

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

JANUARY 29, 2026

9:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY, Chair
DR. JOHN BACON
MS. EDIE STEWART
DR. TINA MOORE
MR. PHIL BALDWIN
MS. TOYCE NEWTON

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LOCATION:

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I N D E X

Page

I. Action Agenda 3

 1. Little Rock School District Conversion Charter
 Application for Hall High School 4

 2. Charter Amendment Request -
 Cabot Panther Academy 55

 3. Review of District Strategic Plans for School
 Districts that Received a "F" Letter Grade . . 97

 a. Friendship Aspire Academy Network 101

 b. Future School of Fort Smith 171

 c. Garfield Scholars Academy 241

 d. Institute for the Creative Arts 283

Court Reporter's Certificate 342

1 of this section before we get started.

2 DR. SMITH: Thank you, Madam Chair, Panel. I
3 appreciate you all being here on a nice cold morning
4 here in Arkansas. And it's -- again, I want to
5 especially thank all of our districts for taking time
6 to be part of this presentation and part of this
7 procedure and this Panel, knowing that you all have
8 other things. Obviously, you worry about your
9 districts and some operations of your districts in
10 the cold weather and trying to figure out what's --
11 when to get school started and all those fun things.
12 So again, we certainly appreciate all of your
13 attentiveness to this matter and for being part of
14 this Panel this morning.

15 **I.1. LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER**
16 **APPLICATION FOR HALL HIGH SCHOOL**

17 DR. SMITH: Back in December, the Little Rock
18 School District came before this panel and presented
19 a conversion charter application to create a
20 conversion charter at Hall High School. They created
21 a presentation. There were questions and answers.
22 Due to a medical emergency during the -- towards the
23 end of that presentation, we deferred the vote until
24 the January meeting, which is where we are at right
25 now. Since such time, there were some additional

1 questions that the Panel had for the district to just
2 kind of clear up some of the things and provide some
3 more in-depth discussion and some in-depth
4 presentation over the educational model that they
5 would be presenting -- or that would -- that they are
6 presenting as applicants.

7 So at this time, I'd like to turn it over to the
8 Little Rock School District leadership for their
9 presentation and for further question and answer
10 regarding their application for a conversion charter
11 of Hall High School.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you, Dr.
13 Smith.

14 Before we get started, can I please ask everyone
15 who will be speaking on behalf of the Little Rock
16 School District to first make sure that your cameras
17 are on. And then also, if you could please stand and
18 raise your right hand. Okay. Thank you. Okay. Do
19 you swear that the testimony or statement you are
20 about to be -- to give is the truth, the whole truth
21 and nothing but the truth? And if you could, please
22 unmute and -- so I can hear. I'm sorry.

23 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you. Okay.
25 You may begin your presentation.

1 MR. McGEE: If I could be allowed to share,
2 please. Okay. Can you see my screen?

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes, we can.

4 MR. McGEE: Okay. All right. Good morning. My
5 name is Carlton McGee. I am the principal of Hall
6 High School. With me today are Mrs. Shameka
7 Montgomery, Director of Career and Technical
8 Education for the Little Rock School District, and
9 Dr. Jermall Wright, who is the Superintendent for the
10 Little Rock School District.

11 We appreciate the opportunity to return and to
12 address your questions. You asked for a greater
13 specificity on four areas: CTE partnership,
14 enrollment demand, staffing and long-term viability.
15 So this is what we have for you. Let me walk you
16 through.

17 All right. So we'll start with CTE, career --
18 excuse me -- and technical education. So the
19 question was to -- or the request was to identify
20 proposed CTE partners, pathways and programs by name.
21 So let me start with our three on-campus academies.
22 We have healthcare and human services, which offers
23 nutrition, science and dietetics. We have digital
24 technology, which offers software development. That
25 is an H2 pathway, high skill, high wage. We also

1 have management and entrepreneurship, which offers
2 business management. That's also an H2. All three
3 are Arkansas approved and aligned to state standards.

4 In addition to our on-campus academies, students
5 have access to ten different pathways through our
6 Metro Career and Technical Center. And those include
7 in the area of healthcare, LPN, CNA or medical
8 assistant certification; in the area of technical, we
9 have networking, cybersecurity, automotive, collision
10 repair, construction, welding and automation --
11 automation industrial technology. Plus we also have
12 culinary arts and criminal justice. Students who are
13 -- students -- excuse me -- who take courses at Metro
14 are bus to Metro, to and from Metro each day, either
15 in the morning or in the afternoon. This setup is
16 already happening and in place.

17 As for our partners, we have a current and
18 working partnership with UAMS. That's currently our
19 flagship partnership for health sciences, where our
20 students are -- have job shadowing and mentorship
21 opportunities. We're also partnering in the process
22 of getting things lined up with UALR for our early
23 college opportunities for Junior Achievement of
24 Arkansas for work readiness and financial literacy,
25 Economics Arkansas for our economic education and of

1 course, the City of Little Rock for civic engagement
2 and municipal career exposure. These are active,
3 active -- active -- excuse me. Most of these are
4 active partnerships. The ones that -- others that
5 we're working on, we're just waiting on the approval
6 of this Panel to implement those.

7 Here is how our students access those
8 opportunities. We have four different levels,
9 starting with awareness, all the way to application.
10 You know, we bring in guest speakers. We take
11 students on field trips to visit sites. They have
12 hands-on laboratory instruction in the classroom, as
13 well as project-based learning. And in terms of
14 application, like I said before, we do -- we have job
15 shadowing and internship opportunities for students.

16 Our -- in terms of how this is facilitated, the
17 questions explain how Hall students will access these
18 internships, laboratories and other industry-based
19 learning experiences. We have an academy coach that
20 the district employs in order to develop those
21 business partnerships and coordinate engagement with
22 those entities.

23 One of those, like I said, is UAMS. And let me
24 show you how or what this looks like in practice.
25 The UAMS Academy of Health Sciences is something --

1 or a partnership that we have that's active right
2 now. And we have what we call a White Coat program.
3 And this is the schedule of that program. They
4 recently had the meeting where they talked about
5 expectations and safety and things of that nature.
6 And they're starting job-shadow rotations next month,
7 as a matter of fact. And so at the end of the
8 program, students will receive -- there's a ceremony
9 and parents are invited, community members, and
10 students receive a white coat for finishing the
11 program. So we're very proud of that.

12 The third question was to -- or request was to
13 clarify CTE pathways. How CTE pathways will function
14 without participation from the Ford NGL MFG
15 framework. Our CTE pathways operate through a
16 district-led model. Our programs aligned to Arkansas
17 CTE standards and Perkins requirements and workforce
18 demand. The district CTE department manages our
19 partnerships, compliance and implementation of our
20 pathways. As you just saw, UAMS is our proof of
21 concept. It's structured; it's sustainable; and it's
22 already in place.

23 So in terms of enrollment and demand, I'll walk
24 you through our engagement timeline in terms of
25 student -- engaging students and families. Like I

1 said before, we had student and staff meetings on the
2 18th. There was a parent meeting on the 23rd and a
3 follow-up meeting on the -- on November the 18th,
4 excuse me. And there was also some feedback during
5 the November 20th school board meeting.

6 And so some of the proof and the evidence from
7 our students, some of the most often -- when we talk
8 to the students and get the feedback from the
9 students, the most often things mentioned were about
10 the flexible pacing. That was the number one thing.
11 The quotes on the screen, as you can see, you know,
12 we can work at our own pace, working at my own pace,
13 less stressful classes. These are the actual quotes
14 and sentiments of the students. And the second
15 highest one was the small environment, not crowded.
16 Some of them feel like this that the small
17 environment is already the best part of Hall West.

18 In terms of parent voice, these are some quotes
19 from a particular parent who spoke. This was a
20 parent of a 10th grader, and they said that they
21 thought the -- the charter was a great idea, that
22 their student enjoyed a small-school size and that
23 they were ready to volunteer to help and assist with
24 the transition and anything needed, you know, with
25 school that we could engage parents with.

1 So in terms of community drivers, this model
2 responds directly to what students and families asked
3 for. Students said they wanted flexible pacing. We
4 built in personalized pacing with the
5 blended-learning model. Students said that they
6 wanted -- students and parents said they wanted a
7 small environment. We capped it at 200. Parents
8 said that they like the smaller school option where
9 -- we're the only small school option in Little Rock
10 School District. And so we want to continue to
11 provide that option to our parents. There was some
12 other concerns about sports and school traditions and
13 we've addressed those. We are keeping some -- some
14 sports based on interest and the school traditions
15 are -- such as, like, prom and homecoming and things
16 of that nature, we're still going to continue. So
17 we've definitely responded -- this model is
18 definitely a response to community input.

19 To explain how the explain how -- how the model
20 bet will best serve the broader needs and priorities
21 of the district, I will let Dr. Wright speak to this
22 for a moment.

23 SUPT. WRIGHT: All right. Good morning,
24 everyone. I will speak to this quickly because I
25 know we're probably running out of time.

1 But this model that we are proposing, it
2 supports our district's larger goal of improving
3 options and services for a diverse group of learners
4 with different paths in preparation to post-secondary
5 success. And so this charter conversion application
6 that we're submitting for our small, personalized
7 high school will be one program that will sit on a
8 single campus alongside some of our other alternative
9 learning education and innovation programs that we're
10 building.

11 So this small high school, charter high school,
12 will be housed on the Hall campus along with our
13 Hamilton Learning Academy, our Accelerated Learning
14 Center which focuses on our over age and under
15 credited students, and our virtual campus, which we
16 already have is also -- the teachers who work on our
17 virtual campus in that particular program is also
18 already a part of Hall. And so this small,
19 non-traditional high school that we are proposing for
20 the charter conversion is not our virtual school.
21 Our virtual school is a separate program, but it will
22 be housed on the same campus. Housing all of these
23 programs on the same campus provides greater equity
24 and access for students. We're solving a lot of
25 geographic, transportation, simplified enrollment

1 processes with co-locating all of these programs on
2 one campus. We provide seamless transitions for
3 personalization across these particular programs. Of
4 course, we are hoping that these will lead to
5 improved outcomes in graduation, operational
6 efficiency and cost effectiveness because we'll have
7 all of these co-located programs on one campus versus
8 being housed on separate campuses. We're able to
9 centralize staff and actually provide more staff and
10 support to some of the programs that didn't have it
11 before because they'll be able to share things like
12 library media specialists, guidance counselors, other
13 mental health support personnel that we have will all
14 be co-located within this campus. Together,
15 co-locating these complementary programs, it creates
16 a streamlined, student-centered ecosystem that better
17 serves diverse learners, aligns directly with our
18 priorities in equity, personalization, efficiency and
19 innovation, increases our district's ability to reach
20 and positively impact more students than we currently
21 serve. Some students and families, as we've already
22 heard, simply do not desire a large comprehensive
23 high-school experience, and this model, along with
24 all the other programs to be housed on this campus,
25 provides our current and new families with options at

1 do not exist within our school district already.

2 Already we have about 161 students, most of them
3 who are currently students at Hall, who have already
4 chosen to select to attend the school next year
5 should this Panel approve our application. And so we
6 already have a good response from our students and
7 families who are interested within this particular
8 model.

9 Thank you, Dr. Wright.

10 MR. MCGEE: All right. In terms of recruitment,
11 our primary focus is the current Hall families, those
12 who are currently enrolled at Hall, as well as 8th
13 graders in Little Rock School District. We do not
14 recruit outside of the Little Rock School District.
15 All of our recruitment is directed towards students
16 who are currently in the district. The methods that
17 we use are information sessions for 8th grade
18 students. We have student ambassadors who share their
19 experiences at Hall and -- and the new model that
20 we're proposing. We have radio ads, social media,
21 parent meetings and community events, and things of
22 that nature to get the word out. And of course, good
23 old word of mouth is always appreciated.

24 So in terms of staffing -- I don't have a timer,
25 but I'm sure we're -- we're almost there. This is

1 the proposed instructional staffing. As you can see,
2 we have teachers for all of the core subjects, as
3 well as the electives and whatnot. Our staffing
4 changes -- the model changes from between, you know,
5 if we have 50, if we have 100 or if we have 200. Of
6 course, the final numbers are really determined by
7 how many students sign up for a particular course and
8 things of that nature. So we also have special
9 education and community-based instruction, which is
10 CDI. In terms of administrative and support staff,
11 these are those numbers, and the same, we have them
12 for 50, 100 and 200. Our -- as Dr. Wright stated
13 before, our social worker and our librarian will be
14 shared with the other entities on campus.

15 The request was to confirm that students
16 enrolled at Hall will receive all core academic
17 offerings and student supports comparable to those
18 available at other LRSD high schools and we have
19 that. The full core curriculum along with AP and
20 concurrent credit courses, as well as special
21 education services, our CTE classes that we talked
22 about earlier, fine arts, foreign language, PE,
23 college and career coaching, and counseling services
24 as well as social work services.

25 In terms of long-term viability, we'll evaluate

1 success over three to five years.

2 Enrollment targets, our target for year one is
3 100 students. As you can see -- or as Dr. Wright
4 already stated, we've already passed that, and that's
5 without confirmation of, you know, what next year
6 will look like, or what next year will be. So as
7 soon as we get confirmation from the Panel and State
8 Board, I'm sure those numbers will increase. On year
9 two, our target is 150; and in year three, our target
10 is 200, which is our current capacity level. Of
11 course, if we end up with more than 200 applicants,
12 we'll implement a lottery system to determine who
13 gets in.

14 Our success metrics that we're looking at,
15 graduation rate in year one will be 95 percent, year
16 three, 97 and in year five to surpass that. CTE
17 completion, 85 in year one, 90 in year three, 95 in
18 year five.

19 Growth, overall growth, we want to be in the
20 40th percentile in year one, 45th in year two -- year
21 three, and uh oh. Okay. And 50th in year five.
22 Bottom quartile will be 50, 55 and 60. In some of
23 these, we're already surpassing that. For instance,
24 we have -- we're in the 90, I think, third percentile
25 for English in our bottom quartile for English

1 growth. So we're very proud of that. All of our
2 bottom quartile metrics currently are above the state
3 average. So we have -- we have met students' metrics
4 already.

5 What are criteria for continuing, expanding, or
6 discontinuing? If we're on track, staff adjusts
7 annually based on enrollment projections. That's,
8 you know, that's how normal -- how we work under
9 normal circumstances. If enrollment drops below 50,
10 we initiate a discontinuation discussion. The
11 ultimate decision and authority rests with the Board
12 of Education with a recommendation from the
13 superintendent. So as you can see, we have these in
14 place.

15 All right. And that's the end of our
16 presentation. We appreciate you taking the time and
17 giving us the opportunity to come back and answer
18 your questions.

19 MS. STEWART: You're muted, Sonya.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Hello, can you hear me?
21 Okay. Sorry.

22 As Dr. Smith said, thank you again. I think my
23 Internet's doing some weird things now. Sorry. can
24 you hear me now? Perfect. Okay. Great.

25 Thank you for your presentation. Thank you for

1 your willingness to be flexible and come back to this
2 meeting and we appreciate you providing the
3 additional details that were requested.

4 Before we get started with our Panel questions,
5 I would like to give Ms. Raney an opportunity to let
6 us know if there's any legal concerns we need to be
7 aware of before we move forward.

8 MS. RANEY: I'm sorry, that's my dog. But we
9 have no legal concerns.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Great. Thank
11 you.

12 Okay. So we'll start with our panel questions.
13 Again, previously, in December we had a good
14 presentation from Little Rock School District, but it
15 did yield some additional questions and so this is a
16 great opportunity for us to resolve any outstanding
17 questions or any new ones that may have popped up
18 from today's presentation.

19 So I will start off with Mr. Baldwin.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

21 And Mr. McGee, thank you for your presentation
22 and Dr. Wright. Thank you for your comments and for
23 being here. And I do -- I do just have a few
24 questions I'd like to walk through with you all. And
25 going back, Mr. McGee, to your Metro Career and

1 Technical Center, I think you said that it's
2 currently active and serving students. Can you
3 describe the activity? And I guess it is currently
4 in the Hall High School building and maybe explain
5 how much of the city is served as far as where
6 students live and kind of show us the scope and scale
7 of that right now.

8 MR. MCGEE: Yes, sir. And I have Miss
9 Montgomery on here as well.

10 If at any time, Ms. Montgomery, you want to jump
11 in, please feel free.

12 But yes, so we currently -- our CTE department
13 is currently up and functioning. All of our students
14 are enrolled in CTE courses. That is something our
15 counselor makes sure that every student at our school
16 does. We pulled -- we have students from all over
17 the city. We don't have necessarily a zone like some
18 other traditional high schools, but we do have
19 students from all over the City of Little Rock. And
20 the current -- if you're referring to -- I think
21 you're referring to the UAMS program, like I said,
22 that that is our White Coat program. It's been going
23 on all school year, and it culminates in March with
24 the White Coat ceremony. Our students will -- well,
25 they've been listening to speakers; they've had mock

1 interviews; they have had discussions with people
2 from UAMS about expectations, about how to get into
3 the medical field, what types of things you need to
4 consider in the different areas of medicine depending
5 upon where students want to go. Like I said, this
6 upcoming month, in February -- next week, as a matter
7 of fact -- we're supposed to start our job-shadowing
8 opportunities with students; and so they'll be going
9 out to UAMS and to a few different clinics that UAMS
10 works with to get those experiences. And -- and
11 again, you know, it culminates in March. So it -- is
12 that what you're --

13 MR. BALDWIN: It is, yes. I -- really what I
14 was trying to -- to understand would be the process
15 students would go through to become part of the
16 charter school, especially students that maybe live
17 in Southwest Little Rock, like, say down by Baseline
18 Road or, you know, over by the airport at MacArthur
19 Boulevard. Just, you know places that are far away
20 from Hall High School. And so I guess the follow-up
21 question would be: if you have -- and, I guess,
22 you're running bus services right now for the Metro
23 program, would you continue to run bus busing
24 services for students that are remote to Hall? And
25 if you had -- let's say you had three students

1 interested in the charter school that lived out on
2 Baseline, would you run a bus out there for three
3 students or would they have to find their own way to
4 the school?

5 MR. MCGEE: So yes, we do run a bus service for
6 our students. Our -- like I said, you know, we don't
7 have a neighborhood zone, so our students -- we do
8 have students that come from southwest. We do have
9 students that come from what some would call the east
10 end. So it's -- our students come from all over the
11 city, and we do run buses for those students. In
12 terms of the Metro, what happens is in the morning,
13 the buses bring all the students to Hall, and then we
14 have a bus that takes the students who have Metro in
15 the morning from Hall to Metro. And then it'll bring
16 them back. Same process for the afternoon, bring
17 them back to our campus. And then at the end of the
18 day, you know, the bus is disperse to take everyone
19 home.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Well, thank you. Thank
21 you.

22 MR. MCGEE: Absolutely.

23 MR. BALDWIN: All right. Then -- yes, sir.

24 SUPT. WRIGHT: I just wanted to jump in and
25 clarify a couple of things. So the enrollment

1 process for what we're proposing will be the same
2 enrollment process that we follow for all of our
3 schools, all of our choice schools throughout the
4 district. So this would just be another choice
5 option. And Mr. McGee has already explained, but the
6 same process we do for Metro for Hall is the same
7 thing we do at all of our schools across the
8 district. This is what I meant to say, I'm sorry.
9 This is a key thing. In terms of transportation, so
10 the same process, enrollment process, is used for all
11 choice schools throughout the district. And so any
12 student who chooses into one of our choice options is
13 provided transportation. So the process for Hall
14 would be no different. The end of processes for all
15 of our other schools throughout the district.

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

17 Next question would be to talk a little bit more
18 about the partners and I know that you -- that the
19 UAMS program is your flagship program. It sounds
20 like it's working well, that you're satisfied with
21 it. I would assume UAMS is. In my past, when I was
22 running a bank, we were very active in internship
23 programs up in Batesville with the community college,
24 with Lyon College, and also with the high schools.
25 And it's a big commitment by the business to have

1 young people in their -- in their business. And you
2 have to allocate staff time and support time for
3 special programs. And the businesses have to go
4 above and beyond what they would normally do to make
5 these successful. We would always sign what we call
6 the Scope of Services agreement with each school,
7 whether it was Lyon College or Batesville Public
8 Schools, to define exactly what that would be, what
9 the relationship would be from our end and what the
10 students would do. And they were very interested in
11 that because they wanted their students to not just
12 be sitting in a room by themselves waiting for the
13 day to end. They wanted, you know, real-life
14 training and they also wanted to make sure the
15 students were safe, that we didn't put them at risk
16 for, you know, for an underage. We would not have
17 them out in an area that that you know they didn't
18 need to be in unsupervised. So talk to us a little
19 bit about the -- the parties you have listed that are
20 still in process where there's probably not a scope
21 of services agreement. And maybe, maybe tell us from
22 a percentage basis, you know, how close are you to
23 getting an agreement with like UALR and Junior
24 Achievement Economics Arkansas. Are you halfway
25 there or are you 90 percent there? How much work is

1 left to bring all these partners on board?

2 MS. MONTGOMERY: Mr. McGee, do you mind if I
3 respond to that?

4 MR. MCGEE: Yes, ma'am. Go ahead, please.

5 MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

6 I'm Shameka Montgomery, director of career
7 education. And thank you for that question.

8 The partners listed today are partners that
9 we've had within our district for many, many years.
10 And no, we don't have a scope of service agreement on
11 file with any of the entities except for UAMS. But
12 Junior Achievement Economics Arkansas, the City of
13 Little Rock all provide us with the services that Mr.
14 McGee mentioned. They're longstanding partners in
15 our district, and they're always willing to help us
16 with job shadowing, internships and scheduling
17 industry tours. And as a matter of fact, Junior
18 Achievement has a virtual career fair every year that
19 all of our schools participate in. So those are
20 longstanding partners and we are -- we are working to
21 develop workforce partners through our ViPS office,
22 through our partners in education. So we're moving
23 forward with developing greater partnerships with
24 business and industry for all of our schools.

25 SUPT. WRIGHT: And we do have the partnership

1 with UALR that's already solidified with early
2 college. That's a done deal.

3 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Well, I think it's -- you
4 know, I think it's a great idea to do this. I like
5 the partnerships with businesses, with healthcare
6 providers, you know, really with any that are
7 interested. We developed our partnership in
8 Batesville with Southside School to the point where
9 we put a bank branch inside of their school, and the
10 branch is run by students. And the branch manager
11 was a teacher, and they learned you know real-life
12 stuff that way. So I applaud what you are
13 considering here.

14 Let me -- let me ask -- and it was interesting
15 when you were talking, Mr. McGee, about the parent
16 voice slide and you had one parent, I guess, it was
17 the 10th grade student parent that said that he
18 thought the charter conversion was a great idea to
19 keep the school open. That was an interesting
20 comment to me. So let me ask you all: if this Panel
21 does not approve your request, what -- what is the
22 option that you have for Hall High School? Will it
23 stay open or is this parent worried about Hall being
24 closed?

25 SUPT. WRIGHT: Mr. McGee, I'll jump in and

1 answer that particular question.

2 And so the answer to that question is yes and no
3 in terms of the traditional Hall High School as we
4 know it today. If this Charter Authorizing -- if our
5 charter application for conversion charter isn't
6 approved, then more than likely that particular
7 program will go away. But however, we already have,
8 like I said, our virtual campus, our virtual academy,
9 which is a part of our district. It's LEA is the
10 same number as Hall, and so that will remain in
11 place. And I mentioned some of those other
12 co-programs that we talked about that we are looking
13 to co-locate on this particular campus, our ACC and
14 our alternative learning education program. It could
15 be that we can -- we might still be able to offer a
16 much, much, much, much smaller version of what we're
17 trying to do with the way that our virtual program
18 and those other programs can work together. But that
19 is something that we have not taken time to
20 specifically plan because we're hoping for a positive
21 outcome with our application here.

22 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you. Thank you for
23 that answer. And you know, I'm encouraged that you
24 already have 161 students interested in attending the
25 charter. I think that's a good a good number,

1 especially since your baseline for that is 100.

2 And my final question is the financial question.
3 And I go back to -- I was looking for a -- a budget
4 in your package and I found what I would call a kind
5 of a summary, a three-year summary, but really not a
6 line-item budget. And so is there -- am I just --
7 have I just missed it -- or is there a line-item
8 budget that would go, you know, a very detailed
9 budget for this? And what would be -- and so the
10 follow-up question then after that would be: what is
11 the break-even number of students that you need to
12 have to make the financial commitment at least a zero
13 and not a loss to the school district?

14 MR. MCGEE: Yes, sir. With the current
15 proposal, with 200 -- we anticipate being in the
16 black. We -- to answer your first question, the
17 budget proposal that was included in the packet is --
18 is what we have. I would also throw out that because
19 we are a part of the district, as opposed to a
20 standalone charter, we have that backing from the
21 district in terms of finances and whatnot like that.
22 Looking at the numbers and things, the 50 minimum was
23 determined because if we hit 50 -- if we get below
24 50, then we will -- we will -- we will no longer be
25 in the black for the program. That's what we

1 anticipate, of course, anything can fluctuate, you
2 know, once you get down, you know, into the actual --
3 into the actuals, but that's -- that's where we were
4 with that.

5 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

6 Oh, yes, sir.

7 DR. WRIGHT: Just -- just to add a little bit
8 more to that answer, the biggest barrier to us right
9 now operating Hall as a traditional high school is
10 that we are still obligated to the same traditional
11 staffing requirements based upon ADE's accreditation
12 standards. And so a couple of the waivers that we
13 are asking for in the conversion charter application
14 provides us the type of flexibility with staffing
15 that will allow us to be able to run the conversion
16 charter without the burden -- the burden of having a
17 traditional staffing aligned to ADE's accreditation
18 standards. Right now, the staffing for Hall is more
19 than double what you see proposed and providing
20 service to almost the same number of kids. We have
21 less than 300 kids at the campus right now, and so
22 with less than half -- being able to operate the
23 campus with less than half of the staff using the
24 flexibilities with the -- the waivers that we're
25 asking for with this particular model, will allow us

1 to operate the school in the black as Mr. McGee has
2 already stated.

3 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you, sir, for that
4 clarification.

5 And, Madam Chair, that I'm sure that was my last
6 question.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

8 Okay. Dr. Beshears-Duncan.

9 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you. And thank you
10 for the presentation and for the flexibility and
11 specificity to be back with us today. Appreciate
12 being able to see the work-based sequence and the
13 options for kiddos as well as some feedback from
14 family and community.

15 With that said, I do not have any further
16 questions. I feel like the presentation today really
17 responded to the questions from last month. Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Moore.

20 DR. MOORE: Good morning. I echo appreciation
21 for your flexibility and for coming back. And
22 although I asked questions prior, your new
23 presentation prompted a few more questions. So just
24 want to ask a few things.

25 One is the listing of the number of staff you

1 anticipate. And I was curious since on campus you
2 have three different CTE pathways, but it lists one
3 CTE teacher. And I understand that you, you know,
4 are requesting some waivers, but even with waivers I
5 can't imagine one person having knowledge enough of
6 the three different areas. I look back you have the
7 health -- the nutrition science and dietetic,
8 software development and management. And it'd be a
9 unicorn who could teach, you know, all three of those
10 things, even if there was a waiver. So maybe
11 someone, maybe Ms. Montgomery could speak to what the
12 plans are for the local CTE teacher of only one
13 person teaching all three pathways.

14 SUPT. WRIGHT: And if you need some help, Ms.
15 Montgomery, you can throw a lifeline to me.

16 DR. MOORE: Sorry, I was just I was thinking
17 that she was like your CTE person is why I put it
18 that way. Anyone. Any three of y'all.

19 SUPT. WRIGHT: Well, I'll -- I'm sure she'll
20 have something to add. But we're using Edgenuity as
21 the platform for all of the courses that we will be
22 offering with the conversion charter; and so with
23 Edgenuity comes CTE courses with its own set of
24 self-paced modules for kids to complete. Along with a
25 certified teacher who isn't providing asynchronous

1 instruction, but that teacher is available for weekly
2 office hours for additional support; and so those
3 students will have opportunity to take CTE courses
4 using our Edgenuity platform, which comes with its
5 own instructor like support for that particular
6 course. And so some will be live, some will be on
7 the Edgenuity platform.

8 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you for that. That
9 triggers my memory of if y'all sharing that prior.
10 So thank you for that.

11 Did you want to add anything to that, Ms.
12 Montgomery, before I do my next question?

13 MS. MONTGOMERY: Well, I'll just add that in
14 addition to the teachers from the online platform,
15 our partners will come in to support some -- some
16 hands-on activities like the Arkansas Extension
17 Services could come in to support those students in
18 the nutrition and dietetics pathway or people from
19 UAM from the dietetics division could come in and do
20 a workshop on various things so that students can
21 have some hands-on opportunities as well.

22 DR. MOORE: All right. Thank you.

23 And then I also had a question, I know on the
24 partners -- a couple of questions about the partners,
25 specifically as it refers to concurrent. I know that

1 with the announcement of the partnership with UALR
2 and Little Rock School District that it mentioned
3 students not leaving their campus to do the early
4 college work. Is the plan the same for this campus
5 that they wouldn't leave, and if so, I can't imagine
6 that all of those teachers would be qualified to
7 teach concurrent. So what's the plan there? Is that
8 also utilizing UALR teachers through some form of
9 virtual learning?

10 MS. MONTGOMERY: So I'll -- oh.

11 MR. MCGEE: Go ahead, go ahead.

12 MS. MONTGOMERY: No, you go ahead.

13 MR. MCGEE: Oh, okay.

14 So yes, the current plan, we do have teachers
15 who are certified in concurrent credit, but if
16 numbers were to dwindle and we would lose those
17 individuals, we're also open and looking at, I guess
18 what I used to call a satellite class. I don't know
19 if that conveys what I'm -- okay, satellite class and
20 being able to provide that -- that coursework to
21 those students in that manner. And we're also -- one
22 thing that we're trying to work out with UALR is the
23 ability for students -- let's say a student is a
24 senior, they have maybe one or two courses they want
25 to take, but they want to start, you know, college

1 courses, giving students the ability and the freedom
2 to do that, to be able to start taking college
3 courses at UALR, you know, the semester before they
4 graduate from Hall.

5 SUPT. WRIGHT: Yeah. The only thing I was going
6 to say, which Mr. McGee has already spoken to, is
7 that because of the nature of some of the kids that
8 we are recruiting for this particular program, some
9 of these kids will be working far ahead of their
10 schedule. It's self-paced, and so some students can
11 be far ahead of where they need to be with their high
12 school -- high school course requirements. And so
13 they may not have to take the course with UALR on
14 credit. They can actually be on campus for half a
15 day or the entire semester, depending upon where they
16 are with the completion of their high school course
17 requirements. So it will vary. This is part of the
18 personalized approach to what we are offering at a
19 particular school.

20 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you. And then along
21 those same lines, UALR is a great partner for
22 concurrent credit. We work closely at the division
23 with UALR on many different projects, but often for
24 CTE, it's more community colleges that provide the
25 concurrent credit. So I didn't notice a community

1 college that offers some of those CTE programs that
2 you listed as like at Metro and stuff, and those
3 programs, or even what you're offering on your
4 campus. Have there been any discussions with other
5 partners such as a Pulaski Tech or someone else that
6 can provide concurrent for courses that UALR doesn't
7 traditionally offer?

8 MS. MONTGOMERY: I'll respond to that. Through
9 Metro Career Tech Center, we have concurrent partners
10 with ASU Beebe, Baptist Health College of Little
11 Rock, Pulaski Technical College. So many of the
12 programs at Metro -- or five of them to be exact --
13 are in partnership with various universities so the
14 students can receive concurrent credit.

15 DR. MOORE: All right. Thank you. And I think
16 right now that's my only questions. Maybe at the end
17 I might come back with another, but for now, that's
18 it.

19 Return it back to you, Dr. Wright-McMurray.

20 Thank you all.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

22 Okay. Ms. Stewart.

23 MS. STEWART: Good morning. Thank you, Madam
24 Chair.

25 Good morning, everybody. I really appreciated

1 the clarification, the additional presentation that
2 you all provided. I just had just a few -- couple of
3 quick questions.

4 I really appreciate the fact that you are trying
5 to fully utilize your facility. I think that that is
6 refreshing, and the idea of shared services is
7 terrific. And then, you know, going along with that
8 small campus feel for -- for this particular entity.
9 The -- one of the questions I had was in visualizing
10 this, is there going to be interaction between
11 campuses that you already have in place there and
12 this campus? Or how -- how is that going to kind of
13 work?

14 SUPT. WRIGHT: I'll speak to a little bit of
15 that, and I'm sure Mr. McGee has about to add. I'm
16 sorry, Mr. McGee, I know I'm not the principal, but
17 you know --

18 MR. MCGEE: Go right ahead.

19 SUPT. WRIGHT: -- it's hard for me to be quiet.

20 So one of the things that we have been working
21 on as a district is to totally redo our alternative
22 learning education programs. And so we have, quote
23 unquote, reimagined how we do ALE in our district
24 beginning with this year. And one of the things that
25 we are so excited about, we just looked at data that

1 shows a number of students in our ALE who are -- who
2 are not returning to our ALE programs because the
3 programs have been so successful with helping them to
4 get back on track. And that recidivism rate this
5 year, I think, was like 17 or 18 percent, which is
6 unheard of. So the problem that we're running into
7 now is that many of our kids who go to ALE -- now we
8 have a new staff, a new leader, a new culture, a new
9 environment, and when they graduate -- well, not
10 necessarily graduate, but when they meet all of their
11 goals to come out of ALE to return back to their home
12 schools, the problem that we run into is they don't
13 want to go back. They prefer the smaller atmosphere
14 with staff. They've built relationships with the
15 staff there. The staff have done an amazing job of
16 really helping to get our students and families --
17 our students back on track. And so with that program
18 being housed on, the same campus as this conversion
19 charter, one of the things that I am really visioning
20 is that when the student exits our ALE program, if
21 they didn't want to go back to a large traditional
22 high school, they can fit right in to the small high
23 school that we will have on -- on the campus. Same
24 thing with our virtual academy. We may be offering
25 some in-person courses or some, not job shadowing,

1 what do we call the project-based learning
2 opportunities. So some of our virtual kids who don't
3 have access to some hands-on things, and they're
4 taking the same course that we're offering on the
5 high school campus could come in and participate with
6 some of those project-based learning experiences.
7 And so there will be lots of opportunities for cross
8 population amongst programs, which is one of the
9 reasons why we're co-locating all of these programs
10 on one campus.

11 MS. STEWART: Hey, great. That -- go ahead.

12 MR. MCGEE: I'm sorry. I was just going to say,
13 I'll add to that just by saying, yes, we -- and
14 currently some of our virtual students who they have
15 some virtual classes, but they may have some
16 in-person classes, do come and take those classes
17 with Hall students. There are a few opportunities --
18 or some opportunities where we bring in guest
19 speakers and the ACC is currently on campus. And so
20 some of those students have an opportunity to come in
21 and sit in on those programs. We share a library
22 space; we share a cafeteria space. So we -- we're
23 trying to utilize our space as -- most efficiently as
24 we can.

25 MS. STEWART: Great. Thank you all for that.

1 That that definitely helps me visualize that a little
2 bit better. And kind of along those lines, you both
3 talked about the virtual campus. It -- can you help
4 clarify for me the difference? Because I know part
5 of this is around teacher licensure waivers. Help
6 clarify for me the -- the difference between your
7 virtual campus and then this campus with virtual
8 learning. I know it's a blended model. But again,
9 apparently I am a very visual learner, so I needed a
10 visualization of -- visualization of your campus. If
11 you can give me an idea of what that looks like
12 compared to your fully virtual campus and the use of
13 that -- that -- your ingenuity platform.

14 MR. MCGEE: Yes. So in terms of visual, I think
15 of it as kind of a Venn diagram. You have the
16 virtual students; you have Hall students; and there
17 is a slight overlap of some virtual students who,
18 like I said before, have some on campus classes. We
19 definitely want to continue to provide that option
20 for parents. Everybody does not necessarily want a
21 strict fully up and down virtual experience. And so
22 that's what we -- that's what we have. And that's
23 what we want to continue to do. So while there are
24 virtual students and they have their own expectations
25 and check-ins and things of that nature, there's also

1 the Hall students and in some areas, and for some
2 students, there is an overlap for those who choose
3 that -- that option. It is -- am I answering your
4 question?

5 SUPT. WRIGHT: I can add a little bit more to
6 that if it'll help.

7 MR. MCGEE: Yes.

8 SUPT. WRIGHT: So our virtual students attend
9 and complete their coursework on their own time,
10 their own schedule, seven days a week, 24 hours a
11 day. It doesn't matter. The -- the teacher that is
12 assigned to their course, the teacher may have
13 specific office hours during the week or specific
14 office hours for those kids to get additional help,
15 but they are working on their own. There's a
16 specific criteria for kids to qualify to get into our
17 virtual program that will be different for kids in
18 this particular -- particular program. So the kids
19 who will be on campus for Hall, although they also
20 will be using the same Edgenuity platform, they will
21 not -- they will be in person, seated within the
22 classroom with the teacher/success coach, so they
23 still have available -- they still have available to
24 them the teacher assigned to the course for office
25 hours, but they also have this in-person person who

1 will be with them throughout the day to make sure
2 that they're staying on pace to provide additional
3 support and help that they may need; and that's
4 something that our virtual students don't have. It's
5 another layer of support. Again, the kids in the
6 high school that we're proposing, some will take
7 courses through Edgenuity; some will take courses in
8 a traditional setting with the teachers that we have
9 on campus for our virtual kids -- well, that's not
10 necessarily true because some of the virtual kids do
11 come in and take some of the in-person classes. But
12 that's the biggest difference. The kids in this
13 program, who will also be using Edgenuity, will have
14 an additional layer of support. They work within the
15 school day, within the school hours, to make sure
16 that they're staying on course, staying on pace.
17 Now, they still can work outside of school hours, too
18 because they have access to the platform for courses
19 that they will take 24 hours a day, just like the
20 virtual students, but they will have an additional
21 layer of teacher support to make sure that they're
22 successful.

23 MS. STEWART: So it would be -- it's almost like
24 it would be a facilitator in that room answering
25 questions, helping, guiding, all of those things.

1 Okay. That definitely helps me. I appreciate that.
2 Just looking over some of my notes, I believe -- I
3 think that's it for me. I appreciate it. Thank you
4 all.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

6 Dr. Bacon.

7 DR. BACON: Thank you, Dr. Wright-McMurray.

8 And I appreciate you all for coming back before
9 us and adding some details to the presentation we had
10 last month. I do have a few questions. I guess the
11 first one is sort of a big picture question. A lot
12 of what it sounds like you're doing are things that
13 you're going to do in the virtual setting, things
14 that are done through CTE, through the Metro School,
15 things that are going to be done online. I guess I'm
16 trying to think other than waivers, which it would
17 seem like could possibly be achieved under Act 1240,
18 what is different about this that makes it a
19 conversion charter as opposed to just maybe getting
20 some waivers?

21 MR. McGEE: So we -- again, the blended learning
22 model, our -- our main things are the blended
23 learning model, the success coaching opportunities
24 and model and the small learning environment. The
25 charter allows us to primarily focus on, or primarily

1 provide, that small learning environment that we
2 otherwise would not be able to -- to provide with
3 that. So there are -- there are some other entities
4 out there who are charter schools that are doing, you
5 know, pretty much similar things that we're doing in
6 other parts of the state, other parts of the country.
7 And so we want to provide that through the Little
8 Rock School District for our students here in Pulaski
9 County.

10 DR. BACON: So you're saying you couldn't do the
11 blended learning model without being a conversion
12 charter?

13 MR. MCGEE: No. The conversion charter allows
14 us to provide the small learning environment.

15 SUPT. WRIGHT: I will also add to that. So we
16 also wouldn't be able to have kids -- there's some
17 accreditation standards that require kids to have a
18 certain number of hours before they receive course
19 credit. This will allow our students to be able to
20 -- those who are able to work ahead to not
21 necessarily be bound by time requirements for courses
22 and so they could work ahead. And so again, that may
23 be a waiver that we're asking to be a part of the
24 charter as well. But the biggest thing is, is the
25 things -- in addition to things that Mr. McGee has

1 already said, the ability to have different staffing
2 which we wouldn't be able to have with a traditional
3 high school and without the waiver. And so that's --
4 that's the -- one of the biggest reasons why we're
5 seeking this. When we were trying to do this without
6 the conversion -- the conversion charter, the
7 guidance that we received is that the conversion
8 charter will give us the best route to address all of
9 the staffing limitations that the traditional
10 accreditation standards by the state held us to. And
11 so we attempted to do this without the conversion
12 charter at first, but when we began having
13 conversations with folks, this is the guidance that
14 they gave us in terms of the best route to get where
15 we were trying to get to without having the
16 constraints of traditional staffing.

17 DR. BACON: That was guidance you got from DESE?

18 SUPT. WRIGHT: Yes.

19 DR. BACON: Okay. Yeah. Because I -- I mean,
20 maybe I'm just looking at it differently, but to me,
21 it feels like just about everything on here could be
22 accomplished through 1240 waivers; because I know a
23 lot of these charter schools in Pulaski County that
24 have students that probably are from your district
25 have these -- a lot of these waivers that you would

1 need. I don't know. It just seemed like an
2 interesting thought. I'm not sure that a conversion
3 charter would necessarily have to be in place for you
4 to accomplish what you're trying to accomplish.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Bacon, I did ask --
6 I sent a note to Darrell to see if he could pop in
7 and just provide some clarity on the guidance that
8 was provided to the district in regards to this.

9 DR. BACON: Perfect.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

11 DR. SMITH: Would you like me to address that?

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes, please. I think
13 that it'll be helpful.

14 DR. SMITH: Absolutely. I -- Dr. Bacon, I think
15 to your point that there -- potentially the 1240
16 waivers could do a lot or most of what is being asked
17 of the Little Rock School District at this point, as
18 far as this -- as far as what they're trying to
19 create. However, after really looking at their
20 proposal, it the most expedient way as well as the
21 cleanest way would be -- was to go through the
22 conversion charter route. And so it -- it just makes
23 it a lot cleaner. It makes it a lot easier for them
24 to accomplish what they're trying to accomplish
25 without running into some of the other -- because as

1 we go through some of the 1240 waivers, each one of
2 them obviously is considered independently of the
3 whole. And so in this way, we could kind of lump
4 them all together into the conversion charter world.
5 And so I -- it is kind of a, you know, two sides of
6 the same coin kind of thing. Can you get there both
7 ways? Absolutely. The conversion charter makes it a
8 much more expedient and much more cleaner way to
9 create this particular charter to this particular
10 model for the school district. But we certainly went
11 through the process with our accreditation team here
12 at DESE and asked them kind of to weigh the options,
13 the pro and con options. And they also agreed that
14 the conversion charter was the way to go.

15 DR. BACON: Thank you. I won't belabor the
16 point. I appreciate that clarification.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And I don't know if that
18 -- I just -- I just wanted to give Dr. Smith an
19 opportunity to clarify what guidance they would give.

20 DR. BACON: Yeah. I appreciate that.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

22 DR. BACON: A couple of specific questions. You
23 hit on the use of Edgenuity, and I'll admit I've had
24 a few conversations in the last month since our last
25 Panel. I've had some people reach out, stakeholders

1 with Hall and LRSD, and -- and we're really excited
2 about Edgenuity and the possibilities of using it. I
3 know you hit on sort of from the CTE perspective. So
4 from my perspective, from core content instruction,
5 Tier I instruction, I noticed if you have 200
6 students, you have two math teachers, you have two
7 ELA teachers. Talk to me about specifically what
8 math instruction would look like. Say I'm a 10th
9 grader; I'm taking geometry. What does my class look
10 like? Who am I in class with? What part of my
11 instruction is fully online with Edgenuity? What
12 part am I receiving support and instruction from a
13 human in the classroom? If you could just sort of
14 walk me through what a core class instruction looks
15 like.

16 MR. MCGEE: Yes, sir. So what we're currently
17 -- we've been talks with the teachers as a team of
18 teachers on campus that we're trying to flesh this
19 model out and, you know, fill in the gap, so to
20 speak. But what we're looking at is at the beginning
21 of class, a teacher would do probably -- our class
22 about 90 minutes -- 90-minute blocks. So a teacher
23 would probably do like a 30-minute mini lesson on
24 whatever the lesson is that day. And then we would
25 roll into guided practice where students would have

1 an opportunity to look at the content on Edgenuity,
2 go through the practice items and things of that
3 nature. The teacher will rotate around, move around
4 from group to group. Depending on where they are in
5 the lesson, this may be an opportunity for the
6 teacher to look at the quote unquote dashboard and
7 see, okay, what groups do I need to focus on in, you
8 know, various aspects of the lesson. So if we're
9 talking about math -- and I was not a math teacher.
10 But if we're talking about math, then this group of
11 students may be having difficulty for this reason.
12 This group of students over here may be having
13 difficulty for a different reason. And so now, the
14 platform allows me as the teacher to provide tier-2
15 intervention for our students and -- and kind of
16 intervene where the gaps are to get them on board.
17 The end of the class would probably -- may be an
18 opportunity for -- to start or continue the project-
19 based learning. It may be an opportunity for
20 individual practice, and it could be an assessment.
21 So that's kind of what we're looking at now, where
22 teachers would still -- this is not going to be kids
23 get on the computers and just work and that's it.
24 Teachers will absolutely still have an opportunity to
25 teach and provide instruction and move around and

1 provide intervention or acceleration for students
2 where needed.

3 DR. BACON: That math classroom is probably
4 going to have students in Algebra I, geometry,
5 Algebra II, beyond or no?

6 MR. MCGEE: No, sir. No, no. Each class -- to
7 my knowledge, you can't stack classes. So, you know,
8 algebra one would just be algebra one; geometry would
9 just be a geometry, you know; calculus or pre-cal
10 would just be pre-cal, so on and so forth.

11 DR. BACON: Okay. So they'll be in separate
12 courses, separate classes or sections, so that one of
13 those math teachers probably is going to have five
14 different subjects that they're -- of math that
15 they're working -- five different courses of math
16 that they're working with.

17 MR. MCGEE: No, no. Two math teachers would be
18 -- well, I get, yeah, two math teachers would have
19 algebra one, algebra two, geometry, pre-cal, stats.
20 And I'm forgetting something. But they're only like
21 --

22 DR. BACON: Okay.

23 MR. MCGEE: I'm sorry?

24 DR. BACON: Maybe each one has three, three
25 different math --

1 MR. MCGEE: Yes. I think each one would have
2 three. You know, someone might have four, but yeah,
3 that's three or four is going to be the average.

4 DR. BACON: And from an ELA perspective, they'll
5 be in separate -- sort of English 1, English 2,
6 English 3, English 4, like that spread out or --

7 MR. MCGEE: Yes, sir.

8 DR. BACON: Okay. The last thing that was
9 brought up from some parents and community people was
10 just a question about the inclusion of -- and I know
11 Dr. Wright has hit on it some already, inclusion of
12 the alternative environment with the ACC, with the
13 Hall setting and all of the pieces there. And just
14 some parents a little reticent about having an
15 alternative setting there with the traditional
16 student in the Hall School. What would -- and I know
17 Ms. Stewart asked about it, but I'm thinking very
18 specifically just because I know that building --
19 where would these different groups be? Like, how are
20 you going to use the 100s, the 200s all the way up to
21 the 800s, I mean, where are your students? Where are
22 the ACC students? Where are the alternative learning
23 students? I know the six hundreds we had talked
24 about last month are mostly office space. Sort of
25 walk me through some specifics of the delineation

1 between these different school settings.

2 MR. MCGEE: So what we're looking at is the 800
3 building. I don't know if the 800 were there when
4 you, okay. So the 800s would probably be the
5 alternative environment; the 200s may be the ACC; and
6 the 100 -- the one, four and 500s would be -- would
7 be the Hall entity. And so we -- we kind of walk the
8 school and looked at the different areas and spaces
9 and -- and, you know, we kind of mapped out where
10 people are going to be. What times is the cafeteria
11 going to be used? Different things of that nature.
12 What time is the gym going to be used? That kind of
13 stuff. So -- yes.

14 DR. BACON: So you feel like for the space that
15 would be available once you've removed these
16 different -- or the other programs and the office
17 space, you would have sufficient space for what you
18 need to accomplish for up to 200 students?

19 MR. MCGEE: I do believe so, yes.

20 DR. BACON: Okay. Because you've walked in and
21 you've got that laid out. You all have a plan for
22 that. So, yeah, I mean, 200 is going to be your max,
23 though, I'm assuming? It's not like you're going to
24 be coming back asking for four or 500?

25 MR. MCGEE: I don't think we could fit 500 with

1 the other programs on campus, no.

2 DR. BACON: Right. That's what it seems like to
3 me, is it's going to be, you know, pretty much all
4 spaces being used at all times. Okay. Thank you.

5 That's all I have.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you, Dr.
7 Bacon.

8 Again, thank you for your presentation and
9 taking the time to answer the additional questions
10 that were submitted after your last presentation. I
11 don't really have any additional questions, just a
12 few comments. One slightly unrelated as I was
13 extremely excited to see at the district that Little
14 Rock Southwest is partnering with the agriculture
15 program at UAPB, which is part of the reason why I
16 have the questions about what other partnerships are
17 going to be established for Hall, because I have been
18 a proponent for years for us to have a more of an
19 agriculture connection with our schools that are in
20 the city of Little Rock. And so so excited to see
21 that and would want to have more information about
22 how that's coming together and any ways that I can,
23 you know, kind of be involved in those. At least the
24 seeing of would be great to have happen. I am more
25 comfortable now that you have provided the additional

1 detail about how CTE is going to work. Very
2 confident in what Ms. Montgomery is already doing and
3 know that she's going to continue to do a outstanding
4 job of supporting what's happening at Hall. But I
5 just felt like that maybe it was helpful for our
6 Panelists to hear the additional details that you
7 guys provided today. So thank you for that as well.
8 And again, thank you for your flexibility. I know
9 our last meeting that you were prepared to move some
10 type of a decision then and I thank you for being
11 flexible on that day. So I don't have any other
12 questions or comments.

13 So with that, are there any other questions from
14 the Panel that need to be addressed before we do any
15 additional steps?

16 DR. MOORE: I have a question that may be for
17 Dr. Smith, but it would be just in relation to this.

18 Dr. Smith, did -- the new laws regarding
19 accountability for open-enrollment charters and how
20 many years they can have a certain letter grade, does
21 that apply to district conversions as well?

22 DR. SMITH: Yes, it does. So the law just
23 states that basically any school I think that
24 receives 3 Fs in a row would -- their charter would
25 be revoked.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay. Just -- I just think that's
2 very important knowing that the history of the school
3 that's, you know, being transformed into this
4 open-enrollment charter and the challenges that may
5 be faced. Because although virtual learning is a
6 great alternative. There's a lot of virtual learning
7 in this platform, it seems, and we know the success
8 rate of virtual learning has not historically being
9 great in Arkansas or nationally. So just something
10 to keep in mind that -- that this will be reviewed
11 and -- from year to year what we're looking at. So
12 that's all.

13 DR. SMITH: Yeah. And I think just to be clear
14 -- and Dr. Wright and Mr. McGee, please correct me if
15 I'm wrong -- is that the virtual school is part of
16 Little Rock School District, and it's not part of
17 this conversion charter. The conversion charter is
18 more of this hybrid small school model that you're
19 proposing; is that correct?

20 SUPT. WRIGHT: That is correct.

21 DR. SMITH: Just wanted to make sure there's --

22 DR. MOORE: I understood that --

23 DR. SMITH: Okay.

24 DR. MOORE: -- but there was a lot of virtual
25 learning.

1 DR. SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I just
2 wanted to make sure that we were all clear that the
3 virtual component of their already existing -- that's
4 already existing was not part of the conversion
5 charter application, even though the application does
6 have an extensive virtual component.

7 DR. MOORE: All right. That's all I had. Thank
8 you, Dr. Wright-McMurray.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No problem.

10 Okay. Is there any additional comment or
11 questions that we need to address before moving
12 forward?

13 (NO RESPONSE)

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay, seeing none.
15 Okay. If there are no further questions, then I'll
16 accept a motion on the district conversion charter
17 school application of Little Rock Hall High School.

18 DR. MOORE: I move that we approve the district
19 conversion charter request for Hall High School.

20 MS. STEWART: I second.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So there is a
22 motion by Dr. Moore, a second by Ms. Stewart, that we
23 accept the application for Little Rock Hall High
24 School. Is there any discussion on the motion?

25 (NO RESPONSE)

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Seeing none, all
2 those in favor of accepting the application for
3 Little Rock High School Conversion Charter, please
4 say aye.

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And any opposed? Okay.
7 Any abstentions? Okay. The ayes have it. Motion
8 carries.

9 Congratulations. Your charter application has
10 been approved to move forward to the State Board.

11 MR. MCGEE: Thank you so much.

12 SUPT. WRIGHT: Thank you all.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you. And thank
14 you again for coming back. We greatly appreciate it.
15 And we look forward to hearing feedback and updates
16 on -- once implementation has taken place.

17 **I.2. CHARTER AMENDMENT REQUEST - CABOT PANTHER ACADEMY**

18 Okay. So next on our agenda, we have the Cabot
19 Panther Academy District Conversion Charter School
20 amendment request. And it looks like that Mr. Scott
21 is going to be the presenter for that item. So if
22 you could please unmute yourself and give us an
23 overview of the application, or sorry, the amendment
24 request.

25 MR. SCOTT: Good morning, Chair Madam -- Madam

1 Chair, and also the other Panel Members. My name is
2 Freddie Scott, Office of School Choice and Parent
3 Empowerment.

4 Cabot School District is appearing before the
5 CAP to request amendments to their existing charter,
6 which is grades 5 through 12. There are three
7 elements to the amendment request. One is to add a
8 new campus site to house the K through 6 Cabot
9 Panther Academy students at the Magnus Creek
10 Elementary School in the district. Two is to
11 increase their enrollment cap from the current 500 to
12 650. And then three, to change the grade level
13 served to add grade levels kindergarten through 4th
14 to the charter current 5-12 authorized grade levels.
15 These students will be served in a hybrid, not
16 completely digital instructional model. And here to
17 present on behalf of Cabot Panther Academy is
18 Assistant Superintendent Aaron Randolph, the Director
19 of Federal Programs and Teacher Development, Melanie
20 Duerkop, Amy Morrow, the principal of Magnus Creek
21 Elementary, and also Stacy Allen, the director of K-6
22 teaching and learning at Cabot Public Schools.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you
24 for that overview.

25 Before we allow you to start your presentation,

1 can I please have all that are planning to speak on
2 behalf of the amendment request to please stand and
3 raise your right hand? And if your camera is off,
4 please turn it on, please, so we can see that and
5 unmute so we can also hear your response. Do you
6 swear that the testimony or statement you are about
7 to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing
8 but the truth?

9 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Very good.
11 Okay. You have 20 minutes and you may begin your
12 presentation.

13 MR. RANDOLPH: Thank you, Dr. Wright-McMurray.
14 Thank you, members of the Panel, for allowing us to
15 come and speak and to share with you all our
16 amendment requests for Cabot Panther Academy.

17 And I will share the presentation with this
18 group. But before we go any further, I do want to
19 thank Mr. Scott and the rest of the folks at the
20 charter office at DESE because initially we started
21 this process almost a year ago and initially our
22 conversation was to actually create another district
23 conversion charter school, similar to what we have at
24 Cabot Panther Academy. But more and more what we
25 were realizing in conversations with our stakeholders

1 was that families were seeking something alternative
2 or something different for their younger students.
3 And we just felt like in our current model, of a
4 traditional K-12 setting, we couldn't always meet the
5 needs or the requests for those families. And so we
6 thought, you know, we've had great success with Cabot
7 Panther Academy, maybe we should just do something
8 from an elementary standpoint. And after working
9 with the charter office, it was determined that, you
10 know, because we've had that great success, why don't
11 we just do an amendment to our existing charter and
12 take those lessons that we've learned, 5-12, and
13 apply them in a K-6 setting. And so that's kind of
14 where we got to this position in which we're
15 requesting these amendments.

16 And I should also add, I apologize, I didn't do
17 this earlier. My name is Aaron Randolph, the
18 assistant superintendent for Cabot Schools.

19 And so I want to share with you all what we're
20 looking at doing to take care of a group of students
21 and families in our school district. And so with the
22 Cabot Panther Academy, one of the things that we have
23 is that we -- we do have an existing charter for 20
24 years now, and we've been able to provide hybrid
25 learning for students at the Cabot School District.

1 Cabot Panther Academy, formerly known as the Academic
2 Center of Excellence, was actually the first
3 conversion charter school in the state of Arkansas.
4 And so we've had a long experience and a lot of
5 lessons learned in how we can provide for students in
6 a different manner. And we really just want to take
7 that same mission that exists on those -- or sorry --
8 in that existing school and apply that to students in
9 K-6. We're going to reimagine education, build
10 relationships with our families and really work with
11 our individual students to ensure they're getting
12 what they need to be successful.

13 And so as Mr. Scott mentioned, there are three
14 specific amendments that we are looking at applying
15 for. Number one is the additions of grades
16 kindergarten through 4th grade to the authorized
17 grade levels. The second is that we would actually
18 utilize an existing elementary school, Magnus Creek
19 Elementary. And then Ms. Morrow is the principal at
20 Magnus Creek Elementary, and she is on this call.
21 And so this would be the home base for those
22 students. So in a hybrid setting, they are still
23 coming to school a minimum of two days a week, and
24 they are coming to Magnus Creek Elementary. And so
25 we wanted Ms. Morrow to be part of that conversation

1 because she is going to be the one working with staff
2 members and working with those families. And then
3 the other component is an increase of student
4 enrollment from 500 to 650 students, simply because
5 with adding another part to this program, we didn't
6 want to put ourselves in a position where we were
7 taking away opportunities for students in our
8 existing program.

9 And the rationale for those amendments, if we
10 look at them one at a time, that first amendment in
11 terms of adding those grade levels, what we have
12 found in meeting with community members and hearing
13 from those around our district is that there is a
14 desire for something else. And I included this in
15 our application, but I had a parent interest meeting
16 and an individual that I've known for a long time
17 that actually has -- her oldest is four. And so
18 she's looking at the future and what they're going to
19 do with their students. And she said, you know, we
20 really want to homeschool, but at the same time we
21 want to be a part of the Cabot Panther School
22 District. We want our daughter to be a Panther, and
23 we really want that flexibility of homeschool, but we
24 also know we want something else. And so
25 conversations like that with our families, we just

1 recognize that there is a desire to do something
2 different than the traditional K-4 building where
3 students are in school from 7:50 to 3:20 five days a
4 week.

5 But we also are finding that students that
6 enroll in that 5-12 option at our existing Cabot
7 Panther Academy, they're typically coming out of the
8 traditional school setting. And so there's a lot of
9 learning curve for those students when they first
10 enroll with our charter. And so if we could set the
11 system up where we had a student at kindergarten, 1st
12 grades, whatever it may be, if we got them
13 comfortable with hybrid learning, that transition for
14 them as they get older is going to be much smoother
15 and we would have vertical alignment for those
16 students in that model. And the other thing that
17 we're realizing is that we want to have the
18 opportunity for students to be learning from the same
19 curriculum that we're using in our traditional school
20 settings in K-4. And so this allows us that
21 opportunity that we would still be able to use what
22 we're doing in the normal school setting with those
23 students. And then the other thing is it just gives
24 us that flexibility with only having students on
25 campus for two to three days a week that we could be

1 much more innovative in what we're doing.

2 One of the things that we're discussing is
3 having training for our parents and our stakeholders
4 and our guardians. So while students are receiving
5 direct instruction on campus, we would be training
6 parents at the same time. So we would have those
7 opportunities for better parental involvement and
8 interaction that doesn't always exist in the
9 traditional setting.

10 The second amendment request, and that is adding
11 the campus of Magnus Creek Elementary. The biggest
12 thing for us as a district was this allows us to
13 leverage what we already have in place. Ms. Morrow
14 has a wonderful team at Magnus Creek Elementary. Any
15 and all support services exist at Magnus Creek
16 Elementary the same that they do at any other K-4
17 campus in our district. This just gives our students
18 the opportunity to have the same media center, the
19 same ELL services, GT services, special education,
20 whatever it may be, whatever needs they have, they're
21 going to be there. And so as opposed to us trying to
22 create something, a new location that's brand new and
23 we have to try to figure out how to facilitate this,
24 all those things are already in place at Magnus
25 Creek, and it gives us that chance. And then also

1 from an operational efficiency standpoint, if we're
2 not having to add a lot of different layers and a lot
3 of different staff members, it just allows us to
4 continue to be efficient and make sure that the
5 program we have is able to continue as long as it is
6 needed. The third amendment in terms of adding to
7 the student enrollment count or student cap, excuse
8 me, again, like I mentioned, this just gives us an
9 opportunity to not hinder the secondary program that
10 we already have in place, but also doesn't put us in
11 a position to where we may have suddenly hundreds and
12 hundreds of students that come in that want to be a
13 part of this program. We have that cap that -- it's
14 not overwhelming for us to get this program up and
15 running in the next year.

16 And I did want to share with you all, because I
17 know some of the questions that may come in, some of
18 the draft schedules that we've developed for our
19 students. When working with our curriculum team, one
20 of the pieces that we wanted to ensure is that we are
21 emphasizing literacy day one. The most important
22 thing we can do for our students, especially early
23 learners, is ensure that they're getting that
24 high-quality instruction in reading. And so there's
25 two different -- as we've said, that -- this draft,

1 schedule one has -- day one is going to be an
2 emphasis on ELA, and so you can see there that 430
3 minutes of instruction and we go through those
4 required components. Students are still getting
5 everything they need. And then you see there the day
6 two, it would be a STEM model and we would rotate
7 that. So students are still getting direct
8 instruction when they're there with us in all those
9 subject areas. Then the request would be, or what we
10 would work with our families on, is that the support
11 would still be going on at home. Parents are going
12 to be assisting us and guardians are going to be
13 assisting us in instruction. This is not a
14 computer-based program. We will use Google
15 Classroom. We will use the technology that's
16 available to us, but it's much more important to us
17 that those students are receiving those instructions,
18 or -- excuse me -- receiving those support services
19 from their families too. We want parents to assist
20 us in this process. And then we also had the --
21 another draft student schedule -- excuse me -- it
22 should be student schedules 2. I apologize. That --
23 this would be just an all-in-one. If we try to make
24 everything flow into one day, that it would be a
25 repeat day one, day two, it would look just like

1 this. And so this one reduces those times and just
2 condenses everything into a much, much tighter
3 schedule.

4 I also wanted to share with the panel, these are
5 screenshots from our current application process. We
6 would continue the same model that we have, the same
7 processes that students and families would apply to
8 be a part of this conversion charter school. There's
9 an interview that would go into this and we would
10 want to make sure that students and families that
11 were participating in this were getting the
12 appropriate education and had the appropriate
13 services and support they needed to be successful in
14 this program. And so these are just some of the
15 questions that we ask as we go through this with our
16 students right now. 5-12, we would carry on the same
17 practice with our early education students.

18 And then as I mentioned, when we talk about
19 services provided, we want to ensure that everything
20 we are doing to our on-site students, everything
21 we're providing to them, these students are going to
22 get that same opportunity, that we are not going to
23 discount or preclude them for participating in any of
24 the same required programs or additional programs
25 that we provide to all of our other students.

1 As we move forward with the Panel and the State
2 Board of Education's approval, one of the things that
3 we want to know is, are we being successful with this
4 model? And so we are going to look at our overall
5 student enrollment in kindergarten through 6 because
6 again, we have found and have heard from our
7 community that this is a request. This is a desire
8 to have something additional, another model. And so
9 we're going to look at -- and what impact this might
10 have on our K-6 enrollment. We're also going to look
11 at the academic growth of our students in the hybrid
12 setting. Are they demonstrating growth as
13 individuals in reading, in math and science? And
14 that will be part of our annual evaluation process
15 for this school.

16 We also are going to utilize beginning of year
17 and end-of-year culture surveys. We want to know
18 from a social and emotional standpoint, how are our
19 students doing? Are they being successful? How do
20 they feel about this? And how do families feel about
21 this? So these are the three components that we will
22 include in our evaluation, along with those -- those
23 pieces that are already existing for all of our
24 schools.

25 And that is the end of my presentation. And I

1 would love to hear from you all, Dr. Duerkop, Ms.
2 Allen, Ms. Morrow here as well. And we are happy to
3 answer any questions you all may have. Again, at the
4 end of the day, what we want to do is to provide
5 another opportunity for students and families that
6 has been requested of us.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you for
8 your presentation.

9 Before we get started with panel questions, Ms.
10 Raney, are there any legal concerns that we need to
11 be aware of?

12 MS. RANEY: We do not have any legal concerns.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you.
14 Okay. So starting with Panel Members, let's
15 start with Dr. Bacon.

16 DR. BACON: I appreciate the information.
17 Really, I guess what I'd like to know is sort of an
18 overview of the success of the current secondary
19 Panther Academy, academic growth performance, and
20 then sort of expectations for what you think you'll
21 see if you are expanding this down to the elementary
22 level.

23 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes sir, forgive me. I'm writing
24 this down to make sure I get it appropriately, Dr.
25 Bacon. So in terms of success, the number one thing

1 for our current Cabot Panther Academy is we're
2 getting students to graduate. Cabot -- excuse me.
3 At the time, Academic Center of Excellence, it was
4 set up as an ALE, and the biggest portion of students
5 that are enrolled at Cabot Panther Academy currently,
6 they do fall under an ALE and a lot of that is
7 academic support. And so the biggest win for us is
8 that we are helping those students earn most credits
9 and they're getting across the stage.

10 In regards to the success -- forgive me. Dr.
11 Duerkop, do you want to help me out here so I can --
12 and Dr. Duerkop works with our federal programs, make
13 sure I answer appropriately.

14 DR. DUERKOP: So, Dr. Melanie Dirkop, director
15 of federal programs. I also want to add in here, and
16 I'm sure Mr. Randolph will address this as well, is
17 that I think for at least maybe, was it been at least
18 the last five or six years, Cabot Panther Academy has
19 been awarded a charter school on the move. They have
20 been recognized at the Capitol. They've been
21 recognized at multiple charter meeting -- board
22 meetings, for the work that they do with their
23 students, not us from a graduation perspective, but
24 also growth in academic courses. A lot of the
25 students that choose to attend Panther Academy do so

1 because they don't feel successful on a typical
2 campus, so a typical high school campus. With the
3 added flexibility of scheduling at our current
4 Panther Academy, with the one-on-one attention that
5 they're getting from the students there, they have
6 seen academic growth. I cannot speak to specifics in
7 that. I'm not the principal out there, but from a
8 federal perspective and working with Carrie Lair, the
9 current principal, Kelly Howard, the assistant
10 principal out there, and just my work with teachers
11 out there and from a federal perspective, our Panther
12 Academy, they have visitors from all over the state
13 that want to come and see our model because of the
14 success of our students. I think if you look at the
15 Panther Academy Facebook page you'll see that daily
16 if not weekly there are students who entered that
17 school not sure if they were going to be able to
18 graduate and they are graduating they have a special
19 ring the bell ceremony every time a student meets all
20 of their requirements for graduation regardless of
21 the time of year. I'm not sure if that exactly -- I
22 cannot speak to for growth in ELA or math or science,
23 that's not my purview, but just from the overall
24 success of Panther Academy, that is the reason why
25 families choose that. That is the reason why

1 students choose to go there. They don't feel
2 successful on a traditional campus, but once they
3 step across the threshold of Cabot Panther Academy,
4 they are successful.

5 DR. BACON: Does the Cabot Panther Academy have
6 a letter grade?

7 MR. RANDOLPH: So it does not, as it's set up as
8 an ALE. So it's a little bit different in that
9 regard.

10 DR. BACON: So your primary goal that you're
11 measuring on outcomes for the secondary level is
12 graduation, getting kids across the bar of meeting
13 high school graduation requirements? And it sounds
14 like you're exceeding extremely well at that. What
15 would be the goals from an elementary conversion
16 charter? Are they primarily academic? I mean, what
17 would be some goals that you might have set that
18 you'll measure your outcomes against?

19 MR. RANDOLPH: Sure. From an academic
20 standpoint, it's growth, 100 percent. We want to see
21 students when they come into us at the beginning of
22 the year, academically, in those three subject areas
23 that they're demonstrating growth. Another
24 component, which we've spent more time on -- and Ms.
25 Allen's welcome to jump in -- is students feeling

1 welcome and students feeling connected to our schools
2 and families feeling connected to our schools. And
3 so that's another piece to that where I talk about
4 the culture survey is we want to make sure students
5 are not only able to thrive academically, but that
6 they want to be there. And when they're spending
7 time at school that they feel like that's where they
8 belong. So those, you know, are the two main goals
9 that would bring up just in quick discussion. I
10 would also add, and I wanted to follow up on what Dr.
11 Duerkop mentioned, Cabot Panther Academy has actually
12 received awards for the past four years for student
13 achievement in math and -- or literacy, depending
14 upon the year. And so that's something they've been
15 recognized at the Capitol through the ALE office
16 pretty consistently over the years.

17 DR. BACON: Okay. Thank you. That's all I
18 have.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

20 Ms. Stewart.

21 MS. STEWART: Yes.

22 Good morning. I just had a couple of brief
23 questions. So you mentioned about, you know, the top
24 of your presentation about the homeschool community,
25 homeschool parents. So talk to us a little bit about

1 how students have been identified, how you have, you
2 know, kind of gathered some of that information, if
3 you will.

4 MR. RANDOLPH: Certainly. What I will say is
5 this has not been in -- part of a not a recruiting
6 goal at all. This has been just as families are
7 leaving our district, we -- we try to have exit
8 conferences with them and, you know, hearing from
9 them just they weren't getting what they needed, or
10 they didn't feel like they had the time they wanted
11 to have with their kids being enrolled full time.
12 And so that was kind of the anecdotal evidence for us
13 that we needed to try something different. And then
14 the feedback, direct feedback I got was through
15 informational meetings that we just posted. Anybody
16 wants to come and hear about this, we'd love to hear
17 from you. And also we want feedback to figure out
18 what is it exactly that you want. And that's where
19 we had currently enrolled families that attended
20 those. We had some that were considering coming to
21 Cabot. And so that's -- those were the feedback
22 sources there, Ms. Stewart.

23 MS. STEWART: Okay. So I appreciate that and I
24 do appreciate obviously having that kind of community
25 engagement and you touched on the exit conferences,

1 that's a great idea to get that information. So that
2 kind of made me think of something else as you were
3 talking about that. From your numbers' perspective,
4 out of the gate, can you remind me how many you're
5 anticipating for the new grade range K through 4?

6 MR. RANDOLPH: So I would hate to give you a
7 concrete number. What I will say is that we had, I
8 think -- I'm going off the top of over 80 families
9 expressed interest in --

10 MS. STEWART: Okay.

11 MR. RANDOLPH: -- this model. And so it's one
12 of those we, until we felt like we had approval from
13 this group along with the State Board of Ed, we
14 didn't want to get too firm into trying to firm --
15 firm families --

16 MS. STEWART: -- Yeah.

17 MR. RANDOLPH: -- commitment, I would say.

18 MS. STEWART: Yeah. No, that certainly makes
19 sense. And then I think, you know, based on that,
20 when you're looking at the flexibility in housing it
21 in a current elementary school, how is -- how are you
22 looking at staff for that with the, you know, the
23 alternate schedules and variety of options that
24 you're offering flexibility for families?

25 MR. RANDOLPH: Well, so Ms. Morrow at Magnus

1 Creek, their school has four main wings and so some
2 of the pieces that we were looking at, again,
3 depending upon student enrollment, was being able to
4 utilize part of a wing, if a full wing, depending
5 upon enrollment, again. And then from a staffing
6 standpoint, the ideal would be just like we have in
7 our regular setting, that we have a kindergarten
8 teacher, a first-grade teacher, a second-grade
9 teacher, and so on. But we also were going to be as,
10 you know, as efficient as we can. And it may come
11 that we have to have a kindergarten, first-grade
12 class where we have students that are in there. And
13 I don't know about everybody on this group, but that
14 existed for many years when I was growing up. We had
15 those two-year grade levels. So that is something
16 we're considering if it comes to that. But the ideal
17 would be a one staff member per grade level. And
18 then again the -- versus, you know, Little Rock being
19 before us in terms of certification, having someone
20 with a K-4 license or a K-6 license, it allows us a
21 little bit more flexibility within that versus a
22 secondary class.

23 MS. STEWART: Okay. That -- well, you just
24 answered my next question, so -- about -- regarding
25 licensure, so I appreciate that.

1 MR. RANDOLPH: Absolutely.

2 MS. STEWART: I think that's it for me right
3 now. Thank you.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you, Ms. Stewart.
5 And I just want you to be aware that Dr.
6 McDonald did -- has dropped some information in the
7 chat in regards to Panther Academy. If you want to
8 just review that as well, either for additional
9 questions or to clarify any questions you've already
10 asked.

11 MR. RANDOLPH: Thank you, Dr. McDonald, for
12 that.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.
14 So next, Dr. Moore.

15 DR. MOORE: Good morning. Thanks for the
16 presentation, the information. Just a couple
17 clarifying points. So you're -- I know your --your
18 presentation listed Magnus Creek's LEA, but to be
19 clear, you're wanting to add this under the LEA of
20 CPA, the --

21 MR. RANDOLPH: That is correct.

22 DR. MOORE: -- 43703?

23 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes.

24 DR. MOORE: And currently both ACE and ALE at
25 Cabot are under that LEA?

1 MR. RANDOLPH: That is correct.

2 DR. MOORE: Okay. And to further confirm,
3 because your previous time when you came back and I
4 know things have changed, it was looking at CLA. How
5 many letters can I use here? I'm sorry. Cabot
6 Learning Academy --

7 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes.

8 DR. MOORE: -- was what you were looking at
9 being part of this. But now that has totally off the
10 table. That is not that population of students. This
11 is a completely different request.

12 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am.

13 DR. MOORE: And that, the Cabot Learning
14 Academy, I think, is changing in that situation as to
15 what it currently is, just to make those
16 confirmations.

17 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am.

18 DR. MOORE: Okay.

19 MR. RANDOLPH: This has nothing to do with Cabot
20 Learning Academy, which is another branch of our ALE
21 that serves students that have some specific needs.
22 This is not an ALE, nor would we go through that
23 process for this part of the charter.

24 DR. MOORE: Okay. And then I was like looking
25 at some things on My School Info during some of your

1 talking, so I was trying to clarify those LEA type
2 things. So I really apologize if you said this and I
3 missed it and I hate to ask you to repeat. But for
4 this, this would allow more acceleration
5 opportunities for students? Students may be able to
6 work ahead if they so choose and they're not bound to
7 necessarily stay at the same grade level; is that
8 correct?

9 MR. RANDOLPH: That is correct. I think we
10 would work within our acceleration policy that we
11 have. But again, if you have -- back to Mrs.
12 Stewart's question -- if you have a K-1 setting, that
13 just allows a natural, or a 1-2 setting, it just
14 allows a natural acceleration opportunity for our
15 students.

16 DR. MOORE: Okay. All right. Thank you so
17 much.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.
19 Dr. Beshears-Duncan.

20 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes. Thank you.

21 Thank you for your presentation. I'm curious
22 about, you spoke a little bit to the demand and the
23 need for K-4 families and learners, and you also
24 spoke to the learning curve for students in 5-12. So
25 I'm wondering, what are some things that you've been

1 learning about proactively preparing families and
2 students for this experience, especially given the K-
3 4 configuration and those -- those students will be
4 much younger and have less experience? Could you
5 just speak to that a bit?

6 MR. RANDOLPH: Certainly.

7 And then I -- I don't want to monopolize the
8 time. So Ms. Allen, Dr. Duerkop, Ms. Morrow, if
9 y'all want to speak, please, please interrupt me.

10 But I will say some of this, Dr. Beshears-Duncan
11 comes, actually came out of COVID. We, I think along
12 with many others, participated in digital learning
13 and virtual learning, K-12. And what we learned
14 throughout that year was virtual learning is
15 incredibly difficult for a traditional school or
16 traditional setting to be successful with it. And we
17 really felt like that we struggled specifically in
18 that K-4 realm. It was so difficult for us to work
19 with students and families at that age, along with
20 having students on site. And so coming out of that
21 year of '21, '22, excuse me, 2020, 2021, that was
22 when we -- we were pretty firm about not offering an
23 elementary virtual learning option and worked with
24 our families that wanted such experiences, and we
25 directed them towards some of the online charters

1 that we have and worked with those families. And
2 through that process, it was very important for us to
3 know that -- and again, I'm going to reference
4 Arkansas Connections Academy -- that they do a
5 wonderful job of working with families on what it
6 means to be a virtual learner and what it means to
7 have a house that's a virtual-learning house. And so
8 for us, in the same way that we see this with our
9 middle school, junior high students, it's going to be
10 imperative that we are bringing those families in at
11 open house, at orientation, to talk about, this is
12 what it's going to look like when students are with
13 us; but when you're at home, this is what it's going
14 to look like there. And so that's going to be part
15 of our onboarding process. And then as they get
16 older, for our students currently in Cabot Panther
17 Academy, it's a similar conversation to, you can't
18 just come to school two days a week and then have the
19 rest of the week off. Like that's not what this is
20 built to do. And so I think, or I believe, setting
21 the foundation for these students in K-4, that
22 transition will be much smoother for them as they
23 move into the model if they continue to do so.

24 Ms. Allen, Ms. Morrow.

25 MS. ALLEN: I would just ditto all of that. K-4

1 -- teaching K-4, especially when you're thinking
2 about early literacy skills and early numeracy
3 skills, is quite a challenge to do in a virtual
4 setting. And so being able to have this opportunity
5 to really partner with parents and for us to help
6 take some of that lift off of parents that are
7 wanting to do these things at home, we can help teach
8 them at the school setting; and then hopefully allow
9 them some additional training to then see that
10 further instruction at home. Bottom line so we can
11 ensure that all of our students are successful.

12 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Amy, I cannot hear you.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Morrow, do you want
14 to try speaking again?

15 DR. MORROW: Can you hear me?

16 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes, it's soft.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: It's still kind of low,
18 but we can hear you, yes.

19 DR. MORROW: Okay. I was just going to say that
20 Magnus Creek is like the perfect place to launch this
21 because it is the smallest elementary school in
22 Cabot. It's also, I like to call it, the slice of
23 heaven off of Highway 5 because it is kind of on the
24 outskirts of town, so it's very -- it's not
25 intimidating. And so this is just an opportunity for

1 us to be able to find ways to get more students and
2 families involved because the trends show that --
3 that students that come in from homeschooling
4 opportunities are not getting the same opportunities
5 from a teacher that is licensed and getting the rigor
6 of an education. So this is a great place and
7 setting to be able to, I mean, in some instances, get
8 kids to be involved, possibly even full-time and not
9 in this alternative setting.

10 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you all for the
11 additional information. It sounds like you're really
12 considering not only what you've learned from 5-12,
13 but also what you've learned over the years from the
14 virtual learning options. And you may already have
15 this in place and I'm not aware of it. So consider
16 that as I make this recommendation to consider some
17 language around some of those explicit learner
18 skills, especially since you've got this opportunity
19 that you spoke to now, K-12, language that you can
20 use for what makes hybrid learners and hybrid
21 learning effective. So perseverance, advocating for
22 self, et cetera. And if you'd like to talk or speak
23 to that anymore, I would be happy to talk with you
24 all regarding. Thanks again.

25 No further questions.

1 MR. RANDOLPH: Thank you.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

3 Mr. Baldwin.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Yes.

5 Thank you all for walking us through this and
6 just -- just a few questions. I was interested, Mr.
7 Randolph, when you were talking about your -- your
8 friend who has young children that's homeschooling
9 and her interest in her kids being a Panther which I
10 think is great. Walk -- walk us through, or walk me
11 through, understanding what if parents have
12 homeschool kids or other that that need to be
13 homeschool kids walk us through a day that child will
14 -- will have in -- in this charter, the K through 4
15 that you're asking for. Is it a, you know, everyday
16 event or is it just a couple days a week or can it be
17 flexible depending on what the parent wants? And
18 walk us through the different options the parents
19 will have with that.

20 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, sir. So the best schedule
21 that we've seen for students in a hybrid setting for
22 Panther Academy is two days on site with one flex
23 day. And so it could be a Monday, Wednesday, a
24 Tuesday, Thursday. Those are the conversations that
25 we're having. And then Friday would be a day for

1 specific intervention, enrichment, additional
2 opportunities. And that could be an optional day.
3 But we also -- what we found is students that need
4 specific types of intervention, it's not an optional
5 day. And so for us, that's kind of the flexible day
6 that we have right now is that third day bringing
7 them in. But in regards to the day, as hopefully
8 looking at those schedules, it's going to be like any
9 other elementary student. They're going to come to
10 school. That -- they're going to have their
11 activities. They're going to learn. They'll have
12 time on the wheel just like everyone other for the
13 activity wheel. So they're going to get those
14 services. They'll have lunch in the cafeteria.
15 They'll have recess outside and it's going to look
16 very similar while they're with us other than it may
17 not be, as I said -- a kindergarten class of 20
18 students that the makeup of that class may be a
19 little bit different than what they would see in the
20 other kindergarten classrooms in that building.

21 MR. BALDWIN: Will they be segregated to a
22 section of the building? Will it be interspersed
23 with all the other building students?

24 MR. RANDOLPH: So I will say that we would want
25 them in -- I hate to use the term segregated. They

1 will be in their own area simply for logistics. It
2 will make it -- with moving between classrooms, them
3 not being there. The goal would be that they would
4 have their own spot in the building that they could
5 work within that. However, when they're going to the
6 cafeteria, when they're going to art, when they're
7 going to music, then they're going to be in the
8 building just like any other student would be. This
9 is not a -- it's not a section of the building where
10 we're going to shut the door and they don't -- they
11 don't see anybody else throughout that day, if that
12 makes sense.

13 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. It does. That sounds --
14 that sounds good. Let me ask you so you know in
15 today's world of funding for schools and for
16 students, you know, homeschoolers are getting
17 funding. The schools are getting funding for these
18 students that are with you all for two days or maybe
19 three if they take the optional day. Who gets who
20 gets the funding? Do you guys get that or just the
21 homeschool family get that for those days that you're
22 providing services?

23 MR. RANDOLPH: So we would get the funds for
24 those days in the time for which we have our
25 students. That would be similar to how we classify

1 students at Panther Academy, the way the funding
2 works there. In regards to the EFA funding and how
3 that works, especially not when I'm on record, I
4 can't speak to that one. And then what that looks
5 like for those families, I can't answer that one, Mr.
6 Baldwin, at this point.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. I was just curious about
8 that. And then I was also -- I was also wondering
9 for those days that these students are on campus, who
10 would for accountability purposes, I guess, would you
11 guys would those the grades and the results for those
12 students flow up into Magnus Creek School and be
13 reported to site that way? Or would they not flow up
14 and just be part of the homeschool, you know, the
15 family effort? And I think I remember that Magnus
16 Creek is a C-rated school, and so I'm just wondering
17 if these students might, you know, help the school
18 maybe improve the grade a bit or maybe not. Maybe
19 they would not. Maybe they would draw the grade
20 down, so if you all thought through that process?

21 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, sir. And again, this is Dr.
22 Duerkop's wheelhouse, and so she wants to jump in.
23 But what I would say in regards to the letter grade,
24 these students would not be coded to Magnus Creek.
25 These students would be coded to the LEA for Cabot

1 Panther Academy. And so the goal is that these
2 students would absolutely help our grades. And I
3 would also say with Cabot Panther Academy is that --
4 my understanding is that in regards to a letter
5 grade, if we have enough involvement of students that
6 are not classified as ALE, then there it starts to
7 shift where there may be a letter grade for part of
8 it. And again, I'm getting a little bit out of my
9 area of expertise there, but these students would 100
10 percent go to Cabot Panther -- excuse me -- Cabot
11 Panther Academy's accountability standards.

12 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. I appreciate that
13 clarification and then my final question, let's
14 assume you're -- that this becomes a very popular
15 program and you have a lot of families in Cabot and
16 in the rounding surrounding area wanted to do this,
17 how much -- how many students could you take into the
18 Magnus Creek building before you have to -- have to
19 stop taking students? I know you're asking for it
20 looks like 150 -- an increase of 150 authorized
21 students, but is there any capacity beyond that for
22 you?

23 MR. RANDOLPH: If we were to -- if we were to
24 broach 150, then we would have to have a conversation
25 kind of on it on a district-wide basis because we do

1 have our elementary schools. We do have choice
2 schools and students transfer, but we are
3 geographically bound by our nine elementary schools.
4 So that would be a conversation there. That 100 --
5 100 to 150 mark, that is something that could be
6 handled at Magnus Creek with our current student
7 enrollment and that would not negatively impact, you
8 know, the function of that building.

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

10 That was my last question, Madam Chair.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

12 I will say majority of my questions have already
13 been answered by other Panel Members. One of my major
14 questions was, was there any connection between your
15 previous request that you guys came before us before
16 with this one and you've provided clarity that it is
17 not, so I do not have any additional questions.

18 So at this point, I will accept a motion to --

19 DR. MOORE: Dr. Wright-McMurray, I'm sorry, but
20 I do have some additional questions.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Oh, sorry. Okay.

22 You recognized.

23 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

24 Regarding the flexibility, can you confirm will
25 -- students will have a flexible schedule, but will

1 it be set where like you know this student will for
2 sure be there on these certain days? Or is it just
3 like every day they get to choose what they every
4 week they get to choose?

5 MR. RANDOLPH: So great question, Dr. Moore.
6 And it's one that we discuss -- at every parent
7 meeting, this was brought up as well. And so it would
8 be a set schedule. So students would be on a -- if
9 it's student Johnny Smith, Johnny Smith is Tuesdays
10 and Thursdays. And that is the expectation with that
11 family. And that's the expectation for us as a
12 school. The only day that would be questionable
13 would be that third day. That Friday is where that
14 flexibility comes in for us. But in terms of an
15 accountability standpoint, it would be very difficult
16 for us to say and to give that open-ended nature of a
17 student could come Monday, could come Tuesday or
18 Wednesday or Thursday. So we would have set
19 schedules.

20 DR. MOORE: Okay. That's what I was thinking to
21 be really hard for planning lunches and also trying
22 to understand, you know, how they would make sure
23 they were getting the wheel appropriately of what
24 extra classes they're getting. So I was trying to
25 understand that. And then once again, if you spoke

1 to this, I'm sorry if I missed it. Transportation.
2 What's transportation look like for this campus? I
3 mean, I know what it looks like for Magnus, but like
4 for these students in particular.

5 MR. RANDOLPH: So -- no and that -- it hasn't
6 been addressed, but in our discussions we would not
7 provide transportation, at least initially, for this
8 this program. And in part it's it goes back to some
9 of the lessons we've learned about with Panther
10 Academy. We've got to have that opportunity for
11 parental involvement on site to make sure that we're
12 doing things successfully. If this is able to expand
13 in the future, we can certainly have those
14 discussions as a district, but initially it would not
15 be -- transportation would not be provided. And then
16 also from a logistics standpoint, as Ms. Morrow said,
17 Magnus Creek is located on the far northwest boundary
18 of our school district. And so it would create a lot
19 of logistical issues for us to try to get students
20 from one end of the school district to the other in a
21 timely manner.

22 DR. MOORE: All right. Thank you so much.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

24 So that does bring a follow-up question for me.
25 So in regards to transportation, if you are not going

1 to do that, that's been communicated to parents, I
2 would assume?

3 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And what has been their
5 feedback on the absence of transportation for their
6 students?

7 MR. RANDOLPH: I think both sides, Dr.
8 Wright- McMurray, is that there are some that have
9 said, we wish we had transportation; but then they've
10 also said, but we understand you want to have that
11 parental involvement. You want parents being able to
12 come to school and being active. And for us, at
13 least in our area, we don't have any method of
14 transporting adults unless they're district
15 employees. And so it would make it very difficult
16 for us to ensure that we're getting that engagement
17 that we need for this to be successful.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

19 All right. Are there any additional questions
20 from any Panel Member or anything else needs to be
21 clarified from the applicant?

22 MS. STEWART: Yes, I'm sorry. I had one
23 additional question that came to mind and it was kind
24 of in regards to staffing. I know you all have
25 spoken to this a little bit, but in particular with

1 special education students, what is that going to
2 look like?

3 MR. RANDOLPH: Certainly. And so that would be
4 very similar to any other program that we offer is
5 that would be an IEP team conversation because we
6 would need to make sure that we are providing the
7 services needed for students. If a student, you
8 know, whatever the student needs in terms of
9 staffing, we're going to provide it through FAPE, but
10 that doesn't necessarily mean that a hybrid setting
11 is going to meet the particular needs of that
12 student. And so that would come down to that IEP
13 team to make that make that recommendation
14 determination.

15 MS. STEWART: Okay. I because I noticed in your
16 application that, you know, you spoke to the dyslexia
17 screener and all of those provided services. Just
18 wanted to make sure that, you know, there would be
19 adequate staffing if -- because you don't -- you
20 know, this is a big unknown basically at this point.
21 But it's -- I mean, you've got a plan in place, it
22 sounds like?

23 MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am. And we will have --
24 absolutely, we're going to have SpEd staff attached
25 and we're going to make sure those students are

1 getting, you know, what they need. But I -- I'm
2 always hesitant to guarantee any program for a
3 particular student, just because there's a lot of
4 things that come into that IEP conversation.

5 MS. STEWART: Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

7 So one more question, sorry. So just for my
8 clarification again, the expected grade band that
9 you're anticipating?

10 MR. RANDOLPH: This would be K -- so at Magnus
11 Creek, would be a K-6 which --

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

13 MR. RANDOLPH: -- is the grade band, but we're
14 requesting the addition of K-4 because currently the
15 Charter is authorized 5-12 through June of '27, I
16 think is the -- is the end of the charter approval.
17 Next summer.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

19 MR. RANDOLPH: And so I will be back in about a
20 year, regardless of whatever the conversation is
21 here.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right.
23 Thanks.

24 So are there any other questions or any other
25 points of clarification needed from our Panel?

1 DR. MOORE: Similar to the last presentation,
2 this is more of a Dr. Smith thing, but I am
3 interested in knowing, since they are not part of a
4 letter grade open-enrollment charter because of the
5 ALE status, what the accountability will look like.
6 Because we certainly don't want this large group of
7 K-6 students having just, like, zero accountability.
8 So can you speak to that, Dr. Smith.

9 DR. SMITH: Absolutely. Darrell Smith, office
10 of school choice.

11 So while there is not a letter grade assigned to
12 this particular LEA, we still see the records of
13 every student and the testing of every student. So
14 as was referred to, I think Dr. McDonald put in the
15 chat, you can still see how every student tested in
16 at the Cabot Panther Academy. So we can see that --
17 what their achievement scores were, what the growth
18 scores were of each student, and what the growth
19 scores of their bottom 25 were. So there still is
20 accountability to testing and for what students are
21 learning into the outcomes of the students that are
22 currently enrolled at the Cabot Panther Academy. And
23 that would extend now, if approved, to the K-4
24 addition to this LEA.

25 DR. MOORE: Dr. Randolph had mentioned that

1 potentially when it meets a certain threshold of
2 percentage of students that aren't ALE, that maybe it
3 does receive a letter grade. Can you speak to that,
4 Dr. Smith?

5 DR. SMITH: There's a potential. I mean,
6 obviously, if we need to reclassify that based --
7 because obviously ALEs have a very distinct
8 definition. And so at any point in time when this
9 particular LEA doesn't no longer meets that
10 definition, that they would just roll into a
11 traditional conversion charter as opposed to an ALE.

12 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you for answering those
13 questions.

14 And thank you again, Cabot School District for
15 looking at alternative solutions. I think some of
16 y'all know that I'm a proud Cabot Panther former
17 parent. My kids have both gone through the system
18 and my daughter went through Magnus Creek. My son
19 would not have graduated without the ACE being able
20 to expedite his learning after him making some
21 choices that got him a little behind. And
22 unfortunately, my grandson experienced ALE very
23 recently, so I'm not too happy about that. But it
24 was a great -- it's a great program is too, so thank
25 you for continuing to try to meet unique needs of

1 students and their families.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

3 Okay. And I did want to just kind of also --
4 I'm sorry. I'm getting, you know, we get our updates
5 on our ADE computers that keeps popping up in my
6 corner. I have to keep remembering to lock that off.
7 So I did note you guys do have a JAG program that's
8 associated with your ALE and just encourage you to
9 continue to lean into the work there to see positive
10 outcomes for your students in that space. And then
11 also just want to make you aware that there are
12 several models that are available for -- most of your
13 ALE students can start as early as sixth grade, which
14 then helps them to start to begin doing work in that
15 space a little bit earlier. And then we've been able
16 to see a lot more positive results on the back end
17 with students start earlier in the JAG program.

18 Okay. So again, I will offer -- are there any
19 other questions or comments that need to be addressed
20 by the applicant before we move forward? If there
21 is, that's fine. I just want to make sure I don't
22 kind of get ahead of what you guys want to do.

23 (NO RESPONSE)

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So seeing none,
25 okay. So at this point, I will accept a motion on

1 the district conversion charter school amendment
2 request of Cabot Panther Academy.

3 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I motion to approve the
4 charter amendment request regarding the new campus
5 site, the enrollment cap and the change in grade
6 levels.

7 DR. MOORE: I second.

8 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm sorry, who seconded?
9 Was that Dr. Moore?

10 DR. MOORE: Tina.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

12 Okay. So you've heard the motion made by Dr.
13 Beshears-Duncan and seconded by Dr. Moore that we
14 accept the amendment request submitted by Cabot
15 Panther Academy. All those in -- oh, sorry. Is
16 there any discussion on the motion?

17 (NO RESPONSE)

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Seeing none,
19 okay. All in favor, say aye.

20 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Any opposed like sign or
22 nay? Any abstentions? Okay. Seeing none, motion
23 carries.

24 Congratulations. Thank you so much for coming
25 in today.

1 Okay. All right. So I -- before we move
2 forward, I would like to probably give us about a
3 ten-minute break. And then to come back and get
4 started with Friendship Academy. So that will bring
5 us back -- sorry. I'm trying to look. So let's plan
6 to be back at 11:20. And we'll get started with
7 Friendship at that point.

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

10 **I.3. REVIEW OF DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLANS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS**
11 **THAT RECEIVED A "F" LETTER GRADE**

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So we're back
13 from our break. So next on our action agenda, action
14 item No. three, review of district strategic plans
15 for charter school districts that received an F
16 letter grade. And it looks like that Dr. Smith is
17 going to come forward and give us an overview of how
18 this session will go.

19 DR. SMITH: Thank you, Madam Chair.

20 Darrell Smith, Office of School Choice.

21 As you all know, the state released its first
22 round of district accountability ratings in November.
23 In that release, several charter districts received
24 an overall F rating. These ratings were deeply
25 concerning, not simply as a letter grade on a page,

1 but because they reflect student outcomes that fall
2 short of what Arkansas children deserve. Our
3 students only get one year in each grade, and they
4 need high quality teaching and strong schools now and
5 not sometime in the distant future.

6 When we first brought this to you -- issue o you
7 in December, the charter office's initial
8 recommendation was to move directly to probationary
9 hearings for each of these F-rated districts. Since
10 then, we've had the opportunity to meet with these
11 district leaders, review the work that's already been
12 underway and consider the timing of when these
13 ratings were issued relative to the district's
14 capacity to design and begin implementing meaningful
15 improvement plans. Based on that additional work and
16 in recognition of both the urgency and the reality on
17 the ground, we're bringing you a revised, more
18 sequenced recommendation today. Our goal is to
19 support serious, immediate improvement while still
20 honoring a clear and transparent accountability
21 process.

22 So today we're asking the panel to, No. one,
23 review the plans and actions that are already in
24 place for each of these F-rated districts, approve
25 DESE's recommendation to accept the district's formal

1 statement of assurance, committing to implement and
2 strengthen those improvement efforts, and to
3 acknowledge that following your acceptance of each
4 district's assurance that the charter office will
5 issue a notice of concern to each of these districts.

6 That notice of concern will do two things.
7 First, it will make clear that an F rating at the
8 district level is not acceptable, and that
9 improvement is required, not optional. Second, it
10 will formally require each district to submit a
11 comprehensive school improvement that will be due in
12 April with the explicit expectation that those plans
13 will lead to an improved district letter grade in the
14 2026 and the 2027 letter grade accountability cycle.
15 This is not the end of the process. It's the
16 beginning of a more structured oversight period.

17 Following the submission and approval of these
18 improvement plans, the charter office will conduct
19 sustained improvement monitoring throughout The
20 remainder of this year, as well as the 26-27 school
21 year, to ensure that the promised changes are
22 actually producing better outcomes for students
23 across these districts.

24 We're very grateful for the hard work and the
25 honest reflection that these districts have already

1 shown, and many leaders have really leaned into very
2 difficult conversations, acknowledged their results,
3 and have begun making very significant changes in
4 their district. So we want to recognize that effort
5 and support them at the same time. We cannot lose
6 sight of the urgency. Every semester that passes
7 without real improvement is a semester of lost
8 opportunity for children. So our recommendation
9 today is designed to balance support and
10 accountability, to give districts a clear path
11 forward with time-bound expectations and monitoring,
12 while keeping the focus where it belongs on student
13 learning, growth, and long-term success.

14 With that context, we'd like to invite four
15 school districts to report on their progress toward
16 improvement, and that you all would accept the
17 district's formal statement of assurance for school
18 improvement. First up on the agenda, as you will
19 see, will be the Friendship Aspire Network, followed
20 by Future School of Fort Smith, the Garfield Scholars
21 Academy, and finally, the Institute of Fine Arts.

22 And with that, Madam Chair, I will turn it back
23 to you.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you for
25 that overview and explanation.

1 **I.3.b. FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE ACADEMY NETWORK**

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And so we will get
3 started with Friendship Aspire Academies of Arkansas.
4 Before we get started, can I please have everyone
5 that's going to be speaking on behalf of the charter
6 to please stand and raise your right hand. Please
7 turn on your cameras if they're not on. And then
8 also unmute so we can also hear your confirmation.
9 Okay. Do you swear that the testimony or statement
10 you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth,
11 and nothing but the truth?

12 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Unlike our other
14 presenters, we are going to allow you to have 30
15 minutes to present your presentation because we know
16 that you are speaking on behalf of multiple and so
17 you'll have 30 minutes to present. Just want to let
18 you know that on the front end. All right. Okay.
19 you may begin.

20 DR. TRAN: I'm going to share my screen. Just
21 give me a second. Do you all see that? Cool.

22 So thanking Madam Chair and Charter Authorizing,
23 CAP, members for providing us the opportunity and
24 space to share candidly what went wrong, what we have
25 learned and most importantly, what we're doing now to

1 ensure and improve outcomes for our students. We
2 value this opportunity for transparency and
3 reflection, and we approach it with humility,
4 urgency, and a clear commitment to corrective action.

5 So just quickly, our mission at Friendship
6 Aspire Academy Arkansas is to provide a world-class
7 education that motivates students to achieve high
8 academic standards, enjoy learning and develop as
9 ethical, literate and well-rounded and
10 self-sufficient citizens. We seek to fulfill the
11 mission for providing students a high-quality liberal
12 arts and STEM education focus on pairing students
13 with the academic and life skills needed to be
14 successful in college and beyond. Today, so our team
15 members are Mr. Jeff Pulliam, who is our FEF Board,
16 Mr. Joe Harris, our CEO, myself, superintendent, Ms.
17 Toni Dickerson, director of academics, Ms. Ashley
18 Williams, principal at downtown, Dr. Mims, principal
19 at Hazel Street, Mr. Kendrick, principal at North
20 Little Rock, and Mr. Johnny Laine, principal at
21 Garland, who will be speaking as well today.

22 So as a district, I want to start by saying we
23 take full accountability for our current designation.
24 Right. And F rating is serious and we do not
25 minimize its significance. Ultimately, the district

1 is responsible for students' performance,
2 instructional system, leadership, stability and
3 outcomes. And we acknowledge that our students
4 deserve stronger and more consistent results than
5 those reflected in our current status. Okay. At the
6 same time, it is important to provide context to
7 fully understand how this destination was reached.
8 Both Hazel Street campus and the Pine Bluff campus as
9 you see now, have never received an F level grade in
10 its history. Historically, these schools earn letter
11 grades ranging from B to C, and the most recent
12 proficiency data, which is the next slide, shows
13 performance near state average, particularly in
14 mathematics. However, both schools were denied a
15 hold-harmless waiver that we were advised would
16 consider based on prior year's letter grade. The
17 denial of these waivers directly impacted the
18 district's overall accountability calculation and
19 resulted in the district's current designation.
20 While this context mattered, we clear -- we are clear
21 and intentionally in saying that we are not using it
22 as an excuse. Regardless of waivers or historical
23 trends, we're in this situation and we fully accept
24 responsibility for addressing it. Our focus is not
25 just student outcome, but on correcting it swiftly,

1 sustainably, and with the students have to set up
2 every decision that we make.

3 So with the root causes, so why did this happen?
4 Following a comprehensive internal revenue student
5 performance data, instructional practice, leadership
6 structures and operational system, we did identify
7 several interconnected root causes that developed
8 over time and collectively contribute to current
9 outcomes. These systematic challenges affected
10 instruction quality and consistency across campus.
11 But please also note that these root causes did not
12 apply to every single one of our campus.

13 First one was staffing stability and living
14 instructional experience. There was a significant
15 root cause with staffing stability, particularly the
16 high concentration of novice teachers combined with
17 challenges related to teacher placement and
18 leadership transition. While novice teachers brought
19 commitment and effort, many lacked the instructional
20 experience needed to consistently deliver rigorous,
21 standard-aligned instruction, especially in
22 foundational leadership mathematics. In some cases,
23 teachers were placed in roles that did not fully
24 aligned with their strengths or preparation, which
25 further impacted instruction quality. Also,

1 leadership transition across campus also disrupted
2 consistency and expectation of coaching and
3 accountability.

4 Another one was inconsistent Tier I instruction.
5 The district determined that Tier I instruction was
6 not consistent or rigorous or aligned to grade level
7 standards. In some classrooms, instruction
8 emphasized remediation during core instructional time
9 rather than delivering grade-level content with
10 appropriate scaffold. This limited students'
11 exposure to the depth and complexity of the standards
12 and contributed to the accumulation of learning gaps
13 over time.

14 Our intervention system not fully also
15 integrated. While intervention structure existed,
16 they were not always precisely aligned to Tier I
17 instruction. Okay. Intervention time was
18 inconsistently protected, and progress monitoring did
19 not always drive timely regrouping or instructional
20 adjustment. As a result, interventions did not
21 always accelerate learning at the pace that was
22 needed.

23 Another one we found was data use lacked urgency
24 and accounted actionability. Although multiple data
25 sources were available, data analysis was not

1 consistently translated into immediate instructional
2 action. While we did have PLCs and data meetings,
3 they were often focused on reviewing results rather
4 than making concrete time-bound instructional
5 decisions. This reduced the district's ability to
6 respond quickly to students' needs.

7 Curriculum implementation without full fidelity.
8 The district, we've identified variations in how
9 high-quality instruction materials were implemented,
10 inconsistent lesson internalization, which is very
11 critical, and uneven curriculum use led to gaps in
12 instructional coherence across classrooms and
13 campuses. Our coaching and feedback systems were
14 underdeveloped. Observation and feedback cycles were
15 not implemented with the consistency or the intensity
16 necessary to drive rapid instructional improvement.
17 Some teachers did not receive frequent national
18 feedback, and -- which tied directly to student
19 outcomes, slowing improvement efforts.

20 And last but not least is fragmented focus
21 across initiatives. We acknowledge that too many
22 initiatives were being implemented simultaneously
23 during -- which diluted the impact. And without
24 sharp -- sharply prioritized focus on Tier I
25 instruction, foundational skills, intervention, staff

1 effort was high, but instructional impact was not
2 maximized.

3 So moving forward, these root causes have guided
4 us as a district-wide reset, which focus on
5 stabilizing leadership, strengthening Tier I
6 instruction, tightening intervention alignment,
7 restructuring PLCs and increasing the intensity of
8 coaching feedback, the cycles that we have right now.
9 These are not temporary measures, but more of a
10 systematic changes designed to produce sustained
11 improvement.

12 And I want to end before I let my principals
13 talk is we fully understand the gravity of our
14 current designation. We also believe that with the
15 corrective actions now in place and with continued
16 accountability, we will move decisively out of the F
17 status and towards the outcomes our students deserve.

18 And up next is Ms. Toni Dickerson. She'll talk
19 about our destruction of focus for the year.

20 MS. DICKERSON: Good morning. Based on the
21 identified root causes that Dr. Tran just shared, we
22 have prioritized our instructional focus on four key
23 levers that we believe will move us quickly into
24 achievement status. We've shifted our focus from
25 lesson internalization using our HQIM to more of a

1 standards internalization focus. This way, teachers
2 can get a deeper understanding of the grade-level
3 standards that they are teaching and not just based
4 on the instructional lesson in front of them.

5 We have reorganized and revamped our ICU team.
6 They now have designated campuses where they're able
7 to provide intensive coaching, feedback and support
8 in an effort to make sure that each teacher is
9 getting the necessary support in the moment. We also
10 have been intentionally aligning our coaching rubrics
11 to make sure that they are TESS aligned so at all
12 times we are hitting the key elements that we want
13 our teachers and leaders to be focused on to become
14 better in their craft. We've also made intentional
15 shifts in our PLC -- in our PLC cycle to make sure
16 that we're including those data meetings quickly and
17 as soon as big assessments are happening. This way
18 we can respond to our student performance data in
19 real time and make the necessary shifts so that they
20 are immediate and not lagging. Our curriculum pacing
21 has been aligned across all of our contents and grade
22 levels. This allows for more consistent support from
23 our instructional team, and it allows an opportunity
24 for teachers to collaborate across campuses. Our
25 CFAs, our common formative assessments, were created

1 at the district level. This allows us to analyze the
2 data, looking at the same data points across campuses
3 that way we can see on a macro level where we need
4 support and also able to drill down into individual
5 campus and our classroom needs; again, to make sure
6 that teachers are not getting a broad level support,
7 but the intensive, intentional support so that the
8 students in front of them are immediately open.

9 Overall, we believe that achievement depends on
10 2 core things. Strong Tier I instruction coupled
11 with targeted data-driven intervention that closes
12 skill gaps and increases proficiency. Our Tier I
13 instructional model is based on the gradual release
14 model. This gives a heavy emphasis on student
15 practice, and it also allows for in-the-moment
16 assessment and feedback. So again, we're not lagging
17 in supporting students. We're able to hit those
18 things immediately so that learning can be maximized.

19 This year, we rolled out what we call the Big
20 Deal Intervention Plan. This is a plan across
21 schools where this is a all hands on deck initiative
22 so that we can ensure that not only are we doing Tier
23 I instruction, we're intervening in the moment, but
24 we're also -- we've also prioritized an additional
25 block of time to ensure that we're doing a couple of

1 things. We can close those skill gaps that our
2 students have come to us with, but at the same time
3 reiterating that targeted Tier I instruction that
4 they are in their classrooms on a daily basis. This
5 intentional separate block protects our Tier I
6 instructional time, but it's also dedicated; it's
7 data-driven; and it gives time for additional those
8 Tier II and tier-three supports to make sure that our
9 students are successful, we are addressing any
10 unfinished learning, and that we can also accelerate
11 student progress and achievement.

12 With that, I'm going to turn it over to our
13 campus principals. They will be able to speak to
14 specific actions at their respective campuses that
15 align to our district initiatives. Ms. Ashley
16 Williams at our Pine Bluff downtown campus is first.

17 MS. WILLIAMS: Good morning. I am Principal
18 Ashley Williams of our Friendship Aspire downtown
19 campus, and I will be presenting our corrective
20 actions in response to identify root causes.

21 Corrective action number one focuses on
22 strengthening Tier II interventions to ensure
23 effective Tier II implementations. Teachers are
24 collecting real time data. I'm doing Tier I
25 instruction to identify scholars who demonstrate

1 skill-based misconceptions. And those scholars are
2 being grouped and provided targeted small-group
3 instruction to address and remediate those
4 misconceptions. The network recently adopted
5 i-Ready, and we have conducted an analysis of each
6 scholar based on their data, based on grade level and
7 by specific skill need. During our daily 60-minute
8 intervention block, all scholars engage in 20 minutes
9 of independent work using their i-Ready MyPath. Based
10 on the data and instruction need, teachers will make
11 -- then assign an additional 20 minutes of targeted
12 already instruction or utilize learning centers to
13 pull scholars for direct intervention. A parent
14 letter was recently distributed to our parents to
15 outline how they could help at home. We have asked
16 parents to encourage scholars to complete 20 minutes
17 of reading and 20 minutes of math during that on
18 their i-Ready for daily skill development.

19 Corrective action number two focuses on staff
20 improvement. We were intentional in hiring
21 experienced third grade teachers to strengthen
22 instructional outcomes at that grade level being that
23 our school letter grade is based solely on 3rd grade.
24 However, there's been some transition with our math
25 teacher resigning while out on maternity leave,

1 resulting in a novice teacher being placed in that
2 role. To mitigate instructional impact and ensure
3 fidelity with instructional practice, our math
4 instructional coach is co-teaching with her and
5 provide ongoing support to build her skill capacity.
6 Recently, our school also received -- was assigned a
7 state literacy coach through CORE Learning. Dr.
8 Hamilton has prioritized 1st and 3rd grade based on
9 data trends but observes all ELA teachers and
10 provides actual standard aligned feedback to improve
11 school wide growth.

12 Our last thing is our instructional strength is
13 not a correctional action, but I would like to
14 highlight our instructional strengths. Tier I
15 instruction is consistently delivered with fidelity
16 through high-quality instructional materials. We
17 have weekly lesson internalizations that are
18 conducted to ensure aligned planning and
19 instructional teams meet weekly to analyze data and
20 make instructional adjustments. We have placed a
21 strong emphasis on building foundational skills in
22 grades K-2 to reduce the learning gaps and support
23 long term academic success. On the next slide we
24 have our recent i-Ready data for K-3. This is our
25 current landscape K-3. As you can see, we have a

1 significant yellow group. That's why we distribute
2 that -- those parent letters to get parents to help
3 at home too so that we can have some skills
4 improvement with i-Ready, and we hope that we our
5 hope is to get all of those yellow scholars over to
6 the green. In our next Slide is our current TFA.
7 Our current landscape for 3rd-grade data. As you can
8 see on the first blue row, it's our interim
9 assessment one and then the second is the state. So
10 in math, we are there just right above the state
11 average; in reading, we are 32 percent; in science,
12 we have to do a little work, but we hope to see some
13 growth using i-Ready and with the focusing on Tier II
14 interventions.

15 Thank you.

16 DR. MIMS: Hi, my name is Dr. Carol
17 Redfield-Mims, and I'm honored to stand before you on
18 behalf of Friendship Academy, Hazel Street and the
19 scholars that we serve, the staff and the families.
20 As Dr. Tran and Ms. Dickerson have clearly
21 articulated, the primary gaps identified at Hazel
22 centered around three identifiable things in their
23 systems: instructional consistency and the effective
24 use of data to drive instructions and intervention;
25 but most importantly, building meaningful

1 relationships with teachers, staff, students and
2 parents alike.

3 Although this is my first year at Friendship,
4 our leadership team did not shy away from the truth
5 of where we were academically because real growth
6 begins with real accountability. From the analysis
7 we identified three major priority errors requiring
8 immediate and intentional attention: systems,
9 instructional practices and protected priorities.

10 The first corrective measure was systems, data
11 systems. We ensured that data is timely, accurate
12 and accessible to teachers and leaders so we can make
13 informed instructional decisions. We also improved
14 our data meetings by strengthening the structure and
15 purpose of our data meetings so that they are focused
16 on action and not just analysis. Once a week we
17 analyze students' work samples, whether it's an exit
18 ticket, the CFA biweekly data or our interim data.
19 And also weekly we do instructional support where we
20 are doing lesson internalizations. The third system
21 that we are improving is the intervention system. We
22 ensure that all interventions are not just random,
23 they are -- or optional, but they're intentional and
24 scheduled and aligned to the students' need based on
25 the most recent data that we've reviewed. The second

1 focus area was centered around instructional
2 practices. The first one that we took a look at
3 strengthening was high-quality instructional
4 materials, ensuring that teachers are not only using
5 the HQIMs, but they're using them with fidelity and
6 purposes. And again, that's a part of our weekly
7 flex planning where they're getting lesson
8 internalization. So they're matching up those
9 lessons with the state standards. Lesson
10 internalization again -- again, that's weekly that we
11 do to support teachers so they can deeply understand
12 the standards and the lesson is designed and it's
13 intended on learning outcomes before the instructions
14 even begin. So they're anticipating students where
15 they may struggle so we can put those interventions
16 in place beforehand. Small-group instructions were
17 also a priority for us. We wanted to strengthen that
18 by using the data to drive those instructions so that
19 they -- students can receive differentiated support,
20 as well as working on targeting those specific gaps
21 and leaning towards students' strengths to move them
22 along in their learning. The third area that we are
23 working on is just protecting the time, protecting
24 the instructional time. We wanted to minimize the
25 disruption in Tier I instructions, as well as protect

1 the time students are engaged in rigorous grade-level
2 learning. Intervention time is protected by ensuring
3 that they're scheduled and treated as essential, not
4 optional. That means every scholar receives that one
5 hour of uninterrupted intervention time daily. Our
6 professional learning communities is a plus and it's
7 a must to having them to protect that time to
8 collaborate for teachers to plan, analyze data and
9 also refine instructional moments together where they
10 can share what's working, what's not working and to
11 also maximize their -- their growth and learning a
12 deeper respect for the standards in HQIM alike. So
13 they are able to provide those Tier I instructions
14 at a rigorous level.

15 Additionally, we are using IXL and Lexia as Tier
16 II and tier three interventions. They're supplement
17 to our HQIM, so they're helping our students close
18 those gaps where we see them. The data driven --
19 they also used as data-driven tools. We use those to
20 run those small-groups instructions so that students'
21 instructions are implemented intentionally based on
22 where they are in their learning.

23 We are also receiving ongoing support, as Ms.
24 Dickerson stated earlier, from the district ICU team.
25 So our teachers are receiving that real-time feedback

1 for observation which is helping tremendously in
2 their growth. Also, we have support from Ms. Simpson
3 in CORE Learning, who has strengthened our K-3
4 learning, where she's stepping in and showing and
5 delivering our lessons, where teachers can see how
6 the science of reading is incorporated through all
7 core subjects.

8 Turn to the next slide for me.

9 Here is our current landscape as we know that we
10 -- we're going to have some significant gaps with our
11 second grade just looking at their summative from
12 last year coming into 3rd. As you can see, 3rd grade
13 we still have some lag on reading, science and
14 mathematics, but again we have that CORE support that
15 IXL the Lexia and we have all hands on deck. with the
16 intervention time that's scheduled, and we're hoping
17 to close those gaps. There are some -- some slight
18 growth areas in all three subjects in 4th and 5th,
19 and we're looking to continue that just by keeping
20 the consistency of the programs that we're
21 strengthening in; and following through and meeting
22 with our team leads every four weeks to see where we
23 can strengthen, where we can change to make it more
24 optional and optimal for our students' growth. So
25 we're keeping a structured review on learning here by

1 looking at our CFAs and monitoring our interim data.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. KENDRICK: Good morning. My name is William
4 Kendrick, and I'm honored to represent Friendship
5 Aspire Academy North Little Rock. Thank you for the
6 opportunity to share our work and our hard
7 commitment.

8 Instructional improvements, strengthening
9 instructional systems. Our staff participates in
10 weekly PLCs alongside with a state appointed
11 representative, which is our state leadership coach,
12 Ms. Carrie Donnell. The PLCs focus on instructional
13 alignment to the state standards, analysis of student
14 data and planning responsive instruction to ensure
15 consistency and effectiveness across the classrooms.
16 Structured daily interventions, we have implemented a
17 twice-daily intervention model designed to provide
18 targeted academic support. ELA interventions occur
19 in the morning, prioritizing foundational literacy
20 skills while math interventions take place in the
21 afternoon, allowing for timely reinforcement and
22 skill development based on the student's needs.

23 Reduce class size, target instruction. Third
24 grade enrollment has decreased. We were reduced from
25 17 scholars to 14 scholars allowing teachers to

1 deliver more intentional, individualized instruction.
2 The smaller setting supports increased student,
3 teacher-student interaction and more precise academic
4 feedback.

5 You can go to the next slide, Dr. Tran.

6 Right here, this is my interim data from 2024 to
7 2025, compared to '25 to '26 school year. As you can
8 see, in '24 ELA -- 24-25 school year in ELA, we have
9 76 percent scored in level one, 24 percent scored in
10 a level two. Whereas of 25-26 school year, we have
11 50 percent scored in level one, 29 percent scored in
12 level two, and 21 percent scored in a level three.
13 In math, we had 38 percent -- in 24-25 school, you
14 had 38 percent scored in level one, 63 percent scored
15 in level two. In 25-26 school year, we had 35.7
16 scored in level one, 35.7 scored in level two, and
17 28.6 scored in level three. Per the data scores in
18 math and ELA, they are already a lot better. We now
19 have scholars scoring in level three and a lower
20 percent scoring in the level one.

21 MR. LAINE: Good morning, Panel. My name is
22 Johnny Laine. I'm the principal of our Little Rock
23 campus.

24 Upon the closing of our 24-25 school year, we
25 wanted to shift our focus to allow our campus to have

1 greater success, starting with our personnel,
2 supporting our personnel with development and
3 aligning our instructional focus to allow our team to
4 yield greater success. Starting with our personnel,
5 we realigned our personnel to have more experience in
6 our lower performing and high-needs grades and
7 subjects. We appointed lead teachers to support our
8 novice teachers in addition to our state support for
9 novice teachers. And then we restructured our
10 leadership team to allow for greater equitable
11 support throughout our entire campus. Going into the
12 school year, we added professional development days
13 to support teachers in that development, especially
14 our novice teachers. We implemented flex planning
15 days to support collaboration throughout our campuses
16 and throughout our -- and throughout our school. We
17 also initiated and kind of restructured our data
18 analysis and data response meetings to have us -- to
19 support us in our data-driven instructional
20 processes. Going into our instructional focus, we
21 came into the school year with a balanced focus on
22 Tier I instruction and intervention, similar to what
23 Ms. Dickerson and my counterparts have discussed
24 earlier in our presentation. Our intervention
25 implemented is not only just for our level-one and

1 level-two scholars, but for all of our scholars to
2 receive intervention in math, reading and science.
3 We completed a curriculum assessment for standards
4 coverage throughout all of our curriculums to ensure
5 that we are maximizing our instruction by having the
6 necessary curriculums for all of our specific content
7 areas. Last school year with our science data, we
8 implemented a new science curriculum that truthfully
9 our teachers didn't have a full grasp on. This year
10 we provided some more support with the professional
11 development and going into our second year, Amplify,
12 which is the curriculum that we use for our science,
13 is -- has yielded us greater results within our
14 science. And going into the school year, we had --
15 as you know, we had NWEA and a number of different
16 platforms that we use for testing and data tracking
17 and progress monitoring. We removed a lot of those
18 different platforms that we use and regulate our
19 common -- our district common formative assessment
20 schedule to ensure that our common formative
21 assessments are aligned to ATLAS and allowing us to
22 track our progress.

23 Next slide, Dr. Tran.

24 Now, I spoke earlier about professional
25 development, observations and feedback and an

1 intentional focus on supporting teachers. Ms.
2 Dickerson also spoke about different observation
3 cycles conducted with our instructional support team
4 at the district level and our campus level. We have
5 noticed since our -- since October, and we've seen
6 through our intentional efforts, that our
7 instructional focus or -- has seen a direct positive
8 impact on teacher instructional performance,
9 especially in the specific areas that we focus on,
10 including structures for learning, aligning content,
11 direct instruction, student practice and assessment
12 and differentiation. And these are the same key
13 levers that is used on our -- that is used for our
14 state literacy coach as well. And we -- from that,
15 we've seen a direct impact on our student performance
16 with our common formative assessment. We've seen a
17 gradual increase with every common and formative
18 assessment. And then, one of the biggest things that
19 we've seen that -- right now with our interim one
20 data, we have outscored our 24-25 interim one data
21 for -- across the board in all subjects and grade
22 levels. With the 25-26 interim data, we are either
23 -- for reading, we are right at the state average or
24 above for 3rd, 4th and 5th grade, and -- I mean for
25 math for 3rd, 4th and 5th grade. And in 3rd grade,

1 we are right at the state average for interim one
2 assessment. In 4th and 5th grade, we are aiming and
3 still working to improve that for reading.

4 So with that being said, that concludes our
5 presentation and I'm going to yield the floor back to
6 Dr. Tran and our leadership team to yield any
7 questions from the board.

8 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you for
9 your presentation.

10 And at this time it looks like we will just go
11 straight into questions from our Panel Members. So I
12 will start off with Dr. Beshears-Duncan.

13 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you.

14 And thank you for your presentation and I also
15 really appreciated getting to hear from each of the
16 schools and what you've been in action on over the
17 past school year. So I have a question that's a bit
18 broad and I'm curious, several of the schools
19 mentioned in either the root cause analysis or in
20 their presentation implementing coaching and a
21 coaching model to support teachers in the classroom.
22 I'm curious what feedback you're hearing from
23 teachers regarding the coaching that you've provided
24 so far this school year and how that model is
25 supporting them and their instruction.

1 DR. TRAN: Thanks for that question. I'll go
2 ahead and let the principals talk because each
3 individual school is different.

4 So Dr. Mims, you want to start?

5 DR. MIMS: I will.

6 As I mentioned earlier, relationships was one of
7 my key levers in the school. Building those
8 relationships allow for feedback, authentic feedback
9 to take place. And because of that, our teachers are
10 grasping the feedback, and they're working with it,
11 and they're working through it. They're asking
12 questions. They're modeling. They're asking for
13 their support. So we've seen extensive amount of
14 growth, but appreciation in the coaching model at our
15 school. We're following the test rubric as Ms.
16 Dickerson has mentioned, and we're looking at those,
17 again, at those levels that are actually moving them
18 towards so that that solid Tier I instructions that
19 we're looking for. And so again, the relationship
20 has been a key part in moving the coaching and
21 feedback cycle along. It's actually a beautiful
22 thing to see when teachers take place in it. It's
23 building the capacity of the teachers
24 instructionally, but also agency. So it's giving
25 them a part in it as well.

1 DR. TRAN: All right. This is Tran,
2 superintendent. I also want to just mention that I
3 made it as a non-negotiable for our coaching feedback
4 cycle. So every two weeks, principals have to go
5 into every single classrooms to go ahead and provide
6 coaching feedback, and that's a non-negotiable. At
7 the same time, our ICU team is also assisting with
8 that. As I mentioned, as one of the causes, we did
9 start that initiative last year, but it wasn't done
10 with fidelity; right? It was haphazard every now and
11 then. But again, like I said, we saw that and made
12 it as a non-negotiable where principals have to go
13 into each and every single classroom within a
14 two-week period to -- to do a coaching feedback with
15 our teachers. What I do is --

16 Mr. Laine -- do you want to talk a little bit
17 before we go to the next question about how your
18 teachers are dealing with the coaching feedback?

19 MR. LAINE: Yes, sir. Thank you, Dr. Tran.

20 Again, I'm principal -- Johnny Laine, principal
21 at our Friendship Aspire Little Rock campus.

22 The one thing I'll say is that if you ever been
23 to our campus, our campus is a neighborhood school
24 and a lot of our teachers who are employed with our
25 school have been with our school since the very

1 beginning. They are very well aware of our status,
2 and they have really committed themselves to the work
3 in just improving our situation. And that commitment
4 alone has allowed for our teachers to really, I don't
5 want to say necessarily enjoy, but they seek and
6 yearn for the feedback that's going to make them
7 better to reach the students that they work with
8 every day. And that has been something that has been
9 refreshing. As we do our instructional observation
10 cycles and coaching and feedback, our teachers
11 truthfully take that feedback and implement it. And
12 I think that's why we're seeing the progress that we
13 are seeing. And, you know, not to go into too many
14 details, but, you know, we've had PLC meetings where
15 teachers are truly like, you know, come and see me
16 more, come and see me more. Of course -- and we do
17 our best to support them and go into our classrooms
18 as much as possible. But it's really been a process
19 that has been, I guess, I don't want to say
20 necessarily enjoyable, but it has really allowed for
21 us to really grow as a campus.

22 Dr. Crystal, did you want to hear from the other
23 campuses as well?

24 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes, thank you.

25 DR. TRAN: So, Mr. Kendrick.

1 MR. KENDRICK: Mr. Kendrick, I'm a part of the
2 -- I'm a principal of North Little Rock School.

3 So at my campus, a lot of the teachers are
4 returning teachers and believe it or not, the ICU
5 team, so a lot of those -- some of those members are
6 actually, used to be a part of the North Little Rock
7 campus, which already has that. So they already have
8 that relationship established. So they are -- they -
9 - so they had a relationship established and so the
10 teachers are actually, like, very familiar with the
11 ICU team and like they're there every day. The ICU
12 team is actually being housed on my campus. So they
13 are there a lot and the teachers are actually, like,
14 wanting the feedback that they are receiving from the
15 ICU team.

16 DR. TRAN: Ms. Williams.

17 MS. WILLIAMS: I'm Principal Ashley Williams
18 with our downtown campus.

19 Teachers like Mr. Kendrick, a lot of my teachers
20 -- all of my staff is returning. I only have new
21 staff on my third grade, so they welcome the coaching
22 and feedback because we're all about getting better
23 downtown.

24 MS. DICKERSON: And I will add, we just
25 completed a regional listening tour at our schools

1 with our CEO, with several members of our district
2 office. We didn't sense a sense of fear when you
3 walked into teachers' classrooms. You can tell that
4 this is a collaborative environment. Teachers are
5 used to people in and out of their classrooms all the
6 time, and they do welcome the feedback. They
7 actually yearn for the feedback, whether positive or
8 negative, because they're eager to grow and get
9 better.

10 My apologies, Toni Dickerson, director of
11 academics.

12 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you. Did anyone
13 else want to jump in? I do have a follow-up
14 question. Okay. Thank you.

15 So you all have -- you've spoke to some of the
16 necessary components of effective coaching models.
17 You spoke to relationships and transparencies and
18 ensuring that there is structure and consistency.
19 I'm wondering what are some ways that you're building
20 teachers abilities and skills to self-reflect and
21 improve themselves?

22 DR. TRAN: So we have PD sessions that we
23 actually allow teachers to look at what they're good
24 at, what they're not. But at the same time, during
25 our PLCs that we have with our team, that's where the

1 self-reflecting comes in as well because they look at
2 the data, they look at, okay, what's happening here?
3 Am I doing it well? If not doing well with this
4 standard, what do I need to do to go back; right?
5 That we teach. So we do have that, again, in the
6 past, the PLCs; and again, I'm shameful to say this
7 is more of a staff meeting, but again, we saw that
8 and we made that change. So at this moment in time,
9 PLC is more reflective, data-driven, intentional with
10 how we actually drive instruction. But that's where
11 we spend a lot of our times, where teachers
12 self-reflect into, okay, is it working? If it's not
13 working, what do we need to do next? The ICU team
14 comes in with the PLCs, Toni, our director of
15 academics, and principals there in there to listen as
16 well and provide guidance. The last PLC session I
17 went in, we had a teacher who's doing so well
18 teaching science, that she was reflecting how she was
19 doing with the other teachers within that session.
20 And so it was a very collaborative session where,
21 okay, we've got someone who's great. Providing, you
22 know, support to those that say, hey, I need that
23 little bit more support. Because again, we want them
24 to feel that they have a voice; right? If they don't
25 have a voice, it's just like how we want our students

1 to have a voice. We want our teachers to have a
2 voice to ensure that, hey, we can come together and
3 fix what needs to be fixed and move on and ensure
4 that our kids are learning.

5 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you all.

6 No further questions at this time.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

8 Dr. Moore.

9 DR. MOORE: Thank you for your presentation. I
10 appreciate you providing updates. I do struggle
11 with, and I just want to know your thoughts on, I can
12 potentially understand some challenges that -- in the
13 areas where the local school districts also have Fs,
14 but I'm really struggling to understand why we're
15 seeing such poor performance when you're pulling from
16 some schools that had higher grades in the regular
17 school system. Because typically the charters, we
18 have a high expectation to see an improvement over
19 what's being offered if the charter wasn't there.
20 Can you speak to that in the North Little Rock area?
21 Were there other elementary schools that were
22 performing at a much higher rate?

23 DR. TRAN: Over at the North Little Rock campus,
24 that was the former Lighthouse school. And so that
25 was a school that was found that we took over, that

1 was two years ago. And so again, it's a K-3, it's
2 not -- we actually condensed it from K-5 to K-3. So
3 we have -- and our school serves a lot of -- and I
4 know you hear this a lot from a lot of schools, but
5 our population is social -- not really impacted a
6 lot. We have kids coming to school with a lot of,
7 how should we say, a lot of mental health issues that
8 we try to work with, and that's not an excuse. But
9 at the end of the day, we have different populations
10 that we serve from. And again, that was taken from a
11 school that was failing, and we're trying to make
12 better. Granted it's -- that school has always been
13 an F, and we're trying to move it out of an effort.
14 But that's just the history of the North Little Rock
15 campus.

16 DR. MOORE: Thank you for that clarification.
17 And once again, thank you for identifying root causes
18 and interventions that should -- should remedy this.
19 At the same time, one reason that we were approved
20 Friendship to begin with is because of the history
21 and charters. So I'm not sure why such
22 research-based strategies weren't applied more
23 intentionally in the first place, but I'm hopeful
24 that this will make a difference moving forward.

25 Thank you.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

2 Okay. Ms. Stewart.

3 MS. STEWART: Yes.

4 Good morning or afternoon. Sorry. Everybody,
5 thanks for your presentation. I have to echo kind of
6 what Dr. Moore just mentioned that that is -- that's
7 kind of what's left me scratching my head a little
8 bit that, you know, we're at this spot where, you
9 know, a lot of research-based best practices, you
10 know, should have already been in place. So that
11 said, I did want to get into a few -- probably might
12 be a little bit in the weeds, but based off of some
13 of the presentations, I heard -- and I appreciated
14 the fact that that, I believe, it was downtown Pine
15 Bluff location. Ms. Williams, you mentioned the
16 parent involvement piece, and, you know, helping
17 parents with especially that reading at home and the
18 importance of that. What are some of the things,
19 across the board at every campus, are you all doing
20 to help parents understand that and -- and support
21 them from the perspective of providing opportunities
22 to, you know, maybe go through what it looks like to,
23 you know, read with your kiddos at home? What might
24 be, you know, best practices in that realm as well
25 from a parent involvement engagement piece? Because,

1 you know, as you stated, we all know that that is
2 that is a critical part, especially with our early
3 learners and literacy.

4 DR. TRAN: Thank you for that question. I'll
5 let the campus speak because they have different
6 sessions that they have with their parents. Parent
7 engagement nights that they have so they can speak to
8 that more and provide you more information on that.

9 And I'll start with our Dr. Mims. She was one
10 talking first.

11 DR. MIMS: This is Dr. Mims. I'm the principal
12 at Friendship Hazel in Pine Bluff.

13 One of the ways that we reach out to parents in
14 their support is to ensure that we're doing the
15 monthly parent night meetings where we invite the
16 parents in and we talk about skills that they can
17 work with students at home, especially incorporating
18 the science of reading into everything that they do.
19 We also do videos via classroom dojos on upcoming
20 standards and lessons so the parents can actually see
21 the teacher work through the -- the current lesson at
22 hand, so they can have support that way. We have
23 weekly newsletters that go out, and every time those
24 newsletters go out, there's something in there where
25 it provides them a link of a resource that they can

1 use to help support with reading through all
2 subjects. And that's the goal, just to keep them
3 asking and being all in. So we do have a high
4 participation of parents at our school that are
5 willing to support us, as well as using the IXL and
6 the Lexia at home. We do have those weekly reports
7 that come in from students where they collect their
8 minutes of how many minutes they've been on. And so
9 just having that open relationship with parents, it's
10 -- pretty much have been at the of our focus as well.

11 DR. TRAN: Mr. Kendrick.

12 MR. KENDRICK: Mr. Kendrick, North Little Rock
13 campus.

14 Like I say, we are a smaller campus, but we do
15 have kind of the same thing. I think district wide
16 that -- we do have the monthly parent nights where
17 the parents are allowed to come in and the teachers
18 are -- are there so they are allowed to have that
19 one-on-one time with the teachers. They are allowed
20 to discuss where they students are, to discuss what's
21 going on in the school, what's going on in the
22 classrooms and all the things of that nature.

23 DR. TRAN: Ms. Williams.

24 MS. WILLIAMS: I'm Principal Williams for
25 downtown.

1 As I stated, I did send out a recent parent
2 letter. Our school also has a monthly parent night
3 where we tell parents what we're working on at school
4 and show them how they can help at home using things
5 around their home in case they don't have the
6 manipulatives and those things. I also do a Sunday
7 dojo message to parents on how they can help at home.
8 I've sent a message home every day since we've been
9 out for the inclement weather on how they can help.
10 And I had teachers to upload things in IXL and
11 i-Ready for scholars to work on. We also sent home
12 an inclement weather packet. So just keeping those
13 parents constantly engaged and involved in what we're
14 doing and how they can help at home.

15 MR. LAINE: Johnny Laine, principal, Friendship,
16 Aspire Little Rock.

17 And just to, you know, echo my counterparts, of
18 course, with the monthly parent nights and different
19 events that we hold for parents, I just kind of want
20 to add some like specific things like Ms. Williams
21 said. Even like with this week, I've had teachers
22 who voluntarily got on Zoom and tutored students
23 throughout -- throughout the inclement weather. You
24 know, going -- and while parents are online as well.
25 We have specific parent nights for specific grade

1 levels where our teachers of those specific content
2 levels and grade levels go in and explain -- in our
3 most recent meeting our parents explain -- our
4 teachers explained the science of reading and went
5 through phonics and decoding and encoding and oral
6 reading fluency and how they can help them with those
7 specific things at home. We identified the specific
8 gaps with those parents and walked them through their
9 ATLAS results as well as any diagnostics we had so
10 that -- and gave them different examples of things
11 that they could be doing at home with them, including
12 like informational text or working with vocabulary or
13 morphology. We walked all of our parents through how
14 to support students at home with math and literacy
15 with those -- with -- with our scholars as well.

16 DR. TRAN: And also -- this is Tran speaking.
17 Also just to add, you know, this whole week that --
18 this snow week we actually planned in advance of
19 getting a packet home to our kids knowing that we
20 might be out for a while and we didn't want to lose
21 the -- the time. I know, hey, you're going to have
22 fun days outside with the snow and all that. But we
23 also want to make sure, especially in the position
24 that we're in at this moment in time, to ensure that
25 we have those -- those work gets sent home because

1 every single minute counts, and that's what we're
2 trying to do. And I hear both Dr. Tina Moore and
3 you, Ms. Edie Stewart, talking about why we're here.
4 And again, yes, we use a lot of research, you know,
5 that is out there, but at the same time, human
6 capacity as well. Some -- it -- sometimes it just
7 doesn't work. And we've seen that and we've made the
8 necessary changes in that regards. But at the same
9 time, we've also partnered with many different great
10 organizations such as APSRC, with the state, you
11 know, just to get people to come in and see what we
12 do because we want to remain transparent. Okay. We
13 want to -- we want people to come in and say, hey,
14 you're doing great here, great. But however, you're
15 doing it bad here. Okay. This is what you need to
16 fix because we know where we at. We know we need to
17 get better and we -- we welcome all the help that we
18 -- we can get. That being said, we want to make sure
19 that the help we're getting also targeted because you
20 can have so many cooks in the kitchen; right? And
21 then, the recipe is going to be destroyed; right? So
22 we've -- we've met with different stakeholders to
23 ensure that, hey, this is what we want to ensure in
24 the classroom is going to happen. This is what we
25 want to ensure is going to happen in the school. And

1 we need to work together. Because again, like at the
2 end of the day, you know, you're hearing people from
3 CORE, you've got people from APSRC, we've got
4 literacy specialists, we've got all these people
5 coming in. But we want to make sure that it's
6 targeted support and targeted feedback to ensure that
7 our teachers get what they need in order to move
8 forward. And so I just want to mention that.

9 MS. STEWART: No, I appreciate that. And thank
10 you for bringing that up as well. And thank you all
11 for talking a little bit more in depth about your
12 parent engagement because I appreciate all that
13 you're doing in that area because we all do know that
14 it is extremely important. And I would just
15 encourage you to continue down that path and, you
16 know, teach parents as you're teaching kids. I just,
17 you know, based on my own experience as a parent, my
18 kids learned how to do math in a different way than I
19 did. So it was really difficult for me to help them.
20 And having teachers in their schools that helped
21 parents understand how to do that really made a big
22 difference in how we were able to help our own
23 kiddos. So I appreciate the emphasis too on science
24 of reading. So I wanted to acknowledge that as well.

25 Dr. Tran, you mentioned the support piece. I'm

1 glad you did because that was actually something I
2 had written down from the perspective of -- can you
3 help walk us through how you are using some of these
4 supports like APSRC? The literacy coach, obviously,
5 that -- that has been discussed, but when you, you
6 know, thinking about those broader supports, how are
7 you engaging with APSRC from the perspective of some
8 of the different areas of emphasis that you all have
9 in front of you?

10 DR. TRAN: So we actually sit down with -- with
11 our -- I'll call them partners. We sit down with our
12 partners and say, okay, these are the things that we
13 are lacking; right? They come in and they see it and
14 they come back and say, okay, that's great. Yes, you
15 are lacking. This is what we want to do. But it's
16 more of a partnership because at the end of the day,
17 they need to understand what is lacking in our
18 schools; right? What is lacking in our teachers,
19 what is lacking in instruction, and then sit down
20 with us to provide that targeted support. Because
21 you can come in -- like a whole bunch of people come
22 in and say, I'm going to coach teachers; right? And
23 we had this happen in past where we had so many
24 different entities coming in and coaching teachers.
25 But what we found was that teachers are so confused,

1 okay? Now who do I listen to? Do I listen to the
2 principal? Do I listen to the state? Do I listen to
3 the ICU team? Who do I listen to? Because there's
4 so many things that people are mentioning, pointing
5 out; right? But at the same time, what do I do to
6 make sure that my -- the items that getting feedback
7 on, that I can fix? And so that's why we meet with
8 the partners and say, hey, we're in this spot. I
9 want you to come in and see what is it that we're not
10 doing, we're not doing great. And then let's come
11 and create a plan together. And a lot of times, it's
12 with the principals; right? It's with the academic
13 team. Because we want to make sure that the feedback
14 -- that the support that we get, again -- and I say
15 this all the time, and you might be tired of me here
16 saying that, it's targeted. Because if it's not
17 targeted, it could be, like, just throwing something
18 on the wall and see whether or not it sticks. We
19 know the issues, okay? We want to make sure that we
20 target on the issues to fix that, and then moving
21 forward, we can get out of that. And so a lot of the
22 partnerships is about, you know, going and see it,
23 having the discussion, and finding the point where we
24 both agree on, okay, this is what we need to do. And
25 again, we use rubrics from the state, the TESS

1 rubrics. We also got our own -- not our own, but we
2 used the getting better faster teaching method rubric
3 as well where you go in and you see how teachers are
4 doing and provide free feedbacks on what is it that
5 they can do better. And so just incorporating those
6 all those things together, hopefully will get us out
7 of where we are at this moment in time.

8 MS. STEWART: And so I appreciate that. With
9 thinking through your novice teachers versus your
10 veteran teachers, I noticed several of you all talked
11 about you've got returning teachers, which is
12 fantastic. How are you separating that out from a
13 support mechanism? Because we know our novice
14 teachers in any circumstance need a lot more support
15 period, but especially in this circumstance and when
16 you're trying to move the ball pretty quickly down
17 the field. So what does that look like?

18 DR. TRAN: I'll start off and then I'll let Ms.
19 Toni talk about as well. But I want to start off by
20 saying. Every single year before the start of the
21 school year, we have a boot camp, or actually we call
22 it a university, teacher university at this moment in
23 time. Our teacher university over the last few years
24 have become more targeted in providing teachers with
25 professional development on what is it that they

1 need. We start the teacher university with a one
2 week with new teachers, and then the other -- and
3 then the next two weeks, our return teachers come
4 back. So we want to make sure that the new teachers
5 that we have, we provide them with everything that
6 they need to start. And then during the -- as they
7 join with the colleagues, we have target profession
8 development on our curriculum on teaching, on the
9 science of reading, on lesson internalization. And
10 that's what one of the things that we found was so
11 critical was the lesson internalization,
12 understanding what is what is -- what is that lesson
13 about; right? You can go in and you just teach, but
14 if you don't understand what that lesson is -- and
15 that's what we found. Some just didn't quite get it.
16 And so having that reset in making sure that our
17 teachers understand what the lesson -- what the
18 output is, actually helped us change a little bit.
19 And that's why you see some of the changes in the
20 growth at this moment in time because we found that
21 that was one of the things that we were lacking. But
22 yeah -- and so again, like I said, we have that
23 two-week boot -- the three-week, one week for new and
24 then two weeks for the returning teachers for a total
25 of three where we provide a lot of support. On top

1 of that, the ICU team as well provides that support.
2 And now I'll turn it over to Ms. Toni Dickerson so
3 that she can talk about the ICU team and how they're
4 supporting new teachers as well.

5 MS. DICKERSON: Toni Dickerson, director of
6 academics.

7 In conjunction to what Dr. Tran said is, we did
8 separate our teacher university. Our new teachers
9 got specific pedagogy as well as content support.
10 And then we brought them into the -- with the broader
11 team with our returning teachers. But specifically
12 on a more consistent basis, what we've done on the
13 academic team is create a tiered system and we've
14 placed teachers within those tiers. We also grab
15 feedback from leaders on how teachers are performing
16 because they are with those teachers on a daily
17 basis. Two things, principals are able to complete a
18 request form and say, hey, You know, Ms. Dickerson is
19 really struggling on this thing from my observations.
20 Can you guys come in and support her with this? So
21 very targeted. The second thing is that we then work
22 with teachers to offer a -- kind of a scale system.
23 The ICU team will work with teachers on co-planning.
24 They will come in and co-teach and model for a
25 teacher. They will give feedback and then complete

1 -- go through that cycle with them as often as
2 needed. We also made an intentional effort to
3 utilize and maximize our lead teachers who have shown
4 us that they are -- they do have the components of
5 being great teachers. We put them in front of the
6 new teachers because we believe you learning from our
7 peers is sometimes more powerful than someone
8 standing up that may not have been in the classroom
9 for a couple of years now. So making an intentional
10 effort to use our teachers who are on the -- in the
11 frontline every day to support their peers has also
12 proved to be super powerful. And we look forward to
13 continuing that as we build out what our PDs look
14 like going forward.

15 DR. TRAN: And I just want to echo what Ms. --
16 Tran speaking -- what Ms. Dickerson was saying. In
17 the last PD, before we returned from, sorry, after we
18 returned from the winter break, we had our teachers
19 actually present during the PDs. And that -- what we
20 heard from other teachers was they loved it; they
21 liked it; they learned more because they were getting
22 the professional development from their peers. So
23 they understood -- so the peers giving that
24 professional development, they understood what is it
25 that is needed. And so I just want to echo that out

1 as we -- as we look forward to the next year, how we
2 develop our teacher university in making it more peer
3 orientated so that that way it's -- they get it more.
4 It's not, like, from people up above where they've
5 never been there, you know, they don't understand.
6 This is your teacher next door, that has been
7 teaching with you, that is coming to you with these
8 strategies to ensure that you get better in your
9 classroom and they -- and our teachers have been very
10 supportive of that.

11 MS. STEWART: So when you're thinking about
12 that, how are you triaging what that PD is going to
13 look like or what, you know, what the focus is going
14 to be? Because I feel like right now, y'all probably
15 are, hopefully, already planning for that next PD.

16 DR. TRAN: Correct. And so we -- we look at the
17 -- we get the teachers' feedback because we want to
18 ensure that what we are providing is what is wanted;
19 right? And I'll start by saying this, in years past,
20 our teacher university was there; right? But what we
21 found from a lot of feedback, a lot of surveys, that
22 what we were presenting wasn't really what was
23 needed. And so we changed that to what our teachers
24 wanted. And so again, Ms. Dickerson just talked
25 about how we just went around different schools in

1 looking internally how we were doing. And so we're
2 taking that information as a team and then working
3 with our leaders and working with central office and
4 working with everybody and saying, okay, this is what
5 we saw during our visits; right? This is what the
6 principals felt as well. Now, how do we together --
7 come together and say, this is what we need to do for
8 the next session? So to your point, Ms. Stewart,
9 we're actually here at this moment in time planning
10 for our summer boot camp that is coming up in August
11 as well. And again, we want to make sure that
12 everything that we're presenting and everything that
13 we provide. into our teachers are what they wanted.
14 Okay. So it's not this -- there isn't any more
15 fluff. It's more targeted to what is it they want,
16 but the same time is target to what is lacking in
17 classroom when we do these visits when we see them
18 so.

19 MS. STEWART: Okay. That will -- I think that's
20 what you hit on. For me, that's what -- that's what
21 I needed to hear. It needs to be what kind of where
22 your -- your indicators are showing red, so to speak,
23 and, you know, I appreciate that you're using some of
24 those observations as well because it -- that is
25 going to be really impactful in moving the needle on

1 some of these things. And if it is more kind of like
2 what you just said, fluff, or, I mean, I'd have to
3 say even what maybe teachers want, it may not be what
4 is actually needed for that PD piece.

5 I have taken a lot of time and I -- Madam
6 Chairman, I have one more question. Is that okay?

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: You are perfectly fine,
8 asks as many --

9 MS. STEWART: Okay. Okay. I apologize. But I
10 --

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: You're good.

12 MS. STEWART: I heard several times y'all are
13 using i-Ready, IXL, Lexia. Can you kind of walk me
14 through how that is being used? And is that --
15 because those are all online platforms; correct?

16 DR. TRAN: Yes.

17 MS. STEART: How that's being used from the
18 standpoint of kids in the classroom? And then I
19 think I heard it referenced that it's also being used
20 at home as well. So, you know, how are you using
21 that to kind of drive performance?

22 DR. TRAN: So I'll -- Ms. Ashley Williams,
23 she'll talk about more -- because she's using i-
24 Ready. i-Ready is getting implemented in our other
25 campuses. Ms. Williams was the first one as a --

1 what you call -- we call it the trial, and so she can
2 provide you more information on what she does with
3 that.

4 MS. WILLIAMS: Ashley Williams, principal for
5 downtown.

6 So with i-Ready, teachers are using it for
7 intervention the first 20 minutes. So after
8 completing the diagnostic, each scholar was placed on
9 their own path of deficit skills that they had. So
10 right now we're trying to bridge that gap with -- and
11 close it with those deficit skills by using i-Ready
12 for 20 minutes. For the first -- we have
13 intervention for one hour. So the first 20 minutes
14 is i-Ready because a lesson takes 20 minutes. After
15 that first 20 minutes, if the teacher feels that the
16 scholar, based on data and instructional needs, that
17 they need more time, she can assign more time, or
18 she'll pull them for instructional deficits for
19 direct intervention with her at the table. It's also
20 being used at home. I think the more time they get,
21 the more skills they'll complete at home, and then
22 it'll help close some of those skill gaps. Lexia,
23 i-Ready, IXL, I'm sorry. IXL, and there's a
24 component on there that we can assign lessons for
25 application that practice after instruction, go ahead

1 and assign an activity to work on that same skill.
2 So it correlates with the curriculum that we're
3 using. There's a Eureka component in IXL, and
4 teachers can go in and assign assignments based on
5 the instruction that they just delivered.

6 MS. STEWART: And then what about the Lexia
7 piece? How are y'all using that?

8 MS. WILLIAMS: So Lexia is kind of the same as I
9 i-Ready. Scholars took a diagnostic on Lexia, and
10 they were placed on a path, their own path. And so
11 just going and working on those ELA skills from what
12 the diagnostic said that you needed.

13 MS. STEWART: And so just for my clarity, are --
14 for each of those individual platforms, are teachers
15 pulling that data on -- per student to then move them
16 forward within the program on the platform? Or, you
17 know, kind of what does that look like?

18 MS. WILLIAMS: So with i-Ready, if they're
19 working on their path, it gradually, you know, moves
20 them up. But teachers can also assign work within
21 the platform. Now Lexia, they cannot. Scholars will
22 just work on the path that Lexia has assigned them
23 based on their score from their diagnostic.

24 MS. STEWART: Uh-huh. Okay. I -- the only
25 reason I was wondering about that because I know --

1 do you all -- are you all using Lexia at all for ESL?

2 MS. WILLIAMS: I think so. Ms. Dickerson --

3 DR. TRAN: Yes. We are.

4 MS. STEWART: Okay.

5 DR. TRAN: Just that -- Ms. Ashley Williams'
6 school doesn't have any ESL kids, so she, you know --
7 I mean, yes, but we do use Lexia for our ESL kids as
8 well.

9 MS. STEWART: Okay. Okay. Okay. I think I'll
10 let my colleagues have an opportunity, but I really I
11 appreciate y'all clarifying all those things for me.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

14 Dr. Bacon.

15 DR. BACON: Thank you.

16 And I've really enjoyed listening to these deep
17 talk provoking questions and answers. So a lot of
18 what needed to be covered, I feel like has really
19 been covered through not only your presentations,
20 which were very helpful, but also the
21 question-and-answer session. You know, as I sit here
22 today trying to think about where you are, and we're
23 talking about last year's status, an F letter grade.
24 To me, it sort of comes back to what's different
25 today? What gives us confidence -- What gives you

1 confidence that you're on the right path to seeing
2 some improvements? I think there's three things that
3 I've heard that really stand out to me, just sort of
4 some observations. I know it was asked earlier sort
5 of about these high-leverage strategies, and did they
6 exist or why not? The one thing I heard, I think,
7 Dr. Tran -- and I think I heard it through some of
8 the principal presentations, fidelity and focus. So
9 it sounds like maybe some of these things might've
10 been in place, but maybe the fidelity wasn't there,
11 or maybe we weren't just as targeted and as focused
12 in the implementation. So I appreciate that those
13 were words that came out through the presentation.
14 The other thing, you know, to me is so much of this
15 comes down to the individual school leadership. And
16 I know at least two of these four schools have
17 first-year principals. So it sounds like perhaps you
18 all had identified some things that were going on
19 last year, even before these letter grades and test
20 scores came out and had already put steps in place to
21 seek high-quality school leaders. And so I
22 appreciate that that is going to be -- I think what
23 makes the biggest difference long term is having
24 high-quality leaders in each of these schools. And
25 then the third thing on the leadership track to me

1 would be, truly reflective leadership is going to
2 require not just analysis and evaluation, but it's
3 going to require action. And so I've heard a lot of
4 things today in the presentations which I really
5 appreciated each principal taking time to give us an
6 in-depth review not just of sort of some of the root
7 causes and some of the reasons but really a very
8 heavy focus on specific actionable steps that have
9 been taken and then an effort to connect those to
10 some interim performance data and other -- other
11 trends so that we can see are we on pace. so really
12 from just an observational perspective I really think
13 those are three things that have up to me so far
14 today. I guess the only real question that -- that
15 probably hasn't been asked that I would be interested
16 in some discussion. You know, I know I think Mr.
17 Kendrick school is K-3. I think it's Ms. Williams
18 school, perhaps K-3. You know, just based on the way
19 that the test the letter grades are calculated,
20 there's such a heavy focus on growth, not just
21 overall growth, lowest quartile growth. With the K-3
22 environment, are we missing out on some opportunities
23 for growth? If you had perhaps K-4 or K-5, so I'd
24 just be curious, Dr. Tran, if you all have thought
25 about that, talked about that, if there any internal

1 sort of strategic discussions about whether that
2 might be beneficial to addressing the just the letter
3 grade perspective?

4 DR. TRAN: Yes, thank you. Dr. Tran speaking.
5 Thank you, Dr. Bacon.

6 Yes. We have thought about that. I know that
7 with downtown and North Little Rock, they're on a
8 different scale. Okay. So they don't get the bottom
9 quartile points, nor do they get the science growth
10 points. So the only thing that they get is based on
11 the ELA growth points, the mathematic growth points
12 and the achievement points. So to your point, we
13 have had that discussion to see, you know, is it
14 hurting us having K-3? Would it be better? We have
15 to see a few things again, just to make that
16 determination. We haven't set in stone saying, hey,
17 we need to move it to, you know, K-5; right? There's
18 a few things that we need to think about. At this
19 moment in time both principals are looking at what is
20 it that they need. And again, you know, I take
21 downtown as an example, their proficiency scores are
22 at state level or above in -- I think in science, I
23 think they're one point above. It's the growth that
24 we got penalized on. And I'm pretty sure you guys
25 have seen that data. Growth could be better, and

1 that's what is driving the new academic
2 accountability model, the growth. So we're looking
3 at that and how we change it, that's why we put
4 different things in place. And you've heard us talk
5 about less internalization. You talked, we just
6 purchased i-Ready. i-Ready gives us an indication of
7 how the students are growing because us trying to get
8 growth from, you know, ATLAS, it's like getting blood
9 from a stone. It's so hard to get growth, you know,
10 growth data from that. And so we're looking at
11 different ways to ensure, you know, are we moving in
12 the right direction? But to -- back to your point,
13 we are thinking about it. We haven't made a decision
14 on that. It just depends upon also space. Because
15 for example, our downtown campus, she -- that school
16 does not have space to go to K-5. Okay. So again,
17 it's based upon a few things, facility and other
18 things that we need to think about. But yes, most
19 definitely we thought about that. We thought about
20 how that could be something that could help us in the
21 accountability scoring. But we haven't made such a
22 decision yet because at this moment in time, we want
23 to make sure that everything that we're doing is
24 targeting in getting us out of this, how should I say
25 it nicely, this hole. So yeah.

1 DR. BACON: Okay. I appreciate that. I just
2 wanted to put that on the table. I do think this --
3 it all comes back to, as you said in the beginning, I
4 believe the words fidelity and focus. So I think
5 staying the course on what you have in place and
6 making sure that those two are pieces that are
7 throughout across all of your school system, not just
8 these schools that are here before us today. So I
9 thank you all for -- for the details. And as I said,
10 I really feel like we've had some great question and
11 answer from the Panel and you guys have provided a
12 lot of feedback.

13 So I don't think I have other issues that I need
14 to bring up right now.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you.
16 Mr. Baldwin.

17 MR. BALDWIN: Yes.

18 Thank you, Dr. Tran and team. I'm not an
19 educator and I can't even begin to ask questions
20 about where you guys are. But I have been involved
21 in a lot of turnarounds, businesses and nonprofit
22 organizations, and there's some similarities, I
23 think. So I'm not going to ask any questions, but
24 I'm going to give you some thoughts that maybe -- I
25 hope are helpful. I think my first thought, and Dr.

1 Tran, you said this, and I totally agree, it's
2 targeted and focus. And the challenge when you get
3 in trouble like this is you can grab -- you can grab
4 for a lot of things and probably each school needs
5 something a little bit different, but I would try to
6 limit what you grab for in three or five -- three to
7 five things. You know, the things that will keep the
8 schools open. You know, I think it's fair to say
9 that you're in a fight for your survival. I wouldn't
10 want to sugarcoat that. You know, if -- if we didn't
11 have the notice of concern, we would be talking about
12 putting you on probation today and then the step
13 after that is revoking the Charter. And I think you
14 should be fully conscious of that progressive-action
15 step that has been initiated today. But I would also
16 say I acknowledge that your grades have been higher.
17 In fact, at almost all your schools, your grades were
18 higher the last recording period. And I know at
19 Hazel Street you were a B last year and now you're an
20 F. So I think that -- you know, I don't know what
21 changed this year, but I think I would acknowledge
22 that you guys have done better in the past. So eyes
23 wide open. Strong strength, good leadership from you
24 all. You know we talk about the new teachers that
25 you have, I would phrase them as inexperienced,

1 maybe. I'd phrase them a little bit different, so
2 you might think about, do you have too many
3 inexperienced teachers? Too many non-certified
4 teachers? I don't know the answer. You don't need
5 to -- to respond to that, but just think about that.
6 Come up with three to five metrics of success trip
7 wires so that you know, you know, if one if one goes
8 from red to yellow, you can celebrate, but if you
9 have one that goes from yellow to red, you can -- you
10 can focus on that. And then, I think I would really
11 encourage you guys -- and I know you said you were
12 working right APSRC and DESE and I don't know that
13 you need anyone else other than that because I think
14 you can't have too many cooks in the kitchen. But
15 when I look at your -- your growth and achievement
16 scores compared to state averages, you are -- you're
17 not even close in a lot of these. I mean, you're
18 far, far away. And so there's -- it's a it's a
19 daunting challenge that you have ahead -- ahead of
20 you. I hope you succeed. I hope that the next time
21 we see you is to explain your success and I pray that
22 that's true, but it's not going to happen without you
23 all hitting this head on. And so that's just my
24 words of thought. I'm not even going to say wisdom.
25 But I think you can make it. I do believe in you,

1 but I don't think it's going to be easy. And I think
2 you may have to really step back and reconsider. And
3 maybe one of those things, Dr. Tran, to reconsider is
4 the size of fellowship. I mean, do you need to be as
5 big as you are, or should you be smaller?

6 So, Madam Chair, that's all I had.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

8 And I will just basically echo many of the
9 comments that have already been stated by the Panel.
10 I was looking at my list of questions that I had
11 prior to your presentation and then as you presented
12 and majority of them have been addressed. Again, you
13 know, it has already been kind of shared, so I'm not
14 going to completely re-plow that field, but, you
15 know, there is a bit of a higher expectation just
16 because we know that you're an established, you know,
17 charter system. And so in comparison to, you know,
18 another organization that this may be their first
19 time out, or they may not have the experience to know
20 how to implement effective instruction for students,
21 that's why the expectation is a bit higher and bit
22 different. And then also looking at the population
23 of students that you're serving, and we realize that,
24 you know, some of what we're seeing may be that
25 you're trying to close gaps for students that maybe

1 had a bit further to go than their peers. But again,
2 that does put a higher level of expectation because
3 when we're serving the neediest, we know we expect
4 more for those achievements to take place.

5 I guess the only thing that I would kind of want
6 to circle back around to and just make sure that I
7 have a clear understanding because you guys did a
8 very good job of listing, you know, what were the
9 root causes and ways that you plan to address those
10 concerns. And you also recognized at the beginning
11 of your presentation that may be part of, you know,
12 your issues that you were trying to do too many
13 things at one time at the beginning, and so you
14 didn't get a chance to do much of that well. And so
15 kind of reflecting slightly back to some comments
16 that were made by Mr. Baldwin. If you think about as
17 you're going this step forward, you know, what are
18 the most primary things that you guys have identified
19 that this is what we've got to do first out to
20 address our concerns? Because part of the concern is
21 that because you've been put on this notice, because
22 this has been brought forward, as anybody in a
23 reactive type of state, you're just going to start
24 saying, okay, these are all the things that we didn't
25 do well. These are things we need to do. And then

1 fear is that you will then get back into trying to do
2 too many things at once. So if you think about what
3 are those like top three key things that just have to
4 take place. That's something I would like for you to
5 be able to kind of share on what you think those
6 things are and have you already started working
7 through those processes? You know, where are you in
8 that timeline of getting those things implemented?

9 DR. TRAN: Sure. Tran speaking.

10 And I'll speak a little bit, and Ms. Toni
11 Dickerson, she can talk about it as well.

12 But when we got our data, we looked at it, and
13 we started to decide what was happening, what wasn't
14 happening. To me, I think the three keys are the
15 lesson internalization, making sure teachers
16 understand what they're teaching. That's -- I've
17 seen that a lot where they just go in and teach, but
18 they don't understand the outcome, okay? So we had a
19 PD, even with our leaders, like, we had a lesson and
20 I made our leaders go through lesson internalization
21 right there and say, what is this lesson supposed to
22 be? What is the standards being covered? What are
23 the outcomes that you want our students to have? So
24 making sure that our leaders understand so that they
25 can make sure that their teachers understand and

1 making sure that our -- so, you know, it's -- it's a
2 flow. And our ICU team has been very critical in
3 helping our teachers understand lesson
4 internalization as well.

5 Another thing that we also found was that our
6 pacing, we were giving CFAs that were not aligned
7 with the pacing. And so as a network, we went back
8 and we redid the pacing to align with the -- the CFAs
9 to ensure that what is being tested is actually truly
10 what they're learning, okay? And we saw that and
11 that's why we're seeing that growth.

12 And then the next thing that to me -- that I
13 found was the observation feedback cycle, okay? We
14 said it, but we never executed it. And that's why
15 it's now a non-negotiable. We have a tracker where
16 we track every two weeks to ensure that our
17 principals are going to the classroom, providing
18 feedback to our teachers; right? And then document
19 that in the tracker to show us that, hey, this is
20 what's happening in classroom. Now, I understand,
21 you know, everything and understand the what we're up
22 against. But I think with our history and everything
23 that we've done so far, we can get there. Because as
24 you can see, especially -- and again, you know, our
25 downtown and our Hazel Street campus historically has

1 never been an F, ever, okay? And so we're working to
2 fix that. That's why we have different leaders now.
3 We're more intentional; we're more targeted in what
4 we're doing, especially with everything that is going
5 on. But that to me is what I've seen that's
6 happening, that it's getting better. But I'll leave
7 it to Ms. Toni Dickerson because she's our academic
8 director and she's also in the schools a lot and she
9 can tell you as well what -- her viewpoint.

10 MR. DICKERSON: Toni Dickerson, Director of
11 Academics.

12 I'll take us back to where we started on our
13 four key levers. So I heard from Dr. Bacon, we heard
14 from Mr. Baldwin, like being focused. And our focus
15 areas are those four key levers. Standards
16 internalization, making sure teachers know what they
17 teach. Observing and coaching so we are seeing that
18 in action and giving that immediate feedback. We
19 want positive when we see it, making sure we're
20 encouraging teachers, but when we don't see it, we're
21 taking action as coaches, as leaders, immediately not
22 waiting a week for a data meeting. It's in the
23 moment feedback, and it's something our teachers have
24 gotten used to. If it's wrong, hey, Ms. Dickerson,
25 can I jump in right quick? So giving that in the

1 moment feedback so that teachers immediately can
2 correct. But also focusing on our PLCs and data
3 meetings, again, those are opportunities for us to
4 address holistically. This is what we see; this is
5 what we need to do. And again, be reflective on
6 data. And then our PACE and CFA assessments. Like
7 Dr. Tran mentioned, we wanted to make sure they were
8 streamlined, that they were easy to implement so that
9 teachers know. We took a lot of the guesswork out
10 for teachers so that it says specifically, today is
11 January 29th. This is your standard. This is what
12 you're teaching. We're given them misconceptions,
13 like really giving, like -- I don't want to say spoon
14 feeding, but to your point, we have a lot of
15 inexperienced teachers. And what we found last year
16 is that we allowed a lot of autonomy and trying to
17 figure out, and that was one of our crutches. So
18 this year we took an intentional effort to say, hey,
19 we're going to take the guesswork out. For those who
20 know, we give them the freedom to adjust and make
21 changes. But for those that don't know, we want to
22 give it to you so that you're not struggling on what
23 I should be doing and focusing on more so how I
24 should be doing it.

25 I think in conclusion, something that stuck out

1 to me throughout this call and Dr. Bacon, you
2 referenced it was the fidelity, focus and action. So
3 to say like, what will we stand on going forth today?
4 Teaching with fidelity, making sure that we stay
5 focused on the outcomes that we have aligned and said
6 this is what we're going to do. And then taking that
7 immediate action, whether that is intervening,
8 whether it's reteach. I have to say all the time,
9 the job of a teacher is to teach, assess and reteach.
10 And that's what we're going to do and continue to do
11 throughout this year to make sure that we reach our
12 intended outcome.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. Thank
14 you for that additional information. And again, as I
15 stated, you know, the expectation is different
16 because of your, you know, your past history of
17 knowledge. But I do feel that that is going to be an
18 asset for you. And as has been stated before,
19 hopefully this is a bit of a wake-up call as you move
20 forward to be able to kind of lean into what you know
21 works well and do that effectively with students that
22 are assigned to your schools.

23 So I don't have any other additional questions
24 or comments. Like I said, I think my fellow Panel
25 Members did a -- have done a wonderful job of asking

1 a lot of intentional questions and you guys were able
2 to answer those effectively. So I will just kind of
3 give Panel Members an opportunity that if there were
4 any other questions or comments that need to be
5 addressed at this time, please feel free to make that
6 known.

7 DR. BACON: Dr. Wright-McMurray, I just -- I
8 noted that Mr. Harris from the Friendship Charter
9 Management Group is on the Zoom with us. I'd be
10 curious to hear from him any supports, things that
11 from that perspective that the national CMO is
12 bringing to assist in this effort?

13 MR. HARRIS: Sure. Thank you. This is Joe
14 Harris.

15 Much like you guys, I too -- this has been --
16 we've been scratching our heads at how we got here.
17 I think at the outcome of this exercise -- or I don't
18 want to say exercise -- but this situation is going
19 to give us a lot of usable information that not just
20 for the school, but as the operator, we'll be able to
21 use to ensure that we're not here again. Here is a
22 cautionary tale of what happens when you make a
23 priority of hiring novice teachers and not following
24 through and providing them with the additional
25 supports. That's part of our mission and has been

1 part of our mission since day one. There have been
2 years we've done exceptional things to support novice
3 teachers. And when you look at our partners like
4 UAPB and Philander Smith and the University of
5 Arkansas, where we are hiring some of their recent
6 graduates, we have learned a lot about what supports
7 they need. But what we also learned is if you take
8 your eye on providing support to them with fidelity
9 in a long-term way, this is kind of what happens.
10 And I don't want to put all of this on the teachers.
11 In fact, teachers are angels, so I won't put much on
12 this. It all falls on us as school leaders and as
13 operators on how we turn this around. The supports
14 that we're going to provide are already what you're
15 seeing, which is to beef up and strengthen the
16 partnerships that we have in the area of coaching.
17 We're also going to be looking at how we can provide
18 side-by-side tutoring through strategic partnerships
19 with the universities and corporate partners. And
20 the operator is really going to be leading that
21 initiative. What we're seeing at a national level is
22 -- I don't want to say these things happen, but they
23 happen when you take your eye off of what's
24 important. And that happens sometimes. We scratched
25 our head because I think everyone here realizes that

1 this was a puzzle because the schools that are
2 presented to you before have been some of the top
3 recognized schools in the county, in their school
4 district and in the state. We understand how this
5 happened and what we're doing now is putting in place
6 strategies to ensure that it doesn't happen again.
7 But this is serious for us. And as the operator and
8 where I sit within the organizational structure, it
9 is very concerning and alarming. And we've taken
10 this very, very serious. Part of our strategy today
11 was to show to this Panel that this isn't just a
12 top-down effort, it really is a all-inclusive, that
13 includes teachers, includes principals, it includes a
14 network-wide strategy; and it is because of that, I
15 have a level of confidence that this is going to be
16 turned around. You know, we're doing what we need to
17 do. We're putting our resources, not just Arkansas
18 resources, but at a national level. We're looking at
19 how we can tap into best practices for other schools
20 across the country's country that have found
21 themselves in this position. And so we're doing the
22 work. It's already underway. We're not waiting.
23 And so, you know, we're going to -- we're already
24 seeing the changes and fruits that are necessary to
25 turn this around. With our weekly intervals, we're

1 accept the motion on the recommendation to accept the
2 signed statement of assurances for the school
3 improvement plans for the following open enrollment
4 charter schools of Friendship Aspire Academies,
5 Arkansas: that is Friendship Aspire Academy Downtown
6 Pine Bluff, Friendship Aspire Academy Hazel Street
7 Pine Bluff, Friendship Aspire Academy Little Rock
8 Elementary, and Friendship Aspire Academy North
9 Little Rock Elementary. And it's my understanding
10 that we can just make the one motion that will cover
11 all those schools.

12 DR. BACON: I'll just say so moved rather than
13 trying to go through all those details.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So --

15 MS. STEWART: I second.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So we have a
17 motion by Dr. Bacon and a second by Ms. Stewart that
18 we accept the plan submitted by Friendship Academy,
19 inclusive of the schools that are listed within that
20 plan. Is there any discussion or comment on the
21 motion?

22 (NO RESPONSE)

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Seeing none, all
24 those in favor, please say aye.

25 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Beshears, did you --

2 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Aye, thank you.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

4 Any opposed? Any abstentions?

5 Okay. All right. Motion passes.

6 Thank you so much for your time. We appreciate

7 you coming in and visiting with us today.

8 So if I think I was catching the tail end of Dr.

9 Smith's comments, kind of mapping out the day, but

10 it's my understanding that we'll take our lunch break

11 now. Is that correct? Dr. Smith, are you still?

12 DR. SMITH: Yes.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sorry.

14 DR. SMITH: Yes, ma'am, I'm still here.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I couldn't find you,

16 sorry.

17 DR. SMITH: You are totally fine. That's up to

18 you all. I certainly I think everybody could use a

19 break, so I think it's up to you to how long that

20 break would be. And then we'll just move forward

21 from there.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So it is -- what

23 is it? It's right at, like, 1:00 and I know that

24 typically this is when stomach start growling a bit.

25 So -- so panelists, are we okay to take our lunch

1 break now or did you want to try to squeeze it into
2 the charter? What are your thoughts?

3 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I'm happy to take a short
4 lunch break at this time.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

6 So will 30 minutes be enough time or do you want
7 to take shorter or --

8 DR. BACON: That really is more than enough to
9 me.

10 MS. STEWART: Yeah, that's more than enough.
11 Yeah.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So let's plan to
13 come back at 1:30. And then we will start with, I
14 believe it's Future School, I think it is. Yeah.
15 Future School at 1:30.

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

18 **I.3.b. FUTURE SCHOOL OF FORT SMITH**

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Welcome back
20 everyone. So we are now going to move on to our next
21 agenda item. I'm just trying to make sure that see.
22 There she is. Our next agenda item. And so that is
23 Future School of Fort Smith which is item 3B and it
24 looks like that Mr. Scott is going to provide an
25 overview of this next item.

1 So you're recognized.

2 MR. SCOTT: Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and the
3 Panel Members. Freddie Scott's office of School
4 choice and parent empowerment, and on behalf of the
5 state leadership and Charter Schools Office, headed
6 up by our Assistant Commissioner, Dr. Smith and
7 alongside my colleagues Cheryl Powell, Lydia
8 MacDonald and Regina Honey, we're delighted to
9 introduce the next item on the agenda, which is a
10 Future School of Fort Smith, and they'll be appearing
11 to present their rule. Calls analysis for their
12 letter grade they received and their school
13 improvement plan and associated signed Statement of
14 Assurance before you this day, representing future
15 School of Fort Smith is Boyd Logan, the director
16 Susan Pruitt, board member. Courtney Mann, Vice
17 Principal and Allison Montiel, internship director.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Scott,
19 for that introduction and brief overview.

20 So before we start with the presentation, if I
21 could have everyone that is associated with or plans
22 to speak on behalf of future School of Fort Smith
23 please stand and raise your right hand and please
24 turn your camera on and unmute yourself so we can
25 hear your response. Okay. Okay. All those giving

1 testimony today on behalf of Future School of Fort
2 Smith, do you swear that you are providing testimony
3 or statements that is the truth, the whole truth and
4 nothing. But the truth?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Was that everybody?

7 Sorry, we should have one more.

8 I believe.

9 Thanks.

10 Courtney is not able to join us today. She had a her
11 daughter's having a surgery that she had to go and be
12 at, so she's not here today. Thank you. Okay.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So thank you for that.
14 And as a reminder, you have 20 minutes for your
15 presentation and then after that we will begin to ask
16 questions and give me just a second to get my timer
17 going.

18 And just making sure you are seeing the slideshow. I
19 am sharing it OK.

20 Yes, sir. We just see this one slide. Yeah. And
21 you may begin.

22 MR. LOGAN: Good afternoon. My name is Boyd
23 Logan. I have the privilege of being one of the
24 founders of Future School at Fort Smith, as well as
25 the current director/superintendent. I'm here with

1 our current board member, former board president and
2 a person who's been with us pretty much since before
3 we opened the school. And that, Susan Pruitt, she
4 actually worked with someone special Ed compliance.
5 So she has a background in special Ed. When we first
6 opened school. So she's been around since the
7 beginning. And then also Allison Montiel, who is an
8 alumnus of IMPACT Arkansas has served in various
9 roles at school over the years. She is currently our
10 director of internships and experiential learning,
11 doing a lot of work with CTE. And then she's also
12 our school nurse. Yes, we wear a lot of hats at the
13 school and she's with us as well. And then as I
14 mentioned, Courtney Mann is not able to join us
15 today, but she has served our assistant principal.

16 I'm going to be handling the presentation for
17 the most part, and they're mainly going to be here to
18 lend their perspectives and their expertise. If you
19 have any questions for them after the formal
20 presentation is concluded, I'll probably leave some
21 things out as well, so they'll ship in if I leave
22 anything out. Thanks for being here today. I know
23 the weather is an idea and thanks to the Charter
24 office for allowing us to do the virtual presentation
25 and consideration of winter conditions and without

1 further ado, I'll get into.

2 So Future School was founded in 2016 by myself
3 and Trisha Flanagan. We see how set out to provide
4 an educational model for students who are looking for
5 a non-traditional a non-traditional educational model
6 based on real-world learning and internships. Our
7 hallmarks were robust advisory program for students.
8 To provide college and career counseling as well as
9 social/emotional learning as well as real world
10 internships for our students to develop professional
11 networks, build workplace skills and explore career
12 opportunities. The first year when we opened saw us
13 earn a B on our School Report card. And that first
14 year was full of innovative staff and students. The
15 future seemed bright, everything was looking amazing,
16 and we really had a amazing group of -- you know,
17 just a lot of energy right off the beginning that led
18 to that being. And since then, our letter grade is
19 pretty much consistently been in the DB. Age since
20 then and it's due to a variety of factors which I'll
21 get into our current letter grade momentarily as I
22 analyzed that. But we mainly became a school that
23 was known for working with students who are
24 struggling with traditional educational systems, our
25 internship program, our small size. And our

1 accepting environment made as a haven, including many
2 students at risk and disengaged from their -- and we
3 when we started the school certainly set out to reach
4 disengaged learners. We saw that there were a lot of
5 kids out there that just weren't connected to their
6 education, didn't see a reason for why they were
7 doing the things that they were doing. And so that
8 was really, we embraced that mission. And when we've
9 always intended to be, you know, that that to be part
10 of what we do is to take these students who maybe are
11 struggling and to help them, you know, to -- to find
12 a purpose for their education. And so that's really
13 we -- we've embraced that. And -- but it hasn't been
14 without its challenges, which have increased, it
15 feels like in recent years, and that's led us to our
16 current status of an F, and we talk a little bit
17 about that F. And the 2024-2025 school year we did
18 receive an F rating. This has been disheartening.
19 And humbling, to say the least, we feel like we've
20 been doing a decent job with our kids as far as
21 quickly and we know that we're succeeding in a lot of
22 other areas with those students, but this is really a
23 wake-up call that a decent job is not going to move
24 the needle for our kids and not set them up for the
25 future with our students and that we and that their

1 families in vision for them. We're certainly
2 unsatisfied with our past E grades and you know we've
3 always known that we need to shore up our academics
4 and do better within that. But the F was really an
5 eye opener and really challenged a lot of our core
6 beliefs and really challenged us our practices and
7 made us really start looking at our practices and
8 what we're doing academically for our kids. It's
9 challenged our status quo and made us really kind of
10 reevaluate everything about the way that we're going
11 about our daily existence as an -- as a school. So
12 yeah, we struggled in all disciplines on that last
13 test, but our math achievement was especially low and
14 with only four percent of our students as proficient
15 in geometry and algebra, our graduation rate also was
16 the worst we've seen. It is 74 percent graduation,
17 which is compared to the state average of 89 percent.
18 And out of those graduates, only 11 percent of those
19 graduates from 2024 were categorized as success,
20 ready underneath the current metrics that we're using
21 until the full system kicks in. And that's compared
22 to 54 percent from the state that, that that were
23 success-ready graduates. Our one bright spot was
24 that our lowest quartile gross scores exceeded state
25 average, and I'll go into that a little bit later.

1 However, that leaves 75 percent of our kids who
2 didn't come close to meeting expected growth while we
3 do serve a high need and at-risk population, we
4 embrace the sense of collective efficacy and know
5 that we're not doing enough to meet the needs of our
6 students. So we started looking at what are the root
7 causes and how do we go about addressing those root
8 causes and showing improvement. So as we looked at
9 our root causes, we really got into four big systemic
10 pieces that were problematic our school with what we
11 were doing. First off is our core instruction and
12 curriculum. We started looking and we really had
13 inconsistent all over the place. Our pacing guides
14 weren't really where they needed to be. They weren't
15 necessarily looking at the state standards. It was
16 sort of a, you know, not where we needed to be. I
17 wouldn't say a free for all, but we just weren't --
18 we didn't have those we're implementing with
19 fidelity, but there wasn't -- weren't accountability
20 pieces in there. There was nothing systematic that
21 we had to really address that. So that was
22 problematic. We also -- we focused so much, it felt
23 like it was because our kids, a lot of our kids are
24 coming to us behind academically and below grade
25 level, and so we're really focusing a lot on Tier II

1 and three intervention and not as much as we need to
2 be doing on Tier I instruction and just being quality
3 on grade level Tier I instruction. Well, I think
4 that's one reason we see our lowest quartile. We saw
5 good growth there because that's really I think who
6 we're teaching to more than kind of teaching to
7 everybody. And so there's a variety of reasons why
8 Tier I instruction is not where it needs to be. One
9 piece is I talked about all this, you know,
10 internships advising other really mission driven
11 school. We attract a very, very passionate
12 empathetic staff, but they are a lot of them coming
13 from non-traditional background. They don't have a
14 lot of teaching experience. A lot of them. And so
15 they don't necessarily, you know, they haven't had a
16 good teacher pre-service program. And so whenever
17 they're coming to us they may be really passionate
18 about helping kids and they be really passionate
19 about you know inspiring kids, helping them connect
20 into, you know, internships, things of that nature,
21 but they may not just have the instructional chops to
22 succeed in the classroom and really have good Tier I
23 instruction. And so that was a piece. And then also
24 inconsistent implementation of our high-quality
25 instructional materials and really knowing you know

1 what's going to kind of goes like the teacher
2 training of really, you know, making sure that what's
3 happening in the classroom is drawing from that
4 issue. I am so that was one big piece. We also had
5 our data use of progress monitoring, which I kind of
6 took check -- touched on just a second ago, we didn't
7 have good systems in place for continuous data
8 monitoring. There wasn't a good NTSS multi-tier tier
9 system support within our intervention pathways and
10 we also really you know as we looked our students we
11 know. Oh, this kids behind, but where? Specifically
12 behind that and really being able to look at that.
13 Another big piece, the letter grade and I talked
14 about our low graduation rate and our low success
15 ready metrics. And so that was big but -- and the
16 reason for that, there's broader reasons for that.
17 I'm a big piece though is turnover at our registrar
18 as far as the graduation rate, whenever you're in
19 high school and you have these kids, you know, we're
20 getting. It's it could be kids that two or three
21 years ago. Through left our system and now we're
22 looking at them in 12th grade. And we're saying, oh
23 my gosh, where this could end up going. And that
24 registrar was kind of the person that was tracking a
25 lot of that. And so then as we tried to go back and

1 figure out what happened, these kids where they go,
2 they go out of state. Where's their documentation
3 around that? And so that really led to us not being
4 able to get as good of a -- of a handle on that is in
5 here. We didn't have good systems in place to track
6 that, and so it really started looking at looking at
7 that and looking at being sure we're tracking that.
8 Also our coursework being a small school and really
9 having those career pathways built out and having
10 very specific ways for students to achieve that
11 success, ready pathways that we didn't have that
12 built out well and so that led to that very low
13 number of students that were considered success
14 ready, ready and there's just a lot of procedural
15 gaps as well as staffing gaps there. And then also
16 we have a lot of our 4th, you know, reason that we
17 looked at is really our talent, our assistance and
18 support for our teachers. We did have a lot of
19 turnover. We lost both of our math teachers midyear
20 last year and that led to us putting kids on
21 Edgenuity with sort of a person in there who's not
22 really a teacher, but more of a tutor to kind of help
23 them along with that. And that was problematic for
24 our students. And so then we've also had, you know,
25 as novice teachers a lot to do at Future School, they

1 are instructors for sure, but they're also advisors,
2 which is a really heavy lift and they're also
3 overseeing internships in the 11th and 12th grade.
4 And so that's a lot of, you know, things to juggle.
5 And we realized that our onboarding process and our
6 training process to get teachers on board is not what
7 it needed to be there. And then finally, we have our
8 school -- we have a lot of students that are coming
9 in that are disenfranchised from their education.
10 And that's leads oftentimes to behavioral issues.
11 And so classroom management is definitely has been
12 identified as a problem within our school. We have
13 made some really great steps. Two years ago, it felt
14 like we really turned the corner and we were getting
15 a lot of these behaviors under control. And then
16 last year, we kind of backslid for whatever reason.
17 I mean, it was not necessarily the environment in the
18 classroom, in the school, those conducive. Learning
19 and so we've really, yeah, looked at that and said,
20 you know, if teachers say I can't teach because
21 there's all these disruptions that are happening,
22 things of that nature. And so that was problematic.
23 And those are really our poor sort of root causes.
24 And so what are we going to do about those or what
25 are we currently doing about those? Our first

1 priority was to address our Tier I instructional
2 cycle as well as our Tier II and three intervention
3 systems. I've been meeting with the staff and
4 observing classrooms for us. There was a lack of
5 clarity and accountability around setting concrete
6 student learning objectives with measurable outcomes
7 and assessments. We were saying things you know
8 objective to other students going to learn about X?
9 Well, that's not really a measurable objective for
10 that day. How do you know if they learned? About
11 that and so that was a big piece that we really
12 realize that, you know, that teachers need to have a
13 very, you know, going back to we've heard a lot about
14 lesson internalization today and we really need to
15 work on that process around lesson, internalization
16 and setting those concrete learning objectives.
17 There was also a wide discrepancy in how assessments
18 and grades were used to track student learning.
19 There was, you know, maybe not grades entered weekly
20 there were, you know, particular grades actually
21 correspond to student learning or the grades. Just
22 more about, you know, where the students there and
23 they participated. And so we we've gone to mandating
24 two grades per week with one grade tied to student
25 achievement. And then we've also taken this and

1 we've reassigned a teacher to work as an academic
2 interventionist throughout the day, with students to
3 help them address the gaps in their learning, and we
4 were able to do some staffing turnover to sort of
5 realign some things and get some And to working with
6 those kids and using IXL as well as some other
7 methods to work with students to address gaps in
8 their learning. IXL, which we've begun to really
9 implement. We -- we've had IXL on our campus for a
10 while. It was used really for mainly really
11 struggling students who are far below grade level and
12 trying to get them kind of supplement their skills.
13 We've now rolled out a much broader implementation of
14 it. So -- and this this is just sort of it's getting
15 more and more robust as we're picking up steam with
16 it. Teachers are getting a better understanding of
17 how it works. Students are getting more buy in,
18 seeing their growth on that. Here's some just some
19 quick, you know stats that we have, we're really
20 going to start implementing this in towards mid-
21 November. And started broadening the scope of our
22 use of IXL and we're seeing a lot of good buy in and
23 engagement from that. As we've done that, we were
24 using leaderboards with students and giving out
25 rewards for students as they meet various milestones

1 and recognizing those students for their progress
2 within that. And so that's been something that's
3 been very that we're seeing be very successful as you
4 start working with that.

5 Priority two is building a responsive data
6 culture. In the past two years ago, we had used a
7 data dashboard, and we've been using that for a
8 couple of years. Last year it fell by the wayside
9 and that data dashboard be shared out with the staff.
10 And this year we really said we need to go back to
11 that and not just go back to that data dashboard but
12 really use that to inform everything kind of be our
13 system. By which we're looking at what's happening
14 at the school on all different aspects of the school
15 and really use that to address problem areas. And so
16 we have basically a weekly admin meeting where we --
17 where we as the admin look at the various measures,
18 our data dashboard and use that to sort of dive down
19 in and have discussions and to and to go deeper into
20 certain areas and certain areas and say, okay, well
21 that that area is good right now we're going along
22 where we need to be there. But in other areas, oh,
23 well, this is something we're really seeing right
24 now. That's a problem from the data that we're
25 looking at. And so we're we use that to sort of --

1 we fill out the data dashboard with our various
2 metrics and have those conversations and that's on
3 Monday morning. And then on Monday afternoon, we
4 meet with the entire staff and go over the data
5 dashboard and use that to -- to talk to them about
6 what the status of the school is, where the problem
7 areas that we may have. Where are we doing well?
8 And so we -- we look at that and then they then have
9 subject team meetings where they take those data any
10 of the metrics order apply to them within that data
11 dashboard and those are on Thursdays. And they meet
12 together and they look at not only that data, but
13 also really dive into more of the academic side of it
14 and look at their CF results and start planning those
15 interventions for the next week to happen to our --
16 during our rocket -- rocket hour, which is our
17 intervention hour that we have. And so that's sort
18 of cycle just kind of just continuously going and
19 trying to keep everything transparent and keep
20 everybody involved as we go to that process. Along
21 with the meetings that teachers hold to -- to look at
22 CFA's and interventions, we are and have always
23 looked at students holistically. That's why we have
24 internships and that's why we have advising as well.
25 And so we have on Wednesday afternoons on alternating

1 schedule we have two, two different kinds of meetings
2 for teachers. One of those meetings is a grade level
3 team and so basically the 10th grade teachers that
4 teach core subjects in the 10th grade. We'll meet
5 together 11th grade teachers and those are
6 multidisciplinary teams, and they'll meet and really
7 talk about what they're seeing from students, maybe
8 what behavioral supports need to be in place. Are
9 there -- are there kids that, you know, maybe they
10 performed well in one class and a teacher really
11 figured something out of how to get the student
12 academically to perform in their class, but then
13 another teachers always struggling with that so they
14 can have discussions around how to better support
15 that student, what's leading to their success. And
16 that's always really eliminating, I think because
17 it's -- it's kind of shocking to see, you know, 1
18 teacher says, oh, like, it's great for me and another
19 teacher says, well, they're, you know, off my class.
20 Well, if you tried this, they really like this thing.
21 So, you know, maybe try to work that in, you know,
22 they -- they really like sports or whatever. If you
23 talk to about sports, then that can help -- help kind
24 of reengage them. And so that's one team -- team
25 meeting we have in our advisors, which that group of

1 advisors, they stay with kids -- a group of kids from
2 9th through 12th grade. And every great sort of has
3 a focus with their advisory of what they're trying to
4 support students around. And so one week we'll have
5 all those previous meetings us on mine and the other
6 week, all the 9th grade advisors that advise the 9th
7 graders will meet to talk about things around parent
8 engagement, college career planning. If they're 11th
9 or 12th grade, you're talking about internship
10 tracking, internship sites. What's happening?
11 Internships are with supporting students through
12 internships. What are the outcomes that we're seeing
13 around that? And then if 3rd, 9th and 10th grade,
14 they're talking more about community service
15 tracking. Just have a big community service push in
16 9th and 10th grade to make sure our students are
17 getting community service hours. And working with
18 that and so looking at sort of providing these --
19 these supports and these times for teachers to
20 collaborate around these issues have really codifying
21 that and systematizing that has really been
22 beneficial so far as well.

23 The next piece is looking at our, you know,
24 priority three, our graduation rate and then, you
25 know, are students set up for success or not. And

1 this was something that's really troubling for us
2 because it's so central to our mission. You know, a
3 lot of our kids are coming to us -- we're a last
4 chance school for a lot of kids. They're on the
5 verge of dropping out sometimes when they come to us.
6 And so we may be, you know, their last chance to
7 receive a traditional diploma. And so these kids are
8 still dropping out. That's really -- or, you know,
9 and we're losing those kids. So we don't know what
10 their outcomes are going to be in the future. So
11 that's really, you know, a big piece for us is to
12 address this and look at that. And you know, I
13 talked a little bit about our issues at turnover to
14 registrar and -- and turnover to counselor that
15 contributed that low performance, but we need
16 proactive steps to strengthen these areas and make
17 sure the students are on track to graduate. And they
18 aren't getting discouraged as they sort of start to
19 lose hope in their path towards graduation. And so
20 our counselor and our family community support team,
21 they work diligently to address these areas. As far
22 as our reporting on our graduates, we know we have
23 100 percent accuracy and where our students actually
24 ended up for the '24 to '25 cohort. We've been --
25 you know, one of the things that leads to student

1 disengagement and students being behind his
2 attendance. And so we've really been making a push
3 to increase our attendance this year as students sort
4 of, you know, they aren't there; they get to miss
5 assignments; and then all of a sudden they start, you
6 know, that -- it just sort of is a snowball they --
7 that increases. And so we've really done a lot to
8 reengage families to make sure that we're offering
9 supports, doing home visits with students and doing
10 everything we can to make sure what are the barriers
11 that are keeping them from coming to school and
12 trying to get to the bottom of those barriers. As a
13 last resort, we have started filing FINS on our
14 kids. And we've always done this, but we're really
15 -- have gotten pretty -- much more systematic about
16 it. In the first semester, we did file 20 FINS --
17 FINS reports on students. And this semester we've
18 already got four kids, four families that we've
19 notified are on at risk of having a FINS report
20 filed. We're working regularly with that -- our
21 system in Sebastian County to try to make sure that
22 the students are getting supports and those families
23 are getting supports to make sure that kids are
24 getting to school.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Mr. Logan?

1 MR. LOGAN: Yes?

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: You're at time. So if
3 you want to just start to begin to wrap up, and then
4 anything else --

5 MR. LOGAN: Oh. And that was really fast.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's okay.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm sure with questions
8 you'll get a chance to wrap up any another thing.

9 MR. LOGAN: I did want -- so one thing, my last
10 slides that I had in the -- on the -- actually, I can
11 -- I can stop there and I -- you all can ask
12 questions.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm sure as we begin to
14 ask questions, you'll be able to refer to the pieces
15 you hadn't had a chance to cover yet.

16 MR. LOGAN: For sure.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So I will start
18 with Dr. Moore.

19 DR. MOORE: Hello, thank you for your
20 presentation. Thank you for -- for owning the
21 results. That's always an important first step. And
22 for looking at ways to address the -- the shortfall.

23 I did want to point out, and if you were on
24 earlier, you heard me ask somewhat similar questions
25 of previous presenters that were in your same

1 situation. But when I compare your results to that
2 of the other high schools in your area -- and I
3 understand that you said you have a challenging
4 population. When I look, we know Northside and
5 Southside have very different demographics
6 historically have and still do. Your demographics
7 are more similar to that of Northside in terms of low
8 income, Northside had 77 percent low income, and you
9 had 72.8 at the data I was looking at on the My
10 School. SpEd, they have 11 1/2 percent. You have 15
11 percent. English learners, they had 26 percent and
12 you had 10.8 percent. Yet their letter grade was B.
13 They had strong growth. So could you speak more to
14 why -- why do you think -- because you said that you
15 had challenging students. How are your students more
16 challenging than what students northside is serving?

17 MR. LOGAN: So we are getting a lot of ALE
18 students. So that's actually from Belle Point and
19 that's a little bit -- you know, that -- that's -- I
20 don't believe that they're -- students don't figure
21 into the Northside grades. But that's not -- I mean,
22 that's -- it's hard to talk about this out sounding
23 like I'm making excuses, so I don't want excuses
24 because we have to have a sense of collective
25 efficacy. We know that we -- our kids can grow. We

1 know that our kids -- that we can make a difference
2 so that we can get them where we need to be. I think
3 in the past -- and really we talk about collective
4 efficacy all the time because it's so easy to say
5 like oh well, we get these kids and therefore it's
6 just, you know, it's out of our control. And that's
7 -- you know, the only thing we can't control is what
8 we're doing with students at school. As far as what
9 -- you know, how they ended up with a B and we ended
10 up with the F? That's, you know, a great question.
11 It -- it's -- I feel like we were behind. This last
12 year, I hope was a little bit of anomaly. But we
13 still are -- you know, in the past they've had Ds and
14 we've had Ds and we've kind of been similar with us
15 and Northside, but this last year there was such a
16 huge gap. And you know, I think one piece of that is
17 that graduation rate, if you -- just as far as the
18 numbers that -- it -- where it puts us. But, you
19 know, that's -- as far as with the letter grade, the
20 points that you get from the graduation rate, there's
21 a huge gap there. The success-ready metrics, that's
22 also another huge point gap that they did much better
23 on there. But really what it comes down to is
24 achievement and growth and that's stuff that, you
25 know, that's things that we've got to address from an

1 instructional level. And we just had -- we just
2 didn't do it last year. And, you know, I wish I had
3 the answer for, you know, all the different things
4 that we didn't do. I went into it a little bit with
5 turnover and things of that nature. But I'm
6 confident this year, sort of looking at where we're
7 at in the results that we're seeing in student growth
8 and -- that we're going to, you know, have a better
9 outcome this year. But once again, I mean, I will
10 just say that I don't want to make excuses. I don't
11 want to say, you know -- and I don't want to
12 relinquish us of the responsibility to own it and to
13 own the growth and progress of our kids, but we do
14 have a lot of ALE students. Our school, because it's
15 not sort of as restrictive in the way that we work
16 with students that may have behavioral problems or
17 may -- and because they have more freedom because of
18 internships and things of that nature, I think we got
19 a lot of students that choose to come over to Future
20 School and -- that would have traditionally been in
21 an ALE, or they may be coming straight from the ALE.

22 DR. MOORE: Okay. And I did want to commend you
23 because as I was looking at your scores, while
24 everything was, like, the lowest category except for
25 one, but that was the growth of your lowest students

1 and they -- you were performing above -- above the
2 state in that area. So maybe your most challenging
3 students were actually the ones that sort of helped
4 -- helped put your ratings in some ways. Because
5 that's a very difficult area to grow is your most
6 challenging students. And with your focus, of
7 course, I'm very much for workforce focus in schools
8 and merit distinction can include that and work-based
9 learning and internships. But we all also have seen
10 over the years not just now that merit distinction or
11 opportunities -- but we've seen sometimes when
12 schools focus so much on work-based learning and
13 internships, that sometimes the academic side suffers
14 and finding that sweet spot where we're making sure
15 we're getting all the academic instruction and not
16 sacrificing any of that at the altar of work-based
17 learning, you know, just finding it -- it's hard to
18 do both and do it well. And I certainly haven't
19 personally done it. I can only speak to the research
20 and seeing what I see out there. So I just encourage
21 you to be cautionary as you pursue the increased
22 internship opportunities to make sure that that's not
23 taking away from core instruction and Tier I
24 instruction time that those students.

25 MR. LOGAN: Yeah. I think that that's something

1 we've definitely, you know, seen in -- it's, you
2 know, because you get this big, heavy push on that
3 and also the push on social/emotional learning, you
4 know, and really helping our students deal with
5 whatever issues that they may be coming with us on a
6 daily basis. And so it can all of a sudden -- you
7 know, it -- it's that high cost of low expectations
8 time. Oh, well, they've got all this stuff going on
9 outside of class and at home, when they go home, and
10 at least when they're here they have a, you know, a
11 safe place to be where they feel, you know, that --
12 that's safe and secure and they have food and -- and
13 all that. But that doesn't mean we can't keep
14 pushing for academic growth as well. And I think
15 that's always -- that -- that's been sort of a -- a
16 push pull and a balancing act and that we've really
17 -- continuously are trying to work on and make sure
18 that, you know, that just because, you know, there's
19 these challenges that people are facing, you know,
20 this is -- this is still the place that we can set
21 them up for success. And part of that has got -- has
22 got to be their academic performance and making sure
23 that they leave us ready with the skills that they
24 need when they leave school.

25 DR. MOORE: And -- and just one more question

1 along those lines of CTE. Are you able to access the
2 secondary career center, your local secondary Career
3 Center for students? And do you have many students
4 going there? And what's -- what's that looking like?
5 Because one --

6 MR. LOGAN: Yeah. That's -- so Allison is the
7 absolute expert and she has done -- I'll just sing
8 her praisal. But she's done amazing work on working
9 with CTE and sort of fleshing out our systems around
10 this. I think we're going to see a lot of benefits
11 in the future as a success-ready pathway is really --
12 as we've -- as we've as we start to build those
13 systems out.

14 Allison, do you want to talk a little bit about
15 that?

16 MS. MONTIEL: Sure.

17 Thank you, Dr. Moore. Thank you for your
18 question. It's a really, really good one.

19 Dying on the altar of work-based learning is
20 certainly something we've been very mindful of over
21 the years. We think about it like this, so if you --
22 if you take the perspective of you're implementing
23 rigor, relevance and relationships and if a student
24 is not engaging in the classroom in the traditional
25 typical way that they would, we kind of do like a

1 little bit of a back door. So we place them
2 intentionally, through their own kind of voicing of
3 desire, in an internship that kind of gets them to
4 start making connections between what they're doing
5 in the classroom and what they're doing at their
6 internship site. So if we have a young person come
7 to us and say my internship at an accounting. Well,
8 we hope that and it does happen that about three or
9 four weeks in, they start making the connection
10 between the numbers that they're doing in Algebra II
11 or quantitative literacy and the work that they're
12 doing at their internship site. And so we see a lot
13 of that rigor, relevance and relationship coming to
14 play there. That's in 11th and 12th grade that they
15 really start blooming there and our letter grade is
16 based on 9th and 10th. So that's a little tough.
17 It's hard to show some of the, like, real strong
18 progress that we've made there with students. And
19 then when we're doing our exit interviews with them,
20 a lot of times what they're saying -- I mean, over 50
21 percent, 60 percent of the time, they're saying,
22 well, I came here for the internship and I'm leaving
23 here, glad that I stayed. So that's a wonderful
24 thing that we're hearing from kids, anecdotally, but
25 it's hard to wrap numbers around that.

1 To your question about the secondary career
2 centers, we do have students participating in the
3 WATC program, Western Arkansas Technical Center
4 program, through University of Arkansas, Fort Smith.
5 They engage with that work at the Peak Innovation
6 Center, which is an amazing collaboration between
7 Fort Smith Public Schools, all of the area schools
8 and UAFS. So our students have access to a lot of
9 that academic coursework, which is all concurrent.
10 So where our students go over every afternoon,
11 participate in those programs. And we get a lot of
12 interest in the beginning of the year, lots of buzz
13 and lots of excitement, but then sometimes they
14 realize they're college classes. So we've got to
15 implement a whole lot of support around them to be
16 able to be successful in those classes. But we also
17 have a lot of students that are really interested in
18 going into several of the fields that are offered at
19 the WATC program. And so that's also very
20 encouraging in our conversations with 9th and 10th
21 grade students as they're looking out and doing some
22 of their course planning projections.

23 DR. MOORE: Do you provide transportation to
24 that secondary -- to Peak?

25 MS. MONTIEL: We do.

1 DR. MOORE: All right. Thank you.

2 That's all the questions I have right now.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

5 Ms. Stewart.

6 MS. STEWART: Sure.

7 Thank you all. Thank you for that presentation
8 and all the information that you're providing. I
9 just had a couple of questions. You started the
10 presentation talking about high-needs students, you
11 know, that -- that's those that -- those are that
12 you're serving. Could you kind of clarify what does
13 that mean when you use that term?

14 MR. LOGAN: Sure. So we are a high-poverty
15 school or CEP, so that's -- that's a bit -- that's
16 one, you know, indicator that we know is -- you know,
17 causes a lot of barriers. Our kids are coming in --
18 a lot of them so behind -- I've got a graphic pulled
19 up right now. And, you know, we had in our fall,
20 zero percent were proficient in -- on geometry, zero
21 percent proficient on literacy. You know, they're
22 coming in severely, severely behind. We also do have
23 a lot of -- that -- I don't want to go into it too
24 much, but, you know, a lot of trauma and our kids are
25 coming in. So we've done a lot of trauma-informed

1 classroom work with our student -- with our teachers.
2 We, you know, we've had -- done a lot of work talking
3 about secondary trauma of our teachers kind of
4 experiencing it. What they're -- what they're, you
5 know, what their kids are -- they're kind of --
6 they're second hand experiencing it from their kids,
7 you know, and how to kind of work with that. And
8 then once again it goes back to too, you know, as
9 you're working with students like that it's so hard
10 sometimes if they're coming in, you know, with all
11 the stuff going on outside the classroom and outside
12 the school building, you know, to still maintain, you
13 know, we talk about the -- you know, y'all probably
14 heard the warm demander, you know, and how to still
15 -- how to be empathetic, how to understand, how to be
16 supportive but yet still how to, you know, to have
17 the high standards and try to push them to succeed,
18 you know. And that -- and it's -- it -- there's an
19 art to it. It's hard, you know, because it can also
20 be -- immediately turn -- you know it -- it -- those
21 standards at first can sometimes be, you know,
22 perceived negatively by students and can be seen as,
23 you know, you're being mean or whatever. And so --
24 and just kind of trying to, you know, to -- to
25 develop that in our staff and let them understand

1 that, you know, it -- yes, you are working with
2 students who have a lot of things happening outside
3 their classroom, but we still need to, you know, to
4 -- to still hold them to a high standard.

5 MS. STEWART: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Thank you for
6 that. So I think you touched on it, but the other
7 question that came to mind was, you know, how far
8 behind are they coming to you? You know from the
9 just in general, like, a generalized --

10 MR. LOGAN: Yeah. It's -- yeah. We -- we have
11 a lot of kids that are coming in -- and, I mean, I --
12 not putting percentages on it, but I mean they're at
13 with, you know, three to grade levels behind or more.

14 MS. STEWART: Uh-huh. Okay. Yeah. That --

15 MR. LOGAN: So that -- that's what we're seeing
16 a lot. And --

17 MS. STEWART: And I noticed you -- you spent
18 some time talking to us about IXL. So you're using
19 that as a measure and as support?

20 MR. LOGAN: Both. Yeah. So -- so -- and what's
21 really -- I mean, what we've seen in the past, you
22 know, is our math teachers, for example, saying like,
23 oh, they, they can't divide or they can't, you know,
24 don't have basic numeracy skills and things of that
25 nature. And so there's a lot of, you know, Tier I

1 instructional time being spent working on that and
2 sort of those background math skills. And we know
3 now from, you know, working with our -- our support
4 systems that we have through APSRC and the co-op and
5 the state that, you know, it -- there -- there's --
6 on Algebra I test, there's not going to be questions
7 about, you know, division. I mean, they're going to
8 need that skill, but it's -- the Algebra I test is an
9 Algebra I test. And if they can't do Algebra I then,
10 you know, that -- that's problematic. So if you're
11 spending a bunch of time not even exposing them
12 Algebra I because you're working with them on these
13 skills that they should have required in 5th grade or
14 6th grade or whatever it is, then they're -- you're
15 setting them up for failure and setting our school up
16 for failure. And so really using IXL to address a
17 lot of those -- those issues, but then also -- and
18 this is getting to our more expanded -- because going
19 back to we we're congratulated on, you know, our
20 lowest 25 percent and our lowest quartile, everybody
21 says, oh, they can, you know, get that lowest
22 quartile to perform, then you kill two birds, one
23 stone and everything else will fall into place. And
24 you're great. You know, you'll get double -- well,
25 we did really well with our lowest quartile, but we

1 still have an F. So, you know, my concern is looking
2 forward, you know, if they're -- we've got to do more
3 than that. We can't -- you know, the lowest quartile
4 wasn't the magic bullet for us like it seems to be
5 for a lot of other districts. They're looking for
6 some answer like, oh, we could just get this group to
7 move, then our letter grade is going to go up, you
8 know, by a whole letter grade. Well, we moved that
9 group and our letter grade is still where it is, and
10 we know why that is. But, you know, the lowest
11 quartile is not the end all be all. So that's --
12 that -- that's really something that we've got to --
13 got to do is continue to be sure that we're working
14 on grade level with our kids.

15 MS. STEWART: Yeah. Yeah. I can certainly
16 appreciate that and I -- I'm glad that you mentioned
17 that that. So thinking about, you know, the IXL
18 piece is additional help, support in, you know, a
19 certain program, so to speak. With your staff, what
20 kind of support staff have you got from the
21 perspective of, you know, smaller-group instruction
22 or say you know working through IXL sometimes, you
23 know, they may need additional support or help?

24 MR. LOGAN: Yeah. So we actually -- we're back
25 -- this year -- we also last year at semester lost

1 one of our SpEd people.

2 MS. STEWART: Okay.

3 MR. LOGAN: And we now -- we have a SpEd
4 director, but our SpEd sort of person that was
5 embedded in the classroom and doing all that, we lost
6 them. We had that back at semester and that's what
7 -- it is -- so in January we have that person and she
8 is co-teaching and going into classrooms so working
9 with those students doing some, you know, not pull
10 out as in pulling kids out the whole time, but it's
11 small-group instruction, maybe it's pulled out to
12 during that small group. So that's one piece we do
13 have that. We have a dyslexia interventionist as
14 well who works and does Bartons with our dyslexia
15 kids and so they are getting a period of day of
16 Barton's one-on-one dyslexia instruction. We're
17 looking at a different model for our dyslexia
18 services, just because it's a little bit inefficient
19 to do Barton's because it is that one-on-one versus
20 being able to do it in a group. And so we're looking
21 at some different models there. And then what that
22 then freed up -- it's -- and that -- in January that
23 then allowed us to take a person and create a
24 position for them and -- where they are basically
25 full time all -- like, one of the tutors that are --

1 all the districts are using now basically and she's
2 able to pull out from elective classes there once --
3 one elective a week so they don't get pulled out of
4 there, like, every day. And pull some kids out to
5 identify either reteaching -- and luckily, they're
6 very good at both math and English, this person is --
7 but they're either reteaching but also working with
8 IXL on very specific identified skills. And I talked
9 a little bit about expansion on IXL, not just looking
10 at our lowest 25 percent, not just looking it as an
11 intervention, but also looking at as a practice
12 school. Did you just get some more automaticity for
13 a lot of our kids? But yeah, also, as they're
14 looking at common formative, CFA's, and saying like,
15 oh, this kid, this specific skill, this group of five
16 kids are struggling in and being able to pull those
17 kids out either during our rocket hour or if they're
18 in one of those tutoring groups, being able to pull
19 them out during the tutoring group and be able to get
20 them support within that skill.

21 MS. STEWART: Well -- and I noticed you
22 mentioned it earlier APSRC, the co-op, ADE, other
23 DESE supports, what -- can you give us some specific
24 examples of what you're -- what you're doing to --

25 MR. LOGAN: Sure.

1 MS. STEWART: -- bring either into the building
2 to support staff or --

3 MR. LOGAN: Yeah. That -- that was that was one
4 of my slides that I -- I did seem to over talk -- but
5 I didn't get to.

6 MS. STEWART: Okay, great.

7 MR. LOGAN: I apologize for that. My -- my 20
8 minutes that I went over. Yeah. So we have in --
9 and let me -- I can kind of give you the full list of
10 -- of all the different pieces that we're doing. But
11 APSRC we're -- we're -- we have three different
12 things that they're -- that they're doing for us.
13 One is we're part of the Charter Impact Group and
14 that's -- that's really almost -- pretty high level
15 where that support is coming in and it's looking at
16 leadership, academics and finance. And so that's one
17 piece that they're coming in with. And that's more
18 meeting on the on the admin side, although the
19 academics piece, they did come in on -- this semester
20 and really help us with pacing guides and looking at
21 what have we done so far, what's the data indicating
22 that students still don't know that they need to know
23 prior to April when the test comes? What are the
24 real, you know, what are -- what are the standards,
25 our power standards, that are identified with the

1 blueprints that, you know, that we -- that our kids
2 are still deficient in and really making sure that
3 we're -- we -- we've got a good blueprint leading up
4 to the testing time to make sure that those are
5 getting hit on. So that's one piece. We have a
6 support team that comes in, an academic support team.
7 One of them meets on Thursdays with our teachers
8 whenever they're doing their subject area meetings,
9 the PLCs, whenever doing that and works with them
10 around HQIM, around us -- around their CFAs and
11 around planning interventions for the next week as a
12 result of those. And then, we have another one
13 that's providing more support for teachers that are
14 in need of support. And so -- so they're the -- so
15 those -- that's the same program as two different
16 people that come in. They're in the building weekly,
17 both of them, once a week each. And then, we also
18 have -- they're also providing novice-teacher support
19 as well for us. And it's -- that's been great. We
20 also have our algebra -- our algebra and geometry
21 teacher is participating in this -- just started --
22 we just did the -- did the meeting this week,
23 earlier this week and we signed the MOU around the
24 Algebra I cohort that DESE is putting together. And
25 so that's good. That's exciting. Although our math

1 teacher this year is absolutely amazing. And so
2 we're already seeing really, really good results from
3 that. But giving her that additional support there.
4 And then our counselor and assistant principal,
5 Courtney, they participated with our co-op with the,
6 oh, gosh whatever -- the Thrive Academy to look at
7 student behaviors. And so they did that as well.
8 And then, of course, we have -- Ginger is helping us
9 with dyslexia from DESE. So we have -- we have a lot
10 of different, you know, support systems that are
11 coming into place there which is -- which is really
12 great. You know, that -- I will say that the -- the
13 Charter Impact for me personally, from a leadership
14 perspective and just being able to think through
15 things and be strategic -- and there was some earlier
16 mentions of, you know, making sure we're prioritizing
17 that you don't have, you know, 100 cooks in the
18 kitchen and that you're really, you know, being kind
19 of direct and focused in what you're doing. And
20 that's been really helpful for me from the Charter
21 Impact team really thinking through, like, what are
22 the big pushes that we need to make here.

23 MS. STEWART: Right. Well, that -- that, I
24 appreciate that very thorough accounting. That's --
25 that's terrific. And I would certainly encourage you

1 to continue down that road of support because there
2 are so many groups and so many, you know, just
3 tremendous assets in the state, whether it be APSRC
4 or DESE that can help, you know, support you in that
5 way. So -- and then well, it was my last -- my last
6 thing I was going to ask you about was novice teacher
7 support. And you -- you mentioned that already. So
8 thank you for that. And that's -- that's all I have
9 right now.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

11 Dr. Bacon.

12 DR. BACON: Yeah. I heard a lot of good things
13 here about explanations for how you're in the spot
14 you are and specific steps you all are taking. You
15 know, when I look at it, just from the data
16 collection perspective and the letter grade and all
17 of that, you know, you've got the perfect storm.
18 You're a really small -- smaller school. You're high
19 school only, which means that probably half or more
20 of your kids don't even take state assessments that
21 count toward this letter grade. And so, yeah, I
22 really, you know, I really think that this hitting on
23 the need to individualize and really look at each
24 specific student, in particularly 9th and 10th grade,
25 who are probably the predominant preponderance of

1 your test of grades and making sure that the students
2 have a plan and that, you know, exactly what they
3 need to be able to progress is -- is probably the
4 best thing you can do from that data perspective.
5 Because I think you pointed out even though you had
6 solid growth in your lowest quartile, that's not
7 enough to have moved you to the letter that you need.
8 So I appreciate this very specific and intentional
9 focus on looking at what each individual needs. It
10 seems like that's an advantage to a small school as
11 you can more easily do that because you really have a
12 smaller pool of students that you're looking at. I
13 was looking at, you know, it seems like from a high
14 school prospective, you do have an advantage on the
15 graduation and the success-ready pieces. And I know
16 you talked about in your presentation, with the
17 graduation piece, some clean up and just sort of
18 making sure you track, you know, where every kid was.
19 I went back and just looked at my school info and
20 looked like in '23, the graduation rate was 82
21 percent, '24, it had gone down to 74, which is what
22 this grade -- this letter grade was based on. I saw
23 for eight -- for '25, it's back up to 86 percent. So
24 I think just in terms of projecting forward, that's
25 going to be a positive for the -- for your -- for

1 your points that that go toward the next letter
2 grade. Talk a little more about just making sure --
3 and, I mean, you all are so career focused, so --
4 have so much going on with your internship and
5 programs, moving that success ready -- that score
6 from -- I think you said it was an 11 and the state
7 average was 54. Just sort of talk specifically about
8 how you all are focusing on that because I think
9 that's another way that you'll be able to really move
10 the needle on this -- this letter grade and this
11 outcome performance-based measure.

12 MR. LOGAN: Allison, do you want to talk? I can
13 talk a little bit about it. Or if you want to talk
14 about sort of our success ready pathways and how
15 we're looking at those. And this is something we've
16 been really, you know, I've had a lot of
17 conversations with about getting really strategic
18 about, you know, because as you look at -- we, you
19 know, originally, oh, we'll build a lot of AP courses
20 because success ready pathway involves AP. But then
21 we look at how many of our kids get four and five and
22 in a couple of years they have to have fours and
23 fives in the APs in order to get, you know, that to
24 be an AP scholar, which means three or more scores of
25 four, I believe, or it's maybe scores of three. But

1 yeah, so, you know, is that right for our students?
2 Is it right to look at, you know, the concurrent
3 class -- the number of concurrent classes they're
4 taking? Is that our best pathway? Is it -- should
5 we look at implementing JROTC for success reading
6 pathway? You know, what should we look at? And
7 really, you know, I think that as we look at it,
8 because we are so CTE focused for us, it's going to
9 be building out those, you know, H2 pathways within
10 the success ready and using those internships to --
11 you know, to count as the practicum levels, the
12 threes and fours within those pathways. The problem
13 for us is, as a small school, is building those level
14 one and twos and having the course offerings within
15 that and making sure that when our kid comes into us
16 in 9th grade, you know, that they have those options
17 and they have pretty clear ideas of which way they're
18 going within that and that we can continue to guide
19 them along that path so that they do at the end up
20 with, you know, three to four years within a success
21 ready pathway.

22 Allison, do you have anything to add around
23 that?

24 MS. MONTIEL: Nothing really, except just to say
25 that about two years ago, when this conversation

1 really kicked off around pathways, two to three years
2 ago, we identified pretty fast that we are in an
3 excellent position because since all -- it's a
4 requirement that all our 11th and 12th grade students
5 participate in the internship program, there's our
6 level three right there. We've already got that
7 nailed. What a gift. So really, it's about one and
8 two and making sure we have the teacher competency to
9 be able to provide that for students. So we leaned
10 heavily into college and career readiness, which is
11 not necessarily a pathway, but does lead to the
12 WorkKeys and can lead to some of those merit or
13 distinction diplomas. We're also trying to figure
14 out by surveying our students, what pathways they're
15 looking for when they come in to us at 9th grade,
16 10th grade and figuring out how to staff
17 appropriately so that we can provide that one and two
18 for them before we send them out to that intern
19 experience. We often find that with the small size
20 of our 9th grade, and we get a little bit bigger in
21 10th grade and then 11th and 12th grade is where we
22 carry the weight of our students, that the
23 information we're getting from kids in 9th grade
24 doesn't always pan out to what they're saying in 11th
25 and 12th grade. So we have to be very nimble and

1 quick to be able to pivot, you know, in the summer
2 when we're putting together a master schedule to be
3 able to go to teachers directly and say, hey, I know
4 we asked you to teach this, but can you teach this?
5 And like Boyd mentioned earlier, we have such a
6 dedicated staff that everybody sort of raised their
7 hand and said, how can I help? So I feel like we're
8 in a really good spot in that regard.

9 DR. BACON: Yeah, I appreciate that you're
10 putting a lot of intentional thought toward that. I
11 really do think -- as a small high school, you know
12 this, I mean, you -- you just you're going to have to
13 maximize outcomes in every way that you can so that
14 you don't find yourselves in this -- this situation
15 again with the F letter grain. And I think that's a
16 really critical piece of it. So I appreciate that
17 response and that you all are putting a lot of really
18 detailed thought into that. I think that's going to
19 move the needle for you in a lot of ways.

20 I don't think I have any other questions right
21 now.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you.
23 Dr. Beshears-Duncan.

24 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes, thank you.

25 And this is a bit of a follow up from Dr.

1 Bacon's question and I think it's also a slide you
2 didn't get to speak to Boyd. Could you speak to just
3 sort of the trend with your school and then what
4 you're really anticipating as far as performance,
5 given everything that you showed us in the growth
6 over this past semester moving forward?

7 MR. LOGAN: Yeah. I mean, we're definitely, you
8 know -- as Dr. Bacon alluded to, our graduation rate
9 is much better and much more, you know, where it
10 needs to be. As far as, you know, going to
11 academics, I would love to say every kid's going to
12 grow. I mean, our goal is every kid meet or exceed
13 growth. We know that achievement, you know, it is
14 what it is to for us to the extent; right? I mean,
15 if we take in -- if every kid -- and because we take
16 in who we take in; right? I mean, we -- kids find us
17 9th grade, they're coming to us from whatever
18 background their achievements going to be what it is.
19 If we take in -- if every kid we took in was reading
20 on a 2nd grade level we probably aren't going to meet
21 proficiency for those kids and press them up seven
22 grade levels within one year. But if we can meet or
23 exceed growth for all those kids, then, at least
24 we're, you know, we know that we're moving the needle
25 on them and then the chips fall where they do with

1 achievement at that point that of whether -- whether
2 they've gotten, you know, proficiency three or four.
3 We are seeing really encouraging signs this year.
4 And really, I'll boil that down to our staff. I
5 think that they -- you know, we've talked about -- I
6 alluded to collective efficacy earlier and we've
7 talked about it in the past. But we didn't have good
8 systems for really judging whether, you know -- and
9 getting really frequent looks at whether kids really
10 are growing or not. And I feel like or I know this
11 year with those, you know -- being very specific
12 about daily student -- student learning objectives
13 and whether students, you know -- and breaking
14 learning down, those daily objectives down into, you
15 know, mastering the standard, the components of the
16 standard. And all of a sudden, you know, our
17 teachers say, like, oh, my God, I did this and I had
18 this high expectation. I wrote a really great
19 objective, you know, or I had this standard I wanted
20 them to do. I wrote all these different pieces along
21 the way to get there, and they responded, and they
22 got there. And so really all of a sudden, you know
23 -- and it's great to say, you know, all these things
24 of, oh, we can move the needle on all these kids.
25 But once you experience it and you actually see it,

1 see it work, then it's awesome, you know. Whenever
2 -- it gets a little tricky because of the October 1st
3 and we do have a highly mobile population, as we
4 start -- and we're trying to get that ATLAS in June
5 to kind of jump through hoops for us and really look
6 at, you know, where the kids -- because with a small
7 population, two to three kids makes a big difference.
8 We look at where we're at right now and where
9 proficiency is well, we've grown in proficiency,
10 which it -- you know, and all the sudden we went from
11 one kid who was proficient to five kids proficient.
12 Okay, those five kids, well, two of those kids
13 actually came to a after -- after October 1st that
14 were proficient. And so all the sudden, you know --
15 then we're back to like, okay, where are we really
16 going to be? You know, whenever we -- whenever the
17 chips fall with our kids at the end. But what we're
18 seeing is across the, you know, across the -- we --
19 we're trying to focus and get too strategic about
20 well, these are the kids are actually going to be our
21 letter grade kids; right? Because then all the
22 sudden, you're doing a disservice to these other kids
23 who happened to come to you after October 1. So
24 really what we just focus on is just growth for all
25 of our kids and not try to get to like, you know,

1 these are the ones that are going to be our --
2 because those kids, if they're nicer, especially
3 they'll be our letter grade next year if they stay
4 with us for -- through the, you know, through the --
5 So -- so it behooves us to make sure that they grow
6 regardless and it behooves the kids to make sure they
7 grow. So yeah. So that's really -- I am encouraged
8 where we're at, you know, with that -- I -- I'm not
9 going to say with confidence -- what I can't say with
10 confidence is I would be very, very pleased if every
11 kid meets or exceeds growth. And I -- that's the
12 direction that we're headed.

13 DR. BESHEARTS-DUNCAN: Thank you so much. Also
14 really appreciate the focus on growth for each child
15 and how that connects to the teachers' expectations
16 in the classroom and monitoring of that versus sort
17 of looking for what's going to push you to the next
18 letter grade. So thank you for calling that out.

19 And I don't have any further questions.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

21 Again, thank you for coming in and providing the
22 additional detail and, you know, providing kind of a
23 -- a plan for going forward. I guess I would want to
24 back up a little bit, and I don't know if I am the
25 only one, I think Mr. Baldwin he's already stepped

1 off and I don't know if Dr. Moore was on. The Panel
2 -- when you guys came and presented to us, maybe a
3 couple of years ago, when you had the D rating and we
4 asked for Ds and F to come in at that time and
5 provide a bit of an update on, you know, how did you
6 get there, what you're working on? And so I'm
7 curious from the -- the last conversation that we had
8 with you when you were a D to now, what are some
9 things that you implemented back then that you can
10 provide kind of an update on that you plan to
11 continue to do or you plan to not continue to do as
12 you're trying to resolve now your F rating?

13 MR. LOGAN: Yeah. I mean, gosh, where -- we
14 were such -- I wouldn't say we're different -- we
15 were such a different organization. I guess, is in
16 some ways then and even though, you know, it's
17 similar academic performance. I mean, I feel like
18 looking back then what we did -- and I'll own this.
19 I feel and this has always been an issue for us is
20 just accountability around things. And, you know, so
21 we've made great -- we've made great plans. We
22 create good, you know, what we feel like is -- we
23 know intellectually, you know, where we need to go
24 and what we need to do. And we -- the problem has
25 been follow through and accountability whenever it's

1 those things aren't happening. And, you know, I feel
2 like that falls on leadership and I feel like that
3 falls on you know our systems around leadership.
4 This year I think one of the things that we've done
5 that we haven't done in the past is creating more
6 shared accountability things to hold both, you know
7 our admin accountable, but also our teachers
8 accountable. So for example, I recognized that --
9 teacher observations I was handling all the teacher
10 observations. And I've and I've handled all the
11 teacher observations for, you know, for quite a
12 while. And just looking at the fact that that living
13 within my -- just my sole silo was not I feel like
14 making it as productive as it needs to be. It wasn't
15 making it as systematic as it should be. And so
16 that's one of the things that we did this year is we
17 really created a system of four of us that are all
18 going in and we have kind of a rotation where we do
19 different people each week and we have a tiered
20 system of some teachers need more support and they're
21 a little bit longer, observations, full periods.
22 Other ones that we know don't -- are doing it great,
23 so they may not need as much. And then us, as a
24 team, meeting together as part of our dashboard look
25 and looking at what we're seeing within those

1 observations. That also holds me accountable cause
2 it's not just living in my head; right? And it's not
3 just living -- and if somebody's not doing their
4 observations that week, well, why, you know, you have
5 these people where are the observations, whether it's
6 me or another administrator that's not -- or our
7 instructional leader. And so I mean, I feel like
8 that's one of the things that we've learned is
9 building in a system and within the design itself,
10 creating accountability, and I think that that's --
11 that's some -- a lesson we've learned as we've gone,
12 you know, forward is that you know, just because we
13 put it kind of down on paper, if it's not making it
14 into practice -- and I feel like that in the past is
15 -- something we've done is we, you know, it's -- we
16 get a system, we get a plan, but then we don't
17 execute on the plan. And I feel like this has been
18 one of our -- and I guess, one of the -- not
19 refreshing because I don't like having an F and I
20 don't like having Ds either. But this has really put
21 us into a point where it's -- we don't have a choice,
22 you know. And everybody on the staff feels that
23 sense of urgency and I -- and I think it's pushing us
24 to do better. I don't know if that answers your
25 question or not? But --

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So it kind of -- so I
2 guess, this is where my concern lingers is that -- I
3 know we had you guys come in before when you were a
4 D. To me that probably should have been more the
5 wake-up call than the F --

6 MR. LOGAN: CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- that you have now.
8 So -- it -- you -- you know, you just got through
9 saying that part of the challenge when you had the D
10 that you didn't move from the D, you moved to the F,
11 was basically follow through on a plan. And that's
12 what we're kind -- we're discussing today is your
13 ability to put a plan in place and to follow through
14 with it. So that's still a lingering concern --

15 MR. LOGAN: Sure.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- for me and pause
17 today, again because I said I was involved in the
18 last conversation where you were D and I think at
19 that point we did give you, you know, a bit of leeway
20 and flexibility because we addressed the population
21 of students that you were serving and that you were,
22 you know, still trying to determine your best
23 implementation process. But you know, at this point,
24 that's just a lingering concern, is -- especially
25 when you state that part of your challenge is to

1 follow through. So that's kind of a lingering
2 concern.

3 MR. LOGAN: Sure. I mean, I would also say that
4 that was five years ago, I believe, whenever we --
5 that was the last time that we had come up for
6 charter renewal. And, I mean, that was -- once
7 again, not to make -- I mean, there -- there was a
8 lot of a lot of turmoil in the following years
9 following, you know, that -- that within us going to
10 basically, you know, a hybrid virtual model because
11 of COVID, you know, all the different pieces that
12 happen along with that. And you know, a lot of staff
13 turnover as well, within that time, leadership
14 turnover in that time. And so there -- there were,
15 you know there were a lot of extenuating factors I
16 think that made our implementation, you know, not
17 what it needed to be to improve. But yeah, I mean we
18 did -- we did grow every year from that D. I believe
19 that our scores went up every year in our simulated
20 score, which I thought we were originally going to
21 get to keep, we were five points away from a C in
22 2024. And so -- and then, this 2025 we received the
23 F. But we did show growth, you know, as we went
24 through all those years. Yeah. That -- we still did
25 have Ds, but we were still showing growth. So now I

1 may have -- I may have overplayed our lack of
2 execution on our plan because I think we did have a
3 plan. We did execute to an extent, not as well as
4 what I would like to. I have a tendency to, you
5 know, kind of -- whenever I don't get to where we
6 want to get then, to, you know, to own it and to feel
7 -- you know, to look at my own fault within that, I
8 guess. But I mean, if you look at our growth over
9 those, you know, five -- the last five years since we
10 last were before the Charter Panel, we did see growth
11 And like I said, that culminated in as close as we
12 ever been to a C in 2024 on simulated -- on the
13 simulated letter grade and then last year was a real
14 step back.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Can you give a little
16 bit more detail used -- for us that you have your
17 advisors and then your internship coordinators they
18 -- they're serving multiple roles outside of those
19 pieces. Is that a part of your plan that you have in
20 place or have you guys discussed how you're going to
21 kind of spread that out or -- even -- more evenly
22 distribute who's responsible for those pieces other
23 than having the -- it sounded like you have the
24 school nurse and other people kind of taking on
25 roles. Have you had -- is that part of your plan

1 moving forward is to kind of not have so many folks
2 doing so many tasks?

3 MR. LOGAN: Well, I mean, I think -- I think
4 it's the nature right now unfortunately where, you
5 know, our enrollment is such that we've got to be
6 lean. We're, you know, 170-ish kids right now. And
7 so we're going to -- we will continue to have -- to
8 wear multiple hats. I mean, like I said, I was the
9 one doing teacher observations, you know, while also
10 doing superintendent-y stuff. I mean, that's where
11 we're at. But I do feel like we're getting people in
12 the right lanes where they need to be. And we are
13 building better systems of support around, you know
14 -- for one thing, we went -internships are 11th and
15 12th grade. We're looking at some realignment around
16 advisors where we have advisory kind of specialize in
17 11th and 12th grade and then advisors just kind of
18 specialize in the 9th and 10th grade. Advisors have
19 mixed feelings on that because a lot of them really
20 like that experience of going with kids all four
21 years. But it also -- you know, the skills of the
22 9th and 10th grade advisor are very different because
23 that's about culture building, you know, behavioral
24 supports, social/emotional learning, all that kind of
25 stuff. And then when we get into 11th to 12th grade,

1 it's more about I'm off campus working with various
2 stakeholders that are internship sites and things
3 like that. And so you can see if you kind of
4 specialize as one of those, then it becomes a little
5 bit less of a heavy lift because you know, like, oh,
6 this is what I -- you know, I'm -- I deal with this
7 and other people kind of deal with this. And so
8 that's one of things we've always talked about in
9 order to kind of -- and it also goes back to some of
10 our advisors really love the internship part and some
11 of them really love the community building part, you
12 know. And so kind of figuring out where people's
13 skill set is. So I think that's -- I don't think
14 people are overloaded as far as how -- they -- we do
15 wear a lot of hats, but it's more about making sure
16 that the hats you're wearing are the right ones, I
17 think. And that you actually have the capacity to do
18 those. But yeah, that's, you know, that's -- we have
19 tried to number one, have better training. Allison,
20 for example, I mean, she's the internship director
21 and she's taken a lot of the internship load as far
22 as the coordination piece of it off the individual
23 advisors and made it made it pretty clear what their
24 workload is and helps streamline what their workload
25 as far as managing internships. And then we have an

1 advisory coordinator, who is also a computer science
2 teacher. But we took it -- but he doesn't actually
3 have an advisory as well anymore. And he does a lot
4 of that piece about what are we doing with advisory
5 and helping to create that -- advisory lessons and
6 what we're doing with that. And that kind of takes
7 that off of the advisors having actually do that role
8 as well.

9 Allison, do you have anything else on sort of
10 how we're streamlining and trying to take things off,
11 you know, help people focus on the right things?

12 MS. MONTIEL: I think that we've worked really
13 hard to get the right people in the right seats and
14 on the bus, and nobody's working out of their scope
15 right now. I think that we have -- we made a major
16 decision about 2 1/2 years ago to hire Courtney Mann,
17 who unfortunately is not here today. She is,
18 unbelievably -- just a crackerjack in regards to
19 instructional excellence, teacher feedback. She's
20 just phenomenal. She also carries a lot of the load
21 of the discipline piece too. I can't sing her
22 praises enough. That was a pretty important decision
23 that we made a couple years ago to be able to really
24 lean into that. And my hope is that, you know, we've
25 had one proof year and the fruits of that I think

1 will come about here pretty soon. But the people who
2 are functioning in leadership roles, I mean each one
3 of us has taken a hard look into, you know, our
4 contribution to this. Each one of us is in school or
5 graduating here pretty soon from programs that they
6 have chosen to engage in on their own time to be able
7 to get better for our school. And so the passion and
8 dedication that's shown by our staff, by our
9 leadership team is pretty, like, systemic. And that
10 is very encouraging in regards to your point, Dr.
11 wright-McMurray about continuity and being able to,
12 you know, define a plan and stick to it. Because if
13 we're all working on the same team, if all of us are
14 in classrooms, all of us are giving teacher feedback,
15 we're all laser focused on this one piece knowing
16 that we have these other things in place, I think
17 that over time we're going to start to really reap
18 the fruits of that.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: My next question is in
20 regard to your CTE pathways and trying to get a
21 better sense of which ones are you currently offering
22 that have enrollment in level one, level two, Level
23 three, and which pathways are you targeting to
24 implement going forward? Outside of any that you
25 have that are currently enrolled with -- because I'm

1 -- just wanted to get clarification on that.

2 MS. MONTIEL: So we've had -- we've had some
3 changes here in these pathways over time. We've
4 initially targeted a business management pathway, a
5 healthcare pathway and a computer science pathway
6 with computer science being our H2. With a lot of
7 the changes that have come down from DCTE here over
8 the last year or so with the -- the course
9 progression kind of switching up and changing, we
10 have stumbled just a little bit in being able to
11 provide course offerings that meet those requirements
12 for specific years. I'll give you an example. We
13 have many students who have taken Intro to Healthcare
14 and this year we have several of those students who
15 are now moving into the level two or so we thought,
16 which was Anatomy and Physiology. Turns out it's
17 medical terminology, so you're not going to see that
18 when you pull up the CTE pathways. Now, next year,
19 Anatomy and Physiology will count, but this year it
20 did not. So that's unfortunate because those
21 students will then move in their 11th and 12th grade
22 year to what could have been practicums but are not
23 going to be unless we be able to pivot with them and
24 offer them medical terminology, probably through a
25 digital online source next year. So a couple of -- a

1 couple of examples there, but we're really paying
2 very close attention to that and working very hard to
3 meet our students where we are, meet our staffing
4 where that needs to be and create a, like, a very
5 well-rounded system. And even when students say I
6 don't want any of the those, our conversation with
7 them is basically, like, well, you need to understand
8 how to be a good employee. So let's take survey
9 business and see if you can buy into that or, for
10 example, you need to understand the medical system.
11 So let's take intro to healthcare and you'll be able
12 to see if that's something that interests you.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So what I can see in my
14 system is robotics and automation systems. Is that
15 correct? Is that correct for you? Is that what
16 you're offering as a pathway?

17 MS. MONTIEL: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So do you plan to
19 continue to offer that pathway?

20 MS. MONTIEL: We're going to pivot with that
21 because that's not going to be an H2 pathway next
22 year. So we're -- we're working with our computer
23 science teacher to get him on board with being able
24 to pivot to what will be the H2 pathway.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

1 MS. MONTIEL: But you haven't determined what
2 that's going to be yet, is what you're saying?

3 MS. MONTIEL: Possibly game design.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So with all of that, I
5 would just encourage you to reach out to the Division
6 of Career and Technical Education. Work with pathway
7 advisors there. If you have questions about who the
8 appropriate person would be, feel free to reach out
9 to me or Director White. We can definitely get you
10 going in the right direction on that.

11 MS. MONTIEL: Thank you. I really appreciate
12 that Jennifer Turner at our Co-op is also --

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah. Yeah, very good.
14 And then also so my last question is around
15 work-based learning. And so as we look in the
16 system, it looks like -- that you're using the JAG
17 code for work-based learning. But -- is that
18 correct?

19 MS. MONTIEL: It was a little bit of an
20 administrative glitch, but we are going --

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Well, the reason
22 why I brought that up isn't -- is because I feel like
23 that, you know, if you haven't considered or would
24 think about, you know, utilizing a JAG program that
25 may -- could answer a lot of the concerns or

1 questions that you have with the population of
2 students that you're serving. Because that program
3 is designed definitely to provide the appropriate
4 skills, training, additional supports with, like,
5 trauma, informed care, all of that is a part of that
6 project. So you're using the JAG work-based learning
7 code, and you know, I believe you've kind of
8 identified that may be, like, a technical glitch.
9 But the program itself may be something you may want
10 to consider looking at as well to support your
11 students.

12 MR. LOGAN: You're honing in on -- the reason
13 that happened is -- as well as the conversations that
14 we're having around that --

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

16 MR. LOGAN: -- and now we're realizing that we
17 probably do need to explore both -- offering both of
18 those. And so, anyway, so there's going to be some
19 recoding that happens within that for this year
20 because we don't feel like we are meeting the
21 requirements of JAG for this year. So we're going to
22 look at recoding that back to work-based learning,
23 which is what it was supposed to be. And then --
24 because we started digging deeper in. So -- but that
25 is something that we would -- now we've kind of

1 realized like, oh, but JAG really makes a lot of
2 sense for a lot of our kids. And so now we're -- but
3 we just -- there's some additional JAG requirements
4 that we haven't met yet. And so anyway -- so -- so
5 yeah. And the system is showing that. But we are
6 going back and -- we need to go back and recode.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Great. Sounds
8 good. Thank you. Okay. So those are my questions.

9 Are there any other questions from any of the
10 Panel Members?

11 DR. MOORE: Just want to circle back to when we
12 were talking about -- when I asked questions about
13 work-based learning and making sure that core
14 instruction didn't suffer and those -- some comments
15 were made in response to that, saying that, you know,
16 you're testing students that are in 9th and 10th
17 grade and it's your 11th and 12th grade that are
18 doing more of the work-based learning. I understand
19 that completely but just want to stress that your
20 letter grade and -- all -- letter grades, I know
21 that's what we look at. We look at that
22 accountability. But if students are thriving and
23 learning and succeeding, the letter grades going to
24 reflect that, you know. So that -- that's all we
25 have to go by. But I just want to stress that the

1 letter grade is only a portion of it about
2 achievement on the test. And your 11th and 12th
3 graders are a huge piece of that, even though they're
4 not testing because your graduation rate being 74
5 percent, which is well below the state average. And
6 then your merit and distinction being 11 percent of
7 student. When the state average is 54. And we -- we
8 are still under transitional rules, that's going to
9 be even more challenging in a couple of years to get
10 because right now you're getting credit if they're
11 just having three concurrent credit courses or
12 completing three CTE pathways. Like, it -- we're not
13 even doing all the all the things that really require
14 merit distinction for the student, so just keep that
15 in mind. I don't want us to paint that picture that
16 it's, oh, just because the students are a challenging
17 group of students because of all they're bringing to
18 the table, which certainly sounds like, you know, you
19 do have students that have some unique needs and
20 you're doing your best to meet those needs. But it's
21 not just about the test. There's overall systemic
22 failures that I know that you're trying to address
23 but just don't want to minimize that.

24 And I'm sorry, I don't know why I'm hoarse.
25 Maybe it's because we've been on a Zoom since 9:00

1 a.m., but --

2 MR. LOGAN: Yeah. That's -- Dr. Moore, that's
3 one of the things that we've really -- you know,
4 we're, of course, for the for this year, we're -- the
5 temporary rules are one thing, but as we look at the
6 eventual end rules, that becomes a lot more
7 stringent, you know. And that's one of the things
8 that we're really looking at and trying to, you know
9 to wrap around, especially as Allison alluded to, our
10 9th and 10th grade classes are kind of not one group
11 of kids, but our 9th grade is really small. Tenth
12 grade grows a little bit and then we get a huge group
13 of kids in 11th and 12th grade, but a lot -- and
14 that's where really get a lot of people also that
15 are, like -- work -- they're like schools not
16 working. Their parents are saying, oh, my God,
17 they're going to drop out. What's our option? And
18 so we're getting -- and so all of a sudden, those
19 kids come to us. And you know, we haven't had that
20 9th and 10th grade ability to build the pathways.
21 And so we're going to have to have a way, you know, a
22 systemic way to address that and look at how are we
23 going to get these kids, you know, to graduate with
24 merit whenever, you know -- and our hope is because
25 this is happening statewide, that they will have come

1 to us and that they will have had a 9th and a 10th
2 grade already and then we can either slot them into
3 some -- you know, a course offering or even better,
4 practicum experience that would, you know, or our
5 internship that would that would slot into whatever
6 they've already had in 9th and 10th grade. But
7 that's something we've definitely been, you know,
8 looking at it going, like, oh, my gosh, you know --
9 and in a couple of years, this is where we're going
10 to be and we need to be -- be ready for it.

11 DR. MOORE: Yeah, especially if you're able to
12 -- and it might not be any crossover, but if you had
13 any students that had been going to -- through WATC
14 and Peak that transfer to you just to continue that
15 would be easy. But with your luck, that probably
16 won't happen. It'll be students who didn't start
17 there. So yeah, I know you're dealing with whatever
18 cards you're -- you're dealt at that point.

19 MR. LOGAN: But it is -- I mean, I think that
20 that's -- and that that's some we're really trying
21 to, you know, to -- to lean into is with getting
22 those kids there because that -- I think that's your
23 highest -- I mean, internships are awesome, but that
24 obviously on -- you know, is your highest return is
25 if they're both doing -- it's a pathway but it's also

1 the current classes, you know. And that's -- that's
2 huge.

3 DR. MOORE: Well, also they can -- if they're
4 going to the secondary career center, even if they
5 don't start till 11th grade, they can get in the
6 three classes --

7 MR. LOGAN: Right.

8 DR. MOORE: -- because of the semester model.
9 So you can -- you can cram it in a lot quicker than
10 you can in a regular yearlong CTE course.

11 MR. LOGAN: It's -- yeah. And that's one of the
12 things we've been looking at is what are our level
13 one and two's that we need to offer so that we're
14 setting kids up for success as they go to that, you
15 know, as they go to a Peak or to WATC. And, you know
16 -- and that's -- and also we're seeing a lot of our
17 kids that will go to Peak or WATC and for what -- you
18 know, they last a semester or they last a year or
19 whatever and they go, oh, this is, you know,
20 whatever. So how do we then support them at the
21 school so they're going to find success once they're
22 going to those other campuses where it may be
23 different or whatever.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So thank you, Dr. Moore,
25 for those additional comments.

1 Plan for open enrollment charter school, Future
2 School of Fort Smith.

3 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I motion we accept the
4 statement of assurances from Future School of Fort
5 Smith.

6 DR. BACON: Second.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. We have a motion
8 by Dr. Beshears-Duncan and a second by Dr. Bacon that
9 we accept the signed statement of assurances for the
10 School Improvement Plan for the open enrollment
11 charter school, a Future School of Fort Smith. All
12 in favor -- oh, sorry. Is there any discussion on
13 the motion?

14 (NO RESPONSE)

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All in favor, say
16 aye.

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Any against? Any
19 abstentions?

20 Okay. Okay. Motion carries.

21 Thank you for joining us today. We appreciate
22 your presentation and looking forward -- look forward
23 to hearing about updates and outcomes in regards to
24 moving through your plan.

25 MR. LOGAN: Thank you all so much. I appreciate

1 you.

2 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you all.

3 MS. MONTIEL: Thank you.

4 **I.3.c. GARFIELD SCHOLARS ACADEMY**

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Next on the
6 agenda, item 3.c. is Garfield Scholars Academy. And
7 Mr. Freddie Scott is going to provide an overview of
8 the next item.

9 MR. SCOTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

10 I'm Freddie Scott, Office of School Choice and
11 Parent Empowerment.

12 Today, Garfield Scholars Academy Open enrollment
13 charter is here to present to you the root-cause
14 analysis for their letter grade they received also
15 their school improvement plan and associated signed
16 Statement of Assurance. Before you today and
17 representing Garfield Scholars Academy is Cheryl
18 Harrison, the director, as well as Dr. Melanie
19 Kennon, CEO and board member -- board president.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you,
21 Mr. Scott.

22 Okay. So before we get started, can I have
23 everyone that is going to be speaking on behalf of
24 Garfield Scholars Academy please stand, turn on your
25 cameras and unmute yourself, and raise your right

1 hand. Okay. Do you swear the testimony or your
2 statement you are about to give is the truth, the
3 whole truth and nothing but the truth?

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you. All
6 right.

7 MS. SAWYER: And I'm on. This is Joy Sawyer.
8 I'm also here with Garfield scholars.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you for
10 making yourself known.

11 MS. HARRISON: Hi, I'm Cheryl Harrison. Oh, I'm
12 sorry.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: You're fine. You have
14 20 minutes and you may start your presentation.

15 MS. HARRISON: Okay. Thank you. I'm setting my
16 timer too. I have an old-fashioned timer. I'm in
17 the counselor's office, so -- so I'm Cheryl Harrison.
18 I'm the director of Garfield Scholars Academy. And
19 I'm -- and I'm with Dr. Kennon and Dr. Sawyer today,
20 who are the founders of our school.

21 This is -- we are in the middle of our second
22 year. and I'm going to go ahead and share our
23 presentation and I'm going to hit that running and
24 then if you all have any questions -- can you all see
25 that?

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

2 MS. HARRISON: Okay. Thank you.

3 Well, it's not wanting to move forward. I'm not
4 sure why it's not moving forward. I'm just going to
5 go ahead and start talking and then maybe I can play
6 with it in just a minute.

7 I just, you know, want to introduce my team and
8 let you know our school has 92 students this year.
9 We're up almost 20 percent from last year. We have
10 five classroom teachers and -- yeah, Joy's going to
11 come in and see if she can get this -- get this
12 working.

13 We have five classroom teachers currently this
14 year and we have ten support staff, and we all wear
15 lots of hats in running the school.

16 Sorry about the presentation. Yes, maybe stop
17 and -- so we do have a vision for this year and I
18 don't want to -- I want to stay focused. But
19 Garfield Scholars Academy, we want to strengthen our
20 personnel quality, improve Tier I instruction,
21 intensify targeted interventions to meet the needs of
22 underperforming students and increase enrollment to
23 ensure long term physical -- fiscal sustainability.

24 There we go. So you can just see some of our
25 staff names. I'm not going to stay there too long.

1 Yeah, sorry.

2 So where we came from -- and I just want to hit
3 the high points. But last year we were located in a
4 church in the city of Garfield, and they were very
5 generous and allowed us to lease that from them. It
6 was not a permanent situation. It was not ideal, but
7 this year we were able, with the support of the
8 community, to move into a school. It's a real school
9 location and so, you know, we feel like that that was
10 one major hurdle that we overcame last year. Another
11 issue that we had last year was teacher efficacy and
12 I attribute that -- that's kind of a broad statement.
13 But we had two first-year novice teachers that were
14 not traditional students that went to a university.
15 They had a different major and they went to an
16 alternate, you know, ARPEP** plan. And they just
17 didn't have the efficacy; they didn't have the
18 background; they didn't have the training and we
19 realized that. And so you know, that was something
20 that we had to work toward to improve.

21 Sorry, I'm going to reduce this.

22 We did have instructional challenges. With
23 teacher efficacy comes instructional challenges. We
24 had students come to us from all different walks of
25 life. We had homeschool students. We had students

1 from other school districts. We had students that
2 had gone to virtual schools and had decided to come
3 back. And so those instructional challenges paired
4 with inexperienced teachers, you know, they were a
5 struggle last year. We had attendance issues. When
6 you have students that come -- sometimes when they
7 come from homeschool environments, they like the
8 flexibility of homeschool, but they also realize
9 their students need the improved instruction and the
10 structure. But they also enjoy having their time
11 off. So that was -- that was an issue last year. We
12 do have approved improved attendance this year.

13 Our culture and climate, they weren't where, you
14 know, we wanted them to be. We were all wearing
15 multiple hats last year and it was stressful. We
16 worked in a building where we had to, you know, set
17 up our classrooms and break our classroom down every
18 week so they could have church. And so that was
19 really stressful on the teachers. But we worked to
20 build a culture and climate. And aside from having a
21 new building that our parents and our students and
22 our community and opening our new building, it's ours
23 now. We don't have to set up and breakdown and I can
24 tell that that has improved our climate and our
25 culture with families and with teachers.

1 I talked a little bit about our student
2 preparedness. They came to us from all different
3 educational readiness levels. And we weren't
4 prepared for that. And this year, we are using our
5 state screeners, we can, you know, find out within
6 the first two days where they are and reading and
7 math, especially our lower grade students and in our
8 upper grade students, we can use classroom
9 assessment. So we are using the ATLAS system. We
10 also didn't focus on technology use last year. We
11 really wanted it to be a pencil paper system for our
12 students, and we didn't want to put them on a
13 computer and let the computer do the instruction.
14 And that's just not what they were used to. They
15 were used to going to classrooms where the teacher
16 would present a lesson and then put them on a device.
17 And they weren't used to that. So we had to do a lot
18 of free teaching. This year, we've got a good
19 balance. Students are doing, you know, still doing
20 paper and pencil work, but now they're getting more
21 practice with their technology. They're more
22 digitally literate using the ATLAS. That platform
23 and the testing platform they they've really had
24 never, you know, experienced that before.

25 Our enrollment numbers, we were down last year.

1 We ended the year at 75 and we're at 92 now.

2 Ninety-three as of October 1.

3 And we had a lot of oversight improvements. We
4 -- we expanded our board. We had a lot of training
5 things that we didn't know we didn't know that helped
6 us a lot this year. And I did link challenges and
7 progress, and I can address those more specifically
8 if you have questions. But overall, we know what we
9 were doing last year was not working. And so we have
10 some goals that we have written this year, and we
11 didn't wait until we got state data to start moving
12 forward. We knew that we had growing to do and so we
13 started with our master schedule. We included
14 teachers and making that master schedule and we
15 talked about what Tier I instruction looks like and
16 then what Tier II and tier-three instruction looks
17 like; and how it's not our job during Tier I to try
18 to remediate Tier II and tier-three. Let's scaffold;
19 let's get the students the content that they need;
20 and then we'll work on the Tier II and tier-three.
21 And we have a school-wide program of Tier II and
22 tier-three now, where every single person, including
23 myself, spends time with kids every day. We have a
24 dedicated time where every child goes where they need
25 to go, and we spent the first semester on English

1 language Arts.

2 So here's our goals that we had for our
3 strategic plan. We're going to demonstrate effective
4 and highly effective Tier I instructional strategies
5 as measured by TESS. We did not -- with -- one of
6 our waivers was not to have teacher evaluations last
7 year. We wanted to build culture. Well, that was
8 definitely a mistake and I realized that. You know,
9 we did give coaching. We gave feedback, but it
10 wasn't the same as the official evaluation that TESS,
11 you know, offers.

12 Goal two, we want to increase student
13 achievement on math, English Language Arts and
14 science. And achievement is those students that are
15 proficient, threes and fours, by five percent.

16 Goal three is a growth goal. We want each
17 student to grow by ten percent, summative, on the
18 ATLAS, and we've been tracking that through our fall
19 and winter interims.

20 Goal number four is attendance. You know, we
21 want parents to know that if they're not at school,
22 they can't learn. They need to be here. And we have
23 made a lot of improvements. And one of the ways that
24 goal four, I'm addressing, is I have a parent GroupMe
25 and they get to hear all the time about the things

1 that we're doing and how it's important for students
2 to be here.

3 And then, goal five is also part of our parent
4 engagement. And so 100 percent engagement means that
5 some of my parents are on GroupMe. Now, remember, we
6 have 92 students. Some are on our GroupMe and some
7 like to message me on Facebook and some like paper
8 letters home. So I'm just meeting those families
9 where they are and what they need.

10 I really don't want to spend all this time
11 reading this because I realize that, you know, I have
12 a time limit. But we have taken steps to look at
13 each one of these goals and to fix what was wrong.
14 So we know that our instruction we need more
15 professional development. We need to spend time as a
16 team talking about what good instruction looks like.
17 We need to review data and that's on goal one, two
18 and three. On goal, four student attendance, we've
19 got to look at when students are here, when they're
20 not here, we've got to find out what's going on.
21 We've got to reach out to parents. And then parent
22 engagement, just so they know what's going on, what
23 the curriculum looks like, when testing is, those are
24 all really important things. But we've kind of
25 outlined those there and those are the steps that,

1 you know, that we want to take to make sure that, you
2 know, we're meeting our students' needs.

3 I did want to hit just a little bit of data, and
4 this is cohort data and right now this is the extent
5 of what we have. We know that, you know, we can look
6 at the summit of that at the end of the year for
7 growth. But our third graders from last year, and
8 I'm not proud to say this, they were some of the
9 lowest in the state. And so last spring we were 20
10 percent; the state was 40. In the fall, it leveled
11 out just a little bit, 25 percent, but in winter we
12 have 30 percent of this year's -- 33 percent of this
13 year's 4th graders. Where the state has 30 percent.
14 So we've already seen achievement, proficiency growth
15 and we're pretty excited about that.

16 I can show you similar stories in math. In the
17 fall, I'm not sure what happened with the zero
18 percent there, but we're back up in the winter to 27
19 percent compared to the state. And then science,
20 very similar we're neck and neck and we're -- you
21 know, one of the things that we have is we have an
22 extra curriculum that teaches science and it's the
23 agriculture piece and we include growth of plants and
24 where their food comes from. And I think that's
25 going to make a big difference in our summative

1 scores as well.

2 5th grade, these were the 4th graders from last
3 year, you can see at the end of the year they were
4 actually above the state in proficiency. Fall, it's
5 just a big drop, probably a lot of changes going on.
6 I really -- I don't want to speculate about that, but
7 winter, you can see we're progressing again. We're
8 at 25 percent in fifth grade, not where we want to
9 be. And we are evaluating our winter interim data.
10 And so math is a very similar story. It's funny how
11 we flip flop, you know, we were doing pretty well in
12 the spring comparatively and then we, you know, we
13 were above the state average in the fall and now
14 we're below. So, you know, we're really digging in
15 to find out that data, you know, where are our weak
16 areas. And then science, this was kind of shocking
17 to me, but I do want to point out again that our
18 curriculum with science, we spent a lot of time in
19 the economics in the fall. So social studies was a
20 big push. That just shows us we need to spend more
21 time in science for that winter score so we can see
22 where our students really are.

23 And then, I kind of just want to show you 6th
24 grade. Now, again, not making excuses, but I have
25 five 6th graders. And it's -- so it's really hard to

1 collect data on students, you know, when you have
2 five of them and you're looking at your lowest 25
3 percent and you're looking at, you know, achievement.
4 So these scores are not where we want them to be for
5 our 6th graders. Math also the same, not where we
6 want them to be, especially at the end of the year
7 when they were -- actually had proficiency and now
8 we're at zero. So we have a lot of growth in 6th
9 grade, 5th and 6th grade to do.

10 And so I just kind of want to -- wanted to go
11 through that really quickly and then answer any
12 questions you might have.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. Thank
14 you for your presentation.

15 So let's start with Ms. Stewart.

16 MS. STEWART: Hey, thank you all. Thank you for
17 that, that presentation and all the information.

18 I think for me, I'd like to start with student
19 supports based on, you know, the graphs that you just
20 shared with us and where you are, you know, the --
21 you know, for each of those areas, what are some of
22 the supports that you're looking at to support
23 students? But then you know, kind of parallel to
24 that question, how are you supporting teachers?

25 MS. HARRISON: Yes, and that's a good question.

1 One of the things we did not have last year was
2 adequate PLC time. We have built that into our
3 master schedule, and we have dedicated 90 minutes
4 every week where we meet and students -- or sorry
5 staff get the support, and they get to look at
6 student data. And I'm there to support. And we have
7 professional development around our Tier I
8 instructional materials, about ATLAS testing,
9 anything that they might need to know. But we're a
10 very small staff, so I'm supporting students and
11 teachers. And so one of the big things we did was
12 change our PLC time. So now we're very diligently
13 looking at student and teacher data.

14 MS. STEWART: Thinking about capacity, kind of
15 what you -- what you just referenced. How are you
16 utilizing supports with within DESE or APSRC or your
17 co-op?

18 MS. HARRISON: Yes, that that's a great
19 question. We -- it's very interesting. Our first
20 year we had some struggles being recognized as a
21 school. And I -- and I'm sure that happens to a lot
22 of charter schools. And so we're getting the
23 response that we want this year from the different
24 areas. Our local co-op in the northwest, they're
25 actively reaching out and wanting to help in offering

1 professional development. APSRC has provided us with
2 support with special education because we really do
3 have a high level of students with IEPs. And that's
4 a big help to us. It's just managing the people. A
5 lot of our staff are part time, so they they're not
6 here all day, every day. And so we don't have an
7 endless amount of time. So just managing that time
8 and how do we serve the students with what we have.
9 APSRC is also helping with back office and different
10 components that we need to access, finances and one
11 of the things that we did recently was applied for
12 the HIT Grant, the High Impact Tutoring Grant. And
13 we -- at first we decided we wanted to hire someone
14 to, to manage that tutoring. But we have partnered
15 with patriots for education, freedom education, and
16 they are an authorized tutor, and we're going to have
17 a partnership with them. And they're going to use
18 some of our space. And they're going to tutor our
19 students. And they're going to have their own
20 tutoring going on. So we've really got a lot of
21 things going -- happening.

22 MS. STEWART: Well, I'm -- I'd love that. I
23 love, you know, bringing others into your space,
24 especially since capacity is an issue for --

25 MS. HARRISON: Yes.

1 MS. STEWART: -- for you and your staff. Can
2 you speak a little bit about -- in reference to,
3 briefly, but with special education services, how are
4 those offered? Is that a full or part -- part time?

5 MS. HARRISON: Yes. I have two --

6 MS. STEWART: Oh, sorry, go ahead.

7 MS. HARRISON: I have two part-time special
8 education teachers. Last year I had one part-time
9 teacher, and he was here all day, every day. But I
10 have two part time. I have one that's here three
11 days and she serves all of our students with
12 characteristics of dyslexia. And she meets with all
13 the students who have any type of writing or English
14 Language Arts in their IEP. So that is her -- her
15 focus and the other one spends one day on campus, and
16 she works with our students primarily on math and
17 then some of our -- our younger students.

18 MS. STEWART: Okay. So how many, just an
19 estimate, do you have needing services or on IEPs?

20 MS. HARRISON: We have 17 out of 92, yes.

21 MS. STEWART: Okay. Okay. And then as far as
22 your teaching staff, are they well experienced? Are
23 they novice, kind of what's the makeup?

24 MS. HARRISON: Yes, yes. So last year we had
25 one teacher that was experienced. She had worked in

1 California for years. She had moved to Rogers with
2 her husband. So she has experience with the Arkansas
3 curriculum, Arkansas standards. I had two teachers
4 at kindergarten and a third-grade teacher last year
5 that were first year alternate licensure teachers.
6 And so they didn't have the support. They didn't
7 have the background. I did have APSRC help with
8 mentoring them. They came in. That was -- that was
9 great. But the -- and then I had a 4th grade, 4th
10 and 5th grade teacher that was in his third year of
11 ARPEP. So he was almost finished. He actually
12 completed it and, you know, graduated from that
13 program. But the two teachers that were first years,
14 we did not extend their contract this year. They
15 were just not effective. And so we hired 2 new
16 teachers that are experienced.

17 MS. STEWART: Okay.

18 MS. HARRISON: And I really attribute us being
19 in our new building because they actually reached out
20 to me. We just really struggle in our little town
21 with recruiting teachers. You know, being where we
22 are, we're next to the big four, you know, school
23 districts and so it's a little bit of a struggle.
24 But yeah, they reached out to me, and they wanted to
25 be here and they knew what our mission was and our

1 vision. And so they're fabulous.

2 MS. STEWART: Well --

3 MS. HARRISON: They both have at least five
4 years of experience.

5 MS. STEWART: That's great. Kudos to you for
6 that.

7 MS. HARRISON: Yes.

8 MS. STEWART: That -- that's good news. So with
9 those that have come out of a non-traditional route,
10 what are your plans for support, ongoing support for
11 them?

12 MS. HARRISON: I do have support through APSRC
13 this year and then -- and I support. And I also have
14 a teacher that was here last year that retired, that
15 also had a lot of experience. I failed to mention
16 her earlier, but she came out of retirement to help
17 and then she retired again. But she comes in and she
18 does coaching. She does Tier II in the classroom
19 with that teacher. She's got 28 years of experience.
20 So we're just using the resources that we have in our
21 community.

22 MS. STEWART: Yeah. Okay. That's great.

23 I think that's all I've got for right now.

24 MS. HARRISON: Okay.

25 MS. STEWART: Thank you.

1 MS. HARRISON: You're welcome.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

3 Dr. Bacon.

4 DR. BACON: Thank you.

5 You know, it's hard to really formulate an
6 overview of what what's happening and where to go
7 since you've really only been on the ground for a
8 year and this is just your second year in operation.

9 MS. HARRISON: Right.

10 DR. BACON: And so, you know, really just trying
11 to think of listening to you, I know how it is when
12 you're opening a new school, whether you have one kid
13 or 1,000 kids, just there's so many things going on
14 and so much -- so many decisions to make and so many
15 systems to try to build.

16 MS. HARRISON: Amen.

17 DR. BACON: Talk to me about, just from a sort
18 of a higher level as admin, whether it's, you know,
19 any of you that are on that leadership team, where
20 are you today versus where you were a year ago and
21 give me some confidence that you -- you're putting
22 strategies in place, systems in place that you
23 believe are going to move you in the direction of
24 meeting these goals you set.

25 MS. SAWYER: I think I can answer that. I'm Joy

1 Sawyer. I'm one of the founders, along with Dr.
2 Kennon, and I am in the building here quite a bit. L
3 Last year, we always said that we were building
4 the plane as we were flying it and parts were falling
5 off sometimes. This year we are actually flying the
6 plane, and we don't have any parts falling off. We -
7 - I do think -- I just can't say enough about being
8 in a school and how much different it is for
9 everybody. You know, teachers have real-sized
10 classroom. But our interventions that we do daily,
11 those are, you know, we don't worry about grade or
12 anything. You know, if you need it, you go get it.
13 So if you're in the 5th grade and there's a
14 second-grade skill you need, you know, then you're
15 getting that second grade skill and you may get it be
16 getting that along with 3rd graders, 2nd graders, 1st
17 graders. You know, it's the group of students that
18 that need that skill. And I just feel like we are --
19 we're more organized. We -- last year, Dr. Kennon
20 and I did this very quickly. And you know, in
21 retrospect, we probably should have waited one year
22 or started one year earlier. You know, just to kind
23 to have it in our head, you know. And so this year I
24 feel like we know what the expectations are as a
25 board. We have added people to our board, local

1 business, you know, people and parents -- that are
2 very -- that are very invested in this community and
3 in this school. And I just feel like we are, you
4 know, we are moving. We have our PLCs. We're
5 partnering -- we feel like we're partnering with the
6 with the right people. You know, and we just -- we
7 feel like now we have our feet on the ground, you
8 know.

9 DR. KENNON: And if I may, Melanie Kennon.

10 MS. SAWYER: Yeah.

11 DR. KENNON: We finally have been assigned a
12 literacy coach from DESE. So we're excited about
13 that. We have some -- our board has gone through
14 additional training and so we -- we know more of what
15 the expectation is for oversight. Last year, we kind
16 of were playing whack a mole in trying to deal with
17 issues with a, you know first year start up. And as
18 you said, Dr. Bacon, there are so many plans and
19 policies and procedures and all the things that have
20 to be implemented, written, implemented, adopted and
21 put into place there at a new school. That -- it's
22 very time consuming, particularly if you only have a
23 limited capacity of folks that can handle that. And
24 so I feel like our board is better equipped. We're
25 asking the right questions in terms of oversight

1 where we are -- we know more. Last year we didn't
2 know what we didn't know. There's not a rule book or
3 a, you know, do this step and do then do this step
4 and, oh, by the way you're going to need to have done
5 this before you do this. So everything we were kind
6 of learning on the fly. We also, are, you know, just
7 to put it out there, just as a note, we -- our score
8 it was based on 30 students and nine of which were in
9 our bottom 25th percent. And so it's hard to get a
10 full picture of the learning that was going on last
11 year even. You know, we know where we had some gaps
12 and some holes and we knew that we had students
13 coming in with literacy gaps. We had a lot of
14 behavior problems we were dealing with last year, and
15 some inexperienced teachers. And so we've moved to
16 try to correct those things, but we also know that
17 this may not represent fully the achievement and the
18 growth that we saw on a day-to-day basis for some of
19 our students. So we, you know, we -- we're owning it
20 and we want to make sure that we have focused in on
21 -- we know we've got a long way to go to put --
22 implement the systems in place that we want to see,
23 you know, help our students grow. And so this --
24 we've tried to take some immediate steps to alleviate
25 that in utilizing more of our resources and setting

1 some real tangible goals and check-ins that we can
2 utilize at the school.

3 MS. HARRISON: And Dr. --

4 DR. BACON: I appreciate that.

5 Go ahead.

6 MS. HARRISON: Dr. Bacon, I wanted to say one
7 more thing kind of to address your question. Last
8 year I spent a lot of time superintendent-ing. You
9 know, building, doing a lot of those
10 responsibilities. I was not the instructional leader
11 I wanted to be. And that -- I've changed that this
12 year. I have some consulting and some support now
13 with Freedom Education. They're both -- one is a
14 former assistant superintendent and the other is a
15 current superintendent of schools. So I'm getting a
16 lot more help from that aspect and now I can be in
17 classrooms. I can be looking at Tier I. I can be
18 doing walkthroughs. I can be working, you know, with
19 students. So I feel like we've come a long way
20 already in one year.

21 DR. BACON: Yeah. I appreciate that. And I
22 think a year from now, you'll feel even better. It's
23 --

24 MS. HARRISON: Yes.

25 DR. BACON: You know, you're -- you're really in

1 such a new place with this organization. And I do
2 think from the presentation you all gave us at the
3 amendment request when you were changing locations,
4 maybe back in the spring or summer, you know, clearly
5 you all are well positioned with -- I mean, it's a
6 small community, but you've got a lot of community
7 and support --

8 MS. HARRISON: Yes.

9 DR. BACON: -- people that are interested in the
10 success of your schools, so using all of those
11 partnerships and relationships to build because you
12 really have a small a small footprint in terms of
13 your support staff and what the -- the personnel that
14 you can provide. So I appreciate that. And it's
15 great to -- you know, this the first of these today
16 that we've really actually talked with the board and
17 so I appreciate having input there because I think
18 that's critical to the success of this school. So
19 we're thinking about the instructional piece. I'm
20 just trying to wrap my brain around you got K-6.
21 You've got 92 students. And I think I heard you say
22 in the beginning, maybe five teachers.

23 MS. HARRISON: Uh-huh.

24 DR. BACON: The number there? Okay. So how --
25 what does that look like, Tier I instruction for

1 students?

2 MS. HARRISON: Yeah.

3 DR. BACON: Are they --

4 MS. HARRISON: Let me --

5 DR. BACON: -- multi --

6 MS. HARRISON: -- give you a break --

7 DR. BACON: -- multi grade levels? Are they,
8 you know, how does that look subject wise?

9 MS. HARRISON: They are.

10 DR. BACON: Yeah.

11 MS. HARRISON: They are. So we -- you know,
12 last year I had some split classes. This year I was
13 much more intentional in where I put students because
14 I knew I would have to have, you know, multi-level
15 classrooms again. I have a standalone kindergarten
16 with 17 students, you know, that's a -- that's a
17 really positive thing. But I have some 1st graders
18 that came to us from homeschool this year that needed
19 some skills that they missed in kindergarten.

20 DR. BACON: Right.

21 MS. HARRISON: So they're also able to go spend
22 some time in the kindergarten class. We're very
23 fluid and we like that about our school. But my 1st
24 and 2nd grade teacher, we looked at data and we
25 decided which students need to be in a 1st and 2nd

1 grade split because I had quite a few 2nd grade
2 students. And I was actually able to put some 2nd
3 and 3rd grade students in a class together because
4 that's what they needed. So they're still getting
5 their core instruction, but they're working with a
6 group of students that's more like them. I have a
7 standalone 4th grade class who has -- he started with
8 20 and he's down to 17. We've had some students move
9 back to public school. And then my class that I'm
10 struggling with the most are my 5th and 6th graders.
11 And they're my smallest grade band. There's, you
12 know, 13 altogether. And, you know, it's just such a
13 small sampling and a small population, several of
14 them in there have IEPs. So they're behind grade
15 level. I've had some new ones come in. So that's
16 where our biggest struggle is right now with the
17 model that we're using is making sure that those kids
18 are getting what they need.

19 DR. BACON: You know, you said something that I
20 think is critical for the future moving forward. If
21 you have 17 kindergarteners and you're a K-6 school,
22 what is 17 times 7 is like 119 if you can hold on to
23 those students and progress through and build on that
24 --

25 MS. HARRISON: Yeah.

1 DR. BACON: -- you'll just continue to have more
2 resources to provide more support. So --

3 MS. HARRISON: Yes.

4 DR. BACON: I think it's awesome that -- that
5 your kindergarten is that size. Talk to me about, I
6 know you talked about some Tier II and tier-three
7 interventions. What specifically are you all using?
8 Any specific programs? Supports? What -- what does
9 that look like?

10 MS. HARRISON: So if you looked at English
11 Language Arts, we use -- for our phonics program, we
12 use Foundations and we also use Benchmark reading,
13 which that was kind of another wrench thrown into our
14 plan. You know, Benchmark will not be allowed to be
15 used after this year. It's not on the approved list
16 anymore. So we -- you know, we did have training in
17 that for my teachers and that's on the comprehension,
18 you know, part of the science of reading. And so
19 we'll have to see what that looks like again. But
20 you know, within class time, every student is getting
21 Tier I instruction on their grade level. And then
22 when teachers transition to small groups, they're
23 working, you know, with Tier II and tier-three.
24 And we also have a schoolwide time where we look at
25 data, and every child gets to go to a group with an

1 adult that works on a skill that they need. And we
2 started -- I was with the kindergarten group this
3 year and we started -- and some of them were 1st
4 graders. We started at the very basic of phonemic
5 awareness and letter naming and letter
6 identification; and I think we started with about 20
7 kids, and now we're down to three.

8 DR. BACON: Okay.

9 MS. HARRISON: And so we're moving, kids. You
10 know, we're taking data. We see that they -- they're
11 ready to move to the next level. We're not going to
12 keep them, you know, in a tie-two or tier-three
13 intervention when they don't -- they clearly don't
14 need it. We have the data to support moving them
15 around and we've moved a lot of students.

16 DR. BACON: Do you all use any specific programs
17 or is it mostly you're dependent on your teacher
18 driven for intervention?

19 MS. HARRISON: Yes. And what we're doing is
20 we're looking at their current Tier I instruction and
21 we're doing reteach where -- and with the science of
22 reading, there's a lot of things available to us. We
23 use the Wilson program for dyslexia, and so that's a
24 tier-three group in the morning. We have students
25 that go to that, you know, specifically. So yeah,

1 we, you know, use Phonics First. So we're using all
2 approved programs to meet the needs of the kids.

3 DR. BACON: And is there anything that families
4 support at home? Anything -- any, you know, one of
5 our groups earlier was talking about reading, you
6 know, ten minutes or 20 minutes of reading at home,
7 ten minutes of that, you know, using maybe IXL. Just
8 curious if you all having -- how you've engaged
9 parents in this process?

10 MS. HARRISON: We have. We don't use any online
11 platforms as far as that goes. We're not, you know,
12 ruling that out in the future. But right now we send
13 home books for parents to read with students. We've
14 actually created small lessons in reading and math
15 that they can do with their students. We sent home
16 -- when we knew this weather was coming, you know, we
17 told parents we're sending this home and they always
18 complete the homework, especially in our lower
19 grades. Our upper grade students are -- their focus
20 is primarily on reading. But I know the 4th grade
21 teacher, you know, they're working -- still trying to
22 learn their multiplication facts. For whatever
23 reason, that's such a difficult thing for kids to
24 acquire, and they're still working on that. So, you
25 know, kind of just whatever they see they need at the

1 moment. And the parents are very willing to spend
2 that time to work with their student.

3 MS. SAWYER: And as soon as -- excuse me. As
4 soon as we did get the letter grade before it was
5 published publicly, we did have a big parent meeting.
6 Board members and Ms. Harrison, we all came together
7 and we told our parents, you know, yeah, we -- we've
8 got to be reading, you know, 20 minutes a night.
9 You've got to have your kids here, you know, every
10 day. We -- and, of course, you're never going to get
11 100 percent really with, you know, participation as
12 far as coming to the meeting. But we, you know, we
13 have -- and we're a small school, so they all talk
14 anyway. You know you can have one parent, and it
15 goes to six or seven by the -- by -- in a couple of
16 hours. But, you know, we did have that meeting with
17 them and shared you know this information with them
18 and told them how we could get better. And
19 overwhelmingly, when asked if they would rather have
20 -- you know, what -- where -- their homework, all of
21 these parents wanted their students to have homework
22 out of their intervention groups so that they could
23 help, you know, build the skills that they are
24 missing. And so I believe that our intervention
25 groups are also working on that getting, you know,

1 getting those skills home so parents can help with
2 that.

3 DR. BACON: Well, that's all I have. And I
4 appreciate the transparency and the responses. I
5 would just say, I mean, you're year two, you've --
6 you had so much in year one that had to be planned
7 out and put in place. You're refining now. Don't
8 get discouraged, keep rolling because obviously
9 you've got a population of families there that want
10 your school. You've got potential for growth moving
11 into the next few years. Just stay focused and
12 really focused on that, that Tier I grade-level
13 instruction with the appropriate intervention. So
14 thanks for what you're doing.

15 MS. HARRISON: Thank you.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

17 Dr. Beshears-Duncan.

18 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes, thank you.

19 So I'm looking at your priorities and I'm
20 wondering about, I think you said 17 of 92 of your
21 students have IEPs. Is that -- so that's a -- that's
22 a big number given your small size. And I'm thinking
23 about some of the push-in supports that can be
24 valuable for kiddos. Yet given your size, that may
25 be difficult to do, so I'm wondering where you are

1 with thinking about both NTSS and behavioral
2 supports, but also maybe some creative ways to help
3 kids in Tier I instruction. What might be some
4 things that come up for you or that you're focusing
5 on?

6 MS. HARRISON: Well, that is a big concern of
7 ours. A lot of our students are speech impaired, so
8 it's an articulation issue. But we do have students
9 with IEPs that are specific learning disability,
10 other health impaired students that do need those
11 supports that -- in class. And that's one of the
12 things that we try to do is write some of those
13 supports into their IEPs and help teachers plan out
14 what that would look like in their classroom. And so
15 we spend some of our PLC time looking at data and
16 saying, well, you know, how would this support help
17 and -- you know, as far as a student that maybe needs
18 reduced assignments, how would -- what would that
19 look like? And so we spent a lot of time talking
20 about that together. And now that we've got one year
21 under our belts, a lot of those older students, I've
22 got teachers that had them last year and they're
23 willing to help. And I also have from APSRC, Sandra
24 Doggett, she has, you know, called me every week and
25 she has some good ideas. She sits some on meetings

1 and she talks about how inclusion, you know, is best
2 practice but you have to have support with inclusion.
3 So we're learning a lot there too. Yeah, we're --
4 you know, with our budget, we're super restricted,
5 but we are getting creative with how we are serving
6 those students. And, you know, I asked parents at
7 the end of every IEP meeting, give us your feedback.
8 How do you think your students are doing? And
9 overwhelmingly they're -- they're pleased. They
10 realize that there's still growth to be -- to be had.
11 But I feel like we're doing the best we can with what
12 we have right now. So --

13 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you. I'm thinking
14 about the last time we were able to hear from you all
15 and how engaged your community is and I feel
16 confident that there are some creative solutions to
17 help -- to help with kiddos. I'm also thinking about
18 the state level supports and there are also some
19 exemplar schools across the state that are smaller,
20 perhaps not as small as you, but smaller and rural
21 that you may also be able to -- to learn from. So --

22 MS. HARRISOON: Yes, we would love that.

23 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: No further questions.
24 Thank you all.

25 MS. HARRISON: Thank you.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

2 Dr. Moore.

3 DR. MOORE: Thank you for your presentation and
4 for your thoughtful evaluation of your situation. I
5 did want to ask, you mentioned homeschool students a
6 lot, former homeschool, and you may have mentioned
7 this, and I just didn't catch it. What percentage of
8 your students come from a homeschool background?

9 MS. HARRISON: Last year -- and I don't have a
10 percentage, but last year I know I had six upper
11 grade students that came from homeschool. And their
12 parents were -- you know, we had, you know, hard
13 conversations, but they would admit that homeschool
14 didn't look like, you know, what -- what they thought
15 schools should look like. And that's why they ended
16 up coming to our school. They wanted the supports
17 and they wanted it to be a small school. So we had
18 several students last year that struggled
19 academically.

20 DR. MOORE: Okay. So -- go ahead.

21 MS. SAWYER: And some of those kids -- I'm
22 sorry. Some of those kids came from homeschool and
23 they were part of also the attendance, you know,
24 issue. And I said, it seems like people think school
25 choice means it's a choice whether or not they come

1 once you enroll them. So we've had to work with
2 those, you know, those parents to help them
3 understand, you know, if they're going to be
4 enrolled, they have to show up. So that was a
5 challenge, but I think that -- that's going better
6 also.

7 DR. MOORE: Okay. Well, I could certainly see
8 with your very small numbers of students that are
9 testing that if you had that many in the upper grades
10 -- and certainly homeschool students can be some of
11 the most advanced students there are. Some of them
12 accelerate far beyond what we're able to do in a
13 regular public-school setting but sometimes grade
14 level Tier I instruction is just not getting that
15 rigor that we anticipate in a public school. So here
16 -- here or there, can go either way, but that could
17 definitely impact your -- your results.

18 MS. HARRISON: Yeah.

19 DR. MOORE: Along those same lines, your upper
20 grades, you mentioned what a small number of students
21 were in those grades and you mentioned combining
22 those classes. Help me understand, especially like
23 my background being math, the math standards in 5th
24 grade and math standards and 6th grade, although they
25 build on one another are -- are certainly different.

1 So how does that look? How does Tier I instruction
2 look in a math class in 5th and 6th grade?

3 MS. HARRISON: And this is Cheryl Harrison
4 again.

5 So I, as a former teacher, I also taught at
6 split classes occasionally and most of them were 4th
7 and 5th grade. And so my point of view, whenever I
8 coach my teachers, you know, I talk about classroom
9 structures and how important it is to get those
10 classroom structures in place so you can spend time
11 working with one grade level while another grade
12 level is may be building a skill that they need to
13 work on. You know, in the younger grades we call it
14 centers, but as -- and, you know, with older students
15 you can give them something to work on that they need
16 to build on, and we talked about multiplication
17 facts. So that is how -- you know, with the limited
18 resources that is how we, you know, operate in this
19 school is, you know, we just set up those structures.
20 And I would say we probably didn't have those
21 structures in place last year, but this year we do.
22 We've done a lot of coaching. I've gone into
23 classrooms. I've modeled, you know, myself. And so
24 I think just giving those teachers the strategies
25 that they need.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay. Because, you know, even just
2 teaching one grade level one subject differentiated
3 instruction is one of the most challenging things I
4 ever tried to do. So I'm just -- blows my mind the
5 thought of trying to do two grade levels at once
6 because it was hard just at one grade level. So --

7 MS. HARRISON: Yes.

8 DR. MOORE: -- I'm sure that has to be a
9 challenge.

10 MS. HARRISON: Well, and Dr. Moore, you know, we
11 didn't have the -- the multi-tier system of supports
12 in place for our behavior last year and this year, we
13 do. We have a school wide system and students know
14 the expectations. The teachers spent the time
15 teaching the expectations. And so that has helped a
16 lot because we did have a lot of behavior issues last
17 year. And so just putting those systems into place,
18 it's helped a lot too.

19 DR. MOORE: Well, I'm sure that, you know, being
20 new, this is -- this is different than when a school
21 comes back that has already been doing this several
22 years. So I'm sure there's some growing pains that
23 first year. I will say because -- and not that it's
24 an excuse, but a lot of times very high poverty is
25 one of the factors for why we anticipate lower

1 performance of students because there's -- you know,
2 research shows such a direct correlation and overall
3 your poverty level is not high. So we're going to
4 have even higher expectations long term as you
5 progress and learn and go through these steps because
6 your poverty level is, you know, in the 30s at least
7 it was. It might have changed this year as you grew
8 some.

9 MS. HARRISON: It has, significantly. Yeah.

10 DR. MOORE: Oh, really?

11 MS. HARRISON: We're closer to 70 percent now.

12 DR. MOORE: Wow.

13 MS. HARRISON: Yeah. Yes.

14 DR. MOORE: All the new students you've got must
15 have been --

16 MS. HARRISON: Well -- and I'd like to attribute
17 it to the state has changed the way they classify
18 students. And so now students that receive Medicaid
19 and receive SNAP are automatically, you know,
20 verified that way. And so that helps to have a lot
21 of families that don't want to fill out a free and
22 reduced lunch form. You know -- and so reporting
23 gets a little skewed too. So I think that's helping
24 a lot too with some of the systems the state's put in
25 place.

1 DR. MOORE: All right. That explains a lot.
2 Well, thank you so much. I appreciate your
3 thoughtful time on this.

4 No more questions.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Well, again, thank you
6 for your presentation and, you know, I don't have any
7 additional comments or questions. They pretty much
8 have been covered and -- and answered. I will just
9 say that I kind of echo what Dr. Bacon said about,
10 you know, you guys are rather new, and you did a, you
11 know, a pretty good job when you came in before when
12 you walked us through your -- your relocation
13 process. And I think part of what we're seeing now
14 is just you guys getting the program up and getting
15 your school up and going and implementation, but we
16 do anticipate that the plan you have in place that
17 you've provided to the state office is going to be
18 one that you're going to follow and try to address
19 those concerns. And so we just look forward to you
20 -- to hearing progress.

21 Looks like Dr. Moore has another question. So
22 you can go ahead and unmute yourself.

23 DR. MOORE: Yeah. Sorry. When you said that,
24 Sonja, it reminded me, did those volunteers follow
25 through and do all the things they said they do for

1 y'all? Didn't you have, like, people doing your
2 heating and air and mowing? And I'm -- just like all
3 kinds of things?

4 MS. HARRISON: Yes, ma'am. Dr. Moore, as an
5 example of that, is yesterday -- actually, it was
6 Tuesday. We had someone in the community come and
7 clear our parking lot so we could come back to
8 school. And by the way, we are the only school in
9 Northwest Arkansas in school today. And we had 76
10 percent of our students here. I polled the parents
11 and I said, do you want your kids back in school?
12 And they said, yes. I said, can you get them here
13 safely? And they said, yes. So -- so we're having
14 school today and they're dismissing right now. So
15 yeah. We just have -- it's an amazing -- and our
16 board members -- some of our board members specialize
17 in things. I have one that handles my bus now. And
18 then -- and one that handles building maintenance.
19 So, you know, we -- it -- yeah, it's amazing. It's
20 amazing.

21 DR. MOORE: That's awesome. I just was reminded
22 of that when Sonja was talking about when y'all came.
23 And I'm sure other parents would love to send their
24 kids back to school. My friends have kids at home,
25 are very ready --

1 MS. SAWYER: They're begging.

2 DR. MOORE: -- to send them.

3 MS. SAWYER: They're begging.

4 DR. MOORE: Yeah. All right. Thank you.

5 MS. HARRISON: Thank you.

6 MS. SAWYER: And can I just do one quick brag,
7 one quick glow?

8 DR. MOORE: Sure.

9 MS. SAWYER: Because one of the things that as
10 -- with the background in gifted ed, one of the
11 things that I always thought was wrong was that you
12 have these kids, you know, that you place in the
13 gifted ed class and then you have all these kids that
14 tested that fall, say between the 65th and the 85th
15 percentile, you know, on their testing but they're
16 kind of the kids in the crack on the other end of the
17 spectrum. And so we are -- we actually have an
18 enrichment program that takes those kids with our
19 gifted specialist for half of that, for 75 minutes a
20 week, and does enrichment to help those kids grow.
21 And because they have a potential for giftedness, but
22 they're just not there. And so it's -- that's very
23 exciting to me because that is -- that's missed in
24 big public schools, just coming from that
25 environment. So those kids are getting some extra

1 attention too. And I just kind of want to brag on us
2 a little bit for that because that's not something --
3 and we think that's a value add to our curriculum.

4 So --

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah. Well, thank you
6 for that. You know, if you don't teach your own
7 horn, nobody else is going to do it for you. So --
8 so -- no. Thank you for that. And again, thank you
9 for your presentation and your thoughtful process and
10 coming up with a plan on how you're going to address
11 your letter grade.

12 So are there any other questions or comments
13 from Panel Members that need to be addressed at this
14 time?

15 (NO RESPONSE)

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Seeing and
17 hearing none. So if there no further questions, then
18 I'll accept a motion on the recommendation to accept
19 the signed statement of assurances for the School
20 Improvement Plan for open enrollment charter school
21 Garfield Scholars Academy.

22 MS. STEWART: I so move.

23 DR. BACON: I second.

24 DR. MOORE: Second.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And motion was by. Was

1 DR. MOORE: Could we do a quick five-minute
2 break?

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. We can. Okay.
4 So it's 3:51. So do you want to say 4:00, make it
5 even or -- how do you do you want to do that?

6 DR. MOORE: Sounds good. Thank you.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So let's say
8 we'll be back on at 4:00.

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

11 **I.3.d. INSTITUTE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS**

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Welcome back.
13 Our next item on the agenda is the Institute for the
14 Creative Arts, and Mr. Freddie Scott is going to
15 provide an overview of this next agenda item.

16 MR. SCOTT: Thank you, Madam Chair and Panel
17 Members. Freddie Scott, Office of School Choice and
18 Parent Empowerment.

19 Before I introduce the last group on the agenda,
20 I just wanted to share a flashback. And that was
21 when I was playing football. It was a long game. It
22 was fourth quarter, and I had to remind myself to
23 upgrade my concentration. And that was important. I
24 find it now as we upgrade our concentrations
25 throughout this process, and so thankful for this

1 opportunity.

2 Today, we'll have representatives from the
3 Institute for the Creative Arts. They appear to
4 present their root cause analysis for the F letter
5 grade and their School Improvement Plan and an
6 associated signed Statement of Assurances.

7 With us today from this group of Creative Arts
8 is Dr. Rosilee Russell, president; Mr. Michael
9 Johnson, dean; Ms. Kelly Lucero, academic
10 coordinator; Ms. Kathy Carty, CPA; and Mr. Chad Poe.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. Thank
12 you.

13 Okay. So before we get started, all that are
14 going to speak on behalf of the Institute for the
15 Creative Arts, if you could please stand and raise
16 your right hand, turn on your camera and unmute your
17 microphone. Okay. Perfect. Do you swear that the
18 testimony or statement you are about to give is the
19 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

20 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Okay. Is that
22 everybody?

23 DR. RUSSELL: That's everyone.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. You
25 have 20 minutes for your presentation, and I am

1 starting the timer once you get your presentation
2 pulled up.

3 DR. RUSSELL: All right.

4 Michael, I think you're pulling up the
5 presentation.

6 I'm Dr. Rosilee Russell, the founder and
7 president of ICA, and thank you for listening to us
8 this afternoon. It's good to see some of you again.
9 We're pleased to present this. We take it very
10 seriously. We are a second year, 24-25 is our first
11 school year.

12 One of the good things is that we have more than
13 doubled in enrollment, so as Michael talks with you
14 about the academic portion, I'm sure you'll be
15 hearing more about that. One thing I should mention
16 about Ms. Kelly Lucero, she is our academic
17 coordinator. She is also in charge of special ed and
18 our math instructor. Mr. Johnson first served as our
19 science instructor and now serves as our dean, and
20 he's going to talk with you about the academic
21 portion of this.

22 In the accountability profile, there were three
23 sections, the academic recommendations, financial and
24 operational. And we chose in our PowerPoint
25 presentation to answer or to provide you with

1 information on each of those areas. But considering
2 the time constraint, we're going to focus on academic
3 and then if we need to move to operational or
4 financial, we're happy to present that to you. You
5 have all of that in front of you and you also have
6 the appendices that discuss that, but I know that the
7 pressing point today is about the academic side so
8 we're going to -- we're going to go there. And I'm
9 going to let Mr. Johnson take over and we'll go from
10 there.

11 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Sorry. I had the
12 wrong presentation for that. As stated, my name is
13 Michael Johnson. I am the Dean here at the Institute
14 for Creative Arts. And we are going to see if I can
15 get this presentation to work. As Dr. Russell said,
16 that's all the people. We're missing our CPA on
17 there.

18 So we're going to start with the first of the
19 issues, the academic recommendations that were
20 presented to us and what we've done and the steps
21 we've taken to deal with these. So when you talk
22 about where we were last year as a school, us being
23 first year, the tracking of ATLAS scores was
24 something that we were new to. None of us having
25 really a background in administration or anything.

1 We're new to that system as far as how do you get the
2 data, how do you collect the data, how do you know
3 what the data means? And so we spent a lot of time
4 last year introducing ourselves to the system of
5 ATLAS and tracking what we were trying to achieve.
6 And so this year, we've spent a lot of time looking
7 at what the interim exams and what the end of year
8 exams told us and deciding how we want to help our
9 students with the growth because at the end of the
10 day, our letter grade is based off of our scores.
11 And so we broke those down into the one through four
12 scale that the state has given, what was passing,
13 what wasn't passing and also looked a lot at the
14 growth, particularly the bottom 25 percent. And what
15 we need to do to get the growth scores with those
16 kids.

17 And in looking at all of that data, we realized
18 we weren't necessarily hitting the right topics or
19 whatever. And so this year we have re-looked at that
20 data and used our social studies teacher, who is also
21 our testing coordinator, Mr. Justin Blanton, to go
22 through our data and really comb through it and see
23 where are we struggling, are there particular
24 subcategories we're struggling in and things along
25 that line to help us achieve those growth scores.

1 And when we got our letter grade, the first person I
2 contacted was Hope Worsham because that was our --
3 that was the lady who initially sent out all these
4 scores to us to get a better understanding of what
5 does a growth score mean. We were -- we knew we were
6 behind in growth scores. So we wanted to figure out
7 what that meant and how you can look at the data to
8 figure out growth scores. So a lot of our decisions
9 that we've made this year have been around hitting
10 those growth scores and making sure we're hitting our
11 subgroups.

12 So some things we've already done this year, and
13 one thing that we had last year was this RTI. So we
14 use RTI. We have it every single day. It's broken
15 down into the core subjects. So math has a day,
16 English has a day, science has a day and they are
17 spending time working with students who are
18 struggling. We're also pulling all of our
19 information for assessments from the ATLAS portal
20 itself. So we know, hey, this is what the ATLAS
21 questions look like. This is what you are expected
22 to know for the purposes of the ATLAS exam, so that
23 we are making sure we're hitting those metrics that
24 our students are going to be tested on at the end of
25 the year. We've also got targeted tutoring that we

1 started this semester, where we took our winter
2 interim and realized we have kids who are still way
3 too far behind. So we've put them in specific
4 tutoring for 30 minutes a week for either math or
5 English or both, depending on what they were -- where
6 they were scoring. And a lot of those kids were at
7 the bottom 25 percent kids who received ones or very
8 low twos on their winter interim exams. And all of
9 these, you have appendices.

10 So if you look at appendix one, we have targets
11 and those are the kids that we have targeted. We've
12 blacked out their names, but what they scored and
13 what we need them to score to hit their growth
14 scores. And those are the kids that we've decided to
15 say, you need tutoring and we're going to tutor you
16 on those specific skills that you're lacking. And it
17 may be a third-grade skill. It may be a fifth-grade
18 skill. But we're not able to spend enough time in
19 our classes on Tier I instruction at grade level
20 because they're lacking these skills. So we're going
21 to use the RTI and the tutoring time to fix and
22 hopefully bring up those kids closer to grade level,
23 so we are spending as much time effectively on Tier
24 I instruction and meeting the goals of what the ATLAS
25 interim and the ATLAS test itself tells us. When you

1 look at what we view as the Tier I through three, we
2 have hit Tier I really well. All of our teachers are
3 highly, highly qualified, have ten-plus years of
4 experience on the core side. I'm not going to spend
5 any time really talking about the arts side, even
6 though that is what our charter focus is. This grade
7 is about our core side. So all of our students have
8 access to high-quality teachers with high-
9 quality instructional materials who have or use the
10 latest practices.

11 Your appendix two is our weekly RTI. So every
12 single week on Friday, I will send out a new list of
13 RTI for teachers to go in and prescribe students into
14 RTI and then tell me why they're there. And then on
15 their RTI day, they will take attendance. And that
16 gives me fidelity to go back and check, okay, are my
17 kids going to RTI? Why not? Were they absent that
18 day or did they just skip RTI? And why are we doing
19 that? So it allows me to have some fidelity in
20 checking with these kids. And the interventions are
21 targeted on what they're learning in class to make
22 sure that they're getting extra time working with the
23 Tier I instruction. The tutoring really goes into
24 fixing those deficits from what they may have missed
25 in younger grades. We have a lot of kids who came

1 from homeschool, who come from other schools here in
2 Fort Smith, similar to Future School, that aren't
3 quite on grade level, are pretty behind on grade
4 level, especially in mathematics. So we have to
5 spend a fair amount of time dealing with how do we
6 get them on level through that tutoring. And then we
7 also have all of our dyslexia services in special
8 education, 504. Ms. Lucero does the special
9 education. I deal with 504s. We don't have any ELL
10 students, so we don't deal with that. But we've
11 worked heavily on RTI and keeping it modified and up
12 to task each week.

13 Plans that we have moving forward, science of
14 reading, we know that reading is always going to be
15 vitally important to us. We have a good connection
16 with the Guy Fenter Center and with APSRC down in
17 Little Rock, but Guy Fenter has worked with us a lot.
18 So this summer we're going to send our English
19 teacher and possibly our academic coordinator down to
20 Guy Fenter to get some more science of reading
21 training and also bring them up here in August for
22 part of our professional development. So we want to
23 make professional development next year around
24 science of reading for the high school level because
25 even though science of reading is so emphasized on

1 the elementary level, we still are seeing reading
2 struggles at the high school level with our students.
3 We are at or above grade level percentage-wise with
4 the state on our English, but there's still issues
5 that we know exist with all of our lower students.
6 This summer, we're going to send our math and science
7 teachers to additional PD on foundational math skills
8 and how they can incorporate those more in classes.
9 So we're going to ask them to go seek out that
10 professional development so that they can incorporate
11 it more into their lessons. We had a really big
12 data-driven professional development in January to
13 look at all of our data and where are we sitting
14 after our winter interim and what is going on. And
15 all the teachers spent time going through the data to
16 pick out our really targeted students for that
17 tutoring. And with the data, we realized it was
18 pretty consistent. If they're having issues in math,
19 they're having issues in English. We have a large
20 percentage of kids that are double dipping on the
21 tutoring. They're needing math and English. But we
22 do have many kids that are just receiving math
23 tutoring. And the teachers were the ones that made
24 the decisions on who was tutoring, not the kids.
25 They didn't get really a say in it because we know

1 with the data what we want to do and where we want to
2 take these kids. And then we always have our ongoing
3 PLC reviews for data and how that drives our
4 instruction. So our teachers, at the end of the day,
5 we have something called flex, which is about an hour
6 and a half, and that gives our teachers every day an
7 hour and a half to work together. We only have one
8 of each core subject, so they're able to intermingle
9 with each other during planning times every single
10 day to talk about the data, talk about the struggles
11 they're seeing with individual students. We only
12 have 98 students, so it's a lot easier to share
13 information about students in privacy about what
14 struggles we're seeing mathematically or with
15 reading.

16 As far as growth and development of teachers, we
17 use the Educator Effectiveness System for monitoring
18 our evaluations. It's the standard one. But I put a
19 lot of notes in there for our teachers about what
20 they're doing well, what they need to work on, based
21 specifically on their PGPs. A lot of our teachers
22 have a lot of experience, so their PGPs were
23 well-developed. But next year we're going to keep on
24 pushing that, what's your PGP look like? What do we
25 need to do to make that align with ATLAS? And how

1 can we get PGPs that are going to keep growing our
2 school?

3 We're doing teacher coaching provided by APSRC.
4 They send out a lady once a month to meet with our
5 new, novice teachers. All of our novice teachers are
6 on the arts side, though. We don't have any teacher
7 that's on the academic side involved in that because
8 they're all so experienced. We have in-house
9 coaching where somebody like Ms. Lucero is meeting
10 with one of those new teachers and helping coach
11 along what does -- what's going on in your class, how
12 are you incorporating things, and that's occurring.
13 And then we plan on implementing more in-depth
14 coaching cycles. I was the only one that has, sorry,
15 I'm the only one that has attended what coaching
16 cycles look like. And I plan on bringing Ms. Lucero
17 into that process next year so we can both sit down
18 with, especially our core teachers, and go through
19 more coaching cycles on PGPs and how we can use those
20 more effectively with our students to make sure our
21 data is constantly progressing and we're looking at
22 the right levels of data. And we know where our data
23 is sitting based off of each thing that's being
24 tested by ATLAS.

25 The financials we're going to skip through

1 because that is -- if you have questions about that,
2 we can get back to that. So operations, going into
3 the operations aspect of this, we have our hiring
4 goals. So we use the website, SchoolSpring, Higher
5 Ed, and Indeed for all of our hiring process. We
6 have a big search committee. So anytime we hire
7 somebody, there's a lot of fidelity in that hiring
8 process to make sure that we're getting the best
9 quality teachers. Whenever we hired all of the core
10 teachers, we spent a lot of time going through them
11 having experience and them having their license and
12 it being an up-to-date license. So none of our
13 teachers are in a weird licensure situation or new or
14 anything like that. We -- we'll often have multiple
15 people meet and we'll bring them up here for full-day
16 interviews to really get a feel for the school
17 because we're not the traditional school and our
18 school days are a bit longer than a traditional
19 school. So how they can handle that process is very
20 important to us whenever we're hiring somebody.

21 Our teacher retention rate was really good. Our
22 goal is to have a 90 percent retention rate. We were
23 at 85 last year. We had one teacher resign due to
24 medical issues, and that was our only core teacher
25 that resigned was due to medical issues. And then we

1 hired a new English teacher with significantly more
2 experience, actually has 27 years of experience,
3 including working at universities. I'm not going to
4 go through all the recruitment and retention, but we
5 spend a fair amount of time making sure that our
6 teachers have what they need to succeed, both
7 salary-wise and benefits-wise so that they know that
8 they are supported. We also have our monthly faculty
9 meetings to keep track of data and to keep track of
10 what's going on in the school so that everybody knows
11 that this is what our goal is and this is where we're
12 going. We have a very active teacher participant --
13 a PTO that comes in and serves the teachers and helps
14 the teachers as well, so that they can continue to
15 keep engaging with the school.

16 We don't have school buses, so we are 100
17 percent dependent on parents getting their kids to
18 school. So keeping the parents involved in school is
19 also vital. We actually only had eight percent
20 absenteeism issue last year, which was well below the
21 state average. So we didn't have an issue with
22 absenteeism. We really had an issue with a lack of
23 data on students and what we needed to do to make
24 them grow because we've done such a good job of
25 keeping the parents and the kids involved in school.

1 We use APSRC, we use Guy Fenter co-op for our
2 professional development helps. We know it's best to
3 bring in outside people. Something that's been
4 brought to my attention that I -- isn't even on here
5 that I would love to start doing next year is also
6 sending our teachers to other districts to observe,
7 hey, this was the best math teacher in the state.
8 Let's send them there and let them spend a couple of
9 days watching and learning how to be a better math or
10 English or science teacher. We have our on-site
11 professional development twice a year, along with
12 outside of school professional development that we
13 request the teachers go to. We specialize all of our
14 professional development for the instruction of the
15 teachers so that they are teaching the right material
16 to our students. Not only do we do the TESS system
17 for evaluations, but we also do a yearly survey of
18 our teachers of what they think is going well and
19 what they think we need to work on in professional
20 development to help them continue growing. This is
21 actually the experience of our teachers and how long
22 they have served in education. So you can see our
23 English teacher has been in education for 27 years.
24 Our math teacher, Ms. Lucero, has been in education
25 for 26 years. So we're not struggling with getting

1 teachers that have experience.

2 This really was a struggle last year of figuring
3 out what the ATLAS was needing of us. And we've
4 completed most everything that the charter panel had
5 asked of us. I feel like the professional
6 development and science of reading is an ongoing
7 thing that you'll never -- you're never going to
8 complete because those are things that are going to
9 keep our school growing through these times. Even
10 though we received an F, a lot of that F was, in my
11 opinion, due to low data and low amounts of kids
12 being able to be in that data. For example, we did
13 give the science test, but since we're high school,
14 that means we only tested biology, so only ten kids
15 got to test. Their numbers did not account for our
16 letter grade. And we had many kids that came in from
17 homeschooling situations or other schools that were
18 just behind. So we have met all of the
19 recommendations this year that the charter panel had
20 set before us minus the professional development just
21 because that's an ongoing task in my opinion.

22 Dr. Russell, is there anything you want to add
23 before I end the presentation?

24 DR. RUSSELL: Sorry, I had turned my audio off.
25 Rosilee here.

1 A couple of things, Michael, that you talked
2 about, the tutoring for us is extremely important,
3 and that is something we've implemented this year
4 that we're going to be very strict about that. Ms.
5 Lucero is the one that coordinates that with the
6 teachers and the students, and there are consequences
7 if the students miss tutoring. I think tutoring is
8 probably one of the most effective ways because it's
9 one-on-one or very small groups with very experienced
10 teachers who help walk them through whatever they're
11 behind on. The other thing is, because we don't have
12 data at times on students coming from outside of the
13 state, private schools and homeschools, we're
14 implementing a placement type of test. It's not an
15 entrance test to get in the school, but it is a
16 placement test to allow us to figure out where we're
17 starting with some of these students.

18 And then I think also something Michael didn't
19 mention is we did start, if you look at our
20 enrollment growth, we went from 43 students that we
21 started with last year, I think, today -- as of
22 today, we're at 99; back in October at 95. So the
23 enrollment growth itself will help us in this growth
24 score as we start reporting. Science was not able to
25 report last year, we'll be able to do that this year.

1 There are some factors that will, I think moving
2 forward, we'll be able to show some significant
3 growth and do well, especially with the RTI and the
4 tutoring and the things that we've put in place.

5 Kelly, you may want to jump in on all of this.

6 MS. LUCERO: Hi, I'm Kelly Lucero, the academic
7 coordinator and SpEd coordinator.

8 Yeah, I would just reiterate what Michael and
9 Rosilee both have said. The numbers were really
10 against us last year with a starting enrollment of 43
11 students. And we didn't have a graduation score
12 because we were just 9th through 11th last year. We
13 do have seniors this year. We are looking at 100
14 percent graduation this year, 100 percent college
15 acceptance this year. We know a lot more now than we
16 knew then and we have a lot more kids to work with.
17 And we feel like we're on track to fix what we didn't
18 know needed fixed. We were kind of in shock with the
19 F score. We'd never been through that process
20 before. But I really think that we have a good
21 handle on it now and a good understanding of the
22 growth scores and what we're looking at with these
23 kids and trying to get them up to proficient.

24 DR. RUSSELL: Dr. Wright, you were on the
25 committee back when we got our charter.

1 This is Rosilee again, and back when we
2 requested this charter, I said that this should be a
3 high-achieving academic school because of it being an
4 art school, and I still believe that, I know that.
5 And that's our goal, to be a high achieving academic
6 school. It's one of the reasons we have teachers who
7 are experienced in the core area. I'm really big on
8 that, and I'm really proud of our core teachers. We
9 will continue to hire very strong academic teachers.
10 And our goal is to be a high academic achieving
11 school because of it being an art school. The focus
12 and the discipline here is pretty, it's pretty major.
13 So we just have some work to do and we know it and
14 we're taking it very seriously.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Michael Johnson here.

16 There is one thing that I want to add in there.
17 Ms. Lucero, as all of these charter schools have
18 said, they are wearing many, many hats. and Ms.
19 Lucero is one of those that is wearing too many hats,
20 and we know it. She will not be teaching math next
21 year. She will actually be just working with SpEd
22 and also on the academic coordinator side. And so
23 when we do hire a new math teacher, they will have
24 the credentials that we feel are necessary. We don't
25 want to bring somebody in who's not certified,

1 especially in one of those core subjects like that.
2 So even this year, we have been working with too many
3 roles for too few people, but we feel like we've
4 still seen a massive amount of growth this year
5 compared to even last year.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Very good. So --
7 can you guys hear me?

8 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

9 DR. RUSSELL: Yes.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: My internet is starting
11 to, I guess, become weary, so it's kind of going in
12 and out. So thank you for your presentation. We'll
13 start with questions. Hopefully, I can stay
14 connected until we get done.

15 DR. MOORE: You might want to turn your camera
16 off, Dr. Wright-McMurray, because on my end, you're
17 frozen. So maybe that would give you a little more
18 bandwidth. I know we're supposed to keep them on,
19 but I'd rather have you on without video than not on
20 at all.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Well, let's see
22 if that works right now. And now here's the -- so --
23 give me a sec. I'm going to try to see here...

24 DR. RUSSELL: While you're --

25 DR. MOORE: We can hear you fine.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, I was going to say, Dr.
2 McMurray, we can hear you fine.

3 DR. RUSSELL: Yes. We can.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Am I back now?

5 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Can you hear me?

7 DR. RUSSELL: Yes.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

9 DR. MOORE: We can hear you the whole time.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Well, I -- well,
11 it was like you guys would stop moving. And so I was
12 like, okay, apparently, they're frozen. So let's try
13 this again.

14 So we're going to start with questions. I'm
15 going to start with Dr. Bacon, and we'll start from
16 there.

17 DR. BACON: Okay. Somehow I knew it would start
18 with me because I'm really struggling here to make
19 sense of how to formulate really specific questions
20 because, I mean, A, as we were talking about with the
21 last group from Garfield, it was your first year.
22 You had a, you know, very small student population,
23 and I think you said 43 students and high school
24 only. So you're literally talking about a handful of
25 students that might have tested for math or science

1 or ELA. You have no graduation rate data. I'm
2 assuming no of that success score data because it
3 looks like you didn't even have 12th graders last
4 year, if I'm reading the data correctly. And so it's
5 sort of, like, very premature that you should have
6 even been given a letter grade in my mind because you
7 only have maybe three or four of the nine data points
8 that are assessed. The -- I -- the one thing I do
9 think I would like to drill down on that just from
10 looking at this review, particularly it looks like
11 it, I mean, math, the growth was 37 percent, state
12 average 52, but in achievement 13 percent versus the
13 state average of 38. I know that we have Ms. Lucero
14 here, which I think is wonderful as a math teacher.
15 Sort of talk me through -- I mean, I know, again,
16 it's such a small number of students and they're in
17 different subjects, whether it's
18 Algebra I/geometry, but just sort of talk me through,
19 as you grow -- I know you now have 100 students and
20 expanding. What does the math instructional program
21 need to look like to make sure that we're hitting
22 benchmarks for students in the different tested
23 subjects?

24 MR. JOHNSON: Michael Johnson, I'll go first
25 just for the sake of going first, and then I'll let

1 her probably get into a lot more of the details. I
2 taught science last year as well as acting as the
3 dean, and so I saw a lot of the math. Right now,
4 what we're seeing coming to us are kids who are
5 functionally significantly behind on their math
6 skills to the ability they aren't performing anywhere
7 near Algebra I or geometry grade level. Again, we're
8 both at -- we're at Fort Smith with Future School,
9 and you saw their math pass rate. The kids we're
10 attracting, they're here for the arts, and they're
11 doing incredibly well in the arts. And we were at or
12 above state level with our ELA. But math is a
13 struggling issue, I think, at a lot of schools in the
14 Fort Smith area. And it's -- it's just that they're
15 low, and the kids that we seem to have attracted were
16 particularly low. And so a lot of it, in my opinion,
17 is a need for a massive amount of remediation before
18 they're really ready for grade-level content, but
19 there's the expectation of, you've got to go. I
20 mean, day one, Algebra I, you've got to start Algebra
21 I content to get these kids ready for this ATLAS
22 interim. Same thing with geometry. And that is
23 causing a lot of our, what I feel like our issue is,
24 they're just behind when we're getting them. We were
25 at, I think, 20 percent homeschool rate last year of

1 our kids that came in. I would say it's similar.
2 They're not ready from the homeschool perspective,
3 but they're also not ready coming from our junior
4 highs here in Fort Smith. And the data we had last
5 year was so minimal between the homeschool kids and
6 what we could get from the state for those kids that
7 transferred in. But even the kids we had coming in,
8 their ATLAS scores this year, coming from the local
9 junior highs, were just -- they were very low. They
10 weren't quite bottom 25 percent. We don't have a
11 huge bottom 25 percent issue, but we have many that
12 are well below grade level.

13 Kelly, if you want to add to that.

14 MS. LUCERO: This is Kelly Lucero.

15 From the classroom perspective of what we saw
16 with these kids that were tested last year, we had,
17 what, maybe 21 Algebra I students and 15 or 16
18 geometry students. And mostly the Algebra I students
19 are the ones that you're looking at. They were in
20 9th grade. They were the ones that were coming from
21 the homeschool situation. We had to spend more time
22 in class in remediation topics before we could get
23 them even anywhere close to grade level because they
24 come in -- they all come in so low. A lot of those
25 students that were coming from homeschool or from --

1 even from out of state, some from across the line,
2 they didn't have a pre-algebra, they'd never even
3 seen pre-algebra. We had a few strong students, and
4 those were our 13 to 15 percent that did well, and
5 they had a pre-algebra -- strong pre-algebra program
6 at the schools they came from. But for the most
7 part, we're seeing kids these days -- and it's not
8 just in our school, it's in a lot of the Fort Smith
9 schools -- that they just don't have basic math
10 skills. And we're having to work on those. We're
11 working on kids that don't know -- they're in Algebra
12 I, and they don't know their multiplication tables.
13 They don't know how to deal with fractions. Or they
14 can do a simple algorithm of solve for X, but if you
15 put it into a word problem like the ATLAS portal
16 does, they don't know what to do with it because they
17 don't have that higher order analysis or synthesis
18 skills. And that's what we've figured out and that's
19 what we're going to be targeting for this year. And
20 I think we're doing a better job of that this year of
21 knowing where we're starting from and with the extra
22 tutoring that they're going to be assigned. Our
23 tutors are going to be working one-on-one with some
24 of these students on what they're missing. And some
25 of it, you could go back to probably 3rd to 4th grade

1 level is what we're working with. And some of our
2 IEP students are coming in with, -- I know we have a
3 several that were at a 5th-grade math level, but
4 they're in Algebra I. And that's the only math we
5 have, Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, and above. We
6 don't have a remedial offering at the high school
7 level for these kids.

8 DR. BACON: Yeah. And I certainly appreciate
9 the struggle. I know exactly what you're talking
10 about, being a high school only where you receive
11 them at 9th grade. You're really trying to do
12 multiple years of instruction and remediation in a
13 very short window of time. But I would be curious,
14 again, acknowledging it's an incredible struggle,
15 with the uniqueness of your environment, you know,
16 focused on the arts, you know, I know there are a lot
17 of studies about the connection between math and the
18 arts. Trying to do things across the curriculum,
19 what -- Ms. Lucero, what can be done in a high school
20 setting like yours with limited time? What does that
21 support, the remediation -- what does that look like
22 that could lead to some success in this math area?

23 MS. LUCERO: I think a lot of the students are
24 more interested in the projects that I've brought in
25 that do incorporate the arts. We're not really a

1 cross-curricular type school, the math is the math,
2 and the arts are the arts. And -- but the things
3 that I have brought in where they've been able to
4 build a kite out of tetrahedrals or do something that
5 is very unique where they get to make up their own
6 design, but it has -- involves graphing or using math
7 tools. I have found that there's -- there's more
8 success with that and being able to bring in the
9 things that interest them, like the music or even
10 statistics and real-world things. You get more
11 interest, you get more interest, even in a school
12 that's not an art school, if you can bring in those
13 kind of things. And in our limited time, I try to do
14 as much as I can --

15 DR. BACON: Sure.

16 MS. LUCERO: -- with the kids to bring in those
17 kind of, you know, more interesting things to get
18 that light-bulb moment or get that, you know, that
19 interest going. But you still only have so many
20 minutes in the period. And when you're having to
21 spend it all on trying to teach them positive and
22 negative numbers that they should have learned in 7th
23 grade, then it really makes it hard to really get
24 into that deeper thinking and deeper, you know,
25 connection to what they're interested in, which is

1 the arts.

2 DR. BACON: I'm curious, Mr. Johnson, if you --
3 if I could get a little more specificity on what
4 intervention mediation looks like. Are you using any
5 specific programs? I know you've talked some about
6 targeting and using data. I mean, obviously, now
7 that you have your feet under you, understanding the
8 data sources that are available and how to interpret
9 and use those. But what does that program really
10 look like?

11 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Michael Johnson.

12 So for us, what we're really primarily harping
13 on is the tutoring aspect. So for us, I can give
14 this example because it happened not that long ago.
15 We have hired a tutor, a math tutor, to come in to
16 work with each kid for 30 minutes a week that needs
17 that help. And he gave them an intro test to, hey,
18 where is your base level math skill, both without a
19 calculator, with a calculator, and figure out where
20 they were at. And so we don't -- we haven't a
21 specific program in IXL. We do use DeltaMath in the
22 math classes, but we don't -- we haven't brought a
23 program to fix that. We're bringing in tutors to
24 work with them one-on-one and figure out what a
25 specific deficiency they might have is, and then

1 report to me on what that is, work with them and then
2 also report back to me what -- what improvement
3 they've shown on those skills. So if it's adding
4 fractions, multiplying fractions, things like that.
5 So really using one-on-one tutoring to figure out
6 what we can do. And then RTI time, Ms. Lucero could
7 probably speak a little bit more about that but
8 pulling the kids in that are struggling with math and
9 working with them more in that Tier II level of
10 instruction. Say they're in that algebra one class,
11 and yeah, they have a deficiency with adding
12 fractions, but they're learning how to solve for X,
13 with those types of fractions. She's spending more
14 of that RTI Tier II time on that with what's going on
15 and what's going to be on the ATLAS test. And we're
16 using the tutor to really bring up those lower-level
17 skills that they should have had before.

18 DR. BACON: Where are these tutors coming from?
19 Are these volunteers or are these --

20 MR. JOHNSON: So we are partnered -- we're
21 partnered with something called CSA Community School
22 of the Arts. They're in the same building as us.
23 And we hired the tutors through the Community School
24 of the Arts, so they're getting paid to work with
25 these kids at -- at that level. And right now we are

1 just hiring our own, like, our science teachers doing
2 the math tutoring. He's also very good at math. And
3 the goal is to eventually, yes, hire out in the
4 community, hire maybe a retired math teacher or
5 whatever to come in and do that tutoring. But this
6 year, for the sake of the time and us really wanting
7 to make sure we were doing it right, we were able to
8 hire within. We did put the job out there. We just
9 didn't -- we didn't get a lot of applications. We're
10 still struggling -- I'll say this, as a school, we
11 are still struggling with the community knowing who
12 we are. Community School of the Arts has been around
13 for I don't know how long, Dr. Russell, forever, and
14 people know about that, but they don't think of ICA
15 High School as this own separate being of a school
16 for some reason.

17 Dr. Russell, were you going to say something?

18 DR. BACON: Oh, yeah. CSA's been around since
19 2016, and that's the piece we didn't discuss earlier.
20 Community School of the Arts is the sponsoring entity
21 to the high school. And on the front of our
22 PowerPoint, you saw the facility. And I've done this
23 before, I would love for you all to come for a visit
24 and visit the school, see what's going on, see this
25 new facility. Because CSA, as the sponsoring entity,

1 has an after-school arts program, but we've also
2 incorporated tutoring. We have a summer ACT boot
3 camp for all these high school kids and other
4 students in the community that can join that. And so
5 we've hired -- so our science teacher, who is strong
6 in math, works after school through CSA to tutor
7 these kids and our English teacher, who is very
8 strong in English, works after school to tutor the
9 students in ELA. Now, we may hire more teachers, but
10 those two really wanted to do this, and they're very
11 good, and the students love them. So it's kind of a
12 win win situation for at the moment since we have
13 strong core teachers.

14 DR. BACON: Sure.

15 DR. RUSSELL: They already have a pulse on those
16 kids.

17 DR. BACON: Sure. One last thing, and then I'll
18 turn it back so that my colleagues can ask questions.
19 Just thinking about, as Ms. Lucero was describing,
20 and I know Mr. Johnson, you know, you get them in 9th
21 grade and they're behind. Have you considered adding
22 8th grade, 7th grade, an entry ramp to high school?
23 I see Mr. Johnson. I just would be curious about any
24 internal thoughts about that.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. We -- Mr. Johnson.

1 We have a whole other half of the building that
2 needs to be finished out before we can consider
3 anything like that. And that's going to drastically
4 help our growth of our school. And I -- we're being
5 killed by small number statistics in a lot of ways.
6 If we could get our enrollment up to that 250 range,
7 I feel like a lot of those issues would resolve
8 themselves just by attracting more high-quality
9 students. But yeah, we've talked about that idea of
10 having a feeder school. It would help the art side,
11 but it would drastically help the math and science
12 side get them in there earlier, figure out what their
13 issues are earlier. You know, does this kid have
14 dyscalculia? By the time they get to high school, if
15 they've not been directly diagnosed with dyslexia or
16 dyscalculia, most schools just keep on moving them
17 along through and say, well, just don't know how to
18 learn or whatever, but we would love to get them in
19 here even earlier. And something that we are working
20 on for next year is placement testing, not in the
21 sense of, well, you're coming in in 9th grade, but
22 you really could be in geometry, but what are we
23 looking at for you? Maybe you've got a decent ATLAS
24 score, but are you deficient in skills and
25 identifying those deficiencies a lot earlier on in

1 the school year so that we can target that even
2 sooner in the school year. Something that we plan on
3 taking from another local charter school is they gave
4 their ATLAS fall interim the first week of school.
5 And I want to do that to where we can really peg
6 things down a lot earlier so that we know, you know,
7 little Johnny is really good at this one skill. We
8 don't need to focus on that for little Johnny, but he
9 still can't, you know, do basic division and work on
10 getting them in tutoring even sooner and even higher
11 quality in that -- our Tier II instruction as well.

12 DR. BACON: Okay. Well, thank you. I
13 appreciate the thoughtfulness. And, you know, from
14 the beginning, it sounded like sort of last year,
15 even figuring out how to get ATLAS data, how to drill
16 down access, and to where you are today, discussing
17 it, it's clear that you all have plans in place. And
18 I'll be interested to follow along as those get
19 implemented and see some results. And I definitely
20 will take you up, Dr. Russell, on coming the next
21 time I'm in Fort Smith, I'll look you guys up.

22 DR. RUSSELL: Oh, thank you. I would -- we
23 would love to have you. We have had charter panel
24 members visit before, and I have to reiterate what
25 Michael said. I would love to have 6th, 7th, 8th

1 grade here. And we have a campus -- we have a
2 property to add space. We currently have the ability
3 to add more space to our existing building and then
4 add a second building. So I really hope one day
5 we're going to add 6, 7, 8. We need to. That is --
6 clearly we need to. We have about five million,
7 Michael mentioned, we have about five million to go
8 on finishing the building. I hope you all will look
9 at the financials because we haven't had a chance to
10 discuss that. What's in the accountability profile
11 isn't the full picture, because Community School of
12 the Arts was a recipient of something called New
13 Markets Tax Credits, which netted us about five
14 million. And in that process, put 600,000 in a -- an
15 account for ICA for funds to be used for startups.
16 So those are in an account that is not seen in
17 eFinance until they're pulled over. So our funds
18 last year and this year are doing very well, plus the
19 grants we've received. But we do have to continue to
20 fundraise and -- but I -- you know, we've got a
21 school that the kids love. And it's a matter of
22 continuing to grow it. So our goal is to get that
23 other side finished as quickly as possible because we
24 all believe the enrollment's going to explode when we
25 get the other side because there's a theater over

1 there and dance studios and everything you can
2 imagine that kids really want in their arts programs.
3 And I, by the way, I do appreciate your comment that
4 because we're so new, it's hard to be appearing
5 before a panel yet. I've asked and I don't know who
6 to ask, but I have asked that the startup charters
7 not receive a grade or not -- just be monitored for
8 the first three years. You know, you have to have a
9 runway of time to build. And so -- because that
10 letter grade, when parents see that, that can be a
11 really negative thing when in fact the school's
12 thriving and we just have to figure out how to get
13 the lower end of students up academically. But the
14 rest of the school, I mean, they're thriving. They
15 want to be here, and the parents love it. And so
16 that grade on the front end, well, like Michael said,
17 it shocked us all. I couldn't believe it. You know,
18 so I don't know who to recommend that to, but it sure
19 would be nice if startups had at least a three-year
20 runway to build and then show something that's a
21 little more accurate with a larger enrollment. So
22 anyway --

23 DR. BACON: You will not get an argument for me
24 on that point.

25 DR. RUSSELL: All right.

1 DR. BACON: But I'm no one, so -- I'll turn it
2 back to Dr. Wright-McMurray.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you
4 for that.

5 Dr. Beshears-Duncan.

6 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes, thank you.

7 Thank you all for your presentation and your
8 stamina today. Appreciate that. You all, you've
9 talked quite a bit about assessment, particularly
10 assessment at a school-system level. You've also
11 spoke to some best practices in math that can
12 support, such as some project and problem-based
13 learning, tutoring, et cetera. Help me understand
14 what day-to-day assessment looks like in the
15 classroom. What are some ways your teachers will
16 know, and not really be surprised, but be more
17 validated by what they see on the system level
18 assessments the rest of this year and the coming
19 year?

20 MR. JOHNSON: Michael Johnson.

21 Yeah. I think what we're doing is using the
22 ATLAS system a lot better whenever we're creating our
23 assessments. So when you look at what types of
24 questions that were being given, they're going in and
25 building their assessments ahead of time using that

1 ATLAS portal. So they know how, I hate to say how to
2 teach to the test because I don't think we should
3 ever teach to a test, but how to approach teaching in
4 a way that is going to prepare the students for the
5 style of questions that they'll receive on those
6 assessments. And then, reviewing that data to see,
7 okay, we're not hitting these growth targets within
8 the way these questions are being asked. Is it
9 because we're not understanding what's being asked,
10 or is it because we're not teaching in the most
11 effective way? And I think that's something that a
12 lot of the state is still figuring out with the ATLAS
13 test because it is a newer test, is what is the most
14 effective way to teach these kids to be prepared for
15 it? And looking at the way that the ATLAS test even
16 breaks down the subject. So for example, Ms.
17 Lucero's geometry class. We take our winter interim
18 and there are aspects of this that nobody scored well
19 on. Why did nobody score well on? Ms. Lucero hadn't
20 taught, say, circles yet. Well, circles make up 25
21 percent of the geometry curriculum. And that's 25
22 percent of what's tested, but she hasn't even covered
23 that on the winter assessment. So do we need to
24 worry about the fact that nobody knew circles yet?
25 No. But we already taught some other skill. Let's

1 say it's solving for angles and rectangles or
2 triangles. Well, if our kids did well on that, we
3 know that's stuck. But if they didn't, then we can
4 look back at that data and say, we need to go reteach
5 that. We need to do a mini lesson on it or something
6 like that. So really using what the state has
7 already built and allowed us to have access to in
8 order to continue to monitor ourselves. And like I
9 said, they meet in their PLC teams and talk about the
10 data and talk about what kids are learning.

11 Ms. Lucero, do you want to add to that?

12 MS. LUCERO: Yes. Also we have started doing
13 some formative assessments and we have a fast Friday
14 schedule here. We're on a block schedule where we do
15 Monday, Wednesdays, and then Tuesday, Thursdays are
16 different classes. But we have a fast Friday
17 schedule, and our PLC of the core teachers are
18 implementing some formative assessments using that
19 ATLAS portal and pulling the questions from the ATLAS
20 portal that connects to the curriculum that we're
21 teaching at that moment. And letting the students
22 get a better feel for using the portal and for doing
23 the problems the way they need to be done. My
24 students have the worst problem with when they see a
25 problem on a screen, they don't think they need to

1 work it out on pencil and paper. They think they can
2 just look at a four-step algebra problem or something
3 and just do it because it's on the screen. And so
4 we're really trying to push that into our fast Friday
5 schedules because we only have a 40-minute class
6 instead of an hour-and-25-minute class on Fridays to
7 get them more experience working with that kind of
8 platform and using the online tools. And really
9 understanding that just because a math problem or a
10 biology problem or even an English problem is on
11 screen, it doesn't mean you can't use your
12 paper-pencil skills and try to figure that out. So
13 that's one of the formative things we're working.
14 It's not a test grade; it's not a quiz grade; but it
15 is something important that we feel that they need to
16 do.

17 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: So you've got some
18 strategies, particularly for the ATLAS, both for the
19 adults as learners and the kids as learners. And you
20 mentioned the formative assessment. I'm trying to
21 get a sense of the day-to-day formative assessment.
22 So if I was that geometry teacher teaching circles,
23 how might I know that point in time that a kiddo
24 needs help?

25 MS. LUCERO: Pretty much -- I like to do some

1 exit tickets or, you know, or when they first come
2 into class, give them two or three questions on what
3 they were doing before and just try to kind of do
4 some cycling that way. And I mean, it is tough
5 sometimes on a block schedule because they don't have
6 math every day. And I was always been a believer in
7 math every day. It's easier to learn if you have
8 math every day, but sometimes just not -- it's not
9 possible when you're on a block scheduling. So
10 bringing that back in as a simple bell work
11 assignment or an exit ticket at the end of the day
12 really helps me see did they really understand it, or
13 do we need to go back and look at that, you know,
14 parallel lines cut by a transversal again the next
15 day. So if that -- I think that's what you're asking
16 is -- our science teacher does that too, and I
17 believe our English teacher does it. We all try to
18 do some bell work and some formative -- some kind --
19 something formative almost daily because of the block
20 scheduling and the alternating days.

21 MR. JOHNSON: And I will -- Michael Johnson.

22 I'm going to add to that. When we do our P --
23 professional development and stuff, that was things
24 that were emphasized and talked about. We need to
25 have our goals set up on the board. The kids need to

1 know what they're learning that day and that we do
2 need to have exit tickets or some way of checking,
3 hey, did we get this or do we need to spend 20
4 minutes more tomorrow on it? It's not just that I'm
5 walking in a room to do an observation every single
6 day, but I do walk the hallways a lot to check in on
7 classes and see, hey, are we doing what we're
8 supposed to be doing? What kind of learning is going
9 on? And I do spend a fair amount of time talking to
10 my teachers about what they're seeing in the
11 classroom and what successes they're having and where
12 they feel like they're struggling. And the block
13 schedule is definitely, like you said, they're not
14 seeing the content every single day, but they've
15 gotten a lot better about checking in with the kids
16 about previously learned materials daily. And I
17 finally understood the question there, so --

18 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you all. I really
19 appreciate it. So -- there are so many variables
20 that are outside of our control and I'm even thinking
21 about, it's your first year, small number of kiddos
22 and the letter grade calculations, etc. I'm
23 wondering what's helping you make some decisions for
24 next year when it comes to those things that are
25 within your locus of control, such as your curriculum

1 and your scheduling. I don't have suggestions.
2 That's not my purpose here, but really just to hear
3 your thinking.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Right. So we start -- everything
5 starts with our master schedule. So looking at, did
6 kids pass classes? What do we need to re-offer?
7 Things like that. So starting on just the grand
8 scale of what are we offering, why are we offering
9 it? Is it going to fit the needs of our students?
10 And really analyzing what we're doing to make sure
11 our kids are successful for the future within the
12 arts. And then we're always discussing is there a
13 program that you want to buy? Is there something
14 that you think would help you do your job better?
15 I've also been looking a lot at what's going on in
16 Kansas and keeping a particular eye on the school in
17 Kansas and really looking at the idea of actually
18 pulling back on technologies and classes and getting
19 back to more pencil and paper because of what we're
20 seeing out of some of these schools that have pulled
21 away from technology and the growth that they're
22 having. So it's a constant monitoring of is this
23 working? If not, why are we spending money on it?
24 If it is, then let's keep spending money on it. If
25 it's working or you think something would work, what

1 are we going to do to get that? And again, that goes
2 back to the professional development for the summer.
3 I want my math and science teacher to go out and seek
4 some math professional development in order to keep
5 themselves growing and see if there's something like,
6 oh, that's a skill that I didn't know about.
7 Particularly, I include the science in there because
8 you do a lot of math in science class. You really
9 do. That's almost your secondary support for your
10 math. And I'm hearing the same issues from Ms.
11 Lucero as I do our science teacher. These kids are
12 struggling with the same issues in both classes. And
13 so really pushing them for the professional
14 development purposes of how can we fix this issue?
15 And it may, you know, I don't want to blame COVID or
16 anything like that, but it is, -- it's something that
17 happened within the past five years that those
18 foundational skills didn't sink into the kids'
19 brains, they didn't stay there. So how can we get
20 them on grade level as fast as possible? And I think
21 removing this -- the screen is one of those options
22 that I'm leaning strongly into for the idea of the
23 future. Just getting back to pencil and paper. So
24 that, like she said, hey, I've got a problem here on
25 the screen. I'm just going to ignore everything else

1 and just try and solve it on my little calculator.
2 No, we need you to get back to using your pencil,
3 using your paper and really working things out.
4 before you just type in 12 and move on with your
5 life.

6 MS. LUCERO: I might add also for next year.
7 This year, I'm teaching full time, all the math
8 classes, every math there is. And I'm also doing all
9 of the special education, all the IEPs. And so all
10 the kids that are on an IEP and for the math, it's
11 considered an integrated classroom because I'm it.
12 I'm the special ed teacher; I'm the co-teacher; I'm
13 the teacher. And next year, we have plans in place
14 to hire an additional math teacher so that I would be
15 available to be that co-teacher and to be able to
16 push into the classrooms and help these kids that are
17 at the lower end of the spectrum, especially your IEP
18 kids or just your lower 25 percent kids. We haven't
19 had that in place, but we do have plans for that for
20 next year.

21 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you. I appreciate
22 your responses. And my last question is maybe more
23 of a takeaway question. My assumption is you all
24 have talked about how invested your kids and families
25 are in your school and the option to have this

1 creative connection in their day-to-day life. And as
2 a parent of some highly creative kids, I appreciate
3 that. I'm wondering what they might say. What's,
4 you know, what are some of their preferences? What
5 helps them, particularly when they come in perhaps
6 high in ELA and yet really struggling in math? What
7 might some of those kiddos say about their
8 preferences for learning?

9 MS. LUCERO: I have some students that, I mean,
10 I knew coming here -- I was at a big school in
11 Fayetteville for 18 years teaching AP mathematics. I
12 knew coming here to an art school that math wasn't
13 going to be their favorite subject. And I have a lot
14 of students that tell me, Ms. Lucero, I can't -- I
15 don't understand math. I don't like math, but I love
16 you. I love you. You're the best math teacher. You
17 make me understand it. And I hope that that's their
18 takeaway that they might not ever be math scholars.
19 They might not be your STEM kids, but they're going
20 to remember that they learned something in my class.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. And I think -- Michael
22 Johnson.

23 I think just adding in maybe some more parent
24 surveying. I get -- I feel like I hear what you're
25 saying there. Adding in some more parent surveying.

1 Yes, we have a very active parent community, but we
2 have not implemented, like, parent surveys or student
3 surveys in that sense of what we could do to make it
4 a better job or make it more accessible to them for
5 those things. But I hear the same thing. Whenever
6 we closed down -- us being closed down this whole
7 week, I've had kids emailing, hey, are we going to go
8 back to school tomorrow? And having to send out the
9 messages, no, sorry, we're -- it's still too
10 dangerous. And something else that I think we're
11 pushing really hard to get is buses. We use our
12 parents bringing the kids to school and we use the
13 city bus, but I really want to get us some school
14 buses to where we can actually -- sending the school
15 bus out to Greenwood and up to Alma. I don't know
16 how well you know the area, but, you know -- and pick
17 a bunch of these kids up. So even though we don't
18 have a chronic absenteeism issue, we can keep that
19 away and keep on offering school even when the
20 weather may be a little iffy. So --

21 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Thank you. It sounds like
22 you all -- that your students and your families would
23 be more than willing to co-design and help you
24 problem solve and just ensure that what you offer for
25 kids in mathematics and beyond will support them. So

1 thank you all so much.

2 I have no further questions.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

5 Dr. Moore?

6 DR. MOORE: Thank you for your presentation and
7 I realize it's 5:00, so I will try to be brief with
8 my questions and comments. I do understand that it's
9 going to be very challenging starting out, but I got
10 to point out it's almost more comments than it is
11 questions because you seem to think you're in a
12 unique situation when it comes to getting students
13 that are behind an as a former teacher in both a
14 struggling school and a high performing school that
15 happens everywhere in our state. I just looked 8th
16 grade in our state, only 31 percent of 8th graders in
17 math scored proficient or advanced, so that means 69
18 percent of students across the entire state are not
19 ready, when they come to Algebra I, for grade level
20 instruction. So it's like we can't think that we're
21 unique and it's -- it's like a proverbial thing and I
22 understand it's so hard teaching grade-level
23 instruction when students are so far behind. I used
24 to support schools that were on school improvement.
25 They were scoring at 3rd -- scoring at 3rd grade

1 level and we're trying to teach them Algebra II.
2 Like, I mean, it seemed crazy. But that is -- the
3 expectation is grade-level instruction. So just want
4 to caveat that. That's not something that's unique
5 to you, the Fort Smith area, or any of that. That's
6 in our entire state. So it's -- it definitely can't
7 be an excuse, even though it's a reason, it can't be
8 an excuse because everyone's dealing with that. And
9 then number two, it troubles me that you seem so
10 shocked by ATLAS, when ATLAS is grade-level
11 standards. You act like it was, like, a -- like this
12 surprise thing called ATLAS. ATLAS is just a test of
13 literally the Arkansas standards. So it's not
14 something that should have been a surprise at what
15 you were supposed to be teaching. If you're using
16 high-quality instructional materials that are, you
17 know, recommended and approved by the state, and
18 teaching it to that rigor, you're teaching what's on
19 ATLAS. And I understand there are unique
20 performance-level descriptors strictly based upon the
21 standards. So I didn't sugarcoat it. I just went
22 straight in. I don't mean to sound rude. I just
23 didn't want to dance around it. Just those things to
24 consider. That's the same thing that every single
25 school in the states facing every bit of that. And

1 if you're not using high-quality instructional
2 materials and teaching grade-level instruction,
3 you're never going to do well in ATLAS because it is
4 -- it is more geared towards standards than our
5 previous test was. Previous test, there was a lot of
6 issues, maybe not being aligned to the state
7 standards.

8 And then one last thing, it is great to have
9 experienced teachers, but research shows that after
10 about the first five years, experience doesn't equate
11 to increasing quality of teaching. A teacher those
12 first few years grows, but just because someone's
13 been teaching for 30 years doesn't mean they're a
14 better, higher-quality teacher than someone who's
15 been teaching five to 10 years. So keep that in mind
16 as you're recruiting that years of experience doesn't
17 equate quality always.

18 So that's it. That's all. You've answered so
19 many questions. I really don't have any questions.
20 Those are just things that were on my heart and mind.
21 Feel free to comment, but no specific question on my
22 end. Thank you for sharing all this great
23 information, though. I appreciate it.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Michael Johnson.

25 Yeah, I do want to comment. And it's not -- I

1 agree. I 100 percent agree with you, Dr. Moore. It
2 was not a -- I don't want to make an excuse, and I'm
3 not an excuses person. So everything you're saying I
4 agree with completely. It is, for us, I think what
5 the uniqueness of the situation only is because, like
6 you said, we don't have 7th and 8th graders coming
7 in. So we don't -- we didn't know what they were
8 placed like; right? If I was at, say in Northside
9 here in Fort Smith, you know, we could look at our
10 8th graders and have a very strong idea of what's
11 coming in ahead of time. Whereas with us, the 9th
12 graders are -- it's very random. And so I think
13 that's what was the shocker is the fact that we
14 didn't attract the same level as what Fort Smith's
15 level was; right? So Fort Smith's grade level for
16 math, let's say it was that 38-something percent. We
17 didn't get that. And I think that was more of our
18 shock than anything. But it's not an excuse. I
19 totally agree. And I'll also say we are teaching on
20 grade level. It's not like we've spent a ton of time
21 doing remediation. We're trying to fix the kids that
22 are behind through things like the tutoring and
23 things. So the instruction that is being given is on
24 grade level. I just wanted to show at the end of the
25 day -- you know, I wanted to show up on that test at

1 the end of the year. And so that's where I think
2 we're at is we are just -- we are like every other
3 school in that sense of we want to be there; we want
4 to push our kids to get there; and we are trying to
5 figure out what's the best situation for us. And
6 right now that tutoring seems to be our best bet and
7 our best hope going forward to fix those deficiencies
8 that we have of those students coming in. But I love
9 that you're being just straight up with us because
10 that's -- you're not wrong.

11 DR. MOORE: No, and I agree with you. It is so
12 challenging and I may be biased, but I always thought
13 it was the hardest in math to do to try to teach
14 advanced math. I know my English teachers would
15 disagree. They say try to teach something when
16 someone can't read, so I agree with those in math.
17 You need to be able to read as well because like
18 Kelly said, if you can't even read the word problem
19 in context, then how are you supposed to do it? So
20 it is a very complex problem, and I don't want to
21 oversimplify it, but I just want you to realize you
22 know others are in a similar boat. But thank you for
23 that. And yeah, high-impact tutoring is very much
24 the golden ticket of hope for these students. So I
25 applaud you for that.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Stewart, do you have
3 questions or comments?

4 MS. STEWART: I -- y'all have done a great job
5 answering everything. I know that this has been an
6 exhausting day, and we do appreciate you hanging in
7 there with us. I honestly -- everything Dr. Moore
8 just hit on was exactly what I had made notes about,
9 honestly. And you know, just to kind of piggyback
10 off of that, I think it would be great and beneficial
11 for your staff, especially since you do have such a
12 tenured staff, to maybe revisit standards and do a
13 crosswalk, you know, whatever term you want to use,
14 cross walking those standards to your HQIM. You
15 know, I echo, again, what Dr. Moore said. Like, it -
16 - that is kind of the basic beginning of that, and I
17 -- I feel like with tenured teachers sometimes, you
18 know, things -- you just continue to do what you've
19 always done, and I think that that could be a great
20 way to kind of invigorate things is to bring out the
21 standards and do that kind of crosswalk.

22 One thing I did want to touch on just super
23 briefly is, I do appreciate the fact that you all
24 talked about the, you know, building capacity, the
25 tutoring, all of those things that you're bringing in

1 and the resources that you are utilizing. I commend
2 you for that for sure, because that's, you know, that
3 is something that you already have front and center.
4 So great job with that. I was wondering about
5 options for SpEd support and then the number -- the
6 current number that you have on IEPs was just very
7 briefly as I noted for at the end of the day.

8 MR. JOHNSON: I'll leave that to you, Kelly.

9 MS. LUCERO: We have -- Kelly Lucero, doing the
10 SpEd.

11 We have 12 students on IEPs, and I think maybe
12 another ten to 12 that's also on 504s with
13 modifications. So it's a pretty --

14 MS. STEWART: Okay.

15 MS. LUCERO: -- significant percentage of our
16 population.

17 MS. STEWART: Well, and just thinking about you
18 as you're doing, you know, kind of both roles, that
19 does make it difficult to, you know, make sure that
20 all of that is, you know, the accountability piece
21 there especially is being recognized. So I heard you
22 mention that you are looking to hire another math
23 teacher, so then that means you will be the sole
24 SpEd, like you'll be able to devote more time to
25 that. Is that the goal?

1 MS. LUCERO: That is, yes.

2 MS. STEWART: Okay. Perfect. Yeah. Okay.

3 That -- that is all I have. Thank you all so much.

4 MS. LUCERO: Thank you.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

6 So again, thank you for your presentation and
7 thank you for hanging in there with us. I know this
8 is -- you had to kind of wait here towards the end to
9 -- for us to kind of hear your presentation and get
10 feedback. You know, as Dr. Russell mentioned, I was
11 on the charter when this application was presented
12 for approval to get started. And in reflecting back
13 to that time, if I do recall, you guys had to come in
14 front of us and then come back after you retooled it
15 a bit. And so I think this may be a bit of a
16 reinforcement of some of those concerns that we had
17 that were had initially in regards to that there was
18 a very good well thought out plan as related to the
19 creative arts side, but there was the concern at the
20 time about the strength of the academic pieces that
21 were associated with the school. And I think we're
22 starting to see a little bit of that unfolding now.
23 But I said that to say I feel as if that this is
24 almost like a jolt to say, okay, we got to start
25 getting these things right and get a stronger plan in

1 place to really address those concerns and those
2 pieces. I do echo the sentiment of some of our Panel
3 Members that just, like, clock-time-wise, you
4 probably just didn't have enough time to get some
5 things in place. So that may be a part of it as
6 well. But I think another part of it is -- is that
7 there's some shoring up that needs to take place on
8 the academic components to mirror and match your
9 passion in the amount of work that went into the
10 creative arts side. And so I think now that we've
11 had these conversations and you've, you know, I don't
12 want to say force, but you've almost been forced into
13 coming up with a strong plan on how you're going to
14 address these pieces, I anticipate that we should see
15 better results than we've seen in the past because of
16 that process. And because of prior knowledge and
17 prior conversations related to this application, I
18 will, you know, I will make it my effort to come and
19 see the school. I can kind of see it in person and
20 kind of follow along as things are rolling to see how
21 the plan is going in place. Continue to have
22 conversations with the various divisions. I know
23 you're working very closely with Dr. Smith and his
24 team and then team and DESE, but, you know, part of
25 what some of our charters are going to start feeling

1 that pinch is when it comes to success-ready
2 graduates and a lot of the pieces that are associated
3 with that that some of our charters have not really
4 focused in on or put enough emphasis on, or now it's
5 kind of coming back to bite some folks. So I would
6 also encourage you to work with our division as well
7 as Career and Technical Education to see where are
8 some gaps that need to be filled in there is. Also
9 because there are various pathways to assist students
10 to be able to be success-ready graduates, but if
11 having good partnerships with all of us, I think you
12 will see more students that will be able to have that
13 opportunity and then that will also impact your
14 letter grade on the back end.

15 So I just wanted to share those pieces with you
16 and know that I am rooting for you because like I
17 said, I was so quick and said, let's go ahead and do
18 this. And so we want to make sure it's successful,
19 but there's got to be some intentional planning and
20 some intentional corrective measures as it relates to
21 the academic side definitely.

22 DR. RUSSELL: And Dr. Wright McMurray, you know,
23 when we started this, I said all along, we want very
24 strong academics. So I take that very seriously that
25 we will be one of the top academic schools. We

1 should be knowing what I know about an arts immersive
2 school, like what we have -- not an arts integration,
3 but an arts immersive -- These kids, as they become
4 more disciplined, more focused, and all of the
5 tutoring and things, we should see a lot of
6 significant change and a lot of growth. So we will
7 -- we will work very hard on that because I don't
8 like it. I don't like this grade at all. It's not
9 -- it -- we do not want that. We want to be at a
10 very top level and so I will work on this personally
11 with our teachers and make sure it happens. I know
12 Mr. Johnson and Ms. Lucero will as well.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah. So

14 DR. RUSSELL: And we would love to have you come
15 visit.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yep, I will.

17 DR. RUSSELL: That would be great.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I will. I will. Yep, I
19 will.

20 DR. RUSSELL: Okay.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So are there any other
22 questions or comments from any Panel Members that
23 need to be addressed at this time? And we're not
24 going to hold you harmed if you did have one at this
25 time.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Dr. Wright-McMurray, I do want to
2 make one just final comment about what you said about
3 the CTE and stuff. We actually have a counselor that
4 I've been working with a lot -- closely here recently
5 about our H2 pathway. Because we're an art school,
6 there's not a lot of H2 pathways that fit in our
7 curriculum. And so we are actively working on
8 figuring out our H2 pathway to get our kids that
9 qualification within the management and how we can
10 align those with all of the arts. So that is
11 actually something we are looking at for the success
12 rates because we know how we are still being graded
13 on that middle-school scale and next year it's going
14 to be the high-school scale and so we're already
15 looking at the ESSA score and how we can modify
16 things within that. So the fact that you brought
17 that up, I'm glad you did, because I didn't even I
18 didn't even think to mention most of the things. And
19 so we are -- we are trying our best to get all of
20 that aligned as well because I know CTE that's where
21 the state is pushing everything right now. And so
22 I'm glad you -- glad you said that.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you for your
24 additional comments.

25 Okay. So if there are no more questions, then I

1 will accept a motion on the recommendation to accept
2 the signed Statement of Assurances for the School
3 Improvement Plan for the open enrollment charter
4 school Institute for the Creative Arts.

5 DR. BACON: I make the motion that we accept the
6 assurances, and forthcoming improvement plans for the
7 Institute for Creative Arts.

8 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

9 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: I second.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion
11 by Dr. Bacon and a second by, I believe it was Dr.
12 Beshears-Duncan; is that correct?

13 DR. BESHEARS-DUNCAN: Yes.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Sorry.

15 Okay. Is there any discussion on the motion?

16 (NO RESPONSE)

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Seeing none, all
18 those in favor, please say aye.

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Any opposed? Any that
21 wish to abstain?

22 Okay. Motion carries.

23 (The action agenda concluded at 5:14 p.m.)
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss
 COUNTY OF PULASKI)

I, Miranda McEntire, Certified Court Reporter #852, do hereby certify that the facts stated by me in the caption on the foregoing proceedings are true; and that the foregoing proceedings were reported verbatim through the use of the voice-writing method and thereafter transcribed by me or under my direct supervision to the best of my ability, taken at the time and place set out on the caption hereto.

I FURTHER CERTIFY, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or employed by the parties hereto, nor financially interested or otherwise, in the outcome of this action, and that I have no contract with the parties, attorneys, or persons with an interest in the action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original deposition transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial attorney, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties in the action.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 2nd day of April, 2026

Miranda McEntire

MIRANDA MCENTIRE, CCR
 Certified Court Reporter #852

