we received this information in October and our first
15 thing that we do at any of our schools when we get
16 our letter grades is do a deep dive into why.
17 Whether it's in A school and we have several of those
18 or whether it's a D or an F school, we want to know
19 what is it that we're doing right and what areas do
20 we need to work on in terms of growth? So we really
21 took a dive into our challenges, and we could kind of
22 narrow it down to these three categories: literacy,
23 attendance and student academic achievement and
24 growth.

25 So in terms of literacy, 20 percent of our

1 elementary students scored ready or exceeds in
2 reading. In terms of attendance, we had a pretty low
3 score on our student engagement SQSS indicator, which
4 was 21.43. And then in terms of our academic
5 achievement and growth, we had a score of five for
6 weighted achievement indicator, which placed us in
7 the lower achievement/lower growth quadrant. And you
8 guys also should have a copy of my narrative that has
9 some pretty charts in there for you too if you want
10 to take a look at those.

11 So something that's interesting to note as well
12 as number of kiddos that we're actually talking about
13 when you start looking at some of these numbers and
14 I'll get into that as we go. So challenges that were
15 contributing to that overall score, like I said, it
16 was our very first year, so we're navigating some of
17 those challenges. We served grades 4-6; we had four
18 students total, so low testing percentages there. We
19 had one who refused to test; we had one who didn't
20 show up for all of them; we had lots of various
21 things that were going on there that -- that
22 contributed to some of that.

23 In terms of our goals that are in our charter,
24 this is what we want to see. So we want to meet or
25 exceed the state average in overall literacy. And

1 our goal is that 80 percent of students who attend
2 our school for two or more years are going to perform
3 at or above the 75th percentile on a nationally
4 normed assessment such as NWEA MAP.

5 For literacy right now what we're looking at, 75
6 percent of students demonstrated growth from fall to
7 winter MAP. So I wanted to give you guys some like
8 real-time numbers this year. Okay, yeah. We got an
9 F last year. What are we doing about it? Okay. So
10 here's some real-time numbers. We've got 75 percent
11 of our students who are demonstrating growth in
12 literacy which is really good; we want to see them
13 continue. We've got 20 percent of our students last
14 year who were ready or exceeds on ACT Aspire reading.
15 So that's where we're getting that 20 percent of our
16 kids are reading on grade level piece.

17 In terms of math, again kind of the same goal
18 that we want to have there for math. And again,
19 we're seeing 75 percent of our students this year
20 right now who have demonstrated growth from the fall
21 to the winter on MAP.

22 And here's a fun thing to know is that typically
23 in most schools across the state, kids actually dip
24 from fall to winter. I don't know if you guys know
25 that, but they do. We don't know why. It's cold

1 outside; they don't -- they're not getting enough
2 sunshine. I don't know, but they typically dip. So
3 for our students to go up, it's very encouraging for
4 us.

5 This one's kind of a scary number, but last year
6 on the ACT aspire, we did not have any students who
7 were in the ready or exceeds category. But remember,
8 we're talking about four kids, so that's something to
9 consider.

10 And then our third goal is we want to meet or
11 exceed the state average in science, and I don't
12 have, like, a number percentage there. When we wrote
13 these goals, science was kind of a struggle across
14 the state for everyone. And so I just kind of went a
15 little bit generic on that. But we want to
16 demonstrate measurable student success in science.
17 And again we've got 67 percent of our current
18 students who have demonstrated growth from fall to
19 winter MAP and 33 percent of students were ready or
20 exceeds last year on the Aspire.

21 I did want to give you some student counts for
22 Aspire so that you could see that as well, where the
23 students fell in terms of what grade were they in.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Can I pause you for just a
25 second? I'm sorry.

1 MS. PROVENZA: Of course.

2 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin has a question.

3 MR. BALDWIN: What you're talking about is
4 really interesting and we'll consider that, but you
5 said something earlier and I just want to follow up.

6 MS. PROVENZA: You have got it.

7 MR. BALDWIN: That there's four students in this
8 class, so all these percentages are based on four
9 kids? So 25 percent means one child?

10 MS. PROVENZA: There you go.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Is that part of the issue is just

12 --

13 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely.

14 MR. BALDWIN: -- the low number of kids?

15 MS. PROVENZA: A huge part of the issue.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

17 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

18 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. Of course. Yeah. Feel
19 free to interrupt me. I will get going and so just
20 wave at me or something. Okay.

21 So these are the student counts and then these
22 are the content areas and where they -- where they
23 were in terms of were they exceeding or ready or were
24 they closer in need of support. So students who came
25 to us from a traditional learning environment,

1 improved academically from their previous year's
2 assessment. We did want to note that. So the kids
3 who were coming to us, what were they coming to us
4 with? Basically was the question we were asking and
5 what we found -- and then we're only talking about
6 four kids, so I don't want to drill down too far into
7 that for confidentiality reasons. But what we have
8 found is that the students who came to us from a
9 traditional learning environment, actually got better
10 when they were with us.

11 Innovations. So classical education in an online
12 environment is something that is unique and different and
13 a little bit unusual, and we're the only school in the
14 state who's offering it right now. We have a lot of
15 student engagement opportunities going on in our campuses,
16 high-dosage tutoring, personalized learning. We make sure
17 that we've got some learning mentors that are assisting
18 our students with time management and course progress. We
19 know that's really important in an online environment to
20 keep those kids engaged. We have learning facilitators
21 that are available for one-to-one tutoring opportunities
22 whenever a student needs it and also for specific concepts
23 that they need to have reinforced. We've got subject area
24 knowledge assessments and MAP data that assist the
25 instructional team to design personalized pathways for

1 learning for each student. We think all of that is
2 contributing to those kids that are growing while they're
3 with us. Scheduling flexibility is obviously something
4 that's important. Providing emergent technology, we've
5 got a dedicated support team, and they assist the students
6 with any issues that they're having in terms of their tech
7 and equipment needs. And then to add engagement and a
8 sense of community for students, we make sure that we've
9 got clubs and enrichment activities included in the
10 regular schedule.

11 So how are we being true to our mission statement?
12 Founders Classical Academy has a proven track record of
13 providing a high-quality classical education that
14 emphasizes increased levels of content learning while
15 installing -- and instilling qualities of scholarly
16 perception and response to that content and this
17 methodology is teacher directed. Educators are focused on
18 teaching those students to think for themselves, analyze
19 and integrate learning as relevant to everyday life. And
20 while we know we've got some room for improvement, we are
21 committed to continuing to be the only online classical
22 education program in the state and continuing to get
23 better at that.

24 In terms of the classical difference, we use a
25 research-based phonics curriculum with proven results in

1 early literacy acquisition. Our sister schools in
2 Northwest Arkansas and Bentonville and Rogers, those
3 elementary schools, they're two of the three charter
4 elementaries that were As, and this is what we do; and
5 this is what we're implementing in our online program as
6 well. So we expect to see some pretty fantastic results.
7 A world class math program focusing on acquiring
8 mathematical thinking skills, comprehensive history and
9 science curriculum, providing a strong knowledge
10 foundation for future reading and research. Emphasis on
11 critical thinking and inquiry, virtue-centered curriculum
12 and instructional method that teaches students effective
13 habits for success in college, career and life.

14 So how are we performing compared to other schools
15 and charters in the area? Just kind of wanted to give you
16 a little bit of a picture there. We're an online
17 environment, so these are all the other online schools
18 that we could get a hold of that were kind of comparable
19 to us, although enrollment numbers vary at the different
20 campuses.

21 In terms of our improvement plan, so what are we
22 doing? Literacy, one of the things that we did was we
23 wanted to make sure that our curriculum maps were
24 completely and totally aligned in terms of literacy
25 instruction to improve reading for 4-6. This year, we

1 added grades K-3. And so with the addition of that, we
2 have implemented some research-based curriculum, and we
3 conduct a daily synchronous reading lessons and then we
4 also have small group reading sessions. And then students
5 all have scored above the benchmark on DIBELS that's
6 current data -- receiving support from state appointed
7 literacy coach as well.

8 Implemented more efficient procedures for taking
9 attendance. Attendance is really important; we all know
10 that student engagement is key and so we have perfected
11 that. We learned a lot in our first year. In terms of
12 remediation, we implemented the REACH which is reviving
13 educational aspirations and cultivating hope program to
14 more closely monitor and support students who are not
15 engaging with school.

16 And then achievement and growth, we've got
17 instructional team which consists of coaches, learning
18 facilitators, learning mentors and they're all working
19 together to implement quality instruction. We have also
20 focused on some target professional development as well.

21 So results so far, this is some MAP data for you that
22 is current year achievement and growth, and it is for the
23 various categories. So you have your little legend over
24 to the side so that you know what you're looking for and
25 what you're looking at. But the really important quadrant

1 is the green one. That's where you want the majority of
2 your kids which is high achievement and high growth. We
3 want them scoring well and we also want them improving
4 even if they're already achieving at a great spot.

5 A little additional information for you guys. So 75
6 percent of our students in grades K-6 met their projected
7 growth from fall '23 to winter '24 in reading. Seventy-
8 five percent of our students in K-6 met projected growth
9 from fall to winter in math. And those percentages are
10 based on our current enrollment, we've got eight students
11 right now that's different from our initial four students
12 and it's different grade levels too. And then 67 percent
13 of our students in grades K-6 met projected growth in
14 science. All of our students in K-2 scored above the
15 benchmark for literacy in DIBELS.

16 In terms of our goals and outcomes, like I said, we
17 evaluated this information back in October and immediately
18 got to work on improvement plans. Here are some of the
19 things that we've done and where we see ourselves going.
20 In December and January, we started implementing
21 interventions. In January, we also implemented some
22 additional coaching. In terms of state assessments, those
23 are happening in March and April and May and June. We're
24 going to pull some end of the year data that we have for
25 our NWEA MAP. We know that we're not going to have state

1 assessment data for a minute and that's okay; we'll be
2 patient. And then our goal is to increase by at least one
3 letter grade. And we know that that may not actually be
4 in the fall when we get that information; that's okay too.
5 So that's our goal. I'm happy to answer any questions
6 that you guys have.

7 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore?

8 DR. MOORE: Sure. So I have just a couple of
9 questions. You mentioned that students improved from how
10 they came to you. Were these students in Triand and did
11 your reporting to the actual growth, because since you're
12 "n" is less than ten when I look on your report card, I
13 can't see.

14 MS. PROVENZA: I know; right?

15 DR. MOORE: Yeah.

16 MS. PROVENZA: It's fun data; isn't it?

17 DR. MOORE: Yeah. So do you know what your growth
18 was?

19 MS. PROVENZA: In terms of just, like, the individual
20 students when they came in what their growth was?

21 DR. MOORE: Your, like, your overall growth index.

22 MS. PROVENZA: No.

23 DR. MOORE: No.

24 MS. PROVENZA: But might have it. No. Ask the
25 question one more time.

1 DR. MOORE: So like on your assessments, it will look
2 at achievements and then it also looks at growth.

3 MS. PROVENZA: Right.

4 DR. MOORE: And so I was wondering if it had anything
5 for growth since you didn't have -- I don't know -- since
6 you weren't a school before, how that works. But if the
7 students were in Triand, maybe those scores were following
8 them.

9 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, they did. Okay. So now I know
10 what you're asking. Okay. So we did look in Triand and
11 that was how we determined on that -- that one slide where
12 I told you that the students who came to us are actually
13 improving with us. And that was based on their MAP data
14 is how we based that growth.

15 DR. MOORE: On MAP -- okay.

16 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

17 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So you had to manually calculate
18 that?

19 MS. PROVENZA: We did.

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

21 MS. PROVENZA: You bet you.

22 DR. MOORE: Okay. Yeah. That was one of my
23 questions.

24 MS. PROVENZA: Yeah.

25 DR. MOORE: And another question, I was looking --

1 when I was looking for those things, I was looking at some
2 other things on your accountability report and it -- one
3 of the factors is the student is unable to complete
4 learning activities due to poor Internet in residence and
5 four out of four were -- answered yes on that. So I just
6 -- was just wondering, has the Internet been an issue?
7 Because apparently that was a response of yes by all four
8 students. Have you had trouble with students being able
9 to submit assignments due to Internet or to engage due to
10 Internet?

11 MS. PROVENZA: So I think that initially some of that
12 was -- one of the things that we have done this year in
13 terms of improvement, is to have that dedicated tech team
14 that we have put in place that not only provides them with
15 devices and anything that they would need in terms of
16 that; but then they're also at the ready to answer
17 questions and to help them submit their assignments, log
18 on, engage in live sessions, all of that.

19 DR. MOORE: Okay. So you don't -- moving forward,
20 you think that won't be an issue --

21 MS. PROVENZA: Correct.

22 DR. MOORE: -- as much?

23 MS. PROVENZA: Oh, yeah. And we sent out hotspots as
24 well. Yeah. That's another solution to that problem.

25 DR. MOORE: Great. That's all my questions at this

1 time. Thank you.

2 MS. PROVENZA: Yeah. You bet.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Questions from you, Dr. Wright-
4 McMurray?

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do. So thinking back to the
6 four students that you said that you were able to serve
7 last year, I think you said maybe two of them came from a
8 more traditional learning environment; is that what you --

9 MS. PROVENZA: I think all -- I think all four of
10 them were in traditional learning environments previously.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. I guess I didn't
12 understand that when said it before, it was almost like
13 you said -- it was like you were saying that there were
14 some that came with traditional learning environments and
15 some that didn't and that you have better outcomes with
16 those --

17 MS. PROVENZA: Oh, I have got you.

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- that came from traditional
19 learning environment.

20 MS. PROVENZA: No. So the students who came to us,
21 based on their traditional learning environment, improved
22 with us while they were there.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

24 MS. PROVENZA: Yeah. With us, yes. Now we did have
25 one student, I believe, who was basically unschooled,

1 like, we could not find a lot of background information on
2 that student.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So then that leads to my
4 question, so when you have students that come to you in
5 those types of environments or situation, I know that you
6 kind of outlined how you're going to provide supports and
7 kind of close gaps for students that are from traditional
8 learning environments, but can you speak to if you have a
9 student that is like the one you mentioned? What are some
10 things that you guys have thought about that you need to
11 do to make sure that that student is also coming along
12 with their peers and meeting their level of growth?

13 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely. So particular with --
14 particularly with the instructional team that we have
15 implemented in terms of the student engagement -- because
16 what we're learning about students who come to us that are
17 not accustomed to going to school, is that they -- they
18 need additional support in terms of student engagement.
19 They need to understand why it's important. Why do I have
20 to log on? Why do I have to participate and engage? Why
21 do I have to do these things? So that one-to-one coaching
22 that we have going on is really assisting with that and
23 those students.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And part of the -- the logging
25 on process --

1 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So what are some steps beyond
3 if you have students that are not complying with
4 appropriately logging on like they should, the appropriate
5 attendance? Is there opportunity for them to be brought
6 in somewhere? Or is there -- is there a brick-and-mortar
7 option? Is there an option for them to sit down and work
8 with some face -- someone face to face? What are the next
9 steps if you have someone that is continuously not
10 appropriately logging into the online portal or system?

11 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely. Yeah. Go.

12 MR. FELTON, JR.: Dennis Felton, director of virtual
13 learning. One of the things is we're just trying to
14 assess the situation. Doctor Moore kind of brought that
15 up to make sure is it something as far as technology
16 that's going on that may be hindering you, is there's
17 something going on in the home that may be hindering you
18 from being successful? After we find that information
19 out, we do have intervention. We talked about the
20 learning facilitators and mentors just constantly checking
21 in. Part of that, if we realize that we do have a
22 brick-and-mortar location that is accessible to that
23 student and that family feels like that's the best option,
24 then we start -- we're able to facilitate those
25 conversations.

1 But most importantly when identifying what are the
2 barriers that are holding the student or family back and
3 then what are the supports we need to put in play. And
4 the only thing I was going to add to Susan's response is
5 we do realize there's an onboarding process when dealing
6 with a virtual student, and so I brag on our team. They
7 have strategically put a process together to do the
8 onboard -- the orientation of this is what it's going to
9 take to be successful in the virtual environment. And
10 just recently as last week, we started having
11 conversations around what does parent workshops look like?
12 How do we engage with parents to get them to help to be
13 able to support our online learner?

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And just -- last question. So
15 the four last year and then you move to K-6 and so you're
16 up to eight this year. So do you anticipate that you're
17 going to kind of stay in that range or did you have --

18 MS. PROVENZA: Definitely not the goal.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Because my thought and my
20 concern is that we'll continuously have this repeated
21 issue when you have such a small number of student's
22 you're pulling data from. If you have one or two that
23 don't do well, then it vastly skews all your other. So --

24 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- I'm just trying to get a

1 sense of what to expect going forward?

2 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely. So we've increased a lot
3 of our marketing in the state in order to -- to basically
4 get the attention of families who might want to
5 participate in the kind of learning that we're offering.
6 And so we are -- our goal definitely is to increase that
7 enrollment and that is something that we are working on
8 daily.

9 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott?

10 MR. SCOTT: Yes. Actually, Mr. Felton spoke to
11 something that is near and dear to mention just the word
12 barriers. Do you have a keen understanding now of some of
13 the barriers you are facing as you work to -- you've
14 identified the SMART goals. But to get to that level of
15 success that you would like to have, could you speak at
16 all to any of those barriers that are known?

17 MR. FELTON, JR.: Yeah. I think one I can speak to
18 that's kind of prevalent, especially in the virtual
19 environment, is technology. We realize that in a lot of
20 homes, some students don't have reliable emergent
21 technology. And so we've made sure that a part of the
22 onboarding process, we identify if the families have a
23 connectivity or doesn't have emergent technology and
24 getting that technology in the home.

25 The other thing is, I guess, I can mention the

1 learning coaches and facilitators. We realize that some
2 of these students, their parents are doing other things at
3 home or may be taking care of -- have other
4 responsibilities. And so the mentors and the coaches are
5 kind of like that champion that learning coach that
6 student -- coach is just cheering them on, making sure
7 they have issues -- because we know even if it's something
8 simple as I'm having trouble accessing or downloading this
9 or can't log in to this device, students can become
10 frustrated. So we've implemented a tech support where
11 students get immediate feedback whether they're having
12 issues with an assignment, whether it's academic based or
13 tech base.

14 MR. SCOTT: Okay. Thank you. As we know, much of
15 intel that we capture goes into the planning effort. So
16 the whole premise behind parents becoming equal partners
17 in the child's education, especially in the online world.
18 Love to better understand the data that you are gathering
19 to help build up to that level of intel that help you make
20 those business decisions. So can you speak at all to your
21 engagement planning effort in regards to increasing
22 parents as equal partners?

23 MR. FELTON, JR.: Yes. So we have kind of like these
24 ongoing meetings where we're kind of looking at the
25 overall data. And so just recently in our latest meeting,

1 one of the things we were looking at is, like, we
2 distribute a newsletter to our parents. And so, you know,
3 how important communication is in the virtual platform.
4 And we have been seeing a high percentage of parents --
5 because it gives us a report of the parents that actually
6 open that communication up and read it.

7 And so now we're in the steps of designing what does
8 that look like or opportunities for parents to engage
9 directly with the school as far as workshops and things of
10 that nature. And I know we're talking about elementary,
11 but she also has high school students as well. So we were
12 thinking about what does the virtual FAFSA workshop look
13 like for those families that need assistance for things
14 like that in regards to post-secondary opportunities?

15 MR. SCOTT: Very good. I'm just wondering -- to add
16 onto that, the survey data typically is just findings from
17 other -- the survey data that you provide is huge. So
18 thank you.

19 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

20 MR. BALDWIN: So the small number of students is a
21 unique challenge, and I'm pleased you doubled that size.
22 And I think you were asked a question about what size are
23 you going for, is there a number you can share that you
24 can share that is your goal for the virtual learning?

25 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. Well, we have a cap at 500. So

1 we're not going to get any bigger than that as of right
2 this second, unless we come back and ask for more kiddos.
3 So that -- I mean --

4 MR. BALDWIN: But do you have a goal for next year
5 and the year after and kind of working towards that cap?

6 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, we do. I don't have that with
7 me, but I know --

8 MR. FELTON, JR.: Like Susan said, we got 500 cap.
9 So if I was using a solid number that we're looking at
10 next year, we'd love to be at 100 students. One of the
11 things that we've tried not to beat ourselves up about is
12 she's offering a very unique program to the unique group
13 of students, and we know -- I think you got about 40 to 45
14 students in that school. And as we engage with parents
15 and find out their interests, we figure out that these
16 families are interested in a virtual school, but just not
17 a virtual school, a virtual classical school. And so
18 we're trying to stay committed to our mission and vision
19 at Founders Classical Academy as well as being responsive
20 to those families that need that -- want this option and
21 need this option.

22 MR. BALDWIN: The four students that you have, I
23 guess, as you were talking, I was wondering if they were
24 rural -- if they live in a rural environment or urban
25 environment? It goes back to the technology question.

1 MS. PROVENZA: I actually have that information.
2 Give me five seconds and I'll find it.

3 MR. FELTON, JR.: We have eight now.

4 MS. PROVENZA: Yes. So with -- with the current
5 student population, we have -- four of our kids who are in
6 the Northwest Arkansas area: Prairie Grove, Bentonville
7 and Gravette, specifically. We have four of our students
8 in Central Arkansas, Little Rock and Benton, specifically.
9 And then we have one student in Northeast Arkansas,
10 Jonesboro.

11 MR. BALDWIN: So they're all areas that should have
12 good Internet access?

13 MS. PROVENZA: Yes.

14 MR. BALDWIN: You would think.

15 MR. BALDWIN: Sometimes, maybe not?

16 MS. PROVENZA: You never know; right?

17 MR. BALDWIN: I like it that you're going to -- you
18 identify that on the front end, and I like your plan --
19 your agreement plan. I'm glad that you all developed that
20 right away. So it looks like you're making steps and
21 paying attention to things to make a difference.

22 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So --

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So thinking back to the -- you

1 said you had one student -- one student who just refused
2 to test. So how do you correct that? Or how are you
3 working to correct that? Could you just like -- how do
4 you -- I don't know how you --

5 MS. PROVENZA: You want to talk about? Yeah.

6 MR. FELTON, JR.: All right. Good question. So one
7 of the things that Arkansas is allowing to happen this
8 year is students to be able to take a remote -- take the
9 test remotely. And so in particular, this student had a
10 lot of anxiety about actually going into a larger setting
11 -- in a larger classroom to engage in assessment.

12 And so with this ability we're hoping that this
13 student can take the assessment in the comfort of their
14 own home with somebody that's proctoring it from our side
15 that meets all the rules of the assessment. And so we're
16 hoping that changes. The student literally was fearful of
17 the anxiety of getting out of the car. I think that she
18 actually drove to the school. They were at the location
19 --

20 MS. PROVENZA: They were at the location, and they
21 would not get out of the car.

22 MR. FELTON, JR.: -- wouldn't get out the car. And
23 so we were hoping that that would relieve that anxiety
24 about being able to take the assessment and most
25 importantly, hopefully performance wise; right? You're in

1 a comfort --you're in an environment you're comfortable
2 in. And so we hope that students are able to put their
3 best foot forward.

4 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore, did you have any other
5 questions?

6 DR. MOORE: No, thank you.

7 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So I did one question and that was
8 in looking at the -- the 20 percent of students and then
9 looking at the literacy rates, I know that you likely have
10 a literacy coach that's been assigned to you; is that
11 correct?

12 MS. PROVENZA: Yes.

13 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So --

14 MS. PROVENZA: We also have a district literacy coach
15 too that we -- in all our schools.

16 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. But you have a state one
17 too?

18 MS. PROVENZA: And we have a state one too.

19 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. Okay.

20 MS. PROVENZA: We do.

21 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: What level of access that they have
22 to the curriculum and the ability that sort of help
23 facilitate that?

24 MS. PROVENZA: Oh, tons. We had a great meeting with
25 her the other day --

1 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay.

2 MS. PROVENZA: -- actually about it to get some
3 feedback from her on how that was all going and how is it
4 working with the teachers and all of that.

5 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Oh, that's great.

6 MS. PROVENZA: And glowing reviews from her. So we
7 were glad to hear that.

8 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Excellent.

9 MS. PROVENZA: Yeah.

10 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Any other discussion?
11 Thank you very much.

12 MS. PROVENZA: You're very welcome.

13 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: We appreciate you coming today.

14 MS. PROVENZA: Thank you.

15 **III.6. SCHOLARMADE ACHIEVEMENT PLACE - IVY HILL CHARTER REVIEW**

16 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Next, we up we
17 have Scholarmade. If you would you raise your right.
18 Do you swear that the testimony you're about to give
19 is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
20 truth.

21 DR. ANDERSON: I do.

22 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you very much.

23 DR. ANDERSON: Good morning. I am Dr. Phillis
24 Nichols Anderson. I am the CEO/founder of
25 Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas. And thank

1 you for allowing this opportunity to talk today about
2 our academic performance last year. "The letter
3 grades are mostly an indicator of the population that
4 the school is serving," Dr. Sarah McKenzie from the
5 director of office of education policy, University of
6 Arkansas. So who are we serving? We are 96 percent
7 economically disadvantaged, 96 percent African
8 American, 29 percent of the students who scored in
9 the need support category in reading and science for
10 students with disabilities or characteristics of
11 dyslexia.

12 So we were asked to compare -- to provide
13 comparative data to comparable schools. And
14 Scholarmade Elementary Schools are in a higher
15 overall index rating than area comparable school.
16 And so these are schools that are serving 80 percent
17 or more African American students. So included is
18 Ivy Hill and Nichols Intermediate that also served
19 elementary grades. So we achieved a higher index
20 score than McDermott, Friendship (Little Rock),
21 Watson, Jacksonville Elementary, Jacksonville
22 Lighthouse, Mabelvale Elementary, Baseline, Capital
23 City, Washington, Western Hills, Harris, Brady, J.A.
24 Fair, Bell, Stephens, MLK, Seventh St. and Boone
25 Park. I also like to note that, like, many of our

1 students come from these schools.

2 So let's talk a little bit about the change in
3 proficiency levels and how we got to where we are.
4 So we had a decrease in our reading proficiency by
5 nine percent and science by 14 percent. Yet we did
6 have an increase in math of two percent and a
7 significant increase in English by 15 percent. Ivy
8 Hill's evaluation was limited to a singular -- a
9 singular grade level third grade with a cohort of 38
10 students, all of whom were economically
11 disadvantaged, and African American. Given the small
12 sample size, the value-added score may have been
13 disproportionately influenced by the performance of a
14 single student. Notably, 42 percent of schools
15 statewide experienced a decline in reading scores.
16 These third-grade students began their education
17 during the pandemic and are undeniably continuing
18 with the repercussions of disruptive learning,
19 particularly evident in reading proficiency.

20 Decline in reading scores indicate challenges
21 and issues with the reading curriculum Wit and
22 Wisdom, a struggling teacher and a high-need
23 population. Again, 29 percent of these students were
24 receiving support services. Similar to reading, the
25 negative percentage in science also indicates

1 challenges with the curriculum alignment, struggling
2 teacher, poor readers. And while the school did
3 experience a decrease in proficiency in reading and
4 science, it saw an increase in math scores for the
5 second consecutive year and in English by 15 percent.

6 I wanted to include also the change in
7 proficiency levels for Nichols Intermediate, which is
8 also serving elementary grades, and you can see for
9 this school we actually had an increase of three
10 percent in reading, a very slight decrease in science
11 of two percent, an increase in math by two percent
12 and an increase in English by 13 percent. Student
13 reading skills improved, resulting in a three percent
14 increase in reading proficiency. The negative change
15 of two percent in science proficiency indicates a
16 decline in student performance in this subject.
17 Actually, probably the change in the curriculum,
18 teaching methods, and external factors and really
19 misalignment in instruction and assessment. Student
20 mathematical skills improved by two percent. And
21 there was a substantial positive increase in English
22 proficiency of 13 percent. In summary, we did have
23 improved proficiency levels in three of the four
24 testing areas.

25 So I wanted to share this and to give an overall

1 overview. We are in our sixth year. We just
2 completed our five-year first term -- charter term
3 and so this is the first time we've had three
4 consecutive years of data. So for Ivy Hill Academy,
5 we had a 3.8 percent growth in math and met the
6 English readiness by 15 percent, had the decrease in
7 size and decrease reading. But in Nichols
8 Intermediate, we had increased proficiency levels in
9 three of the four testing areas. And Prodigy Prep,
10 which is our junior high, eight percent growth in
11 math, three percent growth in reading and no change
12 in the science. Despite the letter grades, we are
13 encouraged by the growth and the readiness levels
14 across all grades, growing -- growth in reading in
15 the upper grades and form targeted strategies needed
16 for third graders who are first time test takers.

17 Now this is the story for us. After our
18 inaugural year, 83 percent of our students fell in
19 the need support category for our baseline data in
20 2019. From 2022 -- that should be 2022 -- to 2023,
21 the percentage of students scoring in the need
22 support category for reading decreased from 64.98 to
23 60.58, decreased by 4.4 percent. But between 2019
24 and 2023, the number of students reading in the
25 lowest category has diminished by 23 percent in the

1 midst of a pandemic.

2 Our school improvement, one of the things that's
3 not -- that's not listed here that I want to talk
4 about is the change in the modifications in our
5 curriculum. We have full implementation of benchmark
6 literacy in grades K-6 as our core reading program.
7 We have continued use of Lexia as supplemental
8 resource and Sonday System for dyslexia. And we are
9 using elevated science that is supplemented by
10 Virtual Arkansas content, writing and document
11 preparation initiatives across all core content areas
12 and targeted skills practice. We adopted the AVID
13 program. We felt like our students needed
14 improvement in basic fundamental skills. AVID
15 focuses on building foundational academic skills,
16 equipping students with critical thinking skills,
17 student agency, communication, organization, note
18 taking, and time management. The focus areas of AVID
19 are computer science and numeracy, digital
20 citizenship and literacy school wide and STEM.

21 And in the area of professional development, we
22 focus on building teacher efficacy and content
23 competency. This summer, we held content boot camps
24 for our teachers in reading, math and science, and
25 where teachers were able to engage with the

1 standards. They also took test released items so
2 that they could also have a good understanding of the
3 prerequisite skills needed for students to be able to
4 master those standards. We partnered with Relay
5 professional development that delivered a number of
6 quality -- high-quality professional development for
7 our teachers, including deepening -- deepening
8 connections with students and families, fostering
9 trauma-informed classrooms, implementing engagement
10 strategies, setting and reinforcement expectations,
11 analyzing standards to support learning outcomes,
12 effectively checking for understanding and preparing
13 students for complex tasks.

14 We are also receiving support from School Kid
15 which is the literacy program that is being provided
16 by the state, in grades K-3 coaching. Science of
17 reading support plans are in place to move teachers
18 to proficiency in the science of reading. We have
19 aligned the new standards to our curriculum and
20 developed pacing guides. We're still focusing on
21 small group instruction, personalized learning,
22 academic support classes for all students and this
23 year we implemented a new initiative called rolling
24 study halls where we put onboard educators on school
25 buses to ride in the morning and in the afternoons to

1 support students with homework as well as they can
2 also read, and they can also sleep because they need
3 a lot of rest. A lot of them get on buses very
4 early.

5 So our mission, we are -- we remain committed to
6 prioritizing the emotional wellness of our students,
7 recognizing it is a pivotal factor influencing
8 academic success. We were focused on this prior to
9 the pandemic, and it is even more important at this
10 time after the pandemic. Developing emotionally
11 intelligent students equipped with the central core
12 competency serves as a catalyst for enhanced learning
13 outcomes. We actively use our personalized learning
14 model leveraging online platforms, tiered academic
15 support and standards-based instruction. We are
16 committed to providing a tailored education
17 experience for each student.

18 And because we know letter grades don't tell the
19 whole story, we had to share with you today that two
20 of our sixth-grade students from Scholarmade were
21 honored with the Young Authors Award for their
22 outstanding literary contributions. These students
23 are now published authors, and their books are
24 available on Amazon, and we are very proud of them.
25 And all of the proceeds from the book sales go to

1 them.

2 And we wanted to also bring the students to
3 life. Oh, go back. Can you move that? Well,
4 there's a video. If you can, go back. Well, that's
5 okay. There was a video there. We'd like to bring
6 the students into it was just sharing our mission and
7 vision. I thought it would be great for you to hear
8 our students be able to articulate that. So that's
9 my presentation.

10 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you very much. We
11 appreciate it.

12 Any questions, Dr. Wright-McMurray?

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you for your presentation
14 and I appreciate being able to see the comparison of your
15 peer institutions -- or peer schools -- and how you are
16 performing. I think that was helpful to see that
17 information. It goes back to my previous comments that
18 I've made before that sometimes there's value in being
19 able to see who we're serving, how we're serving them
20 versus just looking at the letter grade. And I had a
21 question written down, but I think you answered it looking
22 at the growth for reading and what was attributed to that.
23 But I think you answered it on that slide. And the
24 rolling study hall I thought was interesting. So how did
25 you guys come up with the idea of that or did you see it

1 somewhere else or --

2 DR. ANDERSON: Well, you -- you know, we're open
3 enrollment. So we have children that come to us from many
4 different places and really, honestly, we needed to take
5 advantage of every time that we have students. And many
6 of the students get on the buses very early in the morning
7 and they're on for a long time in the afternoon. And so
8 instead of just a bus monitor, having somebody ride the
9 bus, we wanted to level that up. And actually, we have
10 books on the bus and students are able to work on
11 homework. We're hoping to apply for a grant to get Wi-Fi
12 on the buses so that they can even do more while they're
13 on the buses, just taking advantage of every time that we
14 have those students.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thanks.

16 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott?

17 MR. SCOTT: Sure. I would like to build upon
18 that very point, I'm thinking to your bullet point on
19 how you handle emotional wellness. Could you
20 describe what would be a typical day? In the
21 morning, the child comes in -- or how -- what you're
22 doing to address the emotional wellness of the
23 children.

24 DR. ANDERSON: Well, on a typical day, what --
25 our framework is based on the Yale program RULER.

1 And so there is a morning meeting every morning where
2 the students identify their feeling, their emotion.
3 We started off with just -- with them identifying a
4 color, and the second year we were able to give them
5 the vocabulary because we want them to have the
6 lexicon to be able to describe their feelings,
7 something that a lot of us, even as adults, are
8 unable to do. And the feeling words are in green,
9 yellow, red or blue and it will tell the teacher how
10 that student is feeling. And if a feeling is blue,
11 which is normally depressed, you know, the rest of
12 the class will send encouragement to that student.
13 But it just gives the teacher information about that
14 student, and it allows them and cultivates them to be
15 able to identify how they feel and what their
16 triggers are eventually, and then how to move out of
17 that space. So that's attributed -- that's a key
18 part of it. And then the closing circle in the
19 afternoon is pretty much the same process where
20 they're able to share how they feel that day. And
21 anything that happened in that day, we want to try to
22 resolve before they go out of the door and let them
23 have some type of way to process that.

24 Additionally, we have social/emotional
25 intelligence lessons that our culture coordinators

1 also deliver to the students as well, and they are
2 around -- we have our -- our core competencies. So
3 they are around a number of things and so they are
4 able to develop respectful relationships, conflict
5 resolution, just being able to apply consequential
6 thinking to how they feel before they actually act
7 and consider the consequences of that action.

8 And I think the other thing, the biggest thing,
9 is that we don't suppress emotions. We teach them
10 that every emotion is valid, and that in itself
11 requires us to have a lot of expertise ourselves
12 because you can have a building with everybody crying
13 in the building. And, you know, we work hard to tell
14 students not to cry. We don't use that. But when
15 you have -- when you're trying to have an emotionally
16 intelligent building, then the adults also have to
17 have that level of emotional intelligence. So we end
18 up working with the entire school -- adult community.

19 MR. SCOTT: Very good. Thank you. You also
20 mentioned how you're engaging or deepening
21 connections with families and students. Could you
22 describe that.

23 DR. ANDERSON: One of the things -- one of the
24 consequences of the pandemic is that we were
25 definitely disconnected from families. Our buildings

1 were closed, families could not come in. Those
2 relationships definitely were disconnected. And so
3 what we have been trying to do -- this year feels
4 like the first normal year for me since we opened the
5 school. And so we've been there, part of the
6 principal council, we communicate. The parents --
7 teachers have a newsletter; principals have a
8 newsletter; I have a newsletter. We have a Google
9 Drive with just resources in it that the parents have
10 links to that is -- we can just drop resources in it
11 that they can have access to at all times. So we
12 engage them in that way and we really, honestly
13 cannot move forward or be this great, amazing school
14 without our parents and we know that.

15 One thing about the pandemic that I know is that
16 when children were home, parents were very much
17 involved. We had parents that were, like, on Zoom
18 classrooms with their -- with their students, and now
19 they've all gone back to work. So we have to figure
20 out a way to keep them engaged in that way. But we
21 saw a difference in the academic performance when
22 parents were engaged at that level.

23 MR. SCOTT: Okay. Thank you.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin?

25 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you for being here today. I

1 can't imagine how hard it would be to open up schools
2 right around the pandemic, right before and right
3 after. So God bless you and all your people.

4 DR. ANDERSON: Thank you.

5 MR. BALDWIN: I know that's been hard. The two
6 things that you mentioned in your plan to improve the
7 grades was the different curriculum -- new curriculum
8 and then also professional development for your
9 teachers. Is that -- I guess, I was going to ask if
10 that is a result of the grades or were you already
11 seeing a challenge with the curriculum and
12 implementing something new and also for your
13 professional development?

14 DR. ANDERSON: That was a result of the letter
15 grades. It got us really thinking and really
16 analyzing the scores. And that that particular
17 curriculum was above grade level for our students and
18 was just very challenging for them and it was very
19 challenging for the teachers as well. And we had a
20 departmentalized format where we had one teacher
21 teaching English, one social studies, math and
22 science. So they were traveling to a four team and
23 that was just too much.

24 And so we have one teacher that's teaching all
25 four content areas now and they have that support,

1 and they can focus in on their one group of children.
2 And it just keeps the children from having to adjust
3 to so many different teachers. So that was as a
4 result of the letter grades.

5 The PD is definitely a result. What we found
6 was -- were that some teachers were uncomfortable
7 teaching some standards because they didn't have the
8 knowledge themselves about that. They may have, you
9 know, not particularly gotten that -- that standard
10 when they were in college or whatever. So we take it
11 upon ourselves to build their skill set and to make
12 it okay not to know. I was a teacher for 14 years.
13 I had to study every night before I taught. And so
14 we want to normalize that. We want to normalize
15 everybody being a scholar, not just the -- the
16 students. And so that was the purpose of those
17 content bootcamps.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you very much.

19 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore?

20 DR. MOORE: I too was impressed by the rolling
21 school bus thing. I -- that is amazing. Everyone
22 should do that. That is just very amazing, so I love
23 that because I see kids in my neighborhood being
24 picked up, like, at 6:15 in the morning knowing how
25 long they're going to be on that school bus --

1 downtime. And so that's a great idea and congrats on
2 some of your improvements that you've done with
3 students.

4 I did have a couple of points -- and you spoke a
5 lot about the PD, and you mentioned the science of
6 reading. And I believe that you had teacher
7 licensure waivers.

8 DR. ANDERSON: Uh-huh.

9 DR. MOORE: So I was just curious, your
10 teachers, do you feel that maybe not being trained
11 originally in the science of reading has something to
12 do with the -- the very low test scores in ELA?

13 DR. ANDERSON: I think that we have challenges
14 -- and I've shared this before -- attracting top
15 talent. And there -- we all know that there is a
16 teacher shortage. And -- and so it -- that remains a
17 challenge for us. So yes, I -- I definitely feel
18 that we don't always attract teachers that have been
19 equipped in the science of teaching. I'm a
20 traditionally trained educator -- traditionally
21 trained teacher -- and so I understand how important
22 it is for teachers to have that coursework. But we
23 have people who we are holding responsible for that
24 who have not had that coursework, so as a school we
25 have to do whatever we can to build their capacity

1 and to give them that support until they can acquire
2 the formal knowledge that they need to be highly
3 effective teachers.

4 DR. MOORE: Okay. Well, I commend you on making
5 sure that they're getting that training; that's
6 important. And then I had a clarifying question. In
7 your presentation it says between 2019 and 2023, the
8 number of students reading in the lowest category has
9 diminished by 23 percent. And were you talking about
10 Ivy and Nichols --

11 DR. ANDERSON: As a district.

12 DR. MOORE: As a district?

13 DR. ANDERSON: As a district.

14 DR. MOORE: Okay. Because just looking at the
15 Ivy School numbers, and it was -- in need of support
16 was 70.27 percent.

17 DR. ANDERSON: Uh-huh.

18 DR. MOORE: So that would have meant that, like,
19 93 percent were in need of support prior. So I was
20 just wondering if the scores were really that low --

21 DR. ANDERSON: That --

22 DR. MOORE: -- in 2019?

23 DR. ANDERSON: Remember, Ivy Hill was just third
24 grade.

25 DR. MOORE: Uh-huh.

1 DR. ANDERSON: It was a K-3 school. That
2 percentage is for the district. That support -- that
3 directed support that the state gives is based on the
4 district.

5 DR. MOORE: Okay.

6 DR. ANDERSON: So that was -- where we started
7 was 83 percent and we've been able to reduce that to
8 60. And that's important; that's one of our goals to
9 -- to reduce the students that are scoring in the
10 lowest category.

11 DR. MOORE: All right. Thank you.

12 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: I had a question about the --
13 the reason why a vendor was chosen rather than a
14 literacy coach. Is there -- was there a reason
15 behind why you went with School Kit versus having a
16 state literacy coach?

17 DR. ANDERSON: That's the option we were given.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Oh, okay.

19 DR. ANDERSON: Uh-huh.

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay.

21 Any other questions?

22 We really appreciate you being here today.

23 DR. ANDERSON: Thank you.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Oh.

25 MR. SCOTT: Just one quick one.

1 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott has one.

2 MR. SCOTT: Yes. And that is, a lot of it is
3 from a geography standpoint and where you pull from,
4 could you describe -- it's not like you're pulling
5 just from neighborhood within your immediate
6 geography, are you?

7 DR. ANDERSON: Where our -- where do our
8 students come from?

9 MR. SCOTT: Yes.

10 DR. ANDERSON: From most of the schools that
11 were listed there. We have a stop at North Little
12 Rock; we have a bus that goes out -- all the way out
13 to southwest Little Rock; we have children that are
14 right in the community; we have children that are
15 able to walk to school. So literally they come from
16 almost every zip code. We have students that come
17 from West Little Rock also as well. So parents
18 choose us based on what they feel like their children
19 need and what they feel like we can give them. So we
20 have three buses and so we try our best -- we --
21 sometimes we run double routes. We try our best to
22 meet the needs and be able to so that transportation
23 is not a barrier.

24 MR. SCOTT: Excellent. So the last question --
25 my last question is simply that. You are describing

1 the known barriers that you're facing from the
2 families perspective, but also from your perspective
3 and in serving those needs.

4 DR. ANDERSON: I'm sorry. What was the
5 question?

6 MR. SCOTT: The question is on needs --

7 DR. ANDERSON: Uh-huh.

8 MR. SCOTT: -- and they are both sides.

9 DR. ANDERSON: Right.

10 MR. SCOTT: So families have needs. So if you
11 can elaborate a little bit on what your known needs
12 are from the family perspective, but also as you move
13 if -- as you identify barriers that you're facing and
14 moving the needle of success. That would be great.

15 DR. ANDERSON: Well, of course. We're this year
16 100 percent economically disadvantaged. So whenever
17 you're dealing with families that are living in
18 poverty, they're going to bring a lot of great needs
19 to them. And so we -- in the past we have done quite
20 a few things. We've, you know, supported them with
21 school supplies. We provide school supplies for
22 them. We also have varied times for varied methods
23 of having conferences. So we still have conferences
24 and meeting via Zoom for their convenience and
25 they're also able to come in as well. So I think

1 more than anything it is just being aware that those
2 things impact learning and making sure that we
3 provide -- we still provide Chromebooks, we provide
4 the Chromebooks for home use. You know, Internet
5 connectivity when requested. But just really
6 understanding and being conscious that being African
7 American who are still scoring below their peers no
8 matter what the economic level of that family is
9 being conscious of that and working strategically to
10 address those needs. So we know that the pandemic
11 disproportionately impacted black and poor children,
12 and that's who we serve. And so knowing that, we
13 have to do a better job of meeting children where
14 they are and recognizing the basic skills that they
15 may not have and going back to the basics to give
16 them those skills.

17 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Any other discussion?

19 Thank you so much. We --

20 DR. ANDERSON: Thank you.

21 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: -- appreciate you being here.

22 Ms. Summons, do we need to take a break or
23 are we good to keep going?

24 MS. SUMMONS: Lunches are here, but if you want
25 to break or if you want to keep going, that's up to

1 the Panel.

2 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: It's up to the Panel. What is
3 your wish?

4 Five -- five-minute break? Okay. We'll take a
5 five-minute break and then we'll come --

6 (After a break was taken, the proceedings were
7 resumed as follows, to-wit:)

8 **III.7. JACKSONVILLE LIGHTHOUSE ELEMENTARY CHARTER REVIEW**

9 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. We'll call the meeting
10 back to order. Our next agenda item is Jacksonville
11 Lighthouse Elementary Charter. And would all those
12 who plan on speaking on behalf of the charter stand
13 and raise your right hand. Do you swear that the
14 testimony you are about to give is the truth, the
15 whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

16 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

17 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
18 much. You may begin.

19 MS. NOEL: Good afternoon. I am LaShawnDa Noel,
20 chief executive officer and superintendent of
21 Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools. We stand before
22 you today to speak about Jacksonville Lighthouse
23 Elementary campus, it's grade, who we are, our
24 mission, our purpose, goals, data, improvement plan
25 and innovations.

1 Jacksonville Lighthouse Elementary is a member
2 of the Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools District
3 and currently serves grades K-4. Because we believe
4 learning never ends, our approach and purpose is
5 tailored to the needs of each scholar from the day
6 they step into their kindergarten classroom until
7 they walk across the stage to accept their diploma.
8 Upon graduation, each scholar is academically sound,
9 technologically savvy, culturally competent,
10 sustainability conscious and well prepared for
11 college or the post-secondary career of his or her
12 choice. The school's mission is to engage, embrace
13 and empower its scholars, families and community
14 members to create a vibrant, supportive local
15 ecosystem for all for education. Today you will hear
16 from members of the team in this order: Mr. John
17 Osborn, education director, from Jacksonville
18 Lighthouse Elementary; Ms. Anita Hart, K-12 principal
19 for Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter Schools; Dr.
20 Sarper Turker, assistant superintendent of
21 construction and curriculum for Arkansas Lighthouse
22 Charter Schools, who is joining us virtually; and Mr.
23 Wendell Scales, deputy director of innovation for
24 Lighthouse Charter Schools. Mr. Osborn.

25 MR. OSBORN: Good afternoon. My name is John

1 Osborn. I serve as the education director for
2 Jacksonville Lighthouse Elementary.

3 Before I get started and go in depth with some
4 of our goals and some of what we've been working on,
5 it's very important that we understand the community
6 that we serve. So just some very quick demographic
7 information. Our school population is made up of
8 seven percent English language learners. It is made
9 up of 64 percent low-income scholars, and 14 percent
10 of our scholars are eligible to receive special
11 education services.

12 Our district of Arkansas Lighthouse has four
13 main goals that were approved when our charter was
14 renewed. These four goals also translate into the
15 individual school of Jacksonville Lighthouse
16 Elementary and I'm going to briefly go over these
17 four goals.

18 The first one is centered on improving
19 proficiency in math and decreasing those that need
20 support. The same thing with reading. One of our
21 goals is also centered around family satisfaction and
22 our last goal was centered around the number of staff
23 we have who are certified.

24 The first goal is our math goal. Our charter
25 goal is that we would increase our proficiency by two

1 percent each year and we would decrease the percent
2 of scholars in the needs support category by five
3 percent each year. For our math goal, we did meet
4 this goal. Our math proficiency increased by nine
5 percent from the 2022-2023 -- for the 2021-2022
6 school year to the 2022-2023 school year and the
7 needs support category decreased by eight percent.
8 So we increased our proficiency scores, and we
9 decreased those in needs support.

10 Our reading proficiency was an area that we did
11 not meet our goal. Our reading needs support
12 scholars did decrease by five percent and our reading
13 proficiency increased by two percent. However our
14 goal was to increase by three percent and decrease by
15 six percent. So the reading goal was not met.

16 For our overall school community satisfaction,
17 our goal was to make sure that families are satisfied
18 at an 85 percent satisfaction rate. Our survey
19 results from last school year showed that 87 percent
20 of our stakeholders were satisfied.

21 The other goal we have was around licensed staff
22 members. Our goal is that 85 percent of staff will
23 be licensed by the end of the next five years. Last
24 school year, 36 six percent of our staff members were
25 either certified or on a path towards certification.

1 As of this current school year, it's actually 52
2 percent of our staff are either licensed or on a
3 pathway to licensure. Here's just a quick overview
4 of the data showing that our needs support decreased
5 by eight percent and our readiness increased by nine
6 percent. This is data pulled -- all of the data that
7 is presented is pulled straight from ADE My School
8 Info. Here's the reading data that shows the
9 decrease in the needs support as well as the slight
10 increase in the readiness. Here are the results of
11 our survey showing the 87 percent satisfaction rate.
12 And then finally, just a reminder, we are currently
13 sitting at 52 percent of staff either certified or on
14 a pathway to certification. At this point, I will
15 turn it over to our K-12 principal of Arkansas
16 Lighthouse Chart Schools, Ms. Anita Hart.

17 DR. MOORE: Can I ask a clarifying question
18 about something you just said? What do you mean by
19 they're on a pathway exactly? Are they on ArPEP or
20 what?

21 MR. OSBORN: So they are either currently
22 certified, or they are in an MAT program where they
23 are working on reciprocity, or they are working on
24 ArPEP. So something where they are actively involved
25 to get certified.

1 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

2 MR. OSBORN: You're welcome.

3 MS. HART: Good afternoon. My name is Anita
4 Hart and I serve as the K12 principal for Arkansas
5 Lighthouse Charter Schools. One of the things that
6 we take pride in at Lighthouse is ensuring that we
7 are always mindfully creating educational experiences
8 and social/emotional experiences that will help our
9 scholars become productive members of society and
10 their community. This is not just for them; this is
11 for their family as well. So with that in mind, we
12 always want to keep in mind what the community looks
13 like, which brings us to our comparison.

14 What we did is we pulled information from
15 neighboring schools that similarly look like our
16 scholars' schools as well. So we pulled data from
17 schools that have a similar make up of scholars with
18 the same socioeconomic status, the same number of
19 scholars or similar around the same number of
20 scholars who receive special ed services, as well as
21 their ethnic background. What we were able to see is
22 that in math, our scholars at the elementary school
23 actually outscored two of the neighboring schools.
24 We pulled data from Murrell Taylor Elementary as well
25 as Jacksonville Elementary. We were able to see that

1 they did extremely well and one of the things that we
2 can contribute to that honestly is Mr. Osborn, the
3 principal, who has an extensive math background. We
4 also looked at how we taught math last year and how
5 we were able to pull those standards, break them
6 apart and pull the skills out and be extremely
7 intentional about how we taught the skills embedded
8 into those mass standards.

9 When we looked at reading, we were able to see
10 that we did not quite make the mark. We did not make
11 the same number of strides as we did in math. So we
12 understood that there was work that we needed to do.
13 So considering that we needed to really focus on
14 reading, we wanted to do a deep root cause analysis
15 to figure out exactly what we did well as well as
16 where we needed to go differently this year. So one
17 of the things we're going to do is look specifically
18 at reading and I'm going to now turn it over to Dr.
19 Turker, our assistant superintendent to kind of go
20 into more detail regarding that.

21 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Can I ask a clarifying
22 question?

23 MS. HART: You sure can.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So I'm looking at the
25 achievement and it says 2016 to 2023. Does that mean

1 that's the data from all of those years compiled?

2 MS. HART: So for math or reading or just both?

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Both.

4 MS. HART: Yes. So we're looking at the trend
5 of what happened between those years and how we
6 scored.

7 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So are you seeing that there
8 is an increase over time? Was there an increase or
9 was it higher previously and now going lower? Like,
10 what are we looking at in terms of the trend?

11 MS. HART: And Mr. Osborn can speak probably
12 specifically to some of those numbers. Do you want
13 to answer that?

14 MR. OSBORN: So over the years from 2016 to
15 2023, we're seeing more of a loop. We're seeing
16 where it was steadily increasing all the way to about
17 2020, and that's when we started -- that's when we
18 see a pretty massive dip right when -- unfortunately
19 a lot of schools saw a dip --

20 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Right.

21 MR. OSBORN: -- and now we're starting to see a
22 steady increase, which I'll share some of that more,
23 like, immediate relevant data in just a few minutes.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay.

25 MR. OSBORN: But it -- it was more of a loop.

1 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. I appreciate that.
2 Thank you.

3 DR. MOORE: To his question though, does this
4 graph represent just '23?

5 MR. OSBORN: That graph does represent over the
6 whole -- over the whole year --

7 DR. MOORE: The whole time --

8 MR. OSBORN: -- over those -- from 2016. Yes
9 ma'am. To 2023.

10 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

11 MS. HART: So we're going to move it -- go ahead
12 and turn it over to Dr. Turker who is going to unmute
13 himself and speak to us.

14 DR. TURKER: Good morning, everybody. I am Dr.
15 Sarper Turker, the assistant superintendent at
16 Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools and I am honored
17 to stand before you today to discuss the
18 comprehensive root cause analysis that we call RCA
19 that has been instrumental in guiding our path
20 forward. While I regret not being able to present
21 alongside my team in person, I am committed to
22 providing a thorough virtual explanation of the
23 issues we have identified and the measures we are
24 implementing.

25 The root cause analysis serves as a powerful

1 tool, propelling us beyond superficial solutions and
2 guiding us to the core of our challenges. It acts as
3 a catalyst for continuous improvement emphasizing the
4 significance of data collection and comparison. By
5 harnessing the power of data we empower ourselves to
6 make well, informed decisions underpinned by
7 objective evidence. This data driven approach serves
8 to minimize subjective biases, thereby increasing the
9 likelihood of achieving successful outcomes.

10 Allow me to outline the primary issues
11 identified through the RCA in the past two years.
12 Number one was ineffective leadership practices.
13 Before I start this, this team that you see in front
14 of you, standing before you, were all formed in two
15 years. So this root cause analysis, it's prior to
16 this team has been informed -- or formed.

17 The absence of structures, systems and
18 procedures for running effective schools have seen a
19 significant challenge. Our leadership exhibited a
20 laissez-faire model which research suggests doesn't
21 yield a positive effect student achievement.

22 Two, isolation caused by ineffective leadership.
23 The leadership approach resulted in isolation within
24 the building. Our transformation of instructional
25 leadership models emphasized collaboration as proven

1 by John Hattie's research highlighting collective
2 efficacy as one of the highest impact factors on
3 student achievement.

4 Three, unclear instruction model. This focus on
5 tier two and tier 3 interventions created undue
6 pressure on educators to address the achievement
7 gaps.

8 And finally, lack of evidence for a high-quality
9 curriculum alignment. Our investigation revealed a
10 lack of evidence supporting the use of high-quality
11 curriculum aligned with essential standards. In
12 response to these findings we have made strategic
13 decisions to ensure that Arkansas Lighthouse Charter
14 Schools provide the highest quality education. Our
15 focus areas include academic excellence which we
16 called Arkansas Lighthouse Charters School
17 instructional model that we implemented and created
18 in the past year. Implementing a robust
19 instructional model geared towards academic
20 excellence. Talent recruitment, ensuring that the
21 right individuals are in the right positions to
22 maximize their impact. Culture shift, incorporating
23 20 professional days aligned with teacher excellence
24 and support system domains. We changed our calendar
25 this school year. We added additional -- total up to

1 20 professional developments to increase our
2 teacher's teaching capacity. Stakeholder engagement,
3 facilitating monthly district meetings to discuss
4 goals, plans and barriers fostering a collaborative
5 approach with our district staff members as well as
6 our stakeholders. Emphasis on evidence-based
7 collaboration, committing to make decisions void of
8 bias and emotion ground in evidence-based practices.
9 As we embark on this transformative journey, we are
10 confident that the strategic initiatives will lead us
11 toward a brighter future with Arkansas Lighthouse
12 Charter Schools' archnemesis with academic excellence
13 and student success. Now I will go back to Mr.
14 Osborn to share further information on the
15 improvement plan.

16 MR. OSBORN: So to go a little more in depth
17 based on some of the things that Dr. Turker shared.
18 I do want to note that the paper you have in front of
19 you is an updated version of the presentation because
20 I am about to share some of the data around what we
21 have been doing and what we have been working on. So
22 you --

23 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I have a question.

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

25 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sorry. I have a -- and I

1 want to ask it before I forget. So the root cause
2 analysis was conducted when? When was that
3 conducted?

4 MR. OSBORN: So the root --

5 MR. TURKER: It started last -- if I may, Mr.
6 Osborn. So that analysis -- it's been an ongoing
7 process. This team being formed in the past year,
8 and it started in that time frame. So actually we go
9 back to 2021-2022 school year. Based on our -- the
10 observations, based on our teacher's feedback, based
11 on our, you know, checking our curriculum lesson
12 plans and alignment and we see a lot of gaps. And
13 going through our PLC models and understanding our
14 teacher's capacity based around understanding what is
15 essential, what is not essential, you know, those
16 standards, it's allowed us to get a clear
17 understanding. On the leadership area where
18 isolation towards collaboration, based on our
19 observations, we realizes that teachers were in their
20 classrooms, there were no collaboration. Because of
21 that made a change which Mr. Osborn will go into more
22 in depth PLC model which our school starts late on
23 Monday -- an hour -- that's all our teachers. They
24 get together and collaborate together and answer core
25 questions to answer and prepare themselves for

1 lessons. So it's been an ongoing and that process
2 will continue as we move forward till we get to A/B
3 schools in all three different departments.

4 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So the root -- the
5 analysis was done in response to your previous letter
6 grades that you received? And --

7 MR. TURKER: Yes, ma'am.

8 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- and so as you're moving
9 forward, I guess, I'm trying to get a sense of the
10 application of it. I may not be asking the right
11 question, but I'm a little confused.

12 MR. TURKER: What are we going to do about those
13 things? Is that what -- am I hearing your question
14 correctly?

15 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Well, so it sounds like it
16 -- if I understood you correctly, you initiated the
17 analysis in 2020?

18 MR. TURKER: Yes. Ongoing process and it's
19 still going.

20 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So some of the
21 things that you have listed here, were they still
22 occurring currently while you are saying that's the
23 reason why your letter grade is low and you're
24 addressing those now? Or these are things that you
25 determined from the 2020 analysis, and you

1 implemented but yet you're still seeing a low letter
2 grade?

3 MR. TURKER: So that analysis started and the
4 results, based on what we have currently in front of
5 you, is F score -- analysis didn't impact F score.
6 We're trying to implement and with the current
7 analysis improve the score for upcoming school year,
8 which that's why we're taking additional improvement
9 plans and action currently at this school year, so
10 that our -- we don't see isolation. We don't see,
11 you know, social/emotional issues in our teacher side
12 and scholar side. All this support based on based on
13 evidence. So we are applying and implementing
14 currently at this school year.

15 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I'll wait to see if
16 there's --

17 MS. HART: Anita Hart --

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

19 MS. HART: -- K12 Principal.

20 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you.

21 MS. HART: Maybe to add a little clarity, so
22 when we started the root cause analysis, and we
23 started looking at things -- so even if we go back
24 two years. After we collect all the data, then
25 things are implemented within the following year or

1 going into the next school year. So some of the
2 things that we'll be talking about today is a direct
3 result of the things that we -- the data that we've
4 been collecting over the last couple of years. So
5 one of the things that Dr. Turker mentioned was some
6 of the inconsistent practices with leadership. So
7 restructuring what the leadership looks like within
8 in the district, within the buildings, the guiding
9 coalitions -- that's something that started last
10 year, and we're just continuing to build on it. So
11 we may not see the full effect of it right now, but
12 we will start seeing -- if you start listening -- and
13 once we start listening to the data that Mr. Osborn
14 is going to present, we'll start seeing that some of
15 those practices that have been put in place, we're
16 already seeing the effects of it. If that adds a
17 little clarity?

18 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: It -- I just think once
19 you guys -- maybe I'm getting ahead of some of your
20 other slides, so I'll just wait. Thank you.

21 MS. HART: You're welcome.

22 MR. OSBORN: We appreciate the clarifying
23 questions. That right there is a summary of root
24 cause analysis is, it's not based on a feeling. It's
25 not based on well I think this is or isn't working.

1 It is -- it's cold, hard quantitative data that says
2 this did not work. It did. Is there improvement?
3 Is there loss? Anything like that. So some of the
4 information I'm going to share are current results
5 based on our four main assessment platforms: NWEA,
6 iReady, Lexia as well as the science ATLAS interim.

7 So if you look at the pages 17, 18, 19 and 20,
8 they have a breakdown, but I'll go over what those
9 numbers mean. The first one on 17 is a breakdown of
10 our NWEA data, comparing the 20 -- the '22-'23
11 winter, the spring '22-'23, and the winter '23-'24.
12 So basically a progression from winter to spring to
13 winter as well as some information about our fall to
14 winter growth and our winter-to-winter growth.

15 So it's broken down -- the first piece of
16 information is in the winter of '22-'23, we were
17 looking at 33 percent of our scholars -- so 33
18 percent of our students -- were performing at the
19 50th percentile or above on the winter assessment.
20 We had 59 percent of our students were either at the
21 40th percentile or below. So that's a year ago, '22-
22 '23 winter.

23 In the spring we saw a dip. We saw 30 percent
24 of our students at or above 50th percentile and then
25 we saw 65 percent of our students at the 40th

1 percentile or below. So that's where we wanted to
2 see. Okay. What is improving from the spring to
3 winter? For our current winter data, we saw that 34
4 percent of our students are now at the 50th
5 percentile or above.

6 So over -- from winter to this winter, a one
7 percent increase. From spring to winter a four
8 percent increase. We also saw that now 57 percent of
9 our students are at that 40th percentile or below so
10 we did see a decrease of two percent from winter to
11 winter, or we saw an eight percent decrease from
12 spring to winter.

13 The two things that do stand out for NWEA though
14 is the way that MAP assessment works is, from winter
15 to winter they give you a year projection of growth.
16 They also give you a fall to winter projection. So
17 from last winter to this winter, we did meet 80
18 percent of what was expected for growth and from fall
19 to winter we met 77 percent of what was expected for
20 growth. That's just one -- that is just one data
21 point. We have four.

22 The other one is iReady. This was one that was
23 very promising. This is our most recent data point.
24 iReady is similar to NWEA. It is a platform that has
25 diagnostics. It also provides lessons. The most

1 exciting piece of feedback from this was that
2 currently -- this was taken after NWEA -- 32 percent
3 of our scholars are performing on grade level in
4 reading whereas last winter, we had 23 percent
5 performing on grade level. So if you do a year
6 comparison last winter to this winter, we're talking
7 about a nine percent increase.

8 If you look at those in the needs support
9 category on iReady, we went from a 38 percent to --
10 I'm sorry, 35 percent to a 28 percent, meaning a
11 seven percent decrease in the needs support category.
12 That is the direction we want to see. That's the
13 information we're looking at to see if we need data
14 that shows the practices we're putting in place are
15 working. iReady, just like NWEA, gives a growth
16 projection. That projection -- we've already met 55
17 percent of the year projection. They don't give a
18 half year; they just give a full year. We've already
19 met 55 percent of it.

20 The next piece of data will be our ATLAS interim
21 test. The ATLAS interim data actually showed us a
22 lot of areas to improve, and you'll see that on slide
23 19. Our third graders beat the state average by two
24 points. So they were on track to perform where they
25 need to be. Our fourth graders missed the mark by 12

1 points. So they did not meet the state average, so
2 we know where our focus is.

3 And the very last piece of information we want
4 to share again showing -- because we know that if we
5 want our ESSA score to improve, if we want this to be
6 -- if we want to be here for longevity -- we have to
7 make sure our K-2 is doing the right thing. Our K-2
8 data showed at the beginning of the year, with Lexia,
9 another popular supplemental resource, that 25
10 percent of our students were performing at grade
11 level or working on grade level skills. As of
12 Friday, February 9, when the data was pulled, 65
13 percent of our K-2 scholars are now working on grade
14 level in Lexia and of that 65 percent, 11 percent are
15 actually working above grade level in our K-2 band.

16 MR. BALDWIN: How did that happen -- such a big
17 improvement?

18 MR. OSBORN: So that is a -- that's a very good
19 question. That is actually one of the barriers we
20 want to look at because right now we have four
21 different pieces of assessment data and the first
22 three are an overview of K-4. So that's an overview
23 of how kinder first, second, third and fourth grade
24 are working. Lexia for us is just focused on the K-2
25 grade. Just seeing what kinder, first and second

1 grade are doing.

2 So I wanted to share the data before we got into
3 some of the improvements that will go a little more
4 in depth about what Dr. Turker and the team were
5 talking about. We know that the biggest barrier --
6 our biggest issue has been reading. Thus we've
7 adopted the P.L.A.Y. initiative: prioritizing
8 literacy and achievement year around as the theme for
9 the school to make sure that we're promoting reading,
10 the science of reading, as well as the most important
11 thing which is instilling a love for reading and
12 learning in all of our scholars. This is not just
13 something we do, but something that we actually live
14 and breathe with our actions.

15 The first thing we've done is adjusted our
16 master schedule and added DEAR time -- drop
17 everything and read. This is every morning. It's
18 every afternoon. Everything stops.
19 Scholars/teachers get a book out and they just read.
20 They have multiple platforms. They have the library,
21 the classroom library, books in the cafeteria as well
22 as an online source, get Epic, where they can pull
23 any book they want. We stress the importance of as
24 long as you read. What the content is, if it's not
25 curriculum, and you just need to read, that's fine,

1 pick out something to read. In grade level meetings,
2 teachers are continuing to learn about new reading
3 initiatives. We have had so much support from APSRC.
4 We have two literacy specialists with them, a
5 literacy specialist with School Kit, and our on-site
6 literacy specialist who's been supporting all
7 literacy teachers this school year.

8 We've also been focused in the PLCs. So as Dr.
9 Turker mentioned, a huge issue that came up was that
10 we weren't implementing PLCs correctly. There was
11 too much isolated planning. As a result, we were not
12 achieving collective efficacy. The belief that we
13 were all moving in the right direction as we know
14 from John Hattie's research, one of the most
15 effective ways to improve student achievement. With
16 PLCs, the focus is reading standards whether you are
17 an art teacher, a PE teacher, a math teacher. We are
18 looking at reading standards to make sure we
19 understand and know them and are actually
20 implementing them in everything we do.

21 Even small things and celebrations we do --
22 recognizing scholar birthdays every day -- and every
23 month the scholars get a book for their birthday. At
24 the end -- right before winter break, the Sertoma
25 Club of Jacksonville, one of our partners, gave us a

1 massive donation that allowed us to buy a book for
2 every single child for the holiday break.

3 All classes are making sure that they are
4 putting up sound walls, word walls, vocabulary walls
5 and following what is required by the science of
6 reading. Again, thanks to the support of APSRC to
7 encourage the love for reading, we're making sure the
8 scholars participate in monthly literacy projects
9 that implement collaboration, creativity, curiosity,
10 and critical thinking. Our teachers meet regularly
11 as we mentioned in PLCs. They are also now meeting
12 every week with myself and the literacy specialist,
13 so they are collaborating constantly at least twice a
14 week to make sure they are going over their data,
15 making sure they're going over their lessons.

16 Also, it is crucial, just like we talked about
17 with collective efficacy, building student ownership
18 -- another very, very powerful tool that will improve
19 achievement, making sure that our scholars know the
20 data. And we do not have teacher-led conferences, we
21 have scholar-led conferences to make sure that the
22 students are the ones when we have conference time,
23 to actually share their data with their families.

24 Because we've been talking about reading so
25 much, it would be -- I would be amiss if we didn't

1 the science of reading and everything, we're doing to
2 meet those requirements. As we know, a lot of laws
3 are in place that may -- needed to make sure that
4 science of reading was done by this year. We are
5 very happy and confident to say that we have met
6 these. The first one, that all members of Arkansas
7 Lighthouse will either be R.I.S.E. assessed and
8 proficient or on a pathway by October 1. Every
9 single elementary staff member met that criteria.
10 They were either observed by an assessor and marked
11 proficient or they are on an appropriate pathway
12 toward proficiency. The other one is that all K-12
13 classroom teachers will be trained or on an approved
14 pathway by December. As of December, every single
15 member of the elementary school has been through the
16 science of reading training. Same thing with all
17 K-12 special service teachers, PE -- making sure that
18 they are on appropriate awareness pathway. As of
19 December, every single staff member in the elementary
20 building is now on the approved pathway either
21 proficient, coded correctly or they have been marked
22 aware because they have completed that training.

23 Again, going back to talk a little bit about the
24 master schedule. The master schedule has been
25 adjusted to include tier two and tier three time as

1 needed. Dr. Turker mentioned earlier there was an
2 issue in the instructional model. There was such a
3 heavy emphasis on tier two, tier three, that we
4 missed the most important piece which was tier one --
5 making sure that everything we're doing is grounded
6 in that tier one essential standard. Now the tier
7 two, tier three blocks are built in as additional
8 time. Our model makes sure that we do whole group --
9 15/20 minutes -- but even in small group, we are
10 still meeting that essential standard. If tier two
11 and tier three is needed there is time built into it,
12 but the majority of that block needs to be tier one
13 and making sure it is scaffolded or enriched
14 correctly depending on the child, but that tier one
15 drives absolutely every single thing we do. So
16 again, that intervention schedule is built into
17 everything.

18 Again, as Dr. Turker mentioned, the PD days.
19 Now we have an additional 20 PD days -- breaks for
20 scholars. Those days have been heavily emphasized to
21 do reading to make sure that we are doing training
22 with APSRC, making sure we're meeting in PLCs and
23 collaborating about those reading standards, but
24 making sure that that has been the focus of
25 everything we do.

1 Again this is -- these are some of the data
2 sources that we use. The ones that were shared
3 today, iReady, Lexia, NWEA and ATLAS, just some of
4 our major data sources, but I was very excited to be
5 able share a little bit about some of the key
6 specific things we are doing to improve reading. We
7 know that was our issue. We know where the barriers
8 fall, and these are the things we have put in place
9 this year and the progress we've seen to improve it.
10 At this time, I will turn it over to our deputy
11 director of innovation, Mr. Scales, to talk to you a
12 little bit about some of the more bright, creative
13 things in our district. Thank you.

14 MR. SCALES, JR.: Good -- is it morning, good
15 evening? Good afternoon. Wendell Scales, Deputy
16 Director of Innovation. As they talked through the
17 improvements, we know innovation are the things that
18 help spur and keep us moving forward. We have some
19 exciting things to announce in regard to our Ag STEM
20 them initiative. In addition to P.L.A.Y., that
21 undergirds our literacy, we'll be launching our
22 freight farm on our campuses to ensure that Ag STEM
23 pathways are available for our scholars, not just for
24 9-12, but K-8 -- K-12 experiences as well.

25 These initiatives align with our extended

1 calendar. We had some great opportunities during the
2 summer, and we believe that an extended calendar
3 gives us more opportunities for seat time and
4 continued teacher development. Undergirding these
5 opportunities with our parent universities creates
6 that community collaboration to ensure that our
7 families are available and aware of what is going on
8 with these innovations, but also can play a key role
9 in how we're navigating and moving forward.

10 I do want to stress that none of this is
11 possible without partnerships. Our Ag STEM
12 initiative is undergirded with -- we have an
13 extensive relationship with the University of
14 Arkansas Bumpers College Ag and the Division of
15 Agriculture as well who has been supporting of our
16 expansion of this unique initiative. And we believe
17 that it's definitely going to shift the opportunities
18 for us to focus on urban Ag, but also new
19 post-secondary opportunities focused in climate jobs
20 as well.

21 MS. HART: Questions?

22 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore?

23 DR. MOORE: That was a lot of information. That
24 was great. I appreciate all this information and I
25 really don't have any questions right now at this

1 time.

2 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin?

3 MR. BALDWIN: I agree. Great presentation. You
4 guys are on top of it. Thank you.

5 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott?

6 MR. SCOTT: I will -- I do have a few questions.
7 Again, great amount of detail. Definitely appreciate
8 that. I'd love to hear more about your partnerships.
9 In particular, a lot of times we look at -- on our
10 end when we get the letter grades and we're clueless
11 about what's going on in the activity on that end.
12 Partnerships are huge. As we know, you're serving
13 the kids from morning to afternoon and learning
14 continues after school, it continues in the home,
15 within the community. So if you could share a little
16 bit more about that partnership you have,
17 specifically about agriculture, that would be
18 awesome, as well as the effort you have to grow your
19 parent capacity. They are equal partners as well.

20 MS. HART: Thank you for that question. So yes,
21 we pride ourselves on our partnerships with the local
22 community as well as state stakeholders. When we
23 opted to extend our calendar year, we knew that would
24 potentially would be an issue for some of our parents
25 and so we involved the local community -- the

1 Jacksonville Recreation Center, the Jacksonville Boys
2 and Girls Club, and partnered with them to assist us
3 in finding space for our scholars and our families
4 who may not have had places for scholars to go during
5 the weeks that we are off.

6 And so First Arkansas Bank & Trust is also a
7 major partner for us with their financial literacy
8 piece. We know many talk about financial literacy as
9 it relates to schools and scholars, but we try to, I
10 guess, make that bigger and better by going into the
11 community and speaking with our families about the
12 importance of financial literacy too. So through our
13 parent university, they come in and they give -- they
14 may do conferences, or they may come in and do
15 presentations around different things that we feel
16 like are important to our families and our scholars.
17 Is that -- that's the local partner. I'm going to
18 have Dr. -- Mr. Scales -- Dr. Scales come in and talk
19 to you about the University of Arkansas partnership
20 that we have.

21 MR. SCALES, JR.: In what, 2021, we're beginning
22 -- we began a journey with Bumpers College where we
23 created a one-day emergent experience. We took a
24 hundred of our scholars and we did a whole day on the
25 campus. We have since grown that to a three day -- a

1 four-night, three-day residential component for our
2 seventh and eighth-grade scholars. This freight farm
3 that we're going to be putting on our campus has the
4 opportunity to extend and be a bridge for our 9-12
5 population where these scholars not only get to be at
6 the end of a state of the art technology and shipping
7 container farm, they can grow up to six to seven tons
8 of specialty crops -- everything from kale to carrots
9 to flowers. And it will be a student led Ag
10 production in collaboration with MANRRS, Minorities
11 in Agriculture and Other Related Natural Sciences,
12 where now we don't have to go to the campus. We can
13 bring stakeholders from our campus and share best
14 practices and emerging technologies. But empower our
15 students really to help this effort with food
16 security and food waste, but also learn as well
17 because Jacksonville itself is a food desert. So we
18 know this is an interesting collaboration, not just
19 for our community, but helping our -- empower our
20 students for the jobs in the future as well.

21 DR. MOORE: Can I add a question that goes along
22 those lines? I'm just wondering -- and I probably
23 overlooked this. I was looking back through things.
24 What's your engagement with the military community
25 and what percent of your students are military? If

1 you said it, I'm really sorry if you said your
2 percentage.

3 MR. SCALES, JR.: Yeah. We have a military
4 campus on the base for fifth through eighth grade?
5 Fifth through eighth grade. Heavy engagement there,
6 you know. Ms. -- well, I'm thinking of a teacher
7 right now. I mean, we're always doing something to
8 ensure that our campuses off campus are tied to
9 campuses on the military installation. Kudos to our
10 family community engagement coordinator. She's
11 leading the charge in how we anchor communication
12 with all of our campuses and is a lead for making
13 sure that when we do things on base, we're
14 prioritizing, making sure our other community
15 stakeholders are aware. So high population. I don't
16 know the exact data for the enrollment from the
17 military families.

18 MS. HART: Forty-six percent.

19 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

20 MR. SCOTT: I appreciate that question. I
21 actually had that in mind especially when I look at
22 Jacksonville as a community --

23 MR. SCALES, JR.: Uh-huh.

24 MR. SCOTT: -- and how there's a huge push for
25 quality education --

1 MR. SCALES, JR.: Uh-huh.

2 MR. SCOTT: -- and having community partners
3 there that are with you to help in regards to that.
4 So understanding the needs of the families, I know
5 you have capacity from the standpoint of your staff,
6 the assumption, is there -- you have a plan to
7 incorporate your engagement plan into the overall
8 school improvement plan. So how -- describe for me
9 how that works.

10 MR. SCALES, JR.: Well, I would say we're
11 working to ensure that that piece is aligned with the
12 improvement plan. From a parental engagement
13 standpoint, I mean, we're -- starting this year we
14 are doing home visits to ensure that we're assessing
15 the needs of our families. We know that everybody
16 has different -- every family has a different set of
17 needs in regards to the things their scholars need
18 when they get to school, taking that data to
19 reinforce how our principals and staff lead their
20 teachers in the building in the day to day. I think
21 we're taking those priorities and trying to ensure
22 that they are part of the overall guidance of the
23 organization.

24 MR. SCOTT: I appreciate that. That's certainly
25 a sweet spot. In the sense that when it comes to

1 identifying needs, we can map the appropriate
2 solutions, but a lot of times you need to build a
3 trust --

4 MR. SCALES, JR.: Uh-huh.

5 MR. SCOTT: -- with the parents to be able to be
6 open and candid about what those needs are. So,
7 encourage you to continue that.

8 MR. SCALES, JR.: Thanks.

9 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

10 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: No other questions other
11 than thank you for your presentation and taking the
12 time to come in and giving us a little bit more
13 context of what's happening with your school. Like I
14 said before, the last one is very difficult to
15 sometimes look at a letter grade and be able to
16 determine what's happening. So to be able to have
17 additional input is always great. And I just
18 continue to encourage you, especially on your Ag
19 pieces. If there's things that we can do at the
20 State Department to help you with that process, just
21 let us know. Always like to have an opportunity for
22 students that are exploring Ag to also be exposed to
23 FFA and I don't know if that's a part of what you
24 guys are also doing. Didn't hear it so that's why I
25 had to ask because I know that's always a great

1 resource to support the work that's happening in the
2 classroom. Thanks.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And then just to piggyback off
4 of what Mr. Scott said, I think that the, you know,
5 the charter would do well by looking into some social
6 design principles. There have been projects similar
7 to your Ag project and food deserts. Maryland in
8 particular had a very interesting project where they
9 went out in the community and actually started
10 delivering groceries that they were growing there in
11 the urban garden and so that was kind of a, you know,
12 a take on that. But then taking that same principle
13 and piggyback the needs of the community and what
14 else could you do to sort of ignite that partnership
15 and get those parents and stakeholders involved.
16 Yeah.

17 MR. SCALES, JR.: Thanks.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah. Thank you very much.
19 We appreciate it.

20 MS. HART: It was 2022, not 2020.

21 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Oh.

22 MS. HART: Just FYI.

23 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: That's -

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I gave up on that question
25 because I --

1 MS. HART: It was 2022, not 2020.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- I was like, so you
3 waited four years? Okay. All right. That helps me.
4 Thank you. Thanks.

5 DR. MOORE: Hey, I do have one little question.
6 You mentioned the food desert and I was trying to
7 look at that just because I personally have gone to
8 your program many times on my way home instead of
9 going out of my way once I get to Cabot to go to
10 Kroger. So tell me more about Jacksonville being a
11 food desert because you have a Wal-Mart Supercenter,
12 a Kroger --

13 MR. OSBORN: Yes -- so we --

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- Edwards --

15 MR. SCALES, JR.: Yeah. No, no, no. We've used
16 the environmental justice tool to highlight and
17 pinpoint priority areas within the community and
18 we're literally right behind -- our school is an area
19 that is severely impacted. Now obviously, there is a
20 local grocery store, but it's the access too, so we
21 understand that the unique opportunities we get to
22 present as he alluded to. We have an ambitious
23 vision to make our campus a sustainable food system
24 where we can, you know, have locally sourced right
25 here in our community so families who can't, you

1 know, or due to disabilities or what have you, can't,
2 we can be that bridge for their result. And even
3 work with our local growers. Sometimes it's not
4 about proximity. We don't even know what's in it
5 from a health standpoint. So just kind of working
6 with our partners again to alleviate some of these
7 pain points throughout the community for the scholars
8 that we serve throughout Jacksonville.

9 DR. MOORE: That's wonderful. And certainly the
10 size of Jacksonville -- there are many parts that
11 aren't close to one of those stores. So --

12 MR. SCALES, JR.: Yeah.

13 DR. MOORE: -- I just wanted a little more
14 information about that.

15 MR. SCALES, JR.: No, no. You're good. Thanks.

16 DR. MOORE: Thank you. That's great.

17 MR. SCALES, JR.: Uh-huh.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So it's 12:57 right now. We
19 have one more presentation left to go, and I do know
20 lunch is here so it's up to the Panel if we want to
21 break for lunch and come back or do you want to
22 continue on?

23 DR. MOORE: Although my stomach is ready to eat,
24 I would hate to make them have to wait --

25 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Right.

1 DR. MOORE: -- for us to eat lunch. So that
2 doesn't seem right.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Okay. Then we will --

4 DR. MOORE: If others are okay with that.

5 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I'm fine with that.

6 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Then we will
7 continue on and -- yes.

8 Thank you, Mr. Baldwin. We appreciate it.
9 Thank you so much.

10 DR. MOORE: Thank you all. Great presentation.

11 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

12 DR. MOORE: It was very thorough. Thank you.

13 **III.8. FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE ACADEMY CHARTER REVIEW - FRIENDSHIP**
14 **ASPIRE ELEMENTARY AND FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE SOUTHEAST PINE BLUFF**

15 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So next on the agenda we have
16 Friendship. If you would raise your right hand --
17 all those that plan on speaking on behalf of the
18 charter. All right. Do you testify that what you're
19 about to say is the truth, the whole truth, and
20 nothing but the truth?

21 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

22 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
23 much. You may begin.

24 DR. SIMMONS: Thank you. Good afternoon and
25 thank you for holding off on lunch to let us go ahead

1 and get finished. I will promise you that I will be
2 brief, but I will be thorough.

3 Today I'm here to present on behalf of
4 Friendship Aspire. This is my first year as
5 superintendent, so I don't know any of you and you
6 probably don't know me so I'm just going to tell you
7 a little bit about myself. This is my 38th year in
8 education. I've served as a teacher, an assistant
9 principal, a curriculum specialist, a dean of
10 academics, a middle school and STEM principal, a
11 university professor, a SPED program administrator
12 and now I'm superintendent. So I've spent my entire
13 -- I started teaching when I was 20, so if you do the
14 math, you know how old I am. We -- and when I say
15 we, I'm talking about FEF and FAA have 11 schools
16 here in Arkansas. Today I'm only going to talk to
17 you about two, Pine Bluff -- the Pine Bluff Southeast
18 and Little Rock. So our purpose -- let me introduce
19 my team. I'm sorry. I digress.

20 I'm the superintendent of Friendship Aspire
21 Academies. I'm Dr. Denise Simmons. I have with me
22 Dr. Phong Tran, who is the former superintendent, and
23 Dr. Tran is going to address historical information
24 and data as he was the previous superintendent. I
25 have with me Ms. Toni Dickerson. Ms. Toni Dickerson

1 is our coordinator of testing and accountability.
2 She is going to talk with you about data if any of
3 those questions come up. We also have with us -- and
4 I did do an updated slide, but it didn't get in. So
5 we have with us Mr. Scott McRae. Mr. Scott McRae is
6 our director of finance and if any finance questions
7 come up, he will address them. And then finally, we
8 have our chief executive officer, Mr. Joe Harris.

9 So in answering the questions that we received
10 about our charter, I'll start with our purpose. The
11 purpose of Friendship Aspire Academy Arkansas focuses
12 on providing a world class education which motivates
13 students to achieve high academic standards and enjoy
14 learning. As a lot of the other charters said -- and
15 we've been here since about what -- 9:00 this morning
16 so we've heard everybody -- and what they say kind of
17 resonates with us. We have students who are coming
18 from large populations of living in poverty areas.
19 They are underrepresented and underserved. Eighty-
20 two percent of our students enrolled in our schools
21 are low income according to My School Info. Students
22 received -- they were severely impacted by learning
23 loss during COVID, and I did hear that resonate in
24 several others. And our students actually do enjoy
25 coming to the school in the extent that when it's

1 time for them to go home after aftercare, which ends
2 at 6:00, they're still coming back to the campuses.
3 So I get calls from parents -- from principals and
4 they'll say, "Hey I'm still on campus because I'm
5 still trying to run the kids off and have them go
6 home." So I do feel that we are fulfilling our
7 purpose at Friendship Aspire. Our students have been
8 instructed at high levels. We use a depth of
9 knowledge, levels two and three, which help engage us
10 through this in a greater level than just a depth of
11 knowledge, level one, which is just basic recall.

12 For our mission, the mission of Friendship
13 Aspire Academy is to provide a world class education
14 that motivates students to achieve high academic
15 standards, enjoy learning and develop as ethical,
16 literate, well-rounded and self-sufficient citizens.
17 Friendship Aspire seeks to fulfill this mission by
18 providing students a high quality in liberal arts
19 education focused on providing -- preparing students
20 with the academic and life skills needed to be
21 successful in college and beyond. We have -- we do
22 provide a high-quality education that is STEM based
23 to all of our students -- K all the way through
24 ninth. The students enjoy learning and show up at
25 school consistently and work hard to learn the

1 material. Our campuses integrate literacy and life
2 skills in all classes and hold students and faculty
3 accountable. We will always seek to find additional
4 ways to continuously comply with our mission. We are
5 true to our mission for the reason I just mentioned
6 and the fact that we are preparing students for
7 careers that currently do not exist.

8 We were asked about our SMART goals and also our
9 demographics. Our SMART goal for the Little Rock
10 campus, goal No. one, the percentage of students
11 scoring proficient or above in English language arts,
12 reading and mathematics will increase by ten percent
13 from the previous year. We decided to use the NWEA
14 data as opposed to ACT Aspire as we are -- have
15 phased out ACT Aspire with the new state test ATLAS.

16 So in doing this, the way that we're going to
17 improve our scores is by train -- providing training
18 and support to our teachers. On each campus we have
19 content specialists. We also have content
20 specialists who are brought to us from APSRC. We
21 have impacted -- we've started the co-teaching model.
22 So we have co-teaching on both campuses, Little Rock
23 Elementary as well as the Southeast campus. We have
24 professional learning communities. And I did hear
25 one of the young men talk about how the teachers feel

1 isolated when they are in professional learning
2 communities. At our campus at Southeast I'll talk
3 about TLC rooms, and we'll talk about how that is not
4 something that we have currently at Friendship. On
5 our elementary campuses, our teachers plan together.
6 They plan with their academic director as well as
7 their content coaches. And I'll be honest, there are
8 times that Dr. Tran and I sit in with them during the
9 PLC meetings just to make sure that everything is
10 being done with fidelity.

11 We also have common formative assessments that
12 are administered to our students weekly. We collect
13 the data. Ms. Dickerson analyzes it. We go back, we
14 present it to the principals. The principals go over
15 that information with their teachers, and we do that
16 every Monday. And then we do some daily and weekly
17 checks of data throughout the system. We also have
18 data-driven instruction that's based on the
19 information that we learn from our CFAs.

20 As you know, we have the new test -- the new
21 assessment ATLAS. So once we learned about that, we
22 began aligning our standards, our goals, and our
23 pacing guides to make sure that we covered all of
24 those standards. We are, and I'll be honest,
25 concerned about the uncertainty of the ESSA

1 accountability formula as it hasn't been updated yet
2 or adopted. Our pacing guides are developed and
3 based on the active Arkansas academic standards. We
4 have a team of content specialists who meet with us,
5 and we put together -- we have put together the
6 standards for the rest -- the pacing guide for the
7 rest of the year.

8 So you asked the question, why was there a drop?
9 Well, there were several reasons and I -- even as a
10 new superintendent, I came in and I started asking
11 questions; and I've polled students; I've talked with
12 teachers; I talk with administrators; and I also talk
13 with my team that's here behind me. We found that
14 there were several factors. We had some personnel
15 challenges that led to changes in personnel. So we
16 have some people who were with us last year who are
17 no longer with us. Everyone is being accountable for
18 executing their duties.

19 So there are changes in the testing procedures
20 that also impacted our student performance. We
21 learned that our students test better when they are
22 testing with people they are familiar with. Last
23 year we had the students test with people from my
24 network who they were not familiar with. And even
25 talking with the students, they said, "I didn't know

1 that guy." I said, "Did you do your best?" And
2 they're, like, "No." And even talking with the
3 adults, they were, like, those kids -- I don't know
4 those kids. Some of them were terrible. They were
5 talking, you know, whatever. So it was a lot of that
6 stuff going on. So we've gone back to having our
7 students being tested by familiar people, not
8 necessarily their teachers, but someone that's in
9 their building so that we can ensure that we get the
10 true scores because we -- I don't believe that those
11 scores are a true indication of what our students can
12 do. And all of our tests were administered with
13 fidelity.

14 We did take over Lighthouse Pine Bluff campus as
15 well as the Lighthouse North Little Rock campus so
16 they're now part of the Friendship family. If we go
17 over to -- go to goal No. two. We are going to
18 increase average daily attendance by 90 percent or
19 higher and the way that we're doing that is by
20 monitoring the attendance, tracking the trends,
21 attendance -- making attendance calls when students
22 are absent and also providing incentives to those
23 students. Last year our students were at 90.89 for
24 attendance so our goal is to definitely increase. If
25 you look at our demographics, you will see that we

1 have 88.8 percent African American, one percent
2 Caucasian, Hispanic is 10.4 percent and two or more
3 at zero tenths of a percentage.

4 This campus is now a K-5 campus. Last year it
5 was K-4. We do a slow growth model so each year we
6 add. K-5 -- fifth graders is as high as this campus
7 will go but we have other campuses that are still
8 growing. The numbers by grade level are as follows:
9 for kindergarten currently we have 22 students, first
10 grade 39, second grade 38, third grade 34, fourth
11 grade 58, and fifth grade 28 for a total enrollment
12 of 217 students.

13 As you know, and which is the reason I'm
14 probably standing here right now is, our letter grade
15 was an F. We dropped from a C to an F. That's a
16 significant drop. Overall our ESSA index score is
17 54.94 and we do believe that that overall -- that
18 drop is for the reasons that I gave you about the
19 changes in personnel and also the testing environment
20 for our students.

21 In comparison data, I wanted to show that you
22 can see that we as -- oops, I'm sorry. We use --
23 hold on. I'm going too fast. We use comparison data
24 for the BOY, beginning of year NWEA and middle of
25 year NWEA. And what you will notice from the fall --

1 from last year to this year our students increased in
2 every grade level except fourth. Now when you look
3 at fourth grade, this is current. We have -- we had
4 a personnel change where we had to move teachers. So
5 now what we've done to go in and kind of undergird
6 those students is we are providing them with
7 intensive support as well as one-on-one tutorials to
8 make sure that we can strength up -- strengthening up
9 the skills that they missed when they were without a
10 teacher. So we had a sub in there, but now we have
11 an actual teacher.

12 So for goal No. one I did address that we -- and
13 I am showing comparison data so that you can see that
14 our students from last year to this year are showing
15 improvement with the exception of grade four and
16 we're going to show you when we -- if we come back
17 for end of year that there will be significant
18 growth.

19 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Question.

20 DR. SIMMONS: Yes, ma'am.

21 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So for the fourth grade,
22 how long was the sub in the class?

23 MS. DICKERSON: The teacher left in late
24 September and over the Christmas break we came
25 together to get a plan in place that we were

1 implementing when we came back to school on January
2 5, and so from January 5 until now they've had
3 consistent instruction in their classroom with the
4 help of content specialist as co-teacher and planner.

5 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So for that, like, the
6 first semester or something?

7 MS. DICKERSON: The bottom half. So from
8 October to December. So three months.

9 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. And that was last
10 year?

11 MS. DICKERSON: This year.

12 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

13 DR. SIMMONS: Does that make sense? We're
14 comparing last year's beginning of the year to this
15 year's beginning of the year.

16 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yes. Okay.

17 DR. SIMMONS: And we promised -- we said we
18 would increase, but in that particular category, we
19 did not and that was our rationale for it.

20 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

21 DR. SIMMONS: Thank you, Ms. Dickerson. So for
22 our Southeast campus, our SMART goal shows that the
23 percentage of students going from proficient or above
24 in English language, reading and mathematics will
25 increase by ten percent from the previous year.

1 We're using training and support along with the
2 content specialist at that campus as well
3 co-teaching. That campus has changed to a block
4 schedule for ELA and for math. What we learned early
5 in the year is that our teachers weren't having
6 enough time to actually give our students adequate
7 instruction. So we made a quick pivot to go to a
8 block schedule so that those students have additional
9 time in those two camps -- in those two courses.

10 In addition to that, our specialist teachers
11 also help to undergird the literacy skills as well as
12 the mathematic skills. We have professional learning
13 communities and PLCs -- called PLCs. Now with this
14 particular group at the Southeast campus, I talked
15 about the teacher learning center. That is an idea
16 that was taken from Japan that works beautifully.
17 All of the teachers have their desk in one room.
18 They all plan in one room. They all work together so
19 that if a math teacher is working on a skill that can
20 be helped or integrated into an English or science
21 lesson, those teachers go ahead, and they do that.
22 So it works out beautifully. Now you don't have
23 teachers who are out there working in isolation.
24 They feel as though now they have at team. And we
25 actually have the elementary campuses -- we haven't

1 implemented that on their campuses yet, but some of
2 them are already -- have already gone to that model
3 which is great, and it works out very well. We also
4 have the common formative assessments at the middle
5 school campus and also the data-driven instruction.

6 Now, I will say that at our Southeast campus
7 it's a little different than last year. Last year we
8 had fifth grade because our elementary campus was
9 full, so we moved some students over there and we
10 also had 12th grade. So we only had two grade levels
11 at that campus last year. This year we now have
12 sixth through eighth and ninth. And again, with that
13 slow growth model, next year our ninth graders will
14 be our tenth graders and then we'll keep
15 matriculating until we get to the 12th grade, and
16 we'll stop there.

17 So we have sixth grade. We have 77 students, 12
18 of them came from Pine Bluff Lighthouse. We have in
19 seventh grade 51 students, six of -- 16 of them came
20 from Pine Bluff Lighthouse. In eighth grade we have
21 41 students, 22 of them came from Pine Bluff
22 Lighthouse. And in ninth grade we have 28 students
23 and half of them, 14, came from Pine Bluff
24 Lighthouse. Our letter grade was a D and again, I
25 think it was because of that testing anxiety that our

1 students suffered. And the attendance rate was
2 96.56.

3 Our second goal shows that we will increase the
4 daily attendance to 95 percent or greater, by
5 monitoring the attendance, tracking trends, making
6 attendance calls and having incentives. Last year
7 the attendance rate was at 96.56, so we intend to
8 increase even higher than that.

9 And then the third goal is to improve college
10 and career preparedness through financial aid
11 guidance, career technical support, academic support,
12 and career and college opportunities. Our students
13 use a program called Xello. The Xello is an online
14 platform that helps those students seek out their --
15 come to know what their interests are and help guide
16 them in the direction of future goals and careers.

17 MR. SCOTT: Quick question. I'm sorry. You
18 pointed out the number of students that came from
19 Pine Bluff Lighthouse in the various grade levels?

20 DR. SIMMONS: Yes.

21 MR. SCOTT: So the Delta there, what other
22 schools were involved in matriculating over -- the
23 other traditional public schools?

24 DR. SIMMONS: Pine Bluff High School. The Pine
25 Bluff School District would have taken some of those

1 schools, but we got -- we were able to take all of
2 the students who wanted to come to us which was --
3 Dr. Tran do you know? Was it all of them?

4 DR. TRAN: It was over 80 percent.

5 DR. SIMMONS: Over 80 percent.

6 MR. SCOTT: So would that include Watson Chapel
7 as well as --

8 DR. SIMMONS: Most of the -- I live in Pine
9 Bluff, so I can kind of speak on that a little bit.
10 Most of the kids who live in the Pine Bluff area go
11 to school in Pine Bluff. They don't too much go over
12 to Watson Chapel. A lot of the kids who live in
13 Watson Chapel are there. That's usually not a line
14 that they try to cross for whatever reason.

15 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

16 DR. SIMMONS: You're welcome. When we look at
17 the data -- I'm doing comparison data and it's going
18 to -- I mean, it just is what it is. We had fifth
19 grade -- so far, our fifth graders -- I keep wanting
20 to lose the little pointer. Now here we go. For our
21 fifth graders, the fifth graders last year
22 unfortunately had zero percent proficiency in their
23 fall NWEA reading assessment. For the winter of
24 2023, it was the same thing for those same kids. So
25 clearly, we had something going on there. Now, for

1 12th grade in the fall, we had 41 percent, and, in
2 the winter, we went up to 47 percent. But I will say
3 this, and I'm going to go ahead and spoil my own fun,
4 we did have a 100 percent graduation rate. Every one
5 of our seniors graduated so we're very, very proud of
6 that.

7 For supporting data, we use our counter
8 informative assessments to help us guide. We use the
9 beginning of the year and end of year data from NWEA
10 because that's all that we have right now. We use
11 the weekly -- we have ATLAS interim assessments --
12 the date we look at. We have DIBELS for our younger
13 kids, Words They Way -- Words Their Way which is part
14 of the dyslexia testing for spelling. We look at
15 spelling -- attendance, not just for our students,
16 but also for our faculty and staff -- as well as
17 discipline.

18 So for monitoring, what I did was I just put up
19 part of our campus improvement plan to show the
20 actions that we are providing and the monitoring
21 systems that we have for each of them. So I don't
22 want to read that to you because I believe you have
23 the slides? Am I correct? Okay. So I don't want to
24 read that to you because I don't want to take up your
25 time, but you can see that there are several things

1 that we are doing to ensure that our goals are being
2 met and we are doing checkpoints throughout the year
3 and we're not just waiting until the timeline ends.

4 So I'll give you an example. So our teachers do
5 meet weekly for their data discussions. And we have
6 where our teachers sign in. We have an agenda, and
7 we can actually show what our students -- what our
8 teachers are doing where the data is. In addition to
9 that, in every campus as well as in every TLC or PLC
10 room, we have data walls that are updated weekly to
11 show where our students are trending and what we need
12 to work on.

13 For the Southeast campus, it's much of the same:
14 the common formative assessments, the beginning of
15 the year, NWEA data as well as middle of the year.
16 ATLAS interim assessments. At the end -- we have end
17 of year course assessments for our students who are
18 in ninth grade, and we also look at attendance again
19 for adults and students as well as discipline. And I
20 will say that we have had very minor disciplinary
21 infractions this school year. Knock on wood.

22 So for monitoring for that campus is the same as
23 our excerpt from our campus improvement plan that
24 shows our goals and our actions and how we are going
25 to get there. And again, we are always monitoring to

1 make sure that our students are getting their needs
2 met.

3 I do want to point out that for goal No. three,
4 for our students who are getting college and career
5 readiness, we do have assignment sheets for agendas
6 from different trainings. We have the college and
7 career artifacts. We have active participation in
8 our Xello program -- that online program that's like
9 the interest inventory that connects with careers.
10 As well as ACT workshops to help our students get
11 high enough scores so that they can get in -- into
12 college. Our ninth graders are actually going
13 through ACT workshops now. And then we also have
14 guest speakers from different colleges, universities,
15 and career sites, as well as career exploration
16 assessments.

17 Innovations. There are several things that we
18 are doing that we believe is different from other
19 schools in Little Rock as well as in Pine Bluff. For
20 our Little Rock Elementary campus, we have, as I
21 stated earlier, all of our schools are STEM schools.
22 This particular school has a STEM lab. We employed
23 the project-based learning model in that STEM -- that
24 STEM lab, so all of the lessons are based around a
25 project, and they're not done in isolation, and they

1 also relate back to the lessons that the students are
2 learning in one of their core classes.

3 We have the co-teaching model at the elementary
4 campus to the point that our content specialists are
5 co-teaching; our academy director is also
6 co-teaching.; our academy dean of students is an
7 English major who has some outstanding English
8 coaches, so she's co-teaching actually in that fourth
9 grade English class. We are again using a -- we're
10 focusing on depth of knowledge -- that's areas two
11 and three for our students because it asks --
12 requires a higher cognitive level of thinking. And
13 then we also have an active care program on our
14 campus that has, for the first hour, academic support
15 -- strictly academic support for our students in our
16 areas of weakness; and then the second hour is their
17 area of personal choice. So they could pick art,
18 they could pick music, band, or anything, but we do
19 make sure that that first hour aftercare is strictly
20 focused on academics. And we think that's really
21 unique.

22 On our Southeast campus, it is actually a STEAM
23 campus. So our STEAM stands for science, technology,
24 entrepreneurship, agriculture, and mathematics. And
25 on a side note, I am a USDA recognized farmer.

1 For our students with -- in the
2 entrepreneurship, I was going to talk a little bit
3 later about this company down in Pine Bluff called
4 The Generator. But The Generator actually sends a
5 coach out to our campus -- that Southeast campus --
6 and what she does is she teaches the students how to
7 create silk screen shirts and then they build a
8 booth. The kids actually build a kiosk and they're
9 able to sell their wares out of the kiosk which I
10 think is awesome.

11 So we also have project-based learning that I
12 talked about a little before because we want to make
13 sure that everything is integrated so that there
14 could be connections and that learning will stick so
15 it's just not out there in the clouds. And we do the
16 co-teaching model and block schedule which I talked
17 about. Our Southeast students have advisory every
18 day and I did hear one of the other presenters talk
19 about how they look at -- talk to the students about
20 their mood. They do the mood meter. We also do that
21 but during advisory, our students are able to talk
22 with their mentor about any issues they may be
23 having, anything that they may need and also get
24 additional support in areas that they may be finding
25 themselves falling behind in.

1 I talked about our teacher learning center.
2 We're very proud of that model and we hope to have
3 networked by the end of next -- by next year. And
4 then finally, we have the EAST Initiative Grant that
5 we just won, and that grant is going to help us build
6 our campus. We have an innovation lab that is state
7 of the art. So we're going to have some technology
8 in there that our students will be able to use that
9 will help them in real-life applications. Our
10 innovations are all in for implementation.

11 So for data we would ask how do we compare to
12 other Little Rock charter schools? The information
13 -- the data shows that all of the schools are low,
14 and I think someone just talked about just the
15 demographics when you look at where we are. It's
16 challenging but we are up for the challenge and we're
17 going to continue providing our students with high
18 quality instruction. So you can see that Friendship,
19 eStem East, Exalt, Ivy Hill and LISA West are all
20 low. Ours unfortunately is the lowest, but again I
21 think that that's not a true representation of our
22 scores due to the testing anxiety.

23 In comparison to traditional schools in the
24 Little Rock area, we compare ourselves to the MLK
25 Elementary, Mabelvale, Stephens and Chicot. And

1 while Chicot is higher, you can see that we're not
2 too far behind. We're second on the low -- second on
3 that totem pole, but it's not a totem pole that we're
4 really proud of being on.

5 For our Southeast campus of fifth graders, we
6 compared them to traditional public schools in Pine
7 Bluff as there are no charter schools in Pine Bluff
8 other than us. So you can see that our campus is at
9 59 percent, and it outscored all of the other
10 campuses. The Matthews -- James Matthews Elementary,
11 34th Street and Broadmoor Elementary as well as
12 Southwood Elementary.

13 Now 12th grade students, I didn't compare the
14 testing data because our 12th graders took NWEA and
15 Pine Bluff and Watson Chapel campuses do not. So I
16 decided to go with graduation rate and as you can
17 see, we are at 100 percent graduation rate. All of
18 our students graduated. Pine Bluff High was at 78
19 percent and Watson Chapel was at 93 percent and
20 that's all based on My School Info.

21 I want to brag just a little bit. Our Southeast
22 campus won the 2023 Pine Bluff Commercial Reader's
23 Choice Award. And they were awarded the best
24 middle/junior high school in Pine Bluff. And our
25 Best Elementary Campus in Pine Bluff was also

1 Friendship campus -- Friendship Aspire Academy Pine
2 Bluff.

3 In addition to that, our school improvement --
4 we are teaching our standards -- the Arkansas state
5 standards. At our Little Rock campus, we do have
6 stabilized leadership. We did have a change in
7 leadership last year during the school year which I
8 think made us a little bit unsteady, but we now have
9 stabilized leadership there. We are teaching the
10 Arkansas state standards and interested in those
11 common formative assessments that I talked about
12 using the data to help us drive instruction even if
13 that means that we've got to pivot. We provide
14 intervention as well as a celebration because we
15 realize that every student is not behind. So we
16 don't want our students who are on grade level or
17 above grade level to be stagnant, so we continue
18 celebrating those students. We use structured
19 professional learning communities. We provide
20 professional development to our teachers as well as
21 our administrators. And we now have a data team of
22 three very strong persons who create the assessments,
23 we analyze the data; we go over the data with the
24 principals; we sit in the PLCs with them; we work
25 with the teachers. We use that data to help us make

1 decisions about which professional development
2 opportunities we need to offer and what other moves
3 or changes we need to make.

4 In addition at the Little Rock campus, we use
5 proven instructional strategies. I'll give you an
6 example. Writing is a very big deal. Our students
7 are now using what we call the hamburger strategy --
8 or hamburger method for writing. We sent home
9 writing assignments with them during the holidays.
10 They sent -- we sent one home for Thanksgiving. We
11 sent one home for Christmas. One will be going home
12 with them for Easter as well. And the students, as
13 well as the teachers, seem to love it. We had a
14 principal, she said, "I couldn't wait to read my
15 writing to my students," which I thought was awesome
16 because the students sometimes come in, and they're
17 called into the office to read their writings over
18 the income.

19 So we also employ the use of coaching and
20 mentoring. We have several partners -- and I'll talk
21 about them in just a moment -- who come into our
22 campuses, and they coach with our teachers, and they
23 provide mentorship for our principals. We're also
24 improving our inclusive practices for our students
25 with special needs. We are providing extended

1 learning opportunities; I talked about the aftercare.
2 And we also involve our parents, guardians, and the
3 community in the learning of our students and we
4 utilize our partners. We are also working to
5 increase the number of teachers who are certified.
6 One of our partners, actually APSRC, provides an
7 opportunity for our teachers to go in and get
8 training on the test and then be able to go in and
9 take the test. The good thing about it is they don't
10 even have to pay for the test. APSRC has a grant
11 that actually pays for the test.

12 So for our Southeast campus, we're doing much of
13 the same, but the things that are different over
14 there is that we provide tutors at that campus.
15 Those tutors are coming to us from UAPB as well as
16 from Southeast Arkansas which is like the SEARK
17 University down there in Pine Bluff. Our students at
18 that campus are going to be hosting -- our actual
19 students are going to be hosting a Pine Bluff mayoral
20 forum on education where they're going to bring in
21 the mayor -- the potential mayor, or the candidates
22 for mayor -- and they're going to question them on
23 our campus at Southeast. So that's a great
24 opportunity for community involvement and leadership
25 for our students. We also have at this campus a

1 unique program where the students have united with
2 the Grider Field Black Pilots Association. So we
3 have an aviation program down on that campus as well
4 as one of our other campus -- elementary campuses
5 down there -- but our kids -- they do this after
6 school so they're not losing any instructional time
7 -- but if they stay for field and they stay
8 interested, those students can actually -- be able to
9 fly a plane at the age 16. They will have a full
10 license to fly. So we're really excited about that
11 because a lot of times we don't make connections to
12 outside things in education. But there's a lot of
13 math, there's a lot of reading, there's a lot of
14 science, critical thinking in flying a plane.

15 Finally, our South -- our campus down in Little
16 Rock, over in Little Rock actually earned in '21 and
17 '22 the Beating the Odds Award from the Office of
18 Education of Policy -- Education Policy Awards.
19 That's why we know -- that's why I know -- I'm going
20 to speak for me. That's why I know and believe in my
21 heart that the data that we have from last school
22 year is not accurate. And then we also have from the
23 U.S. News and World Report that we have a No. -- a
24 No. one charter school, and that's our Pine Bluff
25 Hazel campus; and also a No. one elementary school.

1 No, I mean, No. 28. I'm sorry. Number one -- No. 28
2 -- I keep wanting to be No. one. I'm speaking it.
3 But No. 28 best elementary school, according to U.S.
4 News and World Report.

5 MR. SCOTT: In the state --

6 DR. SIMMONS: In the state --

7 MR. SCOTT: -- of Arkansas?

8 DR. SIMMONS -- of Arkansas.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Are there any questions
10 for us?

11 Oh, go ahead. Come on.

12 DR. TRAN: Just before you ask questions, I just
13 want to let you know about -- you might be asking
14 what's different; right? I mean, Dr. Simmons made a
15 great representation with everything that's talking
16 about, but I think what's different is that
17 data- driven instruction. Everyone talks about
18 data- driven instruction. Everyone tries to do it,
19 but I think we fell short last year. So this year,
20 this is what we are doing differently.

21 We are actually doing CFAs every week. So every
22 week, they teach a standard, right, from Monday to
23 Thursday, and then Friday we create an assessment
24 based upon ATLAS, not based on ACT Aspire. We look
25 at ATLAS questions and I wish that the state could

1 actually put more questions in the question banks so
2 that we can pull from that. So at this moment in
3 time we use an external resources to create those
4 assessments. But what we do is we look at those
5 assessments and then we actually create seven
6 questions depending on what it is based upon that
7 standard. And then we give it to our students and
8 then at the end of the week the teachers grade it and
9 then we -- during the PLCs, they'll look at what's
10 working, what's not, what's a misconception, how can
11 we go ahead and improve it and next steps.

12 So that's what we've been doing since October to
13 change it a little bit because we know at the end of
14 the day, data-driven instruction does work, but how
15 do you actually do it with fidelity? And I think
16 with what we're doing now is fidelity being that
17 we're looking at the standards every week and align
18 to the ATLAS, the new state standard, and then
19 providing the actual common form of assessments every
20 week to see how our kids are doing. So just to add
21 that in there so that you guys know that hey, we're
22 actually looking at data and we're looking at
23 assessments on how do we drive instructions with
24 those assessments. And being that it's weekly, we
25 can actually pivot if we need to. If we see

1 something that doesn't work right, we can pivot at a
2 drop of a, you know, notice without impacting a lot
3 of things. And so I think with this year, with ATLAS
4 being the new standards, everyone is really nervous
5 with everything that's going on. So again, I think,
6 going back to the data-driven instruction, and
7 looking at data, and helping -- using data to
8 actually guide what we need to do next will help us
9 in what we need to do this school year. So, just
10 that piece of information.

11 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

12 DR. TRAN: He wants to talk about
13 (INDISCERNIBLE) but that's a separate subject, but I
14 think they're doing well as well. We're seeing a lot
15 of growth in there. Just a quick note that, you
16 know, we came in and what we found out was -- and I'm
17 not saying this with ill intent or any negativity to
18 anyone there -- but it's just been generational
19 neglect. Meaning that the kids are just being pushed
20 on to the next grade, pushed on to the next grade,
21 and pushed on to the next grade without any, I guess,
22 without any concern to what they need to know, right,
23 for them to become good citizens to give back. So at
24 this point in time, you know, we're working against
25 the clock to get the kids to where they need to get.

1 Because at the end of the day, regardless of which
2 school district you're in or which school you're in
3 in Arkansas, you're going to have to take the test.
4 I mean, I've been preaching this throughout the whole
5 entire year. If given the chance, give us -- you've
6 given like three years where we can stop and just
7 teach the kids the fundamentals because that's what
8 they're missing. We found out that our sixth graders
9 couldn't even add and subtract double digit numbers.
10 That's how sad it is, and no one has done anything
11 about it. So that's sixth grade; right? So given
12 that's the case, how do you expect our kids to do
13 well on the tests if they can't even subtract double
14 digit numbers? So again, that's another topic, but
15 we're seeing a lot of growth and improvement there,
16 but again it takes a lot of work, and it takes a lot
17 of time. So, thank you.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

19 MR. HARRIS: I know we're all ready for lunch,
20 but I did want to just close with this.

21 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Could you just identify
22 yourself.

23 MR. HARRIS: I know this Board --

24 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Could you just identify
25 yourself.

1 MR. HARRIS: Oh, okay. Joe Harris. I just
2 wanted this Board to hear information now, something
3 that I think will impact. The schools I have
4 presented before you will all, I think, benefit from
5 tutoring. I know that that legislation is on the
6 board and next year we're expecting that the tutors
7 will have an impact; and I think that that will
8 transform a lot of the schools' efforts that have
9 stood before you today talking about deficiencies.
10 So I wanted you all to hear from a charter school
11 that tutoring is important. We're preparing for it
12 by setting up a system where our kids will get
13 one-on-one tutoring as part of both their daily
14 instruction and after school. But tutoring
15 one-on-one has proven nationally to transform
16 education. So thank you all for supporting tutoring
17 in the State of Arkansas.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Thank you. Dr. Moore?

19 DR. MOORE: So first I want to say, Dr. Simmons,
20 thank you for dedicating your life to education --

21 DR. SIMMONS: Thank you.

22 DR. MOORE: -- teaching and leadership and all
23 you've done. We need more people like you. Thank
24 you for this very detailed presentation.

25 I only have one question and I know you're --

1 what you presented answered the questions that we had
2 posed. But as you speak about college and career
3 readiness, I'm wondering about your Southeast campus,
4 and do you have high school students there? Do they
5 have opportunities for concurrent and are you
6 partnering with SEARK for concurrent or with UAPB?

7 DR. SIMMONS: Actually, that is something that
8 we are working on for next year. So we're looking at
9 partnerships with both UAPB and with SEARK University
10 -- with SEARK College. UAPB is one of our greater
11 partners and they actually send students over and we
12 have a guy -- not a guy -- we have a gentleman that
13 we recently hired who actually is able to teach those
14 concurrent courses for us so we're happy to bring him
15 on so that our students will be able receive credits
16 for college while they're still in high school.

17 DR. TRAN: Also, last year our 12th graders
18 actually went to SEARK to participate in some courses
19 as well. So just some information about what we did
20 last year.

21 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Could you speak into the mic?

22 DR. TRAN: So just last year, actually 12th
23 graders actually participated with some courses at
24 SEARK where they went to SEARK and did some courses.
25 So that was our 12th grade last year.

1 DR. MOORE: So are any of their students
2 participating with a secondary career center in your
3 area for their CTE courses, do you know?

4 DR. TRAN: Not at this moment and time. I think
5 we're working on that being that we started ninth
6 grade this year, pushing a new one so we're
7 definitely working on that to make sure that that
8 happens.

9 DR. MOORE: All right. Thank you.

10 DR. SIMMONS: And let me just say for the ninth
11 graders, as I stated in the presentation, half of
12 them came from Lighthouse. The other 14 were
13 recruited so technically we didn't have an eighth
14 grade, so we didn't plan out as far as that, but we
15 are -- we're planning now to make sure we have those
16 things in place for our kids going forward.

17 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

18 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott?

19 MR. SCOTT: Yes. I have a few facets here. One
20 is I could speak to you about some of the challenges
21 or some of the wonderful things I'm aware of. Which
22 would you like to hear first?

23 DR. SIMMONS: It doesn't matter.

24 DR. TRAN: Challenges.

25 MR. SCOTT: Challenges? Okay. We'll get that

1 out of the way. One of the challenges I've seen, and
2 this is really impactful potentially, you received
3 some Title I funding?

4 DR. TRAN: Yes.

5 MR. SCOTT: Right. So one of the requirements
6 is that you provide evidences -- documentary
7 evidences that's to be submitted to us by October 1.
8 So I encourage you to get that done. There are
9 certain areas within the parent family engagement
10 plan --

11 DR. SIMMONS: Uh-huh.

12 MR. SCOTT: -- there are specific areas, submit
13 that to Indistar and that mitigates the risk that if
14 the Feds come to the state and say, hey, look we need
15 to have an audit and oh, you provided money to your
16 school, where's the evidence of that? So having that
17 document available to us would be huge.

18 DR. SIMMONS: Yes. Do you have that?

19 DR. TRAN: So we actually provide the Title I
20 parent survey to our parents. And -- I mean, we
21 don't have it here -- we don't have it on the slide
22 -- but I think from my memory -- I could be wrong
23 because I looked at this a few months back --
24 approximately about more than 90 percent of our
25 parents actually love our school. So that was one of

1 the questions that we actually put in and as you
2 know, we had to actually do that for Title I. So,
3 yes.

4 MR. SCOTT: I appreciate that. And that
5 certainly is one of the evidences that they are
6 asking for, yes.

7 DR. SIMMONS: Actually, I did have that in my
8 presentation. At the -- at the Little Rock campus,
9 it was 82 percent of the parents who were satisfied
10 with our services. And at the Pine Bluff Southeast
11 campus, it was 95 -- 96.5 percent of the parents and
12 that's based on the survey data.

13 MR. SCOTT: Okay. Good. They're probably five
14 -- just FYI, there are about five different areas
15 that speaks specifically to different types of
16 documents, and it's captured towards the end of -- if
17 you'll look into your district level parent family
18 engagement plan, it specified these examples there.
19 And you could easily speak to things, like, is the
20 plan itself jointly developed?

21 DR. SIMMONS: Okay.

22 MR. SCOTT: So it's not just a staff-driven
23 plan, but that is developed with parents, with
24 community members and sometimes students. So things
25 like that.

1 DR. SIMMONS: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. SCOTT: Okay. Absolutely. On the good
3 side, I am so delighted to hear some of these
4 wonderful things that are going on. I was at the
5 ribbon cutting ceremony of the new school on Main
6 Street. Just pretty awesome the commitment that
7 Friendship Aspire is making to the community. I
8 would encourage you -- we will continue -- when I say
9 we, there's been an emphasis for the last couple of
10 years to have what's called a community engagement
11 and education set of meetings where all of the school
12 districts are represented --

13 DR. SIMMONS: Uh-huh.

14 MR. SCOTT: -- but more importantly other
15 stakeholders, the mayor, UAPB, SEARK college, as you
16 mentioned earlier, and others across the board
17 whether that's public safety, Allison Thompson from
18 the Chamber, etc. --

19 DR. SIMMONS: Uh-huh.

20 MR. SCOTT: -- sit around and talk about SMART
21 goals for the community. One of the issues that you
22 know is recruiting and it's hard to get the right
23 teachers because of the brand associated with Pine
24 Bluff.

25 DR. SIMMONS: Yeah.

1 MR. SCOTT: And so working collaboratively
2 together would be a huge asset, I think. As we move
3 forward, I would encourage you to participate in
4 those. I was born in Grady and grew up --

5 DR. SIMMONS: Okay.

6 MR. SCOTT: -- and graduated from high school in
7 Pine Bluff.

8 DR. SIMMONS: Okay. I have got you.

9 MR. SCOTT: Okay? So I understand your plight
10 and appreciate your effort to move the needle despite
11 the challenges that you're facing. And I
12 particularly liked the -- in regards to the effort to
13 -- at the downtown area where you have some of the
14 students making their shirts and stuff.

15 DR. SIMMONS: Oh, yes. That's The Generator.

16 MR. SCOTT: The Generator. Yes. So it sounds
17 like -- just to plant some seed -- it sounds like
18 potentially you are working towards entrepreneurship
19 too?

20 DR. SIMMONS: Yes.

21 MR. SCOTT: Which means that we're now talking
22 about math and a business plan, and things of that
23 nature. It's nothing like starting that with the
24 young entrepreneurs.

25 DR. SIMMONS: Exactly.

1 MR. SCOTT: All right. Thank you.

2 DR. SIMMONS: Thank you.

3 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

4 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you for your
5 presentation and the thoroughness of the information
6 that was provided. The questions that I had either
7 have been answered by the Panel Members or answered
8 during presentation and then just, in general, when
9 you reference that we have sixth graders who cannot
10 add and subtract double digit numbers, that just
11 answered all my questions. So I appreciate the work
12 you guys are doing and I understand that you have
13 taken over some pieces that you inherited --

14 DR. SIMMONS: Yes.

15 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- and we appreciate you
16 guys working through that.

17 DR. SIMMONS: Thank you.

18 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thanks.

19 CHAIR SUTHERLIN: And then I'd just like to say
20 as far as your common formative assessments, given
21 that our new assessment at the end of the year will
22 be based on the Arkansas standards, I'm glad that
23 you're going through that process and making sure
24 that those competencies are reached before moving on
25 to a different competency.

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DR. SIMMONS: Yes.

CHAIR SUTHERLIN: So thank you very much.

DR. SIMMONS: Thank you.

CHAIR SUTHERLIN: We appreciate it.

All right. Is there any new business? If not,
I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So moved.

MR. SCOTT: Second.

CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. All those in
favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIR SUTHERLIN: All right. We are adjourned.

(The Agenda was concluded at 1:42 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)

) ss

COUNTY OF PULASKI)

I, Miranda McEntire, Certified Court Reporter #852, do hereby certify that the facts stated by me in the caption on the foregoing proceedings are true; and that the foregoing proceedings were reported verbatim through the use of the voice-writing method and thereafter transcribed by me or under my direct supervision to the best of my ability, taken at the time and place set out on the caption hereto.

I FURTHER CERTIFY, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or employed by the parties hereto, nor financially interested or otherwise, in the outcome of this action, and that I have no contract with the parties, attorneys, or persons with an interest in the action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original deposition transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial attorney, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties in the action.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 4th day of March, 2024.

Miranda McEntire

MIRANDA MCENTIRE, CCR
Certified Court Reporter #852

