

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

OCTOBER 18, 2022

9:00 a.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	Chairperson/ADE Asst. Commissioner - Public School Accountability
MR. PHIL BALDWIN	Retired Bank Executive
MS. KARLI SARACINI	ADE Asst. Commissioner - Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY	Division of CTE Associate Director
MS. TOYCE NEWTON	Former State Board of Education Member
MR. KIM DAVIS	Former State Board of Education Member
MR. MARK ZELLNER	Lead Cyber Security Analyst, Southwest Power Pool

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. WHITNEY JAMES DESE Attorney

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. DORIE SUMMONS DESE Charter Schools Director

LOCATION:

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

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E X H I B I T S

RIVERCREST JR. HIGH PREP ACADEMY

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

Profile of a Graduate

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning. The October
3 18, 2022, meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is
4 called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the
5 auditorium and ask that you please silence all of
6 your electronic devices. We will have a fair and
7 responsible hearing today. And I ask that each
8 person that is speaking please state your name and
9 title for the record when you come to the podium. I
10 will ask that you continue to speak clearly into the
11 microphone for the benefit of the Panel, the viewing
12 audience. And the meeting is being live-streamed and
13 recorded, so if you're at the microphone then
14 everyone will be able to hear you. A transcript of
15 this meeting will be posted on the DESE website for
16 your follow-up.

17 All right. Good morning, everyone. Let's get
18 started. And we do have panel members joining us via
19 Zoom, so we do have a quorum today.

20 CONSENT AGENDA

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So our first item on the
22 agenda is the minutes from our September 13th
23 meeting.

24 MS. NEWTON: Move approval.

25 MR. BALDWIN: Second.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Ms.
2 Newton and a second from Mr. Baldwin to approve the
3 minutes as presented.

4 All those in favor?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

7 Motion passes.

8 1: CONSIDERATION OF DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
9 APPLICATION FOR RIVERCREST JR. HIGH PREP ACADEMY

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Summons, our first action
11 agenda item please.

12 MS. SUMMONS: Good morning. Dorie Summons, the
13 DESE Charter Office.

14 The Rivercrest Junior High Prep Academy has
15 submitted an application for a district conversion
16 charter school. We have representatives from that
17 school district, and Ms. Shantele Raper is the
18 Assistant Superintendent and she will give you her
19 list of presenters.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

21 Ms. James, would you like to come and go over
22 the procedures for everyone?

23 MS. JAMES: My name is Whitney James with the
24 Department.

25 Each person -- I'm sorry. Yes, let me back-up.

1 Each person speaking on behalf of Rivercrest
2 will be sworn in first by the Chair, and then
3 Rivercrest will have 20 minutes to present. I don't
4 believe that we have any opposition; so if the Panel
5 would allow that five minutes that Rivercrest would
6 normally have to respond to opposition, I believe
7 they have one -- they have Representative Hodges on
8 the Zoom, as well.

9 MS. NEWTON: Madam Chair, I'm having a little
10 problem hearing on that particular microphone. I can
11 hear you fine.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Your microphone is on.

13 Is Representative Hodges ready to present now?

14 REPRESENTATIVE HODGES: I am. Good morning,
15 everyone. I hope everyone is doing well this
16 morning. This is Arkansas State Representative Monty
17 Hodges in eastern Arkansas, Blytheville. And
18 Rivercrest is actually in my district, District 55,
19 which will be District 34 the first of the year. But
20 I am delighted to speak on their behalf. Actually,
21 my 13-year old son attends South Mississippi County
22 School District, Rivercrest School District. And the
23 former superintendent, which I've worked with for
24 years, Sally Bennett, who is retired, who also
25 worked for the Armored School District, she and I

1 have worked closely together. And I work closely
2 with all the schools within District 55, any efforts
3 they put forth to -- helping hands with schools and
4 the education of our young people. And I just wanted
5 to get on to give my support of their efforts for
6 this endeavor this morning. And I haven't asked, but
7 I think Sally -- I think I came before you guys maybe
8 a couple of years ago when Sally Bennett made a
9 proposal.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Representative
11 Hodges. We appreciate you being with us today.

12 REPRESENTATIVE HODGES: Thank you. My pleasure.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. At this time,
14 everyone speaking on behalf of Rivercrest Junior High
15 Prep, if you will stand and raise your right hand.
16 And if you are joining us, thank you. If you're
17 joining us on the Zoom, if you will do the same.

18 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're
19 about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth,
20 and nothing but the truth?

21 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: The print is too small for me
23 to see the people in Wilson, but I'm assuming they
24 all nodded yes. All right. Thank you.

25 All right. Ms. Raper, you have 25 minutes. Do

1 you have a slideshow? There we go.

2 If you will give me just a minute to find 25
3 minutes.

4 And your clicker is right there in front of you.
5 If you'll speak into the microphone, make sure the
6 light is on, and --

7 MS. RAPER: Okay. So --

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- you're ready.

9 MS. RAPER: Good morning to the Charter
10 Authorizing Panel. We appreciate you being here this
11 morning to consider our request for the Junior High
12 Prep Academy. I'm Ms. Raper and I serve as Assistant
13 Superintendent at Rivercrest School District.

14 I'd like to introduce our team. Of course, we
15 appreciate Representative Monty Hodges jumping in.
16 We know he's busy. Our Superintendent, Mike Cox, is
17 back in the office; he will be joining us via Zoom.
18 We have our Principal, Mr. Bill Burfield; he is the
19 principal of the Academies at the high school, and he
20 would also be -- he's also the principal of the
21 junior high. We have Mr. Hunter Durham; he is our
22 Band Director. He boasts some impressive 6-12 fine
23 arts program. He also follows with EAST and AP Music
24 Theory. We have Mr. Dave Diagostino. Mr. Diagostino
25 was a former career coach. He is our Solution Tree

1 PLC leader. He is our CTE director. He is our EAST
2 facilitator. He has taken on work-based learning for
3 us. He's a business teacher. He's the lead for Work
4 Keys. He is the lead for ACT prep and he has been
5 trained through National Career Academy. And he's
6 also a peer teacher leader. So he's a good fellow to
7 have around as well. We also have via Zoom our
8 teachers that were vital in writing the application:
9 Ms. Brooke Brewer, she is a veteran teacher, alumni
10 of Rivercrest, and she's the advocate for the SEL and
11 the health component of the application. And then we
12 have Ms. Ana Elrod, also a vested teacher who is a
13 peer teacher leader, and she is our Solution Tree PLC
14 guru as well. And so I did want to introduce all
15 them so that you would see the vast skills that we
16 have within our team.

17 Let's see. So as we -- we're going to present
18 our vision quickly, and we do appreciate your
19 questions at the end so we can help solidify your
20 decision to support our mission. The approach is to
21 embrace a whole-child educational approach tailored
22 to what we know about our students. If you know
23 anything about Rivercrest School District, we are
24 embedded in tradition and we know our kids. And
25 there is a -- there's a pro and con with that

1 tradition. That tradition is we've always done
2 things one way and now we have teachers wanting to
3 think outside the box and do things a little bit
4 different for our kiddos.

5 Our mission was created in support of our
6 teachers and stakeholders and parents. It was simply
7 because we knew that our students were struggling,
8 and our data indicates that when we have a building
9 change -- and what we call it at Rivercrest -- we
10 have a K-6 elementary and they call it "crossing the
11 ditch." And when they cross the ditch to 7th grade,
12 something happens. And then when they cross over
13 down that sidewalk to 9th grade, something happens.
14 And that's where our data is showing those dips. We
15 know that that has a significant impact. I was a
16 struggling middle school student. I remember the
17 anxiety. I remember the uncertainty. I remember the
18 actual fear. And when we look at our APNA survey,
19 we see that 50% of our 8th graders, 50% of our 10th
20 graders have -- do not feel safe at school. And that
21 as adults we are making sure our doors are locked;
22 we're making sure that we have these drills; we have
23 these vape detectors. We're looking at all those
24 tangible pieces, but we still know that there's
25 something going on with these middle school kiddos.

1 I was a middle school teacher and I had the luxury of
2 teaching students 6th grade, 7th grade, and 8th grade
3 and watching them grow. And there's just a vital
4 piece there that we are ready to tap into.

5 So our rationale for the junior high charter was
6 we are a feeder for the Academies of Rivercrest High
7 School. We came out of last year -- it was like
8 building a plane in air; however, we made great
9 strides. And the junior high teachers felt a little
10 left out because, again, they were a 7-12 and all of
11 a sudden, there's a 9-12 and we had these little
12 danglers of the 7th and 8th grade. And those
13 teachers began to ask what can we do, we want this
14 innovation, we want to do these things for our
15 kiddos. And so looking at this rationale of the
16 challenges that affect most high schools, we are
17 ready to grab hold of our 7th and 8th graders and be
18 proactive because when we look at our graduation
19 rates we see our kids -- we see our students digging
20 themselves in a hole in 9th and 10th grade. Mr.
21 Burfield may be able to share a little bit more
22 about some plans that he has working with graduation
23 rates. But we want to take some of these best
24 practices that we've put in place at the high school
25 and move them down to the junior high.

1 So a little bit about our district. We are --
2 we cover 371 square miles. Our district shares
3 boundaries with eight different school districts.
4 We have two LEAs before the charter. It's still hard
5 for people to realize that we now have three LEAs.
6 Our 7th and 8th grade still has a high school feel to
7 it. And we know that they're still babies and we --
8 so we're kind of having an approach in that we want
9 to give them that elementary support that they had
10 over there on the other side of the ditch at 6th
11 grade, but we're wanting to provide some high school
12 opportunities to them as well.

13 We do have our goals, and I have updated these
14 just a little bit to give you something that's a
15 little bit more measurable. We feel like that we can
16 easily increase that number of junior high students
17 completing a foundation course by 90%. We feel like
18 we can do 90% on that. Our academies, some of the
19 goals that we had for the academy, we were starting
20 at zero and we are very close to 90% on those. And
21 so we feel like we can do that, those high school
22 credit courses, by 90%.

23 We are focusing on growth, individual growth
24 goals for students. Our motto is if we're not
25 growing students we need to go to the house. We just

1 -- we just need -- we need to focus on growth.

2 Increase the percentage of junior high students
3 scoring ready and exceeding -- we can put 5% there
4 but, again, we have this much more individualized by
5 grade level and students. So each team now knows
6 exactly what the growth goal is and those students
7 are identified.

8 And then, increase the number of students at
9 risk -- we're using our Smart data for that.

10 So when we look at these key program features --
11 and I'll go over the SEL component, Dave being the
12 guru, and career exploration. And then Mr. Durham
13 will work on -- talk to you about innovations. But I
14 wanted to share that we do not look at these as being
15 individualized or silos, but rather a whole child
16 approach. We definitely are looking at a Mazlow's
17 with Blooms, if that makes sense -- not a Mazlow's
18 before Blooms, because we would spend all of our time
19 on that piece, but embedding the whole process.

20 Again, looking at our APNA survey -- and this is
21 just one survey that we have at our fingertips. But
22 we know we're going to be doing more social,
23 emotional, and climate surveys. But one of the other
24 things that sticks out is that our 7th grade and 8th
25 grade students, 13% of them said they appreciate the

1 choices that they have. Our 10th and 12th graders,
2 92%. So to go from 13% to 92%, that's a big
3 indicator.

4 So when we look at the SEL component, we were
5 assured and very excited to see that we -- what we
6 were looking at aligned very closely with the new
7 Safety Commission's recommendations. We were almost
8 perfectly aligned with those. Of course, anything is
9 going to be a part of CASEL, but we already have the
10 mental health first aid. There's two of us that are
11 mental health first aid instructors. In our
12 application you would have seen the Guide to Life,
13 Thrive Arkansas with Research Project Aware, and then
14 the Trauma Resource Initiative that would be new to
15 us. But those would all be things that we could -- I
16 like to kill two birds with one stone; we can work on
17 this -- on the safety component and still work on
18 this SEL and this health piece. I think when we see
19 this -- as an administrator or our parents want to
20 see those tangible things, like those doors locked
21 and those safety things. But being proactive, we
22 know these things are there. And, quite frankly, I
23 don't know how prominent these really are in schools.
24 And we want to be the best at this because this is
25 what our teachers are telling us our kids need.

1 You know, we're not going to lie; we want that
2 healthy lifestyle, we want to go back to having
3 structured PE, structured recess time for those 7th
4 and 8th graders. We tried something new this year
5 where we put our PE and health on a wheel where they
6 have it once a week instead of on a nine-week block
7 to see if that made an impact. Because, again, as a
8 middle school teacher, I remember what those 7th
9 grade boys were doing when they could not exercise
10 and get out and move. They were going to beat their
11 pencils on the desk and do whatever they needed to to
12 exert that energy. So that healthy lifestyle is also
13 a big piece that we're looking at.

14 So for the sake of time I'm going to turn it
15 over to Dave and he will talk about the CTE
16 component.

17 May we hand out an additional one-page?

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes.

19 (WHEREUPON, Rivercrest Exhibit One (1) was
20 marked for identification and entered into evidence.)

21 MR. DIAGOSTINO: Good morning. My name is David
22 Diagostino. I'm the teacher and CT Coordinator at
23 Rivercrest, among all the other lovely things that
24 Ms. Raper said about me. I'm happy to be here and
25 I'm glad that you guys have us here today to talk

1 about this charter project.

2 So as we look at building our junior high
3 charter and career exploration program, we want to
4 make sure that we're aligned with all the work we've
5 done as our -- on the high school charters to this
6 point. And one of the main focuses of our high
7 school charter was to create a profile of a graduate,
8 which is on one of the handouts you have there. The
9 profile of a graduate are the skills, the essential
10 things that our students need to be able to do and
11 know to graduate. And those skills are being life
12 ready -- and we all know, especially through the last
13 few years, that life can throw a lot of curveballs at
14 you. So we want them to have the skills to be able
15 to cope and adjust and adapt. And we want them to be
16 future focused, not just what am I going to have for
17 lunch today but what does the next year at school
18 look like for me as far as class schedule, what does
19 the next two years, five years, what is my plan after
20 high school. We want them to be empowered learners.
21 One of the things I've learned through teaching EAST
22 is that the more you empower students the more
23 they're going to surprise and amaze you with what
24 they can do; so we want them to have the power to own
25 their own learning. We want them to be purpose

1 driven. We want them to know why they're at school
2 and what they can accomplish. And we want them to be
3 engaged citizens in our community, to volunteer, to
4 know the struggles, and to help.

5 We're going to use the theory of action for
6 designing middle grades CTE, which is on your slides,
7 and we'll touch on in the next couple of slides as a
8 guide. But the focus here is going to be through
9 social-emotional learning and career exploration to
10 get these students there and get them these skills.

11 So as students begin to form their identities in
12 junior high, we want to make sure that they're
13 focused on answering the question of what's next. So
14 the model that we've set up for the high school
15 charter is what's next, and students answer that
16 question for what classes do they need to take next
17 and what's their next step after high school and
18 beyond. That question keeps us rooted and focused on
19 what is -- what do we need to do for our students at
20 that time to be able to help them answer that
21 question. And we want to make sure that question is
22 driven down through the 7th grade so they -- we are
23 all working towards the same goal, what's next for
24 our students. We want to provide them with the
25 scaffolding and exploration time through this charter

1 and through what we want to do through career
2 exploration so they can explore, find a path that
3 works for them or maybe doesn't work and have the
4 time and the ability to change course and find what's
5 truly interesting to them. We want them to
6 incorporate this pathway that they figure out in
7 junior high into their identity that they're creating
8 so they have a purpose and a drive through high
9 school and their identity is tied to this pathway.
10 Again, this is going to be done through focusing on
11 our social-emotional learning and career exploration,
12 through resources like Youth Science, Career
13 Information Systems, and the Guide for Life lessons
14 that are out there from the State.

15 We want to build their knowledge base around
16 their career exploration and their career options.
17 But we also want to show them that their
18 employability skills are very, very important to them
19 through different activities with community members,
20 job shadows, guest speakers, and so-on.

21 One of the core features of the junior high
22 academy would be allowing students to take their Tier
23 1 CTE courses in 8th grade, along with EAST and fine
24 arts. And these Tier 1 CTE courses would be Survey
25 of Ag, Survey of Business, and Survey of Family and

1 Consumer Science. These courses tie directly to our
2 high school academies that we've created, so students
3 would have that background knowledge to make an
4 informed decision when they go into high school which
5 path they want to take through the academies.

6 In the academies we offer our freshmen academy,
7 which is focused on social and emotional learning,
8 agriculture, nutrition, and community services, and
9 technology, transportation, and leadership.
10 Students' abilities to take these foundational
11 courses will allow them to make that informed
12 decision as they go into high school so they can have
13 an accurate student success plan to guide their path
14 through high school.

15 Along with providing Tier 1 CTE classes, fine
16 arts, and EAST, we'll continue to build out our
17 postsecondary and career continuum that we've built
18 for our high school charter. This was done in
19 partnership with our career coach, our local
20 industry, and business partners, and community
21 members. We want to make sure that we extend this
22 continuum down through 7th and 8th grade so that we
23 are all aligned with who owns what experiences and
24 how we're going to make sure these students get the
25 experiences they need so they can build an informed

1 decision and a career plan as they go into high
2 school.

3 We want them to be well-informed and create a
4 plan that's actionable, provide students with -- that
5 provides them with the self advocacy they need, and
6 the drive they need to be life ready, teacher
7 focused, empowered learners, purpose driven, and
8 engaged citizens in the model graduates that we want
9 to have from the Academy at Rivercrest High School.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. DURHAM: My name is Hunter Durham. I'm the
12 Band Director at Rivercrest and also one of the EAST
13 facilitators, and I teach AP Music Theory.

14 And what Ms. Raper mentioned earlier was that
15 our junior high mindset in the past has sort of been
16 throwing these kids into the fires of high school
17 expectations. And I think we can see with our data
18 that from 6th to 7th grade, as they, like she put it,
19 cross the ditch, we have a very large dip in our
20 academic achievement. We also have a large dip going
21 from 8th to 9th grade. And in my experience, and
22 from going to Paragould High School, the reason I
23 woke up for school every morning was to go to band;
24 that was my niche, that was my thing. And the
25 statistic that she put out, 13% of our students in

1 7th and 8th grade are satisfied with the electives
2 and the choices that they have in their education.
3 And to me, that -- maybe I'm a glass half-empty kind
4 of guy, but that's 87% of our students that are not
5 satisfied with the choices they're presented. So I
6 believe that we have a critical lack of social,
7 emotional and learning in our school district, that
8 Ms. Raper mentioned, that we want to address. It
9 happens at a crucial time in these junior high
10 students' lives. I think we have an imbalance of
11 what we require students to do versus what they would
12 enjoy and what would motivate them to do better in
13 school. And I think that the SEL guide that was
14 released recently mentions growing yourself,
15 motivating yourself, and managing yourself, as well
16 as knowing yourself. And from my perspective and
17 from talking with students and other teachers, I
18 don't think we're giving our 7th/8th grade students
19 an opportunity to do that. So the model that we've
20 presented to you today is our absolute best to our
21 ability to provide that for our students.

22 I think everyone on this team and everyone in
23 our school, every educator that I've talked to, we're
24 all student focused. That's what's on our mind.
25 It's not what would make our job easier, it's not

1 what would be better for teachers, it's not what
2 would be better for the community; it's what would be
3 better for our students that we serve on a daily
4 basis.

5 Currently, our students have fairly limited
6 choices to choose from and that produces a -- what I
7 consider a lack of motivation. And I believe we see
8 that as they cross from 6th to 7th grade and as they
9 cross from 8th grade to 9th grade. I think our data
10 shows that, as well.

11 I hate talking to 7th grade students who, coming
12 from 6th grade, they're presented with all these
13 choices -- and right now there's only three, and we
14 hope that there's many more -- and they have to pick
15 one at the moment. And I've talked with a lot of
16 10th graders and 9th graders and they get into high
17 school and they say, "Man, I really wish I would've
18 done this." I hate that we're putting our 7th
19 graders in that position in the first place, because
20 I don't think any 7th grader is really prepared to
21 pick a career path and a hobby that they will
22 continue to do for the rest of their life
23 potentially. And so we have an open door band
24 policy, and that's what I really would strive for all
25 of our electives to be. We have students that join

1 in 10th grade and they become all-region or all-state
2 level players. Some of them have gone on to be music
3 educators themselves; they're at ASU right now
4 studying Music Education. And that's the kind of
5 opportunities I wish we could provide our students at
6 the very beginning when they get into junior high.
7 And I think if we did that that our data for 7th
8 grade and our data for 9th grade would just
9 immediately grow without really any change in our
10 Tier 1 instruction because students would be more
11 motivated by the things that they wake up in the
12 morning to go to school to do, just like I woke up to
13 go play trumpet.

14 MS. RAPER: So quick and to the point, but we
15 are ready for questions. We can take a look at our
16 data; we have our data here. I can go back -- how
17 much time do we have left?

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You have eight minutes.

19 MS. RAPER: Oh, well, eight minutes.

20 When we look at our sample student schedules --
21 and that's really what we're looking at, is taking
22 those 7th and 8th grades options -- that's where our
23 waivers are going to come in -- and providing our --
24 what we call our Tier 1 career path courses as
25 exploratory courses for our kiddos. On the info-

1 graphic that you have there's an arrow. You will see
2 that our students will have an option for a Tier 1
3 class in 8th grade, an option for a Tier 1 class in
4 9th grade, or even an option for a Tier 1 class in
5 10th grade. We are -- we have a great partnership
6 with ANC. When I got there last year we had a Facts
7 program; we had an Agri Academy approved with our
8 charter. I met Mr. Burfield and said, "Let me get an
9 agri teacher. We're an agri community. There's not
10 been an agri teacher there in 30 years." We got an
11 agri teacher. So we built a business program this
12 year through business and industry input. We have a
13 lot of stakeholder meetings. We threw -- we were
14 planning on -- we had marketing set up; we threw that
15 out the window because business and industry wanted
16 transportation distribution and logistics. We are
17 centered on Mississippi River, I-55, Burlington
18 Northern, and we have FedEx just right up the road;
19 so all four being in use of transportation right
20 there. So we built these programs last year with
21 Tier 1 courses, just starting from scratch. But our
22 kiddos are looking through the windows, chomping at
23 the bits to get into those classes that we are
24 keeping them held into the required 5-8 standards.

25 So I'm going to go ahead and jump into the CTE.

1 We do want a waiver for keyboarding. I was a
2 keyboarding teacher. I went through two rounds of
3 writing the keyboarding standards. So it's something
4 that's not right at all, but our K-6 -- and none of
5 this is possible without our solid K-6 program that
6 we have. I think they're going to add that as an
7 addition for our keyboarding. But our K-6 teacher --
8 I pulled her certification this morning. Matter of
9 fact, let me grab it. Let me just read what our K-6
10 keyboarding teacher has for certification: Middle
11 School Language Arts and Social Studies, Middle
12 School Social Studies, Middle School Science and
13 Math, Elementary, Curriculum Director, Building
14 Administrator, 5th/6th Business Tech, Keyboarding,
15 Key Code Computer Science and Technical Permit.
16 Clearly, our K-6 children have a strong foundation in
17 keyboarding. Then they come into 7th grade and they
18 have to go right back to what they learned in about
19 3rd grade in keyboarding. We have behavior problems
20 there. That is a course that is keeping our students
21 from choosing whether they can be in band, whether
22 they can be in athletics. If they have dyslexia
23 services or special services, that limits it even
24 further.

25 Mr. Durham, how many students do you start out

1 with band in 6th grade?

2 MR. DURHAM: Forty-five.

3 MS. RAPER: Forty-five. And how many do you end
4 up with in 7th to 8th grade?

5 MR. DURHAM: It's a 50% loss.

6 MS. RAPER: Twenty. So we cut our program in
7 half because of courses that we are required to teach
8 that we're confident our students already have those
9 skills. We want to move our career development down
10 to 7th grade. Career development -- and, again,
11 standards that I worked on through the years -- that
12 was a course that I taught. The decision-making, the
13 self-awareness, all of those pieces -- the way we
14 really envision that is to roll that career
15 development to a yearlong course and embed a lot of
16 the SEL through that course, because that will be the
17 welcoming across that bridge. So as our students
18 come from 6th grade into 7th grade they have that
19 career development and that overall exploratory, then
20 we have options to begin allowing our students to
21 take those Tier 1 courses in 8th grade.

22 Talking about that ANC partnership, our students
23 have a mindset --

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: What is ANC?

25 MS. RAPER: Arkansas Northeastern College.

1 Sorry about that. They -- we have a phenomenal
2 partnership with Arkansas Northeastern College. Our
3 students are focused in 9th grade to get an
4 associate's degree by 12th grade. That's the goal.
5 They want that associate's degree by 12th grade.
6 There's -- there was almost no parallel career path
7 to go along with that. By allowing these students to
8 take these Tier 1's in 8th grade, if they make the
9 wrong decision it's okay; they can jump into another
10 pathway in 9th grade. If they still do not feel like
11 they're on the right path, they can jump in at 10th
12 grade. But right now, the way that's set, once they
13 get in a pathway there's not a lot of moving around
14 because of -- they want those concurrent credits,
15 they want those ANC classes, they want those extra
16 classes. But our completer numbers were very, very
17 low. They will not be low as we're putting in these
18 courses.

19 We also -- just to jump over to that 9th grade,
20 we have Keystone in place for 9th grade. Just like
21 we want that 8th grade -- I'm sorry -- that 7th grade
22 for the kids coming into the building, career
23 development 8th grade, we have Keystone in place in
24 our freshmen academy for our 9th graders. So we have
25 a welcoming course to support those students. We

1 moved to a grade level PLC so that we're focusing on
2 students, not content. We meet -- our PLC content
3 meets --

4 MR. BURFIELD: The PLC meets once a week.

5 MS. RAPER: For grade level?

6 MR. BURFIELD: Grace level. And then once a
7 month for --

8 MS. RAPER: For content.

9 MR. BURFIELD: -- content.

10 MS. RAPER: Because we are focusing on student
11 growth and student needs, and that's the question: do
12 we want to talk about our content or do we want to
13 talk about our students. Because we're all doing
14 everything we can on the academic side to support our
15 students, but missing that important piece that our
16 teachers know our kids and they know that's what they
17 need.

18 Are we running short on time?

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: One minute.

20 MS. RAPER: Okay. So, yeah, I welcome your
21 question. We tried to keep this as simplistic as
22 possible. It will be a work in progress. But I
23 assure you, we have a team of teachers, wonderful
24 students, and wonderful parents that want to see this
25 be a success.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Raper.
2 Ms. James.

3 FINAL LEGAL REVIEW

4 MS. JAMES: Ms. Raper, stay close.

5 My name is Whitney James with the Department.

6 At this time we're going to go over the final
7 legal review. And just a reminder, if I don't have
8 any legal concerns, of course that doesn't mean that
9 the Panel is under any obligation to approve the
10 waiver. We encourage questions.

11 My first legal concern was regarding
12 Rivercrest's response to question number 19 on the
13 final application. And that's partially our fault
14 because the application suggests that for a district
15 conversion charter you have to apply for admission
16 and there might be an enrollment cap. However, we
17 just want to insure that Rivercrest is not going to
18 deny enrollment to students in the 7th and 8th grade
19 that reside in the district. And I believe Ms. Raper
20 understands that and will confirm.

21 MS. RAPER: Absolutely.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you'll come to the
23 microphone and confirm.

24 MS. RAPER: Yes. Yes, we confirm.

25 MS. JAMES: Okay. And on the first waiver for

1 Visual Art or Music, as Ms. Raper discussed, they do
2 want to add the Standard 1-A.1.2.7 that would include
3 keyboarding and she did give some rationale for that.
4 And if the Panel would like to ask for additional
5 rationale, just let us know.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members?

7 So just to confirm what I think you were saying,
8 because I was kind of caught off-guard by that --

9 MS. RAPER: Sorry.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: But -- so you're wanting to
11 teach your -- are you wanting to teach keyboard in
12 7th grade or you're not wanting to teach keyboard at
13 all?

14 MS. RAPER: We're not wanting to teach
15 keyboarding at all. We want a waiver for Fine Arts
16 and keyboarding because we have that strong K-6 Fine
17 Arts piece already in place and we have a phenomenal
18 K-6 keyboarding program in place. And when we get to
19 our 7th grade --

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Madam Chair --

21 MS. RAPER: Go ahead.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So are you teaching -- so
23 you're not offering it at all?

24 MS. RAPER: We're offering it now.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: But your plan is to not offer

1 it at all?

2 MS. RAPER: Not offer it at all.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Wright-McMurray?

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm sorry. What I was
5 saying, I can't hear very well when they're not as
6 close to the microphone. And I'll wait till her
7 response is done, but I have a similar question about
8 that waiver.

9 MS. SARACINI: Can I confirm you're saying you
10 are offering it, that all 6th graders are taking it?
11 Is that my understanding?

12 MS. RAPER: Yes. All K-6 students have -- do
13 take keyboarding --

14 MS. SARACINI: Okay.

15 MS. RAPER: -- through a business certified
16 solid program. I follow through, I see the progress
17 of skills. They exceed the 7th grade keyboarding
18 standards. So, you know, when you look -- a
19 kindergartner is typing a word, a 1st grader is
20 typing a sentence, a 2nd grader is working on a
21 paragraph. And, of course, you know, our 3rd graders
22 are typing a page, if possible. So our writing
23 scores are very solid and the keyboarding is there.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And is that the same with the
25 Fine Arts, you offer that K-6?

1 MS. RAPER: And we have a strong K-6 Fine Arts.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. So let me build --
3 that builds me to my question then is will
4 keyboarding be offered in grades 7 and 8 for students
5 that maybe come new to your district and have not had
6 that?

7 MS. RAPER: And that was a thought. We do feel
8 like that we could offer that component if we needed
9 to. But the requirement to offer it is a hindrance
10 to students wanting to choose because that's taking
11 up a class period of electives, so -- along with the
12 Fine Arts. But --

13 MR. DURHAM: Ms. Raper, that's also something
14 that we can offer in (inaudible, not at the mic).

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do have a question when
16 there's an opportunity.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Go ahead, Ms. Wright-
18 McMurray.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So just to be clear, all
20 students are required to take keyboarding/key code as
21 a 6th grader. Is that what you're saying?

22 MS. RAPER: They -- it is a -- it's a K-6
23 comprehensive. She has a K-6 comprehensive plan that
24 starts kindergarten and works all the way through 6th
25 grade to incorporate input technology, all of the

1 skills that are within keyboarding.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. And so are they
3 following the standards that are outlined --

4 MS. RAPER: The --

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- for the core?

6 MS. RAPER: For the -- yes, for the input
7 technology. She's following the input technology
8 right now.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: But outside of the
10 technology piece -- because, you know, there's other
11 pieces in the course outside of that that are taught
12 in the core. So are they following all of the
13 standards that are outlined for the core?

14 MS. RAPER: I would have to look at those 7th
15 grade standards and align them with her K-6 program.
16 But, again, her being a business teacher/curriculum
17 she's developed this entire process for our K-6. I
18 would have to cross-check those, Ms. Wright-McMurray.
19 But they are comprehensive. And as a former business
20 teacher, I don't see any indication that our students
21 are not prepared by 7th grade with this solid program
22 in place K-6.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Wright-McMurray, any
24 additional questions?

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I guess -- and so it -- I

1 guess at some point if there's a way that we can, you
2 know, receive feedback that, yes, we are sure this is
3 aligning properly with what we've outlined for the
4 core before we say that we are giving the waiver and
5 saying you don't have to offer it --

6 MS. RAPER: What --

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- to make sure it's
8 aligned.

9 MS. RAPER: What I --

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That was my only question.

11 MS. RAPER: What I -- what we can do is assure
12 that we make that alignment and insure -- because
13 ultimately we want those students to have all of
14 those skills. So we can assure you that we will make
15 that alignment and make sure all of those standards
16 are taught in entirety. And I feel like we can do
17 that very quickly with the skill-sets that we have in
18 place with our instructors.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I don't have any other
20 questions on that one.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'm sorry, Ms. Wright-
22 McMurray; say that again.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I don't have any other
24 questions on that item right now.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

1 MS. RAPER: And we can also assure the Panel it
2 would be very simple for us to provide keyboarding
3 for students that come in. We do -- as my team
4 members pointed out, we do have an extra period
5 there. We are very fortunate to have a plethora of
6 CTE teachers. I think there's probably five -- six
7 of us probably that -- district-wide that are fully
8 certified to do that. So we are not limited to who
9 can jump in there with the flexibility to teach that.
10 So we can assure that.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And will you also assure that
12 you will offer Fine Arts?

13 MS. RAPER: We absolutely will offer Fine Arts,
14 but we want to offer it through band, through our
15 program. Because our -- what's happening is our
16 students are choosing Fine Arts because it's taking a
17 class period, but they may want to be in band and not
18 the Fine Arts. Now we did work this year to play
19 around with using band as our Fine Arts in 7th and
20 8th grade, but working on the 7th and 8th grade
21 schedule -- you know, that's a little hard because
22 usually those things are in a wheel and we need those
23 elective spots open. Because our 7th graders -- we
24 had someone come in from Florida with National Career
25 Academy to work with us on our schedules, to help us

1 get those opportunities for our kiddos. And we just
2 cannot find that time in the day to open up for the
3 opportunities that we have available for them because
4 of those 5-8 standards that we're required.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you have a question?

6 MS. SARACINI: No.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: We're going to come back to
8 that one.

9 MS. RAPER: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah, let's move on. We'll
11 come back to that.

12 MS. RAPER: Okay.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Maybe something else is going
14 to make it make better sense.

15 MS. RAPER: Okay.

16 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am. The last correction on
17 the first waiver is we'll just correct the rule names
18 -- or the rule name to DESE Rules Governing Visual
19 and Performing Arts Instruction for Students in
20 Grades 1 through 8. A small change, more clean-up
21 than anything else.

22 The second waiver request is Teacher Licensure.
23 And I've spoken with Ms. Raper and they do wish to
24 add the following code sections: 6-17-902 and 6-17-
25 919. And once we add those, I don't have any legal

1 concerns.

2 Does the Panel have any questions regarding that
3 waiver request?

4 MS. SARACINI: Yes, ma'am.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Go, Ms. Saracini.

6 MS. SARACINI: Okay. I just want to make -- as
7 I was reading it, I just want to make sure you
8 understand that you cannot waive special ed., period.

9 MS. RAPER: Absolutely.

10 MS. SARACINI: Okay. But it didn't quite read
11 like that. Also, your -- even though you get a
12 waiver from licensure, your core subjects, foreign
13 language, music, and art have to be AQT.

14 MS. RAPER: Absolutely.

15 MS. SARACINI: Okay. So that was just kind of
16 -- I just wanted to make sure. Because what -- how I
17 really read it, you really are wanting to use it more
18 for CTE. I'm just clarifying some questions that I
19 had.

20 MS. RAPER: Yes.

21 MS. SARACINI: And technical permits are quite
22 easy to get.

23 MS. RAPER: They are. And we ran into that
24 problem this year. We lost our agri teacher
25 suddenly, he passed away, and we were looking at

1 options for our CTE teachers to hire an agri teacher.
2 And I emailed Ms. Coffman and asked would this waiver
3 hold if we are advertising a position. So those
4 technical permits are there. That teacher licensure
5 would really just be in the event we -- because we're
6 surrounded by agri business. We're surrounded by
7 agriculture degreed folks that are not agri
8 education; they're in our building all day supporting
9 our students. And so that's really what we were
10 looking for.

11 MS. SARACINI: I just want clarity around that's
12 why you were seeking the licensure, was for CTE --

13 MS. RAPER: Yes.

14 MS. SARACINI: -- positions.

15 MS. RAPER: Yes.

16 MS. SARACINI: And with ag, that is not a
17 technical permit; that is a standard license. So I
18 understand that. I just wanted to kind of walk
19 through it and understand it and wrap my head around
20 that. Thank you.

21 MS. RAPER: No, ma'am, we are working strong
22 with the licensure and --

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So are you saying then that
24 your 4-D.1 would be for CTE only?

25 MS. RAPER: (Nodding head up and down.)

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Madam Chair?

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes, ma'am.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And just for -- I was
4 trying to follow the conversation. So the waivers
5 that you're requesting are for which CTE positions?

6 MS. RAPER: Primarily agri. But we may need to
7 look at it for business and possibly Family and
8 Consumer Science; if we ever expanded beyond that,
9 with the new program of study.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'll come back.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. So I'm struggling
12 because that's not how the application reads. So the
13 application reads, "This waiver will be used mostly,
14 if not totally, for instruction of non-core courses."
15 "Mostly, if not totally" -- "mostly" implies a wide-
16 open 4-D.1 waiver. So you are requesting -- I just
17 want to say it one more time on the record -- you're
18 requesting a 4-D.1 waiver for CTE teachers only?

19 MS. RAPER: Not to include core teachers. So we
20 would -- we will not request a waiver for our core
21 teachers.

22 MR. DAVIS: And to dig in a little bit more, do
23 you currently have teachers on Act 1240 waivers?

24 MS. RAPER: No, sir.

25 MR. DAVIS: Okay. And there is no -- and what

1 I'm hearing, then there is no need and/or desire to
2 potentially look at Act 1240 waivers for teachers.
3 The only waivers -- once again, just to be clear --
4 the only waivers we're looking at are CTE waivers?

5 MS. RAPER: Yes, sir. We do not see a need
6 right now. We have worked diligently to make sure
7 that our teachers are certified. Secondary math was
8 really the only area that we struggled with, but we
9 are only looking for those waivers for our CTE. And
10 there's no need for them now. I know not the what-
11 ifs, but that's what we're here for, because we hired
12 an agri teacher and then we had a situation three
13 months later.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And just remember we're
15 always happy to come back and revisit when --

16 MS. RAPER: Right.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- situations come up. So
18 it's not -- you're not making a life commitment here.

19 MR. DAVIS: Right.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right, Ms. James.

21 MS. JAMES: I'd like to confirm that the waiver
22 for 4-D.1 is for CTE only, and I can add that to our
23 sheet which will then be indicated in My School Info.

24 MS. RAPER: Yes.

25 MS. JAMES: Okay. And the third waiver request

1 for Class Size and Teaching Load -- and Ms. Raper and
2 I have discussed this -- and Rivercrest has decided
3 that they do not need this waiver. I believe that
4 they intended to use it for Physical Education. And
5 so we talked that over and they don't think that they
6 need it.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So we are confirming that we
8 do not -- we're not requesting a waiver of Teaching
9 Load?

10 MS. JAMES: Or Class Size. Yes, ma'am.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Either one.

12 MS. JAMES: Either one.

13 PANEL QUESTIONS

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Mr. Davis would
15 you like to start our follow-up questions?

16 MR. DAVIS: I would. And I just want to dig in
17 a little bit more into some of the information that
18 was provided, more for clarity on my part, because I
19 think that there are some things that are -- some
20 really good things happening that I want to get a
21 little bit further clarity on.

22 You mentioned the idea -- or you mentioned that
23 14% of seniors complete with an associate's degree or
24 a certificate of general studies. Do you know the
25 breakdown between the two? Are most of them

1 associate's degrees or are most of them certificates
2 of general studies?

3 MS. RAPER: Mr. Dave, you may be able to answer
4 that.

5 MR. DIAGOSTINO: (inaudible, not at the mic)

6 MS. RAPER: Yeah, come to the mic.

7 MR. DIAGOSTINO: Dave Diagostino, Rivercrest.

8 From my time as career coach, the majority of
9 them were certificate of general studies. I don't
10 know the last couple of years worth because I've
11 transitioned to teaching now and I'm not as in-tune
12 with that process. But it has shifted more towards
13 associate's degrees along with general studies. So I
14 don't know the exact breakdown, but I know that the
15 shift is being made where students are more and more
16 going toward associates. I don't --

17 MR. DAVIS: Okay.

18 MR. DIAGOSTINO: -- know those numbers.

19 MR. DAVIS: That would be interesting to sort of
20 watch and I think that distinction is important. So
21 I appreciate that.

22 Something else that was mentioned and I just
23 want to dig into a little bit more -- around the
24 culture piece, the idea -- I think you said somewhere
25 on -- in the range of 50% of students that were

1 surveyed indicated that they were feeling unsafe. Is
2 that right? Is that what I heard?

3 MS. RAPER: Yes. In looking at our APNA surveys
4 -- and, of course, if you've ever looked at APNA
5 surveys, we -- sometimes they seem a little skewed,
6 you know. But still, we need to be cognitive that --
7 again, that hurt my heart a little that 50% of our
8 students do not feel safe at school. Mr. Cox and
9 myself have spent the last year doing everything we
10 can to insure our buildings are locked, to insure we
11 have good solid crisis plans in place. Safety has
12 almost been the number one priority for us. Looking
13 at that, and again going back to my middle school
14 years, we were just nervous. We -- you know, and so
15 are they -- do they really feel unsafe because
16 they're unsafe or do they just feel that way? And
17 that's why that SEL piece and being able to get in
18 there and support those -- they're still babies.
19 But, yes, that is true, 50%.

20 MR. DAVIS: Okay. Yeah, that's -- I think
21 that's interesting considering, one, the size of the
22 district and the school, relatively small. You
23 would, you know -- but you're right, it could be a
24 number of different things, just where we are and
25 what's happening in regards to violence in schools

1 across the country. So I just -- that was just
2 something that jumped out at me.

3 And then the other question that I have --
4 something you mentioned in regards to building on the
5 success of the high school charter. But when I look
6 at the academic innovation slide -- and feel free to
7 kind of pull that up -- it appeared that there were
8 more students -- it might've been the 10th grade --
9 it appeared that the percentage of students in need
10 tended to increase. Is that right? I don't know if
11 we need to pull that slide back up again.

12 MS. RAPER: We can. Well, I have it here. And
13 you are absolutely right. We're looking at that --
14 in that one, we're looking at that In Need of Support
15 piece. We have our teachers looking at those goals
16 and we're, you know, close. Close is a positive. So
17 many times we just focus on the Exceeding/Ready, and
18 so we're really looking at decreasing that In Need of
19 Support. Now if you look at decreasing that In Need
20 of Support, we have. We have moved more students to
21 Close. A lot of times, again, when we're just
22 looking at our data, are Exceeding and Ready. The
23 successes of the high school have been in the
24 infrastructure, in getting these academies in place.
25 We did not take that lightly. We had National Career

1 Academy. We've sent our teachers to training; we had
2 them come in. We worked extensively with schedules
3 because we were set up through Solution Tree, our
4 PLCs, again, through content. So the -- you know,
5 the word "singleton," when you have a biology teacher
6 and a chemistry teacher and a physical science
7 teacher teaching -- I mean meeting every week,
8 there's only so much you can do. And we transitioned
9 to a pure freshmen academy this year and our agendas
10 are always focusing on students first. The very
11 first agenda item is student success and growth. So
12 we did not expect to see overnight growth because --
13 Mr. Cox and I inherited -- we inherited the new
14 charter that, quite frankly, no one knew a lot about
15 on day-one. And we didn't have an agri teacher. We
16 did not have a business program. We did not have our
17 academy. We did not have a curriculum process. We
18 did not have curriculum. We were rowing -- we were
19 still -- we were rowing the bus, is what we were
20 doing, and so all of that has been fast.

21 MR. DIAGOSTINO: And just to add to those
22 pieces, she had mentioned earlier kind of building
23 the plan, it was fluid, and that was true for last
24 year. But we made a lot of strides with the work
25 with the consultant on our schedules to make sure

1 that we have a streamlined schedule that takes the
2 unnecessary class out of the mix and make sure that
3 the students have focus and have some flexibility
4 with what they can do. We also -- I believe it was
5 the 2021 school year -- I know we missed with Covid
6 and all that went on -- we had zero industry
7 certifications. Last year, our seniors graduated 80,
8 85 percent with industry certification; so there's
9 been some huge strides there. And just getting
10 students' buy-in, to understand that they need these
11 certifications and these are important to their
12 futures. And we've started building our
13 certification process with our NCRC down to the 11th
14 grade and then catching any seniors, 12th grade, that
15 didn't get through that process. And then with our
16 agri, more certifications coming there. And more
17 certifications coming -- I just had a community
18 partner out for my EAST program to do FAA drone
19 training. So I have 10 students working to get their
20 FAA drone certification right now. So just buy-in
21 and a lot of progress towards making sure these
22 students understand that there are benefits and
23 values to what we're trying to communicate to them
24 and what we're trying to teach them with these
25 charters.

1 MS. RAPER: Can you speak on the success of our
2 Work Keys process last year?

3 MR. DIAGOSTINO: So for Work Keys last year we
4 decided, just like we would with ACT Aspire and any
5 other program, we were going to go ahead and pre-test
6 all of our seniors and juniors last year through Work
7 Keys. So we called them in, like we would ACT
8 Aspire, and we had all of them take the three pre-
9 tests for Work Keys. Through that process, we
10 identified students that were ready to test in the
11 fall window and we tested those students. And then
12 the ones that weren't ready to test or didn't score
13 at least a silver level, is what we indicated as
14 ready to test for those students, we took them
15 through the modules through our intervention time,
16 for our (inaudible) time, and then we were able to
17 test them in the spring. And we had I believe 70
18 certifications come out of that, including a platinum
19 and five -- I believe it was four or five gold
20 certifications, which are hard to reach on that Work
21 Keys test. So we were really focused on those work
22 skills and making sure students understand they have
23 to have these employability skills and all these
24 certifications and things that we're doing with them
25 in school are important for their future.

1 MS. RAPER: We have four career development
2 facilitators on staff. There's four career
3 development facilitators on staff and we can just
4 roll with what we need to do. They embedded ACT
5 prep. We have trained several teachers -- I believe
6 we have three Keystone certified teachers, several
7 career development teachers. And then, most
8 recently, our college and career readiness is across-
9 the-board in 11th grade. That is our intervention,
10 and we use ACT prep and Work Keys for that
11 intervention piece for our 11th graders. And so all
12 of those things with those academies, you're starting
13 to see this marketing go up. And, again, those 7th
14 and 8th graders are looking at that and ready to be
15 involved.

16 MR. DIAGOSTINO: Right. And then, in addition
17 with that college and career readiness, we're
18 embedding the Guide for Life resources in there as
19 well to focus on the social and emotional. Because
20 we know that a number of students and staff -- and
21 it's just as important for the staff to hear these
22 lessons -- had social and emotional impacts through
23 Covid that we're trying to deal with and fix and move
24 forward from, so --

25 MR. DAVIS: Yeah. Thank you for that.

1 And one last question --

2 MS. RAPER: Okay.

3 MR. DAVIS: -- from me. In the application it
4 talked about an assessment of a 90% growth score for
5 students or 90% of students meeting growth score.
6 What is -- do you have a baseline data? What's the
7 current --

8 MS. RAPER: We --

9 MR. DAVIS: -- percentages --

10 MS. RAPER: We --

11 MR. DAVIS: -- that are meeting goals?

12 MS. RAPER: We did not -- we really did not have
13 an interim assessment process in place. There was
14 some hit-and-miss with STAR. And so in working with
15 teachers last year we went ahead, we moved forward
16 with NWEA MAP and we have a solid baseline now and we
17 have solid growth goals set by individual students.
18 No, sir, we had no baseline. We were going summative
19 to summative.

20 MR. DAVIS: Okay. Thank you for that.

21 No more questions from me.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And before we leave that
23 topic on growth, so you're saying -- you said that
24 90% of your students met their growth in NWEA, their
25 growth --

1 MS. RAPER: No. We -- our goal will be for 90%
2 of our students to meet their individualized growth
3 goal. So what we have teachers doing now, we use our
4 summative data. We went ahead and tested the first
5 week in NWEA. We've worked with our teachers,
6 because they've not had interim assessments for
7 setting those growth goals, and let them figure out
8 what they know about their kiddos. And they have
9 four columns and they put those kiddos in -- they put
10 their students in a column. In December, I'll be
11 sitting in their PLCs with them when we middle-of-
12 year assess and we'll decide are we -- is that still
13 where we're at. But I'm not crazy about the 5%. You
14 know, 5% of what? 5% of the 10% that we had? So we
15 want a .5 student growth? But we're well beyond that
16 5% now in looking at individual goals for our
17 students. But that 5% is just an overall --

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: My question is, on what?
19 Growth on --

20 MS. RAPER: NWEA MAP.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: NWEA?

22 MS. RAPER: Yeah.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Because I'm not seeing
24 that represented on the state summative.

25 MS. RAPER: On the -- no, we're not on the --

1 for our high school?

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: No. For the junior high.

3 MS. RAPER: We -- well, we didn't -- we had that
4 in our school improvement plan, the 5%. No, it's not
5 there. We went -- we were looking for our certified
6 teachers. We had 27 teachers at the beginning of the
7 year that were not on a pathway for certification.
8 We had special ed. teachers that were a bachelor
9 degree, not in a program. We have rectified that.
10 We went from 27 teachers not being in a program for
11 certification to -- really, the only hiccup we had
12 this year was a secondary math.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Ms. Newton, do you
14 have questions?

15 MS. NEWTON: No, I don't have any questions.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin, do you have
17 questions?

18 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

19 Let me step back a little bit from the details
20 and just ask a couple of general questions. And I'm
21 looking at the application where you talk about that
22 the Rivercrest Junior High Prep Academy is maybe the
23 only source of instruction for students 7th through
24 8th grades; and therefore, the school will enroll
25 every eligible student who seeks admission. So

1 explain to me -- explain, I guess -- you know, right
2 now, you have a junior high, you have a 7th and 8th
3 grade. Do you expect all students to enroll -- I
4 mean explain to me the structure of the charter, and
5 then also talk about how it's different from what
6 you're currently doing. Because it looks like it's
7 the same building and same teachers. And so, what
8 does the charter allow you to do that the school
9 doesn't allow you to do?

10 MS. RAPER: Yes. We would -- the 7th and 8th
11 grade junior high would be the only option. The
12 charter would be the only option, so all students
13 would be enrolled through that pathway. Quite
14 simply, the waivers for Fine Arts, Keyboarding, those
15 things would pave the way for us to allow those
16 opportunities. We want those Tier 1 courses, those
17 career exploratory opportunities for our students and
18 a little bit of flexibility there with our SEL and to
19 embed that. Because we really want to bite that off
20 and be one of the best in SEL because -- and healthy
21 lifestyles because that's what our teachers are
22 wanting for our students.

23 MR. BALDWIN: I appreciate that answer. I was
24 wondering if there would be kids who would not opt
25 for the charter and be left in the junior high?

1 MS. RAPER: No, sir.

2 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. All right. And add a
3 little bit more context to relationship with the
4 community college and how do you see that expanding,
5 you know, with the joint curriculum or the ability to
6 get certification through that. Do you do that
7 currently or is that something that would be new with
8 the charter?

9 MS. RAPER: I can let Mr. Diagostino do that,
10 discuss that. One thing for sure, we appreciate our
11 partnership with Arkansas Northeastern College.
12 Everything that we offer is always going to be a
13 program that Arkansas Northeastern College does not
14 offer, or compliments their program. So we want to
15 make sure that our students have opportunities in
16 both places and really simultaneously.

17 MR. DIAGOSTINO: So a key part of our
18 relationship with Arkansas Northeastern College is
19 the career coach that we have through them, through
20 the career coach program. They're a vital role in
21 our career exploration activities on campus, all the
22 way down through the junior high and in the high
23 school. A perfect example is my supply chain class
24 that we're teaching this year, I wanted to get them
25 out in the community and see different businesses and

1 how supply chain impacts the businesses -- one
2 conversation. The career coach and I have three
3 industry tours set up for the next three months. So
4 that kind of relationship has been -- it's just vital
5 to get them the exploration experiences they need.

6 As far as classroom and courses, the career
7 coach is instrumental again in helping our students
8 register and sign up for any online concurrent credit
9 courses through ANC that they offer to get those
10 associate's degrees, get those certificates of
11 general study. They're the coordinator for that for
12 our district, so they help lead that activity with
13 the counselors to get those students through that.

14 In addition, we have a partnership with ANC for
15 their High School Technical Center where our students
16 can go and take welding. It is industrial
17 maintenance, aviation mechanics, medical professions.
18 Things that we don't offer at the high school they
19 teach for us.

20 The benefit of having the waivers is to have
21 students be able to take these Tier 1 classes in 8th
22 grade, so they're going to get that exploration
23 experience then to know what classes they then might
24 want to take through ANC as well as through the high
25 school. So, you know, our agri program doesn't offer

1 welding, but we can get it through ANC; so that helps
2 supplement our classes in agri, because the agri -- a
3 key component is welding and agri.

4 They also look at if we can get them high school
5 credit earlier and get them a credit -- high school
6 credit class in junior high, that opens the door for
7 those students to go and take those classes at the
8 technical center earlier. Currently, students are
9 not -- aren't able to really take those classes until
10 10th grade if they're on-time for credits. Most of
11 our students go to the technical center for welding
12 in those programs in 11th and 12th grade. If we can
13 get them there a year earlier and that is their
14 passion, we could potentially get them through there
15 with a high school -- with a certificate in welding
16 or a certificate in another program as they graduate
17 high school.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you very much. I appreciate
19 the depth of the answer. And, Madam Chair, that's --
20 those are my only questions.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

22 Mr. Wright-McMurray, follow-up questions?

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: First, a couple of things
24 -- I want to commend you on thinking through
25 opportunities for students to engage in CTE earlier,

1 because we know that if we can get them engaged
2 earlier in a program of study they're more likely to
3 concentrate in going to those skills. Also, I
4 appreciate you guys' consideration of including the
5 SEL work and career development. I think that is
6 something that I would like more to engage in and
7 understand the importance.

8 So my question -- I want to go back and just
9 make sure that I'm fully understanding. With
10 keyboarding/key code, if students are taking that 6th
11 grade, if students move into the district -- we're
12 back to Ms. Coffman's question -- 7th or 8th grade --
13 and your answer, unless -- and I'm sorry if I didn't
14 fully under- -- hear you. But in your answer you
15 said you guys feel like you have the capacity to do
16 that. But do you intend to have that offered to
17 students that maybe missed that opportunity as a 6th
18 grader?

19 MS. RAPER: Yes. We -- I think we can -- I know
20 we can provide thalt opportunity, because we do have
21 the flexibility with -- of so many teachers certified
22 in that area. That is a luxury we have. So I can
23 assure that we can pick that up. You know, it would
24 be the same case, schools that offer oral comm. in
25 9th grade and you have a student come in, you have to

1 pick that back up somewhere 10th, 11th and 12th. So,
2 yes, we can do that.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. And if approved and
4 you guys go to the model of offering keyboard/key
5 code in the 6th grade, you will insure that the
6 standards are aligned for that course that are
7 outlined by the Office of Business, Marketing,
8 Technology?

9 MS. RAPER: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. We can --
10 we do have the capacity to do that. We will align
11 that and insure that's there, those standards are
12 met.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Great. So my next
14 question is about career development. And we already
15 have some schools that are offering it at the 7th
16 grade, so that doesn't give me much pause. I just
17 want to get a better sense -- so this -- so I'm
18 trying to -- this is going to be a course that's
19 offered over the course of a full year and not just a
20 semester like the traditional course? Or how is that
21 going to be done?

22 MS. RAPER: I think we can do that. I know we
23 can do that. Currently, it's -- it has a filler on
24 the second side of automation and robotics. We can
25 pull that automation and robotics as one of those 8th

1 grade offerings to allow those students those
2 opportunities. What I would like to see, if eSchool
3 would allow it -- and I believe -- I believe we could
4 work it that way. Because when I taught, you know,
5 back in the day it was CT Intro and CO, and they let
6 us embed that and we were kind of doing it behind the
7 scenes; nobody really knew we were doing it. But we
8 were -- we didn't start in August and stop one in
9 December and pick up the other in January; we just
10 embedded those tech skills throughout, which led us
11 to where we are today with career development.

12 So to answer your question, what I would like to
13 see is us take those SEL components and begin to
14 embed them in the appropriate spots in career
15 development. And, again, we have the capacity within
16 our district to do that curriculum process and work.

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So your intent is for --

18 MS. RAPER: Oh --

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- [audio distortion]
20 year-long, that it will make sure that there's -- if
21 there's an embedding of the SEL work that the
22 standards for the career development course will
23 still be adhered to throughout that time period?

24 MS. RAPER: Yes. Because same teacher -- we
25 would not have to have additional teachers to do

1 that. To be honest, it's much what we're doing with
2 Keystone and oral comm. We put oral comm. with the
3 Keystone teacher. And a lot of times I see those
4 oral comm. standards being taught in the Keystone,
5 and I'm sure I'm going to see the Keystone standards
6 being taught in oral comm. second semester. It just
7 flows.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Then my other
9 question, so with students starting in a program of
10 study 8th grade, when they reach 12th grade the
11 offerings for that course will probably need to be
12 higher level because they -- they're going to reach
13 the third level by 10th grade. So what is your plan
14 to meet those needs? And the reason why I'm asking
15 that question is because you had shared that you had
16 some challenges filling like your ag position and
17 other positions in your district. And so if we get
18 into those upper level courses, those teachers that
19 are required to teach those courses, do you feel like
20 you'll have the capacity to offer that level of
21 coursework to your students by you offering the
22 program of study earlier in their education?

23 MS. RAPER: I think so. And our CTE teachers --
24 again, we felt we had to start with Survey of Ag last
25 year. We're starting very early. We had to build a

1 foundation, so we had to have a teacher with Survey
2 of Ag. That was it, because we weren't ready for a
3 Tier 2 or Tier 3. Same with business, we had just
4 started with Survey of Business. Facts was the only
5 full program of study that we had in place. But we
6 have career practicum and work-based learning. And
7 that -- again, that's -- that started this year, but
8 that has become a very valuable program within our
9 district and within our community. And that's giving
10 our 11th and 12th graders some flexibility; they're
11 working. I mean we have 12th graders working in
12 steel mills right now. So we would -- to answer your
13 question, we want those Tier 1 in 8th grade. We
14 would allow those Tier 1's in 9th grade. We could
15 still allow a Tier 1 in 10th grade because that gives
16 them three years to finish that program of study. I
17 think we may have had five completers last year. We
18 -- I mean that number will increase tremendously.
19 But to answer your question, those 11th and 12th
20 grades, they will go into career practicums and work-
21 based learning.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So I guess my next
23 question, before Mr. Diagostino comes to the
24 microphone -- so if we're pushing more students into
25 the pipeline earlier, and that means we're going to

1 have more students on the back-end that are going to
2 need to utilize the work-based learning option for
3 that fourth year, do we feel like we have the
4 capacity to meet those needs? Because as of right
5 now, we'll have to have the work-based earning
6 coordinator that is supporting that work. And if
7 it's a career practicum course, then that means that
8 the work that they're doing is directly aligning to
9 that program of study. So outside of the school's
10 capacity, do you feel like that your community has
11 the capacity to support that effort --

12 MS. RAPER: Yes.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- as well?

14 MS. RAPER: Yes, ma'am. And we are currently
15 certifying five of our CTE teachers in 4-12 for work-
16 based learning. We certified three, I believe, last
17 year. And our community, in Mississippi County, is
18 one of the most supportive in industry and business.
19 They are there asking us, calling us, wanting to
20 know, "Do you have any gold level CRCs?" They are
21 there recruiting our students often.

22 MR. DIAGOSTINO: The business community just
23 needs a voice. They need workers. They come to us
24 all the time for "who do you have, what skill-sets do
25 you have." So, you know, we're building the work-

1 based learning career practicum program now, this
2 year. And we'll bring in community partners as we
3 build this program and have a list of options for
4 what they can offer and what aligns with what
5 student's curriculum to make sure that we match the
6 needs for the students, the school, and the business
7 in that area. But everyone in our community needs
8 jobs. We have steel mills continuing to expand. All
9 the feeder industries that go into them, there's a
10 need for jobs. And if we can get these students in
11 12th grade out in the community, working while
12 they're earning credit, it's just going to be a
13 benefit to them as they explore the careers and the
14 community as a whole.

15 MS. RAPER: And again our students are Arkansas
16 Northeastern College focused with that associate's
17 degree. So really our goal is -- because our
18 students were almost picking between an associate's
19 degree and a career pathway. What I was seeing was
20 17- and 18-year olds with an associate degree that
21 had no idea what they wanted to do. And so we want
22 to have those parallels for them.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And just one last
24 question. So just thinking about agriculture pathway
25 -- and you mentioned that you have industry folks

1 that are in ag that come in and out of the school
2 quite a bit. And you're -- it sounded like those are
3 the individuals that you're wanting to have as
4 instructors for those courses. So what is the
5 background of those individuals that you're wanting
6 to place in the classroom, if that's what your plan
7 is, to help you support those upper level classes in
8 that program of study?

9 MS. RAPER: Well, right now we have a solid
10 certified agri teacher who plans on -- in fact, she
11 came into my office and she said, "I'm happier than
12 I've ever been in my life." So I hope that's an
13 indication that she's going to be with us for quite
14 sometime. First ever FFA in decades. We have dads
15 pulling out their old FFA jackets to share. If
16 you've been to the -- you know, if you've been to the
17 Delta -- and I know you have, Ms. Wright-McMurray --
18 but, you know, we're in the middle of a cotton field.
19 We're sitting on 100 acres of farmland where we are.
20 We have -- the district owns, I believe, about three
21 -- Mr. Cox can help me -- about 3500 acres of
22 farmland. I have little farmers and farmers'
23 daughters all through my hallways and their parents
24 are excited. We're just beginning to build some
25 partnerships and people are ready to support our

1 programs. But those agri education majors -- I was a
2 little nervous last year, starting an agri program
3 and then losing an agri teacher. And I will say --
4 let me shout-out now to the agri teachers in the
5 state because when we lost our agri teacher, every
6 agri teacher in that area adopted my students. And
7 there was an agri teacher at our door every day doing
8 a project, teaching our kids and doing -- and I --
9 that tells you the impact that they want to have on
10 these young students.

11 MR. DIAGOSTINO: So an example of where we may
12 use that waiver -- so my EAST program is partnering
13 with our ag program to start to learn how to do field
14 mapping for drainage and different things. So that
15 may have all been to unmanned aerial systems at some
16 point, so that may be an area we look for a waiver.
17 So just looking for the future at those type of
18 opportunities.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Zellner, do you have
21 questions?

22 MR. ZELLNER: So I have a couple, and I think
23 Dr. Wright-McMurray probably -- the answers you gave
24 to a couple of her questions should've sufficed. But
25 I don't have the level of knowledge that she does, so

1 I'm going to ask them to make sure I understand.

2 The first is with regard to the 6th grade
3 keyboarding, the K through 6. I heard a lot about,
4 when you talked about that, about your teacher. What
5 can you offer so that we can make sure that what you
6 have in place is a program or a process and not a
7 person? So that if you lost the current teacher you
8 had the students would still be served as they
9 should?

10 MS. RAPER: And I have the luxury of being able
11 to answer that question here by saying I really can't
12 see losing that teacher. I love the fact that when
13 we're looking at these innovative ideas we can put a
14 teacher, a person with it, and know that we have the
15 support to build on to that. But we already have a
16 curriculum checklist -- I'm going to call it a
17 checklist -- of K-6 of what -- so they have already
18 done this. What I can't stand here and say is that
19 it is absolutely aligned with those standards, but I
20 know that we can do that. And if we do, then we'll
21 do what all schools do; we'll just put that 5th and
22 6th grade course in place and insure that those
23 standards are taught.

24 MR. ZELLNER: Okay. And then on the 7th grade
25 exploratory CTE -- so, once again, this may be clear

1 to everyone else. But when we talk about 7th grade
2 exploratory is the idea that the student would
3 choose, if you will, and be exposed to one; and if
4 they didn't like it, because we started them earlier
5 then they had a chance to choose a different one? Or
6 would the 7th grade exploratory be more an overall
7 "these are what will be available as you matriculate
8 on, and here are the advantages, you know, the
9 things" -- would they be exposed in that manner or
10 would it be the latter, that they would choose one
11 and then basically see if they like that or change?

12 MS. RAPER: So that would be 8th grade. Our
13 career development in 7th grade is already set-up as
14 exploratory in nature in that it exposes -- those
15 standards expose the students to multiple career
16 paths. But they're in -- they're in theory. Using
17 those interest inventories, using those pieces, we've
18 adopted a career information system this year to be
19 able to have a little bit more data on that. That
20 exploratory, we want those Tier 1's in 8th grade
21 where we can offer that high school credit and get
22 them on the right path. But if they've chosen the
23 wrong path they have time to choose another path. A
24 Survey of Ag is not going to be detrimental to an 8th
25 grade student. They can still go to 9th grade and

1 move into a Survey of Business or both, because they
2 will now have time to do both.

3 MR. ZELLNER: Okay. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini, do you have
5 questions?

6 MS. SARACINI: I think you've answered most of
7 them. But I just want everyone to know I took a team
8 to Rivercrest, on Licensure, so I feel pretty
9 comfortable where they are now.

10 MS. RAPER: Thank you very much for your help.
11 It was much appreciated and not forgotten.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Down to me.

13 I just want to first start off by saying that
14 was a strong Needs Assessment in your application.
15 And I don't always see that, so I just really want to
16 commend you on that. I think it was honest. I
17 thought you used multiple sources of data, which I
18 appreciated. And I really understand this
19 opportunity for student choice. I love that idea. I
20 like -- I just think about today, in my job, how I
21 reflect back to getting to take an accounting class
22 or, you know, doing this work or doing something that
23 maybe I didn't major in that in college but I had an
24 experience and at least I know who to go to to talk
25 to. So that just cannot be understated at all. But

1 sometimes people -- students are not used to making
2 choice, and so sometimes when you survey and ask
3 about choice they may not know how to respond because
4 they may not have been given choice in the past. So
5 that's a learned experience that I'm excited for your
6 students to learn.

7 So following up on that, in your survey, as Mr.
8 Davis mentioned, 50% of your students said they
9 didn't feel safe. And you mentioned that part of the
10 issue with achievement, with growth, with graduate
11 rate is behavior and attendance. And so if 50% of
12 your kids don't feel safe, that's a survey question.
13 My question then is, and then what? Did you follow
14 up with the students to ask them what that means?
15 Did you have focus groups? Did you sit with groups
16 of kids or individual students and say, "Explain to
17 me what that means?"

18 MS. RAPER: And to be honest, those -- we are
19 just now receiving those APNA surveys, using those in
20 our -- we use those APNA surveys in our Health and
21 Wellness plans. But looking at that data, no, we
22 have not, but it is something that we can't ignore.
23 So we just began to see this data, realize the harsh
24 reality of it. It's disheartening to know that we're
25 focusing so much on safety, yet our children still do

1 not feel safe. And, again, I feel like that's a
2 feeling, is that we need to work with them on the SEL
3 piece. Again, this is not in silos; we're wanting to
4 look at this whole child and nurture them in what we
5 would consider still an elementary.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I don't discount making
7 your building safe, but certainly talking to the
8 students to unpack that -- because you could work
9 yourself to death and they can still give you the
10 same answer next year and the year following. So I
11 do strongly encourage you to talk to the students.

12 And this kind of goes back to that choice -- it
13 all works together -- is you can't just rely on
14 surveys to tell you what kids are thinking; you've
15 got to really talk to them. And it's such an awesome
16 time when they're in middle school; they're just so
17 unique and fun and insightful. And it's just such an
18 opportunity, so I just strongly, strongly encourage
19 you to do that. And I think that's what you're
20 seeing in your data is, as you said, you know, a
21 large group of students in need of support, Close,
22 then Ready, then Exceeding. But really understanding
23 what they're struggling with is really an opportunity
24 where kids can make really huge growth when they're
25 having those student-teacher conversations. It

1 really identifies -- you know, when kids are surveyed
2 at that age most of them say that the teacher tells
3 them what they've done wrong but they don't tell them
4 what they're strong in, and so it's really a time to
5 change those conversations. And I think what you're
6 planning to do with your student success plans really
7 makes that available to you.

8 So, just a couple of quick final questions from
9 me:

10 You do not have a digital learning plan, so I'm
11 assuming all of your kids are on-site?

12 MS. RAPER: They are.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And therefore, as attendance
14 has been an issue, kind of talk about what you're
15 doing that is going to motivate students to show up?
16 And so I'm wondering if, when I look at the sample
17 schedule that looks like a really interesting block,
18 that the intent is to encourage them to come and not
19 skip first period English every day because English
20 moves around during the day. So is that kind of part
21 of that get-them-to-school?

22 MS. RAPER: The mindset -- and we've worked on
23 this at the high school. Our attendance is -- it's
24 up at the high school. We use our smart data. So in
25 addition to our academic growth goals, our teachers

1 have set attendance and behavior goals by grade
2 level. So we are utilizing smart data. Matter of
3 fact, our team leaders will be trained Friday in
4 that. We have several trained. Those little red and
5 orange kiddos pop up on -- you know, on my radar in
6 smart data as at-risk. Usually, I've already heard
7 their names and Mr. Burfield has certainly heard
8 their names. We are looking at -- we're not looking
9 at -- that's what we're doing this year with those
10 grade level PLCs. We've even moved our classrooms
11 around so that we were by grade level and not
12 content, because we want teachers to come out into
13 the hallway and be chit-chatting about our children.
14 You know, the two math classes were side-by-side
15 because, well, for them to collaborate. And we
16 asked, "Well, what are you collaborating? You know,
17 how did two-step equations go this morning?" "No,
18 we're collaborating about our children." And so
19 setting those attendance and behavior goals along
20 with those growth goals is a process that is already
21 in place and being checked.

22 MR. DIAGOSTINO: One of the things, as our
23 district being part of the Peer Teacher Leader
24 program, is personal -- professional development that
25 we get towards engaging students and teaching

1 practices. And that was what our teachers in that
2 program did in our last PD -- or our last staff
3 meeting was go through some engagement practices with
4 teachers to how to engage students. And then
5 additionally with that program comes funding to be
6 able to provide incentives to students and/or
7 teachers when we meet these goals. So we're still
8 working through the details of how we'll want to use
9 that funding to provide the incentives that are
10 really going to make students want to be at school
11 and achieve those goals.

12 MS. RAPER: But as Mr. Durham said, he woke up
13 every morning to go to school for band.

14 MR. DURHAM: I can -- so I want to -- I'm sorry;
15 I'll get to the mic first.

16 Hunter Durham. I want to tie some of this
17 together because we've talked about our students not
18 feeling safe. And I asked our 7th graders when we
19 were doing class sign-ups last year, I said -- I sat
20 in a room full of all of our 7th graders and I said,
21 "Raise your hand if given more than one choice out of
22 your electives if you would do two." And one-hundred
23 percent of those kids raised their hand. They want
24 to do these career pathways and they want to have
25 elective choices. And if you'll talk to my band

1 kids, we talk to them about their grades, every
2 single one of our band kids, every week. If they
3 make a C in class, they're working on that during
4 band class because they know that they will not go
5 with us to our next band trip if their grades are not
6 good. They know that if they are -- especially
7 athletics and band, both, if they're in trouble they
8 won't play in that game on Friday. And so most of
9 the most well-behaved, well-rounded and high-
10 achieving students are those that are pursuing these
11 electives. And so by opening up these choices for
12 more electives and more career pathways for our
13 students, we're encouraging all of them to find a
14 place where they belong, which gives them a sense of
15 safety and gives them that motivation to go to
16 school.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. I think you've
18 hit on a key of how that all fits together. But the
19 thing I heard you say is your high-performing kids.
20 That is -- all of those components are clicking
21 together. And what you're trying to accomplish is to
22 make sure those at-risk kids are getting that same
23 level of support.

24 MR. DURHAM: Well, make no mistake, many of the
25 kids that join band in 7th grade and 8th grade are

1 those at-risk kids. They become high-achieving
2 students because we give them something that
3 motivates them.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good. So I'm interested in,
5 as I've listened to all of this, about who have you
6 partnered with, who have you learned from, and how
7 you're engaging parents. Because, you know, at this
8 age students are trying to disengage from parents.
9 And so, how are you pulling parents in?

10 MS. RAPER: Again, we have a strong -- we have a
11 strong parent base. I'm just very fortunate to be at
12 Rivercrest School District where our parents are
13 involved. You know, we hear our parents saying the
14 more we -- the busier we can keep our kids, you know,
15 the more they'll stay out of trouble. And our --
16 again, our band -- our parents -- I'm not sure how
17 many follow along, but they have an entourage that go
18 with them. We have agri parents -- until -- really
19 until this year there was no program for their
20 students for them to be involved. There are -- so
21 the State Fair, the kind of parents that are at
22 Little Rock with the State Fair, that's all on social
23 media. So providing these opportunities for these
24 students are providing those parallels for those
25 parents to be involved. Our community support -- we

1 had absolutely zero negative feedback on going this
2 direction, and Mr. Cox is a part of that. But right
3 now our parents -- our parents trust us to do the
4 right things for these kids and they're looking for
5 these opportunities. Tuesday night, my husband will
6 be grilling burgers for the agri. I think there's a
7 pumpkin carving -- I think our agri students will be
8 carving pumpkins for our Title -- the same time we're
9 having a literacy night. So those things are just --
10 they just come naturally.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, any additional
12 questions?

13 Ms. James, do you have any additional concerns
14 or topics for conversation?

15 MS. JAMES: No, ma'am. I do not.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, I'll accept a
17 motion, unless there's more discussion.

18 MR. ZELLNER: I move to approve the application
19 as presented.

20 MS. SARACINI: I second.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Mr.
22 Zellner and a second from Ms. Saracini to approve the
23 Rivercrest Junior High Prep Academy charter
24 application. And this will be for five years.

25 Any discussion?

1 All those in favor?

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

4 Motion passes.

5 So the Charter Panel members will write into
6 their voting sheet and read those to you in a minute.
7 This will go to the State Board for review or not
8 review. If they choose not to review and your
9 application is approved, then you'll need to make an
10 LEA name change before the end of the school year.
11 Congratulations.

12 MS. RAPER: Thank you very much.

13 MR. BURFIELD: Thank you.

14 MS. NEWTON: I'm having some difficulty with my
15 voting sheet. So I'll just give a verbal.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Well, we'll have one
17 of our Charter Office type in yours, Ms. Newton, if
18 you want to go ahead.

19 MS. NEWTON: I voted for approval because I feel
20 there were many questions, and I think that the staff
21 did an adequate job of explaining how we're going to
22 -- how they're going to move through, including with
23 the waivers.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Newton.

25 Mr. Davis.

1 MR. DAVIS: Yes. I voted for. And the reason
2 and rationale was to allow the district to implement
3 at aligned best practices learned from the approved
4 charter for the high school.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Zellner.

6 MR. ZELLNER: I support the application as it
7 expands the choices available to the students and it
8 is complimentary in supporting the model as the
9 students matriculate into the high school.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for. And I said
12 with the assurances from District that core standards
13 for career coding, career keyboarding, key code
14 include both courses will be adhered to. I support
15 this application. The ability to offer career
16 exploration and career technical courses with
17 inclusion of SEL work earlier in their education
18 career will enhance the opportunities for success in
19 education and training beyond the high school
20 diploma.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

22 Mr. Baldwin.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I voted for the charter
24 school application. I do believe the new charter for
25 7th and 8th grade will help with the transition of

1 students to the higher charter activities. I also
2 believe that it will benefit the students and allow
3 them to connect their education with their trade job
4 opportunities.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini.

6 MS. SARACINI: I support the approval of the
7 Rivercrest Junior High Prep Academy for grades 7th
8 and 8th with an enrollment cap of 250. Looking
9 forward to seeing student success with early career
10 exploration to become career ready.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Congratulations,
12 Team.

13 2) GENERAL OPERATING PROCEDURES UPDATE

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Summons,
15 Action Item Number 2, please.

16 MS. SUMMONS: Okay. The General Operating
17 Procedures have --

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Pull your microphone closer
19 to you.

20 MS. SUMMONS: I'm sorry. Yes, ma'am.

21 Okay. The General Operating Procedures have
22 been updated and are ready for review.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, do you have
24 any questions or concerns after having read those?

25 MR. ZELLNER: I have no questions or concerns.

1 But I want to say thank you for walking me through
2 the document last month and helping me understand,
3 and taking back the feedback and putting together
4 what you did for this month's meeting.

5 MS. SUMMONS: (Nodding head up and down.)

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, any other
7 questions or comments?

8 Then I'll accept a motion.

9 MS. SARACINI: I make a motion to approve.

10 MR. BALDWIN: Second.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Ms.
12 Saracini and a second from Mr. Baldwin to approve the
13 General Operating Procedures for the Charter
14 Authorizing Panel.

15 All those in favor?

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

18 Motion passes.

19 3) SURRENDER OF IDEA PUBLIC SCHOOL ARKANSAS CHARTER

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Summons, Action Item
21 Three, please.

22 MS. SUMMONS: Okay. Arkansas -- Arkansas --
23 excuse me -- IDEAS Public School of Arkansas
24 submitted a letter of surrender for the Arkansas
25 charter due to the starting and operating costs and

1 a need to focus on their IDEA reaches. And that
2 letter has been -- that is included in your packet.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, any comments
4 or questions?

5 Ms. James.

6 MS. JAMES: I just wanted to point out that I'm
7 not quite sure when we decided to start calling this
8 a voluntary revocation. But if an open-enrollment
9 charter surrenders it's charter and not during the
10 renewal process -- which obviously this charter has
11 not commenced operations, so that would not be
12 applicable -- we would call it a voluntary
13 revocation.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Because we've never
15 had one before --

16 MS. JAMES: Okay.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- to my knowledge.

18 MS. JAMES: And also it's my understanding --
19 and maybe you can confirm this -- that this charter
20 has not received any state or federal funds. I don't
21 even think they have an LEA number. Correct?

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: No. That's correct.

23 MS. JAMES: Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: They -- and I think they've
25 pretty well described in their letter their issues.

1 You know, maybe someday they'll come back and reapply
2 --

3 MS. JAMES: Yes.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and we'll start the
5 process over. It's just not the right time for them
6 right now. And I appreciate that.

7 MS. JAMES: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I appreciate them making that
9 decision.

10 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members?

12 MS. NEWTON: I move to approve the request for
13 revocation or withdrawal.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Ms.
16 Newton and a second from Dr. Wright-McMurray to
17 accept the surrender of the IDEA Public School
18 Arkansas charter.

19 All those in favor?

20 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

22 Motion passes. Thank you.

23 CLOSING COMMENTS

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any additional information
25 before the Panel today?

1 I will just share with panel members that I've
2 started going out to visit charters that will be
3 coming up for renewal. So if you haven't had a
4 chance to get that started -- we'll be hearing all of
5 those renewals in December. We will have two full
6 days of renewal hearings. So it just helps to kind
7 of set some background knowledge if you've been to
8 visit and know what your questions were or know what
9 you can move off your list of questions. So we are
10 out visiting and learning a lot of really wonderful
11 things.

12 And I'll just take the opportunity to say if
13 you've not been to Hope Northwest Academy, they are
14 doing the right things for kids. They are working
15 with kids that may have been in some type of trauma
16 and the work that we saw going on the day we visited
17 was profound and inspirational. So if you haven't
18 been out to visit them, they're outside of
19 Bentonville, at the edge. Feels like the end of the
20 earth, but I'm sure the road goes on from there. But
21 just amazing work and amazing people. So it's really
22 a joy to visit.

23 MR. DAVIS: Yeah, I second that. I know them
24 very well.

25 MS. SARACINI: Have you shared a spreadsheet

1 with us about going to the visits, like you did last
2 time?

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Well, Dorie gave you a list
4 of all of the schools that would be up for renewal,
5 so -- and then she's coordinating when people are out
6 traveling so that if there are two or more that we're
7 notifying the press.

8 ADJOURNMENT

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Panel Members,
10 I'll accept a motion to adjourn.

11 MS. NEWTON: Move to adjourn.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Ms.
14 Newton and a second from Ms. Wright-McMurray to
15 adjourn.

16 All those in favor?

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Motion passes.
19 Meeting is adjourned. Thank you, everyone.
20 Have a great day.

21
22
23 (The meeting was concluded at 10:51 a.m.)
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
 COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on October 18, 2022; that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

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

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

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: October 24, 2022.

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