

BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZATION PANEL

DECEMBER 2025 MEETING

RECORD OF MEETING

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the 18th day of December, 2025, came on for meeting the captioned cause before the Arkansas Department of Education Charter Authorization Panel; the following proceedings transpired with said hearing being reported by Melody Haley, Arkansas Supreme Court Certified Court Reporter.

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DR. JOHN BACON
DR. TINA MOORE
DR. CRYSTAL BESHEARS-DUNCAN

ALSO PRESENT:

MR. FREDDIE SCOTT - OFFICE OF SCHOOL CHOICE PARENT EMPOWERMENT
DR. DARRELL SMITH - OFFICE OF SCHOOL CHOICE PARENT EMPOWERMENT
MS. MARY PERRY - DIVISION OF LEARNING SERVICES COORDINATOR
MS. RACHEL BLACKWELL
MR. TODD ESKOLA
MS. NINA HOLUB
MR. JUSTIN LUTTRELL
MR. JERMALL WRIGHT
MS. SHANA LORING
MR. CARLTON MCGEE

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(NO EXHIBITS WERE IDENTIFIED OR ATTACHED TO THIS TRANSCRIPT)

P R O C E E D I N G S

DECEMBER 18, 2025, AT 9:03 A.M.

CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Good morning. The December 18, 2025 meeting of the Charter Authorization Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium and ask that you please silence all your electronic devices. The goal is to facilitate a fair, responsible hearing.

So for the record, I ask each person speaking to please state your name and title each time you speak into the microphone. I ask that you continue to speak clearly in the microphone throughout your presentation for the benefit of the panel, this audience, and the viewing audience. This meeting is being live streamed and recorded, and a transcript of the meeting will be posted on the DESE website.

So again, good morning to everyone, Panel Members, and Ms. Newton that's joining us online. And so let's go ahead and get started with our agenda. So there is one change to the agenda, so Pulaski County is going to go first, and then Little Rock is going to follow after that. Other than that, everything is going to flow as it is currently stated.

1 So next, I would like to invite up Ms. Raney, so
2 she can give us an overview of procedures for today's
3 action agenda.

4 MS. RANEY: Hi. Julia Raney, ADE. For the
5 action agenda, all persons with the exception of
6 attorneys representing the parties who plan to
7 provide testimony during the hearing must be sworn in
8 by the Chair of the Panel. The charter school or
9 applicant will have 20 minutes to present its case
10 for the panel to approve the proposed charter school
11 application renewal or request. The Chair may grant
12 additional time if necessary.

13 Parties opposed to the charter school's
14 application renewal or request will have 20 minutes
15 to present their -- its case to the authorizer. This
16 is the total amount of time allotted for the
17 presentation regarding opposition to the application,
18 renewal, or request. The Chair of the Panel may
19 grant additional time if necessary. The charter
20 school or applicant shall have five minutes to
21 respond to any arguments in opposition to the charter
22 school's application, renewal, or request. The Chair
23 of the Panel may grant additional time if necessary.

24 The authorizer will follow the presentations
25 with discussion of the public charter school

1 application renewal or request and questions, if any,
2 to the open enrollment public charter school or
3 applicant opposing parties or both. Additionally, an
4 affected school district may submit written comments
5 concerning the application to the authorizer to be
6 considered at the time of the authorizer's review of
7 the application. Thanks.

8 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you. So next up
9 on our agenda, District Conversion Charter School
10 Applications. It's going to be presented by Mr.
11 Freddie Scott of the Charter Office. If you could
12 just come forward.

13 **DISTRICT CONVERSION APPLICATIONS**

14 **PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

15 MR. SCOTT: Good morning, Chair and other Panel
16 Members that are here and those that are joining us
17 online. I'm Freddie Scott, Office of School Choice
18 and Parent Empowerment. The first item on the agenda
19 is for Pulaski County Special School District DRIVEN
20 School of Opportunity. They have applied to become a
21 District Conversion Charter, serving grades 9 through
22 12, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. DRIVEN
23 has been a program at Robinson High School for seven
24 years, and the district now is requesting a charter
25 conversion status for the program.

1 Joining us here in person would be Rachel
2 Blackwell, Nina Holub, Todd Eskola, and Dr. Justin
3 Luttrell representing DRIVEN.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you. Okay. All
5 those giving testimony today on behalf of Pulaski
6 County Special School District DRIVEN School of
7 Opportunity, please, in-person or also on remote,
8 please stand and raise your right hand. Okay.

9 Do you swear this testimony or statement you are
10 about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and
11 nothing but the truth?

12 WINTESSES: Yes.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: All right. Thank you.
14 You can now begin your presentation. And I'll just
15 remind you, you have 20 minutes for your
16 presentation, and each time you come to the
17 microphone, please introduce yourself and give us
18 your title again. Thank you.

19 MS. BLACKWELL: Good morning. We're starting a
20 timer because we can talk a long time about this.
21 But good morning. My name is Rachel Blackwell. I'm
22 the Digital Learning Facilitator, instructional
23 technology for Pulaski County Special School
24 District, and I have been involved in the schools of
25 innovation since their conception with PCSSD back in

1 2017, 2018. And so I just -- I'm a liaison with the
2 program.

3 And so DRIVEN School of Innovation has been a
4 part of Robinson High School since 2019-2020, so this
5 is our seventh year. We have our third graduating
6 class this year. And if you can go to the next
7 slide, you can see our growth over the last seven
8 years. Oh, there it is. All right. So this year,
9 we are 47 percent of Robinson High School, but since
10 last year we did our renewal with the School of
11 Innovation and with the law changes we know that our
12 next step in order to keep our waivers and keep doing
13 what we're doing is to come to you for a conversion
14 charter. So that's the reason we're here today.

15 So next year we plan on having our school with
16 -- with our growth through this next year. So we're
17 very excited about that. Yeah, I'm going let Todd
18 go. Oh, let me say one more thing. So the School of
19 Innovation, which will next be the School of
20 Opportunity, is for the four core classes. So your
21 math, science, English, and history. So that is what
22 we focus on. We will still partner with Robinson
23 High School next year to help with the electives and
24 the pathways there. But we'll tell you a little bit
25 more about what we do.

1 MR. ESKOLA: Good morning, Todd Escola, DRIVEN
2 Lead. So DRIVEN was formed seven years ago with the
3 idea to be different, to think outside the box, to
4 prepare our students for a career, for college, for
5 whatever's next. And we did this by talking to our
6 students, talking to our parents, talking to our
7 community, talking to our educators, not feeling like
8 we were coloring within the lines. What can we do
9 that's always making student-centered
10 decision-making?

11 And so even on the application, there wasn't a
12 box that we felt like fit what we do. And we start
13 with 9th and 10th grade with mastery learning.
14 Mastery learning means we want students to be
15 empowered to have ownership over their education, to
16 learn to use student voice, to be able to advocate
17 for themselves. We want parents involved in the
18 process. We believe if students have ownership, and
19 parents and teachers can be there to support them and
20 hold them accountable for that. And so mastery
21 learning means not every child learns at the same
22 pace.

23 So mastery learning for us means ninth and tenth
24 graders, whatever they attempt in class, they have
25 the opportunity to improve. So we offer unlimited

1 retakes through a process where students have to use
2 their voice and ask for a retake. They have to meet
3 with a tutor to get one-on-one help. They have to
4 study at home. We require all of our teachers to
5 video every lesson. That to us is something that so
6 empowered our kids because it's a resource.

7 Every time a teacher teaches in class, they have
8 to video that lesson. That student now has a
9 resource of everything taught in that class. That
10 parent can become involved by watching what happens
11 in that class, and so the opportunity is for the
12 student to set their own bar. If you make a 50 on a
13 test, why in traditional education are we going over
14 the test the next day and taking them to the next
15 unit or the next chapter without allowing that
16 opportunity, the opportunity to learn that material
17 before they go on or as they go on?

18 And so that's the idea of mastery learning. We
19 believe time is the one thing that we can't have more
20 of. Every school in the state is, you only have so
21 many hours. You have all these requirements to get
22 done. So a challenge for us was on building time in
23 the day, so we cut out all the extra. Our classes
24 are shortened to the curriculum, the instruction, and
25 we create time in the day for our students to learn

1 time management class -- or time management skills,
2 to have the opportunity to see a tutor, to have the
3 opportunity to have ownership of what they need and
4 use their voice. Our juniors and seniors, we want
5 them out in the workforce. We want them to job
6 shadow. We want them to visit colleges. We want
7 them to explore what's next, and that makes us
8 different. We offer mentor time every day for 30
9 minutes where we teach life skills.

10 We believe it's important for our students to
11 know how to change a flat tire. We brought a police
12 officer in and talked to our kids about what happens
13 when you get pulled over, when you see blue lights?
14 What's the law? What are your rights? How do you
15 keep yourself safe? We talk to our kids and let them
16 do basic taxes in the spring. Things that are real
17 tangible to what's next. We believe that's important
18 and it's not always taught. That's a part of our
19 program.

20 We are non-exclusive. We have students with
21 IEPs, 504s, dyslexia. We are open enrollment. We
22 want students of various levels because we believe
23 our school should look like our community. Our
24 school, if you walk into our school, should look like
25 you walk into Kroger or you walk into Walmart, and we

1 want students to see that real world. We believe
2 it's real important for all of our students to know
3 their "why." Why are you in school? What are your
4 goals? You just gave us our job, and we believe
5 that's a must. Every student, every teacher has to
6 know why they're there so that they have direction to
7 make choices to support that "why."

8 Next slide. Oh, our students have the ability
9 to accelerate faster in classes. So all of our
10 teachers are required to lay out their entire
11 semester curriculum. Before we start the semester,
12 we meet in the summer to build that. All of last
13 year's videos are already online. I've got seven
14 years worth of videos for every class. And so a
15 student doesn't have to be bored in the classroom,
16 "I already know how to do this." Well, that student
17 can look at the next day lesson. They can move ahead
18 of the class with support from the teacher, with
19 support from tutors.

20 On Wednesdays there's no new curriculum if it's
21 not an AP class. We offer AP and concurrent credit
22 classes. But if it's not an AP class with that
23 shortened time, on Wednesdays our teachers stand in
24 front of our students and say, "What do you need from
25 me today?" We take a time out. We let our students

1 use their voice. "I need help." "I have questions."
2 That makes us different.

3 Next. All of our students know their "why."
4 All of our students have value and are important and
5 have a voice. They've got to take ownership of their
6 education. They've got to take accountability for
7 their actions. We want our students to learn that
8 positive choices have positive outcomes and negative
9 choices have negative outcomes, and they've got to be
10 given the opportunity to make those choices.

11 We don't want the first time our kids have to be
12 on their own making decisions to be when they go to
13 college or career. We want them to make those
14 decisions for four years with us while they're still
15 supported at home with their parents. So when they
16 do graduate, their parents and us, and most
17 importantly, the student knows, "I'm ready."

18 Teachers have to be great communicators. The
19 list is up there. I'm not going to read it all the
20 way through; you've got a manuscript for that. But
21 we believe our parents have to be involved. One of
22 the coolest things we do is once a month we have
23 parent lunch. And we invite all of our parents to
24 come have lunch with their students, be in their
25 world for 45 minutes, meet their friends, meet the

1 parents of their friends. We have extremely high
2 participation in that. I counted in October, we have
3 338 10th through 12th graders, over 300 of them had a
4 parent there at lunch in October, and it's that way
5 every month. And that's just building a community.
6 And that's why we believe we have so much support
7 within our community for this program.

8 That's a sample schedule, what it might look
9 like. Again, we short -- that's on a seven-period
10 day, and we shorten those blocks. We break the
11 seven-period day in two blocks. A non-AP class would
12 be 25 minutes of instruction, but that builds that
13 academic choice time, opportunity for our students to
14 be assigned to a tutor, to be able to go to our
15 Student Success Center and fill out a college
16 application with a counselor, or learn where to find
17 scholarships, or "What careers might I be interested
18 in?" It allows them to make choices for themselves
19 during the school day. That's where we're stealing
20 time.

21 An AP class, you see there is 50 minutes every
22 day. The elective classes that we partner with
23 Robinson High School are 50 minutes according to
24 their schedule. And then we put down if it is an
25 athlete, we can have athletes in our program as well.

1 So you can be in band, choir, athletics, whatever
2 your interests are.

3 MS. HOLUB: Hi. My name is Nina Holub. I am
4 currently the math instructional facilitator at
5 Robinson High School, and for the last seven years,
6 have been a DRIVEN math teacher and at Robinson have
7 been a lead teacher there. So I just wanted to talk
8 to you a little bit about our teaching and curriculum
9 expectations currently and as we move forward. Just
10 like every public high school, and some of this is
11 redundant for us as educators, but this is part of
12 the information that we share with parents and other
13 teachers who may have misconceptions about what that
14 process of learning looks like for us.

15 But we teach to Arkansas state standards. The
16 curriculum is all partnered with Pulaski County
17 Special School District. So currently, we just use
18 whatever is adopted by the district. Our goal moving
19 forward is to start looking at some opportunities for
20 curriculum development, whatever would be allowed
21 within our district for us to sort of pilot and sort
22 of look at how could we utilize what's now been
23 released by ATLAS and some of those curriculum pieces
24 that are supported by the district, as well as our
25 learning management system, which is Schoology

1 currently, to enrich and develop curriculum that
2 integrates test prep into what we do so that it
3 doesn't feel like an aside.

4 So all teachers, regardless of the level of the
5 class, teach at what we consider an honors level. So
6 we know, as educators, that there's been a
7 progression of pre-AP to honors to, you know, now it
8 will develop outside of that within the coming years.
9 But the goal is to teach regardless of the level of
10 each student in your class, to teach it at a high
11 level so that we know we can use the supports of
12 mastery learning as well as the staff supports of
13 special ed teachers, of our tutors, of our staff
14 members, so that we are not teaching to a bar that's
15 lower and then hoping for the best for those
16 accelerated students, but holding the expectation
17 academically very high and then supporting students
18 that need that extra one-on-one or small group or
19 whatever level of support that might look like.

20 Again, just to reiterate, our program started at
21 a time before blended learning was really just
22 popcorned out throughout the state and the nation.
23 So right before COVID, we were marketed as a blended
24 learning program, as a school of innovation. And
25 that was where our district developed -- or adopted

1 Schoology in essentially our request, hoping that we
2 could have a more dynamic curriculum to afford our
3 students, and like Coach Eskola said, the opportunity
4 to not only live teach lessons.

5 So we are, as a math teacher, instructing face-
6 to-face in a time where that may have been sometimes
7 happening, sometimes not happening. But also to
8 record so that we could utilize those resources, not
9 only for advancement, but for students who may need
10 extra time or extra resources for their learning
11 modality.

12 We'll assess using ATLAS. We each year break
13 down our DRIVEN student scores to see how do they
14 perform in relation to the state, in relation to our
15 district, and in relation to our home school, so in
16 comparison to Robinson High School, so that we can
17 monitor and adjust the needs of our staff, of our
18 students, and of our curriculum. I say that, you
19 know, although that traditional tier one instruction
20 is happening on a daily basis that it's a lot of the
21 intangibles that become the outside of the box
22 strategies.

23 Understanding that we have a high level of
24 parent involvement and parent buy-in to our program,
25 we utilize that mentoring piece so that if a student

1 is struggling in one or more areas, a mentor is going
2 to reach out to a parent, and we're going to use our
3 support systems to make sure that students are taken
4 care of. And then all AP classes follow the
5 requirements of College Board.

6 So when we start looking at some of those test
7 data pieces -- yeah, you can go on to the next slide.
8 We've used ACT on this slide, even though currently
9 we know our Algebra 1, our ELA 9, our Biology,
10 Geometry, and English 10 are all taking the ATLAS
11 assessment. But this is more of the expectation for
12 all students, and it spanned the time of our program
13 so that we're not looking at ACT Aspire compared to
14 ATLAS. We can look at just one assessment piece.
15 And so we just used this from -- the 2022 school year
16 is the first year that we had 11th grade students
17 even able to take the ACT. And just wanting to give
18 you guys the opportunity and for ourselves to see
19 that progression and growth of achievement of our
20 students.

21 So in comparison to the national average, we're
22 consistently outperforming, even inclusive of our
23 special ed 504 population, and then continually
24 growing. And we believe that that's through that
25 mastery learning foundational belief that all

1 students can learn, and that if they're supported,
2 they can learn at a high level.

3 MS. BLACKWELL: All right. Rachel Blackwell,
4 Digital Learning Facilitator. So the last two slides
5 are because we did renew our application for Schools
6 of Innovation at the end of the year. These were our
7 two goals that we set for that. So just to kind of
8 reiterate those -- reiterate those and also kind of
9 show where we're planning. So definitely always
10 performing -- or improving academic performance.
11 We're going to look at several different data points
12 during this year and this year and then beyond, just
13 to make sure that our kids are growing and that we
14 are progressing like Ms. Hall just said.

15 And our last goal and one of our most important
16 that we love is student agency. We love hearing from
17 our students. We get a lot of feedback, and we
18 change things even sometimes in the moment based on
19 their feedback. Coach Eskola mentioned having an
20 officer come in. That was because the students asked
21 for that. So they get a chance to give their
22 feedback.

23 We've also reached out to our graduates to ask,
24 you know, "What does it look like in college?" We've
25 changed some of the ways we've done testing at the

1 end of the year, just because those kids may have
2 been exempt from arts exams. So trying to make sure
3 that they're prepared to do some kind of cumulative
4 test for those juniors and seniors, that was
5 important. That was feedback from our first
6 graduating class.

7 Of course, our student success plans, making
8 sure those kids are on their pathway and eventually
9 earning that merit distinction, and then just
10 surveys, just constantly asking students what they're
11 doing, making sure that they're really focused during
12 their academic choice time. It's easy for all of us
13 to get distracted, and so we always want to make sure
14 that they're using that time for productive things to
15 advance in education. Okay.

16 MR. ESKOLA: Todd Eskola, Lead DRIVEN. The
17 program you just heard about is built on two
18 foundational pieces that I don't believe you can have
19 a successful school without, and that's relationships
20 and trust. And I believe we have that with our
21 students. I believe they have -- we have that with
22 our community. We're constantly asking our kids,
23 "What can we do better?" "What kind of school do you
24 want to go to?" "What makes you excited to come to
25 school?" Asking our kids, "What's your 'why'?"

1 "Where do you see yourself?" "Who do you see in the
2 mirror?" Making sure that they see in the mirror
3 somebody that's strong, that's capable, that can
4 achieve anything they want with support of those
5 around them. And I think those factors have enabled
6 us to grow at a high rate, to be able to achieve
7 higher than some thought possible.

8 But most importantly, the vision of our school,
9 we want to be the best school in the state of
10 Arkansas. We want to change education. We want to
11 show different ways that won't cost districts
12 extraordinary amount of monies that's not been done
13 before. That's thinking outside the box and
14 supporting our kids. Thank y'all very much for
15 listening, and I can't believe we finished in under
16 20 minutes. That's amazing. Yes.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you. Before we
18 get started with questions, Ms. Raney, if you would
19 please come forward and let us know if there's any
20 legal concerns that we need to be aware of before we
21 move forward.

22 MS. RANEY: Hi. Julia Raney, ADE. We have no
23 legal concerns.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Thank you. Okay.
25 So we'll start with questions from our Panel. Dr.

1 Bacon, you want to go first?

2 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PANEL**

3 DR. BACON: Okay. First of all, I appreciate
4 the presentation, and I'm really impressed by the
5 sort of wraparound culture idea of what you've
6 created in you said like seven years, I think, you've
7 been in existence. So I'm really pleased to see
8 that, and I know you've been under the School of
9 Innovation tag, so someone on our Panel might know
10 something about that. So I know that she'll have
11 more information probably and questions.

12 I guess I'm trying to figure out, since you have
13 been in existence that long, academically what your
14 student performance and growth is like, and I can't
15 find it. So are you under Robinson High School right
16 now?

17 MR. ESKOLA: We are.

18 DR. BACON: You're like a component of Robinson
19 High School? Okay. So how can I parse out what
20 student performance on ATLAS, student growth on ATLAS
21 were specific to your students?

22 MR. ESKOLA: We actually have that data.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: If you can just state
24 your name and position.

25 MR. ESKOLA: Oh, I'm sorry.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: That's okay.

2 MR. ESKOLA: Todd Eskola, DRIVEN Lead. We
3 started to put in the slides the data we pulled.
4 Each year we broke down from the map testing, the ACT
5 Aspire, all that kind of stuff, and we can send that
6 to you. We didn't put it in our presentation. We
7 weren't sure exactly what to put in, what not to put
8 in.

9 Our ATLAS scores, we break that down as well.
10 This year, we've already started prepping for next
11 year, where we've taken all of our ATLAS scores,
12 labeled them one, two, three, four, been able to
13 identify who do we need extra support to based on
14 their previous ATLAS scores of incoming eighth
15 graders that will be coming into our program.
16 Current ninth graders that are currently taking the
17 class and using that ACT time to support those
18 students to ensure growth, whether it's from a tutor
19 with extra time or their classroom teacher with extra
20 time and being able to manipulate that schedule to
21 offer them that support.

22 DR. BACON: And clearly you have plans and
23 programs and supports in place. I'm just curious on
24 real data. I mean, is this something DESE could pull
25 for us? I'd love to know what that is to be able to

1 re-evaluate --

2 MR. ESKOLA: Do you have your computer?

3 MS. BLACKWELL: I do.

4 DR. BACON: -- you know, the application --

5 MR. ESKOLA: If you grab your computer, you can
6 pull it up.

7 DR. BACON: -- specific to what DRIVEN looks
8 like.

9 MS. BLACKWELL: Rachel Blackwell, Instructional
10 Facilitator -- or Instructional -- sorry, that was
11 one of my roles eventually. Digital Learning
12 Facilitator. Whenever we have our students in
13 eSchool, this is something for the last seven years
14 -- make sure it's connected to the Wi-Fi.

15 We haven't been able to separate them except for
16 like a classification. In eSchool, this year we have
17 them in a different building under Robinson just so
18 we can look at the data separately. Let's see if we
19 have --

20 MR. ESKOLA: Where's your --

21 MS. BLACKWELL: Try to see if there's a Wi-Fi.

22 But that's been harder, so we've had to just
23 pull the data. Like with the ACT scores, I just get
24 all from the counselor, and we pull out our students.

25 DR. BACON: So while you're pulling that up, so

1 procedurally, if you're approved for a conversion
2 charter, you'll be a separate LEA.

3 MS. BLACKWELL: Correct.

4 DR. BACON: So this will be much easier --

5 MR. ESKOLA: Correct.

6 MS. BLACKWELL: Correct.

7 DR. BACON: -- moving forward to be able to see
8 what performances --

9 MS. BLACKWELL: I know last year when we renewed
10 with our School of Innovation, like we had to provide
11 a list of our State ID numbers so they could pull and
12 make sure, you know, compare what we were saying with
13 what the state was saying, but I never got it back.
14 I can give you what we had, though.

15 DR. BACON: Okay. If you can --

16 DR. MOORE: If you need the Wi-Fi password, it's
17 on that back wall.

18 MS. BLACKWELL: Okay.

19 MR. ESKOLA: If you look up DRIVEN data, you can
20 pull -- I know all the MAP, ACT Aspire, all that
21 compared to state, national, et cetera, is all broken
22 down.

23 DR. BACON: While she's working on that, could
24 -- I'll move to a different topic, and you all can
25 come back and answer that. So you're located at

1 Robinson. Separate part of the building, or are you
2 infused into the totality of what Robinson High
3 School is? Just kind of give me the lay of the land
4 and then how resources, personnel, curricular
5 materials, facility is shared sort of across the
6 Robinson traditional and what you'll be doing.

7 MR. ESKOLA: Okay. Todd Eskola, DRIVEN Lead. I
8 remembered that time. Currently, we are housed in a
9 separate building, the Champion Center, which is a
10 one-level upstairs. Our freshmen are housed at the
11 freshman campus. We are under the umbrella of
12 Robinson High School, so everything is through PCSSD.
13 When we move next year, we'll all be located at the
14 freshman campus, so DRIVEN will be its own facility.
15 Our students will walk across the football field to
16 Robinson High School for elective classes. All core
17 classes will be held on the DRIVEN campus. We will
18 still be under the umbrella of PCSSD. We'll be fully
19 staffed. Administration, teachers, tutors,
20 counselor, all the things.

21 We submitted it to our board. At the November
22 meeting, the board voted unanimously 7-0 to move
23 forward with this application. It's in full support.
24 Our Director of Secretary of Education is here today
25 to support this application. But as far as funding

1 goes, that's where all the funding comes from.

2 DR. BACON: So you have your own teaching staff
3 that's the DRIVEN staff for core classes, but you
4 share resources and --

5 MR. ESKOLA: Correct.

6 DR. BACON: -- other courses, wraparound type
7 stuff like that?

8 MR. ESKOLA: Yes, sir.

9 DR. BACON: Because I think you said something
10 earlier that I thought was very interesting about
11 videoing every lesson taught, which seems like a
12 great thing for students and parents to go back,
13 double check if they missed, if they're absent, if
14 they missed something. That's something to me that
15 seems like that might be helpful for Robinson High
16 School as well. Are these sort of part of the
17 conversation about even though you're pulling out at
18 your own LEA, how you share, they share with you a
19 lot of stuff, but you share with them as well. I'm
20 just, I'm curious.

21 MR. ESKOLA: Yes, sir. When I said we want to
22 redefine education, videoing lessons is something
23 that we believe in. Mastery learning is something we
24 believe in. It's been so much fun over the last
25 couple of years to be visited by districts from

1 across the state to our program. I know of at least
2 one district that next fall is planning to
3 incorporate videoing lessons across the board in
4 their school district, mastery learning across the
5 board just like we do, and it doesn't cost anything.

6 But It's a different way of thinking, and that's
7 what I meant by redefining education is sharing what
8 we do with other schools, other districts. We have
9 had other schools in our district ask questions
10 about, "Hey, how could we do this on our campus?"
11 And it is just a different way of doing things.

12 DR. BACON: Sure. I appreciate that. I'll pass
13 it back. And whenever you get a chance on that data,
14 I'd like to just get some more specifics. But I
15 won't hold everybody up.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Dr. Moore.

17 DR. MOORE: Yes. So thank you so much for your
18 presentation. And I do think so many of your
19 practices are best practices that and I hope you're
20 infusing that to other schools at Pulaski County
21 School District.

22 So you mentioned AP quite a bit, and you
23 mentioned concurrent a little bit. And I know I'm
24 with the Division of Higher Ed, and we are really
25 focused on expanding concurrent opportunities in

1 Central Arkansas because the larger districts really
2 have a lower percentage of concurrent than other
3 schools in the state. So as we move towards merit
4 distinction, while AP is one route to get it, as are,
5 you know, many other routes towards getting merit
6 distinction, concurrent is one of the, if you were
7 hedging bets, students have a lot of success with
8 concurrent compared to some other options for merit
9 distinction, and we know that's transferable.

10 Where AP is a great opportunity, the pass rate
11 is so low, and new students do not actually graduate
12 with credit going into college. Where with
13 concurrent, you know, it's around 90 percent of
14 students graduate with transferable credit to any of
15 our public institutions in the state.

16 So that was my soapbox. Now, the question,
17 sorry. Can you speak to opportunities for concurrent
18 credit currently or in the future that you may have
19 planned? Because we're seeing a lot of expansion of
20 those opportunities.

21 MS. HOLUB: Sure. So currently our school --
22 our program, our school and our --

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Can you please state
24 your name?

25 MS. HOLUB: Nina Holub, Instructional

1 Facilitator at Robinson High School. I know, I need
2 like a little, like, you know, like those stickers
3 that say, "Take attendance." You know, I need a
4 sticker, "State your name and title."

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: We'll work on that.

6 MS. HOLUB: No, I just need -- I need the
7 instructional support. I appreciate the reminder.
8 So, Nina Holub, Instructional Facilitator for Math at
9 Robinson High School. Currently, our school and
10 district use A-State as our concurrent credit. Next
11 year, we are looking at partnering in addition with
12 UAPTC for some non-traditional concurrent credit
13 options, as well as some -- what do we call those?
14 They're not non-traditional. That's not the right
15 word, but I'm missing. Yes, career-oriented, yeah.

16 Sorry. So I lost my train of thought, but that
17 will be our focus next year as well. So in addition
18 to AP, I think that the difference between what we
19 see in AP and concurrent credit currently is through
20 the schools that we offer, there is more of a
21 progression through AP than there is concurrent
22 credit. Where, you know, speaking from the math
23 perspective in particular, you have pre-cal and then
24 AP-Cal and then you have opportunities for AP-Stat as
25 well. Or in history you can take AP-US, AP-World and

1 then AP-Gov. So you have a little bit more of that
2 progression. Whereas, concurrent credit is all based
3 on your partner school and then your current school
4 population.

5 So I think that that's an obstacle that we faced
6 in the past, but one that lends itself, like Coach
7 Eskola said earlier, basically to that equal
8 opportunity that we see, just like you've said, that
9 you have a higher probability, we could just say, of
10 earning that concurrent credit if you're taking a
11 concurrent credit enrolled class as opposed to an AP
12 distinguished class.

13 But I think that just kind of goes into one
14 thing that we've shared with parents as well is that
15 every student is unique and different. And if we
16 have students that are looking outside of the state
17 for their, you know, higher ed opportunities, we just
18 want to be transparent and allow every family to make
19 the decision that's best for their student with all
20 of those factors in mind. Did you have anything that
21 you wanted to add? Yeah.

22 DR. LUTTRELL: Justin Luttrell, Director of
23 Secondary Education. Just wanted to add, in being on
24 the task force for concurrent credit in Pulaski
25 County, we've made a lot of strides over the past

1 couple of years. So as of next year, we will offer
2 at least 60 hours of concurrent credit throughout the
3 district. And so DRIVEN's going to have all of that,
4 where we have partnerships with UAPTC. We're
5 starting partnerships with Shorter College. We have
6 various institutions that we're working with that are
7 more than just your traditional concurrent credit.
8 It may be the early college programs at UAPTC and
9 really expanding our pathways.

10 Like we're already talking about expanding
11 pathways. What would that look like in our various
12 feeders? And all of that relates to concurrent
13 credit. It relates to that trajectory for industry,
14 and what do the students want, and what do the
15 students need? And so as of next year, if all of
16 this were to go through today, they have access to
17 all of our concurrent credit offerings that we would
18 have throughout the district, so at least 60 hours.

19 DR. MOORE: All right. Wonderful. Thank you so
20 much. And I do want to what you said about parents
21 having options and students having choice and the
22 fact that you're advising. Because we say concurrent
23 credit just for concurrent credit sake is not good.
24 Like students have to have some general idea of their
25 future plans. Because just because it transfers

1 doesn't mean it counts towards a degree, and
2 especially if they're going out of state. So I
3 applaud your efforts on advising students and parents
4 and having those discussions, instead of just
5 randomly putting kids in classes just to say they're
6 concurrent. So that's awesome.

7 And then -- sorry, I can't see what I wrote down
8 without my glasses. Can you tell me a little more,
9 especially since you're changing models. Because --
10 about what your feeder schools are since it might be
11 a little bit different than when you were just really
12 part of Robinson, and now you're a little bit
13 different. What will that look like? What are your
14 feeder schools? How will it work for recruiting
15 students? What's that look like?

16 MR. ESKOLA: So, Todd Eskola, DRIVEN Lead. For
17 the first seven years of our program, there has been
18 little to no advertisement for the program. We have
19 had no problem getting students. Our students come
20 from not only our Robinson feeder, but we've been the
21 largest number of school choice within our district
22 of any program across our district for the last
23 several years. We already have -- we're going into
24 next year with our capacity already met. So I
25 anticipate moving forward, especially moving to the

1 conversion charter. With the rules that are set in
2 place for conversion charter, we are going to be
3 limited by capacity.

4 We have students that come from Conway. We have
5 students that drive in from Cabot. We have students
6 that drive in from Bryant. We have students that
7 drive in from Southeast Little Rock. So they kind of
8 come from all over, but it's been word of mouth. Our
9 anticipation is, our facility limits how many
10 students we can have. And so we talked earlier
11 before the meeting about the lottery that is in
12 place, as far as the public lottery, to determine
13 students moving forward after this next year because
14 without space -- we've never had a shortage of
15 students. We've never had a shortage of applicants.
16 And we don't just pull from our feeder pattern. I
17 would say approximately 50 percent of each class
18 comes from Robinson feeder pattern. The other 50
19 percent comes from all over Central Arkansas.

20 DR. MOORE: That's all my questions at this
21 time. And I know you're about to share data. Just
22 congrats on the ACT scores, though. That alone is
23 quite impressive.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Dr. Beshears-Duncan.

25 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes. Might we pause for

1 the data, or should I continue?

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Well, I was going to
3 like loop back around. All right?

4 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay. I'm happy to jump
5 in.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

7 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: All right. So, first of
8 all, I want to say that I applaud the commitment and
9 creativity and the comprehensive growth of the DRIVEN
10 community. So I had the privilege of being part of
11 the School of Innovation renewal last year, and so
12 I've seen that data at that point in time. I've also
13 heard from numerous students from DRIVEN over the
14 years who've led presentations for adults, which in
15 and of itself is a celebration for kids to be doing
16 that. I've also had the opportunity to reach out to
17 you all and say, "Would you present?" "Would you
18 host?" "Would you speak to this leader?" And the
19 community has always been really gracious to do that.
20 So thank you.

21 So just a couple of questions. The community
22 has grown; right? You just spoke to kids driving
23 from a broader region of the area. You also talked
24 in the presentation about really wanting the school
25 to mirror the community and the broader community.

1 Could you speak a little bit to the specific supports
2 and scaffolds that are in place to support kids?
3 That's question one. And then question two is, as
4 you've grown and as you continue to grow, how are you
5 ensuring that every kid continues to be known and
6 seen, and what challenges have you experienced or are
7 you anticipating?

8 MR. ESKOLA: Okay. Todd Eskola, DRIVEN Lead. I
9 may have to come back to you because you had about
10 three questions in there.

11 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I did.

12 MR. ESKOLA: If I got them all. You mentioned
13 support for students. I think that's literally a
14 conversation every minute of the day. How can we
15 better support students? I believe mastery learning
16 is a support for students. I believe being
17 intentional from the application process to meet with
18 families and meet with students and get to know them.
19 Over the last two years, I think I've probably sat
20 with over 1,000 families. We meet one-on-one with
21 the families. Before school starts, we're going to
22 break up our entire school population with our
23 faculty. And over the course of about three weeks,
24 we're going to have one-on-one meetings with a
25 faculty member and a family, because we want every

1 family and every student to know they have a person.

2 You've heard it said before, nobody cares what
3 you know until they know what you care. Well, when
4 our foundation is built on those relationships, we
5 want our students to trust us. If you ask any kid in
6 our program what my job is, every student in our
7 program, all 500 students in our program will tell
8 you the same thing. "Your job is to keep me safe."
9 "Physically and emotionally keep me safe." That's my
10 job. We believe that's because they trust us, and
11 that's something that's been earned. I think it's
12 quick to go away.

13 We're very transparent with our parents. We
14 want our parents to be informed. We sent home a
15 weekly newsletter. We want them on campus. We want
16 to know how we can best support them. I had a
17 meeting last night with a family about their ninth
18 grade daughter struggling in class. We asked her,
19 "What do you need from us? How can we best support
20 you?" Our tutors are a support. Our teachers are a
21 support. Our counseling department is a support.
22 Our entire faculty is a support. And we believe in
23 giving grace. Not every kid's going to knock it out
24 of the park on the first time. Some kids are going
25 to be a little slower.

1 We want motivated students. We want them to
2 believe they can achieve, and we believe it's our job
3 to give those words of affirmation, to make sure that
4 those students don't quit on themselves. And that's
5 a human trait that I believe all of our faculty, all
6 of our community has to buy into. Because without
7 that, we literally have nothing. And I'm sorry, I'm
8 going to have to ask you what your second question
9 was.

10 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: You bet. So the second
11 question was, as you've grown, and as you continue to
12 grow, how are you ensuring that what you just offered
13 continues? And -- because that takes a lot of
14 intentionality and time.

15 MR. ESKOLA: It does.

16 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: And what challenges might
17 you be anticipating?

18 MR. ESKOLA: Okay. So I believe making sure
19 students and parents know what they're signing up
20 for. The reason we have parent meetings is because
21 we want to spend -- it's about an hour, hour and 15
22 minutes per meeting with each family. We want to
23 explain our program and be transparent. We want
24 every parent and every child to be able to say, "This
25 is what I want for my child," or "This is not what I

1 want for my child." It's their choice. It's --
2 we're not forcing anybody to come to this program.

3 We are who we are. We believe what we believe.
4 We will -- we're open to change. If something
5 doesn't work, we're going to try new stuff, and if it
6 doesn't work, we're going to scrap it and try
7 something else. But I believe the buy-in starts with
8 involving them in the decision making process. You
9 know, we're hitting kids after their eighth grade
10 year. And there's so much movement across the state
11 from middle school to high school. And we would
12 involve parents and let them know we know it's a big
13 choice. This is a big decision you have to make for
14 your child, the most precious thing you have. This
15 is what we do. This is what we offer, and if you
16 believe this is what's best for your child, then we
17 want to be there to support you. And if it's not, we
18 want to wish you well and hope that you find exactly
19 what fits your child.

20 And by doing that, I think we get that initial
21 buy-in from our parents and our students because they
22 know what they're signing up for. They know they
23 need to be involved. They know this is the
24 resources. They know we genuinely care about every
25 single one of our students. And I think that's how

1 we ensure that it keeps going. And then again,
2 asking our kids all the time, "What can we do
3 better?" Letting them know we're human. We make
4 mistakes just like they do.

5 The biggest challenge is, I believe, is
6 facilities that will hinder our growth. Eventually,
7 our vision is that it becomes its own standalone
8 campus. It is difficult sharing a campus with a
9 traditional program. From a scheduling standpoint,
10 it can create nightmares. And then you have two
11 different platforms that are equally valuable, and
12 it's difficult sometimes for people to realize that
13 both have value. And it's just a choice for parents
14 and students to decide what fits them best.

15 But I do believe our challenge is that we are
16 capped right now because of our facilities. And we
17 can only fit so many sardines into a can, and so
18 we're there. And that, to me, is the challenge of
19 our district, is how do we build a bigger facility?
20 Because I told Dr. Luttrell, DRIVEN would be the
21 biggest high school in Pulaski County if we had our
22 own facility. I truly believe that.

23 MS. HOLUB: Nina Holub, Instructional
24 Facilitator of Math at Robinson High School. I just
25 wanted to share an anecdote to those two questions

1 when you talk about challenges and the scaffolds and
2 supports. On one of our feedback forms, we had one
3 of the valedictorians -- yeah, we had
4 co-valedictorians last year. And one of those
5 co-valedictorians in his feedback form made the point
6 that his concern about our program is the growth.
7 Because he started in that second graduating class,
8 which means he was one of 150 students at the time.
9 And watching that development of the program over
10 time gives him a unique lens, as well as us who have
11 been a part of the process you know from beginning to
12 where we are now is we think about not only the
13 physical space but also that accountability to each
14 student as an individual.

15 So I mentioned originally we were marketed as a
16 blended learning program, but one of those other tag
17 lines under the School of Innovation model was
18 personalized learning. And so what did that look
19 like to meet the needs of an individual student? And
20 so I just want to acknowledge that growth as a
21 challenge in itself, but that the awareness of it and
22 the keenness to say, "Well, what are other schools
23 doing that support that growth and still offer the
24 individualization for students?" And understanding
25 that academics is one way to go about it.

1 You know, we've seen, what is it that LRCA does,
2 like houses? You see those different opportunities
3 for students. And really, we just looked at it in
4 the last year and a half of could our grade levels be
5 meaningful communities? Could our mentor groups,
6 instead of being mixed grades, be targeted for all of
7 our ninth graders to have two to three mentor
8 teachers that support them so that we can create that
9 cohesive family environment, but also that ownership
10 of those mentor teachers to say, "We're not losing
11 that one." They may go wayward, and we may have
12 concerns and we may meet with parents and look at
13 what individual scaffolds or support are needed.

14 You know, we've seen strategies as -- and this
15 is hopefully not a barrier anymore, but in the past
16 we would say, "Well, do they need to turn their phone
17 into me for the day?" "Do we need to have a planner
18 for a tenth grader that gets signed by parent and
19 teacher every day?" You know, what are those unique
20 to the student and family that makes sense for what
21 they're experiencing? And again, part of that is
22 supported through the mentorship process, which is
23 just a classroom teacher who's dedicated during
24 advisory time, which is 30 minutes each day within.

25 And again, this is really just in the last, I'd

1 say two years that we started focusing on grade
2 levels as a community that's oriented toward that
3 grade level and is accountable and responsible for
4 that 30 or so students to say that on a weekly basis,
5 we have parent communication through the student
6 grade check process. And then that piece of parent
7 involvement and communication to say, "Hey, my kid's
8 struggling," you know. We don't have to ask, "Who do
9 we talk to?" They have that direct line with the
10 mentor teacher, and then we pull that in for a
11 community meeting. But you had a third question, I
12 believe.

13 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I think you all addressed
14 my plethora of questions.

15 MS. HOLUB: Okay.

16 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: And I have no further
17 questions. Thank you so much.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: And I believe we have
19 Ms. Newton online and then we'll circle back around
20 to your data question because I want to make sure
21 everyone gets their questions out. So if something
22 else pops up, you're prepared to respond to it, give
23 you time to be thinking about your response. So, Ms.
24 Newton, do you have any questions for the applicant?

25 MS. NEWTON: I don't have any questions

1 specifically because as the Panel knows and some
2 others may know, my background is in social services,
3 social work. And I've listened and been very
4 impressed at how the school's addressing the many
5 needs of parents and students and teachers as well.
6 So I commend you on developing a school approach that
7 addresses a very number of needs. And I commend you.
8 I think that's what the whole nature of charters is
9 all about is being able to be flexible enough to do
10 that.

11 Just generally speaking, I just -- I don't -- I
12 guess it's a question, but I hope that you stay
13 focused, as focused as you are. And it seems like
14 you have a plan to do that in terms of meeting the
15 social and emotional needs of all involved, including
16 teachers. I think it's a bold approach to videotape
17 and record the classroom, the lessons that the
18 students are being taught because that is an
19 irreversible record. So you can go back and look at
20 those things.

21 Again, the intentionality of so many things,
22 whether it be time management skills, whether it be
23 relationship or trust or parental involvement of the
24 tutors that meet the whole needs of young people.
25 I'm proud to be a part of this Panel and to hear this

1 presentation and can help you continue to do good
2 work.

3 I guess my question would be, how do you remain
4 focused? And if you've had the success, you'll meet
5 more challenges. You will certainly come upon
6 circumstances that will be a first for you or more
7 challenging than something else. So how do you
8 continue with staff? How do you continue with
9 administration? How do you continue your philosophy
10 of the holistic approach and not be distracted?

11 MR. ESKOLA: Todd Eskola, DRIVEN Lead. I think
12 we know our "why." I've taught -- I've been in
13 education 31 years, never been more excited. I've
14 told my students I had on my phone to retire in May.
15 And this opportunity has evolved, and it genuinely
16 takes one second looking in the face of our kids to
17 remind you why you do what you do. And our faculty,
18 our students, our parents, enjoy being together,
19 enjoy the common goal of working with every single
20 student on campus to try to make them the best they
21 can be. And we're committed to do whatever it takes.
22 And I think as long as we know our "why," then we're
23 going to be successful, and we're not going to lose
24 our way. Our vision is clear. Our mission is clear,
25 and I think when we lose our why, it's time for me to

1 retire.

2 MS. NEWTON: Well, I hope that doesn't happen
3 before prematurely. But, you know, I think the
4 culture -- I think the one thing that impresses me
5 most is the culture that's been established. I don't
6 know if you were -- you learned a lot as you went
7 along, certainly, but the intentionality of taking an
8 opportunity just to set an educational culture. And
9 I think that's what I hear because I don't hear -- I
10 would be surprised if the janitor didn't have his
11 part or her part in doing something along the lines
12 of keeping all of this going.

13 So I think I'd like to say the intentionality of
14 it and the resulting culture, my whole philosophy
15 with any best practice that's developed or continued
16 is that it be shared, and I think just certainly as a
17 model that could be shared within the state of
18 Arkansas and with others as well. So thank you for
19 what you do.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: You had some data you
21 wanted to bring forward?

22 MR. ESKOLA: I do. I don't know if we can share
23 this or not.

24 MS. BLACKWELL: If not, just click through it
25 and scroll down.

1 MR. ESKOLA: Is there -- there's not a way to
2 share it, though; right?

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: They're saying no.

4 MR. ESKOLA: Okay. Todd Eskola, DRIVEN Lead.
5 We have multiple sets of data that we've collected
6 over the previous years. We have spring MAP testing
7 broken down by grade level, compared to national
8 average, main building average by subject area.
9 Would you rather see it real quick and then me talk
10 about it so you get eyes on it?

11 DR. BACON: Well, I think what I'd really --
12 while you all have been talking, I've sort of been
13 digging around. So I went to some -- on an OEP site
14 and have some data. The thing that I think is the
15 most questionable, and the reason I was sort of
16 asking can you pull DRIVEN out of Robinson, because I
17 really, I live a minute from Robinson High School and
18 Robinson Schools, and so I really thought Robinson
19 Schools were really crushing it in recent years
20 academically. But when I look at this data from last
21 year, Robinson High School percentile rank for median
22 growth overall was two, and the percentile rank for
23 median growth among the lowest quartile overall was
24 four. So please tell me that DRIVEN is higher than
25 that.

1 MR. ESKOLA: Our numbers are really good.

2 DR. BACON: Okay.

3 MR. ESKOLA: May I?

4 DR. BACON: Sure, you may approach.

5 DR. MOORE: You've always wanted to say that.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Finally go it in there.

7 MR. ESKOLA: This is some of the data pulled
8 from not this past year, but that compares us to the
9 main building, to the state level with ACT Aspire.

10 DR. BACON: All right. So this is --

11 MR. ESKOLA: This is just DRIVEN on the --

12 (Cross-talk)

13 MR. ESKOLA: Right. This is DRIVEN.

14 DR. BACON: Okay.

15 MR. ESKOLA: This is main building. This is the
16 state readiness level.

17 DR. BACON: Okay. What about growth? Do you
18 have that on there anywhere?

19 MR. ESKOLA: I don't have -- that's ACT. This
20 is the MAP test, but it's not --

21 DR. BACON: Okay. So you have --

22 MR. ESKOLA: This is --

23 DR. BACON: But that was ATLAS that you were
24 showing me (inaudible)?

25 MR. ESKOLA: This is --

1 DR. BACON: Is there a way we could email that
2 like to --

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah.

4 DR. BACON: -- someone?

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah, and so if you will
6 just kind of restate for the record, like what you
7 were reviewing with Dr. Bacon so that we can all have
8 that and then it could be in the record.

9 MR. ESKOLA: Restate?

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Like what -- what graphs
11 you were showing him.

12 MR. ESKOLA: Right. So I had broken --

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: And then our intent is
14 that you'll email that back to the Panel --

15 MR. ESKOLA: Yes.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- so we can have access
17 to it.

18 MR. ESKOLA: Rachel will email that to the
19 Panel. We were looking at 2023 ACT Aspire
20 comparisons to the state at or above readiness level,
21 DRIVEN at or above readiness level, and the main
22 building at or above readiness level, and showing
23 that comparison.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So in response to Dr.
25 Bacon's question, the performance in comparison, like

1 percentages wise, the two areas that you were --

2 MR. ESKOLA: Yeah.

3 DR. BACON: You were -- just read off those two
4 columns you were just showing me that show what
5 DRIVEN was versus Robinson as a whole.

6 MR. ESKOLA: Yes, sir. Ninth grade science, the
7 DRIVEN percent at or above readiness level was 46.38.
8 The main building was 18.54. Ninth grade reading,
9 DRIVEN, was 81.16. The main building was 32.25. The
10 ninth grade math was 50.72. The main building was
11 21.77. Ninth grade English was 86.96. The main
12 building was 49.19. Tenth grade science was 45.61 to
13 14.85. Tenth grade reading was 64.91 to 23.76.
14 Tenth grade math was 50.88 to 6.93, and 10th grade
15 English was 89.47 to 44.55.

16 DR. BACON: So this is just an opinion, but it
17 sounds like perhaps the whole Robinson High School
18 needs to be DRIVEN. Because what you showed me and
19 what you just read off shows that in DRIVEN, it's
20 leaps and bounds higher performance than what the
21 school as a whole is.

22 MR. ESKOLA: And we are hopeful that when we
23 were able to pull with our own LEA and have our own
24 numbers, that more districts will be able to use some
25 of the things we use to improve their scores. That's

1 ultimately, as professionals, that's our goal, is to
2 raise the bar for everyone.

3 DR. BACON: And I would tell you, obviously,
4 you're becoming your own LEA, you weren't, if you get
5 approved today. That's the kind of data I'm going to
6 be looking for, is the growth specifically for your
7 students. And also, I'll probably be looking at it
8 compared to Robinson High School as a whole and some
9 of the other schools in the area. So I appreciate
10 you all taking the time to do that. I know I kind of
11 threw you there.

12 Mr. Eskola: And I do want to reiterate that to
13 you, when we started this journey as professionals, I
14 looked at our superintendent in the eye and I said,
15 "We will be an "A" school." And our comments to our
16 parents, even in our recruitment -- in our
17 application meetings with our parents, they both
18 heard me talk about ATLAS scores growth, pathways,
19 graduation, AP, concurrent credit, all those things
20 that go into that school report. That's what's going
21 to be our focus from a school building academically
22 to show that what we do works.

23 DR. BACON: Okay. Do you all have anything to
24 add to this just from the bigger picture? And
25 really, you know, if DRIVEN comes out of this as its

1 own LEA, Robinson's in for a world of hurt. I hope
2 that there's some strategies and plans in place to do
3 something. Because even the elementary and middle
4 school don't look like this, it's literally, it's
5 just Robinson High School that fell to that lowest
6 level of percentile. So I mean, I would be thinking
7 about if DRIVEN becomes its own LEA, what does that
8 mean for the rest of the school? Sorry.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: No. You're fine. Are
10 there any follow-up questions about the data now that
11 we know the numbers? Is there anybody else wanted to
12 come back around to?

13 DR. MOORE: Yes.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Dr. Moore.

15 DR. MOORE: Yeah. So could you speak to the
16 student breakdown, like, your building or your
17 program compared to the high school, what we're
18 looking at for free and reduced lunch and special ed?
19 Do you know the percentages?

20 MR. ESKOLA: I don't have that off the top of my
21 head. I do -- yeah. What we were asked to make --
22 I'm sorry. Todd Eskola, DRIVEN Lead. Our district
23 wanted us to make sure that we provided and had the
24 diversity piece. They haven't asked us about free
25 and reduced lunch. I don't have a ballpark special

1 education students. If I had to ballpark guess, I
2 would say we have 20, 30 in our population right now.
3 I don't know of a comparison to Robinson High School
4 for that.

5 Our diversity piece, we took our community, our
6 school zone map. Our school zone map is about 17, 18
7 percent African American. Currently DRIVEN
8 population is sitting at about 22, 23 percent African
9 American. We have an extremely high Indian
10 population, higher Asian population. Diversity
11 speaking, I know in our applications for this next
12 class that we'll be getting in was, I believe, 51
13 percent white. It was 31, 32 percent African
14 American. It was a really good mix, we felt like, to
15 maintain that diversity piece. But I do not have the
16 numbers on free and reduced lunch. We haven't
17 collected that data.

18 DR. MOORE: Well, first, I'm highly impressed
19 that you could just spit out those percentages. That
20 was --

21 MR. ESKOLA: I get asked all the time.

22 DR. MOORE: Yeah, that was quite impressive.
23 But I would appreciate if y'all could send us free
24 and reduced lunch and special ed. Because, I mean,
25 the disparity between the scores are glaring. And of

1 course, you're doing very different things. So
2 that's one of the primary, and I'm sure the driving,
3 no pun intended, reason for that.

4 But I would be curious, if for some reason,
5 you're getting the cream of the crop students
6 compared to -- and I don't -- when I say that, that
7 doesn't mean that other students aren't the cream of
8 the crop. I don't mean that. But the students who
9 may have the most challenges, if they're being left
10 at the other school, and you're getting the students
11 that may have less challenges, that would be
12 interesting as well. So I'd appreciate if you could
13 share that to the charter office.

14 MS. BLACKWELL: I was just talking about some of
15 the things, some of our challenges we've had. Oh,
16 Rachel Blackwell, Digital Learning Facilitator.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you.

18 MS. BLACKWELL: Some of our challenges we've
19 had, we've had three principals during our seven
20 years, so that's also been a challenge. This year,
21 our special ed teacher left, so any students that
22 were in special ed because they can't have the
23 inclusion classes, they actually were moved back to
24 the main building. They're still tagged with the
25 with the DRIVEN label, but unfortunately, because of

1 not having a special ed teacher designated to DRIVEN,
2 this year they weren't able to stay in the main
3 program. Anything else? Okay.

4 DR. MOORE: I don't know that I -- I think I
5 said it earlier, I said great on the ACT, but wow on
6 your ACT Aspire results and ATLAS results. Which was
7 that ATLAS that you were sharing?

8 MR. ESKOLA: ACT Aspire.

9 DR. MOORE: Okay. You said ACT Aspire, yeah.
10 That is really quite impressive.

11 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: One request that may also
12 serve the Board that I'm thinking about, you all did
13 an immense amount of work for your School of
14 Innovation and Renewal, and you also did a lot of
15 comparisons in that and parsing of the data. So I'm
16 wondering if it might be possible just to send that
17 presentation or information when you send the data?

18 MS. BLACKWELL: Yes. Absolutely.

19 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So I will say that I am
21 very familiar with the DRIVEN program because I had a
22 child that went through the DRIVEN program, and it is
23 a very different structure. So as a parent and a
24 spouse that, you know, went through very traditional
25 education, when they explained to you how DRIVEN's

1 going to work, you are a bit skeptical at the
2 beginning. Because you're like, okay, there's not
3 really set deadlines, and you work at your own pace,
4 and you can retake things. And so at first, we were
5 like, "Oh, I don't know how this is going to go."
6 And, you know, to be very transparent, he was a
7 strong academic student but was not very organized at
8 the very beginning. He was a true ninth grade boy.
9 But we trusted the process, and we are very pleased
10 with the outcome.

11 So he's currently in his sophomore year. He's
12 on the Dean's list every semester at NOLA University
13 in New Orleans, which was very concerning for us for
14 him to go away. And everything you were talking
15 about, those pieces that you guys incorporate into
16 the DRIVEN model, we see in him now. We didn't see
17 it then. Like I said, trust the process. What we
18 see in him now, he is very self-managed. Even some
19 of his friends, which my husband at first was like,
20 "They just say that because they're friends." But
21 they were like, "Jason's very focused on his
22 educational outcomes." And we really feel like
23 because of his experience in DRIVEN, that was the
24 outcome.

25 So just the personal take on that that I have

1 seen, the end product, and what you guys say is what
2 happens. You know, sometimes we have to question
3 that when people come in front of us and they lay out
4 what the plan is going to be, if that's going to
5 actually be what happens. And so I've seen it in
6 action, and I know that it can work for all kids.
7 And, you know, I was in the DRIVEN halls and the
8 classrooms, and it is, you know, all walks of life
9 are in DRIVEN, and it is a model that can be
10 successful. And I echo my Panel Members that this is
11 something I really feel like that others look at.
12 Especially the ability to make students take
13 ownership of their educational learning and
14 experiences. And if they are struggling, they need
15 to be able to say that.

16 You know, if they, you know, taking the retakes
17 is not just retaking again, you have to do the steps
18 in order to show that you're ready to do that. And I
19 feel like that, like I said, I've seen the end
20 product. It does allow students to be ready to go to
21 that next step, whatever it may be. If it's college,
22 if it's going into military, it's going into
23 employment, they're ready to be adults when they
24 leave you guys. So I just wanted to say that, and
25 thank you for all the work that you guys have done

1 and you're continuing to do. And I'm excited that
2 this is something that's going to continue for
3 Robinson.

4 I do, again, echo Panel Members. There is that
5 concern that when DRIVEN is pulled out, what is that
6 going to mean for Robinson as a whole? Because, you
7 know, you guys, based on what the numbers say, are
8 well outperforming the other students that are in the
9 school and what that's going to look like. I hope
10 the district is thinking about that and how to be
11 able to address that. Because we don't want it to be
12 an unintended consequence for Robinson High School.

13 The other thing I was just kind of thinking
14 about is the growth. So what does that growth plan
15 look like? If we already know that we're already
16 kind of busting at the seams, but we anticipate that
17 as we go into a charter, then you're going to open
18 the doors for even more students to want to come in.
19 Because we were fortunate -- Robinson is our
20 neighborhood school, so that's why we were fortunate
21 to be there. But if you're having students coming
22 from Conway and Cabot and Bryant, and that is only
23 going to continue to grow, what does that look like?
24 How is that going to be able to be accommodated?

25 MR. ESKOLA: Todd Eskola, DRIVEN Lead. All I

1 can speak on about that is conversations that we've
2 had on the front end with our superintendent, who,
3 when we made the decision to apply for this
4 conversion charter, the first words out of his mouth
5 were, "I've got to planning now for a facility. And
6 I've got to start thinking about how and where and
7 what is it going to look like, et cetera." So I
8 think we are on the beginning steps of that.

9 As we begin this process, I know it is something
10 that he has said. I don't want to speak too much for
11 someone that's not in the room with us. It will be a
12 process because we are a large district with lots of
13 needs and lots of communities. So we don't have a
14 time line for that. For right now, we are capped at
15 what we have, and we will replace based on our
16 graduates with new students coming in.

17 But I would say that our district is aware of
18 the need for a facility, a standalone facility, and
19 that will be a time line that I can't give specifics
20 on other than saying that conversations have started
21 and planning will take place.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Is there something that
23 you wanted to add from the district's perspective?

24 MR. ESKOLA: Well, yeah. I'm sorry. We are
25 going to be our own facility next year --

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

2 MR. ESKOLA: -- but only able to house the core
3 subjects. Our vision is for DRIVEN to be its own
4 high school --

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

6 MR. ESKOLA: -- and be a standalone high school.
7 That was my reference of being capped, is we can only
8 fit so many students there.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Anybody else want to add
10 anything on that? Were you wanting to?

11 MR. LUTTRELL: Justin Luttrell, Director of
12 Secondary Education. I was just going to echo
13 exactly what he's saying. We actually talked about
14 this for a few years now because we've known that
15 we've been capped at capacity, but still meeting the
16 needs of our district as a whole and still been
17 thinking about this. This is a big, huge first step
18 in what that planning process is going to look like.
19 So based on what happens here today will lead us to a
20 lot more conversations in the future.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Are there any
22 other questions from any other Panel Members?

23 DR. BACON: Can I just ask from an admissions
24 perspective?

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sure.

1 DR. BACON: You hit on, I mean, your limited
2 facility, limited space, you'll have a cap. How do
3 you decide who gets in? Do you run a lottery? Do
4 you take every student who applies for this next
5 year? How does that look for you guys?

6 MR. ESKOLA: Currently, the first seven years,
7 we had -- we started with just an application. And
8 then based on student feedback that we got from our
9 graduates, from our current students, we moved to an
10 application and then a parent meeting to where we
11 explain the program and the parents decide.

12 We do plan to move to a lottery moving forward
13 because we feel like we will have more applications
14 than we will spots, opening seats. And we would
15 adhere to exactly what we read when we started this
16 process as far as what it looks like for a district
17 conversion charter with the public lottery, et
18 cetera. Even talked about making it a big, big deal
19 about getting near like the lotto or something.

20 DR. BACON: Right.

21 MR. ESKOLA: But that's the plan for the future,
22 yes.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Any other
24 questions?

25 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Not as this time.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Ms. Newton, did you have
2 any other questions?

3 MS. NEWTON: No.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. All right. If
5 there's no other questions, then I will accept a
6 motion on the District Conversion Charter School
7 Application of Pulaski County Special School District
8 DRIVEN School of Opportunity.

9 DR. MOORE: I move that we approve the Pulaski
10 County Special School District DRIVEN School of
11 Opportunity as a district conversion charter.

12 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: And I second that.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion
14 by Dr. Moore and a second by Dr. Breshears-Duncan.
15 All in favor say aye.

16 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Opposed?

18 (No response)

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: All right. Good.
20 Congratulations.

21 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Congratulations.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So we're going to take a
23 ten-minute break, and we will be back at 10:25.

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

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: We're back, at 10:25.
2 Next on our agenda, we have the District Conversion
3 Charter School Applicant, Little Rock School District
4 Hall High School. Okay.

5 **LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT HALL HIGH SCHOOL**

6 MR. SCOTT: Good morning. Freddie Scott, Office
7 of School Choice Parent Empowerment. We have Little
8 Rock School District who has applied for a District
9 Conversion Charter School, Little Rock Hall High.
10 The charter is grades 9 through 12, scheduled to
11 begin school year 2026-2027. Here to present on
12 behalf of Little Rock Hall High is Dr. Jermall
13 Wright, Superintendent Little Rock School District,
14 Dr. Shae Loring, Assistant Superintendent, and
15 Carlton McGee, the principal of Little Rock Hall.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Before we get
17 started, all those giving testimony today on behalf
18 of Little Rock Hall High School, both in-person -- is
19 there anybody that's online today? Okay. Great.
20 Please stand and raise your right hand. Okay. Do
21 you swear that the testimony or statement you're
22 about to give us the truth, the whole truth, and
23 nothing but the truth?

24 WITNESSES: Yes.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Very good. You

1 may begin. You have 20 minutes for your presentation.
2 And as a reminder, each time you come to the
3 microphone, either presenting or speaking, if you
4 could please restate your name and title for the
5 record. Thank you.

6 MR. MCGEE: Good morning, to the Members of the
7 Charter Authorization Panel. My name is Carlton
8 McGee. I am the principal of Hall High School. I
9 appreciate this opportunity to show you all what we
10 hope to do at Hall. So we are applying for a Charter
11 Authorization Panel -- I mean, excuse me, for a
12 charter for Hall High so that we can provide a
13 blended learning model and a virtual option for our
14 students.

15 The vision and mission for the school, our
16 vision is to empower every student to design their
17 future through personalized learning, early college
18 opportunities, and real world experiences. Our
19 mission is to provide personalized pathways through
20 flexible blended learning, combining in-person
21 support with virtual instruction, preparing students
22 for enlistment, enrollment, and employment.

23 So why a conversion charter? The conversion
24 charter, first, it enables us to provide the virtual
25 learning component to our students, which is

1 essential. Which is also essential for our blended
2 model as well as those who are desirous of a virtual
3 setting. Secondly, it provides an operational
4 flexibility with our staffing and scheduling and
5 allows us to provide a truly personalized learning
6 experience for students.

7 It also permits us -- excuse me, it permits us
8 to accommodate early college opportunities for our
9 students and create genuinely student-centered
10 pathways. And I'm using the term "pathways" or
11 tracks, however you was to look at it, that respond
12 to individual needs rather than a one-size-fits-all
13 model.

14 The blended pathway model requires daily in-
15 person attendance. Students would still attend every
16 day. Students will work through the digital
17 curriculum, and it will also be supplemented by our
18 teachers and the -- and project-based opportunities.
19 The curriculum will be provided through ingenuity.
20 And the supplemental parts would also come from
21 state-approved curriculum such as my perspectives,
22 Savis, which is a company that the state has approved
23 for math instruction and different things of that
24 nature.

25 Our virtual pathway provides a fully flexible

1 student option for students whose circumstances
2 require it. Whether they're working, managing family
3 responsibilities, or for whatever reason just need a
4 different structure, these students still receive
5 success coaching and progress monitoring, they just
6 don't attend on a daily basis. Both pathways use the
7 same rigorous curriculum, both have accountability
8 measures, and both prepare students for success after
9 graduation. The key differentiator is that we're not
10 offering virtual as, you know, as a standalone, but
11 we're offering the blended model as well.

12 Okay. Okay. Here we go. Student population --
13 excuse me, students. Who are we serving? We're
14 serving students who seek accelerated learning
15 opportunities, early college opportunities, students
16 who need flexibility for work or family
17 responsibilities, students who are interested in
18 earning college credit during high school. All of
19 those types of people, as well as students who thrive
20 with a personalized pacing, but still want daily in-
21 person instruction.

22 Critically, we're servicing students from any
23 academic level who simply prefer a blended learning
24 model over the traditional instruction. The
25 challenges that we're addressing are the

1 one-size-fits-all pacing that unfortunately leaves
2 some students behind or may cause some students to
3 become bored. We're addressing the need for
4 individualized support that is not on a level that
5 may not be provided in a traditional setting, and
6 student engagement and real world opportunities and
7 relevant activities.

8 In terms of curriculum, the online part of the
9 -- portion of curriculum, like I said earlier, will
10 be provided through Edgenuity. The in-person parts
11 would come from the state-approved curriculums within
12 the various subject areas. Our instructional
13 approach transforms the teacher into more than just a
14 teacher. Teachers would also serve as success
15 coaches for students. We would have a 30-minute or a
16 period in the day where students will go to what I'm
17 going to just kind of colloquially call home room,
18 and teachers will provide success coaching to those
19 students, making sure that they're up on their work,
20 making sure that they are utilizing best practices as
21 it pertains to studying and learning the material.
22 Excuse me.

23 Teachers would use real-time data provided to
24 them through the platform in order to provide
25 targeted support for students. The typical class day

1 could -- it's not relegated to this, but definitely
2 could look like introductory portion, a instruction,
3 through lesson. Then students would have an
4 opportunity to work in small groups while the teacher
5 moves around and provides support through those small
6 groups based on the data that is provided through
7 assessment. And after that, there would be
8 individualized -- individual time for students to
9 work. Again, with the project-based learning portion
10 we are looking at once, maybe twice, we have to see
11 how it pans out, that a term that students will
12 participate in project-based learning that is
13 developed by the teachers.

14 In terms of the courses, we would offer -- some
15 things that are not on there. I'm sorry. That's an
16 older version. But we would offer the traditional
17 core courses. Some things that aren't on there are
18 advanced geometry, AP statistics. We also offer
19 concurrent credit as well as, like I said earlier,
20 the model would allow time for if a student were,
21 let's say, a senior, and they wanted to start going
22 to college. We've had some just preliminary
23 discussions with UALR and Philander about students
24 enrolling in college and starting some of their
25 classes while they're finishing up in high school and

1 what that would look like.

2 In terms of academic accountability, we want to
3 -- our goal is to have over 95 percent graduation
4 rate, over 80 percent CTE completion, and above state
5 average in terms of growth, both overall and in the
6 lower quartile. We would monitor and assess daily
7 through Edgenuity. We would participate in
8 district-wide ATLAS interim assessments, as well as
9 the summit of assessment, the state summit
10 assessment, and the unit assessments that are
11 provided through the HQIMs that our teachers are
12 going to use.

13 Teachers would also look at data on a weekly
14 basis in teams. They would look at data on a daily
15 basis, but in teams they would look at data on a
16 weekly basis, get together in order to address
17 student needs. And we would review that data, have
18 large reviews, I guess you could say, every nine
19 weeks quarterly. Oh, that should not be -- okay.
20 Our projected enrollment is 200. We're looking at
21 200 students for next year. We'll have a cap of 260,
22 but we're looking at a projected enrollment 200 next
23 year. Staffing, ten to 15 teachers or certified
24 staff, and five to seven non-certified individuals.
25 Again, the teacher -- well, I'm not going to repeat

1 that. We've already talked about that.

2 In terms of engaging the community and the
3 community support behind this idea, we had a few
4 different community meetings. We've gotten feedback
5 from students, parents, and community members, as
6 well as teachers. And some of the key things from
7 the students were a strong interest in the
8 flexibility, the ability to start college courses
9 prior to graduation, the personalized pacing with the
10 in-person support. Students are very interested in
11 that opportunity. Parents, in terms of the parents,
12 parents are very interested in the small-group
13 instruction, the success coaching, and the
14 project-based learning. And the staff has been
15 interested in the blended model and what that means
16 in terms of their ability to provide individualized
17 support for students. We're going to skip those.

18 All right. In terms of the impact for the
19 district, we want to be able to provide parents with
20 options. We want to give them choices that they feel
21 comfortable with. And we know that there has been a
22 strong uptick, if you will, in terms of parents who
23 are interested in virtual opportunities since the
24 pandemic. We want to provide that as well as, like I
25 said, the middle ground of the blended learning

1 opportunity for individuals and families who are
2 interested in that. We also are looking to provide
3 options for parents so that they don't have to go
4 outside of Little Rock School District. They can
5 remain within the district and receive the type of
6 learning that best fits them and that they are
7 interested in.

8 We want to do this in Hall. Hall is a historic
9 school here in Little Rock. A lot of people are
10 connected to Hall. Dr. Bacon once worked at Hall.
11 We're definitely invested in hall as a school, and so
12 we want to make sure that we provide an experience
13 for students that will be positive and attractive to
14 families. In terms of our time line, we've already
15 gotten School Board approval. We're here for your
16 review, and we will start -- provided that we are
17 approved, we will start planning implementation and
18 everything, you know, further implementation in the
19 spring and training in the latter part of the spring
20 and into the summer so that we can hit the ground
21 running in the fall. So, okay. That's my
22 presentation. I'm sure you have questions.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Before we get
24 started with questions, Ms. Raney, can you please
25 come forward and let us know if there's any legal

1 concerns we need to be aware of before we move
2 forward?

3 MS. RANEY: Hi. Julia Raney, ADE. We have no
4 legal concerns.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Thanks. We'll
6 start online with Ms. Newton. Do you have any
7 questions?

8 **QUESTIONS BY THE PANEL**

9 MS. NEWTON: I'm sorry. Who were you asking
10 for? I'm having some difficulty hearing.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Do you have any
12 questions for the applicant?

13 MS. NEWTON: Okay. You're speaking to me.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yes, ma'am.

15 MS. NEWTON: Okay. You know, I was looking, and
16 it's not necessarily fair to have a comprehensive
17 plan based on the last presentations. I didn't hear,
18 and I don't understand, and you referred to the
19 blended learning model and teachers are interested in
20 to start -- interested as to how to do this. Did you
21 see anything? Did you hear anything? I'm not
22 suggesting that you -- are there things that you want
23 to explain to us because I'm not sure I understand
24 exactly what this is going to be other than the
25 virtual model. What's different, or what are the

1 strong points, or how do you intend to gauge --
2 engage in planning teachers, parents, students in
3 developing this model? It's bare bones is from what
4 I understand.

5 I understand that you want to look at gaining
6 college credit, but how that's going to do -- how
7 it's going to be done, how students are going to be
8 recruited, to what extent? Are they still going to
9 be a part of the main campus, or is this a virtual or
10 whatever. So I just have a lot of questions based on
11 I looked at your presentation. And it was general in
12 the sense that, "We plan to do this, that, the
13 other." But the how-to's and why's and "What we've
14 learned from other organizations that have tried
15 this, and what we plan to do different."

16 MR. MCGEE: Okay.

17 MS. NEWTON: And I'm not an educator, and I
18 don't apologize for that because I think that brings
19 maybe a different perspective in terms of the
20 questioning and looking at the necessity to involve a
21 varied group of people in planning to give some
22 examples of how "This has been tried in other places,
23 but it didn't work, and we were going to do it
24 differently," those type things. And I usually am
25 able to form some questions after I've heard that

1 people from academia kind of pull out some things,
2 but I'm from the Social Services, social work
3 perspective.

4 How are you prepared to do some things that --
5 do some things differently and to not make the
6 mistakes some other folks have made. Not, you know,
7 calling names or anything, but this is what we plan
8 to do and this is how we're going to track your
9 population of students in terms of where they come
10 from as opposed to their educational backgrounds of
11 their parents and being able to understand and
12 participate and to be a part of the process.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So, Ms. Newton, do you
14 want me to let others start asking questions and then
15 come back around to you, or do you want the applicant
16 to go ahead and start?

17 MS. NEWTON: Yeah, I think so. I think that
18 would help. But I still have basically the same
19 questions and usually there's -- and I don't have the
20 parts of -- but I'm not looking -- the
21 comprehensiveness of it all is not clear to me. So
22 that would be a good thing, but still I think
23 basically I have some of those same questions.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So I will start
25 with somebody else, and then I'll come back to you.

1 Is that what you said was okay with you?

2 MS. NEWTON: Okay. Great.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

4 MS. NEWTON: That's fine.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Dr. Beshears-
6 Duncan.

7 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you all so much for
8 your presentation and also considering the
9 flexibility and the needs of your students and
10 families and engaging with them. I was wondering if
11 you could speak a little bit about Hall's history and
12 some of the specific requests, just some more
13 specific requests that you've been hearing from your
14 community that let you know. Because from reviewing
15 your documents, it looks like you have a couple of
16 different pathways, and those are really set up to
17 serve your students. Can you speak just a little bit
18 more to that feedback and those requests?

19 MR. MCGEE: Yes. So we, like as I said before,
20 we have been engaging the community in various
21 meetings and receiving feedback. One of the things
22 that our community has shown -- our parents and our
23 students have shown an interest in, is a very small
24 environment when it comes to school. Very interested
25 in that, and that is one of the things that we're

1 trying to provide. That is one of the reasons we are
2 seeking a charter is to be able to do that in an
3 effective manner.

4 Another thing that people have shown interest in
5 is the virtual component. We have offered virtual in
6 a -- just a virtual model, not so much the blended,
7 you know, in-person, but the virtual model, and we do
8 have interest in that as well from the community.
9 And so we want to continue to provide that, but we
10 want to expand that. And as I said before, one of
11 the things specifically parents were interested in is
12 the level of support and the ability for what I would
13 call a self-paced educational model that the blended
14 model provides.

15 If a student, let's say, needs extra time on a
16 particular lesson, then they're able to do that
17 without penalty. If a student already has knowledge
18 of the content of a particular lesson, they're able
19 to move forward and work on the next lesson. And the
20 ability for the teacher to break the students up into
21 small groups, move around and provide that support at
22 that level, or for them to work individually and a
23 teacher to move around and provide that support
24 allows for that to happen in a blended model. And so
25 that's kind of the direction that based on that

1 feedback, the direction that we've kind of gone in.

2 MS. LORING: Good morning, Shae Loring,
3 Assistant Superintendent. Speaking to the first part
4 of your question about the history of how Hall High
5 School has been a mainstay in our district for
6 several years, it was at one time a very large high
7 school over the years. Due to a number of factors,
8 decline in enrollment, the school population has
9 grown smaller. One of the things that has been
10 requested and asked about by our parents and
11 community is a smaller option within our district.
12 Currently, outside of Hall, our smallest high school
13 is about 1,100 students. And so that was a major
14 component. Parents wanted the option of a smaller
15 school for students who just did not feel comfortable
16 for various reasons, may be accustomed to --

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sorry. Go ahead.
18 You're fine. Yep.

19 MS. LORING: May be accustomed to or need for
20 multiple reasons a smaller environment. It creates a
21 more close-knit community. You would have the
22 opportunity to have same teachers in some instances
23 for multiple years, which builds support, trust, all
24 of those things that are important to parents and
25 students. The second major thing, as Mr. McGee said,

1 was the option of flexibility to move at your own
2 pace, to have different options.

3 We currently have a virtual component at Hall
4 High School, so we will be continuing that component
5 for those students who want that option, but then
6 also including some of the virtual learning --
7 digital learning options in our in-person instruction
8 to allow flexibility to incorporate more
9 project-based, career-focused pathway learning
10 opportunities without having to choose between, do we
11 shorten instruction time here and cut time that
12 teachers are providing direct instruction in order to
13 provide these opportunities? So the two major
14 components that we are seeking to focus on and answer
15 for the community are the small high school
16 environment and the flexibility options.

17 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: So thank you for that. So
18 the virtual component, you're continuing and
19 expanding and the elements of the smaller in-person
20 option. What are some lessons learned that you're
21 considering from the virtual component? And what
22 might you be anticipating for that smaller in-person
23 group just to ensure kids are getting what they need?

24 MS. LORING: Shae Loring, Assistant
25 Superintendent, Little Rock School District. One of

1 the things that we figured out post-pandemic is that
2 we can provide more options to things that we may not
3 have in the school through some of our digital
4 platforms. One of the things that we are doing
5 currently with our virtual students, which actually
6 kind of inspired some of the planning for our charter
7 requests, currently Hall is a small high school,
8 small traditional high school with a virtual
9 component. And what we're doing is, blending those
10 two things for those students.

11 So our virtual students then will have options
12 of being in a sort of a hybrid model where they can
13 take classes online, but if there is an in-person
14 elective that's not offered virtually, they can come
15 to campus to take that class. And then our in-person
16 students have the option of taking additional
17 coursework, advanced classes that we may not be able
18 to offer because the staff and the school is so small
19 through the virtual platform.

20 So one of the biggest lessons is taking those
21 two options that we have there, kind of merging --
22 keeping them separate, but also blending some of the
23 components to get the best of both worlds of a
24 traditional school and an online school so that
25 students have the flexibility to do both and get the

1 most advantages out of both of those programs, if
2 that makes sense.

3 MR. MCGEE: I would also say, one thing that we
4 learned was that virtual students need just as much
5 support as in-person students. And so when I spoke
6 earlier about the success coaching component, that
7 arose from that, from -- excuse me -- from a lesson
8 learned from the virtual school. And so allowing,
9 carving time out of the day, so that teachers
10 specifically can support students, not only the
11 in-person students, but the virtual students as well,
12 through that success coaching is something that we're
13 implementing as a result of lessons learned.

14 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay. Last question. So
15 thank you for that. And the success coaching is
16 something that I've seen work in schools that I
17 visited with across the country. And so it's really
18 great to hear that you all are considering that for
19 both your in-person and your virtual students. So
20 will the virtual students have -- they'll have access
21 to electives on campus. How will they receive access
22 to tutoring or success coaching for core classes?

23 MR. MCGEE: So, like I said, with the success
24 coaching component, there would be -- I'm just going
25 to use the company Zoom. It might be Teams or

1 whatever, but there will be some type of video
2 interaction where students can Zoom in with their
3 teachers at a particular time during that success
4 coaching time that's carved out for our virtual
5 students. And they would be able to receive tutoring
6 or study habits, or, you know, whatever it is that
7 they need to be successful at the content. They
8 would be able to do that. If, for whatever reason, a
9 student desires to come to campus to receive some
10 type of support, then we would schedule that as well.

11 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay. So then there's
12 protected time for those students to receive tutoring
13 or support within your master schedule?

14 MR. MCGEE: Yes.

15 MS. LORING: Yes.

16 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay.

17 MS. LORING: Shae Loring, Assistant
18 Superintendent. I wanted to add our virtual students
19 already have the benefit of the tutoring hours and
20 the coaching and mentoring hours that is built into
21 their teacher schedules. We call it "office hours,"
22 and they're required that both the teacher and the
23 student to participate in a certain number of office
24 hours weekly. So we're actually providing that
25 component now to our traditional students. In

1 addition, virtual students already have that option
2 built into their schedule.

3 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you so much. No
4 further questions.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Dr. Moore.

6 DR. MOORE: Thank you for your presentation. So
7 I have a few questions, and this first one, I
8 apologize if you already said this because you may
9 have stated it while I was looking through things.
10 On your projected enrollment of 200, what do you
11 project to be those that are virtual and those that
12 are not virtual?

13 MR. MCGEE: Out of the 200, I would -- we
14 anticipate about maybe 175, 150 in person. I think
15 we roughly have about 50 --

16 MS. LORING: Sixty-one.

17 MR. MCGEE: We have 61 virtual students
18 currently. So I know that's, that's not exactly 200.
19 So like I said, we'll have a cap of 260. But that
20 that's what we anticipate. And so we have to get
21 through this process and, you know, get projections
22 -- I mean, get the number of course requests and
23 things like that before I can give you a definite
24 number, but that's our projections.

25 DR. MOORE: Okay. And then you mentioned CTE

1 pathways, and I can see online, like on the ADE data
2 center, what pathways it said that you offered. It
3 also says new district partnerships in here. Can you
4 tell me more about your CTE pathways?

5 MR. MCGEE: Yes. We would be offering most of
6 what we currently offer. On campus, we have computer
7 science. We have -- what do we call it? Well, now
8 we have --

9 MS. LORING: Food science.

10 MR. MCGEE: That's what -- food science and
11 nutrition. I don't want to call it home ec. People
12 get offended.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: No, please don't do
14 that.

15 MR. MCGEE: So but we have that pathway as well
16 as a business management pathway. We also, with the
17 district, have our metro facility, which has a number
18 of different CTE pathways. It has auto body
19 mechanic. It has culinary. It has the LPN program
20 where students can become -- get certified as LPNs,
21 you know, before they graduate. And so they have --
22 there are a number of options. We have three on
23 campus. But like I said, Metro has several.

24 DR. MOORE: Okay. So your current student body,
25 how many students take part in those opportunities?

1 MR. MCGEE: All of them.

2 DR. MOORE: All of your students are on a CTE
3 pathway?

4 MR. MCGEE: Except for freshmen. But all ten
5 through 12th graders are on a CTE pathway. That's
6 something we make sure we're very serious about.

7 DR. MOORE: Okay. That's great. And then as
8 far as concurrent credit, and I know that that's
9 something that's evolving in your school district and
10 something that's growing, and partnerships are being
11 forged across Central Arkansas. For the CTE
12 pathways, what's that concurrent credit look like,
13 just specific for them? As Metro, are y'all
14 partnering now with --

15 MS. LORING: Yes. We currently have a MOU in
16 place with UAPTC for our concurrent credit program --
17 courses at Metro. So we offer concurrent credit
18 courses at Metro. All of our high schools offer
19 blended AP and concurrent credit courses, and three
20 of our four high schools now are offering stand-alone
21 concurrent credit courses. They will all be offering
22 stand-alone concurrent credit courses next year. We
23 also recently just signed an MOU with University of
24 Arkansas at Little Rock for an associate's degree
25 track program.

1 DR. MOORE: Saw it on the news.

2 MS. LORING: Yay. That will start -- next year,
3 will be our inaugural year at Southwest. Once we get
4 that program rolling, the second school that we will
5 start that program in will be Hall. We did not want
6 to try to start a new charter program and an
7 associate's degree program the same year, so that is
8 part of our phase in for concurrent credit.

9 DR. MOORE: Okay. And then, sorry, I have a few
10 more questions here. So your most recent letter
11 grade was I'm sure not what you had hoped for for
12 Hall.

13 MS. LORING: No.

14 DR. MOORE: And being a D and in our state, 12
15 percent of schools have D's and 7 percent have F's.
16 So and we know that virtual learning doesn't have a
17 great track record. Even when it's done well, just
18 the overall track record of virtual learning is not
19 that of in-person face-to-face learning. So talk
20 about that a little bit, about your current
21 performance and how you think this new model is going
22 to somehow change student success.

23 MR. MCGEE: So yes, our current school letter
24 grade is a D. However, some things that we're very
25 proud of is that our English ELA department had -- we

1 were in the top seven percent in the state for growth
2 of the bottom quartile in English. We were 69 in the
3 top, what is that, 40 percent for science. Top 30 --
4 excuse me, top 30 percent for science, top 40 percent
5 for math in the bottom quartile in terms of growth.
6 We're very proud of that.

7 What we want to do is, through this blended
8 model, we think that we will be able to shore up some
9 things and increase our growth levels, not only in
10 our lower quartile, but across the board. The
11 ability for students, again, to work at their own
12 pace, we think will provide success. There's
13 research to support that, and I've included that in
14 the in the presentation. And so that's the direction
15 that we think will best support our students at this
16 time.

17 DR. MOORE: Okay. So additional question,
18 PBL's, project-based learning is mentioned a lot, and
19 it says, "teacher designed." So a few questions on
20 that. First of all, are your teachers trained in how
21 to develop project-based learning? Because that's
22 very, very challenging. And I know you said training
23 is coming up, but like that would be a big learning
24 curve between now and next school year.

25 And then how do you do grade-level project-based

1 learning when the students are working at their own
2 pace so much? How is that going to look? Will that
3 project-based learning be grade level, and how does
4 that align with standards? So just speak more to
5 that. How that will work with the virtual component?
6 How are the virtual students doing the project-based
7 learning? A little more about that. Thank you.

8 MR. MCGEE: Yes. So in terms of the
9 project-based learning, yes, it will take quite a bit
10 of training, and that's why we want to kind of get
11 the jump on it in the spring. That's a huge part of
12 the training. When I said in the latter part of the
13 spring, we want to go ahead and start training once
14 we get the planning and things in place, that is a
15 huge part of that training, that and the success
16 coaching component.

17 In terms of what would it look like in class, it
18 would look like more of -- because when we talk about
19 self-pace, we don't envision that a student would be
20 at the end of the nine weeks and would be still on
21 the first lesson. We envision that there would be so
22 much support and so much meeting of the students
23 needs that there kind of would be a moving along at a
24 certain pace, you know, for the ones who need more
25 support. And so the projects would be based around

1 the lesson, you know, at that time. So ideally,
2 there would be students ahead. There may be some
3 students still focusing on this, but the project
4 would provide some more clarity, I think, around the
5 lesson itself, give the kid -- the student an
6 opportunity to learn more through the interaction
7 with the projects.

8 In terms of you talk about the virtual students
9 and involving them in the project, that would happen
10 through -- when we talked about the virtual students
11 checking in with the teachers and doing that, that
12 would happen through that component. And their
13 projects may look a little different than the
14 projects that are going on with the in-person
15 students because of the virtual aspect of it, but
16 they would also participate in that project-based
17 learning activity.

18 DR. MOORE: Okay. All right. Those are the
19 only questions I have right now. Thank you so much.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Dr. Bacon.

21 DR. BACON: Thank you. Thank you all for your
22 presentation and the thought that you've put into the
23 idea for Hall. As Mr. McGee said, I was the
24 principal at Hall High School from 2005 to 2008. And
25 I do know that once you're a Warrior, that spirit

1 stays with you for the rest of your life. And so
2 I've definitely followed along and tried to stay
3 abreast of the different things that have gone on at
4 Hall over the years.

5 I do, just as a citizen of Little Rock who reads
6 the newspaper and watches the news, I know this has
7 sort of been a tortured process to get to a
8 conversion charter application. I feel like I read
9 at one point, perhaps Hall would become an
10 alternative setting, combining a variety of programs.
11 I think I read at one point, maybe Hall would close
12 altogether, and then it felt sort of like at the last
13 minute, this idea of becoming a conversion charter.
14 I think I even read that the Board was not even
15 unanimous in supporting this motion. I think it was
16 a 5-2 vote.

17 So I'd be curious from the big picture, wide
18 perspective, why are we here today having this
19 discussion, and what does this mean for the totality
20 of Little Rock School District?

21 MR. WRIGHT: Jermall Wright, Superintendent of
22 the Little Rock School District. And so I'll try to
23 provide some context for that. And so when we think
24 about the Hall campus in totality, this district
25 conversion charter that we're applying for is one

1 piece of it. Hall is a humongous campus. And as you
2 have heard already, we've gone through a decline in
3 enrollment at Hall for years and years and years and
4 years.

5 And so the plan for next year is to relocate our
6 alternative school. We have done a complete
7 transformation of our alternative school, which is
8 located on a separate campus in a facility that is
9 not prime and best suited for students in our
10 alternative program. So part of the campus will be
11 dedicated to students in our ALE program.

12 We also have our Accelerated Learning Center
13 Program, which we just relocated to Hall's campus
14 this year. That program is for overage, under-
15 credited students to help get them back on track, and
16 it's actually one of our more successful alternative
17 programs in our district.

18 So we'll have the ALE, we'll have the ACC, And
19 then what we're proposing for this district
20 conversion charter is the small high school that
21 provides a different model and a different approach
22 for parents and for families -- for parents and for
23 students who don't want to attend our traditional
24 larger high schools.

25 And so I also don't want to get the virtual

1 school that we already have, that's already operating
2 in Hall, conflated with what we're trying to do with
3 the smaller non-traditional high school. That
4 component will still be there. But we also know that
5 for some of the students that we're trying to target,
6 they may not have the capacity to work independently,
7 which is why we're putting so much emphasis on having
8 in-person instruction with the teachers serving as
9 both teachers and success coaches for those students
10 who will need some additional support.

11 So when you think about, even though those other
12 two programs are not associated with the district
13 conversion charter that we're seeking, Hall is really
14 -- we're envisioning Hall to really be almost like an
15 alternative learning education oasis for all of our
16 non-traditional programs.

17 In terms of why we went with the district
18 conversion charter for small, non-traditional high
19 schools is really influenced a lot by staffing and
20 cost. As you know, it is very expensive to run a
21 small traditional high school as we have been running
22 with Hall with so few students. We currently have
23 under 300 kids at Hall. And adhering to all of the
24 state standards with staffing and all of those
25 things, our per pupil expenditure is exploding at

1 Hall.

2 So when we think about the flexibility that we
3 need around staffing and teacher licensure, it was --
4 we were advised that the best recourse to take would
5 be to seek the district conversion charter, which
6 will help alleviate a lot of the burdens that we were
7 trying to figure out how we were going to staff and
8 structure the school with such ballooning staff
9 costs.

10 So that's why we ended up seeking -- that's why
11 we're here today, to seek the district conversion for
12 the small, non-traditional high school version of the
13 program that we're seeking to get approval for.
14 Hopefully that answers your question.

15 DR. BACON: My next question was going to be
16 about efficiency, because Hall is a big building. I
17 know we had 1,200 or 1,300 students when I was there.
18 So ALE, how many students is that? I know that may
19 be changed, but what is anticipated?

20 MS. LORING: Currently, our ALE max capacity is
21 180 students. ACC's max capacity is 120 students. So
22 both of those programs will be there. Also, in terms
23 of building utilization, we do use a portion of that
24 building now for district-level administrative
25 offices by office. My office --

1 DR. BACON: -- is at Hall, along with the other
2 two assistant superintendents and our staff. So what
3 you knew as the 600 Building is now an Administrative
4 Building.

5 DR. BACON: Okay.

6 MS. LORING: So there are a couple of things
7 that will -- that are occurring in that building help
8 with efficiency and utilization.

9 DR. BACON: Okay. With these three potential
10 different schools there, ALE, ACC, Hall as a
11 conversion charter, is there shared resources, shared
12 staffing? Is that part of the -- an efficiency
13 model?

14 MS. LORING: Yes. Yes. So there'll be shared
15 resources. Right now -- well, last year, all three
16 programs were in three different places.

17 DR. BACON: Right.

18 MS. LORING: So we had to have three
19 administrative staffs, three office staffs, three
20 counseling registrar staffs. So we'll be able to
21 combine some of our administrative staff supports,
22 counseling support, front office supports, also
23 security supports. It will allow us to have more
24 social worker support.

25 We have a career coach through UAPTC right now

1 at Hall. That person will then be also able to
2 provide services to the other two programs. My mind
3 just went blank there. Oh, our library media
4 services was always a challenge for ALE. We'll be
5 able to share those facilities and services now with
6 the three programs.

7 And as he said, our ALE is currently in an
8 elementary building, so this will also provide them
9 access to an arena, multiple gym spaces, field spaces
10 to do a cafeteria. Some of the things that we don't
11 have that can now be shared spaces and shared staff
12 and resources for all three programs.

13 DR. BACON: Okay. I really appreciate that.
14 That helps a lot in understanding sort of how this
15 all fits into a bigger picture. I would like to
16 know, the two Board Members that didn't vote to
17 pursue this conversion charter, what was the
18 rationale for that?

19 MR. WRIGHT: If I can remember, it was concerns
20 about the, and I'm going to use their term that they
21 use, the charterizing -- the beginning of the
22 charterizing of the Little Rock School District.
23 That was the biggest concern.

24 DR. BACON: Okay. So --

25 MR. WRIGHT: And I think that really --

1 DR. BACON: -- not specific to this program,
2 this idea, this hybrid virtual piece that was more
3 big picture --

4 MR. WRIGHT: Yes. Correct.

5 DR. BACON: Okay. Just trying to think. You
6 know, I'm really stuck on the efficiency piece, and I
7 do feel like you all have helped me a lot. I know
8 you're opening a new high school. When is the new
9 high school open?

10 MR. WRIGHT: Fall of '27.

11 DR. BACON: So not this next academic year, but
12 the following.

13 MR. WRIGHT: Correct.

14 DR. BACON: And that is built for 1,200
15 students?

16 MR. WRIGHT: Correct.

17 DR. BACON: And I mean, it looks amazing. I
18 live not -- I told the last group, I live not too far
19 from that. I get to see it occasionally. It's
20 amazing. I think you did a phenomenal decision
21 making and naming Steven Helmick as the founding
22 principal. I think that you're setting that school
23 up for tremendous success.

24 And so I just wonder where these, the students
25 -- I know we're only shooting for 200, 260 cap.

1 Where are there enough students to go around to get
2 Hall enough students to feel like it's viable, and
3 we're able to do what Mr. McGee and what I know you
4 all want to do for students and their families?

5 MR. WRIGHT: Yes. The students who actually
6 chose Hall High School now are all students and
7 families who wanted this smaller environment. And so
8 we actually have more students at Hall High School
9 now than we were projecting to have. Because we know
10 that for some of the students, sports is a big
11 motivator for them.

12 And so we've been very, very clear that this
13 high school, although we will have extracurricular
14 activities, if sports and athletics is the thing
15 that's really driving you, then you should probably
16 look for -- at one of our other traditional high
17 school offerings. And so we already have a lot of
18 parents and families who want a smaller environment.
19 And so we do think it's important for us to have that
20 option in addition to our larger traditional high
21 schools.

22 DR. BACON: And how many students do you
23 currently have do you know that are sticking -- I
24 mean, that'll roll up? I know you'll maybe graduate
25 some students, but how many do you think are at all

1 that we know are planning to stay, at least what
2 they've told?

3 MR. WRIGHT: I think a lot of it is dependent
4 upon this decision today. So folks have just been
5 hesitant to make a final decision. And we've been,
6 although we're in open enrollment right now, we've
7 been, you know, just trying to walk a cautious
8 balance. We don't want to over promise and not be
9 able to deliver, and so a lot of it hinges upon the
10 decision that's made here today.

11 DR. BACON: And so in terms of people, students
12 aren't applying for Hall right now, or they are?

13 MR. WRIGHT: Some are, yes.

14 DR. BACON: Okay. Do we know how many
15 applicants there might be at this point?

16 MS. LORING: Our first round of open enrollment,
17 we did a roll up of our students, and then we opened
18 up for our transfers and new applications. I think
19 the last report I got, which was last Friday, I think
20 we were at about 57 new applicants. These are
21 students that are not currently enrolled in Hall.
22 And I think we only had a handful, I'm sorry, I don't
23 have the exact number, of transfers, students who
24 were at Hall that were saying, "We would like to
25 attend a different high school."

1 So the majority of the students that are there,
2 obviously not including the seniors, have not
3 indicated that they plan on transferring. So that
4 projection gets our numbers to about a little bit
5 under 200. Most of our virtual students have
6 re-enrolled. So that would get us right at the 200
7 number if most of our 60 -- well, it won't be all of
8 our 61, it'll be about 45 virtual students returning,
9 not accounting for the seniors.

10 DR. BACON: Okay. And I think this might be one
11 of my last questions. Is this the only virtual
12 option in Little Rock?

13 MS. LORING: Yes.

14 DR. BACON: Or do other high schools provide
15 virtual? This is the only virtual option?

16 MS. LORING: This would be the virtual option.

17 DR. BACON: Okay. That's all I have right now.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Ms. Newton, back
19 to you. You're muted. I don't know if you're --

20 MS. NEWTON: I'm sorry. I said no, I don't have
21 any questions. All the potential questions have been
22 answered.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Thank you for
24 your presentation and the additional information.
25 You know, it's kind of helpful to get a better

1 understanding of the intent of the application and
2 your goals for the school. So you said that every
3 student is on a CTE pathway. So every student is
4 moving through all three levels within a pathway, and
5 just wanted to get more details on how that's
6 happening for your school and for your students.

7 MR. MCGEE: So yes. We make sure that the, you
8 know, when students sign up for classes, that all --
9 well, for freshmen, we have what's called Freshmen
10 Seminar. And that is a class that helps students
11 decide -- or one of the things that it does is help
12 students decide what pathway they want to go on,
13 whether they need to sign up for Metro, whether it's
14 something that we have on campus. But yes, when we
15 sign up for classes for the next year, we make sure
16 that all students sign up for a CTE class that is
17 within the pathway that they have chosen. And they
18 go through all three levels and graduate as a
19 completer.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Now is that aligned with
21 you -- your partnership with the Academies? Or is
22 that something separate and apart you guys are doing?
23 How do you intend for that to work?

24 MS. LORING: So it's part of our programming for
25 our career and technical pathways through our CTE

1 department. One of the things that each one of our
2 schools has some type of specialty program that they
3 offer. But in addition to that, with those classes
4 they have requirements as part of those programs. So
5 our CTE pathways are part of our requirements in our
6 programming.

7 So just like when our students do course
8 selection, and we say, "This year you are required to
9 take an English course, a math course, science in
10 accordance to the Arkansas graduation requirements.
11 You're also required to enrolling your next level of
12 your CTE pathway course."

13 So they have one pathway that is a required
14 pathway that they select in their freshman seminar
15 course, and then they have the option of enrolling in
16 additional CTE pathway courses to complete another
17 pathway or to just preview different CTE courses that
18 they may be interested in.

19 So that's one of the components of our
20 guaranteed experiences as part of our profile of a
21 graduate that all of our students will have exposure
22 to CTE pathways and experiences through those
23 pathways.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: And so for students that
25 are on your campus and then the ones that are

1 virtual, the virtual students, what is that going to
2 look like for them and their opportunities?

3 MS. LORING: There are CTE pathway opportunities
4 through our virtual program as well. There are
5 classes that are ADE approved through Edgenuity that
6 are career and technical education courses that are
7 sequenced as well.

8 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

9 MS. LORING: And they have the option of, in the
10 hybrid coming, if there's a CTE pathway that they're
11 interested in on campus, they can enroll in those as
12 well. They also have the option of enrolling in
13 courses at Metro.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Any other
15 questions?

16 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes, I have.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Dr. Beshears-Duncan.

18 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes. Thank you. I have
19 one more question. What I'd like to say first,
20 though, is it's really great to hear about the
21 guaranteed experience and the comprehensiveness that
22 you all are thinking about for your graduate profile.
23 In conjunction, clearly, I think you've demonstrated
24 with your family and student needs, community needs
25 today.

1 And so My question is about the current teacher
2 workload, particularly in the virtual environment.
3 And what are some ways that you're ensuring that
4 teachers have the tangible actual time to ensure that
5 small group instruction, individual instruction,
6 perhaps it's CTE coaching that students might need?

7 MR. MCGEE: So yes. So we carve out time for
8 that, and we, I'm going to use the word "train."
9 When we meet with our teachers and team meetings, we
10 discuss and plan around how we're going to support
11 our students in class, and a part of that is small
12 group instruction.

13 I've been in education, I think about 25 years
14 now, and I've have experience K-12. And one thing
15 that when I got into this position, one thing that I
16 noticed is that we do a lot of small group
17 instruction. In education, we tend to do a lot of
18 small group instruction on the K-6 level, but
19 sometimes not as much on the high school level. But
20 it is very effective.

21 And so that is one thing that we have been
22 really focused on is incorporating that what we call
23 our Tier 2 or small group instruction in the
24 classroom, as well as during our 30 minute, we call
25 it advisory. That's what I referred to earlier as

1 home room. During our advisory time, we have small
2 group instruction. During that time where teachers
3 are able to pull students for Tier 2 support and
4 those things. And what was the other part of your
5 question? Oh, okay.

6 MS. LORING: So in terms of the virtual
7 teachers, the office hours and small group
8 instruction time is built into their master schedule.
9 So they have a period of the day in their schedule
10 where they don't actually have classes. During that
11 period is where they can schedule students to come in
12 and do small group times virtually or in-person if
13 they so choose. It's also when they have their
14 office hours time.

15 So this year, we have the benefit of having
16 teachers who only teach virtual classes so that we
17 could then make --

18 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay.

19 MS. LORING: Yes, we don't have -- we did in
20 times past, which is a challenge, have teachers that
21 were doing both. We also, because of the way we're
22 utilizing our building, our accelerated learning
23 center staff are part of the virtual teaching too.
24 So they have some of those classes.

25 DR. BEHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay.

1 MS. LORING: They already have office hours and
2 coaching hours built in as part of the accelerated
3 learning programs -- program for lack of a better
4 word. So we did build those into their schedules.
5 Because it is a challenge to get -- having a planning
6 prep and then also trying to use that to meet with
7 and in conference with and assist students. So they
8 have a separate planning time or work time for that
9 where they don't have classes that they're
10 monitoring.

11 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay. Thank you. You
12 addressed my question and my concern really with the
13 workload. It's great that they have that time carved
14 out and protected. And what I also know as a high
15 school teacher who utilized small group and
16 individual instruction is it does take time to
17 effectively plan and prepare for that, especially
18 when you're wanting, when your goal is to be able to
19 customize for where the kid is. So thank you for
20 that.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Any other questions?

22 DR. MOORE: Yes.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Dr. Moore.

24 DR. MOORE: When I was looking at the waivers, I
25 don't see a waiver request, at least in your

1 presentation, it could be on the application, for
2 teacher licensure.

3 MR. MCGEE: Yes.

4 DR. MOORE: But you did mention teacher
5 licensure.

6 MR. MCGEE: Yes. The Waiver Committee met, I
7 think, Tuesday, and we were able to get some feedback
8 and provide some other things. So yes, we are
9 requesting a waiver on teacher licensure as well.

10 DR. MOORE: Okay. Could you tell me more about
11 that? Why you feel that's needed, and what teachers
12 will be teaching out of their licensure eligibility?

13 MS. LORING: So the major reason for the license
14 -- the waiver, is not so much for core content, but
15 it is for so that we can offer -- we have teachers
16 who have experience teaching maybe in a charter
17 situation or in a private situation, teaching certain
18 classes that they're not necessarily licensed for.
19 More specifically in our elective classes, not so
20 much core content. But it would allow us to have
21 those teachers be eligible to teach some of those
22 courses that we offer without.

23 Because it's such a small environment, we have a
24 lot of singletons. We may have one class of this,
25 one class of that. And in high school, the licensure

1 requirements are so specific. They're not K-5, like
2 in elementary or middle school where you have
3 licensure to teach multiple areas. Like me, I'm only
4 secondary ELA. So if I needed that teacher to teach
5 another class that they have experience teaching, or
6 they may have industry experience, and that allows
7 some flexibility for that.

8 One of the challenges that we've come across
9 multiple times, CTE is another area that I support
10 with technical permits, is the amount -- particularly
11 when we're asking for them for licensed teachers, is
12 the amount of time that has lapsed between their
13 industry experience, if they're non-traditional.

14 For example, I'm a non-traditional teacher. So
15 I've been in education 25 years. My industry
16 experience would have been almost 30 years ago, with
17 that not being able to count towards my -- or not
18 having enough. Because I quickly realized that's not
19 what I wanted to do. I wanted to go into education.
20 So I didn't have enough industry experience, even
21 though -- to count -- to be awarded a technical
22 permit. So it would allow us some flexibility around
23 those types of licensure constraints that we
24 currently have in a traditional school.

25 DR. MOORE: So you said, like, probably not core

1 content areas, but you're not sure? Like it could
2 be?

3 MS. LORING: No. I don't anticipate us needing
4 them for core content with the exception of maybe, we
5 know we have some teachers that -- math where we have
6 a teacher who has -- specifically, it was geometry
7 experience, but the teacher may only have an Algebra
8 1 endorsement. But they've taught geometry before;
9 they've trained in geometry. We may have to use it
10 in that case.

11 But in most cases, 712 ELA allows you to teach
12 most of the ELA electives, all of the ELA content
13 areas. Same thing for a 712 math license. Social
14 studies is the same. So the majority of what we were
15 looking at would be for elective courses. I don't
16 ever say "never" because as soon as I say that then
17 something comes up. But that is not what our goal
18 was, and we don't anticipate having that. The
19 current staff that we have, we have teachers staffed
20 in all of the core content areas that are able to
21 teach the classes that we're offering.

22 DR. MOORE: Okay. Because I just -- I do have
23 concern as a 712 teacher myself, former math, I do
24 very much value making sure that our core content
25 area teachers --

1 MS. LORING: Absolutely.

2 DR. MOORE: -- have that content knowledge.
3 Because even, you know, your middle school teachers
4 who now can teach Algebra 1, no longer having to
5 pursue that endorsement because they've really upped
6 the rigor of that middle school test. Doesn't mean
7 that teacher would be able to teach Algebra 2,
8 calculus, and may not have that content knowledge.

9 MS. LORING: Absolutely.

10 DR. MOORE: So that's just very concerning. So,
11 all right. Thank you.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So, just for my
13 clarification, your question was that they're
14 requesting a waiver, but you did see the waiver?

15 DR. MOORE: Well, it's not on this presentation.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: But it is in their
17 application.

18 MR. MCGEE: Yes. Yes.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. And so I think
20 Dr. Smith is coming to provide some clarity on that.

21 DR. SMITH: Good morning, everybody.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Good morning.

23 DR. SMITH: Darrell Smith, Office of School
24 Choice and Parent Empowerment. There are some
25 changes to the waiver form. So in the Board Book,

1 there's the adjusted waiver form. Teacher licensure
2 is one of those. I think class load, teacher
3 definition, and I'm missing one. It had to do with
4 basically the calendar and just the way they can set
5 the flexibility with classes. And so that's all been
6 adjusted on the waiver form that's submitted in Board
7 Book. Okay.

8 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: All right. And then I
9 will just say that I know that we have tried to make
10 many adjustments and streamline the process for
11 individuals to get technical permits. So I would
12 encourage you just to kind of continue through that
13 process because we realized that there was a need for
14 us to make that a little bit more streamlined. So
15 hopefully it is more effective for you at this point.

16 DR. MOORE: May I ask a follow-up question on
17 that?

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sure.

19 DR. MOORE: Okay. So you said you're going to
20 share some resources among the different schools that
21 are on the campus. Will you be sharing content
22 teachers as well or just --

23 MS. LORING: No.

24 DR. MOORE: Okay.

25 MS. LORING: They have their own.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Are any other
3 questions from any Panel Members?

4 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: No.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: All right. If there are
6 no other questions, then at this time, I will
7 entertain a motion on the application for the
8 District Conversion Charter School Application for
9 Little Rock Hall High School.

10 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I motion to approve Little
11 Rock Hall High School's request to become a district
12 conversion charter.

13 MS. NEWTON: I second.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: We have a motion by Dr.
15 Beshears-Duncan, and a second by Ms. Newton to accept
16 the application for the District Conversion Charter
17 School Application, Little Rock Hall High School.
18 All those in favor, say aye.

19 DR. BACON: Can we discuss this real quick
20 before we --

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Oh, sorry. Is there any
22 discussion on the motion? Thank you, Dr. Bacon.
23 Thank you. Is there any discussion on the motion?
24 Sorry.

25 DR. BACON: Well, I just -- before I can make a

1 decision on the vote, I have two areas that I'm still
2 concerned about and wondering about. One, I think
3 Dr. Moore brought it up, you know, we're not seeing
4 virtual schools showing performance that we want to
5 see. And so, you know, I know some parents want that
6 option, but if we're not bringing the academic
7 results, is that always the best plan?

8 And the second thing is, the district as a
9 whole, I think, continuing to see declining
10 enrollment at a time when I know there are continuing
11 to be increasing options of, you know, the new high
12 school that will open in '27, we've got charter
13 schools, we've got ESA, we've got micro schools,
14 we've got more people choosing home school.

15 Just making sure that approving this, being a
16 small setting where a lot of resources are going to
17 have to be invested for a small number of students,
18 does that, hopefully not taking away from other
19 opportunities for students at other schools? That's
20 just, when I reflect on the whole big picture of it,
21 I'm stuck on that.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So currently, the motion
23 is that we accept, sorry, the application. So I
24 guess we would first need to pull that back down and
25 then have further discussion in regards to the

1 application. Okay?

2 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes. So we'll open it up.

3 DR. BACON: I am curious of anyone else's
4 perspective on that?

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So is that your move to
6 pull it back down?

7 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes. So I move to pull it
8 back and open the discussion.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Is there a
10 second?

11 DR. MOORE: I second.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So there is a
13 motion that we pull back the motion to accept the
14 application and have further discussion on the
15 application for the charter. And so that was --
16 motion was made by Dr. Beshears-Duncan, second by Dr.
17 Moore. All those in favor?

18 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So motion passes.
20 So now we're back to discussion on the application.

21 DR. BACON: So I would just be curious of other
22 perspectives. You know, it really just feels like,
23 is this the most efficient use of resources, and is
24 it smart to have, I mean, I know that Hall exists --

25 MS. NEWTON: I'm sorry. I'm unable to hear the

1 comment.

2 DR. BACON: I'm sorry. I know that I'm just
3 really stuck on the making sure that we're helping
4 the district use their resources to the best of their
5 ability to serve all the students they serve, given
6 -- and I just, you know, anecdotally, I know from
7 other schools in the Little Rock School District that
8 some people are being told that they're going to have
9 to make some cuts because of the big picture of
10 enrollment.

11 And so, you know, I don't know. I don't know
12 how I feel about the best way to help make sure that
13 resources are being used that are going to help the
14 most kids.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So, possibly it may be
16 helpful if the district could give us a little bit of
17 feedback on beyond the next academic year, which is
18 the intended year for implementation. What does that
19 look like for subsequent years of this being a viable
20 option plan? You know, will this be in place five
21 years from now based off of the trends that you're
22 seeing with enrollment and with, you know, interest
23 from families, from community? That might be helpful
24 if we could kind of get a little bit more feedback in
25 that perspective.

1 MR. WRIGHT: Sure. So I don't think that there
2 is a person on the face of this earth who is more
3 concerned and paid more attention about the use of
4 our resources and our finances than me. Like, I
5 spend a whole lot of time making sure that we are
6 using the finite resources that we have to the best
7 of our ability to meet all of our students' and our
8 community needs.

9 As I stated earlier, the biggest pain point for
10 operating Hall right now is the inflexibility that we
11 have in terms of being able to staff the school.
12 With this model that we're proposing with the
13 conversion charter, it alleviates that staffing
14 burden with the flexibility that we will have with
15 the waivers. And so I feel confident that we will be
16 able to operate the school and not take resources
17 away from other schools within our district. So I
18 feel very confident, very confident about that.

19 Secondly, as I said, we have three very large
20 high schools in our district. We have no other
21 option for families who want a smaller, different
22 type of environment in terms of high schools. This
23 gives us that option.

24 And then I think there was a concern around
25 virtual, the virtual component, which has been in

1 existence in Little Rock School District for multiple
2 years now. So this is not -- this is something that
3 is already in existence. This is a very small number
4 of kids. And we have a very structured criteria for
5 kids and families to even get into our virtual
6 program. And so you just can't get into our virtual
7 program because you want virtual education. You have
8 to show that you have the ability to work
9 independently. I mean, there's other criteria, so we
10 just don't let any student get what -- you just can't
11 get into our virtual program because you want to get
12 into the virtual program.

13 The program at Hall, which is why we're using
14 the term "blended," is because although we're using
15 Edgenuity for a lot of the courses, we're not
16 dependent upon a Edgenuity teacher, per say, to --
17 I'm sorry. We're not dependent upon on the -- we're
18 not depending on students to work through the
19 Edgenuity courses by themselves. They will still
20 have a teacher, an in-person teacher assigned to them
21 every single day to help them with their courses, to
22 provide that small group instruction, to help meet
23 the students' needs.

24 And so I also feel confident about that blended
25 option to be able to make sure that those students

1 who can't participate and be successful in a virtual
2 setting, they'll have additional supports to be able
3 to be successful with this blended option.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So as we're
5 thinking about what you just shared with us, and I
6 appreciate you being willing to walk us through those
7 additional details. And so one thing that you said
8 that kind of stuck out to me is that when we look at
9 Little Rock School District, there is not another
10 option for students and families that is a smaller
11 option.

12 But, you know, in Pulaski County, comparative,
13 if we look at, if a student, family wanted to say,
14 "Well, I'll go over to PCSSD," or "I'll go over to
15 North Little Rock School District," how does this
16 option compare to your peers' options of what would
17 keep a family in Little Rock and say, "I want to go
18 to Hall," versus going to other districts. Is there
19 a comparable piece? Is there not a comparable piece?
20 What's going to make folks say that Little Rock's
21 going to be my choice when you can drive a few miles
22 here or there and end up in another district?

23 MR. WRIGHT: You want to answer? Okay.

24 MS. LORING: So when we look at the small high
25 school options in Pulaski County in terms of public

1 schools, there isn't one in Pulaski County. They
2 have large high school options like Robinson, Mills,
3 Maumelle. North Little Rock has one high school,
4 which is a large high school. Jacksonville has one
5 high school, which is a relatively large high school.
6 So the other high schools in the -- public high
7 schools in the county are in comparable size to our
8 other three large high schools.

9 So because Hall has an application process, it
10 is not an attendance zone school. Students have the
11 option of school choice into Hall from various places
12 in the county. There really isn't another public
13 school in the county that is this size that's
14 offering this, not just in Little Rock, but in
15 Pulaski County as a whole.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

17 DR. BACON: Can I ask what the selection process
18 and admission process will look like now that Hall
19 would be a conversion charter as opposed to being in
20 just sort of the traditional umbrella?

21 MS. LORING: So, Hall currently has an
22 application process, and so we would -- there's one
23 component that Dr. Wright spoke to about the virtual.
24 There is a separate criteria for virtual. The
25 additional criteria would be the application, and

1 hopefully we have -- we get to the point where we
2 have students that we put in a lottery based on their
3 application. So we wouldn't change a whole lot of
4 our current process because it was, I think -- well,
5 not I think, I know at the time that you were there,
6 it was an attendance zone. School is no longer an
7 attendance zone. It is an application only based
8 school.

9 DR. BACON: So all students who apply would have
10 the opportunity to be admitted to Hall, they just
11 might not do the virtual option if that doesn't --

12 MS. LORING: Correct. There's a separate
13 application process for the virtual option that has
14 additional criteria that Dr. Wright alluded to in his
15 comments.

16 DR. BACON: Okay. And, I mean, I don't want to
17 keep belaboring points, but I think you brought it
18 up, and I just, from just the long-term perspective,
19 you know. We're talking about this being the only
20 small school option in the Little Rock School
21 District for high school, but I mean, I'm just -- I
22 mean, I know you are very alert to the need for
23 efficiency. You're looking at everything, and you're
24 going to open another big high school, which is going
25 to have a lot of students come in. Where are they

1 coming from?

2 You know, when you just take the big picture, I
3 see this in a lot of the charter schools that have
4 come before us. You see it in traditional districts
5 across the state and some of the work I've done. You
6 know, almost everybody sees decreasing enrollments,
7 and you're opening another really big school, which
8 means students are going to be, you know, coming from
9 somewhere. And then if we open another really small
10 school, in addition to that, I just want to make sure
11 that you've got enough students to give you what you
12 need to make it so you're not having to rob Peter to
13 pay Paul to keep it open five years from now.

14 MR. WRIGHT: Yeah. I know this conversation
15 isn't about our new high school that's opening up in
16 the fall of '27, but there is a -- you know, we don't
17 have a high school in West Little Rock. And so when
18 we look at where our students go when they leave
19 Pinnacle View, they go to a number of privates. They
20 go to Robinson. They go to a number of places. And
21 so, you know, a big strategy around that is really
22 recruiting, recruiting our families to not leave and
23 to come back.

24 And so we're -- no, the goal is not to recycle
25 students among our three high schools, to open up the

1 new high school. Because if that happens, that will
2 defeat the purpose of having a new high school. But
3 again, the students who are already selecting Hall,
4 because again, Hall is a selection school, and the
5 same number of students that we're targeting for this
6 particular school is really the same number of
7 students who have been selected at this whole time.

8 DR. MOORE: May I --

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sorry.

10 DR. MOORE: May I ask a question along that same
11 route?

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I have something real
13 quick.

14 DR. MOORE: Okay.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So what I hear you're
16 saying is that it will be your intent to market Hall,
17 not just Little Rock School District, but Pulaski
18 County to encourage students to come? Or is it just
19 Little Rock School District students that you will be
20 encouraging to attend?

21 MS. WRIGHT: I didn't say anything about
22 recruiting outside of our district for Hall. I was
23 speaking of the new high school that's opening up --

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Oh, okay. Okay. All
25 right. Thanks.

1 MR. MCGEE: I do just want to add that some
2 families are choosing other options outside of public
3 school because they want a small option. And we want
4 to provide that through our district so that they
5 don't have to leave, so that they do remain in the
6 Little Rock School District.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sure. Which is why I
8 appreciate you bringing forth the point. And that's
9 why I wanted to kind of think and talk through that
10 is, you know, because, you know, the way Pulaski
11 County is structured, students can kind of go
12 wherever they want. But if this is the only option
13 that looks like that, then that makes it be a bit
14 different. Okay.

15 DR. MOORE: So just along those same lines, and
16 talking about, you know, what we hear on the news and
17 what we see, there was a big talk of Hall potentially
18 closing because of the decreased enrollment. And I
19 understand that what you're doing is for efficiency,
20 to try to be able to keep it open because you're
21 going to be saving money by doing the different
22 things you've mentioned. At what point would it be,
23 "Okay. This can't carry on?" Like what is -- I know
24 you have projected enrollment. Is there some success
25 measure, like, "To keep the doors open, we have to

1 have this many students. Otherwise, we've got to
2 just move forward and shut the school down."

3 MR. WRIGHT: So I think running the school as a
4 traditional school, yes, there was a number that we
5 were trying to get to that we have not been able to
6 get to since I have been here. But again, the beauty
7 of the conversion charter is the flexibility that it
8 allows us with staffing, which is the biggest driver
9 of the operations -- the operational cost of the
10 school. And so if we have the flexibility with
11 staffing, we can run a school with 200 kids with the
12 flexibility that we're asking for with staffing and
13 stay within our operational means.

14 DR. MOORE: So 200 --

15 MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

16 DR. MOORE: Two hundred is your number you have
17 to have? Okay. So just to extend on that, if you
18 don't get 200, is that like ball game, or can you
19 float it at less than 200? Just because you've been
20 declining every year.

21 MR. WRIGHT: I don't think -- I don't think that
22 200 is like the magic number because if it's fewer
23 than 200, that means we don't have to staff it as if
24 it was 200. And with the flexibility in which we can
25 do the courses, we can still offer this flexible

1 option for families who want to smaller environment.
2 I mean, that's the whole reason why we didn't start
3 out with the conversion charter as an option.

4 But the more we looked at the constraints that
5 we would be under trying to do something innovative
6 and flexible, this was the only route that would, you
7 know, offer us the ability to do so. I would say, if
8 anything, if we weren't able to get approved for this
9 charter, then that would almost be like a nail in the
10 coffin in terms of us being able to keep Hall open
11 because we can't afford to run it as a traditional
12 high school.

13 DR. MOORE: Okay. And I just ask because many
14 of our charters that -- you know, that's when they're
15 going to be anew, you're different being conversion
16 charter existing school. But often we're looking at
17 those financials, and our banker's not here today
18 that's on the Panel, or you would have those
19 questions.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah.

21 DR. MOORE: Not my lane at all. But looking at,
22 you know, what is the minimum number of students that
23 we would have to have to pay the bills, and this is
24 how many teachers we'd need and staff for that, and
25 this -- and, you know, that scale up if enrollment

1 ended up being this. So we're used to seeing that,
2 but I know it's a little bit different because your
3 situation being conversion of a school that's already
4 in existence.

5 MR. WRIGHT: And then we're also -- as I stated
6 before, we're taking programs that were existing in
7 other campuses and actually putting them under one
8 roof on the Hall's campus as well. So all of that is
9 contributing to the -- to more efficiency to be able
10 to run the programs, to run the school.

11 DR. MOORE: And I know we're asking a lot of
12 tough questions, so I do want to applaud your efforts
13 to try to keep this for the community. I know that a
14 few years ago, when there was a big event, community
15 event, because I was doing a lot of work in STEM at
16 the time, and they had a big event, and all the
17 community came out.

18 And there were folks that, they had graduated
19 Hall High like decades ago. A lot of, you know,
20 older folks coming back and were so excited for Hall
21 to be revived. So I know there is a lot of history
22 there and rich community pride. So I know this isn't
23 easy work, and I applaud your efforts trying to make
24 this work for the community.

25 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: So thank you to the Panel

1 for opening it back up, and thank you most of all for
2 continuing to respond to our questions. So we've dug
3 into a little bit of the financial piece and some
4 goals that you have around that. This conversation
5 has just sparked my thinking. How might you know
6 that academically and then also that the perception
7 from teachers and students and families, what might
8 be some data or goals that are just non-negotiables
9 that you know, "Okay. This is working. This was the
10 right choice. We need to continue down this path"?

11 MR. MCGEE: So in terms of feedback from the
12 community, having community meetings and meeting with
13 those parents, and our surveys, getting that survey
14 data back. As a matter -- like I said, the feedback
15 is why we're here today, because there was a -- when
16 that was on the table to close Hall, there was a very
17 large push from the community to keep the institution
18 open.

19 But continuing that and making sure that we act
20 on that feedback that we get, in terms of academics,
21 we want to make sure that our growth scores are still
22 up and if not higher then where they are right now.
23 We service about 30 percent -- 30 percent of our
24 students have special needs. And so that provides a
25 -- definitely something that we have to work with and

1 that we are, you know, making sure that we provide
2 those services for those students to be, like I said,
3 in the 93rd percentile in terms of ELA growth. Given
4 those factors, I think is a very good -- very good
5 thing.

6 And so in terms of academic success, we want to
7 make sure that our growth scores are still where they
8 need to be, that students are still graduating and
9 moving on to the next phase. Whether that be a
10 career, or whether that be a college or enlistment,
11 whatever the case may be, and just focusing on those
12 goals and making sure that we're meeting those goals,
13 and we're providing the supports that students need
14 in order to be successful.

15 MS. LORING: I just wanted to add a few things
16 in terms of success metrics. One of them definitely
17 would be our graduation rate. I think this year
18 Hall's graduation rate was 91 percent. Part of what
19 contributed to that is that we actually did merge two
20 schools. We closed our West Little Rock High School
21 and merged it with Hall. And the graduation rate we
22 received this year is actually from West-Hall High
23 School's graduation rate was 96 percent. And so we
24 want to maintain that above 95 percent graduation
25 rate.

1 MS. LORING: And looking at our merit and
2 distinction, another success metric would be to
3 increase our percentage of H2 completers. Also, with
4 our concurrent credit programs and initiatives that
5 we're phasing in, we should see dramatic increases in
6 our students that are successfully completing
7 concurrent credit courses. We're also continuing to
8 work to increase our number of students that are
9 completing and receiving qualifying scores on our AP
10 exams.

11 Another area that we're working on that is part
12 -- that would be a success metric is continuing our
13 work in all of our campuses, specifically Hall with
14 our Seal of Biliteracy. And then our -- as he said,
15 our growth in our lowest quartile, and our growth
16 continuing to see consistent and constant gains
17 there. We know achievement is a longer haul, but
18 those small increments of growth that we make in our
19 lowest quartile and growth for all will lead to
20 achievement gains over time.

21 So those would be just a few of the success
22 metrics we look at to see, to say yes, the
23 programming that we have in place is working, is
24 successful for the students and families we serve.

25 MS. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you so much. That's

1 really helpful. No further questions.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Any other questions from
3 any Panel Members? Okay. Again, thank you for the
4 additional detail and additional questions that were
5 asked? So again, if there are no other questions
6 from any Panel Members either in person or online, I
7 will again accept a motion on the District Conversion
8 Charter School Application of Little Rock Hall High
9 School.

10 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: So I again motion to
11 approve Little Rock Hall High School's request to
12 become a district conversion charter.

13 DR. MOORE: I second.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion
15 by Dr. Beshears-Duncan and a second by Dr. Moore to
16 accept the application for the District of Conversion
17 Charter Little Rock High School. Is there any
18 discussion on the motion? (No response) Okay.
19 Seeing none, all those in favor indicate by saying
20 aye.

21 DR. MOORE: Aye.

22 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Aye.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Any opposed say nay.

24 DR. BACON: Nay.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Ms. Newton, your vote.

1 Did she vote?

2 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I haven't heard her yet.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I can't hear her. Ms.
4 Newton, did you vote? Okay.

5 MS. NEWTON: No, I'm sorry. I didn't have it
6 consulted. We let -- let -- could you tell me what
7 the situation -- the pamper? What are we -- the last
8 -- the -- excuse, I'm sorry.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I'm sorry. Could you
10 repeat your question?

11 MS. NEWTON: The status. Could you tell me
12 status where we are right now? Because I couldn't
13 care if it -- I was having some (inaudible). None
14 for -- none for understand the situation with the
15 situation with the son and the step -- did you step
16 over --

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Are you wanting me to
18 let you know where the vote count is right now?

19 MS. NEWTON: That's -- that's -- that's what --
20 that's what I'm under -- need to understand.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So currently we
22 have two for and one against.

23 MS. NEWTON: My state -- my standard -- the
24 standards. Come view -- standards. I'm sorry. I'm
25 -- my -- I'm figured the statement for the -- in

1 forward of the conflict to go -- the -- I don't know.
2 I just -- I'm sorry. I'm inverse -- I'm -- I'm
3 forward in -- with a forward -- the forward in -- I
4 mean, forward for the conversion. The conversion of
5 the format. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I've
6 taken some medication. I'm -- I'm sorry.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Ms. Newton, are
8 you okay?

9 MS. NEWTON: I am.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

11 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Ms. Newton, do you have
12 someone there with you right now?

13 MS. NEWTON: Yeah. I'm in my office, just a
14 moment.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Do we want to
16 take a small break?

17 MS. NEWTON: (Inaudible) I'm thought -- I'm not
18 -- I don't have anyone back right now for my make --
19 for my -- going forward for -- for purposes. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So let's take a small
22 break, and we will come back to finish the vote.

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

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you everyone for

1 being patient with us and allowing us to take time to
2 take care of our Panel Member, and our thoughts and
3 prayers with her right now, and hopefully everything
4 works out well as she's getting checked out.

5 So in light of all that is going on, and we're
6 already, you know, pretty tight on where the vote is,
7 we are going to ask to defer this until January.
8 That will give Ms. Newton an opportunity to have her
9 input at that time and then be able to do the final
10 vote then. Is there anything else that I need to --
11 Okay. Okay.

12 So our next meeting, we'll have you guys come
13 back. It should not be as long because we've already
14 had you guys do your presentation and answer a lot of
15 questions, and so we should be able to take care of
16 it at that time.

17 DR. MOORE: I have one question about that
18 process.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

20 DR. MOORE: Yes. So our Members who are not
21 able to be here today, are they able to review the
22 information and vote at that time, or would it only
23 be those of us that were in attendance today?

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: And as you're coming up,
25 Dr. Smith, my addition to that would be to help the

1 applicant to not have to go back through the entire
2 process, would it be acceptable for Members that are
3 not here that would like to have an opportunity to
4 have a say in the process to like go back and
5 re-watch the recording and get the information and
6 then get caught to speed? If we could avoid them
7 having to go through the whole process again.

8 DR. MOORE: Oh, absolutely.

9 DR. SMITH: Darrell Smith, Office of School
10 Choice. That would be my suggestion. And then
11 obviously if they would like to recuse themselves
12 from the vote because they didn't have a chance to
13 review all the details of the meeting, they certainly
14 can at that time.

15 DR. MOORE: Okay. Could ask questions at that
16 time.

17 DR. SMITH: What's that?

18 DR. MOORE: Could they ask questions at that
19 time?

20 DR. SMITH: Well, technically, yes, because
21 we're going to have to put the motion back on the
22 floor for you all to have a motion and a decision.
23 So certainly there would be opportunities for the --
24 any new Members that were not here to ask some
25 specific questions that maybe came from the

1 discussion that they reviewed.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: But I would think that
3 we could also encourage those Members. And we're
4 talking about Mr. Badwin. We keep saying "those."

5 DR. MOORE: And Edie, Dr. Stewart.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Oh, yes, Edie. Sweet
7 Edie. So if we could have them to like watch in
8 advance, and then any questions that they have, could
9 they get those to them --

10 DR. SMITH: Absolutely. We can certainly, as
11 far as a follow up to this meeting for other CAP
12 Members. We will certainly request that once we have
13 the video available, we'll send it out, make sure,
14 and then especially for those who aren't here, and
15 with those, requests that "Please review it. If you
16 have any specific questions prior to the meeting,"
17 you know, we'll give them a date, maybe a week or so.

18 But prior to that, to submit them to us, we will
19 then forward them to the applicant. So they'll be
20 prepared in case there are any questions, which will
21 speed up the process when we're here because the
22 questions will have already been asked. And that way
23 maybe they can even respond prior to the meeting.
24 And that way and maybe address some of those
25 questions outside of this particular meeting. Okay.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. And you'll work
2 with them on that?

3 DR. SMITH: Yes, ma'am.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. All right. Well,
5 thank you.

6 MS. LORING: Thank you.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thanks. Thank you.
8 Okay. So next on our agenda, we had a review of the
9 landscape analysis for open enrollment charters that
10 received an "F" letter grade. And Dr. Smith is
11 already here so jump right in.

12 DR. SMITH: Absolutely. Well, I made it up
13 here, so we'll just keep going. Oh, wow. What a
14 meeting; right?

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah.

16 **REVIEW OF CHARTERS THAT RECEIVED AN "F"**

17 DR. SMITH: As you know, back in the '23-'24 --
18 or I should say '24-'25, the new accountability
19 systems went into place that graded both, not only
20 the schools, but for the first time districts as
21 well. Secretary Oliva had requested that all
22 "F"-rated districts make a presentation before either
23 the Board or the Charter Authorizing Panel. And so
24 today is the first step in that process.

25 There were three single campus districts and one

1 multi-campus network that had an "F" rating. In
2 total, these districts represent ten campuses where
3 student performance was not where it was and received
4 an "F" rating during this last accountability cycle.
5 Our focus today is on those four "F"-rated campuses
6 and districts. The Charter Office and ADE obviously
7 take very seriously the responsibility to ensure that
8 no school or district remains in a failing
9 performance or weak learning outcomes. You know,
10 children only get one chance at a grade level, and
11 they deserve a high-quality school where they can
12 receive an excellent education now and not
13 necessarily years from now.

14 So over the past month, the Charter Office has
15 notified each of these districts that will be
16 presented, that will present their reports today, met
17 with them individually, virtually, or in person, and
18 clearly explained the purpose of today's
19 presentations and the rationale for a potential
20 probation recommendation.

21 In those meetings, we reviewed their data that
22 led to their "F" ratings. We began identifying their
23 root causes and discussed the actions already taken
24 during the first semester to change the trajectory of
25 student learning. We also asked that each district

1 prepare a written report, which you will go through
2 here in just a second, to include a root cause
3 analysis and initial improvement plan for the '25-'26
4 school year that's aligned to performance
5 expectations.

6 These districts do understand why we're here
7 today. And while they are not satisfied with their
8 current results, they have accepted responsibility
9 for their performance and the consequences that
10 follow. They've already begun making adjustments to
11 their instructional programs, staffing, and supports
12 in their effort to improve outcomes for students.
13 And I want to acknowledge that effort and their
14 willingness to engage in an honest reflection.
15 However, at the same time, as the authorizer, our
16 duty is not just to reward hard work, but also to
17 ensure measurable, sustained improvement in student
18 achievement.

19 Under Section 8.11 of the Arkansas Charter Rule,
20 "Schools are expected to make regular and significant
21 progress towards their academic achievement targets."
22 Section 8.3 further requires charter schools to
23 "Demonstrate ongoing progress in reading and math and
24 to work toward exceeding the performance of similarly
25 situated schools in their geographic area and across

1 the state." The results before you today show that,
2 to this point, these districts have not met those
3 expectations. That is why we'll be recommending
4 probation, not as a punishment, but as a structured,
5 time-bound intervention focused on student learning.

6 I also want to acknowledge that whenever
7 accountability tightens, there are those who would
8 prefer to focus on process disputes and
9 technicalities in ways that can slow down the work of
10 school improvement. We welcome thoughtful
11 discussions and questions about our methods and our
12 data, but we cannot and will not allow debates over
13 technical details to distract from our central
14 mission. Nothing will deter us from the
15 responsibility to ensure that every child currently
16 enrolled in an Arkansas charter school has access to
17 high quality education.

18 Accordingly, today I will ask the Panel to
19 accept each district's report and to require these
20 charter districts and networks to return for a
21 probationary hearing in January of 2026. We are
22 bringing these reports to you today for review in
23 advance of next month's hearing, both to give the
24 Panel adequate time to consider the information and
25 to accommodate schools as they complete

1 end-of-semester responsibilities.

2 That probationary hearing will focus on a more
3 detailed presentation of their root cause analysis
4 and their specific plans to improve student outcomes
5 in the '25-'26 school year, as well as their
6 commitment to bring you a comprehensive school
7 improvement plan for the '26-'27 school year, which
8 they will present to you by April of 2026 for your
9 review and approval.

10 Building on that commitment, the Charter Office
11 will also recommend that each district be placed on
12 an 18-month probationary period, during which they
13 will have to demonstrate with clear quantitative
14 evidence that the changes they are making are
15 resulting in sustained improvement in student
16 achievement and accountability outcomes. We approach
17 this work with both urgency and hope. Urgency
18 because Arkansas students cannot wait and hope
19 because we believe these schools can improve and
20 will, and they will rise to the challenge with
21 support, clear expectations, and firm accountability.

22 Charter Office stands ready to work alongside
23 these districts, but we will also be unwavering in
24 our expectation that every school in Arkansas
25 delivers on the promise of a high quality education

1 for every student it serves.

2 **FUTURE SCHOOL OF FORT SMITH**

3 DR. SMITH: With that said, I'd like to present
4 our first report. Future Schools of Fort Smith -- or
5 Future School of Fort Smith is an open enrollment
6 charter high school, grades 9-12, Arkansas' first big
7 picture learning affiliate.

8 Their root cause analysis cites that they have
9 turnover -- cites turnover, particularly in math,
10 leading to heavy reliance on Edgenuity in the spring
11 of 2025, inconsistent standards, alignment, and HQIM
12 implementation, and the absence of a consistent data
13 cycle in MTDSS's structure to drive account
14 interventions with fidelity.

15 Their analysis further identifies fragile
16 graduation in CCR systems in a highly mobile setting,
17 inconsistent intake and transcript coding, limited
18 pathway staffing, learning conditions affected by
19 attendance behavior, and uneven classroom attendance.

20 They have begun already with their improvement
21 plans, strengthening their Tier 1 instruction with
22 HQIM pacing, collaborative planning, and a bi-weekly
23 formative check, establishing weekly data meetings
24 and a rocket hour intervention hour, tightening
25 graduation CCR systems through transcript audits,

1 trackers, verified credit recovery, and FAFSA
2 application supports, and strengthening talent
3 systems through structured coaching observation
4 cycles from external partners and additional
5 resources.

6 So at this time, the Charter Office would like
7 to like this Panel and would like to recommend that
8 you accept the report that is that is being presented
9 both from the accountability report, which is the
10 data that's provided by the Department, as well as
11 the schools analysis, root analysis of the causes of
12 where they're at and why they're where they're at,
13 along with their what they have already begun to do.

14 So the first step is to accept the report. The
15 second is that we'd also then like a recommendation
16 and a vote for -- to bring this school back and their
17 Administration for a probationary hearing in our next
18 time in January.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Do those need -- can
20 those be in one, or do they need to be two separate
21 votes?

22 DR. MOORE: It'd probably be best if it's
23 separate.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So we've heard
25 the report from Dr. Smith in regards to their -- and

1 do you have any questions that need to be further
2 explored at this time?

3 DR. BACON: Not on the first part, but I have
4 just questions about the procedures for the second
5 part.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. All right. So
7 there are no questions about the report. Then I will
8 accept a motion that we accept the report as
9 submitted by Dr. Smith.

10 DR. MOORE: I move to accept the report for
11 Friendship Aspire as reported by Dr. Smith.

12 DR. SMITH: Future School. This was Future
13 School.

14 DR. MOORE: Sorry. Future.

15 DR. SMITH: That's all right. I think I'm the
16 one that did them out of order.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

18 DR. SMITH: So it's probably my --

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So we'll start over
20 again.

21 DR. SMITH: I think I did them out of order.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I will accept a motion
23 to accept Future School's report as submitted by Dr.
24 Smith.

25 DR. MOORE: I'm scared to even try that.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Go ahead. Give it a
2 try.

3 DR. MOORE: Yes. I move to accept the report on
4 Future School of Fort Smith as given by Dr. Smith.

5 DR. BACON: Second.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion
7 by Dr. Moore, a second by Bacon, that we accept the
8 report submitted by Dr. Smith on behalf of Future
9 School of Fort Smith.

10 DR. SMITH: Yes.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: All in favor?

12 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Any opposed? (No
14 response) Okay. Motion passes.

15 DR. SMITH: Yep.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. And then next, we
17 have a request from the Charter Office that we bring
18 back in for discussion in person, Future School to
19 discuss their --

20 DR. SMITH: For a probationary hearing --

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: For a probationary
22 hearing.

23 DR. SMITH: -- basically to place them on
24 probation for the -- for an 18-month period of which
25 they would then need to show evidence of strong

1 student outcomes.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So we have -- I
3 accept a motion that we invite Future School to come
4 back. Oh, yeah.

5 DR. BACON: (Inaudible)

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Sure. Well, I'll
7 pull that back, and, Dr. Bacon, you have further
8 questions?

9 DR. BACON: I just -- this will be my first time
10 being involved in anything of this nature with the
11 open enrollment charter schools. And so I was just
12 curious, like process-wise. So how does that work?
13 What is due process? What is the law for making sure
14 that, you know, if we're going to hold a probationary
15 hearing, I mean, what are the due process steps?

16 DR. SMITH: Well, the -- it's very basically
17 similar to what we're doing right now. Their staff,
18 their superintendent, Executive Director and any
19 building administrators they feel would be applicable
20 to the conversation would come. And at this point,
21 what we're doing is saying that you are -- that the
22 "F" is already there. You have already established
23 that you're an underperforming district at this
24 point. In this case, it's a one school district.
25 But so we've already made that establishment.

1 So at this point, what we need to do is then
2 hold them accountable to that grade. And so instead
3 of saying, "Let's just go get better," the idea is to
4 hold, there's a little bit of accountability of
5 saying, "Okay. For the next X number of times,"
6 whatever, that's a month, five months, eight months,
7 we're obviously recommending a year to test cycles;
8 right? "This 20 -- this next one, '26, and then '27
9 test cycle to show that you not only have you showing
10 improvement, that you could sustain improvement."

11 And does it mean we're doing anything more than
12 just basically saying, We're going to put you on
13 probation. We're kind of put you on the watch list.
14 That's basically what we're doing. And if you
15 continue to perform like we anticipate you
16 performing, then you're going to be great, and we'll
17 take you off the probation and then life goes on.
18 However, if you choose -- not choosing, but if for
19 some reason that, you know, your performance is not
20 there, and we're not seeing any type of significant
21 improvement in that, then we may need to have a
22 different discussion at this time, you know, with
23 this Panel and with the school.

24 So it really is more of just, we're at a
25 crossroads school. We need to figure out what's

1 going on, and let's start fixing it, or there may be
2 additional consequences and additional conversations
3 that we need to make.

4 DR. BACON: So if this vote happens today, you
5 notify the individual school that they'll have a
6 hearing in January. We have this information. Will
7 they -- and you said they'll come, School Board
8 President, I guess Superintendent, whoever is
9 necessary, they'll have an opportunity to present --

10 DR. SMITH: Correct.

11 DR. BACON: -- additional information?

12 DR. SMITH: It basically is just like every
13 other hearing process that we go through. We will --
14 they already know that there's going to be a
15 probation. That's part of that original discussions
16 that we've had with them over this last week or last
17 month actually.

18 DR. BACON: So they're aware that probation
19 steps --

20 DR. SMITH: They're aware we've already did
21 that. At one point, they thought maybe they would --
22 that we would do that today, but because of the
23 calendar and their end of semester activities, it was
24 just really difficult to get them here. So we --
25 what we agreed to upon each -- every (inaudible)

1 school, what we agreed to was that we would present
2 your data. We would present you a report that they
3 would essentially have provided to you in a
4 presentation had they been here so you can review it.

5 And then what we'll do then is we'll have that
6 kind of that question and answer back and forth in
7 January. Similar maybe what we saw at the State
8 Board last week, where the districts had to come
9 before the State Board and basically explain, number
10 one, how we got where we're at and what we're doing
11 to get out. And that's basically what we're doing.

12 And so what we do from a charter standpoint is
13 that we also have the ability to say, "Okay. We also
14 are going to put you on probation, you know, just as
15 a sign that this is serious, that this is urgent, and
16 that we are, you know, that we're for you. We're
17 going to help you. We're not trying to close you
18 down. We're not trying to shut the doors or move
19 anybody out. But we are serious about improving
20 education and improving the outcomes of the
21 students."

22 So this is just one of those little checks to
23 say -- you know, that gives us the ability to really
24 kind of oversee that a little bit and hold them
25 accountable to performance and to providing changes

1 that will make a difference. And so they'll --
2 they'll -- well, we can talk more about some of that
3 next -- on next month, as far as what is it that
4 we're looking for, what will we be looking for, you
5 know, from a if and, you know, you so choose to put
6 them on probation.

7 But basically, what we'll be looking for is,
8 number one, we want to tell you, "Here's our
9 expectation. We expect better scores. We expect
10 students to grow and students to learn. We're also
11 expecting you to check in with us and show us that
12 whatever you're doing is making progress." So we
13 don't want to find out a year and a half from now
14 that, "Well, we didn't make it." We want to know
15 with frequent quarterly check-ins, how are we doing?
16 Are we progressing? How do we know we're
17 progressing? Do we know we're getting better?

18 So this is just a way for us to just kind of,
19 again, maybe light a little fire under some of our
20 school districts to say it's time that we really
21 focus on the right things. We can provide the right
22 additional supports for them, make sure that they
23 have whatever they need once we've identified some of
24 the root causes that are creating maybe a failing
25 system right now.

1 And then what we'll do is, because we want to do
2 that, we're going to stand, and we've start we've
3 already started talking with them about what can we
4 help you provide you? Is it literacy coaching? Is
5 it external support? Is it back-end support? Is it
6 teacher coaching? What is it that's going to create
7 what's creating the system that you're in?

8 So, the goal now is for them, we identify it,
9 figure out what the supports are, put a plan in
10 motion, and then monitor that plan over the next year
11 to see if it's making a difference or not.

12 DR. BACON: Okay. You'll have to forgive me
13 because I have a number of thoughts and questions.
14 Having been on that side of that desk --

15 DR. SMITH: I know.

16 DR. BACON: -- as a charter school CEO, my pulse
17 is really high right now thinking about the whole
18 process because this -- some of this is moving. So
19 we would have the hearing. We already have the
20 reports. We would review what you all have
21 presented, what they've presented in a written
22 report. They would do a presentation, I assume,
23 answer questions.

24 DR. SMITH: Correct.

25 DR. BACON: What gets you off probation? Is it

1 simply --

2 DR. SMITH: Well, I think that's what I think we
3 will determine.

4 DR. BACON: It is simply not having an "F"
5 letter grade next time? What is -- what would --

6 DR. SMITH: Well, I think that's what -- I think
7 we will determine that, and I think we'll bring that
8 -- well, we'll --

9 DR. BACON: "We" being us?

10 DR. SMITH: I think a combination of everybody.
11 I think it's the school, it's us, and it's you. And
12 then so I think part of that performance plan that
13 they'll present to us in April, that comprehensive is
14 -- is also how do we get out of this; right? So what
15 are we going to need to see? You know, when we say
16 improved in -- you know, improved outcomes, what does
17 that mean? Is that one point? Is that ten points?
18 Is that 100 points? Is that a letter grade? I mean,
19 I would certainly think it's at least a letter grade;
20 right?

21 I mean, we can't continue to have "Fs". You
22 know, so we should certainly see from going from an
23 "F" to a "D" and hopefully either a high D"" or a "C"
24 in the year after that. That's -- that would be, you
25 know, we would say that's probably at a minimum the

1 expected trajectory. You know, if we don't quite get
2 there, but we're almost there, we're certainly not
3 going to punish somebody for not quite making the,
4 you know, make a goal. That's not our goal. Our
5 goal is to see improvement, you know. And obviously
6 improvement can be defined a lot of different ways.
7 And so I think every school is going to be a little
8 different depending on where they're at.

9 DR. BACON: Right.

10 DR. SMITH: Right? So --

11 DR. BACON: Yeah. This is not -- this -- these
12 are just -- John Bacon, former CEO of a charter
13 school. Fairness is a big thing to me. So because
14 these are charter schools, the rules are -- I mean,
15 the actions are different because the Charter Panel
16 can put these schools on probation --

17 DR. SMITH: Right.

18 DR. BACON: -- for having an "F," but the six
19 districts that had "Fs" got yelled at, but no action
20 was taken because they --

21 DR. SMITH: Well, I wouldn't say no action was
22 taken. I mean, they had to submit assurances that
23 they would do certain things.

24 DR. BACON: Have they been put on probation?

25 DR. SMITH: Yeah, you can't really put a local

1 school district on probation. I mean, they don't --
2 the State Board --

3 DR. BACON: Are there actions --

4 DR. SMITH: Well, they are under -- they are
5 under the same kind of watch that every school is
6 going to be under. So they're going to go through,
7 and obviously, if they continue to have poor
8 performance, the State Board will take action.

9 DR. BACON: And other than being labeled an "F,"
10 there's no other -- like this is, you're an "F," and
11 you're now on probation. Traditional district is an
12 "F" -- (Cross-talk)

13 DR. SMITH: Right. But my argument to that
14 would be that these guys are on a contract. They --
15 and you know that. You signed a contract -- or they
16 signed a contract to say, "We're going to educate
17 these Children;" right? In maybe a different way,
18 same way, it doesn't whatever model they use. But
19 they made a -- signed a contract to say, "We're going
20 to educate these children."

21 The question at this point is, you didn't
22 fulfill the point of your contract.

23 DR. BACON: And I'm not arguing that we
24 shouldn't hold schools -- charter schools
25 accountable. I guess my argument is, why are we not

1 setting up more for the other schools that are also
2 struggling in -- (Cross-talk)

3 DR. SMITH: I don't have authority to work with
4 the local school district. (Cross-talk)

5 DR. BACON: Extended records of "F" letter
6 grades, academic under performance. And so, which
7 leads me to my second point, which is not only is
8 this a way that we look at the charter schools
9 separately. And actually, they have more
10 accountability because now they're going to be
11 perhaps on probation, a traditional district is not.

12 But they've also had other consequences in law.
13 And again, you don't make the law, I don't make the
14 law. But, I mean, they've lost facilities funding
15 because they had an "F" letter grade. Some of them
16 lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in facilities
17 funding. You just told us that Dese is going to
18 provide support wrap around, I think you said perhaps
19 literacy coach, math coach, all that.

20 DR. SMITH: Yeah. Whatever we need.

21 DR. BACON: And so, you know, I know the answer
22 to my own question, did the traditional districts
23 lose any money over the fact that they have an "F"
24 letter grade?

25 DR. SMITH: Probably not. I don't think there's

1 any specific code there. So I can't speak to the --

2 DR. BACON: I just want to make sure, as I sit
3 on this Panel and know that we will hold schools
4 accountable for academic growth and academic success.
5 And I have no problem with that. And I don't think
6 any of these charter schools that are going to come
7 before us have a problem standing up and saying, you
8 know, they're accountable for results.

9 But I do think it's important that we consider
10 some of those aspects of how are we -- that the "F"
11 letter grade was enough that it caused serious
12 consequences, financial consequences for charter
13 schools. I want to make sure that there is support,
14 there is something that, you know, because you're
15 already -- I'm just telling you as a person who ran
16 charter schools, their facility expenses didn't
17 decrease when they got the "F," and they lost
18 facilities funding.

19 So they're still using the regular other funds
20 to pay for that, which means that they had to cut
21 something that they had been doing in their either
22 state aid or through whatever category. So I mean,
23 they're going to be cutting instructional support,
24 wraparound services, something curricular. I mean,
25 the very things that would get them out of being an

1 "F" are the things that they're going to be having to
2 cut because of the facility funding loss that they
3 face that traditional school districts don't face.
4 And so I just, I'm real uncomfortable with the whole
5 process. But I've spoken to enough people that I
6 think everybody knows where I stand on it.

7 I just want to make sure that they have due
8 process, they have a fair opportunity to make their
9 case, and that someone for the record understands
10 that charter schools are being held to a much higher
11 standard. They're having different consequences that
12 traditional districts aren't. And I'm not saying we
13 should remove the consequences from charters, but
14 perhaps, somebody needs to have a conversation about
15 doing more to raise the bar for all students across
16 the state.

17 DR. SMITH: Well, and I appreciate that comment.

18 DR. BACON: And that's not your purview, but --

19 DR. SMITH: That's why I said I appreciate that
20 comment.

21 DR. BACON: That doesn't really fall under you
22 unit, but I just --

23 DR. SMITH: But certainly, I think, obviously,
24 you know, it is something to consider through
25 legislative, you know, concern maybe, you know, in

1 '27, when the next legislative session comes up.
2 That's certainly, you know, like, I wouldn't say that
3 the local public school has no consequences. All
4 right? I mean, they are still -- they are under a
5 high watch list. So they have -- they have to
6 perform.

7 DR. BACON: Isn't every charter school under a
8 high watch list?

9 DR. SMITH: Well, yeah, yeah. I'm not -- I'm
10 not going to -- (Cross-talk)

11 DR. BACON: One "F" letter grade, one year for
12 -- let's take Future School. I think I looked at
13 their record. A school that has been in the past,
14 maybe "B," "C," "D," look like "C," "C," "D," perhaps
15 on a downward trajectory. I don't think anyone would
16 argue that. Pops an "F" the first time, and they
17 have a lot of serious consequences, financial
18 consequences.

19 DR. SMITH: Yeah. But the probation doesn't
20 change that consequence. That consequence came when
21 they got the "F," and that's -- (Cross-talk)

22 DR. SMITH: -- a legislative issue that we'll
23 have to deal with later. (Cross-talk)

24 DR. BACON: And others that have been "F," "F,"
25 "F," "F," "F."

1 DR. SMITH: Yeah, I --

2 DR. BACON: They're not losing any money, and
3 they aren't having the tag of probationary. Because
4 these very charter schools are going to be competing
5 for students against some of those districts who are
6 going to be, "Well, you're on probation." "They may
7 not be around because they're on probation." I mean,
8 it's just equity. It's an equity argument to me, and
9 I can make it all day long.

10 DR. SMITH: And I appreciate it. (Cross-talk)

11 DR. SMITH: And I do, I appreciate that. And
12 again, something to consider in legislative session.
13 Again, my job at this point is to follow the law.
14 The law says that, you know, that they have to do a
15 certain thing, that they're under contract to provide
16 certain performance. Again, we -- (Cross-talk)

17 DR. BACON: Say they have to be placed on
18 probation because they got one "F."

19 DR. SMITH: It doesn't.

20 DR. BACON: Right.

21 DR. SMITH: But at some point, there's -- you
22 know, what is the consequence; right?

23 DR. BACON: Sure.

24 DR. SMITH: Just that you got an "F" and now go
25 to do better?

1 DR. BACON: Sure.

2 DR. SMITH: Right? So I think that at some
3 point, what we're trying to say is that we need to
4 make a statement to say we, you know, we understand
5 there's urgency maybe that hasn't been in this Panel,
6 in this -- in our world previous to that. It's first
7 time that districts as a whole obviously hold
8 accountable for their overall, their letter grades.

9 DR. BACON: Right.

10 DR. SMITH: So this is a first -- this is a
11 first year for everything; right?

12 DR. BACON: Right.

13 DR. SMITH: So local school districts are being
14 held accountable for their -- you know, for their
15 letter grades, as well as to the individual schools
16 within there. So in some sense, we are treating
17 everybody fairly. You know, you can, you know, if
18 you wanted to say, well, it's a name or not a name, I
19 don't know. And that's something to think about.
20 But you do have to decide at some point, we've got to
21 put some kind of --

22 DR. BACON: Certainly.

23 DR. SMITH: -- importance to that.

24 DR. BACON: I'll let you move on.

25 DR. SMITH: Okay.

1 DR. BACON: Because I could, you know --

2 DR. SMITH: I know. We can have that
3 discussion. (Cross-talk)

4 MR. SMITH: And I welcome it. (Cross-talk)

5 DR. BACON: It's a name of probation, but it's
6 also a loss of funding, which is a big problem to me
7 if there's --

8 DR. SMITH: But the loss of funding has already
9 come is -- I guess is what I'm saying.

10 DR. BACON: Right.

11 DR. SMITH: It'd be different if we were saying
12 that the decision is going to then create a loss of
13 funding. The loss of funding has already occurred.
14 And so the probation is just more of a, you know, of
15 a recognition, number one, that we need you to do
16 better. And so just like we need everybody better;
17 right? I mean, everybody who -- every school that
18 gets an "F" probably should be on probation at some
19 point because, you know, you -- we need you to get
20 better. And not just we hope you get better, but
21 we're going to now really encourage you and spend
22 time with you and make sure that you have the
23 capacity to do the things that you have told us that
24 you were going to do.

25 DR. BACON: Right.

1 DR. SMITH: Right? And so I think that's where
2 we're at right now is the idea of just holding the
3 school and saying it's -- and again, we are not here
4 saying that any school is trying to get "F," or
5 they're underperforming. We understand that there's
6 hard working people in every one of these schools,
7 and they are trying. Every one of them are doing
8 their very best to teach -- to teach students.

9 What we do recognize, there's something in their
10 system that's not working; right? And that because
11 of that something, it's creating low outcomes. So
12 what we're stepping in here to do at this point is
13 say, it is time to stop and take a look at your
14 system and figure out what it is that's creating low
15 performance. Hopefully we can get in there, and we
16 can help you fix it, and we can find the right
17 support so that we can see increase. If it's a
18 systemic issue that's bigger than that, we may not be
19 able to. But this is the first flag; right?

20 And unfortunately, legislatively, you know,
21 we've kind -- we talked about some of our work
22 sessions, like there's only so many actions that you
23 have legislate -- you know, have the ability to make.
24 Probation's that one. There's not one that says
25 "warning"; right? So it's either nothing, or it's

1 probation; right? Because everything else is about
2 -- more about applications and modifications and some
3 of those kind of things, and that's not where we're
4 at.

5 We're not trying to modify anything. We're not
6 trying to transfer anything. We're just saying we
7 need to we need to make a statement here. And so
8 that's what -- the only option we have is one of
9 those nine. The only one that says, "We need you to
10 fix the problem," is probation. Which is why we're
11 recommending -- why we'll be recommending officially
12 in our January meeting that these schools be put on
13 probation.

14 DR. BACON: And all we would be voting on today,
15 you're asking us, is just to vote to schedule a
16 probation hearing for January.

17 DR. SMITH: That's all we're doing right now.
18 Yeah, we're not putting them on probation in this
19 thing.

20 DR. BACON: Right.

21 DR. SMITH: We're just asking that they would --
22 you would schedule a hearing. We would notify them
23 officially that "You're going to come back for a
24 probationary hearing."

25 DR. BACON: Okay.

1 DR. SMITH: Because we -- they fully expect,
2 based on our previous conversation, that there will
3 be some type of probation probably placed upon them;
4 right? And that we've had that discussion with them.

5 DR. BACON: Sure.

6 DR. SMITH: We've sat in the room with them and
7 explained to them some of the consequences of where
8 they're at; right? And so this won't -- that won't
9 come as a surprise to them. So all we're doing is
10 saying, we just want to put it on the record so that
11 we can now invite them and make it an official
12 statement.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sure. Okay. Any other
14 questions?

15 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: So as a part of the
16 process, we might be able to ask them in January
17 their feedback on the process so far. And what
18 crucial needs -- what's supporting them so far, and
19 what crucial needs still exist for them?

20 DR. SMITH: I think that would be a fair
21 question. So, I mean, I certainly, at this point,
22 we've just done it at a real surface level; right?
23 We've looked at it. We know what the letter grade
24 was. We've taken some cursory, looked at the data
25 that you've seen there and start kind of draw some

1 conclusions. We've certainly asked them like, "What
2 do you -- what are the reasons," you know. We asked
3 them to present that report, like, "What do you see
4 as the reasons for where you're at, and what have you
5 already done?"

6 Because they knew that obviously. They knew
7 their letter grade you know, in the summer, and so
8 they could have already implemented some things to
9 create, you know, move that needle for the '26
10 testing period. And so the question is, this is what
11 we're doing. So I think it would be a very fair
12 question to say, "How's that going?"

13 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Right. Right.

14 DR. SMITH: Right? "You've -- you had six
15 months now of this improvement plan that you placed
16 together. How's it going?" You know, "What other
17 additional supports may you might need?" Because
18 that's the -- that's the -- those are the
19 conversations we'll have after January. We talked
20 about that comprehensive kind of school improvement
21 report. Part of that has to go on their AR app. But
22 secondly, you know, it's important that they go
23 through that process, whether it's a complete, you
24 know, needs assessment, or whatever they need to do
25 to start identifying exactly what is it that needs to

1 happen in order to move the needle; right?

2 "We've already -- some things you've already
3 done. We can't change that. But looking forward,
4 What are some things that you feel are going to
5 really take you to that next level?" And then they
6 will present that to you. So basically, they're
7 going to come before you twice. One in January, just
8 to kind of more explain why they think they are where
9 they are and what they're already doing, and maybe,
10 hopefully have some data that says we're -- we can --
11 we're confident that we're moving in the right
12 direction, and here's why we think that.

13 And that's the way we're going to encourage them
14 to -- as far as their presentation and spend less
15 time on the "why." Certainly, the "why" is
16 important. But a whole lot more on the "where";
17 right? And so where are we going? How are we going
18 to get there? And then bring that to you, then you
19 can start having that dialogue. At that point, we'll
20 see where the vote goes. And regardless where the
21 vote goes, we still have to put a -- we're going to
22 still recommend the comprehensive report come back in
23 April or -- you know, in April because that does need
24 to happen. Because there still has to be some
25 accountability before this Board for their actions

1 and for their improvement.

2 So basically, yes, you can ask what you need to
3 ask related to that report and any other report going
4 forward to like, "As you -- you know, as you review
5 your school improvement plan, where do you see the
6 gaps?" "Do you have the -- you know, do you have the
7 necessary support that you need?" "What are those
8 supports that you need?" Those are the conversations
9 we will also be having with them --

10 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Right.

11 DR. SMITH: -- and putting them in touch maybe
12 with some external partners that -- to help them
13 address where some of those needs are. So first
14 thing, it's like, we got to identify what -- the
15 "what." Where's the system broke, and then, at that
16 point, how do we inject the right things into the
17 system so that we get better outcomes? So that's
18 where we're headed with this thing.

19 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay. Thank you.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Thank you for the
21 additional details.

22 DR. SMITH: Sure.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah. So you've heard
24 the explanation of the process and the intent. So,
25 at this time, I will accept a motion to plan to

1 invite Future School of Fort Smith back in January
2 for the probationary hearing.

3 DR. SMITH: Yes.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

5 DR. SMITH: That is correct.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: All right.

7 DR. MOORE: I move to invite Future School of
8 Fort Smith to come in January for a hearing to
9 discuss the report, and it's a probationary hearing.

10 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: And I second that.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So I have a
12 motion to invite Future School of Fort Smith back in
13 January for a review of the report and to have a
14 probationary hearing. That motion was made by Dr.
15 Moore and seconded by Dr. Beshears-Duncan. All those
16 in favor say aye.

17 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Any opposed? (No
19 response) I said "aye" as well. Okay. All right.
20 So motion carries. Okay. So next on the agenda --

21 DR. SMITH: We've got two, three more schools.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- is Garfield.

23 DR. SMITH: Garfield. Let's do Garfield. You
24 tell me where we're going. Well, that's where we're
25 going. How about that? All right.

CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Garfield.

GARFIELD SCHOLARS ACADEMY

DR. SMITH: We'll do Garfield real quick. Let's see if we can get this done. Here we go. So Garfield Scholars Academy opened in 2024. It's a K-5 charter school currently serving 94 students. Their root cause analysis identified systemic implementation gaps.

First root cause is inconsistent core instruction and inconsistent curriculum execution. High quality instructional materials were used inconsistently across classrooms. Pacing and rigor varied and formative assessment practices were uneven. As a result, teachers were not consistently using evidence of learning to adjust instruction and provide timely targeted support.

Secondly, it was underdeveloped school-wide data and progress monitoring system. While the school did have some data practices, the overall system did not reliably translate assessment information into documented actions. Thirdly, there's a talent system fragility, inconsistent instructional support. The accountability profile reports that a low teacher certification rate. While that doesn't automatically determine outcomes, they certainly increase the

1 importance of coaching, curriculum, and structured
2 collaborative.

3 They had four priorities that they wanted to
4 focus on in the '25-'26 school year. Number one,
5 strengthening the core instruction through a vetted
6 standards-aligned curriculum in math and ELA.
7 Secondly, building a coherent data and monitoring
8 system, including a school-wide data center -- excuse
9 me, student-wide data calendar, weekly data meetings
10 using a standard protocol and leadership and board
11 dashboards.

12 Thirdly, aligning talent and support to identify
13 need for strategic educator assignments, quarterly
14 observation and feedback cycles. And lastly,
15 strengthening their MTSS -- MTSS, and school-wide
16 behavior systems including Tier 1 consistency and a
17 consistent menu of Tier 2 support standardized
18 documentation and strengthen classroom management.
19 With this report, I would ask to recommend that the
20 Panel accept this report as well as invite them back
21 for a probationary hearing in January of 2026.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So you've heard
23 the report submitted by Dr. Smith on behalf of
24 Garfield Scholars Academy, and the request is that we
25 accept the report as submitted. And so I will accept

1 a motion on that.

2 DR. BACON: I move we accept the report for Garfield
3 Scholars Academy.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

5 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I second that.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So motion by Dr.
7 Bacon is seconded by Dr. Beshears-Duncan that we
8 accept the report as submitted by Dr. Smith. All
9 those in favor, aye.

10 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Aye. Any opposed? (No
12 response) No. Motion carries. Okay. So then we
13 also have similar requests that we invite Garfield
14 Scholars Academy back in January to further discuss
15 the report that was submitted and then also have a
16 probationary hearing in regards to their "F" rating.
17 And so I will accept a motion.

18 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: So I move to have Garfield
19 Scholars Academy back in January for a probationary
20 hearing at that time.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

22 DR. MOORE: I second.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So a motion by
24 Dr. Beshears-Duncan, second by Dr. Moore. My words
25 are getting tangled up, sorry. That we invite

1 Scholars Academy -- Garfield Scholars Academy to come
2 back in January for review of the report and to --
3 for a probationary hearing. All those in favor say
4 aye.

5 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Any opposed, nay? (No
7 response) Okay. Motion carries. Next is Institute
8 for Creative -- for the Creative Arts?

9 **INSTITUTE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS**

10 DR. SMITH: Yes, ma'am. Institute of Creative
11 Arts opened in 2024. Currently, they are at 100
12 students, and so it's just a little bit, about 20
13 percent of what their cap is. Some of their root
14 causes, they had their landscape analysis that they
15 were all -- everything was kind of basically tied to
16 startup conditions. This is their first -- or yes,
17 technically second year of an operation very similar
18 to where Garfield is.

19 They listed some of their root causes as
20 insufficient staffing capacity and operational
21 support during their inaugural year. They have an
22 underdeveloped system for data use and progress
23 monitoring during the first year, school-wide
24 monitoring. Data monitoring began later than
25 intended, and baseline data was limited for the

1 students. Thirdly, they -- the ICA reports the late
2 implementation of key instructional resources and
3 intervention structures, and -- which led to four
4 priorities.

5 And so priority one was strengthening core
6 instruction. Priority two was addressing staffing
7 capacity. Priority 3, strengthening planning and
8 intervention execution. And Priority 4, which is
9 aligning talent and supports to student needs at this
10 time. The Charter Office would recommend that this
11 Panel accepts the report as written and submitted,
12 and that they would be invited back for a
13 probationary hearing in January of 2026.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. We heard the
15 report from Dr. Smith on the Institute for Creative
16 Arts, and the request is that we accept the report as
17 submitted.

18 DR. MOORE: I move that we request the report as
19 submitted by Dr. Smith for the Institute for the
20 Creative Arts.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Accept the report?

22 DR. MOORE: Yes.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

24 DR. BACON: Second.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion

1 by Dr. Morris, second by Dr. Bacon that we accept the
2 report as submitted. All those in favor say aye.

3 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Aye. Any opposed? (No
5 response) Okay. Motion carries. I think we need to
6 go back and pick up Friendship Aspire Academy Network
7 next.

8 DR. BACON: Do we need to (inaudible) on a
9 motion?

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Oh, sorry. I'm rushing
11 along. Yes, so then we also need to have a motion on
12 bringing them back in in January for review of the
13 report and a probationary hearing. And that's for
14 Institute for the Creative Arts.

15 DR. BACON: I move we invite the Institute for
16 Creative Arts to come in January for a hearing on
17 probationary hearing.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

19 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I second.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So a motion by
21 Dr. Bacon, a second by Dr. Beshears-Duncan that we
22 invite the Institute for the Creative Arts to come
23 back in January to review their report and to also
24 have a probationary hearing. All those in favor say
25 aye.

1 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Aye. Any opposed? (No
3 response) Okay. Motion carries. So we need to go
4 back and pick up Friendship Aspire Academy.

5 **FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE ACADEMY NETWORK**

6 DR. SMITH: All right. Our last contestant
7 today -- no, our last school today, Or actually, it's
8 one of our larger districts. Seven schools that
9 represented in the Friendship Aspire Academy Network.
10 This is -- all the other schools were basically one
11 school districts. This is, again, a multi-school
12 district. Four of their seven schools received an
13 "F" rating this past year, which obviously placed
14 them in -- as an "F" district.

15 As they looked at their root causes, some of --
16 basically there were four things. They said that the
17 district hasn't demonstrated consistent
18 standards-aligned core instruction with high-quality
19 instructional material, that intervention systems
20 were not consistently effective, particularly at Tier
21 2 and Tier 3 supports and progress monitoring.
22 Thirdly, data cycles and PLC routines were not
23 consistently structured or documented. And fourthly,
24 engagement conditions and chronic absenteeism and
25 behavior created some issues.

1 In response, their improvement plan starting
2 here for '25-'26 was basically implementing an HQIM
3 with clear instructional non-negotiables, increasing
4 the frequency and quality of observation and coaching
5 cycles, strengthening pacing expectations, and
6 administering bi-weekly common formative assessments,
7 and establishing weekly PLCs with protocols and
8 monthly deep data dives.

9 At this point, the Charter Office would
10 recommend that you all accept the report as written
11 and submitted and invite them for a probationary
12 hearing in January of 2026.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. We've heard the
14 report submitted by Dr. Smith on behalf of Friendship
15 Aspire Academy Network, and the request is that we
16 accept the report as submitted.

17 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I motion that we accept
18 Friendship Aspire's application as submitted.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

20 DR. MOORE: I second.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion
22 by Dr. Beshears-Duncan, seconded by Dr. Moore that we
23 accept the report on behalf of Friendship Aspire
24 Academy Network as submitted. All those in favor say
25 aye.

1 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Aye. Any opposed? (No
3 response) Okay. Motion carries. We also have a
4 request that we invite Friendship Aspire Academy
5 Network back in January to review the report and to
6 have a probationary hearing in regards to their
7 letter grade. And I will now accept the motion.

8 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: So I motion to have
9 Friendship Aspire Network back in January for a
10 probationary hearing.

11 DR. MOORE: I second.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Motion by Dr.
13 Beshears-Duncan, seconded by Dr. Moore that we invite
14 Friendship Aspire Academy Network back in January for
15 a review of their report and for a probationary
16 hearing. All those in favor say aye.

17 DR. MEMBERS: Aye.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Aye. Opposed? (No
19 response) Okay. Motion carries.

20 DR. SMITH: Very good. Thank you, ma'am.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you.

22 DR. SMITH: At this time, you can decide when
23 that January meeting is going to be. So that's your
24 next vote.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. All right. So we

1 are now to our consent agenda. So I'll invite up Mr.
2 Scott, who's going to present the items under that
3 section. All right. Mr. Scott.

4 **CONSENT AGENDA**

5 MR. SCOTT: Fred Scott, Office of School Choice
6 and Parent Empowerment. You have before you a
7 schedule for 2026 that suggested for you to review
8 and vote on accepting those dates, which typically is
9 the third Thursday of the week following the State
10 Board.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. All right. So
12 the presented item is the agenda for the next
13 calendar year. Hopefully everyone has had a chance
14 to review that. Are there any questions about any of
15 the dates? Any concerns?

16 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Is it possible to have the
17 meeting later in January, given that many of our
18 schools will not have been back in session but a week
19 and a half at that point?

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Dr. Smith is
21 coming forward to respond to that.

22 DR. MOORE: Get in your steps.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Sorry.

24 DR. SMITH: Darrell Smith, Office of School
25 Choice. I think, at this point, what we do is want

1 to set the dates.

2 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay.

3 DR. SMITH: And then if we need to modify the
4 dates for one reason or another, I think we certainly
5 can. So I think the vote before you is like, we set
6 the general calendar for our meetings, and then, you
7 know, for holidays or for month or for schedules or
8 anything of that nature, we can always modify the
9 date.

10 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay.

11 DR. SMITH: Yeah.

12 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: So it's the overall third
13 Thursdays. It's --

14 DR. SMITH: The third Thursday of every month.

15 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Okay. And then we can
16 modify from there.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Any other
18 questions about the calendar? Seeing none, I will
19 accept a motion to accept the calendars -- the dates
20 that have been presented for the next calendar year
21 for our charter meetings.

22 DR. MOORE: I move that we accept the 2026
23 suggested dates. Let me remove that motion. I'm
24 sure it doesn't matter. There's a typo on here
25 because I don't -- it's "2926" for one of the years,

1 but I don't think that matters in the scheme, does
2 it? Okay. Good deal. So I'll move that we accept
3 the proposed panel meeting dates for 2026.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

5 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I second.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion
7 by Dr. Moore, a second by Dr. Beshears-Duncan that we
8 accept the dates for the calendar year 2026. All
9 those in favor say aye.

10 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Aye. Any apposed? (No
12 response) Okay. Motion carries.

13 DR. SMITH: So now that you have -- we've set
14 the date -- not necessarily in year 3000, but now
15 that we've set the dates, I think it might be a good
16 time to determine if you want to move the January
17 date back. Especially in light of our previous
18 conversation as far as the schools that we were, you
19 know, looking to bring in for their hearing. I think
20 we need to probably make sure we get that date on
21 record so that we can notify them of the date.

22 DR. BACON: Well, I know I have a conflict on
23 January 15 already. Two conflicts. So if we were to
24 try and do something, that would help me.

25 DR. MOORE: I have a conflict on the 22nd.

1 DR. BACON: What about the 29th?

2 DR. SMITH: We could --

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I'm good for those
4 dates. So I guess the 29th is not -- it doesn't look
5 familiar or sound familiar. So I don't know if that
6 works for everyone.

7 DR. SMITH: As long as we've got five of you
8 here, I think we'll be okay.

9 DR. BACON: The 29th would be good.

10 DR. MOORE: I can do the 29th. I just can't do
11 the 22nd.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Can you do the 29th?

13 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: No.

14 DR. MOORE: There will never be a time that
15 works.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Well, possibly. Is
17 there a way that we can just send out a poll for the
18 January date to -- because --

19 DR. SMITH: We can. We certainly probably need
20 to do that in the next day or two, just again, so
21 that we can notify the schools.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Because I know
23 Mr. Baldwin's not here, and Edie's not here, and Ms.
24 Newton.

25 DR. SMITH: Sure. Yeah, absolutely.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: And so, potentially, if
2 you're not able to make it, if we had enough of them,
3 we could still --

4 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Right.

5 DR. SMITH: Yeah, we will send out a poll, a
6 survey, either by this afternoon or first thing in
7 the morning before we kind of get -- everybody kind
8 of gets into their holiday mode a little bit, and
9 send it you guys. And then we'll based on that poll,
10 then we'll set the date. We'll let you guys know.
11 We'll also -- that will also allow us to notify the
12 schools so they will be prepared for that day as
13 well.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

15 DR. SMITH: Okay? Very good.

16 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: All right. Let's see.
18 We have the minutes or --

19 SCOTT: Consent agenda, minutes.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Next on the
21 consent agenda are the minutes from the November 20th
22 meeting. If you would, please take a time -- take a
23 minute to review those, and let us know Let us know
24 if you have any corrections or concerns.

25 MR. MOORE: Those are just in the Board Book;

1 right? Online?

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah.

3 DR. BACON: I can tell you, that's not in here.

4 DR. MOORE: I think we have to reference the
5 Board Book on those.

6 MR. SCOTT: You have a hard copy.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Say one more time?

8 MR. SCOTT: You have a hard copy --

9 DR. MOORE: There is a hard copy at this time?

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Has everyone had
11 a chance to review the minutes?

12 DR. MOORE: Almost.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. So everyone's had
14 a chance to review, so I will now accept a motion on
15 the minutes.

16 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I motion to approve the
17 minutes for the Charter Authorizing Panel from
18 November 20th, 2025.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

20 DR. BACON: Second.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion
22 by Dr. Beshears-Duncan, a second by Dr. Bacon that we
23 accept the minutes as written. All those in favor
24 say aye.

25 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Any opposed? (No
2 response) Okay. Motion carries.

3 So just one last item that we have. And so,
4 bittersweet, we have someone that has served us well
5 most recently with the Charter Panel, but for years
6 with the Board. And so Mary Perry is retiring. And
7 so we wanted to say congratulations, and you will be
8 missed, and your presence through the process has
9 definitely been felt. So I greatly appreciate your
10 organization and your communication and your
11 patience, getting responses back. But at the end,
12 well-earned, well-deserved, and just want to say
13 thank you. Yeah. All right. And thank you for
14 allowing us to have that moment of recognition for
15 someone that's wonderful and going on to another
16 phase in life. So congratulations.

17 Okay. So with that, if there is no further
18 business, I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

19 DR. MOORE: I move that we adjourn this Board
20 meeting.

21 DR. BACON: Second.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion
23 by Dr. Moore, second by Dr. Bacon that we adjourn.
24 All those in favor say aye.

25 PANEL MEMBERS: Aye.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Aye. Okay. We are
2 adjourned.

3 (WHEREUPON, the meeting was adjourned in this
4 matter at 1:00 p.m. on December 18th, 2025.)

5 (WITNESS EXCUSED)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)

) ss

COUNTY OF CLEBURNE)

I, MELODY HALEY, Certified Court Reporter #889 and Notary Public, 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 to the action.

C E R T I F I C A T E

(Continued)

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WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 9th day of January, 2026.

MELODY HALEY, CCR

Certified Court Reporter #889

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