

**In The Matter Of:**

*DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL*

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*December 14, 2021*

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ARKANSAS DIVISION OF  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

DECEMBER 14, 2021  
9:00 a.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS (IN PERSON):

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	Chairperson/ADE Asst. Commissioner - Public School Accountability
MR. PHIL BALDWIN	CEO, Citizens Bank
DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY	Division of CTE - Assoc. Director for Career Readiness
MS. KARLI SARACINI	ADE Asst. Commissioner - Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
DR. ERIC FLOWERS	ADE Asst. to Director

PANEL MEMBERS (VIA ZOOM):

DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS	Former State Board of Ed. Member
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ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. WHITNEY JAMES	DESE Attorney
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ALSO APPEARING:

MR. TIM JOHNSTON	DESE Coordinator of Monitoring and Systems Support
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LOCATION:

DESE Auditorium  
#4 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, Arkansas

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NLR CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning. The December 14, 2021 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Department and ask you to please silence your devices. We will facilitate a fair and responsible hearing, and I request that if you are speaking that you would please get close to the microphone, state your name and title for the record. And we would ask that you continue to speak into the microphone so that -- for the benefit of the Panel, as well as our viewing audience and for the recording. This meeting is being live-streamed and recorded and a transcript of the meeting will be posted on the DESE website. So we appreciate all of you being here this morning.

I think we need to start with a few announcements. We have received a resignation letter from Grant Hodges, effective immediately. So Mr. Hodges is pursuing some other interests and is unavailable for the Panel.

We have an announcement of -- one of our panel members has a very special announcement. Ms. Sonja, would you like to tell us what has recently happened?

DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

For those of you that know me know that I hate

1 tooting my own horn, but --

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Toot.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Toot. But I was fortunate  
4 just to complete my doctoral degree, and so I  
5 graduated on December 4th from Maryville University  
6 in St. Louis and I have a Doctorate in Higher  
7 Education Leadership. So --

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Awesome. Congratulations.

9 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Congratulations, Dr. Wright-  
11 McMurray.

12 And then we have a little sad but exciting news.  
13 Our Charter Director, Tim Johnston, has taken a new  
14 position.

15 Tim, you want to come to the microphone and tell  
16 us what you're going to be doing?

17 MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, ma'am. Good morning. I  
18 have accepted the position of Associate Director with  
19 Career and Technical Education. So I will be working  
20 with Dr. Wright-McMurray, as well as Ross White and  
21 all of the staff in the CTE Division. So --

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So we are sad to lose him in  
23 Charter, but always happy to enhance anyone's career  
24 and especially when they're staying with the Division  
25 of Elementary and Secondary Education. So we're very

1 excited about that. Congratulations, Tim.

2 MR. JOHNSTON: Thank you.

3 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Graciously, our own Dr.  
5 Matthew Sutherlin has agreed to not only continue to  
6 work with Standards but to take on the role of  
7 Charter Director for a period of time. So starting  
8 in January you'll see Dr. Matthew Sutherlin and get  
9 your emails and correspondence from him as he takes  
10 on that role. So, thank you very much.

11 And I believe, Dr. Williams, you have an  
12 announcement you want to make as well?

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Absolutely. Good morning,  
14 everyone. I can't remember the number of years that  
15 I have been on the Charter Authorizing Panel. I was  
16 trying to figure that out. But I -- and this will be  
17 my last meeting. I will be submitting my resignation  
18 end of this week, first of next week. This has been  
19 a great experience, between this and serving on the  
20 State Board of Education for seven years. I recently  
21 went on the Rockefeller Foundation Board, and between  
22 the Foundations I'm working with here my time is  
23 limited. And I want to spend more time with my  
24 grandkids and that's going to be the -- that'll be  
25 the highlight of my next journey that I'm going to

1 start. But it has been great working with the  
2 Department of Education and working with the schools  
3 and so-forth. And to go out the right way, Mr.  
4 Baldwin and I had a chance to go visit a school  
5 yesterday; so that's how I really wanted to kind of  
6 finish this off, so it's great. And I just want to  
7 say thank you to everyone at the Department of  
8 Education. It's been a great ride.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Well, Dr. Williams, you have  
10 been an amazing public servant and we certainly  
11 appreciate you, both for your time on the State Board  
12 but most especially for us for your guidance and  
13 leadership on the Charter Authorizing Panel.

14 Any members would like to say anything?

15 MR. BALDWIN: I would, Madam Chair.

16 I've known Dr. Williams for probably 20 or 25  
17 years and he is a man of impeccable integrity and  
18 character. He's I think brilliant. I suspect he has  
19 a photographic memory and -- because he remembers  
20 everything. And I just -- Dr. Williams, Naccaman,  
21 Nac, I want to say thank you for everything and for  
22 your leadership and for the strength that you brought  
23 to the Charter Panel.

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm not quite sure if you

1 remember me, but I remember looking up to you as a  
2 leader when I was at the U of A, day before  
3 yesterday. And so definitely have enjoyed working  
4 with you on the Panel. I always felt like any time  
5 that my thoughts aligned and agreed with yours that I  
6 was on the right track. So thank you so much for  
7 your leadership on the Panel and hopefully we can  
8 work together in some capacity in the future.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Absolutely. Thank you.

10 MS. SARACINI: I just want to say I haven't been  
11 on this Charter Panel board very long, but I've  
12 always looked up to your leadership and what you have  
13 contributed to this board. So thank you for your  
14 time, because we know that's precious. But enjoy  
15 those grandkids. I hope to have them soon.

16 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

17 DR. FLOWERS: Dr. Williams, thank you so much  
18 for your leadership. I've always admired you from  
19 afar and respected you so much. And thank you for  
20 your time and support on this board.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you. But you all on the  
22 Panel, the Panel is in great hands.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. We do appreciate  
24 and we've learned a lot.

25 All right. Well, any other announcements? Any

1 secrets I don't know about?

2 All right.

3 CONSENT AGENDA

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Then let's get started with  
5 our Consent Agenda this morning. And if -- Panel  
6 Members, if you will look at the minutes from our  
7 October 19th meeting, I'll accept a motion.

8 MR. BALDWIN: I'll make the motion.

9 MS. SARACINI: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: To approve?

11 MR. BALDWIN: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion by Mr.  
13 Baldwin, a second by Ms. Saracini to approve the  
14 October 19, 2021 Charter Authorizing Panel minutes.

15 All those in favor?

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

18 Motion passes.

19 ACTION AGENDA

20 - CHARTER RENEWALS -

21 PROCEDURES

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. On our Action  
23 Agenda, Whitney, would you like to come and go over  
24 our procedures?

25 MS. JAMES: My name is Whitney James, with the

1 Department.

2 And each school will have 20 minutes to present  
3 information about their charter renewal. We will  
4 need the court reporter to swear in anyone who is  
5 speaking on behalf of the school -- that is, anybody  
6 but the attorneys -- and, I'm sorry, Ms. Coffman will  
7 swear in. And then there are no oppositions to any  
8 of the applications, to the best of my knowledge, so  
9 there won't be anybody to speak after the schools.  
10 Then we'll have the legal review.

11 And we would just remind everyone who is  
12 speaking to identify themselves and step up to the  
13 podium so that the court reporter can get a clear  
14 record.

15 IV.1. CABOT ACE

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Perfect. All right. I ask  
17 that everyone from -- ask that anyone from Cabot, if  
18 you will please stand and raise your right hand. Do  
19 you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about  
20 to give shall be the truth, the whole truth and  
21 nothing but the truth?

22 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

24 Mr. Johnston, if you'll present the item.

25 MR. JOHNSTON: Tim Johnston, DESE Charter Unit.

1           First is Cabot Academic Center of Excellence.  
2           The district is requesting a renewal of the charter  
3           for a five-year period. The campus serves grades 5-  
4           12. Current enrollment cap is 2,500 students.  
5           They're also requesting to change the name of the  
6           charter from Academic Center of Excellence to Cabot  
7           Panther Academy. The charter will continue to follow  
8           a combination of an Alternative Learning Environment  
9           and will offer virtual only and credit recovery  
10          models.

11           And present is Mr. Aaron Randolph, and I will  
12          let him introduce the rest of his team.

13           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning, Mr. Randolph.

14           MR. RANDOLPH: Good morning, Mrs. Coffman,  
15          Members of the Panel. Appreciate you all giving us  
16          the opportunity to be here. And I am Aaron Randolph,  
17          Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction for  
18          the Cabot School District. And with me also I have  
19          Mrs. Carrie Lair, the Principal at the Academic  
20          Center for Excellence, and Mrs. Mallory Jones, our  
21          Assistant Principal. And they are here with us to  
22          talk a little bit more about our charter, hopefully  
23          to get a renewal, and to tell you a little bit about  
24          the good things that are happening in Cabot and what  
25          we hope to do as we move forward in the future.

1           So a little bit of background information just  
2           so everybody can understand a little bit more about  
3           our charter. As Mr. Johnston said, we do have a  
4           completely virtual option, we have an ALE setting,  
5           and we also have a hybrid setting. And so some  
6           students don't come five days a week, 8:00 to 3:20.  
7           We have a little bit more flexibility because we  
8           know, you know, there's some situations that students  
9           may have to work, they may have to take care of  
10          family members, they may have to be doing different  
11          things, and so we want to have a little bit more  
12          flexibility. And so we have three different settings  
13          on our campus and as part of our charter, and so it's  
14          a little bit unique animal compared to all our other  
15          schools.

16          And so I'll tell you a little bit more about our  
17          charter school. And the mission that we have for the  
18          Panther Academy is that we're going to re-imagine  
19          education by building relationships, inspiring every  
20          student to reach their full -- their potential,  
21          teaching students academic life skills, guiding them  
22          to become successful and productive citizens, and  
23          also helping them to find their own strengths and  
24          unique abilities -- and that's something we'll  
25          reference several times over this presentation is

1           it's about the individual students. One thing that  
2           we want to emphasize at the Cabot Panther Academy is  
3           that every kid is different, every student has unique  
4           skill sets and has unique interests, and we want to  
5           have the opportunity to work with them to help them  
6           grow individually.

7                        So what is CPA, Cabot Panther Academy? It is a  
8           place where all students are valued, that we see them  
9           as individuals, we see that they have the individual  
10          educational needs, and we know that they have  
11          specific needs or maybe there are some specific  
12          interventions that they need to be successful on  
13          their own and we want to work with them through that.  
14          It's also a place that we allow students to work at  
15          their own pace. Utilizing the Edmentum platform for  
16          education, we allow students to progress; the more  
17          they learn, the faster they learn, great -- we want  
18          to help them go faster. If they need a little bit  
19          more targeted support, then we can slow them down and  
20          they can work at that, but it's at their own pace.  
21          And we also know, as again I mentioned, work,  
22          families, everything else, that we have students that  
23          have a lot of responsibilities outside of the school  
24          setting. Utilizing Edmentum in the hybrid setting or  
25          completely digital allows students to have

1 flexibility in their life where they can best meet  
2 the needs of their own academic schedule. And then,  
3 also, smaller setting -- we allow a lot more of a  
4 small setting; you know, it's an ALE. It's a 15-to-1  
5 ratio, students to teachers. In our hybrid setting  
6 we have a little bit bigger numbers, but still  
7 falling within that threshold. And what we do is we  
8 are able to pull students in small groups. Versus  
9 having 28 kids, 30 kids in a classroom in a  
10 traditional 7-12 setting, we can pull them and work  
11 with them in small groups. They're all working  
12 individually at their own pace so we know these  
13 students need extra support in say, you know,  
14 thagerim [ps] theorem or something along those lines,  
15 and we can work with them. We can even pull them  
16 one-on-one. And we have teachers and space spread  
17 out across our campus for that very purpose. So no  
18 student has ever felt like they're just one of a big  
19 group of students; we can meet with them one-on-one  
20 and we talk weekly with them and go through all those  
21 specific issues.

22 Also, the Cabot Panther Academy serves students  
23 from all our other 7-12 campuses. And it is a 5-12  
24 charter, so we do have that opportunity for an ALE  
25 setting for students in 5th or 6th grade. But

1 typically the biggest percentage of our students are  
2 made up by 7-12; we have students from Junior North,  
3 South, Freshmen Academy, and the High School.  
4 Sometimes students will actually take their electives  
5 on those campuses. Maybe they're involved in  
6 football, maybe they're involved in band at those  
7 other campuses, and we work with them; we provide  
8 transportation. So we have a lot of different  
9 opportunities that they're not just at Panther  
10 Academy, unless that's where they want to be, all  
11 day.

12 And we also know that we have students across  
13 the district that need something a little bit  
14 different, and then we can bring them into Panther  
15 Academy and take care of them. And so, you know,  
16 we're not one of those that's a north side of town or  
17 a south side of town; we're Cabot and we take care of  
18 all the students in our district through that.

19 I mean we can talk a lot more about why students  
20 choose to come to the Cabot Panther Academy, but we  
21 would love to actually let you hear from some  
22 students. So we've got a video that we've put  
23 together, hearing from some of our current students.  
24 And then after that Mrs. Lair is going to come up and  
25 talk a little bit more about the charter. It should

1 open up a You Tube video.

2 (WHEREUPON, a video was played; it may be viewed  
3 on the DESE website.)

4 MS. LAIR: Good morning. Carrie Lair.

5 MS. JONES: And Mallory Jones, I'm the assistant  
6 principal at ACE.

7 All right. So we just wanted to show you guys  
8 some -- kind of some demographics of our district  
9 versus our specific school. So you can see here,  
10 just pulled from the data dashboard, this is the  
11 Cabot School District breakdown. We also have the  
12 Cabot Panther Academy demographics broken down there.  
13 While these are great graphics, we thought that it  
14 might be easier to see it in a chart platform where  
15 you could compare them side-by-side. So here you can  
16 see that we have basically very similar demographics  
17 from Cabot School District versus our Cabot Panther  
18 Academy. We're all in a line there.

19 We also have our enrollment. You can see here  
20 these are four years of enrollment at the Academic  
21 Center of Excellence. We kind of hit a peak in the  
22 2018-2019 school year. We declined just a tad, and  
23 now we are at 347 students. We've had a massive  
24 increase this year. We're really excited about it.  
25 Our program is growing. We have all of these

1 students that we get to help every day. It's really  
2 our passion. Like he said, you know, we have that  
3 individualized learning opportunity and we're getting  
4 to grow our program to help more students in the  
5 Cabot School District.

6 So our goals are these. So these are the  
7 previous goals. Ms. Lair and I were not involved as  
8 far as creating these goals; however, we were  
9 involved on assessing these goals.

10 So the first goal from the previous charter was  
11 to increase the school's average ACT composite score.  
12 The goal was to score a 20 or higher. Unfortunately,  
13 our school did not meet that criteria. We have -- 20  
14 is a pretty lofty goal in serving at-risk students.  
15 It seems that maybe that was a little far-fetched at  
16 that time. We would like to continue to use the ACT  
17 composite score in the future as a goal; however, we  
18 think that the 20 mark might be a little too high.

19 You can see here a chart breakdown of where we  
20 have been since the 2017-2018 school year.

21 So our second goal, we wanted to improve the  
22 students' proficiency percentage in math on an  
23 average of 10% each school year. So we again,  
24 unfortunately, did not meet that goal either. We  
25 have quite a few students again that are in an at-

1 risk population. You know, we have a total number of  
2 students that we anticipated are coming from those  
3 at-risk -- sorry -- that are coming from those at-  
4 risk situations. We think that, you know, having  
5 that assessment percentage might have been a little  
6 too high again. For those reasons, as well as the  
7 desire to prepare our students for postsecondary  
8 education success, we want to be able to modify that  
9 goal for the future. And you can see here the  
10 breakdown again.

11 Our goal number three was that we wanted to  
12 increase the percentage in literacy by an average of  
13 5% each year. We wanted to increase that proficiency  
14 percentage; however, again, we did not meet that goal  
15 of the 60% readiness by 2021. Again, we do have  
16 students coming from that at-risk population and we  
17 anticipate -- again, these are always -- there's  
18 always going to be kind of a high validity in the  
19 assessment percentages. So we do believe that that  
20 kind of hindered our -- hindered us from actually  
21 meeting this goal. And again you have a chart here  
22 with all of the data.

23 And, again, we wanted to increase the student  
24 proficiency in science on an average of 5% each year  
25 from 2016 on the ACT Aspire. You can see again,

1           unfortunately, we did not meet that goal for the same  
2           reasons that we didn't in the previous goals as far  
3           as increasing the percentage of proficiency on ACT  
4           Aspire. Our at-risk population assessment  
5           percentages, we really feel like there are other ways  
6           to assess students other than test scores moving  
7           forward. And again here's the chart of our ACT  
8           Aspire data.

9                   We have some Panther Academy highlights that we  
10           would love to share with you guys.

11                   MS. LAIR: All right. Unfortunately, like Ms.  
12           Jones said, we did not meet some of our charter  
13           goals. However, we do have a lot of great things  
14           going on at Panther Academy. One thing that we were  
15           very excited about was to be designated as a School  
16           on the Move towards Excellence this year.

17                   Our data -- as you can see, our ESSA score rose  
18           by over 10 percentage points over this past year; so  
19           we were very excited about that. As you know, scores  
20           were not issued in 2020, so the difference between  
21           2019 and 2021 was something we're very proud of.

22                   Weighted achievement -- as you can see, that's a  
23           gigantic leap for us, so another area that we were  
24           very excited about this year. Moving forward we  
25           continue to put great things out there and hope that

1 the students will respond to that and that that goal  
2 will keep going up as well.

3 One thing that we have included in our next  
4 goals for this upcoming charter renewal period is the  
5 ACT, the Work Keys Assessment. That's something that  
6 we feel like our CTE students -- they really strived  
7 towards doing those last year. We had 14 students  
8 tested; this year we are estimating we're going to  
9 have about 80 by the end of the year. But we were  
10 excited to see that all 14 of them met a mastery  
11 level of at least bronze, silver or platinum; so very  
12 great information there.

13 Ms. Jones, do you want to talk about Declaration  
14 Day?

15 MS. JONES: I would love to.

16 So we started a new event this year, titled it  
17 Declaration Day. We have students that can actually  
18 finish their senior year pretty much at any time  
19 during the course of the school year. And so these  
20 are the students that finished early and will  
21 technically, I guess, be graduating in December; they  
22 just won't walk until May. We just wanted to give  
23 them a special time kind of to highlight and declare  
24 their next steps, whatever those might be, once they  
25 graduate from Cabot. You can see here we have

1 multiple students, different groups of students that  
2 are really excited. We got to invite their parents  
3 to come in. It was a great event. We had central  
4 office staff there. They really felt loved and  
5 celebrated this day. We will continue to celebrate  
6 our seniors every semester, so we will have a  
7 declaration day next semester as well.

8 MS. LAIR: And I think actually a couple of you  
9 might've been there on our Declaration Day.

10 All right. So some academic updates since our  
11 last renewal. We do have new leadership in the  
12 building. Both Ms. Jones and I are new  
13 administrators. We focused on individualized  
14 intervention. We do have a fully digital learning  
15 option now, as Mr. Randolph had stated.

16 Increased elective course offerings -- we've  
17 worked really hard with our sister campuses in the  
18 district to align those to make sure that we have  
19 other offerings besides just our core classes. So  
20 that's been a big draw for our students.

21 A push towards mastery-level learning -- we have  
22 weekly small intervention group sessions and a lot of  
23 that is based on our Edmentum data that we get  
24 through our Exact Path. We align that with our MAP  
25 data to make sure that we are assessing students, and

1 then using that data to help them grow.

2 Professional Learning Communities has been a big  
3 push for us this year.

4 Curriculum aligned, like I said, with the other  
5 campuses.

6 And our overall increased enrollment, but also  
7 parental involvement. Covid has brought about lots  
8 of changes, as you all know; so increasing that  
9 parental involvement has been key for us, and we feel  
10 like last year that's a big reason why we had such a  
11 great push in achievement.

12 So these moving forward are the areas that we  
13 want to focus on for our charter renewal:

14 An increase in our four-year graduation rate --  
15 we were at around 78% last time. On the next screen,  
16 that Ms. Jones is going to show you guys in a minute,  
17 we have a table and we're going to increase that up  
18 into the 80s, and hopefully by the end of that five-  
19 year period we're close to 90% for that four-year  
20 rate;

21 Increasing the school's average ACT composite  
22 score;

23 Increasing the percentage of juniors and seniors  
24 that are participating in those CTE courses, as well  
25 as the Work Keys Assessment;

1           Also, a big push for us right now is that SEL  
2 program. With Covid, again, a lot of changes have  
3 come about and we know that students are dealing with  
4 more trauma now than they ever have before. So a  
5 push towards making sure that we address those needs  
6 is also important to us;

7           And then, increasing the enrollment for future  
8 students who are considered at-risk.

9           All right. And that's just a breakdown of all  
10 of those goals and projections out for those five  
11 years.

12           So the overall Panther Academy experience, we  
13 wanted to be individualized to each student. If you  
14 notice that our logo earlier was a fingerprint, we  
15 truly feel like each of our students are unique in  
16 their needs and challenges. Just like we each have  
17 our own individual fingerprint, we know that those  
18 students need individualized help and instruction.  
19 By offering them a flexible schedule and different  
20 options we hope that they are college and career  
21 ready. We have many students that are going straight  
22 into the workforce; we have some that go into the  
23 military. So just overall helping them, meeting them  
24 where they're at, that's what our experience is  
25 about.

1                   Another focus that we have had this year is  
2                   working with our faculty and staff on identifying  
3                   their why. It takes a special group of people to  
4                   work with at-risk schools, so we want to make sure  
5                   that we have the best group of people there that we  
6                   can to help our students.

7                   And we want to end with a video of a couple of  
8                   our staff members.

9                   (WHEREUPON, a video was played; it may be viewed  
10                  on the DESE website.)

11                  MS. LAIR: All right. And that does conclude  
12                  our presentation.

13                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you so much.

14                  I will just for the record let you know that Ms.  
15                  Saracini and I had a wonderful visit at ACE or Cabot  
16                  Panther Academy, maybe for the future. It was quite  
17                  -- it was very enjoyable. But it was just  
18                  reinvigorating to get to talk to the students and to  
19                  the teachers and to hear what they were learning and  
20                  what their takeaways were from it. So it was very  
21                  impressive.

22                  Do you want to add anything?

23                  MS. SARACINI: I just want to say that in  
24                  visiting with the students they really -- you could  
25                  really tell they were where they needed to be. And

1 to me that's why we're here is to impact all  
2 students. And it was very obvious that you are  
3 impacting students' lives.

4 MS. JONES: Thank you.

5 MS. LAIR: Thank you.

6 WAIVERS

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Let's get started  
8 with waivers then. Ms. James, if you'll come up.

9 And if you'll remain close so she will go over  
10 each waiver and then we'll have questions for you.  
11 Thank you so much.

12 MS. JAMES: My name is Whitney James with the  
13 Department.

14 At this time I'll go over the final legal  
15 review, and then once I'm done if there's anything  
16 the school needs to clarify we can go over that. And  
17 also I will want the school to confirm that  
18 everything that I have stated is correct; that way,  
19 it's on the record.

20 The school did respond and state that they did  
21 not have ALE students engaged in virtual learning, so  
22 that resolved my general legal concern.

23 I do not have any legal concerns regarding the  
24 first waiver, Adopting a School Calendar.

25 The second waiver, Class Size --

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So do you want me to stop as  
2 we go along?

3 MS. JAMES: However you prefer to do it. We can  
4 go through them one by one or at the end, you know,  
5 we can talk about any concerns, whichever you prefer.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any preference?

7 So I think that's the one I mainly have a  
8 question about. So I'd like to hear the rationale  
9 for why this school would have a different calendar  
10 than the other schools in the district.

11 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am. So at this point we  
12 don't have a request to have a different calendar.  
13 But what we have been talking about is just with that  
14 mindset of flexibility in the future if there is an  
15 extreme student need to have a different start date,  
16 to have, you know, different days -- how it works  
17 that may not necessarily align with the rest of the  
18 district we just wanted to maintain that flexibility  
19 for us. And again, going back to that individualized  
20 piece, we want to be able to offer something  
21 different to students if that's what the desire is  
22 for -- from our community.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And so you're aware that the  
24 Commissioner Memo came out recently about school  
25 calendars, that district have to make a decision?

1 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes. Yes. And so that's, again,  
2 with having the flexibility within the charter we  
3 have that opportunity if something else is needed  
4 beyond what the district would decide. It's my  
5 understanding with the Commissioner's Memo is we have  
6 those four options and the district decides of those  
7 four which one they would follow as a district as a  
8 whole. But we still wanted to have that potential  
9 for ACE to do or Cabot Panther Academy to do  
10 something different.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any discussion?

12 I think it's a challenge.

13 MR. RANDOLPH: Okay.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I mean I'm not comfortable  
15 with it myself without a better rationale for why.  
16 But I'm just one.

17 All right. Ms. James, let's go ahead and move  
18 forward and then we can always come back and revisit  
19 that one.

20 MS. JAMES: I do not have any legal concerns  
21 with their request for a waiver or to continue the  
22 waiver of Class Size and Teaching Load.

23 I do not have any -- they've actually got two  
24 Class Size and Teaching Load waivers listed, but I  
25 don't have an issue with Class Size and Teaching Load

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Compensation.

I do not have an issue with them continuing their waiver of Library Media Services; that's waiver number four.

No legal issues with waiver number five, which is the Balance of Print, Non-print and Electronic Media.

They are rescinding their waiver of code section 6-17-203, which is waiver number six. No issues with that -- most of the time not going to have issues with a school rescinding a waiver, most of the time.

They are also asking to rescind their waiver of code section 6-17-1701 et seq. I have no issues with that.

Number eight, they're asking to rescind their waiver of the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act which is 6-17-1501 et seq.

They're also asking to rescind their waivers nine and ten, the Definition of a Teacher and Warrants Void without a Valid License and Contract. They're just moving those code sections over to their teacher licensure waiver. They're still asking for them; they're just rescinding them on their application and moving them to a different spot.

On the legal review I go exactly by what they've

1 got on their application, just to prevent confusion.

2 They are asking to rescind their waiver of a  
3 School Counselor Licensure. I don't have any issues  
4 with that.

5 They are asking to continue their waiver of  
6 Instructional Time and Six-Hour Instructional Day. I  
7 did ask about waiving recess for the elementary  
8 students and they have confirmed they do not have  
9 elementary students enrolled in virtual learning.

10 The thirteenth waiver request is a continuation  
11 of Standard 1-A.4.1, which is Student-Teacher  
12 Interaction Days. I do not have a legal issue with  
13 that.

14 They are rescinding their request for a waiver  
15 of Superintendent Licensure. No issues with that.

16 And then they have several code sections of  
17 standard and are adding Section 7 of the Rules  
18 Governing Educator Licensure to their Teacher  
19 Licensure waiver request, which is number 15. I  
20 believe my concern before was that, first thing, you  
21 need to add the rules, which they do want to add the  
22 rule, Section 7. And the school has confirmed that  
23 they are aware they must meet all Arkansas Qualified  
24 Teaching standards and that all special education  
25 teachers will have full licensure.

1                   If all that is correct, I would just ask the  
2 school to please confirm I've got it all right.

3                   MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, that's correct.

4                   MS. JAMES: I'm sorry; I should remind you --

5                   (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Mr. Randolph comes to  
6 the microphone.)

7                   MS. JAMES: Please confirm I've got it all  
8 right.

9                   MR. RANDOLPH: No, we do confirm that. Yes.

10   QUESTIONS

11                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. We're  
12 ready to start our questions then.

13                   Ms. -- Dr. Wright-McMurray, would you start us  
14 off?

15                   DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I did have a question I  
16 wanted to go back to just for my clarification. You  
17 said you don't have any students that are elementary  
18 age enrolled in virtual?

19                   MR. RANDOLPH: That's correct.

20                   DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So that allows them to  
21 waive the recess?

22                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah, you don't need --

23                   DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Do you not ever anticipate  
24 having any students enrolled at that level?

25                   MR. RANDOLPH: No, ma'am. No. In fact, when we

1           came last summer to -- on the digital learning plan  
2           that was one thing that we were very adamant about --

3           DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

4           MR. RANDOLPH: -- was that we felt like K-6 was  
5           where we had the most -- the biggest struggles with  
6           virtual learning last year, and so did not want to  
7           continue that option. And so that was one -- we were  
8           pretty adamant about that. Yes, ma'am.

9           DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

10          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

11          MS. SARACINI: No.

12          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

13          MR. BALDWIN: I was interested in your process  
14          that you went through to re-evaluate your goals. And  
15          then so I do think the goals initially were pretty  
16          aggressive, it looked like, for the population that  
17          you serve. But talk to us how -- about how you  
18          adjusted those goals and how comfortable you are that  
19          you'll hit the goals in the future?

20          MR. RANDOLPH: Sure. And I'd love to have my  
21          colleagues come up and talk about that too, because  
22          that was one of the things that we worked with our  
23          staff and looked at our students and what were things  
24          that were achievable, and even looking at some of the  
25          metrics, for example, for graduation rate, you know.

1           It's very easy, I think, sometimes for people to put  
2           a goal -- like here's our ultimate goal, but is it  
3           truly a smart goal, is it something that's  
4           reasonable, can we achieve it. And so I'd love for  
5           them to talk a little bit more about how they do that  
6           in their building.

7           MS. LAIR: So when we met with our leadership  
8           team -- we have about three teachers on the  
9           leadership team that were there when the previous  
10          charter was renewed. And in visiting with them, they  
11          agreed that those goals were probably a little lofty  
12          going back and looking at that, especially with an  
13          at-risk population. I will use that composite score  
14          for an example; 20 is higher than the national  
15          average, or right at the national average. So  
16          expecting a group of at-risk students to score at  
17          that point was probably a little far-fetched for what  
18          we can really do.

19          Some of the other goals -- we would talk about  
20          those percentages of testing. If our overall scores  
21          are going up, then naturally those scores should  
22          progress along with that. So we felt like not only  
23          -- we know ACT is important, but we looked at some  
24          CTE goals, social-emotional goals. We just felt like  
25          post-Covid re-imagining school is what we've got to

1 do. Nothing is really the same as it was five years  
2 ago when we came for renewal, so that was very  
3 important to us that we be more realistic and looked  
4 at students individually. And hopefully with that  
5 individual growth would bring about the school  
6 growth, as well.

7 MR. BALDWIN: So you -- I heard -- I think I  
8 heard you say that you had several people involved.  
9 And I guess my follow-up question would be: teachers  
10 were involved, and so the folks that are actually  
11 teaching the students were part of the goal setting?

12 MS. LAIR: Yes, sir. For the renewal, yes, sir.  
13 So those goals were not only established by the  
14 leadership team, but we also had student input on  
15 those as well.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers?

18 DR. FLOWERS: Dr. Baldwin asked my question, so  
19 thanks for your response.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams?

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I want to follow-up a  
22 little bit with Mr. Baldwin.

23 First of all, I love the process of you all  
24 presenting the goals and the fact that you didn't  
25 reach those goals. I mean it gives us a look into

1           what you're striving to do, and I agree those goals  
2           were probably somewhat ambitious for those students.  
3           So your new goals look good.

4                     But my question is about your mission statement.  
5           When I look at your old mission statement and look at  
6           your new mission statement, that's quite a growth  
7           process from one to the next. Could you just talk a  
8           little bit about what led you to change your mission  
9           statement and how you went about it?

10                    MS. LAIR: Yes, sir. And I hate to keep  
11           referring to Covid, but that's kind of where we're  
12           at. The last two summers at our back-to-school days  
13           we've really talked about focusing on our why,  
14           developing a sense of who we are as a school and as a  
15           community. We've invited stakeholders into those  
16           meetings, school board members, central office  
17           administrators. We want to make sure that everyone  
18           is on the same page because when we talk about that  
19           at-risk group of students it's important that not  
20           only we reach them at our school but community-wide.  
21           We work with them on finding jobs and different  
22           things. And we just decided a mission overall is  
23           really focusing on their individuality and making  
24           sure that we reach each student separately, but also  
25           as a whole. We feel like if we could do that, then

1 we're really serving our community better, and that  
2 matches up with that mission.

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. Thank you. It's just  
4 when I -- I have it up on my second screen here in  
5 the application. And when you read the first one and  
6 you look at the second one, there's kind of an  
7 epiphany has occurred there. Uh-huh.

8 MS. LAIR: Yes, sir.

9 DR. WILLIAMS: Great job on this. Uh-huh.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Williams.

11 Ms. Saracini?

12 MS. SARACINI: More of a comment. I just  
13 appreciate that when you're -- when you were looking  
14 at your waivers, the ones you weren't utilizing you  
15 rescinded. And to me, I applaud you on that because  
16 sometimes we do not do that; it's easier just to go  
17 on and continue -- which I felt like you analyzed  
18 what you needed, so thank you.

19 MS. LAIR: Thank you.

20 MR. RANDOLPH: And I will say that was one of  
21 the things that we discussed as we were going  
22 through. There were waivers in there, for example,  
23 counseling. Like no, like our kids need a counselor,  
24 so that's not something we would pursue. So that was  
25 something we discussed.

1           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So let me ask the question,  
2 do you feel like you have the waivers necessary to  
3 implement your digital learning plan for the next  
4 five years? Because I mean that all ends with your  
5 charter and so as you're renewing, you're renewing  
6 your full concept.

7           MR. RANDOLPH: And I would say -- so on those  
8 digital waivers, so I included an addendum that I  
9 hope you all got on Friday and it was specific to  
10 that digital learning plan because that was one  
11 concern that we had. We were just reviewing things  
12 last week and went Oh, heavens, what we went through  
13 this summer is not on our charter renewal. And so  
14 with those waivers that are part of that digital  
15 learning plan we can continue on and be successful  
16 with digital learning. But those that were on the  
17 initial application we submitted, we would need those  
18 additional waivers from the summer.

19           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. James, did you get a  
20 chance to review those?

21           MS. JAMES: I got the addendum last night, so I  
22 can pull that up here.

23           MR. RANDOLPH: And like I said, it's exactly --

24           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

25           MR. RANDOLPH: -- what we submitted this summer.

1                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Let's let -- let's give Ms.  
2 James a few moments to review those.

3                   In reading through, your program is a 200-to-1  
4 ratio max is what you've recommended on Class Size  
5 and Teaching Load. And, honestly, as I'm reading  
6 through, the waivers all make sense to me. I'm stuck  
7 on the school calendar.

8                   MR. RANDOLPH: Sure.

9                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And the reason I'm stuck on  
10 it is because, I mean, we're asking districts to make  
11 district decisions. I don't have a good rationale  
12 for why and "in case" doesn't sit well with me.

13                  MR. RANDOLPH: Okay.

14                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Because we amend so easily  
15 and quickly when schools need it and they come with  
16 their rationale, and that's what I'm hung on without  
17 a rationale.

18                  MR. RANDOLPH: Okay.

19                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I mean I need a solid reason.  
20 Because you have flexibility with, you know, the  
21 school day and how many hours the kids are doing, and  
22 I just need a reason for why you might need to start  
23 early. Going longer -- I mean we allow kids to go to  
24 summer school and there's lots of programs for kids  
25 to continue their learning. But official school

1 calendars are very important to me.

2 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am. I will tell you the  
3 conversation that we had was just looking at, you  
4 know, the need that may exist for students to come in  
5 we'll say two weeks before school starts, before  
6 everyone else comes to school, having an earlier  
7 start date.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So you can do that now, I  
9 mean with a select group of students. It's when  
10 you're taking a school calendar and you're saying  
11 everyone starts at a certain time and all of our  
12 contracts start at a certain time. So just like you  
13 can have summer school, you can have a pre-start  
14 opportunity for kids that want to attend, you can do  
15 that now. I mean that's just -- we never -- we are  
16 never sad about adding educational opportunities for  
17 kids. So I mean lots of people have summer schools  
18 that, you know, go right after school ends in the  
19 summer or in the mid-summer or they'll do kind of a  
20 pre-learning opportunity for kids before the school  
21 year officially begins.

22 MR. RANDOLPH: But would that count towards --  
23 so if we had 190-day contracts, is that something we  
24 would -- because in our summer services we typically  
25 pay those staff members to come and work those other

1 hours; it's not counted in that 190 days. Do we have  
2 flexibility to do that and have it be part of the  
3 190?

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: As long as you're providing  
5 178 days of instructional opportunities to all  
6 students. I mean how you design your --

7 MR. RANDOLPH: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you were having some  
9 people that started earlier with a small group and  
10 other people that were ending later with the later  
11 groups, those are all decisions that you're making.  
12 We don't set the -- we set the amount; we don't set  
13 the timeframe. So, yeah, there's some flexibility in  
14 doing that. Just know that you're not going to be  
15 able to end school in April and say, "Oh, well, we  
16 did all of ours two weeks early."

17 MR. RANDOLPH: Sure.

18 MS. LAIR: Okay. That makes sense.

19 MR. RANDOLPH: So I mean do we see wanting to  
20 start the school or would it be just a select group  
21 of students, do you think?

22 MS. LAIR: I would say a select group. Yeah.

23 MR. RANDOLPH: Okay.

24 MS. LAIR: Yeah.

25 MR. RANDOLPH: Well, can we rescind that?

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You certainly can.

2 And the point is if it -- if you try that with  
3 select kids and see, oh, that's super successful,  
4 then, you know, there's always a process to come back  
5 and say, "Oh, we've got data now to say this worked."

6 MS. LAIR: Okay.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then we might need to  
8 amend based on something that we know works, not --  
9 we need a little more reason.

10 MR. RANDOLPH: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. James, when you're ready.

12 MS. JAMES: I believe the only two additional  
13 waivers -- and y'all can confirm this -- that they  
14 wanted to add that are related to their digital  
15 learning plan that they didn't have on their original  
16 application are the Attendance waiver and the Clock  
17 Hours waiver. Is that correct?

18 MR. RANDOLPH: Correct.

19 MS. JAMES: Okay. And the Attendance is code  
20 section 6-18-213(a)(2) and Clock Hours is Standard 1-  
21 a.2. I don't have any issues with that if they need  
22 it for their digital learning plan, but we can go  
23 ahead and add that to the waiver list.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So you would be confirming  
25 that you're taking attendance based on the students'

1 engagement in their online activities, as opposed to  
2 physical presence?

3 MS. LAIR: Yes, ma'am.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And you're confirming that on  
5 the Clock Hours, because you're required to have 120  
6 clock hours to consider that a credit in high school,  
7 that the students have completed coursework --

8 MR. RANDOLPH: Correct.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- that would be similar to  
10 the coursework expected of a class for credit?

11 MS. LAIR: Yes, ma'am.

12 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Dr. Wright-McMurray?

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Just more of a comment and  
15 a -- I guess a recommendation. I know that your  
16 district does have a Jobs for Arkansas Graduates  
17 program and we have this aligned with the ALE. From  
18 just looking at your current roster, there's like 25  
19 students on the roster. So maybe there's an  
20 opportunity there for you to build in more students  
21 to be engaged in that program. Because looking at  
22 your anticipated goals, a lot of what the JAG program  
23 addresses and focuses on will help you to meet those  
24 goals. So I just think that -- I just wanted to  
25 encourage you to try to enroll more students in that

1 program and engage them more through that process.

2 MS. LAIR: We have actually partnered with a  
3 local church who will sponsor some of our JAG  
4 students for this upcoming semester, for the spring  
5 semester. So we have 48 that have indicated that  
6 they're going to enroll in JAG in the spring. So --

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Great.

8 MS. LAIR: -- I'm hoping that that's almost  
9 double of what we are at right now.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Very good.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any additional questions?

12 Any questions of us? We're all clear, digital  
13 learning plan included in the process?

14 MR. RANDOLPH: We're good.

15 MS. LAIR: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. Then if  
17 there's no further conversation, I'll accept a  
18 motion.

19 DR. WILLIAMS: Move to approve.

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Dr.  
22 Williams and a second from Dr. Wright-McMurray to  
23 approve the Cabot Panther Academy for five years with  
24 the waivers as discussed.

25 Any discussion?

1 All those in favor?

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

4 Motion passes.

5 Congratulations. As you know the process, we'll  
6 take a moment to record our thoughts and share those  
7 with you. And then at the next State Board meeting  
8 the Board will determine if they will review or not  
9 review.

10 MR. RANDOLPH: Thank you all.

11 MS. LAIR: Thank you.

12 MS. JONES: Thank you.

13 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams, if you would  
15 start us off please.

16 DR. WILLIAMS: Absolutely. I support the  
17 motion. Cabot Panther Academy will continue to meet  
18 the needs of students via in-person, virtual and  
19 hybrid learning. What really stands out is their  
20 work with ALE students.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

22 Dr. Baldwin. Mr. Baldwin. Sorry.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you. I vote to approve the  
24 renewal. I think the program does benefit the  
25 student population that you serve and I really like

1 the fact you re-evaluated your goals and set those at  
2 an appropriate level.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers.

4 DR. FLOWERS: Yes. I vote to approve the  
5 charter renewal for Cabot Panther Academy, with  
6 waivers as discussed. I'm excited about awesome  
7 educational opportunities as you re-imagine  
8 individualized needs while working to meet the needs  
9 of your new smart goals.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

11 Ms. Saracini.

12 MS. SARACINI: I vote to approve the new name of  
13 Cabot Panther Academy and looking forward to seeing  
14 the impact, not only on the students but the  
15 community as well.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I support the motion to  
18 renew. I appreciate the thoughtful consideration of  
19 reviewing and revising goals for the school. I am  
20 encouraged that moving forward seeing that you will  
21 continue to provide a strong environment that will  
22 produce great resources and outcomes for those  
23 students.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Congratulations. I was just  
25 thinking we're the Charter Authorizing Panel, CAP,

1           you're CPA; we could share letters. Congratulations.  
2           So, really amazing work going on there with kids.

3                   And I will share Karli and I were so impressed  
4           when we were talking to the students, but -- so my  
5           impression was very high. But then when I got to  
6           talk to one of your teachers and talk about the  
7           shared role in the traditional school as opposed to  
8           the academy she was really thoughtful and insightful.  
9           And just the idea that the things that she's learning  
10          in your school could be transferred to the other  
11          school to benefit all students is really exciting.  
12          So, keep that conversation going; we're really proud  
13          of you.

14                   Thank you.

15                   If you would like to take -- Tim, there you are  
16          -- would you like to take about a 6-minute break so  
17          we can get our next group in and get everything  
18          ready?

19                   MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, ma'am.

20                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Thank you.

21                   (BREAK: 9:59 A.M. - 10:06 A.M.)

22                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Let's call our  
23          meeting back together.

24          IV.2. HOT SPRINGS JUNIOR ACADEMY

25                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Johnston, if you'll

1 present our next agenda item.

2 MR. JOHNSTON: Tim Johnston, DESE Charter Unit.

3 Next is Hot Springs Junior Academy. The  
4 district is requesting renewal for the Hot Springs  
5 Junior Academy for a five-year period. The campus  
6 currently serves grades 7-9. The current enrollment  
7 cap is 900 students and the charter will continue to  
8 follow a traditional education model. And present we  
9 have Dr. Taryn Echols and William Brazle.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you will stand and raise  
11 your right hand please? Do you swear or affirm that  
12 the testimony you're about to give shall be the  
13 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

14 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. You are  
16 recognized. If you'll state your name for the record  
17 please, you may begin.

18 DR. ECHOLS: I'm Taryn Echols.

19 MR. BRAZLE: And I'm William Brazle, Head  
20 Principal of the Junior Academy.

21 DR. ECHOLS: He really goes by Billy, so we're  
22 going to call him Billy today.

23 Thank you all for allowing us to come today. We  
24 are going to talk you through Hot Springs Junior  
25 Academy and their charter renewal. Today, you're

1 going to learn about our original charter goal  
2 progress, Glows and Grows, through the last five year  
3 moving forward, and then waiver requests. We just  
4 added them in the presentation, so that will be the  
5 end of our kind of communications part.

6 HSJA is really preparing our students for the  
7 flagship at Hot Springs World Class High School. So,  
8 many of you saw me last year when we came via Zoom to  
9 ask for another five-year renewal for the high  
10 school. And so the Junior Academy is our flagship.  
11 Currently, they serve 821 scholars grades 7-9. And  
12 Hot Springs School District is the most diverse  
13 school district within Garland County. You can see  
14 our demographics there, but those demographics and  
15 what I'm going to talk to you about in the next  
16 couple of slides don't define the work that is going  
17 on at Hot Springs Junior Academy.

18 In 2020-2021, HSJA was selected to participate  
19 in the PLC pilot Cohort 4. They had applied twice  
20 and finally received the application during the 2021  
21 school year. So since then, I kind of want to talk  
22 about the things that have happened over the last  
23 year-and-a-half. The school has established  
24 essential standards and have passed them for learning  
25 targets, which is a key focus on providing a high-

1 quality learning experience for all students; they  
2 revised the mission and the vision, created a  
3 celebration tracker -- and Mr. Brazle is going to  
4 talk to you all a little bit more about that -- that  
5 houses all of their essential learning and  
6 assessments for all content; and they've added a plan  
7 to attack reading and math achievement through  
8 targeted RTI and core instruction.

9 The mission of Hot Springs Junior Academy is to  
10 insure high levels of learning for all students to  
11 compete in a global society. And that vision now is  
12 to become a national model PLC school by the  
13 completion of the 2022-2023 school year.

14 So I want to talk briefly about the goals that  
15 the school had over the last five years. What I  
16 found when I took this role is that both conversion  
17 charter applications were actually written very  
18 differently. What we've tried to do this next go-  
19 around is really make them cohesive so that the goals  
20 at the Junior Academy really reflect what happens  
21 once students get to the high school.

22 So the first goal of the last five years was to  
23 increase mathematics achievement. If you look  
24 throughout the application, you'll see I put a  
25 rationale in there as to why mathematics achievement

1 has not increased. Part of that was due to a lack of  
2 core content instruction. Our -- the school at the  
3 time was using the Math 180 program; but instead of  
4 using that as an intervention, it was the core  
5 instruction and that was not the right way to utilize  
6 that platform. So we took that away two years ago  
7 and we have started implementing Eureka Math, which  
8 is what we used kindergarten through 6th grade; we  
9 use that now kindergarten through 8th grade. And  
10 with the help of our math instructional facilitator  
11 and myself, working with Mr. Brazle and his team,  
12 we've really worked through to develop essential  
13 standards and learning targets, specific and directed  
14 response to intervention for students who are not  
15 scoring where they need to or mastering those  
16 essentials, and then improving the mathematics  
17 curriculum.

18 The next goal from the last five years was to  
19 increase literacy achievement. If you look in the  
20 packet, the rationale is similar to what the  
21 rationale was for the mathematics achievement. The  
22 school at the time used Read 180; but instead of  
23 using it as a targeted intervention program, they  
24 were using it as a core instruction program and that  
25 was not the intent of the platform. Therefore, our

1 students' literacy scores, specifically in reading,  
2 did not increase. So what we've done over the last  
3 two years is the development of those same essential  
4 standards but targeted them for literacy and reading,  
5 specific and directed response to intervention. But  
6 we also added some courses. So we added the reading  
7 courses, critical reading, academic reading, and we  
8 added those courses in for our 7th and 8th grade  
9 students. I think I came two years ago to ask for  
10 the district alignment to change. Originally in the  
11 charter the alignment was 7th and 8th grade only; now  
12 it is 7th, 8th and 9th grade. So we configured both  
13 campuses and now our Junior Academy campus houses 9th  
14 grade students, so we had to make some changes in  
15 regards to curriculum and instruction.

16 The next goal was to provide career exposure and  
17 opportunities for students. This goal had very  
18 limited progress, and I believe the last time I was  
19 here one of the statements that I very much remember  
20 is Leadership Matters. And when you have someone who  
21 is at the forefront of implementation of a conversion  
22 charter, you have to know how to take the vision and  
23 implement that and make it come to life. Right --  
24 during the last five years this goal was not achieved  
25 in the original way that the charter was presented.

1           The school changed master schedules from year to  
2           year, they changed their schedule in general from  
3           year to year, and that just didn't adhere to what the  
4           original goals of the charter needed. So what we've  
5           done over the last two years is now our current  
6           master schedule -- we sat down -- Mr. Brazle is a new  
7           principal, so let me back up to that. We hired him  
8           back in April, and so when we hired Mr. Brazle he and  
9           I sat down and really talked about the last five  
10          years. And I told him, "Part of your first year you  
11          get to renew your conversion charter at the Junior  
12          Academy." Luckily, he was assistant principal at the  
13          high school, so he knew what kind of needed to happen  
14          in order for us to make that work. So we put some  
15          things in place in the current master schedule for  
16          this school year to add this, providing exposure to  
17          students. But also our Tuesday and Thursday seminar  
18          classes, he's done a really good job of taking what  
19          we talked about this summer and really making it  
20          happen with our students.

21                 The standards-based report card -- there is no  
22          standards-based report card at the 7th and 8th grade  
23          levels for our students right now. I took that as a  
24          goal from the district level. When I started this  
25          position we had standards-based report cards K-2;

1 we've moved those up to 6th grade for this year. But  
2 right now, we've had a lot of discussion about that  
3 and we don't think that that is something that we're  
4 going to pursue any time soon. It is a challenge  
5 doing standards-based report cards if you really want  
6 to do them effectively through the Professional  
7 Learning Community process. So we really are trying  
8 to hone in on the effectiveness of that kindergarten  
9 through 6th grade before we try to put that on our  
10 teachers and students at the 7th and 8th grade level.

11 And then, lastly was monitoring student  
12 progress. If you read the original application, this  
13 goal was very vague. To monitor student progress is  
14 something that we should always be doing anyways. So  
15 the evidence that we had was not concrete evidence  
16 that we had monitored student progress the way it was  
17 written in the original application. So Mr. Brazle  
18 and I talked through -- one of the greatest things  
19 that I think he has access to right now is his  
20 Celebration Tracker. And what it does is it gives  
21 him a live view of actually what students are  
22 learning and what they're doing and what skills  
23 they're gaining in their classrooms on a day-to-day  
24 basis. So that's kind of where we are right now. It  
25 has CFAs and CSAs and then also access to ACT

1 summative assessments and NWEA, all for each student  
2 compartmentalized in one complete document.

3 So if you look at the last five years you're  
4 probably going to say, "Well, what progress did you  
5 really make?" We have made some progress, but it has  
6 been limited. The thing that I'm most proud of  
7 though is the conversations that Mr. Brazle and I  
8 have had over the summer to start implementing what  
9 needed to change, effective immediately.

10 Our ESSA School Index -- obviously, the school  
11 for the 17-18, 18-19 school year earned a D letter  
12 grade. We didn't have ESSA school letter grades for  
13 the last two years, but SQSS did improve at the  
14 Junior Academy quite significantly. And I can tell  
15 you part of that was just an error on the part of our  
16 attendance keeping. The attendance component/student  
17 engagement on the ESSA School Index, the score was  
18 very low during the 18-19 school year. So I did a  
19 little digging and found out that the way that they  
20 were taking school attendance was incorrect, so we  
21 fixed that, as well as done some training with his  
22 staff on what each component of the ESSA School Index  
23 means. Because it's very, very important for staff  
24 to know, not just your leadership but staff to know  
25 how all of those indicators align to your school

1 letter grade.

2 So your harsh reality is always better than  
3 false hope. We can hope that things will get better,  
4 but, you know, I really had to sit down with our  
5 superintendent and we had to talk about what we  
6 needed in the next leader at Hot Springs Junior  
7 Academy. So what has to change in order for us to  
8 execute the conversion charter vision? Who has the  
9 leadership capacity to support the school community?  
10 I'm only one person servicing six and seven campuses  
11 across our district. How does the school district  
12 support the continuity of a 7-12 conversion charter?  
13 Because that really is our vision as far as students  
14 to leave us with a value-added diploma, but doing  
15 school differently and providing the opportunities  
16 that they may not have at the seven other school  
17 districts within the county.

18 And then, what are our next steps? So  
19 leadership is action, not necessarily position. And  
20 I think we acted upon a gem having Mr. Brazle knowing  
21 the background of the Junior Academy and also knowing  
22 what it takes to implement the components of a  
23 conversion charter. So he's going to talk to you all  
24 a little bit now about what we've done since we hired  
25 him in April and then the goals that he and his

1           guiding coalition and students at the Junior Academy  
2           have decided upon for the next five years.

3           MR. BRAZLE: All right. Good morning,  
4           everybody.

5           One of the first things, coming from the high  
6           school as an assistant principal and then being hired  
7           as the head principal at the Junior Academy, I got a  
8           great taste of seeing those Junior Academy kids come  
9           up to us and seeing that that was a huge transition  
10          for them. And as most of you know, the hardest  
11          transition is really that 6th grade year into that  
12          junior high year. And one of the things that we  
13          decided to do really as an entire district was make  
14          that a 7-12 shared campus; so our Junior Academy is  
15          right next door to our high school. So when I came  
16          over to the Junior Academy one of the things I wanted  
17          to instill is I want your hardest transition to be  
18          from that 6th to 7th grade, and from then on  
19          everything that we do is to not only get you better  
20          prepared for your education every single year but  
21          also easily transition you into high school to where  
22          when it comes to the high school it's time for your  
23          learning and not time to worry about, man, what is  
24          9th grade going to be like when I go to this  
25          different school.

1           So, one of the things that we focused on was our  
2           culture and our culture of collaboration. Our vision  
3           is to be a model PLC school by the end of the 2022-  
4           2023 school year, and a big part of that is our  
5           collaboration, the way our teachers come together and  
6           insure that we have a guaranteed and viable  
7           curriculum for all of our students to make sure that  
8           when they leave our grade levels that they are going  
9           to be -- they are going to know the essentials. So  
10          that's one of the things that we've established.

11          You guys can see what we have there. We wanted  
12          to expand opportunities for our students by getting  
13          out into the community. You guys see that  
14          newsletter. That newsletter goes out to our  
15          community so they can see what's going on inside of  
16          the school, but they also can get a glimpse into who  
17          we are. So, they know who the leadership is, they  
18          also know who the support staff are, but they see  
19          what's going on in our campus all the time.

20          One of the things that we also have on our  
21          latest newsletter is we have interviews from our  
22          students. And these interviews from our students are  
23          students that did not get their essentials the first  
24          time and they were able to pass that essential, their  
25          CFA, that second time. And what we asked was what

1           caused you to get that essential that second time,  
2           and we were able to hear from students when they were  
3           able to say, "Well, my teacher slowed it down for  
4           me;" "My teacher gave me a different way to look at  
5           something." And that's a change that we've made  
6           within the school because, as we know, the  
7           traditional learning is you get it or you don't -- or  
8           my only way of intervening is I'm going to say it  
9           louder and slower. Well, now, we have targeted  
10          interventions. So instead of saying like, "Hey, I'm  
11          going to hold you back and teach it because you got  
12          an F on the test, I'm going to hold you back because  
13          you're having trouble solving equations using that  
14          three-step process." So those interventions became  
15          targeted and our essentials became clear. And our  
16          students, if you ask them what their essential is,  
17          what is your learning, they can tell you, and they  
18          can tell you what they're struggling with.

19                 I'm missing today our 9th grade celebration in  
20          which we get to have our 9th graders walk across the  
21          stage for all of our 9th graders who passed all of  
22          their essentials for the first semester. We had our  
23          first 8th grade celebration last Thursday. So the  
24          thing is, is we're bringing these things to life.  
25          It's no longer about you're learning or you're not

1 learning; it's no longer about hope you make it; it's  
2 no longer about whether you have an A or an F. It's  
3 about can you tell me what your essential is, did you  
4 learn your essential. And if you walk in our  
5 building and you say, "What are your students  
6 learning and how do you know," not only can the  
7 teachers tell you that but the students can tell you  
8 that as well.

9 So we have refocused our goals, and our focus in  
10 our goals is to make sure that not only is our Junior  
11 Academy excellent but I am preparing each and every  
12 student to make sure that they're going to be  
13 successful in high school as well.

14 So, number one, we want to take part in career  
15 exploration to align with our academies at the high  
16 schools. So we have career development; we also have  
17 increased enrollment in JAG; and we have a very big  
18 focus on showing students the different types of  
19 opportunities they have to whenever they go to high  
20 school to select their academy they're easily able to  
21 not only select it and know what they're wanting to  
22 do, but also know what their educational experience  
23 is going to be when they go on to high school.

24 By 2027, we want to increase our enrollment in  
25 our advanced courses. We're an IB school, and in our

1 school we have the middle years program which is the  
2 middle part of the IB program. We want to increase  
3 that to 40% of our students. In the past what we've  
4 done is we've kind of identified our GT students and  
5 said, "You'll be the ones taking IB." And one of the  
6 things that we're wanting to open up is to ask our  
7 kids, especially when we're going to talk to our 6th  
8 graders coming into 7th grade, do you want a more  
9 rigorous curriculum; do you want the opportunity to  
10 be able to have a more rigorous curriculum. So we  
11 want to open that enrollment to more students to  
12 where there are more students that have the  
13 opportunity for advanced courses besides just ones  
14 that are targeted for GT. Also, by 2027, we want our  
15 ESSA report card to reflect student growth by 5% each  
16 year in weighted achievement, ELA and math.

17 Dr. Echols did a wonderful job of talking about  
18 some of the things that we have in place. And one of  
19 the things that we're doing is we're targeting our  
20 students with specific essentials. And also with  
21 that targeting we're -- one of the first things we  
22 did when I walked in is we looked at our ACT Aspire  
23 scores. We looked at our students that are close to  
24 being ready; we put them in special seminar classes  
25 that were targeted for Tier 3 supports. So those

1 students have two times a week, Tuesday and Thursday,  
2 in which they get to work on below grade level skills  
3 while still getting grade level instruction within  
4 the classroom. So they get additional support that's  
5 already built into their schedule. That same thing  
6 is happening beginning in January for our students  
7 receiving those same scores in reading. So they get  
8 additional reading supports that are targeted  
9 throughout the school day, again, that's built into  
10 their schedule already.

11 And also by 2027 we want to streamline the live  
12 PLC data tracker in the student success plan to  
13 increase progress on student academic and social  
14 standards.

15 One of the things that Dr. Echols talked about  
16 previously was our celebration tracker. That's  
17 really a data tracker. What you're able to do when  
18 you walk in is you're able to look at what 8th grade  
19 math -- excuse me -- what 8th grade math, science,  
20 English, social studies is doing. We can look at  
21 their essentials; we can look at what the CFA looks  
22 like; we can look at what the data looks like. It  
23 also can pinpoint what type of interventions and  
24 extensions that you've giving those students. And  
25 it's a live data tracker to where we know where our

1 students are at all times. So, again, when the  
2 principal calls somebody in the office it's not just  
3 about whether you have an A or an F; "I see that  
4 you're really struggling with supporting your claim  
5 using evidence in your English class. What type of  
6 things can we put in place to make sure that we can  
7 help you with that?" And I believe wholeheartedly  
8 that that's the type of success that we're going to  
9 show utilizing this is the type of instruction that  
10 we're going to have on a daily basis within our  
11 Junior Academy.

12 Our goal one is really focused on careers. We  
13 are an academy school at the high school in which we  
14 have different types of avenues that you can go into.  
15 We're just wanting to make sure that we give our  
16 students opportunities to really see that type of  
17 success that's available. We want to bring in guest  
18 speakers from the community. One of the things that  
19 we believe is that our students -- it's going to be a  
20 hard thing for them to achieve these type of things  
21 if they don't see the type of success that's really  
22 out there. So we want to bring people in from the  
23 community that have had these type of success in the  
24 medical field, the educational field, and other type  
25 of businesses as well.

1           And as we said, you know, increased  
2 participation in our MYP program -- and that's really  
3 we want to make sure that it is a rigorous  
4 curriculum, but we want to make sure that our  
5 students have the opportunity to see that; they have  
6 the opportunity not only for grade level instruction,  
7 but beyond. And having them have that offered to  
8 them, it's going to be a big help for us and I'm  
9 really excited to see the type of numbers. We've  
10 already seen some increased numbers of students that  
11 have really never thought about taking advanced  
12 classes to where they wanted to take those advanced  
13 classes now.

14           The third goal there, the focus on instruction,  
15 I'm an instructional leader. I'm just an old  
16 teacher. I want to go in and I want to teach every  
17 class at a high level. And one of the goals we have  
18 in our building is high levels of instruction in  
19 every classroom, every day. I want to make sure that  
20 when you send your kids to us -- there's no teacher  
21 lottery; I hope that they get this teacher. No. We  
22 -- every classroom that you end up on you're going to  
23 be getting high levels of instruction, you're going  
24 to get targeted intervention, and targeted extensions  
25 as well. And that's a goal for us that we're really

1 excited about and the focus on student success. High  
2 levels of instruction every classroom every day means  
3 that when you walk in my door I want you to be  
4 successful. Success looks a lot different for every  
5 single person -- but I promise you, when we find out  
6 what your level of success is we want to go beyond  
7 that. You can always better your best. The thing is  
8 that some of our students have never realizing what  
9 it is to push past their own weaknesses. So one of  
10 the things that we do with every student who walks  
11 through our doors is we want to make sure that they  
12 can better their best and that they know that we're  
13 not going to give up on them, no matter what. And  
14 part of that goes into their social-emotional  
15 learning, as well as the high levels of instruction  
16 that they're going to be getting on a daily basis.

17 So our master schedule has really reflected the  
18 type of changes that we're going to make. We have  
19 added, you know, health and career development as now  
20 standalone courses and not just taught through other  
21 subjects. We also have an NJROTC program that hits  
22 on those same things as well. My biggest thing,  
23 again, when I came over to the Junior Academy I saw  
24 what type of transition it was for those 9th graders  
25 to come over into our building. It's a big

1 transition because they weren't used to the building;  
2 it's all new leaders; it's all new -- it's a whole  
3 new environment. So what we're doing now is we  
4 really have a 7-12 building so they know those  
5 leaders, they know those teachers; so it's a really  
6 easy transition from that 9th grade year to your 10th  
7 grade year. You've already been in that building and  
8 those expectations are the same. There's not some  
9 certain rule that's at the Junior Academy that's not  
10 at the high school. So what we've done is we really  
11 wanted to make sure that that transition for them has  
12 really been easy and something that where they can  
13 focus on learning and not focus on learning a whole  
14 new set of standards.

15 Seminar -- our 45-minute period that we have on  
16 Tuesday and Thursday has been revamped and it has  
17 also been, again, targeted. In the past it was  
18 something where we kind of talked about a lot of  
19 different things -- you know, it went in a lot of  
20 different ways. What I wanted was I wanted you to  
21 know what your Tuesday and Thursday was going to  
22 consist of. So I may not tell you that you -- you're  
23 going to be doing below grade level math instruction,  
24 but what I am telling you is you're going to get  
25 extra math practice that you're going to be able to

1 utilize. That way, when you have your math class  
2 that you're getting grade level instruction, you're  
3 going to dominate those things that you haven't been  
4 doing well in. So we really turned that around. And  
5 one of the things we're wanting to do for next year,  
6 after seeing how successful this has been so far with  
7 our Tuesday and Thursdays we're wanting to move that  
8 plan to Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. We  
9 have an early-out Wednesday, which is also for our  
10 PLCs, and we get out at 2:10. Our teachers meet from  
11 2:30 to 3:30 for planning for the PLC process. But  
12 what this does is it just touches our Monday,  
13 Tuesday, Thursday and Friday to where our students  
14 get more practice with those skills that they're  
15 learning to basically get those skills that are for  
16 their on-level instruction.

17 Our reading plan development I'm really excited  
18 about. This is something that I have kind of banged  
19 my head on a wall for and asked Dr. Echols to help  
20 me, because I've got to just figure out a way to help  
21 with reading in the school. And we came together and  
22 we came up with a way of addressing it to where --  
23 traditionally, these things just go through English  
24 class. Literacy can be impacted by everybody.  
25 Everybody is a literacy teacher. So we did come up

1 with a way of -- in our ELA classes we work on  
2 morphemic awareness daily. So these are one to three  
3 minute lessons that you can teach to where students  
4 are getting more phonemic awareness. And then in our  
5 science classes we've begun to look at measured  
6 progress databases, as well as baby data nuggets  
7 which are ways in which you get to look at charts and  
8 have to read charts, as well as doing closed reading  
9 within -- using your science lens.

10 And then, lastly, our social studies classes  
11 where they -- they're looking at Newsela articles and  
12 doing closed reading strategies. So some of our  
13 social studies classes, we're doing closed reading,  
14 but now with Newsela they're doing specific closed  
15 reading all on the same articles -- and it's not  
16 something that they're having to go look for a lot of  
17 resources; they already have those right there at  
18 their fingertips. So that's something as well. But  
19 we're going to be touching on reading in every class,  
20 and that was something that I'm going to be -- I'm  
21 just very, very excited about that's going to start  
22 at the beginning of this semester and I'm really  
23 excited to see what the progress shows with that.

24 And I've touched on this a little bit earlier,  
25 but just our guest speakers that we're going to bring

1 in. We have -- we've already got lined up, we've got  
2 a doctor, some of the community that's going to come  
3 in; we've also got a few nurses that are coming in.  
4 But one thing that I'm really excited about is at the  
5 high school we have some kids that are doing their --  
6 they have a nursing field that they're getting into.  
7 Those students are actually coming in to basically  
8 recruit our kids into that medical practice in the --  
9 at that secondary level. And I'm real excited about  
10 that because not only are those my old kids, but at  
11 the same time I want my kids to see the success of  
12 somebody else that's just a little bit older than  
13 them. So that's something that I'm just really,  
14 really excited about.

15 DR. ECHOLS: That is the end of our  
16 conversation. So that concludes the waiver request.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Thank you. Thank  
18 you.

19 Ms. James, if you'll come up and go over the  
20 waivers.

21 And then stay close because we'll have  
22 questions. You're prepared, aren't you, Dr. Echols?  
23 Not her first rodeo.

24 WAIVERS/LEGAL CONCERNS

25 MS. JAMES: My name is Whitney James with the

1 Department. I just want to go over the final review.

2 The first waiver -- the first request was to  
3 rescind the waiver of CTE. And I believe that might  
4 have actually even been an old standard. So they  
5 just want to go ahead and rescind that.

6 They've also asked for Teacher Licensure  
7 waivers. And my comment there was that they would  
8 also need a waiver of standard 4-d.1. Would you  
9 please confirm that you would like to add that to  
10 your waiver request?

11 DR. ECHOLS: Yes, we would like to confirm to  
12 add that to our waiver request.

13 MS. JAMES: Okay. Thank you.

14 The third waiver request was for Class Size and  
15 Teaching Load. I did not have any legal concerns  
16 with that.

17 The fourth one, they want to rescind Health and  
18 Safety Courses. I believe that was also an outdated  
19 standard. And, of course, no issues with that.

20 The fifth waiver request is to continue Seat  
21 Time and Planned Instructional Day. I did not have  
22 any legal comments regarding that waiver. I just ask  
23 that Dr. Echols please confirm that everything I've  
24 stated is correct.

25 DR. ECHOLS: Yes, everything she has stated is

1 correct. And if you all want me to expand upon the  
2 rescinding of the career courses and the health and  
3 safety, I can give you some rationale behind that.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. James --

5 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- on the Seat Time, are we  
7 talking 120 hours for the 9th grade classes?

8 MS. JAMES: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

10 MS. JAMES: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: The wording was throwing me  
12 off.

13 MS. JAMES: Okay. Yes.

14 I do have a question about their digital  
15 learning plan.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah, I do too.

17 MS. JAMES: Okay. As far as -- and I'm still  
18 not quite sure what we're doing regarding those  
19 waivers. If they want to continue the waivers  
20 associated with their digital learning plan, is now  
21 the time to do that?

22 DR. ECHOLS: We only do it for one year, last  
23 year, and we still are having conversations of if we  
24 want to offer the digital component for next year.  
25 So we haven't made a concrete decision about that.

1 We are continuing, obviously, with this year. But  
2 our numbers at the Junior Academy and high school for  
3 digital learning were low. We actually have a  
4 partnership with Arch Ford and offer ALE through Arch  
5 Ford in the hub. So the hub has a digital component  
6 where we wouldn't have to necessarily offer it  
7 through the school. So we hadn't completely made a  
8 decision on if we were going to continue to ask for  
9 the digital learning component for next year for both  
10 the Junior Academy and the high school. We did it  
11 for this year, but I just don't know if it's going to  
12 be beneficial for us to offer that for next year  
13 because our numbers are just low.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So you would want to come  
15 back at a later time and amend if you decide you --

16 DR. ECHOLS: Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- wanted to continue?

18 DR. ECHOLS: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. That would be fine.

20 Ms. James, I'm still confused about number five,  
21 Seat Time and Planned Instructional Day. So I want  
22 to make sure we're on the same page as to what we're  
23 continuing the waiver for. So that is not the Clock  
24 Hours standard.

25 MS. JAMES: Okay. Let me look at something just

1 real quick.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So, Dr. Echols, exactly --

3 MS. JAMES: I'm so sorry. I feel like I'm right  
4 in your way.

5 DR. ECHOLS: No, you're good.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Are you waiving -- the Seat  
7 Time blew me -- confused me, so -- because we did  
8 away with Seat Time.

9 DR. ECHOLS: Right.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So are you just wanting a  
11 waiver of the Six-Hour Instructional Day?

12 DR. ECHOLS: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That's it?

14 DR. ECHOLS: Yes.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Okay. Okay.

16 DR. ECHOLS: And in my -- I mean, you know,  
17 sometimes doing the waivers can be a little  
18 cumbersome, so --

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes.

20 DR. ECHOLS: We don't need the Seat Time. I  
21 don't think I had Seat Time --

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah. It may have just  
23 gotten transferred that way.

24 DR. ECHOLS: Yes.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I just want to make sure

1 we're --

2 DR. ECHOLS: Yeah. The way I have it written in  
3 here is Six-Hour Instructional Day.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Great.

5 MS. JAMES: And I apologize for the confusion.  
6 Whenever I'm typing up the final legal reviews I make  
7 everything exactly what is on the application just so  
8 there's no confusion. So sometimes the waiver will  
9 not be named correctly, but I still transfer it  
10 exactly as it is so we all know what we're talking  
11 about.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah.

13 MS. JAMES: But I didn't have any legal comments  
14 regarding the standard listed or the statute listed.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right.

16 QUESTIONS

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams, would you like  
18 to kick us off with questions?

19 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, I would.

20 You all have -- I have just kind of a general  
21 concern here. It seems like we've -- and maybe  
22 because I've been on the board -- been on this panel  
23 for so long. I think during the last presentation  
24 that you were here that the discussion was somewhat  
25 similar to this of things to do to improve what's

1 going on. And I'm hearing more of the same. I guess  
2 I just want to just hear you comment on do you think  
3 this is going to get us where we need to be. That's  
4 just kind of where I'm at.

5 DR. ECHOLS: Sure. I mean, and that's a valid  
6 concern. I guess the way that I will answer that is  
7 the way I answered it at the beginning of the  
8 presentation. Having a vision for a conversion  
9 charter is one thing, but being able to implement the  
10 components of the conversion charter is another. So  
11 leadership does matter and we have seen great gains  
12 at the high school. And I talked to you all about  
13 that last year around this time because we had  
14 effective implementation of what the goals were  
15 actually supposed to be. Very transparent, the goals  
16 over the last five years were not implemented very  
17 effectively. That's neither here nor there in  
18 regards to leadership. But I knew that this was  
19 going to be a challenge, and I kind of talked to Mr.  
20 Brazle about that when we hired him, coming in, you  
21 know. This was something that we were really  
22 passionate about and that we wanted to continue for  
23 our students. But when you look at concrete  
24 evidence, the evidence of increasing student  
25 engagement and increasing student achievement was not

1           there, Covid or not. That's not an excuse for us in  
2           our district. Covid is not an excuse; it is what it  
3           is. It happened, it's still here, but we have to  
4           figure out ways to move beyond that. I do think that  
5           with Mr. Brazle's leadership and the way that we have  
6           refined the goals to really effectively meet the  
7           needs of our students we are moving in the right  
8           direction. And the reason I say that is because I'm  
9           in his building just about every week and I am able  
10          to talk to students who have been there as 7th  
11          graders, who are now 9th graders, who do feel a  
12          culture shift and who can speak to the cultural  
13          changes with the focus on academics, but also the  
14          focus on allowing them to see careers and people from  
15          outside of the community that have already been in  
16          the building this semester.

17                 So I do think that we are on the right track and  
18          moving in the right direction. Even from the high  
19          school last year, you know, we started making some of  
20          those improvements, as I talked to you all about last  
21          year, in December. But I've seen those improvements  
22          change over the last year. It takes a special person  
23          to lead a junior high and a high school campus. I  
24          think we have the right people in place now. And  
25          just in the last four-and-a-half months Mr. Brazle

1 has taken what we've talked about over the summer,  
2 things that we needed to change, and implemented a  
3 lot of those changes for the good and for the  
4 betterment of the students that we serve.

5 Hot Springs is a unique place with six different  
6 school districts within the county. So we do have to  
7 compete and we do have to make ourselves different  
8 and we do have to really just explain to people who  
9 we are and what we provide for our students. So I do  
10 think that we are moving in the right direction, but  
11 that's why I kind of talked to you all about that  
12 upfront, on the front-end, here's what happened over  
13 the last five years. And it wasn't anything to brag  
14 upon. We still had school, we still serviced our  
15 students, but we did not provide them what we put in  
16 the original application which was providing them  
17 with career exploration and doing school differently,  
18 the way that it was implemented or the way that it  
19 was written in the original application. You also  
20 have to remember that neither Mr. Brazle nor myself  
21 wrote the original application. So coming in, in my  
22 role over the last two-and-a-half years, it was how  
23 can we implement what's written right now three years  
24 into the process. That's a challenge. So this is an  
25 opportunity for us to take some of the original

1 pieces that were written in the conversion charter  
2 but make them applicable to what we have right now,  
3 but also make the experience for our students greater  
4 than what they have received in the past.

5 So I hope that answers your question.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Just a follow-up, and this is  
7 just a pretty clear question for me. Do you think a  
8 conversion charter school model is the way to achieve  
9 what you're trying to achieve?

10 DR. ECHOLS: I think that it is the best fit for  
11 us right now. If I'm being a thousand-percent  
12 honest, I think that the conversion charter  
13 application was something that we did at the Junior  
14 Academy level because we wanted -- we saw this vision  
15 to have a 7-12 cohesive model. I do think that  
16 moving forward this is the way that we need to go  
17 just because of the continuity it provides us with  
18 the academy model at the high school. What we have  
19 put in place is a real pathway for students to have  
20 access to all three academy models at the junior high  
21 level so that when they do get to 10th grade they  
22 have had those experiences. One thing that we did  
23 not talk about today is we've already put in place  
24 what the culminating experience is for students 7th  
25 grade, 8th grade and 9th grade prior to them going to

1           10th, 11th and 12th at our high school. And I don't  
2           think that we will be able to culminate those  
3           activities without some of the pieces that we have  
4           with the conversion charter.

5           DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

6           DR. ECHOLS: You're welcome.

7           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers?

8           DR. FLOWERS: I just have two questions.

9           First, when I was looking at so your smart goal  
10          two and then smart goal three as well. So you talk  
11          about creating a literacy plan.

12          DR. ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

13          DR. FLOWERS: So could you please speak on the  
14          process of creating this plan, how you feel it's  
15          going to serve as the best resource to support your  
16          work in those --

17          DR. ECHOLS: Absolutely. We got notification  
18          this year, which I knew was coming -- but this year  
19          we -- our district as a whole was over the 40% in  
20          need of support in reading for ACT Aspire summative  
21          in reading. So we've been working on a literacy plan  
22          primarily at the K-6 level for the last two years.

23          I've spent a lot of time looking at how we fill the  
24          five components of reading foundationally from the  
25          elementary level. A lot of our students 7th grade

1 and up did not get a really good sound phonics base  
2 or phonological awareness base because the Science of  
3 Reading wasn't here yet. So we have a lot of holes  
4 to fill at those levels. So the primary base of the  
5 literacy plan for our secondary campuses was to  
6 include those courses. So we identified students who  
7 really need targeted support in reading, and so  
8 that's where we have the academic reading and the  
9 critical reading.

10 I went back and talked to Mr. Brazle and told  
11 him I felt like we were still missing a large chunk  
12 of students that we serve 7th grade through 12th  
13 grade. So I have two RISE TOTs, which means they  
14 train -- so they come here, do all their training,  
15 and they train everyone in our district. We sat down  
16 and formulated a plan. The phonemic awareness is  
17 where we feel like we're going to get the best bang  
18 for our buck at the present moment for all of our  
19 students. So 5th through 11th grade we've added --  
20 it's a book called More Phonemic Awareness and we've  
21 trained our teachers on that book; so they are using  
22 those one-minute to three-minute drills in their  
23 classrooms daily for ELA. I told Mr. Brazle that I  
24 felt like it really needed to be a holistic approach  
25 because they didn't need to get that targeted piece

1 just in their ELA class. So that's why we added the  
2 science piece which was the measure of progress; it's  
3 actually through Cognia. They -- if you look at the  
4 data from our students, they struggle with  
5 interpreting graphs and charts and they struggle with  
6 just the interpretation. But if they can't read it  
7 for comprehension, then they're not going to be able  
8 to do that. So we really needed to go back through  
9 and figure out how can we provide them with a  
10 rigorous grade level or above assessment daily in  
11 their classes that will translate to them being able  
12 to be successful on ACT. I know the test is not the  
13 end-all be-all, but they still need access to that  
14 every day. What we were seeing is that the CFAs that  
15 our teachers were developing were not rigorous  
16 enough.

17 DR. FLOWERS: Okay.

18 DR. ECHOLS: You know, we'd have 10, 20  
19 questions; that's way too many for a common formative  
20 assessment. We really needed to look at what we were  
21 asking and how we were asking it. So that's going to  
22 be the piece that's added for science.

23 And then for social studies students need to be  
24 able to read every day. They should have access to  
25 some form of reading every single day. So we have

1 added in the close reading strategy. You hear about  
2 that a lot at the elementary level. But we really  
3 need to put some of those components back at our  
4 secondary campuses. So within the day of a Junior  
5 Academy student, they're going to have close reading  
6 strategies through their social studies classes;  
7 they're going to have morphemic awareness, plus the  
8 addition of our new curriculum that we've added  
9 kindergarten through 8th grade, which is Wit and  
10 Wisdom for all of our students in the district. And  
11 then you get to measure progress through your science  
12 classes.

13 So that's the basic component of our literacy  
14 plan. It's a very -- have to write a level 3  
15 coordinated support plan; it's about 19 pages long.  
16 I could talk to you all about it, if you want me to.  
17 But that in a nutshell is kind of what we're doing  
18 for our secondary campuses.

19 DR. FLOWERS: Okay. Thank you so much for that.

20 DR. ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

21 DR. FLOWERS: My next question about your  
22 revised student success plan --

23 DR. ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

24 DR. FLOWERS: -- how do you go about assigning  
25 an advisor to the students?

1 DR. ECHOLS: So it's kind of varied between the  
2 Junior Academy and the high school. High school was  
3 much more established. Junior Academy has gotten  
4 onboard really this year after, you know, Mr. Brazle  
5 came on. I kind of talked to him about some of the  
6 things that we needed to put into place. We  
7 should've added a copy of it in there because what we  
8 did is I challenged our counselors because they are  
9 the ones that really need to spearhead the student  
10 success plan. I challenged him to come up with a  
11 document that they can use any time that they're  
12 talking to students. So we have an Excel spreadsheet  
13 document that tracks their credits, the courses that  
14 they take. It has access to Noviance, which is a  
15 career exploration piece that we have added --

16 DR. FLOWERS: Yes.

17 DR. ECHOLS: -- over the last couple of years.  
18 But they use that during their seminar classes on  
19 Tuesday and Thursday, but they also use it with their  
20 counselors when they get ready to do pre-  
21 registration.

22 DR. FLOWERS: Okay.

23 DR. ECHOLS: So it tracks that from 7th grade.  
24 The law says they have to have it starting in 8th  
25 grade, but we start it in 7th grade, and it tracks

1 every course that they take so that they see a big  
2 picture of if I take these courses now in 7th, 8th  
3 and 9th grade, here's a track that I'm going to be  
4 moving towards 10th, 11th and 12th grade; so really  
5 having those conversations at an earlier age. It  
6 tracks their ACT composite; it tracks their ACT  
7 summative; it tracks their NWEA. The counselors have  
8 all of that material in one place so that it's  
9 digital. We can print them a copy of it, but it's a  
10 digital piece that stays with the students 7th  
11 through 12th grade.

12 DR. FLOWERS: That's great. Thank you so much.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

14 MR. BALDWIN: Two questions. The enrollment  
15 data that you have shows a large increase in  
16 enrollment in 20-21, from 478 the year prior to 771.  
17 Why is that? Is there something that changed?

18 DR. ECHOLS: The addition of the 9th grade  
19 class.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Pardon me?

21 DR. ECHOLS: The addition of the 9th grade  
22 class.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Okay.

24 DR. ECHOLS: So it was 7th and 8th grade prior.  
25 I had to come and ask for a reconfiguration two years

1 ago, I believe. And so we reconfigured to a 7-9  
2 building --

3 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

4 DR. ECHOLS: -- instead of a 7th and 8th grade  
5 building.

6 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. I just thought you guys had  
7 done something --

8 DR. ECHOLS: No, we didn't grow that much --  
9 well, I would hope. Right?

10 MR. BALDWIN: So then going down and looking at  
11 your letter grades -- and you have two letter grades  
12 in here and then two years that aren't, and we'll be  
13 getting back to letter grades --

14 DR. ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

15 MR. BALDWIN: -- pretty soon.

16 DR. ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

17 MR. BALDWIN: In the improvement plan that you  
18 have I guess maybe the question is how long do you  
19 think that plan needs to be in effect before we see a  
20 C rather than a D?

21 DR. ECHOLS: Honestly, I think that we will be  
22 able to see that this year. I sat on a little panel  
23 a couple of years ago where we were able to get  
24 access to an Excel spreadsheet that allows you to  
25 kind of manipulate how many students you need to move

1 in order to move your letter grade to where you want  
2 it to be. I kind of did a training with them on that  
3 a couple of years ago. And then the year that we  
4 were supposed to utilize all that we all went home in  
5 March, so we didn't take an assessment that year.  
6 And then last year we did have a significant number  
7 of students who were virtual and it was a challenge  
8 to keep them engaged and it was a challenge to get  
9 them all tested the way that we needed to test them.  
10 So I don't know if the test accuracy is as accurate  
11 as it could have been for the assessment that we took  
12 at the end of last year. I do anticipate both our  
13 Junior Academy and our high school, honestly, and our  
14 3rd through 6th grade classrooms to see an increase  
15 on weighted achievement from the perspective of math,  
16 literacy, and science just because I know the work  
17 that we're doing across all the campuses and I know  
18 the curriculum alignment that has happened over the  
19 last two-and-a-half years, since I've been there. We  
20 have monthly meetings with our principals; they have  
21 to bring us data and they have to bring us evidence  
22 of what they're doing to lead the charge. And if  
23 it's not -- if they're not seeing the results that  
24 they want to see, we ask why. And then what supports  
25 can I put in place with my instructional facilitators

1 to help them lead those charges. So I honestly do  
2 think that we will see an increase this year on  
3 weighted achievement. I'll take a small increase.  
4 But the biggest thing that I really am focused on  
5 right now is moving us from that 40% in need of  
6 support in reading. We were right there prior to  
7 Covid, and then Covid hit and we saw about a seven-  
8 and-a-half percent increase of the students who were  
9 in need of support. But we've identified all those  
10 students across the district and they're receiving  
11 targeted intervention right now. It's a pretty  
12 beautiful thing to see when your literacy plan is  
13 actually working the way that it was written. So  
14 we've had lots of conversations with our  
15 interventionists. I meet with them monthly, so I see  
16 that data real-time, so I know kind of where we are  
17 and what we're tracking.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So I take this that you are  
19 laser-focused on this.

20 DR. ECHOLS: Yes.

21 MR. BALDWIN: Great.

22 DR. ECHOLS: I think Ms. Coffman would agree  
23 with that. But I'm only one person.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

25 MS. SARACINI: I just have two quick questions.

1           When you're looking at the waiver for Licensure,  
2           you put in your rationale that your teachers work for  
3           ALPs, and currently, this year, you have none and  
4           last year you only had one; in '19, you had one; in  
5           '18, you had two. So I'm assuming you're using just  
6           the Act 1240 waiver --

7           DR. ECHOLS: Yes.

8           MS. SARACINI: -- for licensure. You're not --  
9           so when you re-look at your rationale in the future,  
10          you might want to call my office and we can kind of  
11          look for that data. Everyone that --

12          DR. ECHOLS: So there are two assistant  
13          superintendents; one works with Federal Programs, the  
14          hiring, and that's Ms. Becky Rosburg. And then I do  
15          all curriculum and instruction. We actually had a  
16          conversation with her about three weeks ago, just  
17          about that exact thing. So we are hosting  
18          conversations about which of our employees are on an  
19          ALP, which are not, and then what we need to do to  
20          insure that all of our employees are fully licensed.

21          MS. SARACINI: As long as we're working to  
22          pathways to licensure, that's -- I just wanted to  
23          know that you're having conversation.

24          DR. ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

25          MS. SARACINI: The other is on your Class Size

1 and Teaching Load, you're utilizing this for your  
2 intern expiration. But we are also over in special  
3 ed., physical science, language arts, social studies,  
4 and algebra just a little bit. And I know you have  
5 the waiver. So I just -- when you do the rationale,  
6 I am a data person. Ms. Coffman knows that. I look  
7 at data all the time. So just when you're doing your  
8 rationale just make sure you put in there that you're  
9 utilizing it in the other classes as well. It looks  
10 like your 8th grade must have grown as a cohort --

11 DR. ECHOLS: Uh-huh.

12 MS. SARACINI: -- because you're just over a few  
13 numbers.

14 DR. ECHOLS: Yes. The 8th grade class that we  
15 have right now -- at the Junior Academy last year the  
16 7th graders really busted us at the seams with the  
17 number of classes that we -- I mean they were tight  
18 -- tight, tight, tight.

19 MS. SARACINI: Well, that's what it looks like.  
20 But with you confirming that, I just -- that answers  
21 my questions. Thank you.

22 DR. ECHOLS: You're welcome.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I would say a lot of my  
25 questions have been asked and answered. Just you had

1 indicated that you wanted to get more detail on why  
2 you guys were addressing the waiver on the career.  
3 Do you want to give a little bit more detail --

4 DR. ECHOLS: Sure.

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- on that? And I know  
6 some waivers we don't have a -- but I just want to  
7 get a sense of what was your rationale there.

8 DR. ECHOLS: The way that it was written in the  
9 original application was that we would have a career  
10 exploration kind of talk through all of the core  
11 content areas, and that wasn't happening. So, if  
12 that's not happening, we need to rescind that waiver,  
13 and we needed to put back in the actual courses for  
14 students to have instead of embedded in other  
15 courses. So that's why we took that out, to rescind.  
16 I didn't feel like we were doing it justice and our  
17 students weren't receiving kind of the "let's get a  
18 preview into CTE; here's what career development is;  
19 here are the components of that course." All of our  
20 students need to be exposed to that and they weren't  
21 being exposed to that throughout the embedding in our  
22 four core content areas. So that's why we took that  
23 out. It just wasn't what's best for our kids.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So you would be offering  
25 the traditional career development courses?

1 DR. ECHOLS: We're offering it right now.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

3 DR. ECHOLS: We changed it in the master  
4 schedule to reflect that this year.

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. And then like I did  
6 with the last group, I noted that you do have a JAG  
7 program -- and, again, a lot of what you're speaking  
8 to is aligned in that work. But your roster is like  
9 31 students, so --

10 DR. ECHOLS: For --

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: For your JAG program.

12 DR. ECHOLS: At the Junior Academy?

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

14 DR. ECHOLS: No. Then they must not be coded  
15 right.

16 MR. BRAZLE: Yeah, because --

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So that's just a heads-up  
18 to you that your roster is showing you only have 31  
19 students in that.

20 DR. ECHOLS: Yeah, because Stephanie Goodman,  
21 her classes are packed at the Junior Academy.

22 MR. BRAZLE: Yeah, we've got 31 in just her  
23 first block class. So, you know, we'll -- we've just  
24 got to -- we've obviously got to get that fixed.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah. Yeah. So that's

1 another piece to it is that obviously we want to  
2 visit with her, because right now we're showing 31  
3 students. And so that was my concern to you guys.

4 DR. ECHOLS: Oh, no. I know that's not correct,  
5 the way that it is right there, because --

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah.

7 DR. ECHOLS: -- her classes are completely full  
8 --

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah.

10 DR. ECHOLS: -- almost to the point where she  
11 needs to have some taken out --

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

13 DR. ECHOLS: -- of her classes.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's good to hear.

15 DR. ECHOLS: Yes. But she has a wonderful JAG  
16 program at the Junior Academy. We actually changed  
17 JAG instructors at the high school so that we can  
18 extend that opportunity, because the program at the  
19 high school -- it's about having the right person in  
20 the right spot. So we had the right person in the  
21 right spot at the Junior Academy; now we have the  
22 right person in the right spot at the high school.  
23 So I anticipate an increase in those participants at  
24 our high school level. But I know at the junior  
25 high, her classes are full. So that might be an

1 error on our part. I'll get back with the registrar  
2 when we get back to the office today.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Perfect. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I've marked off every  
5 question that I have except for one that popped up  
6 during your presentation, and that was Early Out  
7 Wednesday. So just for the record, I'm assuming that  
8 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday are longer days,  
9 and that you've met the 30-hour requirement for the  
10 week?

11 DR. ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

13 DR. ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am. I think this is our  
14 fourth year with early release Wednesday.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Just wanted to put that out  
16 into the universe so I don't get calls later about --

17 DR. ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- "how do we do an early out  
19 Wednesday."

20 DR. ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That's how you do an early  
22 out Wednesday; you have 30 hours of instruction?

23 DR. ECHOLS: Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Any additional  
25 questions?

1 Then I think we're ready for a motion.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I move approval of the  
3 application.

4 MS. SARACINI: I second.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I have a motion by Dr.  
6 Wright-McMurray and a second by Ms. Saracini to  
7 approve the five-year renewal for Hot Springs Junior  
8 Academy with the waivers as discussed.

9 All those in favor?

10 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

12 Motion is approved.

13 If you'll give us a moment to give you feedback.

14 So just as they're writing that, also you have  
15 821 students and you have a cap of 900, you're aware.  
16 So --

17 DR. ECHOLS: I don't think we'll increase any  
18 further with that.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

20 DR. ECHOLS: That was the last e-school pull  
21 that I did last week. I don't think that we will  
22 increase any further, just looking at our cohort of  
23 students --

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Coming up?

25 DR. ECHOLS: -- 6th grade and down.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah.

2 DR. ECHOLS: I don't think that we'll ever have  
3 an opportunity where we have more than 850 students  
4 at our Junior Academy campus.

5 (A MOMENT OF SILENCE)

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray, if you'd  
7 like to share your thoughts.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I stated I support renewal  
9 of the charter application. I believe the new  
10 leadership and restructuring of the goals will  
11 produce better outcomes for their students. As a  
12 result, students will be better prepared to enter  
13 secondary and move into postsecondary education and  
14 the workforce.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

16 Dr. Williams.

17 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I support the motion. This  
18 will allow the Hot Springs Junior Academy the  
19 opportunity to address some needed improvements.

20 Just another suggestion is I would suggest,  
21 although I won't be here, is that there may be a  
22 look-in by the Panel somewhere at the two-year mark  
23 instead of waiting for the final five years to track  
24 some of the progress. Just a suggestion, not part of  
25 the motion.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, sir.

2 Mr. Baldwin.

3 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I support the motion. I  
4 believe that both the district and school leadership  
5 is focused on improving the areas that need improved.  
6 And I believe you will accomplish that.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers.

8 DR. FLOWERS: I vote to approve the five-year  
9 renewal of the Hot Springs Junior Academy with  
10 waivers as discussed. I look forward to hearing  
11 about the educational opportunities students have as  
12 you work to increase weighted achievement and student  
13 growth, opportunities for the students in career  
14 exploration, and renewed focus on students receiving  
15 additional support as needed, as you work to achieve  
16 your refocused needs and goals.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And Ms. Saracini.

18 MS. SARACINI: I vote to approve the charter  
19 renewal of Hot Springs Junior Academy. I look  
20 forward to seeing the vision and mission of the new  
21 leadership impact students with the new  
22 opportunities.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Congratulations.

24 Dr. Echols, I just have a quick question, for  
25 process. Is it easier for -- on the district to have

1 the high school one year ahead or would it be better  
2 that at some point we get them lined up?

3 DR. ECHOLS: If we could get them lined up that  
4 would probably be much easier for me to keep them  
5 together. I don't know what that process would look  
6 like. I know Dr. Williams mentioned a two-year, so I  
7 don't know if that's something that we need to do,  
8 have our Junior Academy and high school come back  
9 together in two years and then we can present kind of  
10 where we are. And that way, we can get back on track  
11 where we're renewing every five years together.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So why don't you schedule a  
13 time maybe to talk with Whitney --

14 DR. ECHOLS: Okay.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and Matthew, and let's  
16 kind of look at the timelines and see how we can fix  
17 that in the future.

18 All right. Thank you everyone.

19 Take a quick, quick break and we'll be ready for  
20 Cross County.

21 Thank you everyone.

22 (BREAK: 11:02 A.M. - 11:08 A.M.)

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. We'll return and  
24 get started.

25 IV.3. CROSS COUNTY ELEMENTARY

1                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Let me recognize Mr. Johnston  
2 first to bring up the agenda item.

3                   MR. JOHNSTON: Tim Johnston, DESE Charter Unit.

4                   Next is Cross County. Cross County Elementary  
5 Technique -- Technology Academy -- excuse. The  
6 district is requesting a renewal for the charter of a  
7 five-year period. Campus serves grades K-6. Current  
8 enrollment cap is 500 students. And the charter will  
9 continue to follow a traditional education model.

10                  Madam Chair, I just realized Dr. Williams is not  
11 on.

12                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'm sure he'll be back in  
13 just a second.

14                  MR. JOHNSTON: Okay.

15                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Go ahead.

16                  MR. JOHNSTON: Go ahead and move forward. Okay.

17                  And Dr. Nathan Morris, superintendent is here  
18 and I will let him introduce the rest of his team.

19                  Does Legal have any comments to make?

20                  MS. JAMES: Not at this time. I'll wait till  
21 the legal review. I think everyone just needs to be  
22 sworn in.

23                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

24                  MR. JOHNSTON: Okay.

25                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If everyone from Cross County

1 will stand and raise your right hand? Do you swear  
2 or affirm that the testimony you're about to give  
3 shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but  
4 the truth?

5 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

7 Before we have the official presentation, any  
8 tornado damage in your area?

9 SUPT. MORRIS: (Shaking head from side to side)

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good. I visited --

11 SUPT. MORRIS: But we certainly feel for the  
12 ones that did.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Oh, certainly.

14 SUPT. MORRIS: And they're very close to us.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Certainly. Not the last time  
16 I was at Cross County but years ago, my first time to  
17 the Cross County District was right after a tornado  
18 had ripped through. So that's -- when I heard the  
19 news I was wondering about you because I know where  
20 you are positioned.

21 SUPT. MORRIS: Couple of trees over driveways,  
22 things like that.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah.

24 SUPT. MORRIS: Not near what others dealt with.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Well, come --

1 SUPT. MORRIS: Those can be chain-sawed.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Sure. Come to the microphone  
3 and we've got 20 minutes.

4 SUPT. MORRIS: Okay. Thank you all for having  
5 us today. My name is Nathan Morris. I'm the  
6 superintendent at Cross County School District here.

7 We're very honored today to be in front of you  
8 all for our second renewal, going into our third term  
9 hopefully of Cross County Elementary Technology  
10 Academy. We're very proud of what our  
11 accomplishments are and what our accomplishments are  
12 going to continue to be. I want to steal a line from  
13 Dr. Echols who just left us, from Hot Springs, that  
14 leadership matters. And I want to introduce our very  
15 fine team of leaders that you'll be hearing from.  
16 Today, you'll hear from Mrs. Jessica Stacey, our  
17 elementary school principal, and you're going to hear  
18 from Mrs. Mindy Searcy, our district executive master  
19 teacher; she's -- that's a very fancy term for  
20 curriculum coordinator for our district. But the way  
21 that we structure things, master teacher is a term  
22 that we use and float around very often. And if need  
23 be, Mr. Stephen Prince, our high school principal,  
24 who has done extensive work with our high school  
25 charter -- he's a former elementary principal, so he

1 has done extensive work. And Mrs. Stacey is a new  
2 mother for the second time, so on her maternity leave  
3 Mr. Prince had a significant role in much of what  
4 you'll -- the presentation that you'll see today. So  
5 we're honored to be here and we'll certainly take all  
6 questions at the end of our presentation.

7 MS. STACEY: Good morning. I'm Jessica Stacey,  
8 the principal of Cross County Elementary Technology  
9 Academy. And today I'm going to highlight some of  
10 CCETA's academic achievements as we present our  
11 charter renewal.

12 Our teachers utilize school-wide learning  
13 outcomes, or SWLOs, to assess student projects and  
14 products with a focus on 21st century skills. These  
15 rubrics assess problem-solving, oral communication,  
16 and written communication for grades K through 6, and  
17 additionally collaboration for grades 4 through 6.  
18 Through the use of these assessments teachers are  
19 able to guide students towards areas of interest and  
20 push students to their fullest potential. These  
21 tools allow for our teachers to design instruction  
22 that includes the needs of all learners and  
23 especially our gifted students. Opportunities for  
24 lessons to be motivating with real-world connections  
25 allows for authentic application of academic skills

1 at a higher level, with the teacher who is most  
2 familiar with a student's academic strengths.

3 Here you see pictures of CCETA's students  
4 involved in academic paths over the years. The SWLO  
5 assessments are used to assess projects such as A  
6 Living Wax Museum based on different characters  
7 researched and Who Was books, story writing, creating  
8 a news program, and commercial making. SWLOs provide  
9 teachers with concrete ways to assess 21st century  
10 skills, along with grade level academic standards,  
11 and it also allows students flexibility to pursue  
12 interests specific to them. Additionally, students  
13 participate in discussions using Kagen [ps]  
14 structures where teachers are able to model and  
15 develop deeper student thinking and communication  
16 skills.

17 This chart details our 2021 ACT Aspire results  
18 with both CCETA's performance and the state average  
19 for each grade highlighted with a different color.  
20 CCETA's performance is listed on the top row in each  
21 grade's color, while the state average is on the  
22 bottom row. Our students performed very well in  
23 comparison to the state average this past year, with  
24 the exception of our 4th graders. And our school  
25 will address these deficits through our cluster

1 meetings and strategies, which Ms. Mindy Searcy will  
2 provide details about later in the presentation. One  
3 of many highlights to note is that our 6th grade math  
4 percentage of students meeting readiness was number  
5 one in the state of Arkansas.

6 This slide shows CCETA's ESSA score performance  
7 over time compared to the state average. As you can  
8 see, our overall ESSA index score, our value-added  
9 growth score, and weighted achievement score all  
10 exceed the state average by a large margin since the  
11 2017-2018 school year. Once more, I would like to  
12 point out to you is our value-added growth score for  
13 all three years listed. Cross County School District  
14 has been focused on value-added growth for many years  
15 due to its implementation of the TAP -- of NIET's TAP  
16 system. Since a value-added growth score of 80  
17 indicates that students grew as expected in an  
18 academic year, you can see that our growth scores of  
19 85 or higher would tell us that CCETA students have  
20 consistently grown at a level that is higher than  
21 expected in an academic year.

22 Due to CCETA's continued high student  
23 achievement, we have been recognized by a variety of  
24 institutions. The University of Arkansas publishes  
25 an annual report on high-growth schools and high-

1 growth schools that are also high-poverty, called  
2 Beating the Odds. The badges on the bottom of the  
3 slide represent CCETA's placement on the 2021 list,  
4 where we placed in each category for the northeast  
5 region in both the high-growth schools and the  
6 Beating the Odds list. Additionally, in 2019 and  
7 2018, CCETA placed at the state level for overall  
8 growth and overall math growth, along with the same  
9 recognition in the Beating the Odds categories.

10 In addition to the Office for Education Policy,  
11 there are several other acknowledges of our  
12 successes. NIET has recognized CCETA as one of the  
13 five finalists for its National Founders Award twice.  
14 The Founders Award finalists must show high student  
15 achievement through implementation of NIET's TAP  
16 system. We have also received over \$90,000 in  
17 Arkansas School Recognition Program award money since  
18 2018. Recently, we were also informed that U.S. News  
19 and World Report identified CCETA as the number one  
20 charter elementary school in the state and the number  
21 38 elementary school overall in the estate. We  
22 recently were also awarded the distinction of Apple  
23 Distinguished School through 2024, because of our  
24 student and teacher use of technology and  
25 instruction. Also, as mentioned before, our 6th

1 graders have the highest math scores in the state,  
2 thanks to the very hard work of our 6th grade math  
3 teacher and her students.

4 As you can see from our data that was presented  
5 in recognitions that were highlighted, CCETA provides  
6 effective instruction that leads to high student  
7 achievement. Our students and teachers consistently  
8 prove that a school in the rural Arkansas delta, with  
9 close to three-fourths of the students qualified for  
10 free and reduced lunch, are capable of high  
11 achievement that will impact our students, families,  
12 and community in a meaningful and positive way for  
13 many years.

14 I would now like to turn it over to Ms. Mindy  
15 Searcy to highlight how CCETA uses NIET's TAP system  
16 to impact student achievement and success.

17 MS. SEARCY: Good morning. I'm Mindy Searcy and  
18 I'm Executive Master Teacher for the district. I'm  
19 charged with the responsibility of making sure that  
20 we implement the TAP system throughout our district  
21 with fidelity by providing support to our principals,  
22 master and mentor teachers.

23 The TAP system is an educator-led comprehensive  
24 school model focused on attracting, developing,  
25 motivating, and retaining high-quality educators. We

1 are currently the only school district in Arkansas  
2 implementing the TAP system. The TAP system has  
3 literacy -- literally provided us with the blueprint  
4 that we've needed to transform our school. My  
5 purpose is not to sell the system but to better allow  
6 you to see how it is who we are as a district.

7 Our unique aspect of the TAP system is its  
8 emphasis on true teacher leadership. When we first  
9 adopted the TAP system 12 years ago, I started out as  
10 a master teacher. TAP allowed me to advance  
11 professionally without having to leave the classroom.  
12 I was able to provide the support to the other  
13 teachers in my building, led professional  
14 development, and increased my qualifications. I  
15 later became principal of the elementary school, and  
16 while I was principal we received our first letter A  
17 rating. The knowledge I gained as a master teacher  
18 better prepared me as principal. I know that our  
19 current mentor and master teachers are receiving that  
20 same kind of development. Our master teacher at the  
21 elementary school is responsible for the second  
22 element of the TAP system, ongoing applied  
23 professional growth. In our PLC meetings, which we  
24 refer to as cluster, teachers are taught high quality  
25 instructional strategies aimed at meeting student

1 learning needs. Each week we look at both  
2 qualitative and quantitative characteristics of  
3 student work and use that data to drive our  
4 instruction. With student work as our primary focus,  
5 teachers never leave the cluster, or our PLC  
6 meetings, questioning the purpose of that meeting.  
7 In cluster, the master teacher and the mentor  
8 teachers also determine what individual teacher  
9 support is needed. Just like a teacher gives  
10 students differentiated support, the leadership team  
11 provides teachers with differentiated support to meet  
12 their individual needs in order to grow them as  
13 teachers. This support includes modeling, co-  
14 teaching, conferencing, and planning.

15 A highlight of our cluster meetings is the  
16 implementation of our school-wide strategies. During  
17 the summer months the teacher leadership team  
18 analyzes standardized test results and identifies the  
19 area our students struggled in the most. After  
20 extensive research, a strategy is chosen or developed  
21 that targets the area of greatest need. This  
22 strategy -- that strategy is then field tested on a  
23 group of students. This process allows us to see  
24 what works and what doesn't with our students. Then,  
25 how to teach the strategy is modeled for the teachers

1 during cluster meetings.

2 We have had many successes after implementing  
3 school-wide strategies. In 17-18, we developed an  
4 inferring strategy. This strategy led to a 10%  
5 increase school-wide in reading. In 18-19, we  
6 addressed math by implementing number talks and a  
7 fraction sense strategy. We raised our test scores  
8 3% school-wide while exceeding the state's average in  
9 all grade levels. And in 19-20, our focus was on  
10 comparing passages in literacy. Once school closed  
11 in March of 2020, our cluster meetings continued via  
12 Zoom throughout the remainder of the school year.  
13 Our focus changed to providing motivating academic  
14 feedback to our students, to encourage them to  
15 participate in the novel studies our teachers pushed  
16 out virtually to keep our students reading. Due to  
17 the loss of learning, our math scores dipped by 13%  
18 last year on the ACT Aspire. To compensate for this  
19 weakness, we are currently implementing a concrete  
20 representational abstract model strategy in math by  
21 focusing on hands-on manipulatives to enhance our  
22 iReady math curriculum.

23 As you can see, cluster group meetings are vital  
24 to the success of our school. Our teachers are all  
25 working toward a common goal. I've been known to say

1 "it's where all the magic happens." As you can see  
2 on this chart, the support that we give teachers --  
3 that teachers receive in cluster and from other  
4 elements of the TAP system has increased teacher  
5 effectiveness in our school. This effectiveness is  
6 partially measured by our observation process. Our  
7 teachers are observed three times a year using the  
8 NIET instructional rubric. Each teacher gets an  
9 observation from the principal, master teacher, and  
10 two mentor teachers. There is no better person to  
11 get feedback from than teachers who have their own  
12 classrooms, working in the trenches. After each  
13 observation, the teacher receives feedback from the  
14 individual evaluator in a post-conference meeting.  
15 In the post-conference, the evaluator shares points  
16 of reinforcement to highlight the teacher's  
17 strengths, as well as points out refinement, where  
18 the teacher has growth areas. Our teachers are never  
19 stagnant; they are constantly working on ways to  
20 improve their instruction.

21 Ms. Kimball, a second year teacher to our  
22 district, who came to us from a neighboring school  
23 district, stated, "The observation process at CC is  
24 an ongoing process that provides us with specific  
25 feedback to help us be more effective for our

1 students." This says so much about what our TAP  
2 system does to encourage teachers to improve that  
3 pedagogy and content knowledge for their students.

4 As teachers grow in effectiveness, they are able  
5 to tap into the final element of success: performance  
6 based compensation. TAP allows us to provide  
7 additional compensations to teachers based on new  
8 roles and responsibilities, their accomplishments in  
9 the classroom, and the performance of their students.  
10 No teacher at Cross County ever loses any part of  
11 their salary or base pay because of TAP; they can  
12 only earn extra compensation. Our teachers love  
13 being acknowledged for their expertise, performance,  
14 and professionalism. The bonuses we are able to give  
15 out because of the -- of TAP is a huge motivator to  
16 our teachers and allows us to retain our most  
17 effective teachers.

18 Overall, TAP makes increasing student  
19 achievement our common goal. The focus on data-  
20 driven instructional decisions has molded the culture  
21 of our school into one of healthy competition where  
22 teachers and their students strive for greatness.

23 We're ready for questions.

24 WAIVERS

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Ms. James.

1 MS. JAMES: My name is Whitney James, with the  
2 Department. I'm just going to go over the final  
3 legal review.

4 The Panel may have some questions about the  
5 first waiver, which is School Calendar. It is code  
6 section 6-10-106. And if you'd like to go ahead and  
7 ask the school to provide additional rationale or  
8 explain how they want to use that waiver --

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes.

10 MS. JAMES: -- that would be fine.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes. If you'll -- so the way  
12 I read it, it looked like an early start?

13 SUPT. MORRIS: That's it.

14 MS. STACEY: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So under Act -- oh, let's see  
16 what the act number is -- Act 688, there's a  
17 statement in there that says the Division shall not  
18 grant a public school district a waiver under 6-15-  
19 103 to begin school on an earlier date. We can give  
20 a later start date, but we can't give an earlier  
21 start date.

22 Mr. Walter?

23 MR. WALTER: Thank you, Madam Chair, Members of  
24 the Panel. Tripp Walter, Staff Attorney, Arkansas  
25 Public School Resource Center.

1                   What you said, Ms. Coffman, is absolutely  
2 correct, but that statute refers to Act 1240 waivers  
3 in front of the State Board. So I don't see how that  
4 would affect the Panel's ability to --

5                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

6                   MR. WALTERS: -- grant or in this case continue  
7 that 6-10-106 waiver.

8                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So you think that it doesn't  
9 affect because we're going the district conversion  
10 charter route?

11                  MR. WALTER: That is correct. Yes, ma'am.

12                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

13                  So, Mr. Morris, are you thinking that in Cycle 7  
14 you will mark traditional 178-day calendar but you  
15 will have an early start date for all of your  
16 campuses?

17                  SUPT. MORRIS: That's correct.

18                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: What is your plan for early  
19 start?

20                  SUPT. MORRIS: It will follow about where it's  
21 been. We don't have an exact date right now, but our  
22 start date this year was August -- second week of  
23 August, I believe, maybe the -- we start bringing  
24 teachers back in the first. We've not set that  
25 calendar. But it is an early start time to combat

1 the loss of learning that we've shown over the past  
2 10 years has worked. We start traditionally about  
3 two to three weeks earlier than our other  
4 counterparts in the state.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then you end two to three  
6 weeks --

7 SUPT. MORRIS: No, ma'am. We have a -- we  
8 follow a lot of the traditional calendars that other  
9 people have. We have an extended week in between  
10 grading cycles, so we take an extended fall break,  
11 then we've got a few days extra at Christmas  
12 potentially, and then a couple of extended breaks  
13 like at spring break a couple of extra days that go  
14 with that to -- we're really just looking to shorten  
15 down the summer because of student learning loss, to  
16 combat that.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Have you considered a 12-  
18 month calendar?

19 SUPT. MORRIS: We have not. But with your  
20 denial, we would. But this is something that we have  
21 -- I guess the third -- the second renewal, the high  
22 school was on the same -- I know you asked that  
23 question at the very end of the last presenters about  
24 getting your charters on the same.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Uh-huh.

1 SUPT. MORRIS: So before you ask that question,  
2 we would certainly be open to that. Because we were  
3 here last year with our high school. Obviously, our  
4 high school and our elementary run the same calendar  
5 as a district and they are -- you know, they were  
6 renewed last year on this same waiver.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Let us think about  
8 that for a few minutes, about the calendar.

9 SUPT. MORRIS: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. James, if you'll  
11 continue.

12 MS. JAMES: The second waiver request was to  
13 continue Teacher Licensure waivers that they already  
14 have. I didn't have any legal comments regarding  
15 that.

16 The third waiver request was for Duty-Free  
17 Lunch. I did not have any legal comments for that.

18 The fourth waiver request was to continue their  
19 Library Media Services waivers. I did not have any  
20 legal comments for that.

21 The fifth is to continue their Alternative Pay  
22 Programs, Arkansas Code Annotated 6-17-119. I did  
23 not have any legal comments for that.

24 I did not have any legal comments for their  
25 request to continue their Gifted and Talented

1           waivers; that's number six.

2                   Number seven is the School Counselor Licensure.  
3           They wish to rescind that waiver. No comments on  
4           that one.

5                   Number eight is the request to rescind the  
6           Superintendent Licensure. I did not have any legal  
7           comments.

8                   They are also asking to rescind their Class Size  
9           and Teaching Load waiver. I did not have any  
10          comments on that one.

11                   They did add a couple of code sections to their  
12          Teacher Licensure waiver request. Those are 6-15-  
13          1004 and 6-17-902. They're also adding the DESE  
14          Rules Governing Educator Licensure - Section 7. I  
15          did not have any comments regarding the addition of  
16          those code sections and section of the rules.

17                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Morris, are you renewing  
18          your digital learning plan?

19                   MS. STACEY: Yes. We would like to renew our  
20          digital learning plan. We did that for one year with  
21          the intention of that -- asking for renewal of that  
22          for the duration of our charter renewal just as it  
23          stands.

24                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And you have waivers  
25          appropriate to also apply to your digital learning

1 plan?

2 MS. STACEY: Yes, ma'am. We did that last year  
3 when we --

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I know, but that was only for  
5 one year. So when you renew --

6 MS. STACEY: Gotcha.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- do you have the  
8 appropriate waivers in this submission to cover your  
9 digital learning plan moving forward?

10 MS. STACEY: No. We just did the one year.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Let me ask my question  
12 again.

13 MS. STACEY: Right. No. No, it's not in there.  
14 It's -- we just did it for the one year.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. So let's start over.

16 MS. STACEY: Okay.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Are you asking to renew your  
18 digital learning plan with this --

19 MS. STACEY: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- package?

21 MS. STACEY: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes. And do you have the  
23 appropriate waivers request to implement your digital  
24 learning plan for the next five years?

25 MS. STACEY: No, ma'am.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Then my recommendation would  
2 be to come back with an amendment with your digital  
3 learning --

4 MS. STACEY: Okay.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- plan so we can get it all  
6 together.

7 MS. STACEY: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay?

9 MS. STACEY: All right.

10 QUESTIONS

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Dr. Flowers,  
12 would you like to start with our questions?

13 DR. FLOWERS: My question is about the 100%  
14 teacher -- I think this -- can you talk to me a bit  
15 about how you got to that 100%?

16 MS. SEARCY: So through the observations that  
17 they receive, that is all of our teachers, 100% of  
18 them, scored a 3 which deems them to be effective --

19 DR. FLOWERS: Okay.

20 MS. SEARCY: -- in the district. Yeah. And  
21 this is the first year -- last year was the first  
22 year that we have had 100%.

23 DR. FLOWERS: Okay. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

25 MR. BALDWIN: So congratulations on the 100%.

1 That was -- you know, that was pretty impressive.

2 Are you all the only school in the state that  
3 has the TAP system?

4 MS. SEARCY: Yes.

5 MR. BALDWIN: Why is that? I mean I know you  
6 talk with your peers. But it seems like if this is  
7 working so well that other schools may want to use  
8 it.

9 MS. SEARCY: So we -- we are currently on our  
10 second TIF grant cycle. We received our first one 12  
11 years ago. And 12 years ago Lincoln School District  
12 was also partnered with us. They were -- they used  
13 the TAP system, but they no longer do. And so we're  
14 currently the only one that uses the full-fledged  
15 four components.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Is that because it's hard to do?

17 MS. SEARCY: It is very hard to do.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

19 MS. SEARCY: It is -- it's a huge comprehensive  
20 program that took a lot of hard work, tears and sweat  
21 to get going 12 years ago. But I was with the  
22 district before that time, and I will say that it has  
23 completely transformed our school district.

24 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. And my final question is:  
25 are you all involved in the state teacher

1 effectiveness task force that is starting up again?  
2 Are you part of that?

3 MS. SEARCY: Are you referring to the Aaron [ps]  
4 with NIET or something different?

5 MR. BALDWIN: I'm not sure I'm using the right  
6 word. Help me out if I'm using the wrong --

7 MS. SARACINI: The taskforce, they're all  
8 involved. They're all involved.

9 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

10 MS. SARACINI: All districts are just  
11 represented and they have a representative from their  
12 region.

13 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

14 MS. SARACINI: And, yes, so they will be --  
15 they'll have surveys eventually. Yes.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Good. I just wanted to  
17 make sure you all are part of that. Great.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

19 MS. SARACINI: I just wanted to commend you that  
20 you were rescinding some of your waivers. Because I  
21 look at licensure with educator effectiveness and  
22 licensure -- that's what I look at. And I just want  
23 to say that you've really -- with your current  
24 licensure waiver you use it very sparingly,  
25 minimally. And I can't say that about everyone. So

1 I'm -- great job.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: First, I want to commend  
4 you on your accomplishments and your achievements. I  
5 really appreciated seeing the slide on all of your  
6 awards and commendations. One thing that I would  
7 want to get just a little bit more detail on: so are  
8 -- the students that are in your current grades, what  
9 type of career exploration or opportunities are they  
10 afforded at that level that could build upon what  
11 they're going to be experiencing when they get to the  
12 next tier at middle and high school?

13 MR. PRINCE: Stephen Prince. I'm the high  
14 school principal.

15 That's a really good question. So through  
16 project-based learning at the elementary school it  
17 really does allow the students to do a lot of  
18 exploration. Like I don't know if you saw one of the  
19 examples with the radio station, the student news  
20 section. And so that allows those students to start  
21 exploring and the teachers to plan projects that are  
22 more meaningful and relevant and real world. So they  
23 can start looking into all of those components of  
24 maybe what they want to do when they grow up, you  
25 know, for lack of a better term. But when they do

1 get to high school they have already started to gain  
2 some of that background on what's out there for them,  
3 so when they start getting to our high school they  
4 can start taking our EAST classes and they know what  
5 that is because we're introducing some of those  
6 aspects of them at the elementary level. And so  
7 they'll be better informed, I guess you could say,  
8 when they get to the high school level on what  
9 classes they want to take, what programs of study  
10 they want to be a completer in, and, you know, like I  
11 said, our EAST -- if they want to go into computer  
12 science and all those courses.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. Just  
14 hope that you guys have opportunities to share your  
15 work and some of the things you've been able to  
16 implement with your peers. Because, you know, we  
17 love to see great work happening in our schools, but  
18 we don't want there to just be like these little  
19 diamonds that we have in certain parts of the state  
20 and other people not getting those benefits.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams?

22 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I'll start off with a  
23 comment: leadership matters but teaching really  
24 matters. So I just appreciate what the teachers are  
25 doing there in Cross County. I always look forward

1 to hearing about what the students are doing, and the  
2 students are doing great there in Cross County and  
3 the TAP model.

4 So my question is really one around what is the  
5 barrier for other school districts in using the TAP?  
6 Is it the fact that you all are receiving grants that  
7 are allowing you all to implement it or -- you know,  
8 this sounds like such a great program, so, you know,  
9 why not spread the good news.

10 SUPT. MORRIS: That's an outstanding question.  
11 And I do believe it takes rolling up sleeves and  
12 changing a mindset, and I'm sorry to say that some  
13 may not want to change their mindset. I often say  
14 this: if I can -- I came in as the role of  
15 superintendent five years ago, and you learn quickly  
16 as a district leader. But I'm at Cross County  
17 Schools based on the TAP model. I wanted to go  
18 there; I wanted to seek that out. But I also knew  
19 after about three days there if I tried to change  
20 that I would be the first one ran out on a rail.  
21 Okay? And so our teachers believe in what's going  
22 on. They're committed. It's an awesome structure to  
23 see.

24 Mrs. Searcy mentioned the TIF grant that we had  
25 received for two straight years. We're out of that

1 now. We now have to self-fund performance-based pay.  
2 It's a commitment that myself as the school district  
3 leader and our board of education is committed to,  
4 and we're going to make sure that we make the  
5 necessary adjustments in budgeting to make sure that  
6 our teachers are awarded compensation based on  
7 growing students. Okay? On growing students. We  
8 make this statement all of the time: if a teacher  
9 gets a student behind on grade level, then if they  
10 can catch them up they should be applauded to no end  
11 and celebrated. And sometimes we don't do that  
12 because they don't catch them all the way back up,  
13 you know. And so we feel like we do that well.

14 Let me expound real quick on your point on the  
15 effectiveness, the 100% effective teachers district-  
16 wide. And we don't have this broke down by 20  
17 schools, but we're a small district. Last year we  
18 retained 96% of our effective teachers. Okay. So in  
19 five years we've increased from -- we've increased  
20 21% our retention of effective teachers. We no  
21 longer lose teachers to districts, partnering  
22 districts who might pay a little more because of the  
23 ongoing embedded professional growth that they get at  
24 the Cross County School District. What we lose now,  
25 if we lose teachers, are maybe a spouse changes jobs,

1 a career change within a family, and there's  
2 absolutely nothing they can do about that. We do not  
3 worry about losing our educators 20 minutes or 30  
4 minutes to our north, south, east or west. It just  
5 doesn't happen.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I think my only hang-up is  
8 calendar. And while you may be legally able to have  
9 an early start, I feel more comfortable about it  
10 because you would have the waiver for elementary and  
11 high school; so the whole district would have that  
12 option. But our legislators feel strongly about this  
13 and they've put it into law, and it's something that  
14 I think we should take very seriously. So I would  
15 encourage you to be looking at a 12-month calendar to  
16 see can you make that work in the future. And one of  
17 the issues with the 12-month calendar is that seven-  
18 week limitation in the summer. And so I think that's  
19 -- those are the things to be thinking about, is that  
20 ever an option that gives you a more stable --  
21 stabilized calendar in the future.

22 SUPT. MORRIS: Yeah. I would answer that -- and  
23 I'm not sure there was a question there, but I would  
24 answer a statement with a statement that the one  
25 thing that -- the other thing that I learned very

1 quickly with our board of education, who are seven  
2 great individuals and I wouldn't trade them for seven  
3 other board members in the state -- they always want  
4 to stay on the cutting edge. You know, a boat  
5 doesn't move in calm water, and so they always look  
6 to me and our leadership within our district to make  
7 sure that we're doing what is right for kids, what  
8 helps kids, what helps move students and be  
9 successful once they leave. So we are -- I say that  
10 to say this: we are always looking at new and  
11 innovative ways and thinking through -- again, a very  
12 dynamic team -- to go back -- you're right, I think  
13 that we do fit the law here. I understand what was  
14 passed and our legislators passed that, but our  
15 legislators also want us to move our children  
16 forward. Cross County School District is doing that.  
17 It's proven. It's been proven for 10 years. Our  
18 high school now -- I know we're not here for our high  
19 school renewal, but our high school just obtained a  
20 status of what would've been a B letter grade, if  
21 grades were out. Last year, in a pandemic year with  
22 no test scores, our interim assessment is showing we  
23 would've been a B school. So the proof is in, as my  
24 granddad always said, the pudding. Our scores  
25 indicate what we're doing is working, and the loss of

1 learning is not there, and I think it shows in our  
2 test scores coming out of a pandemic year that we  
3 didn't show -- or we -- what we've shown in the math  
4 was very minimal. And we kicked other areas in the  
5 tail. And I think that if I could -- you know, I  
6 don't want to ever step in the mind of a legislator  
7 and what they pass, but I also think that if you ask  
8 all of them is it very important for what is working  
9 to continue to work, I think that they would -- the  
10 General Assembly would say yes.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I feel more comfortable with  
12 this one because it's consistent for the district --

13 SUPT. MORRIS: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- than just having one  
15 school within a district have a different calendar.  
16 That makes me feel more comfortable. The reason I  
17 was asking about the 12-month is -- because you do  
18 have an early start -- is what can we learn from this  
19 before our next legislative time, what can we learn  
20 about these calendar options.

21 To address your point, how do we continue to  
22 improve --

23 SUPT. MORRIS: Yeah.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- academically.

25 SUPT. MORRIS: And I don't think everything

1 works for everyone. The four-day option, I have big  
2 reservations as an educator on that; but it's working  
3 for some. I have colleagues in the state that  
4 absolutely love it and feel like they're going to  
5 move mountains that way. That's great and I -- and  
6 if it moves mountains for everyone, Cross County  
7 School District will look at a four-day calendar one  
8 day, if that's what might be what's working. I know  
9 that I have colleagues that have -- that would run a  
10 12-month and believe in that working. There are  
11 colleagues that have a traditional schedule that it  
12 will work. But we know that right now ours is. But  
13 to your point, we're always looking for what might  
14 could get -- what might can move us a little bit  
15 further. We always want to keep the kids' best  
16 interest at heart and their families and what works  
17 for them.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any other questions from the  
19 Panel?

20 Then I'll accept a motion.

21 MR. BALDWIN: I move approval.

22 DR. FLOWERS: Second.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Mr.  
24 Baldwin and a second from Dr. Flowers to approve  
25 Cross County Elementary, renewal of their charter for

1 five years with waivers as discussed and not  
2 including the digital learning plan. So you'll have  
3 to make a decision about that.

4 All those in favor?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

7 Motion passes.

8 Congratulations. If you'll give us just a  
9 moment to give you feedback.

10 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams.

12 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I support the motion. The  
13 renewal will allow the Cross County Elementary  
14 Technology Academy to continue a successful teaching  
15 and learning model, also to continue implementation  
16 of TAP which can serve as -- and hang on here a  
17 second, my little box got small on me -- which can  
18 serve as a model for other districts -- schools and  
19 districts.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I support the motion.  
22 Cross County has produced great results for their  
23 students. They are a model for other elementary  
24 schools, not just those with charter designations. I  
25 encourage them to share interventions and strategies

1 with their peers so we can potentially replicate  
2 these outcomes in other districts across the state.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini.

4 MS. SARACINI: I support the motion to approve  
5 the renewal charter for Cross County Elementary. It  
6 is evident in the data the impact they are making on  
7 students. The renewal will allow for continued  
8 growth for both students and staff. And I cannot say  
9 I absolutely loved the video that was out with your  
10 high school EAST student. I commend you. Great  
11 work.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin.

13 MR. BALDWIN: I voted to approve the renewal.  
14 You all obviously have a great program. 100% teacher  
15 effectiveness, we don't see that very often. I think  
16 you all are an example for other districts. I hope  
17 that we can figure out how to shine a light on this  
18 so they can see that.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers.

20 DR. FLOWERS: I vote to approve the five-year  
21 renewal with waivers as discussed. Cross County  
22 Elementary Technology Academy continues to  
23 demonstrate the ability to engage and inspire  
24 students to achieve at a high level. With meaningful  
25 learning opportunities and access to multiple career

1 pathways, students are sure to have an enriched  
2 learning experience where they are college and career  
3 ready.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Congratulations.

5 SUPT. MORRIS: Thank you all very much.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Johnston, we will break  
7 until 1:00. Thank you. Thank you everyone.

8 (LUNCH BREAK: 11:51 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.)

9 V.1.a. LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Mr. Johnston,  
11 you're recognized.

12 MR. JOHNSTON: Tim Johnston, DESE Charter Unit.

13 Next on the agenda is Lincoln High School  
14 charter. Stan Karber is principal. He will be  
15 representing the district. They will be joining us  
16 via Zoom. The district is requesting a renewal of  
17 their charter for a five-year period. The campus  
18 serves grades 9-12. Current enrollment cap is 850  
19 students. And the charter will continue to follow a  
20 combination of the traditional education model with a  
21 focus on trade, skill, certification, college, and  
22 careers.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Thank you.

24 If all of our members from Lincoln -- am I at  
25 Lincoln? Yes.

1 MR. JOHNSTON: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- High School -- if you will  
3 raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that  
4 the testimony you're about to give shall be the  
5 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

6 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. If you will  
8 introduce yourself, then you'll have 20 minutes.

9 MR. KARBER: My name is Stan Karber; I am the  
10 Lincoln High School principal. In the room with me  
11 and sharing the computer is Emilianne Cox; she is the  
12 assistant principal. And Ms. Jana Claybrook is also  
13 -- yes, she's right there waving. And I believe  
14 that's all that we have here. So --

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And, Stan, he's giving you  
16 co-host rights so you can post your presentation.

17 MR. KARBER: Okay. Can you see it? So explain  
18 to me, can I share my screen? Is that what you're  
19 saying?

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes, sir.

21 MR. KARBER: I have the ability to share my --

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes, sir.

23 MR. KARBER: Let me share that. Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: There you go.

25 MR. KARBER: Everybody good?

1                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes, sir.

2                   MR. KARBER: Okay. Thank y'all.

3                   So we went through the same steps. The mission  
4 of the Lincoln High School is to prepare our students  
5 with personal and academic skills needed to be  
6 college and career ready. I think in the last couple  
7 of years everybody is pretty clear on that education  
8 got turned upside-down and the whole world did. So  
9 we came back to the table with the same -- kind of  
10 the same foundation but a little bit of a twist to  
11 it, just trying to insure that we're constantly  
12 pushing to put our kids in front of opportunities  
13 that could be career-based. We're still working on  
14 that on a daily basis, just as -- today, we have a  
15 lady that's looking to join us next year and we're  
16 trying to partner -- in Lincoln, Arkansas, we have a  
17 fire training academy and we're looking to be one of  
18 the first and one of the best; clearly trying to push  
19 for that for Northwest Arkansas Emergency Management.  
20 We're looking to have EMT kids coming straight out of  
21 the door, certified; we're going to have classrooms  
22 built that are modeled off of the back of ambulances;  
23 we have -- we constantly are trying to find ways to  
24 put these kids not only where they can receive that  
25 educational diploma, they can also walk out of here

1 with the opportunity to have a paycheck that  
2 accompanies that. So that's kind of where we're  
3 going with that.

4 On our educational model, you see that our  
5 student opportunities are trade skills, employment  
6 skills, industry certifications, college or career  
7 readiness, internships.

8 Curricular instruction -- I don't want to read  
9 the entire thing to you guys; I just want to kind of  
10 give you the overlay of why we're doing this and what  
11 we do.

12 One of the things that's key to us and key to me  
13 and something that's really, you know, close to me,  
14 especially in the last couple of years, is the  
15 emotional support that we can provide these kids and  
16 the mentor programs that we use within our day-to-day  
17 basis to develop these relations with these kids. I  
18 believe wholeheartedly that our charter allows us to  
19 have the freedom to work with these kids and to  
20 develop those relationships and understand what their  
21 interest is and what they need to probably be doing,  
22 and that allows us to spend the four years, from 9  
23 through 12, that I have with them pulling them in  
24 that direction. And hopefully by the time they leave  
25 they know exactly where they're going and what

1           they're going to do.

2           Our digital learning platform provides our kids  
3           -- we took these pictures of our CNA graduates, of  
4           our diesel mechanics, welding mechanics. We have  
5           kids that come to us that -- you know, if I'm just  
6           being honest and I feel like I'm kind of past the  
7           point of selling it -- I have kids that don't enjoy  
8           being on our campus, but they enjoy being right down  
9           the road as a diesel mechanic. And we have a tough  
10          time with them wanting to show up here and they never  
11          miss over there because that is where they see the  
12          dollar signs coming, that is where their interests  
13          lie, and that is where the passion is at. And we use  
14          the platform that our charter has provided us to  
15          still continue to provide them the educational goals  
16          that they need and the standards that they need to  
17          have met in order to graduate; but while doing so,  
18          providing them with the time that they need to go  
19          over during the day with transportation services that  
20          we can provide them, with the connections that we can  
21          create, and put them in front of career readiness  
22          programs to where they come out. We've got a few  
23          students over there on their senior year. They  
24          graduated last year but they are on their last go-  
25          round in diesel mechanic schools and welding schools

1 and things like that that we're super proud of and we  
2 always will be. And they come back and they share  
3 these stories and it just kind of fuels the fire for  
4 the next group to come through and want to try to  
5 pick one of those paths.

6 Our personalized learning, I just rolled into  
7 that because, again, I think it's a huge, huge  
8 advantage to get to know these kids and to get to  
9 know them on the level that we are provided with that  
10 opportunity. We have -- you can see right there in  
11 the middle, kind of highlight over it, it says Mentor  
12 Fridays. That is a day that we have used to develop  
13 -- we have a group of mentees that are assigned to a  
14 mentor within our school. We use that as a draft  
15 process where during the summer all of our staff get  
16 together and we draft the kids we want. Some of  
17 those kids will remain with that mentor throughout;  
18 some of them will be cycled around. We use it again  
19 to develop the relationship and the understanding of  
20 maybe who they should be partnered up with, who would  
21 be a good mentor for them. If they have interest in  
22 FFA, we select them with an FFA teacher. We have a  
23 great FFA program here in Lincoln. So those guys  
24 know how to connect those dots and put those kids in  
25 front of things that they will find interest in and

1           therefore they'll do the work that we need them to do  
2           so they can get to do the things that they're wanting  
3           to do. I highlight, you know, the building  
4           relationships. We've got a picture down here -- I  
5           can appreciate them putting that in there -- of some  
6           kids in a canoe. We have an amazing outdoor program.  
7           We're located -- we're lucky to be located right down  
8           the road from Lincoln Lake. It's an amazing city  
9           resource. It's got a 96-acre lake, it's got hiking  
10          trails, rock climbing. Again, we use that to develop  
11          these relationships and to take kids down there and  
12          they earn all these opportunities, and that is what  
13          is celebrated on our Mentor Fridays. We use the week  
14          to build up to that and then on those Fridays we can  
15          have small group interventions, we can look at  
16          educational gaps, we can look at emotional gaps, we  
17          can look at social gaps; we can figure out what our  
18          kids need, in my opinion, at a faster level. We also  
19          use it to communicate throughout the building and to  
20          communicate on the outside of this building. If you  
21          have a mentor, that mentor acts as your liaison  
22          between communication efforts for your parents, your  
23          grandparents, your guardians; also acts as the  
24          liaison between you and the other teachers within the  
25          building. So if I know that one of my students is

1 struggling in a particular class, I can reach out to  
2 that teacher and I can try to figure out what I need  
3 to do to get them through.

4 Does anybody -- if I'm going too fast, please  
5 just tell me.

6 Our expanded educational offerings -- again,  
7 this is everything that I'm kind of passionate about  
8 and that's just a list, because I will leave things  
9 off there. We've got -- we try to insure and I feel  
10 like we are meeting it in a successful way -- we're  
11 going to continue to grow; that every kid comes  
12 across our stage with a plan. And last year, we had  
13 our first ever Decision Day where even in the midst  
14 of everything that was going on in the world around  
15 us. Out of our right around 100 kids that graduated,  
16 I think we had 87 take the podium and make an  
17 announcement about what they were going to be doing,  
18 whether it be going in the military branch, going to  
19 a college, going directly to work. We wanted them  
20 all to take that opportunity and stand up and be  
21 proud of that, and that, I believe, is kind of the  
22 overall idea behind all of this. We have many  
23 different partners and it's -- we've listed off --  
24 clearly, we try to list off the big-hitters there so  
25 you guys can take a look. But we have more; it goes

1 beyond that. We have small business owners, we have  
2 -- we have a coffee shop right down the road that,  
3 you know, it is what it is; everybody enjoys a good  
4 \$5.00 cup of coffee. They run a successful business  
5 in Prairie Grove. For years, we've partnered with  
6 them. I'll go back one -- in this little picture  
7 down here in the corner, that is our coffee shop that  
8 we have built for an entrepreneurial program where  
9 our kids come in. And we get the free roast, they  
10 make us coffee, they deliver the coffee, they run the  
11 entire business, and we use that to collect dues and  
12 to get money for our kids to enjoy proms, to enjoy at  
13 the end of the year the things that in years past  
14 we've had a tough time giving that money. So our  
15 kids take ownership of that and we have that time to  
16 explore those options with them because of the system  
17 that we've had set up and because of the charters  
18 that are provided.

19 Student perseverance -- again, you see down  
20 there at the bottom it says Senior Decision Day. We  
21 had I believe over 20 representatives from different  
22 schools, different colleges, different trade schools,  
23 military branches. They all showed up, they set up,  
24 we opened it up to our community, we went live on it,  
25 we videoed it. And all of our kids, in front of our

1 entire student body and in front of their parents,  
2 basically just talked about what they would be doing  
3 and where they would be going and how they got there.

4 Our program assessment -- we do track our  
5 college remediation rates, number of students earning  
6 college credits.

7 Tracking students -- the teacher and student  
8 surveys, in my opinion, that's one of our greatest  
9 voices because we want to hear what the students  
10 think about it. We all understand the educational  
11 climate and school choice and what kids -- you know,  
12 in today's world everybody has a louder voice than  
13 they ever had with all the platforms they're allowed  
14 to voice it on. So we want our kids to enjoy being  
15 here and we want them to understand the value of what  
16 we're trying to provide them and that it's not just a  
17 piece of paper that they just toss to the side; that  
18 they come out of here and they have enjoyed their  
19 time and they know which direction they're going to  
20 go.

21 Our partners across the board, these are people  
22 that we've reached out to. And, again, we're  
23 continuing to grow that. I'm super excited about our  
24 EMT program and about our emergency management  
25 program. We sat at a table, Dr. Spears and I and

1           Jana Claybrook and Emilianne -- we all sat at a table  
2           with over 12 different representatives, from fire  
3           fighters, from police officers, from -- and they were  
4           all in there and they thought the idea of developing  
5           this type of program -- and especially seeing how  
6           they've changed the age requirements for kids to come  
7           out of school with these EMT certifications, it just  
8           makes sense. And I believe in our area we will have  
9           a large group of kids and parents that are excited to  
10          put their kids in something like that. That's our  
11          partners.

12                 Our goals -- we use IXL student data. It drives  
13                 some of the educational gaps and needs. We use that  
14                 as our small group intervention. We take a baseline;  
15                 we run that through numerous times. Everybody is  
16                 familiar with that process. But that is also  
17                 something that is practiced throughout the week and  
18                 then, once again, gone over on our mentor days. A  
19                 lot of time is dedicated towards students'  
20                 personalized educational needs, their educational  
21                 gaps, and maybe even areas that they excel in.  
22                 That's always the goal is to give them more time in  
23                 front of the things that they are passionate about  
24                 and that they educationally excel in.

25                 Every student will graduate with a PLA and that

1 is our plan of action and that is our goal and that  
2 is what we show up every day to try to successful  
3 have happen. And I think our students would vouch  
4 for that, I think our staff would vouch for that;  
5 clearly, I'm vouching for that with all of you guys.  
6 But that's where we're at.

7 Our waivers -- the flexibility, attendance,  
8 class size, seat time, clock hour -- that's kind of  
9 -- that's what provides us with this range to put  
10 these kids where they need to be.

11 I'll change this back.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you very much.

13 MR. KARBER: That's my presentation.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you very much, Mr.  
15 Karber.

16 MR. KARBER: You're welcome.

17 WAIVERS

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. James, if you'd like to  
19 discuss waivers.

20 (MR. DAN DAVIS: He needs to stop sharing.)

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Karber, if you'll stop  
22 sharing your screen please.

23 MR. KARBER: I will stop sharing, yes. Sorry.  
24 There you go.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Thank you.

1 MS. JAMES: My name is Whitney James, with the  
2 Department.

3 And I did not have any legal comments regarding  
4 the waivers that Lincoln High is asking to continue.  
5 It's my understanding that the waivers they have  
6 listed are related to their digital learning plan,  
7 which they do wish to continue.

8 They have some waivers listed on My School Info  
9 that they didn't list as ones that they want to  
10 rescind on their application. However, I did confirm  
11 that they are asking to rescind all of those. And,  
12 you know, Mr. Karber and I went down this list one-  
13 by-one; I said, "Are you sure you don't need this?"  
14 "Are you sure you don't want this?" "Do you want to  
15 rescind this?" And he said yes to every single one,  
16 I think mainly because they are not going to have 8th  
17 grade students in their school. They're now a 9  
18 through 12, so several of their waiver requests were  
19 related to 8th grade students.

20 But they're asking to rescind CTE, Teacher  
21 Licensure, Library Media, Fine Arts, Health and  
22 Safety -- there's a whole big long list. I don't  
23 know if you're interested in hearing everything that  
24 they wish to rescind. But I confirmed everything on  
25 the -- that's listed on the final legal review is

1 what they're asking to continue.

2 I have no additional comment. If there are any  
3 questions, I'm happy to take those.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That makes all the others  
5 make more sense. Yeah, okay.

6 QUESTIONS

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini, do you have any  
8 questions? No questions?

9 MS. SARACINI: Not at this time. No.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No questions, just a  
12 comment. I appreciate the school taking a focus on  
13 true college and career readiness and seeing that  
14 throughout their structure. So I'm really excited to  
15 see that. And I'm also glad to see they were  
16 rescinding the waivers that were related to career  
17 and technical education.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams?

19 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I enjoyed your  
20 presentation. The thing that stood out to me is that  
21 you all are doing a good job of -- no, let me  
22 rephrase that -- you all are doing a great job of  
23 meeting the needs of your students and that's what  
24 really has come out to me.

25 Quick question on the mentoring program, which

1 really I think is great. I like that idea. How many  
2 -- what percentage of your students have mentor  
3 teachers or a staff member mentoring them?

4 MR. KARBER: 100%, sir.

5 DR. WILLIAMS: 100%?

6 MR. KARBER: Yes, sir.

7 DR. WILLIAMS: I thought that. So what's your  
8 current enrollment since you dropped the 8th grade  
9 and are just 9 through 12 now?

10 MR. KARBER: I think we're right around 370,  
11 sir.

12 DR. WILLIAMS: 370. Okay.

13 MR. KARBER: Yes, sir.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: All right. The only other thing  
15 I had with the mentorship program -- well, a follow-  
16 up on that one: how -- any bumps in the road? What's  
17 making that program successful?

18 MR. KARBER: That's a good -- I think at first  
19 you're clearly going to come across something that we  
20 all deal with. If there was any bumps in the road it  
21 was that maybe the alignment of the mentee with the  
22 mentor, with a particular mentor. But I would say  
23 that two -- I think that what it did was it increased  
24 our ability to communicate within the building. And  
25 not only to express that we wanted our students to

1 have their own voice, that we needed to use that  
2 voice and use our voice and to understand where -- if  
3 I have a student and I am doing my job, not only as a  
4 professional, just as a human-being communicating  
5 within this building, if I know someone that has a  
6 similar interest that can start this kid and provide  
7 that hook, that's my job to make sure that I put them  
8 in that alignment. And at first I think there was a  
9 little shuffle-and-muffle because I think every  
10 school has one that -- you know, we can't have one  
11 with 55 mentees --

12 DR. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

13 MR. KARBUR: -- because they have something that  
14 is aligning. But I think once we figured out what  
15 worked best and then, again, what worked best for the  
16 adults so they wouldn't feel like they were burning  
17 out and that they showed up every Friday and every  
18 day, I think that was the toughest part. But we have  
19 an amazing building full of human-beings who have  
20 made it through things and they did it because of the  
21 relationships they develop with those kids and with  
22 themselves.

23 MS. CLAYBROOK: I want to talk about one. So we  
24 have -- hi, I'm the assistant principal here. We  
25 have a young guy who is our biology science teacher;

1 he also teaches astronomy. But in his previous years  
2 he was in a rock band and he has a kids school rock  
3 band at our school and it's really awesome. We put a  
4 picture in our slide show. She's actually in our  
5 school band but she's in our rock band also, and it's  
6 pretty cool. They played for us on one Friday. I  
7 mean who has a school rock band. I mean I know  
8 there's a movie about it, but we really made one.  
9 It's pretty awesome.

10 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you. That's great.

11 MR. KARBER: We enjoy it. We really do.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers?

13 DR. FLOWERS: Yes. You more or less answered my  
14 question. My question was -- I was thinking about  
15 the mentor matching piece and how do you create a  
16 balance between students -- the number of students  
17 that are assigned to their mentors. But you did  
18 touch on that.

19 MR. KARBER: Yes, sir.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

21 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. Thank you.

22 Just really a question and maybe also just a  
23 point of clarification. So you all have a pretty  
24 robust offering of opportunities for your students,  
25 from industry certifications, to college preparation.

1 Help us understand, I guess, which are most popular.  
2 Is it the industry certifications that most students  
3 sign up for? Kind of give us some context on that.

4 MR. KARBUR: Yes. Without hesitation, in this  
5 area -- and again I think that comes with, you know,  
6 we're 26 miles down the road from the University of  
7 Arkansas. We do have students who clearly have  
8 college aspirations and we align them the best we can  
9 and we do everything we can to prepare them for that.  
10 But in this area, in this rural area we are a  
11 consolidated school district. It is one of the  
12 larger districts as far as square miles. We've got  
13 kids that are up early. Everyone knows the stories.  
14 This is rural Arkansas. So, yes, sir, I would say  
15 that the majority of ours are career aligned. We  
16 also have a large support within our Armed Forces.  
17 We have gentlemen that show up every Friday from  
18 around the area that are recruiters, that they don't  
19 just come and sit in the office; they are out in the  
20 hallways, they're in the cafeteria, they're in the  
21 gyms. They help us develop these relationships and  
22 we have a great group of young men and women that go  
23 and serve and then come back, or just the route for  
24 high school, they're just preparing for what they're  
25 -- but -- and without hesitation, it is the career

1           readiness; it is coming out with some kind of  
2           certification to go into a field to immediately make  
3           some money.

4           MR. BALDWIN: I expected that. I lived down the  
5           road from you --

6           MR. KARBER: Yes, sir.

7           MR. BALDWIN: -- in West Fork, so I can relate.

8           Let me ask you -- you had a good list of  
9           industry partners. Do they financially support your  
10          program?

11          MR. KARBER: In some ways, yes, sir. And we  
12          also have -- Jana Claybrook is joining us on here and  
13          she's a phenomenal grant writer and she points us to  
14          these resources that just continuously help us year  
15          after year fund all this. So --

16          MS. CLAYBROOK: I can speak to that for just a  
17          second, Stan.

18          MR. KARBER: Sure. Yes, ma'am.

19          MS. CLAYBROOK: We have a partnership with  
20          United Way where we have written a grant, a Pathway  
21          Out of Poverty grant. And that allows us to pay for  
22          the certifications for our poverty students and it  
23          allows for us to pay some different certifications  
24          for those students. So that way, the student can go  
25          ahead and go through the program if there's a

1 financial commitment, but the United Way piece of it  
2 will pay for that for that student. So they're able  
3 to -- you know, the CNA students can graduate with  
4 college credit hours as well as their CNA degree and  
5 then go right into LPN. So we have different  
6 programs that we've worked with United Way on. I  
7 think we've been -- the entire charter has been  
8 through with United Way grants. We continue to seek  
9 those out. For those mentorship pieces, we're  
10 allowed to pay the students to go into the businesses  
11 for mentorships through that United Way grant as  
12 well, as well as a 10f grant through the JAG program.  
13 So those are ways that we've been able to get our  
14 students in programs that financially they might not  
15 be able to do.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Thank you.

17 Mr. Karber --

18 MR. KARBER: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- in the amendment request  
20 it says that you are moving 8th grade back to the  
21 middle school campus. I'm assuming that will happen  
22 for the next school year?

23 MR. KARBER: Actually, that happened I believe  
24 three years ago. So that is -- that move and that  
25 transition has already taken place. We have not had

1 8th grade in this building. I believe Jana could  
2 probably give us an exact -- but I believe it's been  
3 three years now.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So was there an LEA change  
5 request submitted?

6 MS. COX: Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

8 So, Whitney, shouldn't there have been an  
9 amendment to the charter if they're changing grade  
10 levels?

11 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am, I believe that there  
12 should have been. I don't know if there was an  
13 amendment request filed for the charter.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. We'll  
15 circle up on that. Make sure that everything is  
16 correct with the LEA numbers, just heads-up in the  
17 future.

18 MR. KARBER: Yes, ma'am.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And on the -- if you look on  
20 the agenda, you'll see where Mr. Johnston has kind of  
21 noted out each of your components. And you do want  
22 us to include that your renewal does include your  
23 digital learning plan. Is that correct?

24 MR. KARBER: Yes, it is.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. That's all my

1 questions. Short and sweet.

2 Anyone else, questions?

3 Then I'll accept a motion.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I move approval.

5 MS. SARACINI: I second.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Dr.

7 Wright-McMurray and a second from Ms. Saracini to

8 approve Lincoln High School renewal for five years,

9 with the waivers as discussed.

10 All those in favor?

11 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

13 Motion passes.

14 Mr. Karber and Team, if you will give us just a

15 moment our panel members will read their thoughts

16 regarding the vote and we'll get you ready for State

17 Board meeting next month.

18 MR. KARBER: Okay.

19 (A MOMENT OF SILENCE)

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Let me make my little box

22 here a little bigger here, so -- boy, here we go.

23 I support the motion. This renewal will allow

24 Lincoln High School charter to continue offering

25 workforce and college readiness programs that meet

1 the needs of their students. Also, the mentor  
2 program can serve as a model for other schools.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

4 Dr. Wright-McMurray.

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for and I said I  
6 support the renewal application. Lincoln High School  
7 has developed a strong model that effectively  
8 addresses college and career readiness for their  
9 students.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I voted to approve the  
12 renewal. I think it's a strong program and  
13 especially in a rural community. It's meeting the  
14 needs of the kids and the community, both.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers.

16 DR. FLOWERS: I vote to approve this five-year  
17 renewal with waivers as discussed. I look forward to  
18 seeing how your learning and mentorship model will  
19 continue to guide and support students in college and  
20 career preparation.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini.

22 MS. SARACINI: I support the motion for renewal  
23 of Lincoln High School. Lincoln High School is  
24 leading the way in career and technical.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Congratulations, Mr. Karber.

1 MR. KARBER: Thank you guys. Thank you very  
2 much.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Thank you for  
4 your presentation. We appreciate you, and see you  
5 for the State Board meeting.

6 MR. KARBER: Sounds good. Merry Christmas, you  
7 guys.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

9 MR. KARBER: Have a good one.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Bye-bye.

11 MR. KARBER: All rightee. Bye.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Prairie Grove is next. Are  
13 they online yet?

14 MR. JOHNSTON: I'm not sure. I'm checking to  
15 see if Ms. Melody is --

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Why don't we take a  
17 quick 5-minute break and let them get online. And if  
18 they can't, if they're not ready, then I believe you  
19 said North Little Rock is ready to go?

20 MR. JOHNSTON: Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

22 (BREAK: 1:30 P.M. - 1:36 P.M.)

23 V.1.b. PRAIRIE GROVE HIGH SCHOOL

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: For the record, we are --

25 Prairie Grove has asked us to move their presentation

1 to tomorrow, and we will be able to do that.

2 V.1.c. NORTH LITTLE ROCK CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So, Mr. Johnston, when you're  
4 ready to introduce the next item.

5 MR. JOHNSTON: Tim Johnston, DESE Charter Unit.

6 North Little Rock Center of Excellence has come  
7 before the committee requesting a renewal on the  
8 five-year period for their charter. The campus  
9 serves grades 9-12. Current enrollment cap is 3,000  
10 students. The charter will continue to follow a  
11 blended -- I apologize -- a blending of traditional  
12 and digital education models. And Karla Whisnant is  
13 here representing the district, and she has some  
14 other staff with her.

15 And you will need to be sworn in.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So everyone speaking on  
17 behalf of North Little Rock Center of Excellence, if  
18 you'll stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear  
19 or affirm that the testimony you're about to give  
20 shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but  
21 the truth?

22 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. And thank you for  
24 being early so we can move along. And I will say  
25 that Ms. Saracini and I visited North Little Rock and

1 we were quite impressed.

2 MS. WHISNANT: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Appreciate the tour.

4 Ms. Sonja, did you get to go there?

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: No. Okay.

7 All right. You have 20 minutes --

8 MS. WHISNANT: Thank you, ma'am.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- or whatever you need.

10 MS. WHISNANT: I would like to introduce Joseph  
11 Maxwell, he's my assistant principal, and Dr. Hoover,  
12 she's the new assistant superintendent. And I  
13 believe Melody Cox, my counselor, is online.

14 As stated before, my name is Karla Whisnant; I'm  
15 the principal of the COE, the Center of Excellence,  
16 and we've been in existence for five years. After  
17 the visit from Ms. Coffman and Ms. Saracini, they  
18 definitely wanted us to focus on what we've learned  
19 and how we plan to make changes for the future.

20 Does this work?

21 MR. DAN DAVIS: All right. Give me one second.  
22 It will work.

23 MR. JOHNSTON: Is it off? There's a switch on  
24 the side of it.

25 MS. WHISNANT: It is off. There it goes. Just

1 a little nervous, guys. So sorry about that.  
2 There's no such thing as the word "just." All right.

3 So vision and mission -- the first thing we  
4 changed was the vision and mission because I was not  
5 part of the leadership team that created that. So I  
6 wanted to get more input from the staff and the  
7 students and the teachers in saying what is it, what  
8 is going to be our vision and mission.

9 And so our vision is that every student will  
10 graduate and be prepared for the next step of their  
11 life, be it career or college or military, whatever  
12 reason. It is our goal -- the vision is that every  
13 student walks across the stage knowing what they want  
14 to do next and what they want to explore.

15 The mission of the North Little Rock Center of  
16 Excellence is to prepare our students to be authors  
17 of their future through personalized learning,  
18 positive relationships, and engaging instruction.

19 And the goals -- we revised our goals last year  
20 to include more realistic and attainable goals. They  
21 were at 40% increase by the original charter, and we  
22 wanted to make it a 20% increase. And we also added  
23 some indicators in the NWEA Maps score that we're  
24 going to use to determine, not just the ACT Aspire.  
25 We plan to increase the math, the reading, and the

1 English scores for all our students.

2 There's our school profile. I gave you a  
3 picture of it, but for those who are online if y'all  
4 can hit the link on the line part, since I'm not sure  
5 I can do it here.

6 MR. DAN DAVIS: Hold on one second.

7 MS. WHISNANT: I can just go from this sheet.

8 We started some notable recognitions that we've  
9 earned over the first years. But the first part I  
10 want to talk about is every one of our students  
11 belong to a CTSO, a Career Tech Student Organization.  
12 We are part of the Skills USA, which is our Criminal  
13 Justice and Advanced Manufacturing programs. We are  
14 part of TSA, Technical Student Association, which is  
15 our engineering and computer science programs. And  
16 we're part of HOSA, which is our medical professional  
17 program. So, all our students belong to a technical  
18 career organization. What's unique to us is that we  
19 do have robotics; we compete across the state. And  
20 we actually started eSports by student demand a few  
21 years ago and that really has blossomed tremendously.

22 Our academic program -- we always talk about our  
23 expanding what we can academically. We are a charter  
24 school inside a high school, so a lot of the AP  
25 classes and stuff that are very specialized we can --

1           our -- both our students join and make the successful  
2           classrooms, like the Macro Economics and stuff of  
3           that nature.

4           The project-based learning is what we want to  
5           stress and that is because that deepens the mode of  
6           learning in the classroom. It answers the question  
7           why are we doing this to the kids, and it helps  
8           bridge the learning loss that our kids have  
9           experienced through Covid with applying what they do  
10          in the classroom. Okay. And in our time we've given  
11          well over 400 certifications. The vast majority of  
12          those certifications arrive in HOSA, in our medical  
13          professions, with CNA, pharmacy tech, and some FEMA  
14          certifications, with You're the Help Until the Help  
15          Arrives CPR, stuff of that nature. We were one of  
16          the first high schools -- and I don't know of any  
17          other school that has offered C&C certification from  
18          HOS. So we had several kids earn that last year, I  
19          believe the year before Covid hit, and we're bringing  
20          that back. And so -- and we offer OSHA-10  
21          certifications as well. We have two Project Lead the  
22          Way pathways, one is the engineering and the other  
23          one is biomedical science. And we've had a meeting  
24          with UALR, who's looking at offering -- extending  
25          their certifications to include biomedical science,

1 because right now I believe the only places that  
2 recognize that is in Florida, colleges in Florida.  
3 So we've met with them.

4 If you go down to our demographics down there,  
5 we are 74% free and reduced -- and that's really  
6 higher than that, but that's what the kids, you know,  
7 would come to. We have 7% ELL students, 7% special  
8 ed. When I first came out onto this we had 21% of  
9 our kids enrolling or have enrolled in an AP course,  
10 and as of this year we're at 42% to experience -- so  
11 all our students experience a pathway. Every student  
12 experiences one form of our pathways of career tech,  
13 and now we're getting close to 50% of our students  
14 experiencing an AP course. And our graduation rate  
15 was 95% for all years we've been here.

16 So I don't know if I can get back out of this  
17 screen to our presentation.

18 MR. DAN DAVIS: Sorry, I'm dealing with another  
19 issue.

20 MS. WHISNANT: Our staff profile is me, Mr.  
21 Maxwell, Ms. Cox; my three classified staff with the  
22 secretary, the registrar, and parent engagement  
23 professional; three CNLs, which is a version of  
24 Opportunity Culture -- one is full released and two  
25 are partial released; we have 24 classroom teachers,

1 14 are licensed and 10 are working on their licensure  
2 through various ways -- AQT, passing Praxis, working  
3 on getting technical permits.

4 Here's our data trends for the last three years.  
5 And I did not put -- you can see that the Covid year  
6 was skipped in this data over here. Our ELA scores,  
7 even with the Covid year, rose; and so we feel really  
8 good about our English scores on that part. We won  
9 Beating the Odds in 17-18 and 18-19 in ELA scores,  
10 and we beat those scores last year. And,  
11 surprisingly, if you look at our math scores, they  
12 went down after the year of Covid, but we still -- we  
13 got recognized by UALR with Beating the Odds in math  
14 scores too. So even at that, our growth of our  
15 students is beating expectations from the previous  
16 test scores.

17 Reading has always been a strong point to hit.  
18 Literacy is extremely important, as everybody knows.  
19 So we are actually doing literacy across the  
20 curriculum in all our classes, including our CTE  
21 classes -- doing the reading prompts and the writing  
22 prompts to increase the literacy of the students.  
23 Two classes that we offered due to the scores of  
24 reading and math this year, since the State  
25 recognized Critical Reading and the Critical Algebra

1 I class, we have bumped that in and double-blocked  
2 them with our regular reading or our regular ELA  
3 class and our Algebra I class.

4 Our graduation rates have been high. I want you  
5 to know that when we -- my indicator that I use with  
6 our leadership team is our on-time credit rate. And  
7 our first year, when we first started we were sitting  
8 right around 80-something percent on-time credit, and  
9 so that on-time credit rate is what drove our  
10 intervention classrooms. Okay. So we started doing  
11 interventions to help the kids get the missing  
12 credits that they were needing. What's not seen here  
13 is what -- how we ended last year with Covid, year-  
14 before-last with Covid, and how that impacted our on-  
15 time rates. Our -- my 9th grade group after one  
16 semester was at 80% on-time. So we knew then we'd  
17 better start planning now if we're going to get them  
18 where they need to be in order to get them the high  
19 school diploma and/or the certifications they need to  
20 be successful in whatever career they are choosing.

21 Here's some of the changes that we made based on  
22 what we learned. Once again, the vision and mission  
23 was recreated. We do mentoring. We did -- we do  
24 mentoring for all our students. Every single student  
25 has a mentor. Every teacher is a mentor to students

1 or my MCLs are mentor to teachers. Okay. So at the  
2 first time we did mentoring -- mentoring is a big  
3 pillar in our school, but we did pull-outs. And by  
4 that what I mean is the teacher would have, on their  
5 prep, pull the kids out of a non-essential core class  
6 and do some mentoring with them once a week. We've  
7 always done cumulative grading throughout the  
8 semester. We look at it -- we do weighted grading.  
9 We did weighted grading in core classes only, 70%  
10 summative, 30% formative, and we provided after-  
11 school tutoring. The next year we did mentoring  
12 during the day, meaning we had it during block  
13 scheduling. The district allowed us to go to block  
14 scheduling and we have a flex period, which you  
15 recall, and we meet every day for 40 minutes. And  
16 during that flex period is when mentoring will occur  
17 for our students. They stay with that teacher during  
18 -- every day; they report to the same teacher that  
19 period every single day.

20 We had two different reading initiatives. At  
21 that time we did a Read 180 class and DEAR Reading  
22 Initiative, which is Drop Everything and Read, which  
23 I'm sure you've heard of at some point in time. So  
24 the year after that we dedicated a room for RTI. We  
25 realized we needed a room in our school environment

1 for the kids to get the interventions during the day,  
2 which is the best time to get them. We changed our  
3 platform to Google. The district made a difference.  
4 We were on a Summit Learning platform prior to this  
5 and we changed it to Google because we ended the year  
6 with Covid. This is the year that we ended and the  
7 district wanted everything the same. We went to just  
8 Words Reading and we ended on virtual learning. Year  
9 after that was also -- last year we did hybrid  
10 classrooms. I have so many singletons. I cannot  
11 offer a class virtual and offer a class traditional,  
12 so we did hybrid. We did the asynchronous -- or the  
13 synchronous learning at the same time. We had our  
14 Google Classrooms open and the teachers were teaching  
15 to the kids in the room that were face-to-face, as  
16 well as the kids that were virtual at the same time.  
17 And that is very hard on the teachers, but they did a  
18 fantastic job, and that way all our students got the  
19 services they needed. And we do PLCs; we did them  
20 grade level and/or department level.

21 This year, we started with our essential  
22 standards. We have no hybrid classrooms. The CTE  
23 classes were very clear that we have to have hands-on  
24 labs. These kids need to come in and work with the  
25 machines that they're going to be using. So they

1           were very -- saying no, we can't do it. We did it  
2           last year because we had to, but this year we didn't  
3           have to have that option; so we are definitely 100%  
4           hands-on labs during the school day. And we do  
5           weighted grading in all our classes across the board.

6                        So what we've learned, we must have a quality  
7           digital curriculum. We did Summit. Summit was a  
8           quality curriculum, but it did not communicate with  
9           eSchool as well as we'd like to. So at this point in  
10          time we're looking at Schoology; so we're going to  
11          move over on that, starting next semester. We've  
12          always done -- mentoring is a must. The kids must  
13          have an adult. And it's so impactful that I had a  
14          student today from college come meet me before the  
15          semester test and she asked for a mentor from our  
16          school to help her through college because she  
17          recognized that when she was here -- and she  
18          graduated a year ago -- and she goes, "I need  
19          somebody to help with goal setting." And so I spoke  
20          to one of our new teachers and he was more than  
21          willing to say, "Sure, I'll mentor her." So that's  
22          the value of the mentoring. It is important to the  
23          social-emotional aspect of our students going through  
24          the crisis that we have as a country, as a world, and  
25          it's important just on the academic success to have

1 someone that they can go to that's not mom and dad  
2 and not principal, saying, "Hey, this is where you  
3 need to be moving forward to get to what you want to  
4 do, to explore."

5 Project-based learning, like I said, is  
6 essential for deeper understanding and greater  
7 retention of content knowledge. The kids remember  
8 what they learn when they do it in a project format.

9 And safety protocols -- in order to be -- and we  
10 are very flexible, but in order to be as flexible as  
11 we have, you need to have strict regulations and  
12 safety measures in place so the kids are not  
13 experiencing -- so there's some control and not  
14 chaos, not performance chaos.

15 Here's our snapshot. We've had the option of  
16 blended traditional and digital courses. The  
17 students focus. Our course delivery is personalized.  
18 We have flexible scheduling for the apprenticeships  
19 and internships, the workforce. We've had several  
20 apprenticeships over summertime. Our kids go to --  
21 our CNA kids go to the VA hospital to get hands-on  
22 experience. I know there's a lot of HIPPA laws and  
23 stuff, but we have to make sure that we follow the  
24 regulations of the companies we're visiting and that  
25 stuff. And students compete -- can complete with a

1 value-added diploma and that's all we're trying to do  
2 is make sure that when our kids leave our campus and  
3 they walk across the stage they have more things at  
4 hand to make them more employable, make them more  
5 successful in the next step of their lives.

6 These are the waivers that we have asked for to  
7 continue. We did rescind several waivers, and I  
8 think Ms. Whitney will talk about that.

9 And these are some of the recognitions that we  
10 have in the last five years. Our graduation rate,  
11 40%. And the AP enrollment. We were a Highly  
12 Effective Schools Accreditation by Solution Tree last  
13 year. We've beaten the odds in '18, beaten the odds  
14 in ELA in '19, top 10% growth in 2019, top 10% growth  
15 last year in 20-21, and beaten the odds in math in  
16 20-21.

17 And that is my presentation. I thank you for  
18 listening to me speed through that because I can feel  
19 myself not breathing. Okay.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Breathe. Breathe in.

21 So is your digital -- I'm a little lost on your  
22 digital learning plan. Is it in -- are you including  
23 that, not including that?

24 MS. WHISNANT: We are going to include that.  
25 Whitney and I had a conversation yesterday on that.

1 And so there is going to be some amendments --

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

3 MS. WHISNANT: -- on it based on that. But we  
4 are going to include the DLP in this renewal because  
5 --

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. It will just come  
7 later in the form of an amendment?

8 MS. JAMES: They actually -- I'm sorry. I'm  
9 walking up there.

10 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Ms. James comes to the  
11 podium.)

12 MS. JAMES: They actually -- since they want to  
13 include their digital learning plan in the renewal,  
14 they do need a couple of code sections to add to  
15 their waiver request. So I can just cover them today  
16 --

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

18 MS. JAMES: -- and get it all rolled into one.

19 MS. WHISNANT: As a matter of convenience for  
20 y'all.

21 CHIARMAN COFFMAN: We love it.

22 All right. Come back, Ms. James.

23 MS. JAMES: Okay.

24 WAIVERS

25 MS. JAMES: My name is Whitney James, with the

1 Department.

2 For the waivers for the Center of Excellence,  
3 they wish to continue their Career and Technical  
4 Education waiver. I didn't have any legal comments  
5 regarding that.

6 They also wish to continue -- I can try to get  
7 through this a little bit more quickly if I need to  
8 -- their Library Media waiver. I have no comment.

9 Their School Nurse waiver, I have no comment on  
10 that.

11 They also wish to continue with their Health  
12 Services waiver. I have no comments on that.

13 And their Teacher Licensure waiver -- on that  
14 waiver request I believe they had an old standard  
15 listed. That's highlighted in red. So we're just  
16 going to take that off there.

17 And I'd also like Ms. Whisnant to please explain  
18 -- or please confirm on the record that they will  
19 meet all Qualified Teaching standards and that any  
20 special education teachers will have full licensure.

21 MS. WHISNANT: Well, we have zero special  
22 education teachers on our staff. All our students go  
23 outside to the high school for those services. So we  
24 do not -- we do not worry about that.

25 And as for the Licensure of staff, all our staff

1 have created a plan of -- a process to get their  
2 licensure completed at this point in time.

3 MS. JAMES: They wish to continue their waivers  
4 listed in -- or the waivers of the code sections  
5 listed in number six regarding Salary. I have no  
6 comment.

7 They did confirm that they do not need a waiver  
8 of 6-17-908 and I did verify that.

9 They are asking for a waiver of Instructional  
10 Time. And with that request, we'd like to add the  
11 code section 6-10-126 because that is part of their  
12 digital learning plan. So that's one of the code  
13 sections they would like to add to continue the  
14 digital learning plan. So with that, I don't have  
15 any comments on waiver number seven, Instructional  
16 Time.

17 They're asking to continue their waiver of the  
18 Six-Hour Instructional Day. I didn't have any  
19 comments on that.

20 They're asking to continue their waiver of Clock  
21 Hours. I have no comments on that.

22 They do want to rescind waiver number ten, Adopt  
23 and Implement School Safety Policies and Procedures.

24 They also wish to rescind -- and I don't even  
25 know if this is necessary because this rule and the

1 statute are no longer in existence. But number  
2 eleven, Attendance. We've updated their Attendance  
3 waiver with the correct code section. The one they  
4 had listed I'm sure was from the older -- from the  
5 initial application, so we've updated it to the  
6 current citation.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So where is -- I'm just  
8 showing Attendance rescinded. I'm not seeing  
9 Attendance corrected.

10 MS. JAMES: Yes. I'm sorry; I had a couple of  
11 rules to add to the end --

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

13 MS. JAMES: -- that go with their --

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

15 MS. JAMES: -- digital learning plan.

16 So they're just going to -- and like I said, I'm  
17 not even sure if it's necessary to rescind a waiver  
18 that has old --

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Clean-up.

20 MS. JAMES: -- old information listed, but --

21 They wish to rescind their waiver request for  
22 Class Size and Teaching Load. And that did throw me  
23 off a little bit, so I did ask the school if they  
24 would be willing to explain to you why they're asking  
25 to rescind that waiver when they do have a digital

1 learning plan.

2 MS. WHISNANT: That waiver is rescinded in our  
3 DLP and we want to be consistent across the board on  
4 that, and that's why we rescinded it.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Whisnant, is your digital  
6 learning -- so you're not -- you're not doing  
7 synchronous anymore. So are they -- are your  
8 students that are on a digital learning plan that are  
9 100% virtual, are they taught like in a separate time  
10 with teachers? Are they --

11 MS. WHISNANT: It was just a little bit of  
12 everything. Okay. It's -- it is -- the district  
13 outsourced that this year. Last year, our teachers  
14 did it synchronously and asynchronously. And this  
15 year, it is a little bit of everything. There are  
16 some -- there are office hours for the teachers,  
17 there are class hours for the students, and they also  
18 have asynchronous classes that they can attend when  
19 they are not working.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then the students come  
21 onsite for their career ed. classes?

22 MS. WHISNANT: Yes. We have some kids that come  
23 on there just for a CNA lab. Okay?

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

25 MS. JAMES: This brings us to waiver number

1 thirteen, Gifted and Talented. They wish to rescind  
2 that. I have no comments on that.

3 The school is also asking to rescind their  
4 Principal waiver. I have no comments on that.

5 Number fifteen, the school is asking to rescind  
6 their School Counselor Licensure waiver. I have no  
7 comments regarding that.

8 Number sixteen, the school is asking to rescind  
9 their Superintendent Licensure waiver. I have no  
10 comments on that.

11 And they're also asking to rescind their School  
12 Calendar waiver, which is number seventeen. I have  
13 no comments on that.

14 We would like to add a couple of code sections  
15 so that they're consistent with their digital  
16 learning plan. The school would like to add 6-18-  
17 213(a)(2), which is what they have in their digital  
18 learning plan, Attendance. And 6-10-126 -- and I  
19 believe we already went over that, but that's the  
20 Delay or Early Release of the school.

21 Is all of that correct?

22 MS. WHISNANT: Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. JAMES: Okay. That's all the comments that  
24 I have.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So that just means on your

1 attendance that, for those students that are  
2 participating in your digital learning plan, that  
3 attendance would be recorded based on their  
4 participation --

5 MS. WHISNANT: In the classroom.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- in the online courses?

7 MS. WHISNANT: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then on 6-10-126, that's  
9 due to inclement weather, late start --

10 MS. WHISNANT: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and early release?

12 MS. WHISNANT: AMI day is what I was thinking,  
13 but it's not necessarily. Right?

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: It doesn't replace an AMI  
15 plan.

16 MS. WHISNANT: No. But it -- we don't -- we  
17 don't need it if we're rescinding it. Correct?

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So that's the one we just  
19 added.

20 MS. WHISNANT: To be consistent with the DLP.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Right.

22 MS. WHISNANT: You're correct.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So if the school were to do  
24 an early release due to inclement weather, as  
25 described in that law, then it tells, you know, what

1 -- when and when you don't have to make it up. But  
2 it doesn't allow you to do early release and not have  
3 your 30 hours of instruction --

4 MS. WHISNANT: Correct.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- provided?

6 MS. WHISNANT: Correct.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Just for clarification.

8 QUESTIONS

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Dr. Flowers,  
10 would you like to get us started with any questions?

11 DR. FLOWERS: Thanks again for your  
12 presentation.

13 When I look back at your smart goals, so I know  
14 that you updated them so all of them are now -- you  
15 had 20% increases. So talk to me a bit about how you  
16 came up with the 20% for the math. It was initially  
17 at 40, which you felt was lofty, so you went down to  
18 20. So talk to me about how you selected 20 as your  
19 baseline.

20 MS. WHISNANT: It was selected after discussion.  
21 We were talking about having a goal that's more  
22 attainable --

23 DR. FLOWERS: Okay.

24 MS. WHISNANT: -- in that time and we thought  
25 40% was just not a smart goal --

1 DR. FLOWERS: Sure.

2 MS. WHISNANT: -- and was not attainable.

3 DR. FLOWERS: Sure.

4 MS. WHISNANT: So we wanted to make sure it's  
5 more attainable.

6 DR. FLOWERS: Okay. So that's how you just came  
7 up with the 20?

8 MS. WHISNANT: Yeah. Well, we were thinking --  
9 we were actually thinking maybe 25%.

10 DR. FLOWERS: Okay.

11 MS. WHISNANT: 5% per year. And it turned out  
12 to be 4% -- 4% per year for the next five years. But  
13 20 was what we went through on all three of those  
14 goals.

15 DR. FLOWERS: So your target was at 4% for each  
16 year then?

17 MS. WHISNANT: Yes, sir.

18 DR. FLOWERS: Okay. Okay.

19 MS. WHISNANT: It would be a 4% growth per year.

20 DR. FLOWERS: Thank you.

21 MS. WHISNANT: Thank you.

22 DR. FLOWERS: Okay.

23 MS. WHISNANT: Yes, sir.

24 DR. FLOWERS: Okay.

25 MS. WHISNANT: You are correct.

1 DR. FLOWERS: Okay.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

3 MR. BALDWIN: I was glad to hear you all have a  
4 mentorship program. How do you select the mentors?  
5 Is it first-come/first-serve or randomly or do you  
6 actually target students and mentors based on --

7 MS. WHISNANT: That's a great question. When we  
8 first started it was completely and totally random.  
9 Okay. We wanted to make sure the mentor had 9-12,  
10 not just all 12th graders and everything like that.  
11 That way, we can use some student mentorship as well  
12 in the classroom -- peer mentorship. Several of the  
13 teachers asked for a survey to give to the kids so we  
14 can see -- with like minds. So the kids that were  
15 interested in the medical professions will have a  
16 medical profession mentor, versus the kids who are  
17 interested in the engineering have an engineering  
18 mentor. So surveys were sent out. The kids will  
19 tell us who they connect with. And just like the  
20 other school had mentioned, you always have that one  
21 person that wants -- every student wants, and you  
22 have -- so we do our best to pair personalities, pair  
23 goals, visions, and stuff of that nature with the  
24 students. But when we first started, yes, it was  
25 100% random. And as we progressed, we learned how to

1 connect kids with the students that they connect with  
2 and they can have choice. And students and teachers  
3 have choices in that.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams?

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I would just -- you know,  
6 it sounds like things are just going great. I was  
7 looking at all the accolades and so-forth.

8 Just like to get your comments on what your  
9 projection would be. The letter grades was D in '17-  
10 18 and C in '18-19. And, you know, we have the two  
11 Covid years with no letter grade. So how do you  
12 compare that -- you don't even have to use a letter  
13 grade. But really what I'm getting to is how would  
14 you compare then with those grades to where you all  
15 are now?

16 MS. WHISNANT: Well, yeah, we had the -- the  
17 school -- the State sent out that My School Info  
18 where we were and they had an asterisk that it was a  
19 Covid year. And it showed us now as a D+ if we were  
20 to use that, that we slid down just a smidge. But  
21 they didn't give any letter grades for it.

22 Comparing it is just -- what we're trying to  
23 figure out is how to address the learning loss during  
24 a year of Covid versus a year of just a normal school  
25 year -- with two years of Covid; let's just be honest

1 about that. We have choices on the kids, and the  
2 district helped us out tremendously because we had  
3 kids -- our first year there were kids going from  
4 virtual to traditional to virtual to traditional, by  
5 happenstance sometimes. And now that we say you have  
6 to commit to a semester of one or the other, that  
7 helps us support our kids in the learning loss in  
8 that section. So I feel like we are going to be a C,  
9 if not a B school, under the same thing just by doing  
10 what we did well -- you know, the mentoring, the  
11 interventions, the on-time credits, but also trying  
12 to address the learning loss section. We do  
13 interventions during the school day on our flex time.  
14 We have teachers list out the kids that -- hey, like  
15 our algebra teacher, "I need these kids for this  
16 subject area," and stuff of that nature, just to help  
17 build up the learning loss. As long as we teach what  
18 we're supposed to be teaching and addressing the  
19 learning losses that occurred during Covid, I think  
20 we'll be fine in moving our grade -- letter grade up.

21 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

22 MS. WHISNANT: Does that answer your question,  
23 sir?

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, it does. Uh-huh.

25 MS. WHISNANT: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

2 MS. SARACINI: So on the amendments -- on the  
3 amendments, you're asking -- talk a little bit about  
4 the current enrollment cap is 3,000.

5 MS. WHISNANT: I've asked for it to be amended  
6 to 600. I was in the cafeteria when I first heard  
7 that brought up and I felt the air get sucked out of  
8 the room. At this point in time, the staffing with  
9 what we have and everything like that, 600 I think is  
10 a nice goal. I don't think 3,000 -- once again, it's  
11 more of that attainable stuff. I think we need to  
12 keep in mind what's attainable in the next few years,  
13 and that is my attainable goal for the next few years  
14 to try to reach 600.

15 Does that answer your question, Ms. Saracini?

16 MS. SARACINI: Yes, it does. And I just wanted  
17 -- I would think that I would be remiss to say that  
18 our visit was wonderful and kids were totally engaged  
19 --

20 MS. WHISNANT: Yes.

21 MS. SARACINI: -- and really in charge of their  
22 learning.

23 MS. WHISNANT: Thank you, ma'am.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you for your

1 presentation and walking us through where you guys  
2 are right now.

3 I do have a question back on waiver number one  
4 as it relates to Career Technical Education. And so  
5 I have a sense of why the waiver is in place.

6 MS. WHISNANT: Are you talking about the CTE  
7 waiver?

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

9 MS. WHISNANT: Okay.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Because you are really --  
11 you know, you're offering out of two occupational  
12 areas and not the three. So I can see why you have  
13 the waiver there.

14 But my questions are: do you ever anticipate  
15 offering any additional occupational areas than what  
16 you have right now, which falls under trade and  
17 industry and our STEM office? And then, two, looking  
18 at your explanation for why you have the waiver I'm  
19 just trying to get a sense of how do you feel the  
20 waiver being in place is addressing you being able to  
21 embed the curriculum in the other courses and -- so  
22 that was your response there.

23 MS. WHISNANT: Okay.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Because I feel as if you  
25 can still get there without it, but I'm just trying

1 to get a sense of --

2 MS. WHISNANT: I gotcha one-hundred percent.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- what your thinking is  
4 behind that.

5 MS. WHISNANT: Yeah, one-hundred percent, ma'am.

6 As for the expansion, which I failed to mention,  
7 because you just brought that up -- and I have it in  
8 my notes but I didn't use my notes -- is animal  
9 science, HVAC, and small engine repair at this point  
10 in time. We're still looking at areas and rooms  
11 where we can do such expansion. Those are some of  
12 the biggest ones we have. We created a class called  
13 Intro to COE and in that classroom we talk about all  
14 the pathways and all the CTE classes and all the  
15 offerings we have for those classes. So for the -- I  
16 hope that answers your first question.

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So you're looking at  
18 adding animal science, which would be under our  
19 agricultural science and technology, which would get  
20 you to the standard rule, which would get you to the  
21 --

22 MS. WHISNANT: Third.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- third occupational  
24 area. But you were looking at doing that next year  
25 or --

1 MS. WHISNANT: We're -- we have discussed this  
2 with our central office people --

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

4 MS. WHISNANT: -- this year and it is still in  
5 discussion. And I believe the decision will be made  
6 in January of this school year.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Okay. So then if  
8 you do decide to give it, will they need to come --  
9 okay.

10 MS. WHISNANT: No, it's not a pathway yet --

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

12 MS. WHISNANT: -- where -- if that's what you're  
13 saying. It's not going to be a program of study.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

15 MS. WHISNANT: Okay. It's just going to be  
16 introducing the classes until we get --

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Are you just talking about  
18 offering just that one class out of that occupation  
19 area?

20 MS. WHISNANT: Until -- yes, until we get --

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

22 MS. WHISNANT: -- a better feel of what we need  
23 to do in order to make it a program of study.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

25 MS. WHISNANT: Okay. We can go through the

1 process at that point.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And then my other question  
3 is: can you speak to -- speak just a little bit about  
4 how you are embedding those --

5 MS. WHISNANT: The CTE.

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- programs of study in  
7 your other courses and how that waiver gets you to  
8 that?

9 MS. WHISNANT: Okay. Well, that was in the  
10 classroom that I was talking about, in our Freshmen  
11 Seminar class --

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

13 MS. WHISNANT: -- that was started. And all our  
14 freshmen take an Intro to COE and Freshmen Seminar.  
15 Our first year we had kids hopping pathways; they  
16 said, "I thought I wanted engineering, but I  
17 discovered I didn't want it. And I thought I wanted  
18 this, and I didn't want that." And so in order to  
19 streamline the process, we are giving them an  
20 introduction to these classes in one year. So in our  
21 9th grade year our kids take Intro to COE and  
22 Freshmen Seminar, which is part of the academy model  
23 or Keystone. Some of you may know it as the Keystone  
24 class --

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

1 MS. WHISNANT: -- and stuff of that nature.

2 Our CTE teachers, we -- like in our art, for  
3 example -- they use a lot of the structures. They  
4 try to -- we try to do cross-curriculum instruction  
5 all the time in little bits and pieces everywhere.  
6 And so for the manufacturing and engineering, talking  
7 about it in the math classrooms; the computer science  
8 coding, talking about that in the math classrooms and  
9 stuff of that nature -- not per se as teaching the  
10 standard in the math classroom, but definitely  
11 introducing the concept of the CTE classes in the  
12 math classrooms.

13 Does that help?

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So just one more question.

15 So do students have the opportunity -- or are  
16 the students encouraged to go through a traditional  
17 program of study inclusive of the (inaudible)?

18 MS. WHISNANT: I don't know what -- please --  
19 encouraged to go through a traditional program of  
20 study?

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh. So if like in CTE  
22 -- so, for example, medical professions -- if there's  
23 --

24 MS. WHISNANT: We --

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: There's like --

1 MS. WHISNANT: Three years.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes.

3 MS. WHISNANT: Yes, ma'am.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

5 MS. WHISNANT: We do three years and we record  
6 them.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

8 MS. WHISNANT: I know the state changed it to  
9 concentrator --

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes.

11 MS. WHISNANT: -- I believe.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes. Okay.

13 MS. WHISNANT: Yeah. We still want three years.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

15 MS. WHISNANT: And that's part of our thing.

16 Yes, we definitely want our kids to go through all  
17 three sequential years of the CTE programs.

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

19 MS. WHISNANT: Okay.

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's what I wanted to  
21 hear. Okay.

22 MS. WHISNANT: Thank you.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Perfect. Thanks.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. James, you may have to  
25 help.

1 MS. JAMES: Okay.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So when I think about the CTE  
3 waiver it's waiving nine units of sequenced career  
4 and technical education courses representing three  
5 occupational areas. So, what do you have?

6 MS. WHISNANT: What is our occupational areas?

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: No. I mean do you have two  
8 occupational areas, one occupational area, or --

9 MS. WHISNANT: We have --

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- do you have three?

11 MS. WHISNANT: We have -- occupational areas, we  
12 have more than -- we have health professions, CNA,  
13 pharmacy tech, and sports medicine, all under HOSA  
14 health professions. And project (inaudible)  
15 biomedical science which falls under that. And our  
16 Skills USA pathways we have criminal justice now, all  
17 three areas, and manufacturing, all three areas. In  
18 our TSA we have robotics and computer science and  
19 engineering, all three areas. But when talking about  
20 academies versus programs of studies versus classes,  
21 which one are we referring to?

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So the standard is nine units  
23 of sequenced career and technical education courses  
24 representing three occupational areas. So they don't  
25 meet the three occupational areas?

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Huh-uh.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's what -- what she's  
6 -- from what's being described, they have  
7 representation in trade and industry, which is an  
8 occupational area; then they have representation in  
9 STEM, which is an occupational area, with robotics  
10 and those pieces being in STEM; and then medical  
11 professions and CNA and criminal justice is under  
12 trade and industry. So although there's an offering  
13 -- and I have to go ahead and look to see exactly  
14 which one of those are actually streaming out to a  
15 program of study. So, there's offerings, where they  
16 have a way of offering but only in two areas.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Gotcha. Okay. All right.  
18 That makes sense to me.

19 The question I have for Ms. James was: the  
20 request for a waiver of 10 -- 6-10-126, the delay or  
21 early release of school due to emergency  
22 circumstances --

23 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So explain to me what happens  
25 by waiving that?

1 MS. JAMES: Well, the main reason that schools  
2 want to ask for this waiver is that it limits the  
3 number of days that you could do that per year to  
4 five. And so that is the reason that it is listed on  
5 most digital learning plans, is my understanding.

6 Section or subsection B-1 says "for no more than  
7 five school days total per year a superintendent may,  
8 due to emergency circumstances, under subsection A of  
9 this section, either delay the start of a school day  
10 till as late as 10:00 or release students from school  
11 no earlier than 1:00."

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I don't know what that has to  
13 do with digital learning plans.

14 MS. JAMES: It's on almost every digital  
15 learning plan. Remember, that was the one that --

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That was miscoded.

17 MS. JAMES: Yes. And so it's on almost every  
18 single one of them that's been fixed. I mean I don't  
19 -- if it's with digital learning plans, I'm not sure  
20 they need it, but it's on almost every single one.  
21 And just for consistency that's why they wanted to  
22 add it. So we can revisit that and I can talk with  
23 the school a little bit more about whether they  
24 really want to or need to continue that. I mean if  
25 they don't have a set start time or release time, I'm

1 not sure that it's needed. It was just there for  
2 consistency.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah, it doesn't make any  
4 sense to me.

5 MS. JAMES: Okay.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That doesn't mean it's wrong.  
7 It just means it doesn't make sense to me.

8 MS. JAMES: I understand. I understand. And it  
9 might be something that we need to have removed from  
10 our digital learning plan application if it's not --  
11 you know, if it's not going to apply. But, you know,  
12 a school that's fully virtual or --

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah, I can't imagine that  
14 you use that in any way.

15 MS. WHISNANT: I can't either. And the only  
16 reason we put it there today was because yesterday or  
17 the day before we had a conversation about the DLPs  
18 and how they impact charter schools.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Right.

20 MS. WHISNANT: How I believe the State said  
21 three years for a traditional school and they're  
22 limited to DLPs based on the charter's renewal. So  
23 for consistency only today we looked at that. But I  
24 understand 100% about --

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Because once you get the

1 school day adjusted --

2 MS. JAMES: Right.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and attendance, then  
4 basically you've put them on a program of study and  
5 the kids are working their way through that and  
6 you're giving them credit for doing the work and  
7 making the progress.

8 Okay. That's -- we'll just follow up and look  
9 at that.

10 MS. JAMES: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Let's leave it in until we  
12 decide to take it out.

13 MS. JAMES: Okay.

14 MS. WHISNANT: That's what we discussed.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah.

16 MS. JAMES: I don't think it can hurt, but it  
17 may be an unnecessary waiver.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I think so. Or maybe  
19 somebody else has a really good reason that we  
20 haven't thought of.

21 All right. Any other questions or concerns or  
22 clarifications?

23 Then I'll accept a motion.

24 You have something else to say?

25 MR. MAXWELL: I was going to address -- you had

1           that question. But some of our offerings -- because  
2           we are a school inside of a school, so if a pathway  
3           is a different option we might not meet it under ours  
4           but those options are still available through -- they  
5           can enroll through our high school classes and still  
6           be able to take both of their pathways and stuff like  
7           that inside of ours.

8           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So that -- I think that part  
9           is interesting because the student would still be  
10          enrolled in your ELA. But just in your scheduling  
11          you would -- whatever teacher that's over in the high  
12          school would just have a schedule that also has your  
13          student in it as well?

14          MS. WHISNANT: Correct. And we have high school  
15          kids in our classes.

16          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Right.

17          DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So, but -- I'm sorry.

18          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Go ahead.

19          DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: But is it one LEA or two  
20          LEAs?

21          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: There's two LEAs.

22          MS. SARACINI: But students can flow in and out.

23          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: But you can share staff. All  
24          of our buildings can share staff, unless there's a  
25          number of students limited per person, like at the

1 district level.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So we've had this  
3 conversation before and what we've come back around  
4 to in previous conversations is that we're looking at  
5 this LEA with their offering. And is that -- that's  
6 what we would look at to determine that. Now if we  
7 want to -- I'm sure we could have other conversations  
8 and work through that, but that's how we've kind of  
9 determined it in the past. As we've been doing  
10 program approvals and awarding start-ups, we look at  
11 it from the perspective of what the LEA has to offer  
12 and what the students under that LEA can receive.

13 MS. WHISNANT: That is correct. So I do need  
14 the CTE waiver at this time, do I not?

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That would be my --

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That would be her  
17 recommendation. My question would be by getting the  
18 CTE waiver is that excluding this LEA from any future  
19 support, financial support, start-up grants, any of  
20 those things?

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm trying to -- so with  
22 Perkins it may be a challenge. But with our state  
23 startup funds it would probably not be an issue.

24 MS. WHISNANT: Okay.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Well, Karla, you've caused

1 all kinds of conversations.

2 MS. WHISNANT: I am not trying to.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'm writing this one down  
4 too, shared -- so that's a really good question and  
5 we'll have to dig that out. Today, we're keeping  
6 your waiver until further conversation to see. I  
7 just want to make sure that you're not missing out on  
8 something when actually the services are available to  
9 students.

10 MS. WHISNANT: Yeah.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And that's what's really  
12 important, are services available to students.

13 MS. WHISNANT: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

15 MS. SARACINI: Oh, I was just going to make a  
16 motion.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'm ready for you.

18 MS. SARACINI: I make a motion that we approve  
19 this renewal.

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I second.

21 MR. BALDWIN: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion by Ms.  
23 Saracini, a second by Mr. Baldwin to approve North  
24 Little Rock Center of Excellence for five years with  
25 the waivers that were discussed.

1 All those in favor?

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

4 Motion passes.

5 Congratulations. If you'll give us just a  
6 moment, Panel Members will give you their feedback.

7 MS. WHISNANT: Yes, ma'am. Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You're welcome.

9 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini.

11 MS. SARACINI: I support the motion for renewal  
12 of the North Little Rock Center of Excellence.  
13 Excited to see the COE provide the opportunities that  
14 will prepare students to be authors of their future.  
15 I loved your new mission statement.

16 MS. WHISNANT: Thank you, ma'am.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams.

18 DR. WILLIAMS: I like the new mission statement  
19 too. I support the motion. North Little Rock Center  
20 of Excellence has a strong focus on CTE that provides  
21 students with the opportunity to be a member of one  
22 of three career tech student organizations. It was  
23 interesting to see their improvement around student  
24 learning loss.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Baldwin. Mr. Baldwin.

1 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

2 Yes, I voted to approve the renewal. I think  
3 you all provide good educational opportunities for  
4 your students, and I support your program.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

6 (A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sorry. I had the same  
8 issue as Dr. Williams a minute ago; my box got small  
9 on me.

10 I support the motion. North Little Rock Center  
11 of Excellence has provided strong opportunities for  
12 their students to engage in CTE programs in the area  
13 of trade and industry and STEM. And we look forward  
14 to expanded opportunities in additional areas.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And Dr. Flowers.

16 DR. FLOWERS: I vote to approve the five-year  
17 renewal with waivers as discussed. I look forward to  
18 hearing about how your mentorship opportunities will  
19 continue to enhance the educational experiences of  
20 your students and also how your work in rebuilding  
21 programming will successfully address learning loss.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Whisnant, we had a great  
23 visit. I was just extremely impressed with your  
24 teachers, with your students, with your building. It  
25 was just really an amazing place to learn. And just

1           like you do with your kids, you've stretched us to  
2           think about our work and we appreciate that. That's  
3           always a good thing that we're always thinking about  
4           how everything fits together or doesn't fit, what  
5           needs to be adjusted. And I think that's what you've  
6           done at your school as well. So keep up the great  
7           work and we look forward to following up with you  
8           about these waivers.

9           MS. WHISNANT: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

10          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, everyone.

11 CLOSING COMMENTS

12          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. James, what was your  
13          decision about moving forward on our agenda?

14          MS. JAMES: I pulled up the Media Advisory, and  
15          in the Media Advisory we did not state that items on  
16          Fri- -- I'm sorry -- Wednesday's agenda could be  
17          heard on Tuesday. So I would advise that we go ahead  
18          and leave the calendar item on Wednesday's agenda.

19          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Thank you very  
20          much.

21          Do we have any other business today?

22          MS. JAMES: I don't believe so.

23 ADJOURNMENT

24          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'll accept a motion to  
25          adjourn.

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DR. WILLIAMS: So moved.

DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion by Dr. Williams and a second by Dr. Wright-McMurray to adjourn.

All those in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, everyone. Have a great day. We'll see you in the morning at 9 a.m. Thank you.

(The meeting was concluded at 2:24 p.m.)

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V.1.c. NORTH LITTLE ROCK CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

EXHIBIT ONE (1)



	<b>41:23;42:17;43:5,13; 44:8,24;45:3,5,20,25; 46:10,17;47:9,20; 49:13;50:12;52:14; 53:7,21;54:1,7,8,14, 16;57:11,20;60:11, 13;62:23;63:9;69:2, 10;75:14,18,20;79:5; 80:2,3;83:13;86:15; 88:12,21;89:16,21; 91:8;92:4,18;93:9, 19;94:8;95:5;97:10; 98:9;125:14;126:22; 129:17;180:22</b>	<b>56:20;83:17;84:10; 126:2;134:12; 136:21;141:19; 153:13;154:19; 157:19;161:5;163:3; 168:3</b>	<b>98:17;99:12;101:6</b>	<b>159:10</b>
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<b>\$90,000 (1)</b> 101:16		<b>acted (1)</b> 53:20	<b>addresses (2)</b> 40:23;149:8	
<b>[</b>		<b>ACTION (4)</b> 8:19,22;53:19; 138:1	<b>addressing (4)</b> 64:22;87:2;175:18; 177:20	
<b>[AUDIENCE (2)</b> 4:9;5:3		<b>activities (2)</b> 40:1;76:3	<b>adhere (1)</b> 50:3	<b>age (3)</b> 29:18;81:5;137:6
<b>[ps] (3)</b> 13:14;99:13;116:3		<b>acts (2)</b> 133:21,23	<b>adjoin (2)</b> 193:25;194:5	<b>AGENDA (11)</b> 8:3,5,19,23;45:1; 95:2;127:13;147:20; 193:13,16,18
<b>A</b>	<b>accept (6)</b> 8:7;41:17;124:20; 148:3;187:23;193:24	<b>actual (1)</b> 87:13	<b>ADJOURNMENT (1)</b> 193:23	<b>aggressive (1)</b> 30:16
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<b>ability (4)</b> 109:4;126:23; 128:21;141:24	<b>accompanies (1)</b> 130:2	<b>added (15)</b> 46:4;47:6;49:6,6,8; 62:19;77:19;78:1,22; 79:1,8;80:7,15; 153:22;170:19	<b>administrators (2)</b> 20:13;33:17	<b>agricultural (1)</b> 178:19
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