

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL
DECEMBER 13, 2022
9:00 a.m.
A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MR. KIM DAVIS	Acting Chair
MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	ADE Asst. Commissioner - Public School Accountability
MR. PHIL BALDWIN	Retired Bank Executive
MS. KARLI SARACINI	ADE Asst. Commissioner - Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY	Division of CTE Associate Director
MS. TOYCE NEWTON	Former State Board of Education Member

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. SHASTADY WAGNER	DESE Attorney
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ALSO APPEARING:

MS. DORIE SUMMONS	DESE Charter Schools Director
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LOCATION:

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

I N D E X

	Page
Preliminary Matters	3
Consent Agenda	6
1) 2023 CAP Meeting Dates	7, 323
2) 2023 CAP Open Enrollment Renewal Application	7, 323
3) eStem Public School Renewal Application	5, 9
4) Friendship Aspire Academies Renewal App	137
5) KIPP Delta Renewal Application	197
6) Premier High Schools of Ark. Renewal App	234
Adjournment	324
Court Reporter's Certificate	326

E X H I B I T S

No exhibits.

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So we're going to go ahead and
3 start. Good morning. This is -- the December 13th,
4 14th, 2022 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel
5 is called to order. Welcome to the Department of
6 Education auditorium. Please, please, please silence
7 all electronic devices.

8 My goal is to facilitate a fair and responsible
9 hearing. I will request that each person speaking
10 please state your name and title for the record. I
11 ask that you continue to speak clearly into the
12 microphone for the benefit of the Panel, the
13 audience, and the viewing audience. The entire
14 meeting is being live-streamed and recorded. A
15 transcript of the meeting will be posted on the
16 website.

17 Just FYI, I know I am not Ms. Coffman. She is
18 on by video this morning. And so I will do my best
19 to kind of stand in her place, although we all know
20 anyone who knows Ms. Coffman knows that there's no
21 way you can fill those shoes. So I'm going to ask
22 for a little bit of grace on the front-end. And I'm
23 also going to ask Staff to please, as well as my
24 fellow members up here, to keep me on task and keep
25 me honest as we move through the process.

1 With that, I'd like to call Ms. Wagner up to
2 talk a little bit about the process for today. And
3 then we will get on with the agenda items.

4 MS. WAGNER: Good morning.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Good morning.

6 MS. WAGNER: Shastady Wagner with ADE Legal.

7 So this morning we have our renewals in front of
8 us. So there are four charters slated for today.
9 The process is you will -- the Chair will swear
10 everybody who is testifying in. After swearing
11 everybody in, the applicant will have 20 minutes to
12 present. And I do not believe we've received any
13 opposition, so once they've presented for their 20
14 minutes we can come up and then do the legal reviews.
15 After we do the legal reviews, then the Panel can ask
16 all the questions it has. Okay. And then after that
17 then you'll vote -- and we can go over the voting
18 process at that point or if you want to go over it
19 right now we can.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We can go over it at that
21 point.

22 MS. WAGNER: Okay. All right. So that is the
23 most important things, swearing everybody in and then
24 letting the applicant begin the 20 minutes. I
25 believe eStem is up first.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Any questions from
2 committee members before we go ahead and start?

3 3) eStem Public School Open Enrollment Renewal Application

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. I would actually ask all
5 individuals on behalf of eStem stand and take the
6 oath. If you would, raise your right hand. Do you
7 swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to
8 give shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing
9 but the truth?

10 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic. Thanks. Have a
12 seat.

13 Dr. Bacon, we'll start with you.

14 DR. BACON: We need a minute to get our
15 presentation up there.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Sure. Not a problem. Yeah,
17 one second. While we wait there, Dr. Bacon --

18 MS. WAGNER: We have not done our consent
19 agenda. So would you like to back-up and do our
20 consent agenda real fast --

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely.

22 MS. WAGNER: -- and then we'll move to the
23 action agenda? Sorry.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely.

25 MS. WAGNER: We've got to give grace to

1 everybody. It's my first time doing this, it's Mr.
2 Davis's first time chairing, so you have to give us
3 grace during the holidays here.

4 So if we can just do the consent agenda and then
5 we'll move straight to the action agenda. You guys
6 are already sworn in, and then we can get started
7 from there.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely.

9 MS. WAGNER: Perfect.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So we do have the consent
11 agenda in front of us. It has been sent to us. Are
12 there any questions or concerns regarding the consent
13 agenda?

14 MS. SARACINI: Mr. Davis -- Dr. Davis?

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes. Mister.

16 MS. SARACINI: They are not hearing us on Zoom.

17 MS. SUMMONS: We're working on that.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. We're working on that.

19 MS. SARACINI: Deb is texting, so --

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So we'll just hold.
21 We'll just hold for them. Ms. Wagner, while we're
22 holding --

23 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

24 CONSENT AGENDA

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic. All right. Let's

1 take two. We've already sworn you in, eStem, so
2 there's no need to do that again. But I am going to
3 back-up and I would like to take a motion for the
4 consent agenda.

5 MS. NEWTON: Move to approve.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: It has been moved.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And a second. All those in
9 favor of the consent agenda?

10 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any opposed?

12 Okay. Consent agenda passes.

13 1) CONSIDERATION OF 2023 CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL MEETING
14 DATES

15 2) CONSIDERATION OF 2023 CHARTER APPLICATION AND RENEWAL
16 TIMELINE

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'm also going to ask for a
18 motion. There are two items, considering that we
19 have gotten off to a little bit of a delay, that
20 really only deal with the Panel. And one of those
21 items has to deal with the calendar for next year and
22 the other item has to deal with the renewal timeline.
23 I'm going to ask that we have a motion to move those
24 two items to the end of the agenda today so that we
25 can begin with our schools -- we can begin with

1 eStem. Can I get a motion, please?

2 MS. SARACINI: I make a motion to move these
3 items to the end of the agenda.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And a second?

5 MR. BALDWIN: I'll second.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. It has been moved
7 and properly seconded. All those in favor say aye.

8 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any opposition?

10 Okay. And I'm going to ask Staff to help me
11 watch in the Zoom as well for those folks in regards
12 to this.

13 All right. I think we are ready. Dr. Bacon, if
14 you would come up, please. We have already sworn you
15 in. As you are aware, there is 20 minutes that you
16 have for your presentation. Any opposition, which
17 it's my understanding there isn't any today, but just
18 for notice for everyone watching, there is 20 minutes
19 provided also to anyone who is opposing the charter
20 authorizing. And then the applicant has a five-
21 minute response, and then we sort of move on from
22 there. So I think we've got you loaded up. Is that
23 correct? Or are we still waiting?

24 DR. BACON: I don't see the presentation up
25 there.

(A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

1
2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And you should have the ability
3 to -- yeah -- be able to make sure Dr. Bacon's
4 clicker is working as well. So, okay. Can you try
5 that clicker? I think we may need some assistance
6 with the clicker as well, please.

7 Fantastic.

8 DR.BACON: All right.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: It took us a minute --

10 DR. BACON: Yeah.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- to get here, but we're here.

12 DR. BACON: We understand technical
13 difficulties.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah.

15 DR. BACON: Good morning. I'm John Bacon. I'm
16 the Chief Executive Officer for eStem Public Charter
17 Schools. And as always, it's a privilege to stand
18 before you all on behalf of our incredible staff and
19 students at eStem. It's a little bittersweet for me
20 today, knowing this is probably the last time I will
21 appear before this panel. You may have heard I have
22 recently announced my impending retirement from
23 eStem. But we have an incredible senior leadership
24 team, a veteran team. I'm going to introduce a few
25 of you to, who I think are going to be able to take

1 eStem into the future and continue the great work
2 that we've been doing.

3 First, I want to introduce Ms. Johnecia Howard
4 who is our Chief Operating Officer. She'll be
5 joining me in the presentation in a minute. We also
6 have our Chief Financial Officer, Ms. Angela Miller.
7 And we have Mark Milhollen who is our founding Chief
8 Financial Officer with me 15 years ago and is going
9 to be taking over as superintendent upon my
10 retirement. So eStem is in very good hands moving
11 forward and I'm really proud of the team of leaders
12 that we have there.

13 I'll talk a little bit about what we're going to
14 share with you today. I'm going to give you a little
15 bit of an overview of eStem. We've changed since the
16 last time we were here for our renewal in the spring
17 of 2013; talk some about our academics, student
18 achievement. Ms. Howard will then speak with you
19 about some of the ways that we believe that we've
20 been innovative in our approaches to teaching and
21 learning and some of the impact that that's had as we
22 move eStem forward.

23 As you know, eStem was founded in 2008, three
24 schools and one facility in downtown Little Rock
25 right in the business and financial district. Today,

1 we actually serve almost 2900 students in five
2 schools in three locations across the city of Little
3 Rock. After that initial opening in downtown where
4 we had two facilities, in 2017 we moved our high
5 school to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock
6 campus in a very unique partnership between K-12 and
7 Higher Ed. And then, in 2018, we opened two schools
8 in the East Village neighborhood of Little Rock. And
9 so today, again, we have five schools in those three
10 locations.

11 As I said, we've had a couple of new school
12 openings in the last five, six years. And so I want
13 to talk a little bit about how eStem has changed, and
14 I'll sort of speak pre-expansion, post-expansion.
15 And if you look at the data charts, it's pretty
16 obvious where the expansion started. We were
17 operating just under 1500 students for a number of
18 years. In 2017, when we moved our high school we had
19 our first expansion, 2018 with the East Village
20 campus. So as you can see over the last few years
21 we've actually more than doubled our student
22 population. We were serving right at 3,000 students
23 when Covid hit. We're down a little bit into the
24 2900 range. Obviously, through Covid I think
25 everybody saw some transitions and choices that

1 families were making for virtual and other options,
2 but -- so we feel like we've really stabilized and
3 are starting to see an uptick in our enrollment.

4 Again, as the transition through this expansion
5 has occurred you'll notice that the biggest increase
6 in our population has really been in our African
7 American students. We went from about 40% of our
8 students who are African American pre-expansion to
9 about 65% of our students who are African American
10 today. We've also seen an increase in the percentage
11 of our Hispanic students. Our white percentage of
12 students went from about 40% pre-expansion to about
13 -- I think it's about 16% today.

14 Looking at how that sort of compares to the city
15 and some of the local charters and school districts
16 in Pulaski County, you can see basically we're at --
17 last year we were at just under 20% white, 64% black.
18 The closest comparison really in terms of demographic
19 data is the Little Rock School District. We have the
20 exact same white percentage of population and we were
21 slightly higher in our African American population
22 than they were. North Little Rock is also a very
23 close comparison in terms of racial demographics. So
24 we just sort of want to set the stage there of when
25 we talk about maybe some comparisons later. You

1 know, those are really the closest comparisons in
2 terms of race.

3 As with any other subgroups, as our transition
4 through this expansion has occurred you'll note a
5 pretty striking increase in our percentage of
6 students or number of students who have IEPs or
7 special education. We went from about 7% of our
8 students being on IEPs pre-expansion to almost 13% of
9 our students today. We've also seen a pretty heavy
10 increase in our students who are on 504 plans and our
11 LEP, or Limited English Proficient, students --
12 again, starting to mirror what the traditional school
13 districts, the larger districts in Little Rock and
14 North Little Rock look like.

15 Perhaps the biggest change demographically for
16 us has been in the percentage of low income students
17 that we serve. If you'll note, 2017, which is our
18 last year pre-expansion, we were at about 30% of our
19 students from poverty, students who qualify for free
20 and reduced lunch, and that had been pretty steady.
21 About a third of our students had been from poverty
22 for those first few years. Once this expansion
23 began, you'll note a pretty striking increase year by
24 year. In 2018, when we opened the high school we
25 increase to 40%. With East Village we were at almost

1 50%. And now sort of post-Covid or on the backside
2 of Covid we actually -- this year our October 1
3 enrollment was actually at 70% free and reduced
4 lunch. OEP at University of Arkansas sort of
5 identify as high-poverty schools as those that have
6 two-thirds or more of their students from poverty.
7 So eStem would now be classified as what you would
8 call, you know, serving a high poverty population.

9 And now I've lost my clicker.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We're having another clicker
11 issue.

12 DR. BACON: Okay. Now we go.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: There we go.

14 DR. BACON: All right. It was taking a minute.

15 Okay. Just to put that into perspective, again,
16 as we sort of talk about sort of how our percentage
17 in terms of race compares to the larger districts,
18 these are some charts -- or a chart here that shows
19 the percentage of low income families. And so you'll
20 note we are the blue line, and if you start at that
21 2017 and you work your way to present you'll see that
22 movement increasing pretty dramatically. The red
23 line is the Little Rock School District, yellow is
24 Pulaski County Special, and the green is North Little
25 Rock. So you can see where in the earlier days, pre-

1 expansion, people could have said "maybe there's not
2 a good comparison between you and these other
3 districts." But if you'll note, particularly going
4 into last year, we were just slightly below Little
5 Rock and North Little Rock in poverty. I don't have
6 their data for this year yet. But if you look at
7 where we are at over 70%, we're actually very
8 comparable to those districts in terms of the
9 percentage of students in poverty we serve. And this
10 just puts it a little more in perspective from --
11 this is last year's data; so you can see Pulaski
12 County certainly is probably not a good comparison,
13 but the other districts would be good comparisons.

14 Just to hit on one thing that we think is
15 important to talk about -- as I noted earlier with
16 our demographics, before we move on, we have seen a
17 slight decrease in our student population the last
18 couple of years through Covid. We looked at some of
19 our statistics and metrics. We just wanted to share,
20 you know, we set a number of years ago an 85% target
21 for our student retention year-to-year. We know
22 students and families have a lot of choices; those
23 choices continue to increase both public and private
24 and virtual. And so we've been meeting that 85%
25 target. It is a little down, our retention, over the

1 last couple of years, but certainly in our
2 elementaries we're actually in pretty solid shape.
3 It's more -- been more at the secondary level where
4 we've seen some reductions in enrollment.

5 I wanted to just share with you a few things
6 we're doing to address that. We've actually hired a
7 full-time employee who's over our efforts for both
8 recruitment and retention of students using all of
9 the tools that are available for marketing, digital
10 marketing, social media; we've done billboards; we've
11 been out in the community; and in the university
12 district we have people out door-to-door handing out
13 flyers and information about our high school. We're
14 just trying to make sure that anyone in the city and
15 in Pulaski County and in the area, frankly, who's
16 interested in what eStem is offering knows about the
17 opportunity to attend our schools and that we are
18 regularly accepting new students.

19 I'm going to move to academics now just to sort
20 of give you an overview. And you can't really see
21 that because of the dot there on the screen. But in
22 terms of our overall ESSA scores we would say that we
23 are in that rebounding category I think that the
24 state DESE talks about a lot, whether you're
25 recovering or rebounding. Our elementary schools are

1 up from where they were last year, but they are still
2 struggling to get back to those 2019 pre-Covid
3 levels. At the secondary level we've really seen a
4 great recovery. Our junior highs are actually
5 performing at or above where they were in the pre-
6 Covid era and our high school is almost back to where
7 we were pre-Covid. So at the secondary level we're
8 definitely seeing a lot of recovery. I've been
9 feeling really good about those results. In
10 elementary we're seeing some rebounding but we have a
11 ways to go. But we did grow by a good two to three
12 points in both of our elementaries ESSA scores last
13 year.

14 Given that, just to hit on a few things, we've
15 got a pretty exhaustive list here of things we've
16 been doing both at the elementary and secondary level
17 to address some of these academic things. In
18 particular, at the elementary the main thing we did
19 this year was we hired an Executive Director over
20 elementary schools. We've acknowledged elementary is
21 an area we need to improve upon. And so Ms. Lori
22 Smith is here with us; she joined us from the North
23 Little Rock School District after a number of years
24 as a principal and a senior leader. And so she's
25 overseeing our elementary school operations, really

1 working on developing our teachers through some
2 specific professional development, collaboration,
3 really building on that human capital. We've done a
4 lot with curriculum and instruction to make sure that
5 that foundation is solid and then that we build upon
6 that solid foundation for both our curriculum MAPS
7 and our assessments. And then we've added a number
8 of additional extra pieces: afterschool, summer
9 school, daily interventions built into the day to
10 make sure that we're addressing any student needs as
11 they come up.

12 Again, at the secondary level I'm really proud
13 of the work that we've been doing and the growth that
14 we've been seeing. And so with that, I'm hitting on
15 things we'll continue. Same thing with development
16 of our teachers through some master classes and
17 through using PLCs -- really master schedule,
18 maximizing our instructional time. We've done a lot
19 of double blocking and extended time for math and
20 reading; common formative assessments. We've all --

21 I know you're chasing -- they're chasing me
22 around because every box goes to a different spot.

23 We've also done some extra things through
24 summer, afterschool, weekend, and we do Saturday
25 sessions in our Reading is Lit program.

1 The biggest piece that I think is worth
2 discussing for our purposes today in terms of
3 performance -- you know, OEP at the U of A talks
4 about the need to shine a light on value-added
5 growth. We can't control where students are when
6 they come to us, and if you're serving a high poverty
7 population you often have students who are coming in
8 one, two, three grade levels behind. But what we can
9 control is the value that we're -- excuse me -- the
10 value we're adding and whether those students are
11 growing and outpacing what would be their expected
12 growth.

13 So when we look at our value added growth we
14 really think it's a great story for this year. We
15 have five schools. Four of those schools actually
16 exceeded the 80 point level that sort of is that
17 threshold that the DESE has set as a threshold you
18 want to meet to say you are actually -- your students
19 are outperforming where they would have been expected
20 to perform based on their past history. So, four of
21 our five schools -- 80% of our schools are exceeding
22 that. All of our schools saw an increase in their
23 value added growth from the previous year, and four
24 of our five schools again had the highest value added
25 growth they've ever had. And so we feel really good

1 about that what we're seeing is, coming out of this
2 Covid era, that expansive growth that we need to see
3 to bring our kids back up to the levels that we would
4 like to see them.

5 Just hitting on a few things there again through
6 OEP -- you know, they recognize schools for growth,
7 and so we're really excited that we had three schools
8 this year recognized for their value added growth
9 through OEP. Our high school was recognized as being
10 in the top 20 of all high schools in the state for
11 value added growth. Our Downtown Junior High School
12 was recognized as being in the top 10 of all middle
13 schools or junior high level schools in the state for
14 growth. And our East Village Junior High, which is
15 our highest poverty secondary school, was actually
16 the top value added growth junior high or middle
17 school in the entire state, number one for value
18 added growth. They were also recognized through OEP
19 and what they call Beating the Odds. So then we look
20 at just those schools that are high poverty, so two-
21 thirds or more of their students in poverty. Again,
22 East Village Junior High was the number one school in
23 that category, not only seeing value added growth for
24 all students but particularly given that it's a high
25 poverty population. So we're really proud of the

1 growth we're seeing and the movement we're seeing
2 back toward the levels of performance we'd like to
3 see.

4 This is just sort of a snapshot of overall ELA,
5 English Language Arts, and math percentages for our
6 students who are Ready and Exceeding on last year's
7 ACT Aspire. As I shared with you, our closest
8 demographic comparison on race and poverty status
9 would be Little Rock and North Little Rock School
10 Districts. ELA, we're about nine to ten points above
11 both Little Rock and North Little Rock for ELA. And
12 math, we're seven to nine points above -- seven over
13 Little Rock, nine over North Little Rock. So we feel
14 like that's a really good comparison point, given
15 that our data reflects that these are very similar
16 populations that we're all serving here in Pulaski
17 County.

18 I also want to just hit on something. You know,
19 DESE recognizes Reward Schools every year for growth,
20 for academic achievement. We have generally had at
21 least one school recognized by DESE as a Reward
22 School every year for the last few years, going back
23 to pre-Covid. Our high school is regularly
24 recognized for top 5%. This year we actually had two
25 schools recognized for top 5%. Our East Village

1 Junior High School and our high school are both
2 receiving rewards for having that high level of
3 growth. And we had two schools this year recognized
4 by DESE for being Schools on the Move toward
5 Excellence, those schools that are seeing
6 improvements. So both of our junior highs were
7 recognized for improvement in overall ESSA Index and
8 then our East Village Junior High with that great
9 growth was also recognized for weighted achievement
10 increase and value added growth increase.

11 So we feel like we're seeing a lot of really
12 positive things in our test performance here
13 recently. Additionally, an important datapoint we
14 always talk about is the outcome piece of graduation
15 rate. Generally, our goal is 100% and we've been at
16 100% in some years in the past. Most recently, I
17 think we've been at 97, 99 percent, but never below
18 that 97.63%. That's probably the lowest in really
19 our history since our first class graduated in 2012.
20 So we feel really good about some of our academic
21 metrics. I'm going to let Ms. Howard speak about
22 some ways that we've been innovative in our
23 approaches to teaching and learning.

24 MS. HOWARD: Thank you, Dr. Bacon.

25 Good morning, everyone. Johnecia Howard for

1 eStem.

2 The success that our eStem students have earned
3 is in direct response to the ingenuity, the
4 innovation, and creativity of our educators. We are
5 doing some really exciting things, guys.

6 So we have several programs that are
7 specifically targeted at improving enrichment and
8 intervention opportunities for our students. I just
9 want to pay attention to a few of those today,
10 highlight a few. The first is eStem Advantage. This
11 is a new 6-12 enrichment program that exposes
12 students to college readiness, career and technical
13 educational opportunities, and concurrent credit
14 options.

15 Another is our Ignite afterschool program which
16 was recently featured on Channel 11. When -- the
17 title of this program is called Ignite and that is
18 exactly what it does for our students. It ignites
19 them by exposing them to a host of opportunities,
20 like yoga. We see 2nd graders playing chess. We see
21 2nd and 3rd graders engaging in opportunities that
22 they probably wouldn't be exposed to otherwise.

23 The third one I'd like to pay attention to is
24 content labs. Content lab is specifically at our
25 secondary schools. We actually presented on it at

1 the APSRC conference a couple of years ago. It is an
2 intervention and enrichment program that involves
3 peer tutoring, individualized instruction through
4 office hours with their professors, and a host of
5 wellness activities like wiffle ball and salsa
6 dancing. Who would've ever thought that high school
7 students would enjoy recess so much.

8 Our goal has always been for our students to be
9 college ready, career ready, and world ready, and
10 that's exactly what we want all of our students to
11 accomplish. So it's important to us and our families
12 that our students have multiple post-secondary
13 options. Our goal is to equip them with the
14 educational foundation they need to get to college,
15 whether they choose to attend or not.

16 This chart actually highlights the percentage of
17 high school students entering college across the
18 nation, the state, the county, and at eStem. From
19 this slide you can see that we are reaching our goal
20 of insuring that eStem students are in position to
21 attend college if that's what they choose to do. And
22 we have consistently outperformed the county, state,
23 and nation in our ability to help our students get to
24 college. What we find equally impressive is the
25 percentage of eStem students who actually graduate

1 from college in four years. The takeaway that I'd
2 like to leave with you all is that students who are
3 active participants in the eStem network for multiple
4 years are more likely to graduate from college in
5 four years. As you can see, the graduating class of
6 2012 had only been at eStem since 9th grade, about
7 four years, and 18% of them successfully graduated in
8 four years. However, when you jump to our cohorts in
9 2016 and 2017, those are comprised of students who
10 were likely in our network for eight or nine years,
11 and roughly 50% of them graduated from college.
12 Ultimately, this proves to us that our families --
13 and our families that the eStem way is effectively
14 getting Arkansas students to and through college
15 successfully. Moreover, our alumni consistently
16 outpace the state average of four-year college
17 graduates since 2013.

18 So, how are we doing this? It is a lot of hard
19 work on the part of our entire school community
20 because we believe in educating the entire child.
21 But it is not work that we shy away from. We focus
22 from day-one on relationship building. It's
23 important that our teachers and our team of educators
24 understand how important it is to know the child. We
25 expose our students to real world challenges and we

1 push them to be solution oriented. We peak their
2 interest through engaging classroom activities,
3 memorable extracurricular experiences, and we provide
4 them with an opportunity to leave a legacy for the
5 next group of eStem MET. In fact, our alumni are
6 phenomenal representatives for us. They are doctors,
7 lawyers, Ivy League graduates; we have a runway
8 model, engineers, active duty service members, Emmy
9 award winners, and a few are even back at eStem as
10 members of our faculty and staff.

11 I'd like to take a brief moment to share a story
12 about one of our most notable alumni. Gia Hayes came
13 to us in elementary school and was a member of the
14 2014 state championship girls' basketball team. She
15 graduated with honors from eStem in 2016, with a
16 Division 1 basketball scholarship to Bucknell
17 University. While there she obtained a degree in
18 Computer Engineering and now works for one of the
19 largest technology companies in the world as a
20 software engineer. But what's most impressive about
21 Gia is that after starting her career she called us
22 with an opportunity to give back to eStem. Just last
23 year she worked with a committee of representatives
24 from eStem and other notable figures from around the
25 country to implement the Gia Hayes Scholar Athlete

1 and Character Incentive Award program. We gave out
2 our first round of scholarships to two students just
3 last year. And Ms. Hayes has made a commitment to
4 continue this scholarship program for as long as
5 possible.

6 That's what it's all about: equipping and
7 empowering our students with enough love,
8 encouragement, drive, and eStem pride to pay it
9 forward. That is what makes me proud to be an eStem
10 MET and why we are here today requesting that our
11 school community be allowed to continue to do great
12 things for at least another 13 years. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. Thank you so much
14 for the presentation.

15 It appears that there is no opposition to the
16 presentation. But I would like to provide public
17 comment. If anyone is interested, please approach
18 the podium at this time to be sworn in.

19 Okay. Seeing none, I'd like to move on to Ms.
20 Wagner with the legal review.

21 LEGAL REVIEW

22 MS. WAGNER: Again --

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Good morning.

24 MS. WAGNER: I'm also joined by Mr. Tripp Walter
25 with APSRC. This is my first time doing one of these

1 in front of you guys, so bear with me. If I do
2 something out of line I'm sure Tripp can help correct
3 me.

4 Okay. So I will just go down the final legal
5 review, if you guys would like to pull that up off
6 the agenda.

7 ALTERNATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

8 MS. WAGNER: The Alternative Learning
9 Environment -- they asked for a waiver of 6-15-
10 1006(b)(5), 6-18-503(a)(1)(c)(i), 6-48-102, 6-48-103,
11 the DESE rules governing Student Special Needs
12 Funding Section 4, and Standard 2-I.1. I have no
13 concerns as legal. But if there are any questions
14 from you guys, that's up to you.

15 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

16 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Moving on to number 2, I had
17 no concerns with the Arkansas --

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Just one second.

19 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Just one. I do think we have
21 -- Ms. Coffman, is that correct, you have a comment
22 or a question?

23 I think you may be on mute. Just give us one
24 second here. I think we're going to be un-muting
25 you; so you may be okay but maybe we need to un-mute

1 you on our end.

2 I think we're okay.

3 MS. COFFMAN: All right. So my question, I
4 would like for the school to explain their ALE
5 process that they're using now and to give us some
6 feedback on in-school suspension and out-of-school
7 suspension, expulsion.

8 DR. BACON: So, I feel like there's an echo.

9 We had submitted early on to try and to be as
10 flexible as we can in meeting the needs of any child
11 within [Zoom audio distortion] --

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I think we're working on it.

13 All right. Let's try now.

14 DR. BACON: Okay. No echo?

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No echo, and hopefully they can
16 hear us on the other end.

17 DR. BACON: Okay.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: They can. We may need to
19 bounce back and forth --

20 DR. BACON: No worries.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- depending upon questions --

22 DR. BACON: We're flexible for sure.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

24 DR. BACON: And so our commitment has always
25 been to create ways to serve all kids in our schools

1 and to keep them in school in a -- as traditional of
2 an environment as possible. So we haven't really
3 used any sort of creating our own ALE internally. We
4 have had a small number of students who have been
5 into a variety of different day treatment programs.
6 We've had partnerships with Methodist and maybe one
7 other.

8 MS. HOWARD: Behavioral services.

9 DR. BACON: Behavioral services, where we've
10 sent a handful of students over the years.
11 Generally, you know, we do progressive discipline, as
12 anyone would, with the ultimate goal of keeping
13 students in school, keeping them in class as much as
14 possible.

15 I'm going to let Ms. Howard speak a little bit
16 about in-school or out-of-school suspension and the
17 way we use that.

18 MS. HOWARD: So right now, we have roughly a 10%
19 out-of-school suspension rate. So out of about 3,000
20 students we have about 300 suspensions on file and
21 some of those are students that have gotten
22 suspensions more than once, obviously. But our goal
23 is always restorative, and so even with our in-school
24 program, which currently is just at the high school,
25 those students are actually beyond just doing class

1 work; they're actually learning about the mistakes
2 that they made. And so our Deans are very active in
3 making sure our students understand the why behind
4 their behavior and then figuring out the additional
5 supports they need that we can provide at school or
6 if we need to outsource those services from other
7 people.

8 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Ms. Coffman gave a
9 thumbs-up signal.)

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

11 DR. BACON: So thumbs-up.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah.

13 DR. BACON: A thumbs-up from Ms. Coffman is high
14 praise. So, okay.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely. Absolutely.

16 And just to continue on that point, you gave us
17 a lot of information about racial demographic
18 breakdown.

19 MS. HOWARD: Uh-huh.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Are you also tracking that when
21 it comes to your ALE program and/or suspensions?

22 MS. HOWARD: So, again, we don't have an ALE
23 program, but as it relates to our suspensions we can
24 see racial demographics using Smart Board -- the
25 Smart Board Data Dashboard to see what percentage of

1 our students are African American versus white and
2 so-on.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Do you happen to know
4 that number right now?

5 MS. HOWARD: Yeah, I think we do. We can pull
6 it real quick.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

8 DR. BACON: And the 300 number was from the last
9 complete school year, 21-22, I think.

10 MS. HOWARD: Yeah. So total African American
11 out-of-schools are -- so the African American
12 students that were out of school --

13 DR. BACON: That was the year before. This is
14 last year.

15 MS. HOWARD: Okay. So we had a total of 80
16 African American girls and 172 African American males
17 -- and, again, some of those are repeat offenders, so
18 it's not -- and I think there's an important point to
19 make, that oftentimes our suspensions aren't as a
20 result of like violent; a lot of times it's a
21 repeating of like kind of a Category 1 offense, so
22 like I had my cell phone out in class five times last
23 month. And so oftentimes those are the types of
24 behaviors that students are being suspended for, as
25 opposed to something violent.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

2 DR. BACON: So it's about upper 70% of our
3 suspensions would have been African American
4 students, and upper 60% of our students are African
5 American as a whole.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

7 DR. BACON: So it's slightly higher for African
8 Americans than it would be for other subgroups, but I
9 don't think it's totally out of alignment --

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic.

11 DR. BACON: -- with the overall population.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

13 Any other questions in regards to the waiver
14 topic Alternative Learning Environment?

15 MS. NEWTON: I have a question.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes.

17 MS. NEWTON: So, a couple of questions actually.

18 When you started at the beginning of the school
19 and the year's start-up did your percentage of
20 African American students -- how did that change over
21 the years? And, also, one of the topics nationally
22 is about suspensions and children of color and how
23 does that compare to the other populations that you
24 have at eStem?

25 DR. BACON: So historically, you know, we're an

1 open enrollment school. And in 2018, when we were
2 approved we went out all around, different parts of
3 the community and recruited. And so the first people
4 in were probably more -- it was more balanced; it was
5 probably in the lower 40% white, 40% African
6 American, and 20% other groups. But what we saw was
7 building waiting lists -- and we don't ask the
8 specific information on our application other than --
9 the address was there. So we could look at Zip Codes
10 and we knew the places where the preponderance of Zip
11 Codes were on that waiting list were going to be in
12 the more diverse parts of the city. So that was part
13 of our strategic planning for our expansion with
14 opening the new campuses in 2017 and 2018. And what
15 we saw was what we expected, which was that as we
16 doubled that population the students who were coming
17 off of those waiting lists were definitely more
18 diverse. And so, today, we're at -- I think the last
19 count was about 16% or 17% of our students are white
20 and about 65% to 66% of our students are African
21 American, and then our Hispanic population has also
22 grown to about 10% of our enrollment. But it's still
23 an open enrollment lottery process. We run a lottery
24 each -- I think February for any seats available.
25 And generally we have -- occasionally, we'll now have

1 some waiting lists in some of the lower grades, but
2 generally it's pretty open enrollment as you work
3 your way up through the grades.

4 MS. NEWTON: And I understand that. But, you
5 know, there's a lot of national attention around the
6 disparity in populations and color and children of
7 color. So I was just wondering if that's something
8 that you have paid special attention to or that you
9 monitor how you -- of course, the charter schools are
10 different in terms of the way young people and
11 families are approached, in many ways. So is that
12 something that is on your radar or is it -- do you
13 look at it and compare it to regular public schools,
14 other charters, and factoring in the communities that
15 you serve? So it's just several years ago someone
16 came before the State Board of Education from the
17 University of Arkansas -- I can't remember her name
18 -- and just broke it down in terms of school
19 districts. And so I was just wondering if that is an
20 issue? And if it is an issue, or if it's not an
21 issue, whether or not you look at that as a regular
22 part of your evaluation?

23 DR. BACON: We absolutely do break down our data
24 when we look at it by subgroups for populations to
25 see. Traditionally, our African American students

1 have outperformed African American students in the
2 other districts and areas and schools around us. Our
3 white students, Hispanic students -- at each subgroup
4 we look at that and we generally found solid
5 performance, comparatively speaking. But it
6 certainly is something we pay a lot of attention to
7 throughout our -- you know, particularly with our
8 staffing. We made a real commitment to diversify our
9 staff. I think there was a time early on when, like
10 a lot of other schools, we were probably very heavily
11 white and white female teachers. We have a lot of
12 younger teachers because they're coming out of
13 college, they're coming from some nontraditional
14 places, and we had opportunities the last few years
15 as we were expanding. But we made a real commitment
16 to diversify the staff -- and Ms. Howard can probably
17 speak to that better than I can in terms of --

18 MS. NEWTON: Well --

19 DR. BACON: -- what that looks like.

20 MS. NEWTON: -- before -- you know, I don't want
21 to prolong the process. But I'm looking at just as
22 you highlight the academic achievements, just as you
23 highlight the numbers that go up with this
24 population, I think it would be helpful for
25 information purposes and helpful maybe to the

1 Department to know how you are dealing with the
2 populations of black and brown --

3 DR. BACON: Right.

4 MS. NEWTON: -- children, whether or not you're
5 making the same progress.

6 DR. BACON: Right.

7 MS. NEWTON: Because I think that speaks to the
8 overall --

9 DR. BACON: Absolutely.

10 MS. NEWTON: -- value of eStem and the program.
11 So it's not -- I don't want to put you on the spot
12 here --

13 DR. BACON: No, no.

14 MS. NEWTON: -- but at the same time I would
15 appreciate knowing --

16 DR. BACON: Absolutely. We have --

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Actually, before you answer
18 that why don't we do this -- because I know there
19 will be a place for questions and discussions, and I
20 think -- can we hold that answer until then?

21 MS. NEWTON: I'll hold it till then. I'm sorry.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And what we'll do is --

23 DR. BACON: We'll finish.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- we'll go through -- yeah, we
25 definitely will because that's a great question. I'd

1 like to go through all of the legal review, and so if
2 there are questions that are pertinent to the topic
3 in regards to the legal review we can do those at the
4 moment, and then at the end we can come back with
5 some general lessons learned.

6 DR. BACON: Okay.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Because I think those are
8 critically --

9 DR. BACON: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- important to how we not only
11 --

12 DR. BACON: Absolutely.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- think about the work, but
14 how we think about other organizations moving
15 forward.

16 So with that, any Panel have any other questions
17 in regards to the initial waiver that has been
18 presented?

19 If not, I'd like to ask Ms. Wagner to come back
20 up and let's continue down the waivers. And, once
21 again, if there are any questions that are pertinent
22 to the waiver that's being requested we will take
23 those now. All other general questions or questions
24 we may have about the institution we can hold until
25 panel questions and discussions. Does that sound

1 okay?

2 MS. WAGNER: Sounds great.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Hopefully, that's in order and
4 that's the way we should operate. But continue if
5 you would, Ms. Wagner.

6 ARKANSAS HISTORY

7 MS. WAGNER: All right. So the next waiver
8 topic is Arkansas History. EStem asked to continue
9 their waiver of Arkansas code annotated 6-16-
10 124(a)(2) and Standard 1-A.1.2.8. This is legally
11 correct. I have no concerns.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'd just like a little bit of
13 background on that waiver and why the school is
14 requesting the waiver.

15 DR. BACON: So we're meeting the elementary
16 guidelines for teaching Arkansas History across the
17 social studies curriculum. The reason we had asked
18 for this and have used it over the years was just to
19 have the flexibility to not have a specific required
20 Arkansas History semester or course at the secondary
21 level. We infuse that across our history and social
22 studies curriculum at the secondary level just so
23 that our students would have an opportunity to take
24 some other hopefully STEM-based electives. It's
25 really just that one course offering as a specific

1 course and we infuse it in our curriculum.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for the answer.

3 Any other questions regarding this waiver from
4 the Panel?

5 MS. SARACINI: May I ask a question?

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Please.

7 MS. SARACINI: And maybe Amy Counts can help me
8 with this. With the new alignment piece with
9 Arkansas History and how it's going forward, how does
10 this waiver play into that? I had asked my -- this
11 question, because I know that we have re-done --
12 we're in the process -- I think the State Board just
13 approved our social studies standards last Thursday
14 at State Board. And I just wanted to know --

15 MS. COUNTS: Amy Counts.

16 MS. SARACINI: -- what impact does this have on
17 this kind of waivers.

18 MS. COUNTS: Okay. So, Amy Counts, Director of
19 Curriculum Projects.

20 So there has been a shift where we're moving
21 geography down to the 5th grade level and then moving
22 that, you know, U.S. History up to the -- what was
23 traditionally 7th. Arkansas History is typically a
24 course that's taught in grade 7/8 but they have some
25 flexibility in, you know, where that goes. And then

1 there is also an Arkansas History in the 9-12 range,
2 so --

3 MS. SARACINI: So it really wouldn't impact it
4 anymore. Okay.

5 DR. BACON: And one -- I mean, I don't want to
6 belabor that.

7 MS. SARACINI: No, that's okay.

8 DR. BACON: But the original questions were I
9 think around -- we are providing the professional
10 development for all of our teachers, as stated in the
11 guidelines for Arkansas History, which is one of the
12 waivers we were not asking for. And obviously our
13 teachers who are traditionally licensed or through
14 the certification process have to meet those Arkansas
15 History requirements, so they have the knowledge and
16 background.

17 MS. SARACINI: Yes. For licensure renewal.

18 DR. BACON: Yes.

19 MS. SARACINI: Yes. I just wanted to make sure
20 there was nothing with the new aligned curriculum.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic. If no further
22 questions, let's continue with the waiver requests.

23 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

24 MS. WAGNER: Waiver request number three, the
25 Board of Directors, eStem is asking to continue

1 Arkansas code annotated section 6-13-619(b), 6-13-
2 630, 6-14-101 et seq., 6-13-608, 6-13-619(c), 6-13-
3 616(a), 6-13-634, and 6-13-611. These are all
4 legally correct and I have no concerns.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions regarding this
6 waiver from the board -- I mean the Panel, rather?

7 Let's continue.

8 CLASS SIZE/TEACHING LOAD

9 MS. WAGNER: Class Size and Teaching Load --
10 eStem is asking to continue their waiver of Arkansas
11 code annotated 6-17-812, Standards 1-A.5 and 1-A.6,
12 and then the DESE rules governing Class Size and
13 Teaching Load. This is legally correct and I have no
14 legal concerns.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions regarding this
16 waiver from the Panel?

17 DR. BACON: Ms. Coffman.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: It appears that Ms. Coffman has
19 a question or a comment regarding this waiver.

20 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. My question was, are the
21 teachers being compensated if they're going over the
22 150? And it said in your notes that you were going
23 five students over in elementary. Is that correct?

24 DR. BACON: I think we had set that in the
25 language for our last renewal. And the elementaries

1 setting, if we're doing it, it is literally going to
2 be one student over. It's the -- you know, just sort
3 of when we do our initial assignments and assigning
4 of students and then with the movement that comes
5 with -- you know, you'll find that some families
6 choose multiple -- have applied at 12 or 13 different
7 schools. And so just having that flexibility often
8 for short periods of time -- and in the elementary
9 it's never going to be more than perhaps one student
10 in a class. At the secondary level what we try to do
11 is we -- because our junior highs and high school
12 population are substantially smaller than a lot of
13 the other more traditional high schools we want to be
14 able to offer as many electives and opportunities as
15 possible. And so occasionally we'll need to have one
16 student over or two students over a class count or
17 maybe a teaching load for a teacher just because
18 we're trying to be as efficient as we can and
19 maximize resources. I think last year, I think I
20 made a note in there, we may have had three or four
21 situations where for a period of time we were maybe
22 one student over for a teacher. I don't think at
23 this point this year we have anyone who is having to
24 go above that at this point, but it's there because
25 we've needed it as recently as last year. But we do

1 compensate, per the guidelines, anyone who is having
2 to take on the additional load as DESE has laid out
3 for us.

4 MS. COFFMAN: Then, if compensation is being
5 provided is the waiver of Teaching Load required?

6 DR. BACON: I'm having a hard time hearing.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Ms. Coffman, can you
8 repeat that question and/or comment?

9 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. My comment was, if
10 compensation is being provided to the high school --
11 junior high and high school teachers is a waiver of
12 Teaching Load required?

13 DR. BACON: I'm not a lawyer. Somebody else --

14 MS. WAGNER: I'm not actually a hundred-percent
15 certain about that. I would have to look at the
16 standard and see exactly what the standard says.
17 Because you're asking in relation to the standard,
18 correct, Ms. Coffman?

19 MS. COFFMAN: That's correct.

20 MS. WAGNER: I'll have to look at the standard
21 to know for sure.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

23 MS. WAGNER: Let me take a look at the statute
24 real fast.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. We want to make sure we

1 get this right, and so we're digging into the
2 standard in order to provide Ms. Coffman with the
3 answer that she requested.

4 MS. WAGNER: So to answer your question, Ms.
5 Coffman, yes, they would not need a waiver of 6-17-
6 812 if they were compensating. So I will just let
7 the charter answer that for you.

8 DR. BACON: I guess I'm just learning as we
9 stand here and while we're talking about this. We do
10 compensate the people when we ask them to teach above
11 the requirement. And we will -- I think our plan
12 would be to continue to do that. But we definitely
13 need the flexibility to go over from time to time
14 slightly. So someone smarter than me probably needs
15 to say if we need these waivers or not to accomplish
16 that. But I think -- I'm just speaking with our CFO
17 -- our commitment is that we do pay them and plan to
18 continue to pay them when we need to go over.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So what do we do in this
20 situation? What's the advice of Counsel?

21 MS. WAGNER: So in order to continue going over
22 the teaching load requirement they just need the
23 standard; they don't need the actual code section
24 that is currently in the waiver. The code section is
25 strictly for compensation when you go over. As I

1 understand it, eStem is saying they already
2 compensate any time they go over that teaching load,
3 so they are complying with what the statute says. So
4 they would not need a waiver of the statute.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So the recommendation is to
6 remove the request for the waiver?

7 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Is that what I --

9 MS. WAGNER: It would be a request for that
10 particular code section. They would continue to
11 receive the waiver of the two standards and the
12 waiver of the Class Size and Teaching Load rules.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And help me understand it. It
14 appears that there's some hesitation from the school
15 to remove that request for that waiver, although --
16 and I'm trying to figure out why that is the case or
17 what does the waiver give you that you currently
18 can't do considering --

19 DR. BACON: So I'm learning this, as you are.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Yeah. We're doing this
21 together; right?

22 DR. BACON: We are. It's my understanding from
23 our conversation that the standard waiver allows us
24 to go over, which we need to maintain.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Right.

1 DR. BACON: The Arkansas code waiver is what
2 would allow us to do that and not compensate. We're
3 actually willing to give up the Arkansas code waiver
4 because our plan is to compensate. And so if that
5 needs to go away, we're comfortable with that as long
6 as we can hold on to the other pieces.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Let's -- yeah.

8 Name please, and organization?

9 MR. WALTER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Members
10 of the Panel. My name is Tripp Walter; I'm the Staff
11 Attorney with the Arkansas Public School Resource
12 Center.

13 The only thing I wanted to add to the
14 conversation is my understanding is in the past,
15 although apparently not now, there was a time when
16 compensation wasn't being provided. So I would just
17 mention to the Panel that my advice to eStem is let's
18 monitor this in the future and we may be back in the
19 future if there comes a time when their situation
20 shifts and they decide they need the protection of
21 the waiver from the Panel.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. And so am I correct in
23 saying that eStem is comfortable with the removal of
24 that waiver request at this time? Is that --

25 DR. BACON: For the Arkansas code 6-17-812

1 piece.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Right.

3 DR. BACON: The rest of it would remain.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And Staff is understanding of
5 that as well and understands how that process works?

6 MS. WAGNER: Yes. So we would just take off the
7 Arkansas code annotated 6-17-812, but we would
8 continue to have the standard 1-A.5, 1-A.6 and then
9 the DESE rules governing Class Size and Teaching
10 Load.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Fantastic. Is there
12 anything we need to do from a panel size in order to
13 -- is that adjustment okay as sort of mentioned and
14 documented here?

15 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Great.

17 Any other questions in regards to that Class
18 Size and Teacher Load waiver from the Panel?

19 Okay. Let's continue.

20 CLOCK HOURS

21 MS. WAGNER: Okay. So waiver topic number five
22 is Clock Hours; it's Standard 1-A.2. And I have no
23 legal concerns regarding that.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments from the
25 Panel regarding waiver number five, Clock Hours?

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do have a question.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Question from Ms. Wright-
3 McMurray.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Just trying to get an
5 understanding -- and I may be trying to attach
6 something that's not involved here. But with the
7 flexibility that we have with seat time, does that
8 not provide an opportunity to address that or is that
9 something separate and apart from that? I'm just
10 trying to get a sense of how other schools that are
11 providing the concurrent and dual enrollment for
12 their students -- how are they doing it? Or are they
13 all having to ask for this waiver to be able to do
14 so?

15 DR. BACON: Yeah. I can't really speak to other
16 -- how other schools are doing it. You may know?

17 MR. WALTER: Mr. Chair, permission to be
18 recognized. Thank you. Tripp Walter, APSRC.

19 I think I can address that, Dr. Wright-McMurray.
20 What 1-A -- what that standard does is allow for a
21 high school unit of credit to require at least 120
22 clock hours. And in consultation with Dr. Bacon, my
23 understanding is eStem has several, perhaps many,
24 courses at the high school level where it's possible
25 for the unit of credit to be obtained in under 120

1 hours of instruction. And that's the reason, to
2 provide the ability for those courses to continue.
3 Obviously, there's still going to be authentic
4 teaching and learning going on in a full presentation
5 and teaching of the subject in question.

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So it's not specific to
7 when the students are in the classroom; it's specific
8 to the credits that are being earned or -- I'm trying
9 to get a better understanding.

10 MR. WALTER: Yes. It's credit -- it's just
11 specific to a high school unit of credit and the 120
12 hours required to obtain that credit in absence of
13 the waiver.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions?

15 Okay. Let's continue. I think we are on waiver
16 number six.

17 COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM
18 AND SCHOOL COUNSELOR

19 MS. WAGNER: So waiver topic number six is the
20 Comprehensive -- oh, excuse me -- Comprehensive
21 School Counseling Program and School Counselor.
22 EStem is asking to continue a waiver of 6-18-
23 2003(a)(2)(A) and Standard 4-E.1 and 4-E.2. There
24 were no legal concerns with it.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We have a question from Ms.

1 Coffman. Ms. Coffman, please, your question
2 regarding waiver number six, Comprehensive School
3 Counseling and School Counselor Program?

4 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. I'd like to know how the
5 district is providing counseling services. So do you
6 have a licensed counselor? Are you -- are there
7 contracted services? Do you have unlicensed people
8 serving in the counselor role? And what is your
9 current ratio?

10 DR. BACON: Uh-huh. We are meeting the 450-to-1
11 ratio. Is it 450 or 400?

12 MR. WALTER: 450.

13 DR. BACON: 450-to-1 ratio for counselors to
14 students. And we endeavor to hire traditionally
15 licensed or fully licensed and certified guidance
16 counselors, at least one in each of our schools. The
17 flexibility -- you know, we do some other things from
18 wraparound mental health services, being able to
19 bring in mental health providers and others to fill
20 in some of those gaps. We have contracts I think
21 with six or seven mental health providers in Pulaski
22 County. And so our goal is to get there with full
23 certification/licensure and to insure that we stay
24 within the ratio. But the flexibility allows us to
25 have -- as long we have -- you know, we have at least

1 one traditionally licensed, fully licensed guidance
2 counselor in that building perhaps we have some
3 flexibility on having a second person who is not in
4 the traditional licensure mode.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And are you currently meeting
6 that goal to have one --

7 DR. BACON: Uh-huh.

8 MS. COFFMAN: -- licensed individual?

9 DR. BACON: Uh-huh.

10 MS. COFFMAN: My follow-up then is then why are
11 you requesting the ratio?

12 DR. BACON: I mean we've had years in the past
13 where we weren't at the 450-to-1. But at present --
14 I mean our endeavor is to be within that ratio.
15 Frankly, we'd like it to be lower than that, to be
16 honest, with where we are coming out of Covid with
17 mental health issues and the needs that students have
18 for guidance and counseling. So, yeah, we are in
19 compliance with that and our commitment is to
20 continue to be in compliance. So, again, if that's
21 one that -- what is that, 4-E.2 or 4-E.1?

22 MR. WALTER: I think it's 4-E.2.

23 DR. BACON: 4-E.2 is the ratio. And I think
24 we're probably comfortable if that one needed to be
25 stricken. Because we are meeting that now and plan

1 to meet it through all of our full efforts in the
2 future.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do have a follow-up.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's -- Ms. Coffman, any other
5 questions in regards to that before we move on?

6 MS. COFFMAN: (Shaking head from side to side.)

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So I'll say that
9 Deb did take -- Ms. Coffman did take part of my
10 question. But I -- just for my clarification, so
11 currently you do have a licensed counselor that is in
12 place in your school?

13 DR. BACON: In every one of our high schools --
14 each of our high schools.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So over the course of the
16 time that you've been in operation how many years
17 have you not been able to have a licensed counselor
18 in your schools?

19 DR. BACON: I think -- okay. Ms. Howard is
20 telling me that really this is the first year that
21 we've been able to have fully licensed meeting the
22 450-to-1 ratio in all of our schools. So as recently
23 as last year we would have had at least one who was
24 not a traditionally fully licensed guidance
25 counselor.

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. I have additional
2 questions, but I'll just wait until we get to the
3 question.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic.

5 And so, it's my understanding that we are
6 striking the request for 4-E.2, the waiver 4-E.2. Is
7 that correct? Can I get a --

8 DR. BACON: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Thank you.

10 DR. BACON: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

12 Any other questions regarding School Counseling,
13 Counseling Program and School Counselor?

14 Okay. Let's continue. We are on waiver request
15 number seven.

16 CURRICULUM - VISUAL ARTS & MUSIC

17 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Waiver topic number seven is
18 Curriculum, Arts -- Visual Arts and Music. EStem is
19 asking to continue Arkansas code annotated 6-16-130,
20 Standard 1-A.1.1.5, 1-A.1.2.5 and 1-A.1 through 6,
21 and the DESE rules governing Visual Art and Music
22 Instruction. I had no legal concerns.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Panel Members, are there any
24 questions regarding this waiver?

25 MS. COFFMAN: Yes, Mr. Davis. My question is

1 how is the district meeting the needs of students
2 regarding art and music? And, you know, this is the
3 second thing that we're obviously embedding.

4 DR. BACON: So at the elementary level we have
5 what we call an enrichment wheel which allows us to
6 do common planning time for all of our grade level
7 teachers in a particular grade. And so on that wheel
8 they have a variety of courses, five or six courses
9 that the students take either one day a week or it
10 gives us the flexibility to do it for maybe a four-
11 to five-week period in blocks. And so that's where
12 we have our visual art/music piece on that wheel.
13 And so what this flexibility -- if we want to have
14 five or six weeks say of a block of visual arts and
15 then, you know, the next five or six weeks is another
16 -- physical education or technology piece or
17 something, it just gives us some flexibility in the
18 timing of that so that we're not held to that strict
19 standard of X-amount of minutes per week. So we do
20 that for visual arts and music.

21 Then, at the secondary level, in that middle
22 school or junior high environment we have the fine
23 arts as part of our electives, and so we place
24 7th/8th grade students into those various electives.
25 And so, again, they may not take it for the set

1 amount of time for a week, and so it just gives us
2 that flexibility to cover that content.

3 MS. COFFMAN: So P.E. was mentioned in the
4 elementary --

5 DR. BACON: Yeah, it's later on. It's another
6 waiver, one of our 32 that are on here. That's
7 number 21. But, yeah, so it's treated the same way
8 basically. It is -- we do the required recess/
9 physical activity daily for our elementary students.
10 But we treat physical education and health similar to
11 the way we treat visual arts in that it's on that
12 enrichment wheel. But we have sort of flexible
13 timing of how we allocate time for that, whether it's
14 in a several week block or whether it's done one day
15 a week. It's just the flexibility piece.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions, Ms.
17 Coffman?

18 MS. COFFMAN: (Shaking head from side to side.)

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Panel Members, any other
20 questions regarding this waiver?

21 Okay. Let's continue. Number eight.

22 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT BUSINESS MANAGER

23 MS. WAGNER: Waiver topic number eight is
24 Financial Management Business Manager. eStem is
25 asking to continue Arkansas code annotated 6-15-2302,

1 Standard 3-A.5, and the DESE rules governing Arkansas
2 Fiscal Assessment and Accountability Programs,
3 Section 12. There were no legal concerns with this.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions from the Panel
5 regarding -- and I do believe it might be waiver
6 number -- we have that listed as waiver number nine
7 as the Financial Management Business Manager. But
8 anyway, any questions or comments on the waiver that
9 we're discussing?

10 Okay. Let's continue.

11 MS. WAGNER: Next up I have Gifted and Talented.
12 Is that what everybody else has?

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We do. We had as waiver number
14 eight Eye and Vision Screening. Is that not --

15 MS. WAGNER: No. So I think that was on the
16 initial legal review.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Fantastic.

18 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

20 MS. WAGNER: So --

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's continue.

22 GIFTED AND TALENTED

23 MS. WAGNER: Okay. So Gifted and Talented --
24 eStem is asking to continue a waiver of Arkansas code
25 annotated 6-20-2208(c)(6) and 6-42-109, Standard 2-

1 G.1, and the DESE rules governing Gifted and Talented
2 Program Standards. And there were no legal concerns
3 with this waiver request.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions from the Panel?

5 We have a question from Ms. Wright-McMurray.

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So I appreciate in your
7 response that you detail out -- it looks like at the
8 upper levels where you offer honors advanced courses,
9 AP courses, concurrent credit. Can you give a little
10 bit more detail on how you are addressing this for
11 your lower grades? Your elementary students that may
12 show promise to be supported through Gifted and
13 Talented education, how are you supporting that?

14 MS. HOWARD: So at our elementary and our junior
15 high levels -- I'll start with junior high. So in
16 our 7 through 9 grades it looks a little bit like it
17 does at the high school in that students have the
18 opportunity to take honors classes, pre-AP classes,
19 advanced classes. At our elementary levels,
20 especially since the pandemic, we're really seeing
21 that a lot of our students are coming to us with some
22 gaps. And the ones that are not, the ones that are
23 our advanced students, we do a lot of built-in
24 classroom differentiation. And so our teachers work
25 really, really hard to implement small groups, and so

1 within those small group opportunities obviously
2 we're going to be able to advance those students who
3 are gifted. But also with the implementation of our
4 Ignite program those students have another
5 opportunity to do some things they wouldn't normally
6 be able to do in the classroom.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions regarding
8 the Gifted and Talented waiver?

9 Yes, Ms. Coffman.

10 MS. COFFMAN: In your documentation you had said
11 that advanced placement courses and concurrent credit
12 courses were provided to students that were proving
13 competence through above-average grades and test
14 scores. So are you limiting students' ability to
15 take these courses?

16 MS. HOWARD: No, ma'am. So it is -- it's open.
17 So obviously that initial criteria for someone that
18 may be successful in those courses is going to be
19 grade and the general academic performance. However,
20 we like to reward students that work hard and that
21 can show that they're willing to put in the effort to
22 be successful in those classes, specifically at the
23 high school level. Our AP courses are blended with
24 our concurrent credit courses, and so for concurrent
25 credit they have to take an ACCUPLACER or an ACT test

1 and get a certain score in order to qualify for the
2 college level courses. And so that would be I guess
3 the only hindrance, but it's not one that we're
4 placing on our students. And so if we find students
5 that are interested in those classes and haven't met
6 the ACCUPLACER score, we work with them to make sure
7 they can get that score; so we'll provide those
8 additional supports to make sure that they have an
9 opportunity to take the courses they desire.

10 MS. COFFMAN: So would that be part of their
11 Student Success Plan?

12 MS. HOWARD: Yes, ma'am. So obviously starting
13 in 8th grade we start those Student Success Plans,
14 and so students that are interested -- we start
15 offering AP classes as early as 9th grade. Some of
16 our students are able to take them. And so we try to
17 introduce those opportunities as early as 7th,
18 sometimes even 6th grade, so students know what
19 options are available for them as they move through
20 our network.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Just a question on that.

22 MS. HOWARD: Yes, sir.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: In regards to demographic
24 breakdown, do you have that for enrollment in your AP
25 courses --

1 MS. HOWARD: I don't --

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- what does it look like, the
3 enrollment in school?

4 MS. HOWARD: I don't have it available with me
5 right now, the demographic breakdown. I do know that
6 it is a very, very wide net in the younger grades.
7 And students tend to choose some of the easier
8 courses, unfortunately, as they kind of move up
9 through high school, mainly because a lot of them
10 have jobs and they participate in extracurricular
11 activities and don't necessarily want the burden of
12 taking AP classes, concurrent credit, and some of the
13 extracurricular things they are involved in. But
14 demographically, I think at the high school level it
15 probably is more of our Caucasian students that
16 participate in the AP courses, but it's open and
17 available to anyone that wants to do it.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

19 Let's continue.

20 LEASED ACADEMIC FACILITIES

21 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic I have is Leased
22 Academic Facilities. eStem is asking to continue
23 their waiver of Arkansas code annotated 6-20-1407 and
24 then Standard 6-A.2. eStem is the only charter with
25 this waiver, which Mr. Walter is going to explain;

1 he's going to give the rationale for that. And then
2 we also have rationale behind the Arkansas -- the
3 2002 Arkansas School Safety Commission recommendation
4 and I believe the charter is going to explain the
5 rationale for that.

6 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC.

7 The 6-20-1407 is part of a series of statutes in
8 the code that deal with public school district
9 requirements under the partnership program, master
10 plans, and various parts of facilities and --
11 academic facilities and transportation, which charter
12 schools are not a part of. Probably the most
13 concrete example to give you is obviously school
14 districts having to comply with these requirements
15 are eligible for partnership funding, can submit
16 projects for partnership funding. Charter schools do
17 not have that opportunity and therefore they seek
18 waivers routinely.

19 Even though I understand apparently this is an
20 outlier, it's part of that whole process, is the
21 charter is not having to be subject to the rules and
22 regulations and laws of the Facilities Division as to
23 their facilities because they don't receive --
24 they're not eligible for any funding.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions from the Panel

1 regarding this waiver?

2 Ms. Coffman.

3 Ms. Coffman, just a second. We can't hear you.

4 Let's try now.

5 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you. So charters do receive
6 some funding regarding facilities if they need to
7 make payments or something like that. Can you speak
8 to that, Mr. Walter?

9 MR. WALTER: Yes, I can. And that is a separate
10 -- that is a separate process statutorily. And I
11 didn't mean to imply they didn't get funding. But
12 there is a specific statute on point on the
13 facilities funding -- charter facilities funding
14 program which lists out the specific requirements for
15 eligibility for those charters to share in those
16 facility funds. And this is a process separate and
17 apart from that, the statute.

18 MS. COFFMAN: And how does this relate to
19 Standard 6-A.2?

20 MR. WALTER: I don't see that it does. Standard
21 6-A.2 is really a separate request, as I see it.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman, any response to
23 that?

24 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. So are they rescinding the
25 standards request?

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: There's conversation taking
2 place right now. Just one second.

3 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

4 DR. BACON: I think we're comfortable rescinding
5 the 6-A.2.

6 Our commitment is to provide the safest
7 environment possible and to meet safety guidelines.
8 And so I think we're okay with rescinding the 6-A.2
9 piece of that.

10 And I think it was mentioned earlier in terms of
11 the new recommendation from School Safety. I mean,
12 we're evaluating those. One of the things we were
13 pleased to see in the initial recommendations -- and
14 I think it stayed the course through the final
15 recommendations -- but we are meeting a large
16 majority of those already in terms of some of the
17 locking and single access point and secured entrance
18 and -- a lot of the pieces are there. There were one
19 or two things that we've got to look at and discuss
20 how we would go about implementing. But we're really
21 evaluating those and deciding as a school community
22 how we want to move forward, making sure that we are
23 implementing recommendations as appropriate.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
25 from the Panel?

1 Let's continue.

2 LIBRARY MEDIA SERVICES AND LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST

3 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next one I have is
4 Library Media Services and Library Media Specialist.
5 eStem is asking to continue their waiver of Arkansas
6 code annotated 6-25-103, 6-25-104, and Standards 2-
7 D.1, 4-F.1, and 4-F.2. The charter is going to
8 discuss how those media standards will be taught.
9 But other than that, I have no legal concerns.

10 DR. BACON: In terms of teaching the standards
11 at the secondary level, I know that we have been
12 training and developing our English Language Arts
13 teachers to infuse those standards into their English
14 courses and their curriculum. At the elementary
15 level, I know Ms. Smith, since she's come onboard,
16 has really worked hard at building -- rebuilding our
17 relationship with the Central Arkansas Library
18 System. In fact, I believe that they have been
19 working on professional development for our teachers
20 from their perspective on the media standards,
21 helping us implement and maybe even be coming over
22 and teaching some of those standards in our
23 elementary classes for us to insure that we're
24 meeting those standards and that our students are
25 getting that content. We have set up classroom

1 libraries, frankly, in each of our content classes so
2 that we're building those continuously and have
3 dedicated resources to that to make sure students
4 have options for books and things in our buildings.
5 But with the Central Arkansas Main Branch being
6 within walking distance of our two downtown schools,
7 our original campuses, and with the trolley stop away
8 from our East Village campuses it feels like we'd
9 like to continue using that resource as our primary
10 media center. On the UA-Little Rock campus our
11 students have access to the library there that the
12 university has and those resources.

13 MS. COFFMAN: I have a follow-up question on
14 that. How often do the students attend or go to the
15 Central Arkansas Library?

16 DR. BACON: So in the past, pre-Covid -- you
17 know, with Covid we weren't able to go the way that
18 we had been. We tried to get them over there -- I
19 think it was monthly, at a minimum quarterly. Since
20 Covid, and this year, we're really just starting that
21 back up. We're working on the tech cards so they can
22 have access to all of the digital resources and all
23 of the ebooks. We've invested in a lot of devices so
24 that all of our students can do e-reading on digital
25 devices as well. So they have access to those

1 materials while we continue to build back a schedule
2 for actual physical onsite using that library.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions regarding
4 this waiver?

5 Let's continue.

6 PERSONNEL POLICIES FOR CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES

7 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next waiver topic I have
8 is Personnel Policies for Classified Employees. And
9 eStem is asking to continue their waiver of Arkansas
10 code annotated section 6-17-202 -- excuse me --
11 2301(c) and 6-17-2303. And I have no concerns.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
13 this waiver request?

14 Seeing none, let's continue.

15 PERSONNEL POLICIES - COMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL POLICIES

16 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next one is Personnel
17 Policies - Committee on Personnel Policies. It is a
18 waiver of Arkansas code annotated 6-17-203, and I
19 have no legal concerns.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions from the Panel
21 regarding this waiver?

22 Hearing none, let's continue.

23 PERSONNEL POLICIES - DAILY PLANNING PERIOD

24 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic, Personnel
25 Policies - Daily Planning Period; so a waiver of

1 Arkansas code annotated 6-17-114. And I had no legal
2 concerns.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions and comments from the
4 Panel regarding this waiver?

5 Hearing none, let's continue.

6 PERSONNEL POLICIES - REQUIREMENTS

7 MS. WAGNER: Next was Personnel Policies -
8 Requirements. And it is Arkansas code annotated
9 section 2-17-201, 2-17-204, 2-17-205 -- I'm sorry --
10 6-17-201, 6-17-204, 6-17-205, 6-17-206, and 6-17-208.
11 And I had no legal concerns.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions from the Panel
13 regarding this waiver request?

14 Seeing or hearing none, let's continue.

15 PERSONNEL POLICIES - EMPLOYMENT OF LICENSED PERSONNEL

16 MS. WAGNER: Next one is Personnel Policies -
17 Employment of Licensed Personnel. It's a waiver of
18 Arkansas code annotated section 6-17-301(a) and 6-17-
19 301(b). And I also had no legal concerns.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments?

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have a question.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So of your teaching staff
24 how many or what percent would you say is licensed
25 and non-licensed?

1 DR. BACON: I knew someone would ask. We -- so
2 in our -- for this current year it's really -- 55% of
3 our teachers are fully licensed, 45% are not fully
4 licensed. Some of those are people who are licensed
5 in a different area that haven't, you know, received
6 certification in the area they're teaching. But
7 we've always tried to seek a good balance between the
8 traditional trained licensed person and some of our
9 non-traditional avenues and ways of finding --
10 particularly at the secondary level -- content
11 specialists who we can work with in our master
12 classes and our professional development to train on
13 some of the instructional skills. And so it's a
14 little over half are licensed, which is -- I think
15 that's up a little bit from where we were last year.
16 One of the things we made a commitment to doing this
17 year, particularly at our East Village Elementary
18 School, as we have turnover in our leadership there
19 and trying to sort of turn a corner to pick up some
20 performance in that elementary level, was to seek a
21 better balance and more traditionally certified
22 elementary educators. And so we did that this year.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. And, I'm sorry, and
24 I do have --

25 So when you look at the levels elementary to

1 high school do you see that they're -- is it evenly
2 distributed across those grade levels or is there a
3 certain grade level that we see to where you have
4 more unlicensed teachers than licensed that are
5 (voice fades, inaudible).

6 DR. BACON: We actually tend to have higher
7 percentages of licensed teachers at the secondary
8 level. One of the things that we had been doing
9 because of our difficulty finding STEM teachers for a
10 number of years, we created what was called a STEM
11 residency program through a grant. We've actually
12 been doing it now, funding it ourselves, for the last
13 probably six or seven years, where we're trying to
14 take on people who have content knowledge in the STEM
15 fields and then we would put them through a year of
16 training. And it's actually now an alternate pathway
17 through the Department of Ed. and DESE for licensure.
18 And so this past year we got approval, working with
19 DESE, to actually drop that down into the upper
20 elementary grades, so like maybe 4th, 5th, 6th grade;
21 looking at some middle level certification. But for
22 our 5th and 6th grade teachers, which are in our
23 elementary, so that we are sort of trying to expand
24 that beyond just that secondary. Because we're
25 actually finding, in just anecdotal conversations

1 with our elementary directors, this is -- recently it
2 has actually become more difficult to find high
3 quality ELA elementary level educators. Which it was
4 always STEM before, but we had sort of a plethora of
5 choices for STEM teachers in the elementary. But
6 we're struggling to find people who are really high
7 quality and highly trained on the ELA side, so we're
8 really working on possibly expanding that program in
9 different ways in the future.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

11 MS. SARACINI: As we're talking about your
12 staff, I just want to confirm that my numbers are
13 similar to yours. You have about 104 of your staff
14 with three or years less of experience, about,
15 roughly?

16 DR. BACON: Yeah. Yeah. That's one of the
17 things -- you know, again, that was an effort this
18 year, particularly at the elementary level, to start
19 trying to balance that out more with some more
20 veteran staff. One of the reasons we have a lot of
21 less veteran teachers today is that when we started
22 that expansion we literally doubled our teaching
23 staff in the 2018-19 school year. And so a lot of
24 people that we brought in in that year and the next
25 year or so were new teachers, and so they just don't

1 have a lot of experience. But -- so, part of our
2 commitment is also on the teacher retention side. I
3 think the last thing I looked at for teacher
4 retention we were in the upper 70s -- 76%, 77%
5 teacher retention, which is really right in line with
6 what the state of Arkansas as a whole was. I
7 remember seeing a report and I think we were almost
8 identical to the state numbers. And so, you know,
9 we'd like to be able to outpace that and find some
10 creative ways to hold on to more of those teachers so
11 we can build up that veteran pool.

12 MS. SARACINI: Well, as I was looking at your
13 staff, I want to commend you because you have really
14 diversified your teaching staff.

15 DR. BACON: And that was one of the things sort
16 of that -- Ms. Newton's original question earlier
17 that I was wanting to hit on was it's really been a
18 commitment of ours to do that and I feel like we've
19 seen the results of that. Absolutely.

20 MS. SARACINI: You're doing the Hispanic part,
21 so --

22 DR. BACON: Okay.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
24 regarding this waiver?

25 All right. We're getting there. We're getting

1 there. Let's keep going.

2 CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE MINIMUM SALARY

3 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is Classified
4 Employee Minimum Salary. It is Arkansas code
5 annotated section 6-17-2403. And I have no legal
6 concerns.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments from the
8 Panel regarding this waiver?

9 Let's continue.

10 PERSONNEL POLICIES - NON-INSTRUCTIONAL DUTIES

11 MS. WAGNER: Next, Personnel Policies - Non-
12 Instructional Duties. It's Arkansas code annotated
13 section 6-17-117. And I have no concerns.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
15 this waiver request?

16 Let's continue.

17 PERSONNEL POLICIES - PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE FAIR HEARING ACT

18 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic, Personnel
19 Policies - Public School Employee Fair Hearing Act,
20 Arkansas code annotated section 6-17-1701 et seq.
21 And I had no concerns.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
23 this waiver from the Panel?

24 Go on to the next.

25 PERSONNEL POLICIES - TEACHER FAIR DISMISSAL ACT

1 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic, Personnel
2 Policies - Teacher Fair Dismissal Act. It's Arkansas
3 code annotated section 6-17-501 et seq. -- or, I'm
4 sorry -- 1501 et seq. I had no concerns.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions?

6 Moving on.

7 PHYSICAL EDUCATION

8 MS. WAGNER: All right. Next waiver topic is
9 Physical Education. Arkansas code annotated section
10 6-16-132, Standards 1-A.1.6 and 1-A.1.2.6, the DESE
11 rules governing Nutrition and Physical Activity
12 standards, and Body Mass Index for Age Assessment
13 Protocols in Arkansas Public Schools Section 7.01.1,
14 7.01.2, 7.09, and 7.10. And I had no legal concerns.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
16 this?

17 Ms. Coffman.

18 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. So this is for elementary
19 and middle or are you requesting the waiver for high
20 school? And I'm assuming, as mentioned previously,
21 this is on your wheel?

22 DR. BACON: Yeah. All of that stands from what
23 we said earlier for elementary and middle. We have
24 not requested any waiver for the high school. We
25 offer the one-and-a-half units as required under the

1 Physical Education and Health requirements.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
3 from the Panel regarding this waiver?

4 Let's continue.

5 PRINCIPAL

6 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is Principal, and
7 it is Arkansas code annotated section 6-17-302 and
8 Standards 4-C.1 and 4-C.2. And I had no legal
9 concerns.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
11 this waiver request?

12 MS. COFFMAN: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman.

14 MS. COFFMAN: I was wondering about the reason
15 for the ratio. I understand that maybe some of the
16 principals are not licensed, but I was interested in
17 the ratio for that.

18 DR. BACON: So I think our goal here is
19 primarily for the licensure piece. Let me look at --

20 Yeah. The 4-C.1, those ratios, I mean we're --
21 we've always met those and probably are well above
22 those ratios, frankly, in terms of providing
23 additional leadership support for our -- we call them
24 School Directors instead of Principals. I think
25 4-C.1 is probably unnecessary; 4-C.2 is the piece we

1 really need because we do embrace the flexibility for
2 hiring teachers outside that licensure.

3 I do want to speak to that in terms of our
4 School Directors is something that I think is really
5 valuable to know. So of our five School Directors we
6 have one who is a Level 1 - Master Principal. We
7 have two who are, I believe, working on doctorate
8 degrees in Educational Leadership. And we have a
9 fourth who is enrolled in the U of A Impact
10 Fellowship program for training principals in high-
11 poverty schools, a master's degree program there.
12 And then our fifth was recently hired at our East
13 Village Elementary this year and she's a veteran
14 fully-licensed experienced elementary school
15 principal who had some years in Little Rock School
16 District before she came to us. So we feel really
17 good about the quality of leadership at the school
18 level.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic. Any other
20 questions, Ms. Coffman?

21 MS. COFFMAN: So are they rescinding 4-C.1?

22 DR. BACON: Yes, we're comfortable doing that.

23 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's continue.

25 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Next on the list, I believe,
2 was Professional Development. But after speaking
3 with eStem and Mr. Walter I believe they are willing
4 to rescind that request for Professional Development,
5 which was standard 4-G.1.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Can we get confirmation
7 from the school in regards to rescinding?

8 DR. BACON: Yes. We have offered to rescind
9 that Professional Development section for standard
10 4-G.1.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

12 SALARIES AND COMPENSATION

13 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Next I have Salaries and
14 Compensation. It is Arkansas code annotated section
15 6-17-807, 6-17-902, 6-17-908, and 6-17-919; the DESE
16 rules governing Documents Posted to School District
17 and Education Service Cooperative Website sections
18 5.01.4 and 6.01. I have no legal concerns, although
19 I will add, to Mr. Walter and Mr. Bacon, that we
20 probably should add 6-11-129 which is the website
21 posting statute.

22 MR. WALTER: Yes, we will.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We will need to get -- I'd love
24 to get some confirmation from the school that they're
25 comfortable adding what you just requested.

1 MR. WALTER: Can I speak to that?

2 DR. BACON: I learned a long time ago when
3 lawyers told me to do something I'm probably going to
4 listen to them; I don't think I'm smarter. So we
5 will follow through on that.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely.

7 MR. WALTER: (inaudible)

8 MS. WAGNER: 6-11-129.

9 MR. WALTER: Right. I just want to add --

10 MS. WAGNER: Yeah.

11 MR. WALTER: Yes. Mr. Chair, if I may just add
12 another comment -- Tripp Walter, APSRC.

13 Given that, that means though -- that does not
14 mean that there won't be any posting of salaries and
15 compensation. It's just due to the difference in the
16 fact that eStem, as with just about all charter
17 schools, doesn't follow a compensation schedule
18 that's the traditional step-and-ladder years of
19 experience. They'll post what they have; it just
20 won't look like a school district's will.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thanks for the clarification.

22 Any questions or comments regarding that waiver
23 from the Panel -- waiver request?

24 Okay.

25 SCHOOL CALENDAR/SCHOOL START DATE

1 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic I have is
2 School Calendar/School Start Date, Arkansas code
3 annotated section 6-10-106. And I have no legal
4 concerns.

5 I see a question from Ms. Coffman.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman.

7 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. Now that we have four
8 calendar options available to school districts, I'd
9 like for the charter to speak to why they can't
10 address one of those?

11 DR. BACON: I don't have those in front of me
12 right now to be able to speak with specificity to
13 those. What I would say is our commitment has always
14 been to shrinking that summer break so that our
15 students would experience less learning loss. And
16 our anecdotal data over the years and historical data
17 through our NWEA assessments show that having this
18 three to four week shorter summer has certainly -- we
19 have less learning loss than what national norms
20 would show. I mean, I don't have those four in front
21 of me right now to be able to speak with specificity
22 as to those guidelines and where they would fit with
23 what we've historically done that's worked for our
24 population.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other comments or questions

1 regarding this waiver request?

2 MS. NEWTON: I was just wondering if that's
3 something that parents and students -- not students,
4 but parents and staff or faculty and administration
5 worked on?

6 DR. BACON: Yes. I would say everyone embraces
7 the way our calendar works, understanding the purpose
8 behind it. They like that because we start earlier
9 we have some extra breaks thrown in. Like we
10 invented the fall break, that we do a week at the end
11 of the first quarter. We also have always taken off
12 the full week of Thanksgiving, which now it's
13 interesting to see how other districts and people
14 sort of follow, once someone starts something like
15 that. And so I think our families embrace the way
16 that calendar works. Probably there would be a few
17 people on our staff who wouldn't be unhappy if the
18 August 3rd start date, or August 2nd, were traded for
19 August 17th or 19th. But I think that's probably
20 just everyone would like to have a few more weeks of
21 summer and live in the now. But I think on the whole
22 it certainly is something that's been embraced by our
23 community over the years.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do have a question.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, Ms. Wright-McMurray.

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So just for clarification,
2 you guys were aware of the four different options and
3 elected to remain with what you had? Or you were not
4 aware that there were other options you could utilize
5 --

6 DR. BACON: We --

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- and that's new to you
8 today?

9 DR. BACON: No, that's not new to me.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

11 DR. BACON: We looked at those.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

13 DR. BACON: I don't -- I don't have them in
14 front of me to be able to speak --

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

16 DR. BACON: -- with specificity as to why. But
17 when we evaluated that we didn't see what fit our
18 needs being one of those.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

20 DR. BACON: But I don't -- again, I don't have
21 it in front of me today to speak with specificity.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

23 DR. BACON: I'm sorry about that.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman.

25 MS. COFFMAN: Just to follow-up, do you go more

1 than 178 instructional days?

2 DR. BACON: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. COFFMAN: How many days do you go?

4 DR. BACON: Usually, it's between 183 to 185,
5 because we do build in these additional breaks. We
6 also have -- our instructional day is generally about
7 45 minutes to an hour longer than what traditional
8 school districts do. So we certainly get in -- I
9 think we calculated it a couple of years ago -- about
10 a quarter more time, given the extra days and
11 extended time in the day -- 20% to 25% more
12 instructional time than a traditional calendar.

13 MS. COFFMAN: So to clarify, you're going more
14 days and each day is longer?

15 DR. BACON: Yes, ma'am.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
17 regarding this waiver?

18 All right. Let's continue.

19 SUPERINTENDENT

20 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is
21 Superintendent. eStem is asking to continue a waiver
22 of Arkansas code annotated section 6-13-109, 6-17-
23 427, standards 4-B.1 and 4-B.2, and the DESE rules
24 governing the Superintendent Mentoring Program.
25 There were no legal concerns with this request.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments from the
2 Panel?

3 Seeing none, let's continue.

4 TEACHER LICENSURE

5 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is Teacher
6 Licensure, Arkansas code annotated section 6-15-1004,
7 6-17-309, 6-17-401, and 6-17-418, Standard 4-D.1, and
8 the DESE rules governing Educator Licensure Section
9 7. There were no legal concerns with this waiver
10 request.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments from the
12 Panel regarding this waiver request?

13 Okay.

14 DIGITAL LEARNING PLAN - ATTENDANCE

15 MS. WAGNER: The next set of waiver topics,
16 they're all for Digital Learning Plan waivers.

17 The first one is Attendance, and it is Arkansas
18 code annotated 6-18-213(a)(2). And there were no
19 legal concerns.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments?

21 Hearing none, let's continue.

22 DIGITAL LEARNING PLAN - CLASS SIZE/TEACHING LOAD

23 MS. WAGNER: Okay. We have a Class Size and
24 Teaching Load DLP waiver. We've got the same
25 Arkansas code annotated 6-17-812. But since it was

1 rescinded earlier, will you continue to rescind it on
2 this?

3 DR. BACON: Yes.

4 MS. WAGNER: Okay.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

6 MS. WAGNER: We will strike that. So it will
7 instead be Class Size and Teaching Load DLP waiver
8 standards 1-A.5, 1-A.6, and the DESE rules governing
9 Class Size and Teaching Load.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments?

11 Seeing or hearing none, let's continue.

12 SIX-HOUR INSTRUCTIONAL DAY

13 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is the Six Hour
14 Instructional Day DLP waiver, Arkansas code annotated
15 section 6-16-102, 6-10-126, and standard 1-A.4.2.
16 There were no legal concerns.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Comments or questions?

18 Ms. Wright-McMurray.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm sorry. I was trying
20 to look back at my notes that I made. Sorry --

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No, there's no need to be
22 sorry.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I was trying to look back
24 at my notes --

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Take your time.

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- that I made. And about
2 the "sorry," so I meant to say earlier -- so sorry I
3 was running late; I had a sick child this morning, so
4 that's what threw me off. But specifically, I sent
5 an email, I thought, to Ms. Coffman and Ms. Summons,
6 but then I realized it didn't go through. So I
7 apologize for that.

8 Going back to the waiver that includes the
9 Digital Learning Plan -- and I'm just trying to, just
10 for my own information -- I know that we previously
11 reviewed a lot of those, approved a lot of those for
12 a set period of time. And now that this is going to
13 be a part of the waivers for the renewal -- and I'm
14 looking at that you're asking for a 13-year renewal.
15 So how would that effect the timeline of what was
16 previously approved for the Digital Learning Plan,
17 and then the timeline for what it will be going
18 forward? That's just for my information.

19 MS. WAGNER: I'm going to have to ask a content
20 person about digital learning plans because I'm
21 really not certain 100% how that is -- will work.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And will it affect --
23 because I'm just trying to get a sense. I know that
24 we specifically addressed timelines of those
25 approvals for those plans previously. I'm just kind

1 of wondering how will that affect it if we factor in
2 here there's a 13-year approval for this?

3 MS. WAGNER: Matthew, will it have an impact?

4 DR. SUTHERLIN: I'm not sure. I mean, we need
5 to talk to the district and Ms. Coffman probably.

6 MS. COFFMAN: Mr. Davis, I can address that.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah, please do, Ms. Coffman.

8 MS. COFFMAN: So typically our State Board has
9 limited DLP approvals for three years. And last year
10 we limited them down to two so that they would all
11 end about the same time because we're looking at the
12 effects of the virtual learning. So I think the
13 question that would come to me is how many students
14 are currently enrolled in virtual-only learning?

15 MS. HOWARD: Johnecia Howard, eStem.

16 So at our secondary levels, total, out of all
17 three schools we have less than 10 students that are
18 participating in a virtual learning environment, and
19 that's in conjunction with the Virtual Arkansas
20 Academy. And so we are not providing a virtual
21 option for our students to take all year long. What
22 we are doing, however, we've added an online learning
23 platform for students that may need to be out for an
24 extended period of time, so whether that's a medical
25 reason or whatever, if a student needs to be out for

1 more than a couple of days that student now has the
2 option to participate in virtual learning from home
3 if they're sick or they have a sick parent --
4 specifically because we don't have transportation,
5 and so sometimes parents aren't able to get their
6 students to school. So it gives them another
7 opportunity to still participate in coursework.

8 At our elementary levels we don't offer a
9 virtual option at all. And so what we learned from
10 the data is that our elementary students need to be
11 onsite and we need to be able to give them the
12 support they need -- and they need hugs. And so we
13 made sure that -- our virtual options for them we
14 took away and just left that available for our
15 secondary students who are more successful in using
16 that platform.

17 MS. COFFMAN: So my comment would be I think
18 that speaks to the concern about 13 years for a
19 digital learning plan.

20 MS. HOWARD: Is that a question?

21 DR. BACON: I would say, you know, I think we
22 understand that, as Ms. Howard said. You know, we're
23 doing our own evaluations of our ability and
24 effectiveness in providing virtual learning. We
25 think we need it in a very limited set of cases that

1 we're using right now. But we would completely
2 understand -- I don't know how the logistics of that
3 work, but if that piece of our waiver is needed to be
4 for a much shorter window of time we absolutely would
5 agree with that because we're constantly evaluating
6 our effectiveness and ability to do that. So, if
7 that needed to be two or three years we would
8 understand that, if that could be done within the
9 total set.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And I don't -- I don't
11 know; I don't know how that works with it being in
12 here. Because if we approve this application, then
13 is all that's in there approved under that full
14 timeline? Or can it be we approve this application
15 for this distinct amount of time and then this piece
16 is separate? I don't know how that works.

17 MS. WAGNER: So we can actually approve the
18 waivers to expire at a set time, these DLP waivers.
19 If you want to set them to expire in three years or
20 two years, whichever the State Board agreed with,
21 then you as a Panel can -- you can set those waivers
22 to expire earlier.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Considering that, what is the
24 request of the school if we were interested in doing
25 that? Are we looking at a two-year, a three-year?

1 DR. BACON: I would think we would ask for
2 three, but I don't know that I have to have three.
3 But I think three would be a good window for us to be
4 able -- you know, we're just really coming out of
5 Covid and, obviously, depending on who you ask, we
6 may be back in and out of RSV and flu and everything
7 else. So it really feels like if those -- that set
8 only were for three years we would be comfortable
9 with that and having a re-evaluation of that.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So then I guess my next
11 question is for other applications what has been the
12 final determination of the State Board on what the
13 timeline will be for that waiver? Is it two years,
14 is it three years? So that we are consistent with
15 how we have treated other schools.

16 MS. WAGNER: I would defer to Ms. Coffman on
17 that, because I'm not 100% certain.

18 MS. COFFMAN: So the initial approval by the
19 State Board was for three years. So that was last
20 year plus this year; we're finishing up -- we're
21 halfway through the second year. So they would have
22 another year-and-a-half on those approvals.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And, Ms. Coffman, would that
24 mean that they would then have to come back, if they
25 were to amend it and then request an additional two

1 to three years for that specific waiver?

2 MS. COFFMAN: So there's been some conversation
3 -- and I'm sure you know we're heading for
4 legislative session. So it's -- I think the State
5 Board wanted to have time to see what the effects of
6 the digital learning programs were and then decide
7 what waivers would be needed in the future to address
8 the individual student issues. We're not talking
9 about a whole body of kids going virtual for the full
10 year; we're talking about students moving in and out
11 of services. So that work is still being done. And
12 that's pretty much what the State Board asked us to
13 come back and do, is figure out what the effects are,
14 what's the best plan for the state moving forward.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So it appears to me that it
16 sounds as if there is potentially 18 months based
17 upon the timeline that's been set before the school
18 -- if they were to align that thinking. I'd love to
19 hear --

20 DR. BACON: When we did this, we were
21 specifically told that our -- because we had a
22 renewal coming up that ours would expire at this
23 renewal hearing so we would need to have an extension
24 I think of some -- even if you're at 18 months. My
25 understanding was this is the end of our digital

1 learning approval unless you extend it today.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely. And is it -- is
3 the school comfortable if we were to do an 18-month
4 approval or does that need to be two years, three
5 years? I'd love to --

6 DR. BACON: I mean, our hope would be -- I think
7 three years gives you enough time to do more. But, I
8 mean, we're obviously at your mercy. So I would
9 think, you know --

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No, I don't think that's right,
11 but --

12 DR. BACON: I mean, you all can decide that.
13 But I think three years is probably enough for us and
14 this team to be able to have -- as Ms. Coffman
15 described, I mean, really just evaluating the
16 effectiveness in how we use it and knowing that there
17 may be changes coming in the future.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Mr. Walter, do you have
19 something to say?

20 MR. WALTER: I just -- Tripp Walter, APSC --
21 APSRC.

22 Just wanted to reiterate what Dr. Bacon said. I
23 think he's made some thoughtful comments about how
24 the waiver is being utilized now. A three-year
25 window would give he and the school a chance to

1 completely review everything and then see what tweaks
2 need to be made, and then this way still continue to
3 provide that option for the next three years and then
4 come back and address it with this panel at that
5 time.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Ms. Wright-McMurray, any
7 concerns or any questions regarding a three-year
8 limit on that waiver?

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I just want us to be
10 consistent with what we have done with other schools
11 and in line with what the State Board has already
12 determined that they are okay with. So that would be
13 my only additional comment.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any suggestions or advice, Ms.
15 Wagner, in regards to that consistency piece?

16 MS. WAGNER: Since the State Board has not said
17 that they would not grant them renewals, I don't
18 think there's any issue with granting them a three-
19 year waiver of that. I don't think you have to --
20 you don't have to align it specifically. But it's up
21 to the CAP, so the CAP makes the final decision
22 there. If the State Board for some reason does not
23 like it, then the State Board can send it back.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Then I think we've
25 gotten approval from the school --

1 DR. BACON: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- in regards to that waiver
3 being three years.

4 Is there anything we need to do in regards to
5 documenting that or --

6 MS. WAGNER: When I do the final -- when I do
7 the cleaned up sheet I will note in there that it is
8 for a three-year period only --

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic.

10 MS. WAGNER: -- on each of the DLP waivers.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

12 MS. WAGNER: Okay.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's continue.

14 DIGITAL LEARNING PLAN - CLOCK HOURS

15 MS. WAGNER: Yes. We have the Clock Hours DLP
16 waiver. It's standard 1-A.2. I have no legal
17 concerns.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
19 that?

20 Continue.

21 DIGITAL LEARNING PLANS - RECESS

22 MS. WAGNER: And then the Recess DLP waiver is
23 Arkansas code annotated section 6-16-102(a)(5) and
24 the DESE rules governing Nutrition and Physical
25 Activity standards, Section 7.1.1.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or concerns regarding
2 this waiver request?

3 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

4 WAIVERS REQUESTED TO RESCIND

5 MS. WAGNER: And then we do have a list of
6 waivers that the charter wishes to rescind. I'm just
7 going to go over them in one batch, if that is okay
8 with the Charter.

9 The Eye and Vision Screening waiver, we just had
10 the DESE rules governing Eye and Vision Screening
11 Reports; the Health and Wellness Plan, Standard 1-
12 B.3, and the DESE rules governing Nutrition and
13 Physical Standards that went with that; the Health
14 and Safety Services, which was Standards 2-E.1 and 2-
15 E.2; the Report Cards, which was Arkansas code
16 annotated 6-15-1902; and then the Student Discipline
17 Procedures, which was a set of rules -- DESE rules,
18 Guidelines and Development Review and Revision of
19 School Student Discipline and School Safety Policies.

20 The charter is asking to rescind all of those,
21 along with the PD that we discussed earlier.

22 And the charter is requesting no new waivers.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

24 The school is in agreement with what's been
25 read?

1 DR. BACON: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. Thank you so much.

3 Ms. Summons. Name and title please, and can you
4 let us know if there are any other remaining issues
5 --

6 MS. SUMMONS: Yes.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- in regards to this?

8 MS. SUMMONS: Dorie Summons, Public School
9 Charter Director for DESE.

10 We presented to you in the pack a list of the
11 concerns that were presented by the SER committee.
12 We also have members who are here, on the SER
13 committee, so in case you have any questions. We
14 have no other information that came into our office
15 about remaining concerns. But as you start your
16 questions they are available via Zoom and then we
17 also have some in the audience.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic. Thank you so much.

19 At this time I'd like to open it up to the Panel
20 for additional questions and conversations.

21 Oh, just one second.

22 DR. BACON: Well, Ms. Newton had a question that
23 I think --

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We'd love for you to address
25 that. Yes. Why don't we start there.

1 DR. BACON: Can you kind of restate it? It's
2 been a while going through this.

3 MS. NEWTON: I don't remember either. I was
4 generally speaking about if there's a way to look at
5 the progress or your -- or through a lens to look at
6 how you compare to other schools as it relates to
7 discipline and suspensions, you know, where there's a
8 major population or populations of color. That's
9 what I think I had asked.

10 And I apologize for being out of order, Mr.
11 Chair.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No, not a problem.

13 MS. HOWARD: So up until -- Johnecia Howard,
14 eStem.

15 So up until this year we really didn't have a
16 lot of out-of-school suspensions. And so -- well,
17 actually last year we had a lot of out-of-school
18 suspensions. Specifically in 20-21, we had a total
19 of 56 suspensions out of our roughly 3,000 students.
20 This past year, the year coming right out of Covid, I
21 think all of our students had just some trouble
22 reintegrating back into school. That's when those
23 numbers kind of spiked and you heard that 306 number.
24 Right now, we're on pace to have almost a third less
25 than that this year. And so I think we've already

1 put in some things to obviously prepare our students
2 to be back in school, with each other. But, two, to
3 monitor -- as we were talking about earlier, to
4 monitor the demographics of those students that are
5 getting in trouble and, you know, are having to go to
6 out-of-school suspension or in-school suspension.
7 But, again, our ultimate goal is always to teach and
8 to make sure that we're being restorative in our
9 practices with them. And so the goal is for that
10 number to continue to go down regardless of race.

11 MS. NEWTON: And my concern wasn't that you have
12 the exact numbers, but that we would start as a
13 system looking at those things, generally speaking,
14 how impactful they are to learning, based on
15 population -- that we just be more aware as a state,
16 as a system, charters and regular public schools, as
17 to how we look at it based on some other schools that
18 are like or not like. So that's -- that was my
19 intent.

20 DR. BACON: And I would say one of the other
21 things that we've noticed from our data, as our
22 population has become more high poverty one of the
23 things that's most striking is -- as I said, we
24 always use NWEA assessments. We used to do them four
25 times a year; we do them three times a year K-9, and

1 have for years. But one of the things that we're
2 seeing is really in the last I would say three years
3 -- so back to about 2019, pre-Covid year -- is that
4 our incoming -- particularly at the elementary level,
5 incoming students are a full one to two RIT bands,
6 which is a way of speaking about NWEA assessments --
7 in both math and reading falling now one to two RIT
8 bands on average below where they were previously.
9 So we know that the students are entering our doors
10 already behind, even when they come into
11 kindergarten, and we compare that to national norms.
12 That was one of the things I think in the previous
13 goals we had set; we had some pretty high goals for
14 meeting national norms for academic performance,
15 which was based on a very different population 10
16 years ago. With our current population we are not
17 seeing that we're meeting those national norms the
18 way we had hoped because our students are coming very
19 far behind. What we have seen is a tremendous amount
20 of outpacing national norms for growth on our reading
21 and math assessments, particularly in our elementary
22 students. And so, you know, it is -- you know, we do
23 look more like some of the larger, more urban
24 traditional public school districts in this area.

25 And so I do think there probably are some

1 opportunities for some more direct comparisons to see
2 how those show up, but we're certainly seeing with
3 the high poverty population we've had a reduction in
4 incoming performance. And then also, as Ms. Howard
5 talked about, just with Covid, students being at home
6 -- all of them at home, you know, three months in
7 2020, about 60% of our kids were virtual in some form
8 or another for the entire 2020-2021 school year; we
9 got a lot of them back last year, and so we have sort
10 of this new baseline of data sort of in this post-
11 Covid. And we've seen that tremendous growth, but
12 our weighted achievement is going to take time to get
13 them caught up and outpace the traditional growth.

14 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Additional questions?

16 Yes, Ms. Saracini.

17 MS. SARACINI: I just have a couple of concerns
18 or pause on they're requesting the 13 years. Because
19 as I'm looking at the licensure request on -- it goes
20 back to consistency. On our Act 1240 waivers we give
21 five years on that. And I guess I'm also looking at
22 the downward trend; you had B's on your ESSER rating,
23 and over the last three years now you're at two D's
24 and three C's. So I just give pause for the 13 years
25 without coming back and re-examining. And so I guess

1 that's concerns but questions and just pause on that

2 --

3 DR. BACON: And I would say that --

4 MS. SARACINI: -- 13 years.

5 DR. BACON: Our response to that would be (a)
6 this panel has, even as recently as last year, given
7 I know several charters 10 years who have some
8 performance issues as well. We're asking for 13
9 because we would like to be able to bring in a new
10 set of kindergartners and have them K-12, be able to
11 commit that they'll be with us from beginning to
12 graduation. That's where the 13 years came from.

13 We acknowledge, particularly at our elementary
14 level, that we have seen a dip. A lot of that is
15 attributed to that reduction in our weighted
16 achievement piece of that. As I said, students are
17 coming to us, as our population has changed
18 dramatically, from 30% poverty to 70% poverty and our
19 demographics have shifted. We're seeing students
20 coming in further behind. But we are banking on what
21 we're seeing from the value-added growth piece, even
22 at the elementary level and particularly our Downtown
23 Elementary where we've exceeded that 80 level and
24 we're starting to see that upturn back. But we
25 believe we're on track.

1 At the secondary level, I don't think you can
2 get much better than having the top performing growth
3 junior high school in the entire state of Arkansas.
4 So I think that's valuable. I think the fact that
5 our other junior high was in the top 10 for growth
6 and our high school in the top 20 for growth show a
7 lot of what we're doing is working.

8 I think our elementary kids were hit the hardest
9 by the pivot to virtual and being at home and not
10 being in a traditional environment. It's one of the
11 reasons why we hired Ms. Lori Smith, because we need
12 someone to help us make sure that everything we have
13 as a foundation for a high poverty, highly mobile
14 elementary school coming out of Covid is in place and
15 we build upon that. And so we're seeing slower
16 turnaround and rebound there, but we've seen a
17 tremendous rebound and recovery at the secondary
18 level. And we would like to know that that is
19 recognized and celebrated as well.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I will -- please.

21 MR. WALTER: Go ahead.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Just I want to echo that
23 comment because that was something that struck me as
24 well, particularly given the leadership change.
25 Although clearly there's been some strong leadership

1 in place and the leadership continues, there's some
2 significant consistency there. I did find the 13
3 years a little bit odd. And I really wanted to know
4 has there been any other -- and this is, I guess, a
5 Staff question -- in renewal beyond 10 years? And I
6 want to be thoughtful about are we setting a
7 precedent here. And if so, you know, what's to stop
8 someone from saying 15, 20 years -- 16 years because
9 we want to see them through college. Right? And so
10 that is a question that I do have.

11 So if we could, Staff, is there any recollection
12 of any renewal going beyond 10 years?

13 DR. SUTHERLIN: I'm not aware of any, but Ms.
14 Coffman may be.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Ms. Coffman, do you know
16 is there any renewal that has gone beyond 10 years in
17 the state of Arkansas?

18 MS. COFFMAN: So I believe there was.

19 DR. BACON: Lisa Academy --

20 MS. COFFMAN: I believe Lisa.

21 DR. BACON: How many years? Lisa got 13 --

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

23 DR. BACON: -- a couple of years ago, several
24 years past.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And what you're saying, Ms.

1 Coffman, just FYI, is being echoed by some folks in
2 the room; they are mentioning Lisa Academy and 13
3 years. So, thank you for that clarification.

4 Mr. Baldwin, questions?

5 MR. BALDWIN: So just a couple of questions.

6 In going through the application, which you guys
7 prepared, I was looking at the goals that you had
8 established and there was a couple of goals that were
9 not satisfied. And then later on I saw that there
10 are some new goals that you're placing on yourselves.
11 And I was wondering are the new goals replacing the
12 old goals, are they being added to the old goals?

13 And then going back to Ms. Saracini's question
14 about the letter grades, are you changing your goals
15 to try to do it with the reduction in letter grades
16 that we've seen? And just maybe explain that whole
17 process to us.

18 DR. BACON: So the original goals that we had
19 set -- you'll even note the first goal was tied to I
20 think the Arkansas ACTAAP assessments, which went
21 away several years ago. And so that goal went away
22 and was not measurable. The other goals we had set
23 were really related to our NWEA assessment which has
24 been a consistent assessment. We set some really
25 high goals for meeting and exceeding national norms

1 in math and reading that we have not met. We were on
2 track and on pace early on to meet those. We were
3 almost there prior to Covid and prior to our -- the
4 really onset of our expansion. But the positive that
5 we saw was the goals that we are meeting from those
6 original goals that regardless of where a student
7 comes in, if they're already behind when they arrive,
8 was meeting those growth -- exceeding national norms
9 for growth. So both in the elementary and the middle
10 level the goals we had set for growth we were far
11 outpacing the percentage of our students who are
12 exceeding national growth norms.

13 And so one of the things that we looked at when
14 we were setting goals for new goals -- and I need to
15 find them in my notebook here -- give me just a
16 second to find them; I think they're up here at the
17 front. Here they are, next page, of course. Okay --
18 was we wanted to look at things that, if this is a
19 13-year renewal, which we were asking for, that would
20 probably still be in place and relevant and they're
21 measurable and attainable. And so we set goals
22 around growth, including our NWEA growth, because our
23 commitment is, you know, we did it before it became
24 one of the K-2 mandated state assessments and we
25 continue to use it and we plan to continue using it

1 because we see the value of the fall, winter, spring
2 progression, the growth, comparing to national norms.
3 So we set some goals around our NWEA assessments and
4 we set goals for the value-added growth through ESSA
5 because, regardless of what tests and how the test
6 looks the year after this -- and I guess this is the
7 last year for ACT Aspire -- regardless of what the
8 state assessment looks like, we really don't know are
9 those going to be higher or lower than they've been.
10 You know, our goal is still those ESSA calculations
11 for growth to make sure that we're adding value to
12 our students based on their previous performance.

13 And then the other growth -- the other goals we
14 set are really related to more outcome-based. So our
15 11th grade state-mandated assessment, which is the
16 ACT, which is that college readiness piece, is making
17 sure that our students are meeting or exceeding state
18 norms. This year -- we didn't put it in our
19 presentation because we only had a limited amount of
20 time, but we -- our 11th graders actually exceeded
21 all of the local school districts in Pulaski County
22 and the state in every sub-category of the ACT for
23 the 11th grade assessments; so both composite and
24 then all four of the content areas. So we've set a
25 goal there of maintaining and exceeding by half-a-

1 point state performance on ACT and then some, getting
2 our students to and enrolled in college as sort of
3 that college readiness and outcome measure.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So --

5 DR. BACON: So the old goals would go away and
6 these would be our new set of goals.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So what we'd be looking at
8 would be these --

9 DR. BACON: Uh-huh. The section 4 new goals --

10 MR. BALDWIN: -- goals in Section 4?

11 DR. BACON: -- would be what we have set as
12 metrics that we believe will continue to be
13 measurable. So we didn't set anything based off of
14 the state test other than specific to value-add.

15 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So my follow-up -- I guess
16 my follow-up question would be on the new goals.
17 They seem to be somewhat less aspirational than your
18 original goals. And I guess what you're saying is
19 you have a different demographic of student now. So
20 are you kind of giving up on the aspiration a bit?

21 DR. BACON: Well, I would say exceeding the
22 state composite performance by at least a half-a-
23 point on the ACT is pretty aspirational. We have not
24 been at that point until really recently. This is
25 one of the first years we've been there. I would say

1 getting 90% of students admitted to at least one
2 college and really getting them actually enrolled in
3 college would be pretty aspirational. 70% of
4 students meeting or exceeding national growth norms
5 -- you know, our previous goal I think was looking at
6 at least 50% exceeded growth norms. We have set a
7 really high bar for exceeding national performance;
8 so that is the bar that we took off the table for
9 now. Because, as I said, our students are coming in
10 so much further behind that I think we need time and
11 transition through this Covid -- all of the changes
12 that have occurred through Covid to be able to
13 determine what are rational and reasonable and
14 attainable measures on that NWEA performance piece.
15 But we know that the growth piece -- as Sarah
16 McKenzie and OEP have recently stated, growth is the
17 great equalizer, because regardless of where your
18 kids are coming in on an achievement level you should
19 be able to move them forward. And the value-added is
20 actually moving them more forward than one would have
21 expected in a normal situation.

22 So I would risk a little at saying that these
23 are aspirational. They're different based on a
24 different population we serve and trying to be
25 realistic about we can't control who shows up at our

1 door and where they are, and the students we're
2 getting now are much further behind than they once
3 were. But we can control what we bring to the table
4 and how much growth that we see. So that's why the
5 goals are set there for growth.

6 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

7 MS. NEWTON: I have a question.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, please, Ms. Newton.

9 MS. NEWTON: This is my question, and it's just
10 my question from a personal background standpoint in
11 social work. Heaven forbid that we have another
12 pandemic. But given the risk of that possibly
13 happening, what lessons learned -- what are you --
14 would you do, say -- I wouldn't buy as much toilet
15 paper and paper towels. But, you know, what would
16 you do to help families and help students and help
17 the trajectory to continue even -- you know, so many
18 people suffered, so many young people suffered, and
19 some more than others. But I'd like to ask every
20 charter that or every school that. But I'm
21 interested in knowing if there's an approach or a
22 thought process around anything impending from this
23 point.

24 DR. BACON: So I think one of the best things
25 that we've done is to be able to become a lot more

1 savvy at delivery through a variety of means; and so,
2 a lot of extra devices. We have enough devices that
3 students can have a laptop or an iPad in the early
4 elementary grades onsite, on campus, and they can
5 take one home as well; having access to resources,
6 making sure they can get on WiFi. Our secondary
7 schools were already using -- It's Learning was the
8 product, but it was a learning management system.
9 And so we've shifted some of that so that K-12 were
10 using I think Google Classroom and some other tools.
11 But making the learning -- all of the, you know,
12 recorded lessons or handouts or notes or assessments
13 and everything available in these portals, all the
14 way down to kindergarten, so that a parent -- if a
15 kid is forced to be at home parents can assist them
16 better. I think we had things in place but certainly
17 not at the level that would be across the board for
18 K-12 and for all students. And so I think that was
19 one of the biggest things that we've learned.

20 I think the one thing to me, just looking at it
21 as we've talked about some of this, whether it was
22 suspension data or whether it was especially the re-
23 entry of sort of -- you know, closing schools was
24 what -- the only thing anyone knew to do, and
25 offering this sort of full-on virtual, trying to let

1 -- you know, let people make their choices from a
2 safety perspective, because it was so unknown. But I
3 think my biggest lesson is from the earliest level
4 children are better off when they are in that
5 classroom environment with all of the direct
6 instruction and the opportunity to be with their
7 peers and the wraparound services we can provide. So
8 we were all sort of on our heels. You know, we did a
9 great job -- Angie runs that piece of our, you know,
10 having meals available so that parents could pick up
11 meals. So we continued our meal service, sort of an
12 offsite frozen meal, you know, but we were able to do
13 those things and put things in place.

14 But I think now we have a lot of those systems
15 in place. I don't know. Let's hope that it's not
16 another pandemic and let's hope it's not something
17 else crazier that we can't even predict that would do
18 that. But I think we now have a lot of tools in
19 place to make it where that pivot is easier, as Ms.
20 Howard described. If a student has to be out for,
21 still, 10 days or, you know, 5 days for Covid or they
22 get really sick or they've had an injury and they're
23 unable to make it to school, they can pivot very
24 quickly, whether it's asynchronous or in some cases
25 synchronous learning, and we don't lose a beat. And

1 I think that is -- we had it in small places, and we
2 knew it was valuable, but we had to commit the
3 resources and the personnel to have it across the
4 board now. So I think that is a positive outcome
5 that we're further along.

6 But I just think keeping that community in place
7 -- you know, one of the things that I think will
8 contribute to our student retention and family
9 retention is -- you know, we went really two years
10 where parents weren't really able to come into the
11 building because, you know, there were so many
12 restrictions and we were trying to keep everything,
13 you know, sanitized. And so parents sort of stopped
14 at the door and we didn't have family events, we
15 didn't have Grandparents Day, we didn't have all of
16 those opportunities for building that community. And
17 what we've seen this year is, the first year, we've
18 really gotten back to sort of -- you know, we
19 understand the risk and we know how to mitigate. I
20 mean, people are just -- I mean Grandparents Day this
21 year was 10 times what it's ever been because people
22 are dying to have that connection again. So I think
23 keeping a connection, no matter what the conditions
24 are, with our families and their extended families
25 and this wraparound support has to stay in place, no

1 matter what is happening in the world, moving
2 forward.

3 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

4 DR. BACON: And I don't know if that's helpful.
5 That's just me talking, so --

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thanks for that.

7 Ms. Wright-McMurray.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have a couple of
9 questions. The first couple are around school
10 counseling. So going back to our previous
11 conversation that you said this is the first year
12 you've actually had someone that was in the building
13 or in all buildings. That was --

14 DR. BACON: Fully licensed in School Guidance
15 Counseling, making sure that we have and we're
16 meeting the ratios with fully licensed people at all
17 of our buildings this year.

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So can you just
19 give me a little bit more information on in
20 situations -- in your explanation you provided that
21 you do partner with community mental health partners
22 and such to provide those support services. But then
23 just speaking back to the conversations that we were
24 having around Covid and students coming back into the
25 school environment with so many different challenges,

1 and you diversifying your population of students that
2 you're serving, so then they come with particular
3 additional concerns. How is the in-house support
4 provided to students to where that's not farmed out
5 --

6 DR. BACON: Right.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- but immediate? When a
8 student needs assistance how is that being addressed?

9 DR. BACON: Do you want to talk about that?

10 MS. HOWARD: So I can talk specifically. So
11 just back to ratios first, Ms. Wright-McMurray -- so
12 at our high school, we have a general student
13 population of roughly about 500, 550 students. We
14 have two fulltime licensed counselors there just
15 onsite. At our junior high levels we have one apiece
16 and those numbers are under -- student numbers are
17 under 500. In our elementary schools, we have two to
18 three counselors in each building. So onsite we have
19 counselors available. In addition to those
20 counselors, we still kind of outsource some of those
21 mental health services from local partners. And so I
22 think the collectives of all of those people working
23 together is what's providing our students with the
24 support they need.

25 We also have a lead counselor that works at the

1 district office that helps support those counselors
2 and kind of finds additional service providers, if we
3 need those, throughout the year.

4 DR. BACON: And the mental health providers are
5 generally coming into the schools. It's not
6 something that we're referring and sending away for
7 parents to have to deal with getting their kids
8 somewhere for services. You know, we're constantly
9 having requests to build a wall, create a new space
10 that's private for -- you know, because those
11 different groups are very committed to providing
12 wraparound and supporting our kids. But we try to do
13 all of that onsite so that it's there, you know, to
14 provide that extended support for our students on
15 campus.

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Then my second question,
17 also related to school counseling -- first, I really
18 appreciate and commend your students that have come
19 through your doors and exited on the other side and
20 have successfully gone into post-secondary and gone
21 on to bigger and better and brighter things. You
22 mentioned there's 90% that typically fall within that
23 realm. For the 10% that are not going immediately on
24 to post-secondary, can you speak to what types of
25 supports and guidance are provided to those students

1 who may not immediately go to those traditional
2 college campuses?

3 DR. BACON: So for your exact question, about
4 three or four years ago one of the things I thought
5 about that we really needed to put in place was --
6 so, you know, Ms. Howard talked about we get -- do a
7 good job getting our kids to college. Once they're
8 there, were we able to really control -- you know, a
9 lot of it is we hope we've prepared them -- and so in
10 looking at data on how we make sure they get through
11 college. But then also those kids who are "I need to
12 get an apartment," "I need to know how to turn on my
13 utilities," "I need -- I'm having a child at 21," you
14 know, "I've gone into the military and, you know, I
15 need to support family" -- so we created a role,
16 which was one of our former teachers and then
17 guidance counselors, that's really our Director of
18 Alumni Support. And so what this person basically
19 does is from the minute they walk across that stage
20 they're under her care, and so she is in
21 communication with the students and their families
22 and their parents. You know, I thought we were
23 creating a person who was going to say -- be able to
24 say -- you know, really I was -- in my mind it was
25 that large percentage who were going to try -- we're

1 trying to get them to college because of the college-
2 readiness, get them through. But really what she --
3 I mean, the stories she tells are just so -- I mean,
4 kids literally -- you know, "I lost my job, what do I
5 do, how do I file for unemployment, how do I -- you
6 know, I can't pay my bills; is there anyone I can
7 talk to, because I'm about to get kicked out of my
8 apartment." You know, it's the life -- adult-living
9 that I don't -- I mean, I think we talk about it with
10 kids; but once they graduate high school, in most
11 cases it's on the family and on -- you know, they're
12 sort of on their own. But we've committed to
13 providing this support piece to see them through, and
14 it's just -- it's heartbreaking but it's also
15 heartwarming to hear the stories that, you know,
16 children -- not children anymore, they're young
17 adults who are graduates of our school, who now -- I
18 feel so confident that they're going to have a better
19 chance at succeeding in life. Because whether
20 they're going to college or the military or straight
21 into the workforce they're all dealing with those
22 adult life issues, and oftentimes the parents don't
23 know -- either don't know about the issue, because
24 the kid -- the young adult is not telling them, or
25 they really don't know how to help them through it

1 because they may be struggling with some of those
2 same things themselves.

3 So it's really been an incredibly valuable
4 resource, I think, for helping all children, but in
5 particular the power has been in the ones who aren't
6 going to college that need just life assistance.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So you said there's like
8 parallel conversations on being college-ready and
9 career-ready at the same time for your students as
10 they're moving through?

11 DR. BACON: Uh-huh.

12 MS. HOWARD: So at our high school level we
13 actually offer a course called College and Career
14 Readiness where students are presented with multiple
15 options. I think just a couple of weeks ago we had a
16 like post-secondary fair; and so we had everything
17 from colleges there so students could talk to
18 representatives from those schools, we had EMTs
19 there, we had police officers there, we had the
20 military there. And so we had just different things
21 that students choose to do after college, with
22 representatives from those respective fields that
23 could help our students kind of navigate that after
24 high school.

25 DR. BACON: Yeah. It was really awesome because

1 I was just following it on social media and it was --
2 you know, this was the day that it was all of these
3 four-year universities, and this was the day that it
4 was two-year or career and technical institutions,
5 and then this was literally police, fire, EMT, city
6 -- you know, public services; and then, you know,
7 small business -- I mean, and military. It was
8 really incredible because it is what we're trying to
9 teach our kids is, you know, college-ready is one of
10 our main goals -- it has been from day-one -- and our
11 -- sort of our mission and vision. But that career-
12 readiness and world-readiness is also equally, if not
13 more important for all of our students.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And then the last clean-up
15 question that I had in relation to Gifted and
16 Talented -- so I'm just reflecting back on I think a
17 response to a question that there -- and if I
18 misunderstood, please clarify -- but there may not be
19 equal representation of students of color in your
20 GT/AP courses?

21 MS. HOWARD: So --

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And so I'm just kind of
23 getting the sense -- if that is correct, are there
24 things that are being done to try to better educate
25 students on those options? Or are you seeing that

1 they're just not wanting to take part in those, and
2 how are you addressing that?

3 MS. HOWARD: So now I think that's a great
4 follow-up question, because I think in the past there
5 has been -- it has been somewhat disproportionate.
6 Just last year we had about 22 students at the high
7 school level that were enrolled in AP courses; this
8 year that number has more than doubled already. And
9 so I think with the implementation of the program I
10 spoke about earlier, eStem Advantage, and just
11 opening up those opportunities for students, putting
12 those supports in place so that they can be
13 successful in those courses once they take them was a
14 commitment that we made at both the district level
15 and the school level. And so I believe that we're
16 doing some things to make sure that there's equal
17 opportunity available for all students.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
19 before we move to a motion?

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Coffman has one.

21 MS. COFFMAN: Mr. Davis, I have a few.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes.

23 MS. COFFMAN: So, first of all, thank you for
24 your presentation. And I did visit eStem, so I did
25 get to see all of the buildings and I appreciate Dr.

1 Bacon taking me around to all of them.

2 My first concern is a Calendar/Start-Date waiver
3 when we have four options. And they are a
4 traditional school, so I think that should've been a
5 consideration on one of the four calendar options.
6 That's my first thing.

7 Second thing is in the goals that Mr. Baldwin
8 addressed, I would feel more confident about those
9 goals if there were baseline data, where are you
10 starting in relation to those goals, and that we
11 every year or even when you come back for renewal to
12 see yearly progress toward those goals.

13 And, finally, my concern is 13-year approval on
14 a charter that's been in operation for 14 years and
15 still asking for this number of waivers. And when I
16 think about the opportunities that are -- while they
17 are being provided there's not a year-long
18 opportunity for P.E., library, visual arts, music,
19 GT, Arkansas History. And then with the changing
20 demographics, it just causes great concern.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Response?

22 DR. BACON: Is that a question?

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, no. I think she raised
24 some concerns. I would like to think that the school
25 would like to respond to some of those concerns, if

1 you have any additional information.

2 DR. BACON: I was starting -- I was trying to
3 take notes. I heard talk about the calendar. I
4 mean, we're willing to have an ongoing conversation
5 about that. In terms of -- I mean the four options
6 we looked at and we didn't see how that fit with what
7 we have always done and have committed to doing. So
8 not being able to really look at it and process, I
9 know you don't want us to do that standing here
10 today. I'd need to look at that and make sense of
11 it.

12 You know, we feel like we did a really strategic
13 evaluation of these waivers. And, you know, our
14 commitment was always, you know, seeing what works;
15 if the waiver and flexibility works, pushing for
16 other people to have those same waivers or for those
17 laws or policies or standards to go away. You know,
18 I stood in front of the state -- I think it was the
19 House Education panel and spoke on behalf of those
20 waivers, to allow traditional school districts to get
21 the same waivers that charter schools have. I'm all
22 about the need for flexibility and for perhaps
23 removing some of the rigid requirements that we have
24 in place, if we can show that they're not necessary.
25 So what we did was paring down, taking out, you know

1 -- we rescinded five, you know. If you know me --
2 and Debbie Coffman knows me pretty well -- giving up
3 a waiver -- I've fought these battles for 15 years,
4 when we had our accreditation crosswalk, of "I don't
5 want to give it up until, you know, we know for
6 certain that it's not something that's valuable to
7 our organization." So we've rescinded five plus -- I
8 think five or so more, where we've given up pieces
9 today because we see that perhaps we've moved on
10 beyond those and they're not relevant to us. Or, in
11 a lot of cases, when we're talking about the safety
12 and security and some of those health things -- you
13 know, we've learned that lesson, Ms. Newton, coming
14 out of Covid, that we need to provide that, the
15 counseling piece, the wraparound service. You know,
16 those are things that we've just learned those
17 lessons about. We have to make sure -- you know, I
18 don't want flexibility from some of that because we
19 need to be able to do it, because it's the right
20 thing to do in this period. We've got to make sure
21 our schools are safe; we've got to make sure our kids
22 are well and healthy and can come to school and be
23 well.

24 And so, you know, we've evaluated these waivers
25 and removed a number that we didn't feel like were

1 relevant or that, frankly, we felt like we were
2 meeting and didn't need anymore. So the ones that
3 we've kept are things that we believe are valuable to
4 our student population and valuable to our way of
5 doing business. I know moving forward with the
6 organization they'll be looking at these again
7 continuously to see is that the right way for our
8 schools to operate. And I mean I think, again, my
9 philosophy was always if I get a waiver from it and
10 we're able to be successful, and other people get a
11 waiver from it, let's just do away with that all
12 together instead of having everyone have to seek the
13 waiver.

14 So I mean I feel really strongly that we've done
15 an evaluation and feel good about the pieces we have
16 in place are the things that we need to keep in
17 place. I'm happy to dig into some baseline data, as
18 I shared with you sort of anecdotally. You know,
19 setting these new goals was basically trying to set
20 goals that are (a) measurable -- we know these are
21 all measurable, but they do need to be achievable for
22 the population that we serve. So when we look at,
23 you know, the majority of our schools every year
24 being 80 or above on value-added growth, this was the
25 first year I think in a -- the last couple of years

1 is the first time we've been where the majority of
2 our schools were at that level. Because our
3 population, you know, is shifting and with the new
4 assessment -- so to commit that all of our schools
5 will exceed it every year feels like setting
6 ourselves up for an unrealistic expectation when the
7 new test comes on and perhaps there's a dip, an
8 implementation dip for a year or two. So I don't
9 feel like the goals that we've set are not based on
10 historic performance; they're based on what we see in
11 our students that we serve today and where we think
12 that we can move them.

13 It's the same thing with that ACT goal. You
14 know, this is the first time we've been above. We
15 were not .5 points above the state in that ACT level,
16 but our commitment is to getting there. We now know
17 we can do it. With the students we serve today, our
18 commitment is to meet a higher bar for that.

19 You know, the goals related to getting kids into
20 college -- I mean, we set a goal of at least 90% of
21 our college [sic] is accepted to at least one four-
22 or two-year university. Tell me someone else in the
23 state of Arkansas that is accomplishing that today.
24 Tell me who's doing that -- 90%, 9 out of every 10
25 kids that walk through their doors in high school and

1 are there for a high school experience are getting
2 into at least one college. That's an aspirational
3 goal in a state where I think our population of
4 adults with college degrees is somewhere in the 30%
5 range. And we're -- I think we only beat maybe two
6 states in the entire country. Those are aspirational
7 goals. Those are high goals set, based on what we
8 believe -- on our previous history and the students
9 we serve today that we believe can do it. And so I
10 don't think that these goals are not in some way
11 rooted in our current level of performance and to the
12 history of where we've been and using that as the
13 basis point to say what is achievable and what is
14 aspirational moving forward. So that's where these
15 goals came from.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And can you -- sorry; Ms.
17 Coffman, continue, and then I'll ask my question.

18 MS. COFFMAN: So just to clarify, I wasn't
19 questioning --

20 DR. BACON: No, no. I know you weren't.

21 MS. COFFMAN: I was just asking for baseline
22 data.

23 DR. BACON: Absolutely. Absolutely.

24 MS. COFFMAN: But you can go ahead and move on,
25 Mr. Davis.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, and I did want to revisit
2 the idea of 13 years. And I think you've provided
3 some explanation on how you landed on the 13-year
4 renewal. I guess my question is if that were to be
5 reduced to 10 or if that's something -- what do you
6 feel you would lose if that were to happen?

7 DR. BACON: I mean I think the 13 years -- of
8 course, we requested 13 years in 2013 and we were
9 given 10. It's just that the idea of being able as
10 we're recruiting -- and Ms. Cleveland, who's our --
11 does all of our admissions -- knowing that when a
12 parent is interested that we can say this school is
13 going to be here, without a doubt, for your child
14 walking in the door in kindergarten until they
15 graduate. That was where the 13 years immediately
16 came -- comes into play. It's just a K-12
17 environment and wanting to be able to commit that we
18 can serve students for that period. If your pleasure
19 is that it's 10, I mean that's -- you know, I mean
20 we've been there before; we're -- I mean we, again,
21 at your -- it's obviously your decision and we would
22 be probably okay with that. But the 13 was selected
23 for a reason; it wasn't just random. I know some
24 people may think it's sort of random -- not 10, not
25 20, not 5, but that's where we came up with that.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'd love to hear any other
2 additional comments from panel members in regards to
3 that question of, you know, 10-year renewal versus
4 13-year renewal.

5 MS. SARACINI: I know you alluded to Lisa
6 Academy getting 13 years. But when you go back and
7 look at their ESSER scores they have no D's. I go
8 back to the two -- the trend going downward. I just
9 have a problem with the 13 and I just pause for
10 concern. Those are our babies.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other members?

12 DR. BACON: I just want to remind, the trend
13 down is a trend that everyone is seeing and it's a
14 trend that we actually are seeing recovery,
15 particularly at the secondary level. So I don't want
16 that to be forgotten, that there is tremendous growth
17 and progress that we're seeing, particularly in our
18 junior highs and as with the high school. And we saw
19 the rebounding at our elementary level with that
20 value-added growth. But I think we all know that
21 when you go from schools that were 30% to 40% poverty
22 to schools that are 70% poverty you're working with
23 students who are coming in the door further behind.
24 And our baseline data shows that -- as I said, one to
25 two RIT bands behind.

1 So our commitment is -- has always been getting
2 them back on pace by value-added growth and throwing
3 in more support and more -- seeing those growth
4 numbers exceed sort of the national norm for growth,
5 which is one of our NWEA goals that we've set here as
6 comparing to national norms for growth. And so I
7 mean that's our focus, is growth. And we feel really
8 good about where we are with growth in this last
9 year's set of data.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thanks.

11 Any other comments or questions?

12 It seems like we're ready to call the question.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do have a question. I
14 don't know if it lands here or if it lands when we
15 start the process for determining our recommendation.
16 But some of the concerns, it seems, is that if we do
17 this 13, reach out, and then if we do start to have
18 challenges, you know, what ability do we have to
19 correct if we're getting off course, if we have that
20 13-span out before we can really say you need to do
21 anything different. Is it possible to say with the
22 contingency of back toward you or something to give
23 an opportunity for us to kind of see are we making
24 the gains that we would like to see happen, to
25 correct for Covid and for changing the population and

1 for different demographics before saying 13. And
2 then maybe after review then we could go, "Okay, now
3 you can have those additional three years." But not
4 just give them now. We know we're seeing some things
5 that are causing some folks to have pause. That's
6 just something I just have a question about. And I
7 don't know if that's here or that's another place.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah, probably once the motion
9 is made --

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's something we're
11 going to have to kind of --

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- we'll have some additional
13 time. Yeah. No. Thank you for raising that.

14 We'd like to move -- if someone would like to
15 make a motion in regards to the renewal of eStem
16 Public Charter School?

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I make a motion for the
18 renewal. But I still need help with the other pieces
19 figure it out. So I don't know quite how to make the
20 motion, I guess I would say.

21 MS. SARACINI: Can she make a motion --

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: You can make a motion for 10,
23 if you'd like, and then it could be seconded, and
24 then conversation can happen, and the vote can be
25 made on that motion, and it can be approved or denial

1 and -- denied. And then another motion can be made
2 if someone is interested in 13.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: All right. That's my
5 understanding of how this --

6 MR. BALDWIN: Can I ask a question before we
7 proceed?

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Sure.

9 MR. BALDWIN: So if we do a motion for 10, I
10 also have concerns about the trends. I really
11 expected to see you guys comment more about your
12 plans to change the trends. I didn't see that in
13 there, so I'm -- my concerns remain. If we do a 10-
14 year renewal, can we have a period of time where they
15 come back in and talk to us about the results? Can
16 we have that in the motion? Or is that just
17 something we do -- we could do that anyway, I guess.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah.

19 MR. BALDWIN: I guess that's a question maybe
20 for the Staff, is how normally would you do that if
21 you wanted to have a shorter period of time to kind
22 of revisit results?

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Because that's part of my
24 question, is if we're --

25 MS. COFFMAN: Mr. Davis, I can help with that.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes. Yes, Ms. Coffman has an
2 answer to that.

3 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. So typically a charter comes
4 up for renewal, and five years is the minimum
5 renewal. You can ask them to come back in for
6 reports. That has been done. In this situation, you
7 may want to look at a shorter number and then if
8 things are solid like you think -- and the thing you
9 have to consider is the Charter Panel may be
10 different at some point in time, so they're not going
11 to remember the reason you brought a report in. But
12 you can extend it up to I believe -- correct me if
13 I'm wrong -- 20 years, but the minimum is 5.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And, Ms. Coffman, help me, I
15 want to make sure that we're approaching this the
16 right way. Right? There will be a motion made, a
17 second, and then some brief conversation about that,
18 and then a vote or denial on that motion. If the
19 vote is denied, another motion can be made and then
20 the same process happens again. Is that correct?

21 MS. COFFMAN: That's correct.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. All right. Does that
23 satisfy all panel members?

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm sure -- I want to be
25 sure of what I'm supposed to be doing. And I guess I

1 still have questions, because I see the rationale for
2 wanting to do the 13 years, and I understand why they
3 would want to do that for recruiting purposes. I do
4 understand that. And I do understand and I
5 appreciate and I also am looking at that's a long
6 period of time to go and not have any way to say,
7 okay, hey, we're kind of off-track here, let's
8 correct. So that's why I was wondering how do we
9 kind of make that compromise on that. And so --

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, let's have that
11 conversation in the motion.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So --

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And then that's what the vote
14 is for.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Right? Would someone like to
17 make a motion?

18 DR. BACON: Can I say something?

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, please.

20 DR. BACON: So I know you all have noted on the
21 virtual digital learning waivers -- I think there was
22 a discussion of three years and then eStem would need
23 to come back and evaluate the digital learning
24 waivers. So if -- I mean, given that we're changing
25 assessments from the ACT Aspire, they'll have that

1 set of data this year; the next is the first time
2 with the new assessment. In three years, if eStem
3 has to come back to defend the digital learning --
4 perhaps a report at three years. When that happens,
5 if you were to give us the 10- or 13-year renewal,
6 right there is a checkpoint since they're already
7 going to have to come back in three years over the
8 digital learning piece.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. And I think Ms. Coffman
10 made it clear that we can request if we wanted a
11 report, for them to come in and provide a report on
12 that data in regards to that.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So with that, I would like
14 to make a motion to approve the renewal application
15 for eStem Charter for 10 years, with a review in
16 three of their progress.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Is there a second?

18 MR. BALDWIN: I'll second that.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. A motion has been made
20 and it has been seconded for approval of the renewal
21 for eStem for 10 years, with a review in three years
22 -- or an update report in three years. Any
23 conversation?

24 Okay. All Panel Members, it's now time to vote.
25 Those in favor please state your wishes by stating

1 "aye."

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any opposed?

4 Okay. Motion passes.

5 If we could now, I think, Charter Panel Members,
6 we will go to our voting sheets. And if you could,
7 go ahead and record your vote on your voting sheets.
8 We will then come back and state how you voted on the
9 voting sheets.

10 (A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: It appears that there is a
12 little bit of an issue --

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: (inaudible)

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'm sorry?

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I don't have it on. I'm
16 sorry.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. It appears that it only
18 -- it's not letting us adjust the voting sheets. It
19 seems like edit is not allowed; it appears that only
20 -- we can only view the document. I think Staff is
21 adjusting the issue. Let's give them a moment.
22 We'll wait for some indication from Staff. If
23 nothing else, what we can do is potentially record it
24 on an individual Word document and then transfer that
25 in, if necessary.

1 MS. SARACINI: Refresh.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: It appears to be working now.

3 MS. SARACINI: Just refresh and you should be
4 fine.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

6 MS. NEWTON: I had to be set-up independent of,
7 but I -- you know, so mine is not coming up at all.
8 And maybe Matthew can help me with that.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

10 MS. NEWTON: Okay. He said he would type in
11 what I said.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah, mine isn't working
13 either.

14 We'll give a couple more seconds here.

15 Why don't we start with Ms. Newton.

16 Ms. Newton.

17 MS. NEWTON: Okay. My vote is yes for the
18 approval of the application for 10 years. And my
19 explanation is that the application is structured
20 using as accomplice educational, social, and
21 psychological needs of the school, the students and
22 parents.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Mr. Baldwin.

24 MR. BALDWIN: So I approved the motion to grant
25 a 10-year renewal, subject to a three-year review for

1 educational results and trends.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: My vote was in approval of the
3 10-year renewal, based upon a history of good --
4 based upon a history of good historic performance and
5 recent history of student growth.

6 Ms. Saracini.

7 MS. SARACINI: I support the 10-year renewal of
8 eStem, with a report within three years on progress
9 of academic progress toward goals.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: [clearing throat] Sorry.

12 I voted for the motion. I support the motion.
13 I commend eStem on the success they've experienced
14 thus far. I look forward to hearing their progress
15 on revised goals in light of post-Covid and
16 demographic changes in three years on addressing
17 concerns.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman.

19 MS. COFFMAN: I voted in favor of the renewal
20 for 10 years, with the DLP waivers for three years
21 only, and a review by the Charter Panel in three
22 years. That review of progress in three years should
23 include the data for each of their goals.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

25 Staff, is there anything that we're missing in

1 regards to this charter renewal process for eStem?

2 Okay. Hearing none, this first process is over.

3 What's the pleasure of the Panel at this point?

4 You want to take a 10- or 15-minute break?

5 Yeah, I'm seeing heads nod.

6 I am not sure -- actually, Staff, I don't know
7 if lunch -- or what that --

8 MS. SUMMONS: Lunch is here.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

10 MS. SUMMONS: So it's ready and in the
11 conference room upstairs.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So what's the pleasure in
13 regards to lunch? Are we thinking 45 minutes, are we
14 thinking an hour? What's the thought? Thirty
15 minutes?

16 Okay. So we'll break for lunch for 30 minutes.
17 We'll return back by 12:30 to start the second
18 process with Friendship Aspire Academies of Arkansas.

19 (LUNCH BREAK: 11:57 a.m. - 12:33 p.m.)

20 4) FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE ACADEMIES OPEN ENROLLMENT RENEWAL
21 APPLICATION

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay, folks, we're going to go
23 ahead and get started. Thank you for the break. Up
24 next we have the charter renewal for Friendship
25 Aspire Academies of Arkansas.

1 Would everyone who may be testifying on behalf
2 of Friendship Aspire Academies of Arkansas please
3 stand and raise your right hand? Do you swear to
4 [sic] affirm that the testimony you're about to give
5 shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
6 the truth?

7 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

9 Just as a reminder of the process, Friendship
10 Aspire Academies of Arkansas will have 20 minutes for
11 their presentation. There doesn't appear to be
12 anyone who has registered for opposition. We will
13 then move to public comment, if there are any. And
14 then we'll move to the legal review.

15 With that being said, if we can get Friendship
16 Aspire Academies of Arkansas to come forward? Do we
17 have the presentation loaded and ready to go? You
18 should have a clicker.

19 Okay. First of all, congratulations; you guys
20 got a much smoother start than we had this morning --
21 and that was all on me. So congratulations to you.

22 SUPT. TRAN: That's a good sign, so let's hope
23 that this one goes smoothly as well.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: There we go.

25 SUPT. TRAN: But thank you. I hope you guys had

1 a great lunch. I want to introduce myself; I'm Phong
2 Tran, the Superintendent. Here we have Mr. Joe
3 Harris, who's the CEO of the Friendship Education
4 Foundation; we have Ms. Virginia Perry, who's the
5 Deputy Superintendent; we've got Ms. Jeryca Einhorn,
6 she's the Director of Special Education; and we've
7 got Mr. Scott McRae, who's the Director of Finance.
8 So that's our team -- and of course Tripp doing the
9 Legal. So that's our team for today.

10 Is it this button? There you go.

11 So the mission of Friendship Aspire Academies of
12 Arkansas is to provide a world-class education that
13 motivates students to achieve high academic
14 standards, enjoy learning and develop as ethical,
15 literate, well-rounded and self-sufficient citizens.
16 I know it's a mouthful, but at Friendship what we do
17 is we place our schools in the hardest-to-serve
18 communities. That's our mission, that's what we do.
19 We don't go around placing schools anywhere; we
20 strategically place in communities that need help and
21 that need services. So that's the mission of
22 Friendship. It is also to -- you know, to fulfill
23 this mission by providing students a high quality,
24 liberal arts education focused on preparing students
25 with the academic and life skills needed to be

1 successful in college and beyond. And there's one
2 thing that we do say at Friendship; it is we want our
3 students to go to college and through college. So at
4 the end of the day we try to insure that every single
5 one of our students get to college and make it
6 through college.

7 And I wanted to start off by saying that --
8 actually, I'll leave it to when we get to the
9 Southeast. I think that makes more of an impact
10 there.

11 So at Friendship we started off with the Pine
12 Bluff Elementary, and we opened that in 1998. Then
13 we actually took over the Covenant Keeper, which is
14 the middle school; so we took that over and that was
15 in 1999 -- no, sorry -- 2019. I was going back a
16 decade; sorry. So, we started -- we opened Pine
17 Bluff in 2018, and then we took over the Covenant
18 Keeper -- the failing Covenant Keeper in 2019. And
19 then the year -- that year we also opened the Little
20 Rock Elementary. And then we took over the failing
21 Southeast High School and we turned that over into
22 the Southeast Pine Bluff campus. And then our last
23 one we just opened, which is the Friendship Downtown
24 Pine Bluff which is situated right next to the
25 library.

1 So just a little bit of background of our
2 schools because I know some members here are new and
3 you might not know the history of Friendship. But
4 our first school, as you can see, is Pine Bluff
5 Elementary. So, again, it opened in 2018. We
6 started that school with K-1. So we opened K-1 and
7 then every year after we added on a grade. So at
8 this moment in time it is a K-5 school, so it is a
9 fully -- it's a school that's K-5. Sorry. With that
10 school currently we have 382 students, letter grade
11 is a C, index is 67.48. We have a Bronze level in
12 RISE, meaning that school is a RISE school where all
13 the teachers are RISE trained. And our attendance
14 rate is 96. What I'd like to say about this school
15 is that it is the highest performing school in Pine
16 Bluff, okay, in that district and in the city. With
17 that being said, last year we received from the OEP,
18 from Arkansas University, the Beating the Odds award
19 for High ELA growth in Central region. And also we
20 received the Growth in ELA statewide. So we were the
21 number seven school in the state of Arkansas in
22 Beating the Odds in ELA. We were also recognized by
23 DESE last year as being in the top 10 of high
24 performing schools -- not high growth, but high
25 performing. So that school -- that was our first

1 school, and so that's what's been happening there.
2 At that school we have a whole bunch of programs
3 going on -- before care, extended daycare -- not
4 daycare -- extended learning programs. So we have in
5 the morning kids get dropped off at 7:00 and in the
6 afternoon we have an extended day program where kids
7 for the first hour they go through tutorial sessions
8 with teachers. A lot of times the teachers come and
9 help them with their class work to make sure that
10 they get the help and support they need. And then
11 the hour after that they get provided with
12 extracurricular activities, such as chess,
13 cheerleading, robotics, animated clubs, so-on and so-
14 forth.

15 So this is a comparison to the elementary
16 schools that's around Pine Bluff. As you can, our
17 school is 67.48, and compared to the other schools
18 it's high.

19 Then the high school -- and I want to go through
20 the Pine Bluff region first because that's where we
21 are at. So the school -- the next school is
22 Southeast Pine Bluff. So I'm not too sure if you all
23 know that Southeast was a failing school and so we
24 were asked to take over the school. And so when we
25 took over the school what we did was we phased out

1 the students; so when we took over we started with
2 10th grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade, and then we
3 slowly phased those students out, and then slowly we
4 were going to go ahead and re-phase them in, so --
5 with our students. So when we took over the
6 Southeast, that school wasn't doing very well
7 academically nor financially. And so what happened
8 during the first year that we took over, a hundred
9 percent of our students graduated. Moving forward to
10 last year, again, a hundred percent of our students
11 graduated again. So that's a great feat with
12 everything that we had to do coming in and so-on and
13 so-forth. But I want to tell you guys a story about
14 that school. We had one student, legally blind -- am
15 I correct in saying that?

16 MR. HARRIS: Yes.

17 SUPT. TRAN: Legally blind. He was -- that
18 student, they didn't pretty much have any, you know,
19 any future. They felt like that he's not going to
20 pass, he's not going to graduate, so-on and so-forth.
21 But, you know, we came in, we made sure that he got
22 all his credits, so-on and so-forth, and he graduated
23 at the end of the year. And it made such a big
24 impact, because the mother came to us and said, "I
25 couldn't believe that this is happening, because my

1 child is legally blind and everyone gave up on that
2 child." And for him to be able to go through
3 everything that he has to go through and insure that
4 he got the credits that he needed to graduate that
5 was a very profound moment. So, again, that's what's
6 happening. This year is our final year, our final
7 12th grade year, and then we're going to phase them
8 back in again.

9 Our next school is the Friendship Aspire
10 Academies in Little Rock which opened in 2019.
11 Again, we started that school with a K-1. We are
12 actually at this moment K-4, so next year will be our
13 K-5. As you see over there, 248 students, letter
14 grade C, index 68.33. We were designated by DESE as
15 a School on the Move Toward Excellence. But also
16 last year what we did -- what we were able to achieve
17 as far as by the -- as you can see up there, by the
18 OEP we were awarded as with the Highest Math Growth
19 in Central region; that was number two. And then
20 High ELA Growth in Central region as well, and we
21 were ranked number two in Central Region. So that
22 school is also doing what it needs to do and helping
23 our students to get where we need to get.

24 And our next slide, that's a comparison where
25 Friendship is sitting compared to the charter schools

1 in Little Rock. And then that is the Little Rock
2 campus compared to the local district schools
3 surrounding the area. So as you can see, we're
4 higher performing around there.

5 Then our final school -- last but not final is
6 our middle school. Again, we assumed management of
7 that school. That was the Covenant Keeper charter
8 and we assumed management in 2018, and began to open
9 that -- I think it was in March of 2019 when we
10 assumed that school. It's a 6-8 grade. And again
11 for two years we were designated as Beating the Odds
12 award for High ELA Growth in the Central region for
13 2021 and 2022. And remember our schools -- we have
14 high free-and-reduced rate lunch, so all of our
15 students are in that poverty zone stricken area; so
16 that's why we get that OEP Beating the Odds.

17 And then, again, that is the comparison. Yes,
18 it's close. We have much more work to do, but we're
19 still leading by a little bit compared to that.

20 And before I pass on to Virginia, I just wanted
21 to say that over the last year or so, as everybody
22 knows here, regarding Covid, it has put a strain on
23 the school and on the educational system. We were --
24 our schools were like closing every-other-day because
25 of the amount of Covid outbreaks that we encountered

1 during the last two years, and that made our students
2 suffer because the educational system at that time
3 wasn't stable enough. Yes, we were able to give and
4 provide them with the online support; we were
5 providing -- giving all that. Every single one of
6 our students had one-to-one devices. They were able
7 to take home the computers. We made our students
8 dress up in the morning to feel like they were going
9 to school; "Like at 8:00 you'll need to be in your
10 uniforms again, in front of the computer," so-on and
11 so-forth. But just a time when you have to shutdown
12 a school, coming back to school in person, shutting
13 down a school, coming back to school in person, and
14 that just -- that model wasn't that great. And so
15 you'll see with everything that's happening over the
16 last two years why there's a dip. But even with the
17 dip, everything we're doing, we're looking at data,
18 we're using data-driven instruction.

19 And what Virginia is going to talk about is the
20 lessons learned and what we're doing now or the
21 interventions that we've put in place to insure that
22 our students perform and get to where they need to
23 get. Because at this moment in time, you know, even
24 in those areas they're getting a lot of disservice
25 happening to them. So what we're trying to do is

1 we're trying to insure that at least with their
2 education they're going to deserve and receive one of
3 -- the world class education that they can receive.

4 But anyway, I'm going to pass on to Virginia.

5 MS. PERRY: Good afternoon. I'm Virginia Perry-
6 Henry and I am the Deputy Superintendent for
7 Friendship Aspire Academies of Arkansas.

8 So before I start to talk about the things that
9 you actually see on this slide that address learning
10 loss I want to talk about a couple of mantras that
11 Friendship holds dear. One is Everyone Grows With
12 Friendship -- and to that end, not only our students
13 but also our teachers. So we couldn't adequately
14 address learning loss until we were able to first
15 address the needs of our teachers. So we have a
16 professional development plan that speaks to the
17 pedagogical and the curricular needs of our staff to
18 actually help us before we even get to the plan for
19 addressing learning loss. Then, the other one is --
20 the other mantra is Pursuing Excellence. Although we
21 fared fairly well in comparison to other traditional
22 districts and other charters in the areas that are
23 demographically similar to our schools, we still
24 aspire for greater academic achievement. So we are
25 continuously pursuing excellence. So to that end,

1 one of the main things -- of the first things that we
2 do to address learning loss are formative
3 assessments, which we use NWEA Map and it's given
4 three times a year. Then we use this data to set and
5 gauge year-end goals and also initial goals for each
6 student. So each student has their own academic
7 goal. They're actually able to communicate and talk
8 to you about where they are on their goal and where
9 they aspire to be. We also share that data with the
10 parents. We have monthly Parent Nights where the
11 parents come in, they talk to the teachers and the
12 students -- well, with the teachers and the students
13 about where their individual student is as far as
14 their aspirations for academic improvement. Then we
15 have frequent analysis. The frequent analysis allows
16 for necessary adjustments in the instructional
17 practices; so we have daily interventions and we also
18 have tutoring that takes place. We have enrichments
19 and -- well, we have enrichments for our students
20 that are at the 20% or above as far as their academic
21 improvement or achievement is concerned. And then
22 for the other students that need some closure to gaps
23 in learning we have specific interventions. Then we
24 also have a fully functioning RTI process where
25 students are identified -- where the students who are

1 not performing on grade level are afforded additional
2 supports, and that could be small group, tutoring,
3 afterschool tutoring -- because we also have extended
4 learning opportunities, such as before and after
5 school care, where not only are kids able to actually
6 be involved in athletic activities and
7 extracurricular activities but there are also
8 academic interventions [clearing throat] -- I'm
9 sorry, I need some water. Excuse me.

10 And then, finally, the goals and student
11 progress are discussed weekly in Professional
12 Learning Communities. So we partnered with Solution
13 Tree to come in --

14 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Ms. Perry was given a
15 bottle of water.)

16 MS. PERRY: Thank you. Thank you.

17 So we partnered with Solution Tree to come in
18 and provide training on RTI, SEL, as well as PLCs,
19 and it wasn't just a one-time sit-and-get training.
20 We have a specific individual, Mr. McWilliams, that
21 comes in at least every-other-month and meets and
22 sits in the PLCs and helps to guide the professional
23 learning talk that goes along with the PLCs to make
24 sure that we're staying on target with making sure
25 that our students and teachers are all progressing.

1 Then, we address literacy daily. Jeryca Einhorn
2 is here and she's our Director of Special Education;
3 she's also our in-house RISE trainer. So at the
4 beginning of the year, before school started we spent
5 a full week -- practically a week-and-a-half where we
6 made sure that each one of our staff went through
7 RISE training and received their RISE credentials.
8 We also have building level leaders that are
9 designated as RISE assessors. We track how our
10 teachers do or how our students do, utilizing the
11 RISE components, daily, just to make sure that we're
12 addressing the RISE initiatives fully.

13 So in K-5 we focus on phonological awareness,
14 phonics, comprehension, read-aloud and shared
15 reading, oral language, vocabulary, small group
16 reading, and writing. Then at our middle school, 6-
17 8, which is in Little Rock, we have an extended
18 literacy block, strategic reading course offered,
19 word study, comprehension, and writing. And then at
20 our high school, which is 12th grade only this year,
21 we have extended literacy block, strategic reading
22 course is offered, grade level tests in all content
23 areas, and domain specific vocabulary development.
24 We also have at the high school a partnership with
25 the SEARK Community College where our kids are

1 actually -- where our scholars are actually able to
2 work on concurrent credit.

3 Then, ESSER Fund Usage -- okay. Well, I want to
4 address number two primarily. While number one and
5 number three, Creating Safe and Healthy Learning
6 Environment and Supporting Educator and Staff
7 Stability and Well-Being, are very important to us,
8 the bulk of our time is probably spent on number two,
9 Addressing Learning Loss. We have put a considerable
10 amount of financial and manpower and human capital
11 behind making sure that we adequately address
12 learning loss. We pay our staff, as well as outside
13 staff, to come in and provide before and after care
14 where they also work on learning loss.

15 We have also hired a -- Friendship has allowed
16 us to have a Chief Academic Officer who started this
17 year, who has done some phenomenal work of actually
18 coming -- she's not here today, but she would have
19 been here if she didn't have another engagement.
20 She's done some phenomenal work of actually coming
21 in, finding out where we are, what we know, what we
22 don't know, and also helping us to get where we want
23 to be. She has compiled a literacy -- I'm sorry --
24 she has compiled an intervention program that we feel
25 is going to substantially help to move our students

1 forward.

2 And that is all that we have.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

4 At this time I'd like to invite any public
5 comment, if anyone in the room is interested.

6 Seeing none, we'll move on to Legal Review.

7 LEGAL REVIEW

8 MS. WAGNER: Good afternoon. We're going to get
9 started with just -- we'll run through the waiver
10 topics, just like we did previously.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Before you do that, let
12 me ask, is -- and maybe we need to do it this way.
13 But for the ones that have no concerns is there a
14 possibility to sort of group those in a way that we
15 can just --

16 MS. WAGNER: I could group together -- like I
17 have Board of Directors is all grouped together.
18 Personnel Policies, instead of going individually I
19 could read them all at once and just do Personnel
20 Policies -- read you all of the statutes that I have
21 no concerns with. Would you prefer to do it that
22 way?

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's see what that does.

24 MS. WAGNER: Okay.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah, let's try it that way.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1
2 MS. WAGNER: Okay. All right. First up we have
3 Alternative Learning Environment that -- excuse me --
4 Friendship is asking to continue Arkansas code
5 annotated sections 6-15-1005(b)(5), 6-18-
6 503(a)(1)(c)(i), and 6-48-102 and 6-48-103, Standard
7 2-I.1, and the DESE rules governing Student Special
8 Needs Funding section 4.01.1. I have no legal
9 concerns about this.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Any questions in regards
11 to that?

12 Okay.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

13
14 MS. WAGNER: Okay. For Board of Directors,
15 Arkansas code annotated section 6-13-611, 6-13-12, 6-
16 13-615, 6-13-616(a), 6-13-619(c)(1)(a) and (d),
17 6-13-621, 6-13-630, 6-13-631, 6-13-634, 6-13-635,
18 6-14-101 et seq., and then also had the ADE proposed
19 rules governing Reimbursement by School Districts for
20 Election Expenses. And I have no concerns.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions or comments
22 regarding this requested waiver?

23 Okay. Let's continue.

CLASS SIZE AND TEACHING LOAD

24 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Next up is Class Size and
25

1 Teaching Load. They have Arkansas code annotated
2 section 6-17-812, Standards 1-A.5 and 1-A.6 -- and
3 you will note 1-A.6 is new, and the DESE rules
4 governing Class Size and Teaching Load. And I have
5 no legal concerns.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Can you help me understand the
7 new 1-A.6, please?

8 MS. WAGNER: So --

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: What is that in reference to?

10 MS. WAGNER: What ended up happening is 1-A.5
11 and 1-A.6 used to be a standard together, and they
12 were split when the standards were re-done in May of
13 this year. And so since they were split apart it's
14 just -- they already had 1-A.5, they're continuing
15 that, and they needed to add 1-A.6 for Teaching Load.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I think Ms. Coffman has a
17 question or comment.

18 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. I'd like for them to explain
19 to us about when they are going over Class Size and
20 are they compensating for going over Teaching Load.

21 MS. PERRY: Virginia Perry. We have not up into
22 this point compensated for having gone over the
23 actual Teaching Load. When that happens, it's
24 typically only for a short period of time. As an
25 open enrollment charter school, students are

1 constantly coming in or constantly enrolling. So we
2 may have a class that might have a new student enroll
3 and that throws us over the ratio for a day or two,
4 until we can make some other arrangements.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other comments or
6 questions?

7 Ms. Coffman, does that satisfy your question?

8 MS. COFFMAN: Yes, for now.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. Let's continue.

10 SUPERINTENDENT

11 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Next is Superintendent. It
12 is Arkansas code annotated section 6-13-109 and then
13 standards 4-B.1 and 4-B.2.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
15 this waiver request?

16 Hearing none, let's continue.

17 PRINCIPAL

18 MS. WAGNER: Next one is Principal, and it's
19 Arkansas code annotated 6-17-302 and standard 4-C.2.
20 And I have no concerns.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. Questions or
22 comments?

23 Seeing none, let's continue.

24 GIFTED AND TALENTED

25 MS. WAGNER: Next, I have Gifted and Talented,

1 Arkansas code annotated section 6-20-2208(c)(6) and
2 6-42-109, standard 2-G.1, and the DESE rules
3 governing Gifted and Talented Program Approval
4 Standards. And I have no legal concerns.

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have a question about
6 that.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We do have a question regarding
8 this from Ms. Wright-McMurray.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And just in, you know,
10 looking at your response -- and I tried to -- I'm
11 just trying to get a sense of -- so how -- are you
12 offering Gifted and Talented services or --

13 MS. PERRY: No, ma'am.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I saw in your statement
15 about the population doesn't yet demand for AP
16 courses. So can you further respond what you mean by
17 that?

18 MS. PERRY: For AP courses, you're correct. We
19 did indicate that there is not a demand for AP, but
20 GT is a little different and we don't have a fully
21 functioning GT program as of yet. But what we do --
22 what we do in lieu of that is we look at the top 20%
23 of our students or the top performing 20% of our
24 students and we actually have a little program that
25 we call internally Aspire. And in the Aspire program

1 twice a week we offer enrichment activities for those
2 kids to keep them engaged and to also keep them
3 motivated.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And the top 20% is
5 measured by?

6 MS. PERRY: Based on their NWEA Map scores.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions on that
8 one?

9 Just to that point in regards to this Aspire
10 program, do parents have the opportunity to lobby for
11 their kids to be included in this --

12 MS. PERRY: Certainly.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- program?

14 MS. PERRY: Uh-huh. Certainly.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Any other questions?

16 I see a question from Ms. Coffman.

17 MS. COFFMAN: Ms. Henry, would you reconcile
18 that we don't offer or we wait for the students to
19 demand AP courses with your college prep model?

20 MS. PERRY: Well, the program that we have with
21 SEARK right now, the students are actually able to go
22 to SEARK in the afternoons and earn concurrent credit
23 and also work on a certificate program. And there
24 are, I think, about two or three programs that SEARK
25 is actually offering our scholars. But as far as AP-

1 Advanced Placement courses are concerned, no kids --
2 none of our students at this point have indicated
3 that they are actually interested in pursuing those
4 courses. Now as we grow -- because, you know, we are
5 going to go back down and start with 9th grade and
6 make our way back up -- we do intend to put things in
7 order so that we can have a fully functioning AP
8 program so that we can meet the demand as it
9 warrants.

10 MS. COFFMAN: So this is a legal question. Does
11 this -- do the codes here, does that meet the waiver
12 requirement to offer AP as a part of the 38?

13 MS. WAGNER: So are you asking does this require
14 -- like the two code sections are just for Gifted and
15 Talented? I'm not one-hundred percent certain about
16 the AP aspect of that. I would have to look at that.

17 MS. COFFMAN: Maybe we can chew that up for our
18 curriculum team to address later.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
20 regarding this waiver request?

21 Okay. Let's continue.

22 MS. WAGNER: Next one I have is Grading Scale,
23 Arkansas code annotated section 6-15-902(a) and 6-15-
24 902(c)(2). And then they are also adding the DESE
25 rules governing Grading and Course Credit, section 2-

1 2.01, which the rules are new; they're a new
2 addition. And I have no legal concerns.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Waiver request, open for
4 comment or questions. Ms. Coffman.

5 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. What -- Shastady, what does
6 that actually waive regarding grading and course
7 credit?

8 MS. WAGNER: It waives -- (a) is -- if I'm not
9 mistaken, (a) is just simply the actual grading
10 scale. I'll have to look at (c)(2). Let me grab my
11 code book real fast.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Sure. Let's -- yeah.

13 MR. WALTER: I've got it.

14 MS. WAGNER: Mr. Walter to the save here.
15 (c)(2) is the weighted credits allowed for advanced
16 placement. (C)(2) requires weighted credits, so
17 they're waiving granting waived -- excuse me --
18 weighted credit. So (a) is for the actual grading
19 scale. Yes. So (a) is for the traditional grading
20 scale, and then (c)(2) is the weighted grade to
21 advanced placement courses.

22 MS. COFFMAN: So follow-up, what is their
23 grading scale? Ms. Henry?

24 MS. PERRY: We're actually seeking this for K-2
25 primarily as far as the grading scale is concerned

1 because we want to offer something that we feel is a
2 little bit more equitable for our students.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And what might that look like?

4 MS. PERRY: Well, it would be -- we want to have
5 more of like a ready or not ready type grading scale,
6 as opposed to a numerical grading scale or an A, B,
7 C, D.

8 MS. COFFMAN: Follow-up, please. What would
9 that look like when you enter into eSchool?

10 MS. PERRY: And that is a good question. That
11 is a very good question.

12 MS. COFFMAN: So it's not something you're
13 currently doing? It's something you --

14 MS. PERRY: No. It's not something that we're
15 currently doing.

16 MS. SARACINI: Can I clarify? Looking at a
17 standards-based --

18 MS. PERRY: Yes.

19 MS. SARACINI: -- grading --

20 MS. PERRY: We are.

21 MS. SARACINI: This is a letter grade?

22 MS. PERRY: Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. SARACINI: Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman, am I correct to
25 assume that there may be some complication in regards

1 to what they're proposing and how that might align
2 with what the State is able to do in regards to
3 eSchool?

4 MS. COFFMAN: No. I think if they're using a
5 standards-based grading system that's something that
6 other schools have been challenged with as well.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. All right. So it
8 appears that if it's a standards-based assessment
9 that that should be fine.

10 SUPT. TRAN: Yeah, it's based on a checklist.
11 So like, for example, with (inaudible), they're going
12 to have to have certain skills they're going to have
13 to master. So giving an A, B, or C doesn't really
14 necessarily, you know, give them a fair indication of
15 how they're performing. So having a whole bunch of
16 checklists in saying it's ready or not ready, we'll
17 be able to provide parents with more of -- a bigger
18 picture of, hey, this is what I need to work with my
19 child because he might not know how to write. Right?
20 Because what's happening now is that you have like
21 ELA, English -- sorry -- ELA, reading, mathematics,
22 science and social studies. But do they have a
23 component where it's like can he write his name, can
24 he count -- you know, so-on and so-forth. So it's
25 more of a comprehensive list so that they can get

1 intervention or get further assistance, whatever the
2 case is.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah.

4 SUPT. TRAN: So --

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thanks for the clarification.
6 Unless there are any more questions, we'll
7 continue.

8 MR. HARRIS: Can we underscore something with
9 that?

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Sure.

11 MS. EINHORN: Jeryca Einhorn, Special Education.
12 So one thing that I see -- and this is what
13 we've done in previous schools before too -- is for
14 SPED kids, especially, it's really hard to give them
15 a grade because it's so open-ended in how you give
16 someone a grade for being able to complete this
17 assignment when they're on this level and another kid
18 is on another level. So really what we're looking at
19 is not necessarily to take out all pieces of grades,
20 but maybe just look at shifting a couple of things.
21 So we would still have some kind of numerical value
22 that we could provide and put into eSchool; however,
23 it wouldn't look quite the same.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thanks for that.

25 Let's continue.

LIBRARY MEDIA SERVICES/LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST

1
2 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is Library Media
3 Services and Library Media Specialist, Arkansas code
4 annotated section 6-25-103 and 104 and standards 4-
5 F.1 and 4-F.2. And I have no legal concerns.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments?

7 Hearing none, let's continue.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: She has a question.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'm sorry?

10 SUPT. TRAN: Ms. Coffman has a question.

11 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. I was wondering --

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman, go ahead.

13 MS. COFFMAN: All right. I was just wondering
14 if they have a Library Media Specialist, if they have
15 libraries, and what's the cause for the ratio waiver?

16 MS. PERRY: We do not have a Library Media
17 Specialist. We do have libraries. And we also have
18 a partnership with the downtown library in Pine Bluff
19 to provide services there so that our students can go
20 over there daily and interact with the library staff
21 there and also utilize the facilities and have access
22 to the books and things there. We also have school-
23 based libraries and classroom libraries at all of the
24 other campuses. But there are no Library Media
25 Specialists at this time, primarily due to the small

1 nature of our schools.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Let's continue.

3 PERSONNEL POLICIES

4 MS. WAGNER: The next set of waiver topics I
5 have are all Personnel Policies. So I will run
6 through each of them all together -- I have no
7 concerns over any of these -- if that sounds good to
8 the Panel.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes.

10 MS. WAGNER: Okay. It was the Daily Planning
11 Period, which is Arkansas code annotated 6-17-114;
12 Classified Personnel Policies, which are 6-17-203 et
13 seq.; Classified Employee Minimum Salary, Arkansas
14 code annotated 6-17-2403; Personnel Policies,
15 Committee on Personnel Policies, Arkansas code
16 annotated 6-17-203, 6-17-205, and 6-17-209; Personnel
17 Policies Incorporated Into a Teacher's Contract, 6-
18 17-204; Personnel Policies on a Public School
19 Employee's Fair Hearing Act, 6-17-1701 et seq.;
20 Personnel Policies, 6-17-206, 6-17-208, 6-17-210, and
21 6-17-211; the Personnel Policies for the Teachers
22 Fair Dismissal Act, 6-17-1501 et seq.; and then we
23 have the Personnel Policy Website Requirements --
24 they have the DESE rules governing the Documents
25 Posted on School District and Educational Cooperative

1 Websites, section 5.01.4 and 6.01. I would also
2 recommend to the Charter to add 6-11-129, but I will
3 let the Charter confirm that they want to do that.

4 MS. PERRY: We do want that. We do.

5 MS. WAGNER: Okay, perfect.

6 MR. WALTER: Can I add something to that?

7 Tripp Walter, Staff Attorney, APSRC.

8 Just as with the school before, I just wanted to
9 point out this doesn't mean that there won't be
10 posting of personnel policies on the website; it's
11 just the personnel policies that are posted may look
12 a little different from the district's website due to
13 the waivers they hold.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for the
15 clarification.

16 Any questions or comments regarding Personnel
17 Policy waivers?

18 Ms. Coffman.

19 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. On their application, they
20 had rescinded three of those. Is that still -- that
21 rescission still in effect? It was 6-17-203, 6-17-
22 204, and 6-17-205.

23 MS. WAGNER: So it is my understanding that the
24 only thing they are wishing to rescind is the
25 Classified Employee Minimum Salary, the 6-17-2207 and

1 then 6-17-807?

2 MS. HENRY: (Nodding head up and down.)

3 MS. WAGNER: Yes. They're wanting to keep 203
4 and -- 6-17-203 and 6-17-204 and 205.

5 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions or comments?

7 Okay. Let's continue.

8 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next waiver topic is
9 Teacher Licensure, Arkansas code annotated section 6-
10 15-1004, 6-17-309, 6-17-401, 6-17-902, and 6-17-919,
11 Standard 4-D.1, and the DESE rules governing Educator
12 Licensure Section 7. I have no legal concerns.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Comments or questions from the
14 Panel regarding these waiver requests?

15 MS. SARACINI: I just want to clarify one thing.
16 You currently have three licensed teachers in the
17 whole district. Correct?

18 MS. PERRY: Oh, no. No, ma'am.

19 MS. SARACINI: Okay. That's what's showing on
20 LEA Insights. That's why I'm just confirming.

21 MS. PERRY: Let me ask you a question. Is it
22 just showing information for the one school? And the
23 only reason why I'm asking that is because we
24 consolidated all of our LEA's. We have three
25 different LEAs and we consolidated all three under

1 one. So I'm afraid the web might be showing is just
2 the information for just that --

3 MS. SARACINI: One.

4 MS. PERRY: -- one primary LEA.

5 MS. SARACINI: Okay. That would explain it.

6 MS. PERRY: Okay.

7 MS. SARACINI: That's why I'm confirming,
8 because when I saw that I was alarmed.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or
10 comments?

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So just --

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- for clarification, what
14 is the percent of your licensed teachers?

15 MS. PERRY: I knew you were going to ask. The
16 percent of licensed teachers that we have is more
17 like 15% district-wide. But each teacher that we
18 have is in a program -- we were able to get a grant
19 from the Center for Strategic Leadership to actually
20 help them to pay for their certification. So every
21 Arkansas qualified teacher that we currently have is
22 enrolled in a program, whether it be an MAT program
23 or an alternative program of some sort, to work on
24 their certification.

25 SUPT. TRAN: Also, just to add, what we also did

1 was we have an arm which is the Friendship
2 Advancement for Teaching. And what we've done is
3 that with helping teachers who don't have the --
4 especially doing the Praxis, helping them pass that
5 Praxis exam, because a lot of them find difficulties
6 in passing that. So what we're doing is that's an
7 after-hour program and all of our teachers enroll in
8 trying to -- those that are not certified, to go
9 ahead and help them pass the Praxis, because that's
10 pretty much one of the hardest steps for them to get
11 through to that certification process.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
13 regarding this waiver?

14 Okay. Let's continue.

15 SCHOOL CALENDAR/SCHOOL START DATE

16 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic I have is School
17 Calendar/School Start Date, which is Arkansas code
18 annotated 6-10-106. And while I have no legal
19 concern, I see that Ms. Coffman has a question.

20 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. I'd like to know about their
21 start date and their review of the four calendar
22 options.

23 SUPT. TRAN: So our start date is usually in
24 line with the actual school district. For the last
25 four years we have always had a calendar that

1 operated the same as the school district. Because
2 when we opened our schools, being a slow growth
3 model, some of our families had other students at
4 other districts -- because, you know, we started with
5 K-1. They might have had 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th. So
6 we try to mirror it with the school districts so that
7 our families won't get impacted if, you know, one
8 school is closed and then we're still open, so-on and
9 so-forth.

10 The reason why we're asking for this waiver is,
11 as you know, learning loss. If there is -- you know,
12 looking at everything, looking at data and how it
13 drives instruction, we might need to open earlier.
14 So that's to insure to provide our students, our
15 families with more instruction so that they can get
16 to where they need to get. Because as you all know,
17 Covid has just caused such an uproar with everything
18 that's going on, and having this waiver just enables
19 us that flexibility to go ahead and change our start
20 date, if need be. But at this moment in time we
21 haven't had any different start date. So for the
22 last -- well, this is the fifth year that we're in
23 operation now, and we haven't deviated from that --
24 from the district calendar at all.

25 MS. PERRY: And if I can kind of piggyback on

1 that, we are looking at the coming year at actually
2 having a bridge program which would require that we
3 do start a little bit earlier, and it's a program
4 where we will work with those students that we know
5 have a need for additional learning enhancements.
6 And we want -- we wish to be able to start earlier
7 this coming year to kind of bridge the gap for those
8 students.

9 MS. COFFMAN: Well, as follow-up, if you want to
10 do a summer program or a bridge program at the
11 beginning of school and invite kids in, and that's
12 not part of your 178 days, you are free to do that --

13 MS. PERRY: Okay.

14 MS. COFFMAN: -- at any point. So that comes
15 back to my question: if you're following a
16 traditional start date with school districts, then
17 are you on a traditional calendar model? And if so
18 why the request for the waiver?

19 MS. PERRY: Well, we do go a little bit longer.
20 We have more than 178 --

21 Okay. It still applies?

22 MS. COFFMAN: Still applies.

23 MS. PERRY: Gotcha.

24 SUPT. TRAN: I mean given the -- this is just
25 giving us the opportunity. Even though we haven't

1 done it for the last five years, everything that
2 we're going through now is pointing to that just-in-
3 case scenario. Because at the end of the day, if we
4 were to change -- let's just say with everything
5 that's going on, right, with the learning loss, with
6 everything that Covid has wreaked havoc upon, what
7 we're doing now is -- I mean, we have an extended
8 day, but -- you know, with tutorial sessions and so-
9 on and so-forth. But allowing us to have this
10 flexibility -- and, again, it's the flexibility.
11 Like I said, we haven't used it, but giving us this
12 flexibility -- because we're asking for a 10-year
13 renewal -- giving this flexibility would allow us to
14 have that program when we need it, and it looks like
15 we will be needing it. But at the end of the day we
16 really need to look at the data and that at the end
17 of the day drives what we do. So that is why I am --
18 you know, that's why Friendship is asking for that,
19 so that if that is the case we don't want to come
20 back in front of you and say, "Hey, can we go ahead
21 and get this waiver because we need this at this
22 moment in time?"

23 So being that we are in this renewal phase it
24 was just, you know, right of us to ask so that we can
25 go ahead and implement it if we need to.

1 MR. HARRIS: Joe Harris.

2 I just want to say that we've been deliberate
3 and thoughtful about our request for this waiver. I
4 think everyone is aware there's a national issue of
5 how do we recover from the Covid learning loss. This
6 is our strategy to address it. We know that our kids
7 need as much time in the classroom and in a learning
8 environment. We will be creative in how we approach
9 this, considering the time and needs of each
10 individual child but also the family. We believe
11 that our kids need an opportunity to make up for that
12 time lost over the last three years.

13 MS. COFFMAN: Well, I'm not going to debate that
14 because if that were the issue then you would have
15 considered it this year -- or possibly this year and
16 last year. But going forward, as I stated, it
17 doesn't prevent you -- the calendar start date for
18 all students doesn't prevent you from having a boot
19 camp or anything at the beginning of the school year
20 for those kids that need additional time. It's when
21 you're starting your entire school and moving your
22 calendar. That's the issue. But we can move on.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's continue.

24 SCHOOL COUNSELOR

25 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic I have is School

1 Counselor, Arkansas code annotated section 6-18-
2 2003(a)(2)(a) -- and this is a new waiver request,
3 but I went ahead and put it together with the
4 standards that go with it, which is 4-E.1 and 4-E.2.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Comments or questions regarding
6 this waiver request?

7 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. Do you have counselors? And
8 why the ratio?

9 MS. PERRY: We do not currently have school
10 counselors. Again, due to the small nature of the
11 school we don't have counselors, but we do have a
12 fulltime social worker and we have alliances or
13 partnerships with other service providers in the
14 different counties to help us with the needs of our
15 students. So we have formed partnerships that have
16 been very advantageous. We do see the need for
17 counselors, and in years to come we will add
18 counselors. But with the numbers as they are right
19 now, we just haven't added them at this point.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Mr. Walter.

21 MR. WALTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 I just wanted to add a couple of pieces to this,
23 if I may. First of all, what the code section waiver
24 4 is for licensure, and licensure only. And,
25 secondly, in my discussions with Friendship it's been

1 made clear to me -- and I wanted to assure --
2 reassure the Panel that even given the method of
3 delivery they've talked about, they are still
4 providing and committed to in the future providing
5 the whole comprehensive school counseling plan that
6 the law requires.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

8 MS. COFFMAN: Mr. Davis, let's please note that
9 while the code may be for licensure only, 4-E.2 is a
10 standard waiver of ratio.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Duly noted.

12 CLOCK HOURS

13 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is Clock
14 Hours and it's standard 1-A.2. And I have no legal
15 concerns.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Comments or questions regarding
17 this waiver request?

18 Let's continue.

19 HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICES

20 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic was Health
21 and Safety Services; it's standard 2-E.1. And I have
22 no legal concerns.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
24 this waiver request?

25 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. Do they have a Registered

1 Nurse or do they contract with a Registered Nurse?

2 MS. PERRY: We do have a Registered Nurse.

3 MS. COFFMAN: Then, what's the purpose of the
4 waiver?

5 MS. PERRY: Well, we have a Registered Nurse
6 that services all of the students at this particular
7 point in time and -- but we're -- and we're looking
8 for another nurse to actually have in Little Rock.
9 So we would just like to have the ability to have
10 that one nurse service both Jefferson and Pulaski
11 County.

12 MS. COFFMAN: So explain that, because that's
13 what the standard says, "the district shall have a
14 health services program under the direction of a
15 licensed Registered Nurse."

16 SUPT. TRAN: It's also because sometimes we
17 might not have the ability to have a Registered Nurse
18 on campus as well. So that is why we're asking for
19 this waiver, so that it doesn't, you know, get us
20 into any issues, even though we do have one in Pine
21 Bluff. But Registered Nurses are hard to get these
22 days to employ. We've placed an ad out, especially
23 for our Little Rock campus, but it's not easy getting
24 one.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: When was the last year you

1 didn't have a Registered Nurse?

2 SUPT. TRAN: So in Little Rock it was in two
3 thousand -- it was about two years ago. No, last
4 year. I think we had one at the beginning of last
5 year, but then she left. And then again we utilized
6 our Pine Bluff and they went back. But, yeah, that
7 last year, beginning of the year we did have one.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: But as far as a district, an
9 LEA is concerned, from a combined standpoint when was
10 the last time you didn't have a Registered Nurse in
11 either Little Rock or --

12 SUPT. TRAN: District -- well, that's a funny
13 question because last year we were three separate
14 districts. So the Pine Bluff district always had
15 one, but the Little Rock district didn't. But now
16 that we're consolidated it's -- you know, to your
17 question, consolidation made all of our districts
18 into one and we've had one, if that is -- if that's
19 the question you're asking.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So the district hasn't -- if we
21 looked at the total number of -- whether it was two
22 or three districts, there was always a certified
23 nurse in a district since the inception? And so the
24 question then becomes, as Ms. Coffman posed, you
25 know, what's the need for the waiver? There hasn't

1 been any indication --

2 SUPT. TRAN: So like, for example, last year,
3 being -- Little Rock being its own district before we
4 consolidated, we didn't have a Registered Nurse
5 onsite.

6 MS. PERRY: I think the thing is we're just a
7 little afraid that being that there's a national
8 nurse shortage that if we lose the one that we have
9 in Pine Bluff then we're out of compliance until we
10 can find another one. So just because it's been so
11 difficult historically for us to keep a nurse in all
12 areas we're just a little concerned about not having
13 the waiver, should we lose the one nurse that we
14 have.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
16 regarding this waiver?

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, please.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So to that point, if you
20 happen to lose the nurse that you currently have and
21 you have the waiver -- I'm not saying this would
22 happen, but how do we insure that that person is then
23 replaced, because you have the waiver?

24 MS. PERRY: We've never stopped looking for
25 additional nurses. We're always looking for nurses.

1 There's always a running ad for a Registered Nurse.
2 So we wouldn't stop, because we consistently look for
3 one. Also, we would hope that we would be able to at
4 least hire an LPN or an LVN until we can actually get
5 an RN.

6 MS. COFFMAN: Do you have any other nurses on
7 any of your other campuses?

8 MS. PERRY: No, ma'am.

9 SUPT. TRAN: No.

10 MS. PERRY: We just have one nurse. But we are
11 diligently searching for another.

12 SUPT. TRAN: It's hard to find, really hard.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other additional questions
14 or comments about this waiver?

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Oh, no. I just -- I have
16 pause on that. If you only have one nurse now and
17 you haven't been able to find another to replace it,
18 and then if you're granted the waiver, then you're
19 waived from the requirement to have it. So I just --
20 I'm just --

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: What's the accountability
22 measure --

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah. I'm just not --

24 SUPT. TRAN: I mean we always try to get
25 somebody. And like Ms. Virginia said, we have an ad

1 all the time; so it's not like if we don't get it
2 we're going to forget about it. I mean, we're still
3 trying to look. It's just trying to get the
4 candidates to come in and hire somebody; that's the
5 difficult piece.

6 MS. PERRY: And there's a need. We know -- even
7 if there were not a standard, we would still be
8 looking for an RN for each campus because there's
9 definitely a need, especially with the numbers
10 growing as they are and the needs of the students
11 that we serve. We have a self-contained classroom in
12 Little Rock, so we definitely need to have a full-
13 time nurse there. And we've been looking, and we
14 continue to look, but we just haven't been able to
15 secure one.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. And I'm on the -- my
17 concern about this waiver is actually it doesn't
18 appear that history has proven that it's been needed.
19 So on one hand there's an accountability issue in
20 helping the district continue to do that looking and
21 searching; on the other hand, there's no history of
22 them not being able to secure a nurse. And so it
23 hasn't been used, nor will they -- you know, they
24 will continue to try to use it. So that's where I'm
25 a little, you know, torn on that.

1 MS. COFFMAN: Well, I think to add to that, if
2 you have an LPN or someone with lesser credentials
3 than an RN, I believe you're able to do that at the
4 different sites. It's just making sure you have an
5 RN that's overseeing the program, if I'm not
6 mistaken.

7 Shastady, is that correct?

8 MS. WAGNER: Yes, ma'am. The standard just
9 requires that you have a Registered Nurse for the
10 district that oversees everything. Yes.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So then, back to -- so
12 then are we saying that they do need to have it, or
13 they don't? Should they keep it or should they
14 rescind that? I'm trying to get a sense of where
15 we're landing on that.

16 MS. WAGNER: So they currently have a waiver of
17 the two. So they've also requested Arkansas code
18 annotated 6-18-706, which is the School Nurse code
19 section, and they already have that waiver and are
20 attempting, as they stated up here, are attempting to
21 fill this position. And they do have one nurse,
22 correct, that works for them right now. So it's
23 really up to -- if they think they can maintain that,
24 it's them coming to ask you for that. So --

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Is the school willing to

1 rescind that waiver request?

2 SUPT. TRAN: I mean, it's -- go ahead.

3 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC.

4 I want to choose my words carefully here.

5 Obviously, the nursing program and the health program
6 is a vital component of the school, and hopefully
7 there's not been any thought by the Panel that the
8 requested waiver has been an attempt to diminish
9 that. And I would say -- I mean this is a commonly
10 held waiver by charters. And to me, it's almost an
11 analogous to teacher licensure. I mean, if you're a
12 charter school -- and I think Friendship has
13 indicated that much today -- they're certainly going
14 to search for an RN. And they've been fortunate
15 lately to have an RN heading their program. But --
16 and I realize the Panel looks to how the waiver is
17 being used now. But I think there's also a portion
18 of waivers that are valuable if in the charter
19 school's recent judgment they think there may be a
20 time when it would be useful and it's not just being
21 held to hold it. And I think what they've shown you
22 is that case now. I mean, I think it's pretty clear
23 that there's a shortage of RN's out there. They've
24 been fortunate not to run into that. But again, to
25 reiterate, they would just like the ability, should

1 they find themselves that in the future, perhaps for
2 a short period of time, that they could get an LVN or
3 some other classification of nurse to head up their
4 nursing program. It's not intended to be a
5 diminution of services in any case.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you for that
8 additional explanation. I appreciate it.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Please.

10 MR. BALDWIN: So just a question on that. If
11 they -- if we don't rescind the waiver, and then the
12 nurse leaves and they're in violation, is there a
13 cure period? I mean, what happens if that happens?
14 Do they have six months to go find a new nurse or is
15 it just a violation they can't cure?

16 MS. COFFMAN: It would be a waived expectation
17 for the length of the charter.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

19 MS. WAGNER: Yes. So if you grant the waiver,
20 then it will be waived for the length that the
21 Charter is asking to be renewed for, which I believe
22 is 10 years.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

24 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

25 MR. BALDWIN: But if we don't grant the waiver

1 --

2 MS. WAGNER: Then --

3 MR. BALDWIN: -- and then they lose their nurse,
4 what happens?

5 MS. WAGNER: Okay. If they were to lose a
6 nurse, then they would flag in SFA. Correct? They
7 would flag in SFA. And it is a citing. Correct? It
8 is a cite. They would receive a cite, which means --
9 and Matthew can tell you better than I can, so I'll
10 let Matthew talk on it.

11 DR. SUTHERLIN: So, Matthew Sutherlin, Standards
12 and Systems Support/Charter.

13 Essentially what happens is they flag in SFA and
14 that would be a citation. Once that flags, then they
15 have 15 days to clear that flag. If they don't get
16 it cleared in 15 days, then we send them a letter.
17 They have 15 more days to then clear that flag. If
18 not, then they have to come before the State Board.
19 However, if we are working with them and they are,
20 you know, working towards clearing that up and they
21 have a corrective action plan for that, then we can
22 work with them to try and help clear that up. So
23 there is some flexibility there. It's not just
24 you're flagging and then we're going to hold you
25 accountable, you have to go before the State Board.

1 It really is -- there's a grace period, and then
2 there's also the corrective action plan. So --

3 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or
5 comments?

6 MS. COFFMAN: But it would be years?

7 DR. SUTHERLIN: No.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'm satisfied with the answers,
9 if we want to continue.

10 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The other waiver topic -- I
11 said the Health Services School Nurse, I included
12 that with that one. It's just Arkansas code
13 annotated 6-18-706 and it goes together with the
14 Health Services. And since we've already discussed
15 that I think we can move forward, if that's okay with
16 the Panel.

17 RESCINDED WAIVERS/NEW WAIVERS

18 MS. WAGNER: The Charter is wishing to rescind
19 some waivers, so we'll go over those real fast. The
20 Board of Directors-Reimbursement for Training is
21 Arkansas code annotated 6-13-629; the Superintendent
22 Mentoring Program, Arkansas code annotated 6-17-427
23 and then the DESE rules governing Superintendent
24 Mentoring Program; for Principals, they are
25 rescinding standard 4-C.1 for Salaries and

1 Compensation, Arkansas code annotated 6-17-807;
2 Classified Employee Minimum Salary, Arkansas code
3 annotated 6-17-2203; School Safety Policies and
4 Procedures, standard 6-A.2; Clock Hours, which was
5 Arkansas code annotated 6-15-216; Health and Safety
6 Services, which is standard 2-E.2; and then Student
7 Services, a set of rules that have actually been
8 repealed. They are seeking to rescind all of those
9 waivers. Is that right?

10 SUPT. TRAN: Correct.

11 MS. WAGNER: And then they were asking to add
12 some new waivers, which we already discussed adding
13 standard 1-A.6 when we discussed Class Size and
14 Teaching Load. And we also discovered -- discussed
15 the School Counseling Program, which is 6-18-
16 2003(a)(2)(a). And the Grading Scale -- we discussed
17 with Grading Scale earlier. The only one we have not
18 discussed was Board of Directors; they were seeking
19 to add 6-13-608, 6-13-611, 6-13-620(5)(A)(ii)(b), 6-
20 13-624, and 6-13-628. And I have no legal concerns
21 about any of their additional waivers.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments from the
23 Panel regarding the waivers that they wish to rescind
24 or the new waivers that have not been discussed?

25 No, okay. Hearing none, we will continue.

1 MS. WAGNER: That concludes my legal review.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you so much.

3 INTERNAL REVIEW REMAINING ISSUES

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'd like to invite at this time

5 Ms. Dorie Summons up to discuss if there's any

6 remaining issues regarding the internal review.

7 MS. SUMMONS: Dorie Summons, Public School

8 Charter Director.

9 There are no additional remaining concerns.

10 However, we do have some of our Internal Review

11 Committees -- committee members here in the audience

12 and also via Zoom, in case you have any questions.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you so much.

14 PANEL QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'd like to move on now for

16 panel broader discussions and/or conversations for

17 the school -- questions or comments. We'll start to

18 my right and then we'll work our way around, and then

19 we'll also make sure that we have the opportunity to

20 include Ms. Coffman.

21 And so, with that, Ms. Wright-McMurray?

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you for your

23 presentation and for the additional information you

24 guys provided in response to our previous questions.

25 My question goes back to School Counseling. In

1 looking at your explanation that you have under your
2 waivers you addressed how students would be supported
3 with it looks like mental health and then also
4 academic needs. But I didn't see where you address
5 career guidance in that. So can you speak to what
6 supports are going to be provided to students if
7 you're wanting to kind of modify how you normally
8 would offer those courses?

9 MS. PERRY: Currently, we have 20 seniors, 20
10 12th graders on the Southeast campus in Pine Bluff.
11 Most of the career guidance services are actually
12 offered by the Principal and it's really a
13 combination of the Principal and the social worker.
14 And due to the small nature of the -- or the small
15 amount of students that's been workable for us up
16 until this point. We do have plans to eventually add
17 a full-time counselor at the high school level once
18 we have middle and high school there to actually be
19 able to address the academic concerns.

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Can you get into some more
21 specific examples of how that career guidance is
22 delivered to students --

23 MS. PERRY: Sure.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- by the Principal and
25 social worker?

1 MS. PERRY: The Principal has relationships with
2 the local colleges. She actually just brought all of
3 her seniors to Philander Smith -- what, about two
4 weeks ago?

5 SUPT. TRAN: Yes.

6 MS. PERRY: About two weeks ago. And all of the
7 students received scholarship money should they
8 choose to attend Philander Smith. Currently, over
9 50% of our students have already been accepted to a
10 college. Our goal is to have 100% of those students
11 before graduation be accepted to the -- to a college
12 of their choice. And for the past two years 100% of
13 our students were accepted to a college of their
14 choice, and that was primarily -- well, spearheaded
15 by the work of the Principal. She also has alliances
16 with members of the Armed Forces and she has them
17 come in; she also has different career people come in
18 and actually do presentations and work with the
19 students to help them with career guidance and to
20 motivate them.

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Just what I would just
22 recommend is that if given -- after the decision of
23 the Panel, I recommend that you guys reach out
24 potentially to our Division and work with our Career
25 Ed. and work-based study office. There are a lot of

1 resources, tools that are available I think that
2 could help to further expand and develop what you may
3 be offering. Because a lot of what you described --
4 some of it is -- a lot of it is more college
5 readiness and not really focused on the broader
6 career readiness focus. And I think that the
7 students would potentially benefit from that.

8 MS. PERRY: Most certainly.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions?

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Saracini?

13 MS. SARACINI: Yes. I would just like to say
14 reach out to my department so that we can help you
15 with your continued licensure. I know that you have
16 everybody on a path, and I know you have talked to my
17 office before. But --

18 MS. PERRY: Yes, we have.

19 MS. SARACINI: -- there is a lot that we give to
20 the co-ops and to APSRC, financial, through my office
21 that is for specifically to help with that tutoring
22 for Praxis. And so I would love for you to tap into
23 that. So, please, do not hesitate to call.

24 MS. PERRY: Yes, ma'am.

25 SUPT. TRAN: And I think it's most definitely

1 because I sit on that board as well, so I can
2 provide, you know, our school with a bit more of
3 that. But, yes.

4 MS. SARACINI: Yes. But we give money to the
5 co-ops for that specific reason.

6 MS. PERRY: We want it.

7 MS. SARACINI: I know. So, instead of you
8 having to use your own it's there and you guys need
9 to tap into it.

10 MS. PERRY: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No questions from me.

12 Mr. Baldwin?

13 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah. I don't have any questions,
14 but I've got two comments.

15 So I've really appreciated the comparisons that
16 you all made to the other school systems. That was
17 helpful. We rarely get those comparisons and I
18 appreciate what you're showing us. Of course, it's
19 good that you look better than other schools, so --

20 SUPT. TRAN: Yes, indeed.

21 MR. BALDWIN: But then also, I also appreciated
22 the fact that you are looking at the learning loss
23 challenge and that you're developing plans for that.

24 And so, just well done on both of those.

25 SUPT. TRAN: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Anything from you, Ms. Newton?

2 MS. NEWTON: Just a comment. I wanted to
3 compliment you on a job well done. I remember when
4 Covenant was blended into your system and that was
5 quite a challenge. And so I just wanted to say
6 congratulations on the work that you're doing.

7 SUPT. TRAN: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And, Ms. Coffman?

9 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

10 I would like to echo Friendship's willingness to
11 step up and take over when others may not have been
12 successful and certainly should be commended for
13 that.

14 A couple of things: 10-year renewal makes me
15 nervous for relatively a new charter that's taken on
16 so many different issues. Not to say that you can't
17 succeed with that, because if you can take on two
18 failing charters and succeed that certainly is a
19 testament. So I'm kind of torn back and forth with
20 that.

21 What probably tears me is some of the waiver
22 requests. I'm not a fan of "in case we need it"
23 waivers. I like to know exactly what we're doing.
24 So the calendar gives me pause, and of course the
25 nurse gives me pause because once we waive it then

1 for up to 10 years you may not have a nurse and we
2 would never know; our system would not alert us to
3 that. So those issues -- and not having a Library
4 Media Specialist even within the district concerns
5 me.

6 And then, of course, with -- I like the idea
7 that you have your teachers on a pathway. 15%
8 licensed I think is -- sounds very low, but certainly
9 for a new charter that kind of makes sense.

10 So those are just my ponderings.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: If I may ask a question, Ms.
12 Coffman and Staff, in regards to the timeframe what
13 has historically been the timeframe for districts
14 that are currently in the same year of operation that
15 they are in? I mean has there been a stair-step
16 from, you know, five years -- from two years and then
17 ten? Or three-year, five-year, ten? Or what has
18 that history been like?

19 MS. COFFMAN: So I don't think there's anything
20 set in stone. I mean, we always take the first
21 initial application and it's only approved for five
22 years. Back when Lisa got their 13 years they'd
23 certainly been in place for sometime and proven
24 themselves. We recently gave a little bit more
25 extended time on some of these that have been in

1 place for sometime. I just think that we -- it's not
2 that we can't bring them back in; it's just
3 challenging to the parents and families if you bring
4 them back in and start making adjustments. So it's
5 better to be more solid in our thinking moving
6 forward, I think.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

8 SUPT. TRAN: Can I also add just --

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes.

10 SUPT. TRAN: -- we're asking for the 10 years
11 also because, as you know, we are a slow-growth
12 model. Right? So giving us a short amount of time
13 doesn't give us the time to prove to you-all what
14 we're doing. As you already know, for the last few
15 years we've taken on the hardest to serve, especially
16 with the Covenant Keepers; that had to happen within
17 a 24-hour time period. And then, the Southeast. And
18 we've consistently showed you all that, you know, we
19 are performing; we're doing the best of our
20 abilities. And especially with the Downtown Pine
21 Bluff that we just opened, having that longer time
22 period will allow us to do what we need to do to
23 insure success for our students definitely down in
24 Pine Bluff, as well as Little Rock. And that's what
25 I wanted to say with that one.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

2 Any other questions or comments?

3 MOTION/VOTE/RATIONALE

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. I think we are ready for
5 a motion. Would someone on the Panel like to make a
6 motion, please?

7 MS. NEWTON: I'll make a motion. I move to
8 approve Friendship Aspire's renewal for 10 years.

9 MS. SARACINI: I second.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: There's been a motion and a
11 second to approve the charter renewal.

12 All those in favor do so by stating "aye."

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any opposition?

15 The motion passes.

16 Charter Panel Members, I ask that you record
17 your vote on the voting tally sheet.

18 So, our congratulations to Friendship Aspire
19 Academies of Arkansas.

20 SUPT. TRAN: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: A quick minute here to record
22 the tallies, and then we will call out or ask for
23 verbal reading of the tallies.

24 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: All right. Let's go ahead and

1 start. We will start with -- on my far left, Ms.
2 Newton.

3 MS. NEWTON: I was going to type. But I approve
4 based on historical accomplishments and improving
5 educational outcomes for children.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

7 Mr. Baldwin.

8 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I vote for the motion, to
9 approve the motion, and believe Friendship Aspire
10 will continue to provide a quality education for your
11 students.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And myself, Mr. Davis -- based
13 upon recent history and success and the ability of
14 the district to provide proven positive impact in
15 hard-to-serve communities in Arkansas.

16 Ms. Saracini.

17 MS. SARACINI: I support the 10-year renewal of
18 Friendship Aspire Academies. I'm looking forward to
19 seeing what the future holds for the students of
20 Arkansas that attend Friendship. Way to move our
21 students in academic achievement.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And Ms. Wright-McMurray.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for. I support
24 the motion. The outcomes Friendship has accomplished
25 of taking over failing schools and outperforming

1 similar schools is impressive.

2 I encourage them to directly work with the
3 Division of Elementary and Secondary Education/Office
4 of School Counseling and the Division of Career and
5 Technical Education, Office of Career and Work-Based
6 Learning to further develop and strengthen their
7 career guidance and development programs.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And Ms. Coffman.

9 MS. COFFMAN: I voted for the renewal for 10
10 years so that the charter will have time to
11 demonstrate their progress as a school growth
12 charter.

13 And I appreciate them taking over those two
14 charters, giving those kids a chance.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Yeah, fantastic. Thank
16 you. Thank you.

17 SUPT. TRAN: Thank y'all.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: How about a 5-minute break,
19 just a bathroom 5-minute break and then we'll -- so
20 we'll start in five.

21 (BREAK: 1:51 P.M. - 1:56 P.M.)

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. We're going to go ahead
23 and get started. Thank you all for being respectful
24 of the time and getting back so we can go ahead and
25 start.

1 5) KIPP DELTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS OPEN ENROLLMENT RENEWAL
2 APPLICATION

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We are going to move on now to
4 KIPP Delta Public Schools. If I could have everyone
5 who may be speaking on behalf of KIPP Delta to stand,
6 raise your right hand. Do you swear to affirm [sic]
7 that the testimony that you're about to give shall be
8 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

9 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. Please be seated.

11 Just a reminder of the process for those who may
12 not have been with us earlier, the applicant will
13 have 20 minutes for presentation; if there is any
14 sort of opposition to the presentation, they will
15 also be provided 20 minutes; the applicant will then
16 have 5 minutes to response; public comment for
17 individuals who may be interested is three minutes;
18 and then we will move to a legal review of the
19 waivers.

20 With that being the case, I would like to turn
21 it over to KIPP Delta for a 20-minute presentation.

22 SUPT. STITZINGER: Good afternoon. My name is
23 Megan Stitzinger and I have the honor of serving as
24 KIPP Delta Public Schools' Executive Director.

25 Let's see if I can get this --

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Why don't we try on the side?
2 Is there a button on the side? We're having a little
3 trouble with the clicker.

4 All right. Let's give it a try.

5 No, we still -- oh, there we go.

6 SUPT. STITZINGER: There we go. There we go.
7 Great. Awesome.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Sorry about that.

9 SUPT. STITZINGER: No, no worry. Thank you.

10 So, in 2002, KIPP Delta opened the door to 65
11 5th grade students in Helena, Arkansas. Since then,
12 our district has grown to over a total of five
13 schools in Helena and Blytheville, Arkansas.

14 Our mission is to partner with families and
15 communities to create joyful, academically excellent
16 schools that prepare students with the skills and
17 confidence to pursue the path they choose -- college,
18 career, and beyond -- so they can lead fulfilling
19 lives and build a more just world.

20 As you may know, KIPP Delta is part of a
21 national network of 250 schools, 6,000 educators, and
22 140,000 alumni. In Arkansas, we currently serve over
23 1200 pre-K through 12th grade students, support an
24 alumni network of over 550 alumni, and provide
25 professional development and support to 84 teachers.

1 Over the last year our enrollment has increased by
2 over 13%.

3 We believe that every student that walks through
4 the doors of our schools has a unique gift, talent,
5 perspective, drive, and inspiration. At KIPP Delta,
6 we support every student to see those gifts, then
7 build the skills and confidence they need to pursue
8 their highest aspirations. We do this through high
9 expectations of all students, helping foster social
10 and emotional skills essential for student success
11 and well-being; provide safe, structured and
12 nurturing learning environment; recruiting and
13 retaining highly effective teachers and leaders; and
14 supporting alumni to discover what a fulfilling life
15 means to them and help them break through any
16 barriers that stand in their way of achieving that.

17 MS. SARACINI: There's no sound for Deb Coffman.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Can we try again? Ms. Coffman,
19 are you able to hear us now?

20 MS. COFFMAN: Yes, we're fine.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: She says it's fine. Sorry
22 about that.

23 SUPT. STITZINGER: No, no problem.

24 While there's a tremendous amount of work that
25 needs to be done to continue to strengthen our

1 academic program, our staff's hard work, persistence
2 and love for our students is demonstrated by the
3 recent academic awards our district received.
4 Earlier this year, KIPP Delta Elementary Literacy
5 Academy, KIPP Delta College Prep, KIPP Delta
6 Collegiate, and KIPP Blytheville Collegiate were
7 recognized by the Office for Education Policy at the
8 University of Arkansas as schools where students
9 demonstrate high growth on ACT Aspire overall, in
10 math, as well as ELA content areas for the 2021-22
11 school year. Additionally, KIPP Delta College Prep,
12 our middle school in Helena, Arkansas, was designated
13 as a School on the Move by DESE for demonstrating
14 improvement on recent state and federal
15 accountability reports.

16 I think I'm having problems with my clicker
17 again.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Try it now.

19 SUPT. STITZINGER: There we go.

20 In addition to our district's recent academic
21 achievement, we are incredibly proud of our KIPP
22 Forward program. KIPPsters set a high bar for their
23 futures. For some that means being the first in
24 their family to graduate from college, provide a
25 home. For others it means serving our country or

1 opening a business. KIPP Delta works to insure that
2 each student receives at least one college acceptance
3 and has the skills and competence to pursue any path
4 that leads to their highest aspirations.

5 Our counselors support students to choose and
6 prepare for a right-fit college or education path and
7 a meaningful career. The program culminates KIPP
8 Delta's efforts to support students for a minimum of
9 16 years which includes preparing students for their
10 education and career path, but aligns their goals and
11 sense of purpose.

12 As a result of the work of our KIPP Forward
13 team, 100% of KIPP Delta's graduating classes of 2017
14 through 2022 were accepted into a post-secondary
15 educational institution. I'm also thrilled to share
16 that nearly 8% of our current staff members are
17 graduates of our high schools. This is a testament
18 to not only the work of our schools to prepare our
19 students for college, career, and beyond, but also
20 the strength of relationships among our team and
21 family members. It demonstrates the impact of KIPP
22 Delta in our communities, now and beyond.

23 As a result of the work of the KIPP Forward
24 team, the gap between the KIPP Delta and the national
25 average for post-secondary graduate rate has narrowed

1 in the last two years. More intensive support, an
2 increase in the number of alumni counselors, as well
3 as stronger systems to track and support students'
4 success has led to this increase.

5 Our KIPP Forward program is what makes us
6 different from our neighboring districts and schools.
7 Currently, our KIPP Forward advisors provide support
8 not only to our KIPPsters but also to Cross County
9 High School students. In the coming years we hope to
10 expand this partnership beyond Cross County High so
11 that all students in our communities receive support
12 to and through college and beyond.

13 As we work to implement our academic vision, we
14 know that high quality teachers play an important
15 role in the success of our students. At KIPP Delta,
16 we believe that teachers who are supported are
17 teachers who stay. Retention efforts include
18 proactively seeking feedback from instructional
19 staff, competitive salary and benefits, retention
20 bonuses, intensive and intentional professional
21 development, and a tuition reimbursement program for
22 staff members receiving degrees and licensure in hard
23 to staff areas, including math, science and special
24 education. As a result of our efforts, KIPP Delta
25 has seen an increase in teacher retention over the

1 last five years. From the 20-21 to the 21-22 school
2 year our retention rate has increased by 5%.

3 In addition to teacher retention, we are placing
4 an increased focus on building a program that
5 supports instructional assistance and others in our
6 organization with receiving their degrees and
7 completing a path towards licensure. In fact, this
8 month we'll have three instructional assistants who
9 will receive their bachelor's degree and we're
10 working alongside them to insure that they are able
11 to successfully become licensed teachers at KIPP
12 Delta Public Schools.

13 In 2022, student attrition trended lower than
14 the last five years, which has resulted in the
15 strongest student retention rate KIPP Delta has seen
16 since we opened our doors in 2002. We believe that
17 the increase in the student retention rate is
18 directly related to strengthening our academic
19 program, increasing partnerships with parents through
20 engagement activities including, but not limited to,
21 math and literacy nights, data nights for families,
22 as well as our KIPP Forward program.

23 KIPP Delta's financial stability has continued
24 to improve year after year and it's projected to
25 remain steady after ESSER funding has ended. In

1 FY22, KIPP Delta experienced a decline in Days of
2 Cash on Hand. This was due to a decrease in
3 fundraising as a result of the pandemic and the
4 vacancy of the Director of the Development and
5 Communications Division. In recent months, we have
6 solidified a plan to insure that we were able to
7 increase the Days of Cash on Hand year after year and
8 improve our fundraising efforts. At the completion
9 of the FY21 audit, there were four immaterial
10 findings. Despite this, KIPP Delta is still
11 considered low-risk and the finance team is putting
12 procedures in place to prevent this in future years.

13 Finally, as previously discussed with some
14 members of ADE, KIPP Delta is currently working to
15 pay down \$12,000,000 in loans. These loans were not
16 for operating expenses; the loans are related to
17 capital expenditures to make up for the loss of
18 facility funding for charter schools. We've had
19 clean audits during the entire construction and
20 renovation periods. All of the loans and lines of
21 credit were approved by the board, ADE, and our
22 auditors.

23 So as we all know, Covid has had a tremendous
24 impact on learning loss as well as the socio-
25 emotional well-being of our students. However, we

1 will not allow the impact of Covid to impede our
2 efforts to provide joyful academically excellent
3 schools that provide students with the skills and
4 confidence they need to pursue the path they choose.
5 Rather, we are using it as fuel to continue to get
6 better for our students, families, staff, and
7 communities.

8 As we continue to get -- as we continue to push
9 to get better for our students, we acknowledge that
10 our academic performance and report card grades are
11 not where they need to be. While the overall scores
12 are not satisfactory, KIPP Delta's ESSA index scores
13 for elementary schools remain steady in the 2022
14 school year. Our schools ESSA index scores were 2%
15 to 4% -- 4 percentage points higher when compared to
16 our neighboring elementary schools in Helena and
17 Blytheville. Our ESSA index scores for our middle
18 and high schools remain steady in Blytheville, and
19 increased by over 4 points at the KIPP Delta College
20 Prep and 2 points at KIPP Delta Collegiate, our
21 middle and high schools in Helena.

22 Overall, KIPP Delta Public Schools demonstrated
23 high proficiency across all subject areas compared to
24 neighboring districts with ACT Aspire in the 2021-22
25 school year. KIPP Delta outperformed neighboring

1 districts in 78% of the tested areas.

2 NWEA Map math assessment results remained steady
3 during the 2017 to 2019 school years. However,
4 similar to school districts across the state and
5 nation KIPP Delta's performance dropped in 2021.
6 From 2021 to 2022, the percentage of 3rd through 9th
7 grade students identified as proficient in math by
8 the NWEA Map assessment increased by an average of 5
9 percentage points. The increase is attributed to
10 more robust and intensive professional development
11 opportunities for our instructional staff, improved
12 teacher retention, and other academic supports
13 including Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.

14 From 2021 through 2022, the percentage of 3rd
15 through 9th grade students identified as proficient
16 in English Language Arts by NWEA Map assessment
17 increased by an average of 5 percentage points.
18 Similar to our math scores, this increase is
19 attributed to more robust, intensive and intentional
20 professional development opportunities, teacher
21 retention, and other academic supports.

22 In order to help us get where we need to be for
23 our students, we're actively working to improve our
24 performance through the implementation of strategic
25 goals, as well as the strategic and intentional use

1 of ESSER funds. KIPP Delta was awarded over
2 \$25,000,000 in ESSER funds. To date, we have spent
3 our obligated \$10,000,000. ESSER 1 funds were sent
4 down and we are projected to spend down ESSER 2 and
5 ARP ESSER funds by the deadline. To do this, we'll
6 focus spending in the four following strategic areas.
7 The first is what we're calling Raise the Floor,
8 which is creating safe and healthy learning
9 environments through Covid prevention and mitigation
10 strategies and projects including but not limited to
11 the purpose of PPE, school facility improvements and
12 repair, and transportation upgrades. The second is
13 what we're naming Enrich to Invest, which is to
14 accelerate learning and positively impact student
15 outcomes by addressing learning inequities, mental
16 health and resource support for students, and
17 increasing family engagement opportunities. The
18 third bucket is what we're calling Grow Your Own,
19 which is supporting educator and staff stability
20 through recruitment and retention and professional
21 development initiatives. And, finally, the fourth
22 bucket is One Band, One Sound, which is addressing
23 learning loss through district-wide instructional
24 approaches including but not limited to the alignment
25 of high-quality and rigorous K-12 curriculum and

1 evidence-based intervention and tutoring programs.
2 We have plans and designated projects to spend all
3 remaining ESSER funds by the September 2023 deadline
4 and the September 2024 deadline. Spending correlates
5 to the four strategic priorities that I outlined in
6 the slide as presented.

7 As a data-driven organization, KIPP Delta
8 reviewed data from the previous four years and
9 implemented new, more robust services and support in
10 the 22-23 school year to increase academic
11 achievement, growth, and college and career
12 readiness.

13 KIPP Delta has started the year by insuring that
14 we have high-quality instructional materials for all
15 content areas and have provided extensive training on
16 the curriculum during the summer where we increase
17 professional development from two weeks to three
18 weeks during the summer. Additionally, as part of
19 this work KIPP Delta has increased partnerships with
20 external folks, including but not limited to TNTP,
21 Relay, APSRC, and our local co-ops. Teachers are
22 receiving support through weekly coaching sessions,
23 feedback sessions, and teach-backs. Examples of
24 professional development are included on the slide.

25 Meeting the needs of all students is a priority

1 and we have implemented intervention times for all
2 grade levels and identified them at the middle
3 school, a strategic reading class, and the high
4 school as a critical reading class. Additionally, we
5 have aligned our performance rubric with the State
6 using the test rubric for teachers and Leads for our
7 school leaders and provided training as part of our
8 summer professional development.

9 After each professional development we survey
10 instructional staff to gauge their comprehension or
11 knowledge after the presented materials to insure
12 that we are meeting their needs.

13 As we look forward to the next five years, we
14 have identified the following goals that are also
15 outlined in our application. The first is Academic
16 Growth where we seek to achieve year-over-year growth
17 on state-required end-of-year assessments in literacy
18 and math. The second is to increase our Graduation
19 Rate year-over-year. The third is 100% of our
20 graduating seniors have a post-secondary college or
21 career plan that includes outline of coursework for a
22 two-year or four-year degree program, technical or
23 vocational school, military, or specific
24 opportunities tied to pre-identified career paths.
25 And the fourth and final goal is to increase student

1 enrollment and retention year-over-year to provide
2 further support for students in our rural
3 communities.

4 We know that our academic results are not where
5 they need to be, which is why we are asking for a 5-
6 year renewal as part of accountability measure.
7 Thank you for your consideration of our charter
8 renewal application and for providing us with the
9 opportunity to share more about our initiative to
10 increase academic achievement and the great work
11 happening in our classrooms and communities.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

13 There's an additional 20 minutes that is
14 reserved for opposition. I don't believe that there
15 is anyone in opposition to the charter, so we will
16 continue. There is 3 minutes reserved for public
17 comment, if necessary. I don't believe that we have
18 anyone here in regards to public comment. Therefore,
19 we will move to our favorite portion of the program,
20 legal review.

21 LEGAL REVIEW

22 MS. WAGNER: All right. Well, we're going to
23 kick it off with School Calendar/School Start Date,
24 which I'm sure we'll have a question. It is Arkansas
25 code annotated 6-10-106(a).

1 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. And I have a standard
2 question.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Please, go ahead, Ms. Coffman.

4 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. If they would speak to why
5 they need this waiver?

6 SUPT. STITZINGER: Yeah. So, historically, KIPP
7 Delta has extended our school year by five days at
8 the start of the school year and at the end of the
9 school year to address any learning loss that may
10 have occurred over the summer.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

12 Ms. Coffman, any other questions regarding --

13 MS. COFFMAN: Yeah. Just -- so you start five
14 days early for all students and go five days longer
15 at the end?

16 SUPT. STITZINGER: Correct. Historically, that
17 is what we have done. That is accurate.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
19 regarding this first waiver request?

20 Hearing none, we'll continue.

21 TEACHER LICENSURE

22 MS. WAGNER: All right. The second waiver topic
23 is Teacher Licensure, Arkansas code annotated section
24 6-15-1004 et seq., 6-17-309, 6-17-401, 6-17-418, 6-
25 17-902, 6-17-908, 6-17-919, Standard 4-D.1, and the

1 educator rules governing Educator Licensure, Section
2 7. There were no legal concerns.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions regarding this waiver
4 request?

5 MS. SARACINI: This is not a question but it's
6 -- I'm commending you because you actually know what
7 AQT means and you address it. Thank you.

8 SUPT. STITZINGER: Thank you.

9 MS. SARACINI: I could not say that -- I could
10 not let it go because my staff came back -- and
11 that's brownie points to you guys.

12 SUPT. STITZINGER: Thank you for that.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Hearing none, we'll continue.

14 PRINCIPAL

15 MS. WAGNER: All right. The next waiver topic
16 is Principal, Arkansas code annotated section 6-17-
17 302(a) and Standard 4-C.2. And there were no legal
18 concerns.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
20 this waiver request?

21 Let's continue.

22 PERSONNEL POLICIES

23 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next set is Personnel
24 Policies. I had no legal concerns about any of
25 these, so I'm just going to run straight through

1 them.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely.

3 MS. WAGNER: All right. Committee on Personnel
4 Policies, 6-17-203; Personnel Policies/Leaves, 6-17-
5 1304; Personnel Policies/Employment of Licensed
6 Personnel, 6-17-301(a) and 301(b); the Teacher Fair
7 Dismissal Act, 6-17-1501 et seq.; the Public School
8 Employee Fair Hearing Act, 6-17-701 -- 1701 et seq.;
9 the Classified Employees Paid Break, 6-17-2205. I
10 have no concerns over any of those.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions regarding any of the
12 waivers that have been mentioned?

13 Hearing none, we will continue.

14 GIFTED AND TALENTED

15 MS. WAGNER: All right. The next waiver topic
16 is Gifted and Talented, Arkansas code annotated
17 section 6-20-2208(c)(6) and 6-42-101 et seq.,
18 Standard 2-G.1, and the DESE rules governing Gifted
19 and Talented Program Approval Standards.

20 SUPT. STITZINGER: Ms. Shastady, that's actually
21 one that we're rescinding.

22 MS. WAGNER: That's right, I apologize. So this
23 one is actually being rescinded, yea.

24 SUPT. STITZINGER: And we'd be happy to speak
25 more to what our GT program will look like next year.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Please -- I'd love to hear that
2 but when we get to the general questions.

3 CLASS SIZE AND TEACHING LOAD

4 MS. WAGNER: And the next one on here, which was
5 Class Size and Teaching Load, KIPP is actually
6 rescinding that one as well.

7 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

8 MS. WAGNER: So next one is Board of Directors.
9 It's a long line, so I'll just go through them:
10 Arkansas code annotated section 6-13-608, 6-13-611,
11 6-13-615, 6-13-616, 6-13-617, 6-13-618, 6-13-
12 619(a)(1) and (c)(1)(a), 6-13-620, 6-13-621, 6-13-
13 622, 6-13-630, 6-13-631, 6-13-632, 6-13-634, 6-13-
14 635, and 6-14-101 et seq. There were no legal
15 concerns.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
17 this waiver?

18 Let's continue.

19 SUPERINTENDENT

20 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic was
21 Superintendent, Arkansas code annotated 6-13-109 and
22 Standard 2-B.2.

23 I have no legal concerns.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or concerns there?

25 Seeing none, continue.

ARKANSAS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1
2 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic, Alternative
3 Learning Environment, Arkansas code annotated section
4 6-15-1005(b)(5), 6-18-503(a)(1)(c)(i), 6-48-102, and
5 6-48-103, Standard 2-I.1., and the DESE rules
6 governing Student Special Needs Funding, Section 4.
7 No legal concerns.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Comments or questions regarding
9 -- Ms. Coffman.

10 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. I was wondering if the
11 charter would speak to the number of in-school
12 suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and
13 expulsions?

14 SUPT. STITZINGER: Sure. So our number of in-
15 school suspensions for across the district for last
16 school year was about 22%. That was across all of
17 our five schools. Or, I'm sorry, that's out-of-
18 school suspensions. We don't do in-school
19 suspensions; we have other supportive measures that
20 we take to insure that our students are successful
21 and not removed from the learning environment. And
22 then our expulsion rate was, I believe, around 5%
23 last school year.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any follow-up questions or
25 concerns there?

1 Seeing none, we'll continue.

2 SCHOOL COUNSELOR

3 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is School
4 Counselor, Arkansas code annotated section 6-18-
5 2003(a)(2)(a) and Standard 4-E.1. There were no
6 legal concerns.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman.

8 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. Do you employ a counselor?

9 SUPT. STITZINGER: So all of our five schools
10 have a licensed social worker or counselor, but they
11 are not all licensed school counselors. But they do
12 have either a social work or counseling degree that
13 they're able to provide services to our students,
14 both in school and then also help provide wraparound
15 services as well.

16 MS. COFFMAN: And so my follow-up question is
17 how does that play into that 22% of out-of-school
18 suspensions?

19 SUPT. STITZINGER: Sure. Yeah, that's a really
20 great question. So this is actually the first year
21 that we have had school counselors or what we call
22 our Student Success and Support Coordinators at all
23 of our five campuses. And the rationale for that
24 was, again, to make sure that all of our students
25 receive those socio-emotional supports that we know

1 that our Student Success and Support Coordinators can
2 provide. So our hope is that with having one at each
3 of our five campuses we're able to see that out-of-
4 school suspension and expulsion rate decrease year-
5 over-year.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions?

7 Let's continue.

8 LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST/LIBRARY MEDIA SERVICES

9 MS. WAGNER: The next two waiver topics are
10 Library Media Specialist and Library Media Services.
11 I'm going to put them together. It's Arkansas code
12 annotated 6-25-104 and 6-25-103, and it's Standards
13 2-D.1 and 4-F.1 and 4-F.2. I have no legal concerns
14 over these.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No legal concerns. Any
16 concerns by panel members?

17 Ms. Coffman.

18 MS. COFFMAN: So when I visited KIPP I saw a
19 fabulous library. And so would you speak to your
20 licensure, ratio, and the sufficient resources?

21 SUPT. STITZINGER: Sure. I'm actually going to
22 introduce Dr. Francine Swickheimer, who is our
23 Managing Director of Academics, so she leads
24 academics for KIPP Delta.

25 DR. SWICKHEIMER: Sure. Can you repeat the

1 question, Deborah?

2 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. I said that when I was
3 onsite I saw a fabulous library.

4 So I was wondering why you needed the licensure
5 waiver, the ratio waiver, and the sufficient
6 resources waiver?

7 DR. SWICKHEIMER: Sure. So right now we only
8 have one certified Library Media Specialist for the
9 entire region, so that is one of our reasons.
10 However, we do have all of our teachers trained well
11 in how to use our different media services and how
12 they can help students. We have a portal that
13 students can access books, e-books, online books. We
14 have classroom libraries. They also have access to
15 encyclopedias and other type of research materials
16 through that portal. But at this time the only
17 Library Media Specialist we have is at that one
18 campus.

19 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

20 DR. SWICKHEIMER: Okay.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I think you secretly wanted to
22 hear Ms. Coffman say "fabulous library."

23 DR. SWICKHEIMER: I did. I did, because it is
24 beautiful.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We'll continue.

ACHIEVEMENT GAP

1
2 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic I have is the
3 Achievement Gap Taskforce. It's Arkansas code
4 annotated 6-15-1603. And I have no legal concerns.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Can someone speak to that for
6 me, please? I'm interested in just learning a little
7 bit more about that.

8 SUPT. STITZINGER: Sure. Sure. So we work
9 really closely with our parents and families, along
10 with our board of directors and other members of the
11 community to make sure that we have a really deep
12 understanding of the community needs and then also
13 wants. And that's through just one-on-one
14 conversations; right. It's through focus groups and
15 then also through surveys that are released on a
16 quarterly basis just to, again, better understand
17 what those needs of support are for not just our
18 students but also our communities as well.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

20 Any questions or comments regarding this waiver
21 request?

22 Okay. Hearing none, we will continue.

GRADING SCALE

23
24 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is the Grading
25 Scale, Arkansas code annotated section 6-15-1902(a)

1 and the DESE rules governing Grading and Course
2 Credits section 2-2.01.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Comments or questions?

4 Ms. Coffman.

5 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. If the Charter would speak
6 to what their grading scale plan is?

7 SUPT. STITZINGER: So I think it's mentioned in
8 our waiver request, but this is one that we planned
9 to -- in January, we plan to present in front of the
10 board the opportunity for us to align our grading
11 scale with Arkansas, so that we would no longer need
12 this waiver after this current school year.

13 MS. COFFMAN: So are you requesting to rescind
14 it?

15 SUPT. STITZINGER: Yes, we are requesting to
16 rescind it.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: What -- go ahead.

18 SUPT. STITZINGER: Okay.

19 MS. COFFMAN: It would be covered through the
20 end of this school year.

21 SUPT. STITZINGER: Okay. It would be covered
22 through the end of this school year? Okay.

23 MS. COFFMAN: Yes.

24 SUPT. STITZINGER: Okay. Then we would rescind
25 it for this charter renewal.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And just -- I want to make --
2 you feel good about --

3 SUPT. STITZINGER: Yes, I do feel good --

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- the board accepting? Okay.

5 SUPT. STITZINGER: Yes. And I'd be happy to
6 explain a little bit more about the rationale as to
7 why we're also making that adjustment.

8 I think that that's -- when you look at our
9 graduation rates too we, you know, decrease over
10 time. And a lot of that is as our student
11 recruitment numbers increase we have students that
12 are coming to us from other high schools that are
13 essentially having to play catch-up in the credits
14 that are required -- right -- which then prevents
15 them from graduating within four years. So making
16 sure that our grading scale is in alignment with
17 Arkansas will help set our students up for success.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's continue.

19 RESCINDED WAIVERS

20 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Those are all of the
21 continuing waivers. This charter is requesting no
22 new waivers. And now I have a long list of waivers
23 that they are rescinding, starting with the Grading
24 Scale we're going to be rescinding, Arkansas code
25 annotated 6-15-902(a). They are also rescinding the

1 9-12 Curriculum standard 1-A.1.3. They're rescinding
2 the 5-8 Curriculum, Arkansas History standard 1-
3 A.1.2.8; Curriculum standard 1-A.3; the Comprehensive
4 School Counseling Services Plan, which was standard
5 2-C.1 and 2-C.2; the Superintendent, Arkansas code
6 annotated 6-13-427, standard 4-B.1, and the DESE
7 rules governing Superintendent Mentoring Program; the
8 Health and Safety Services Standards, 2-E.1 and 2-
9 E.2; the Principal, standard 4-C.1; the School
10 Counselor, standard 4-E.2; the Professional
11 Development standard 4-G.1; the School Safety
12 Standard of 6-A.2; the Minimum Teacher Compensation
13 Schedule, which was Arkansas code annotated 6-17-
14 2403; the Duty-Free Lunch Period, which was Arkansas
15 code annotated 6-17-111; the Daily Planning Period,
16 Arkansas code annotated 6-17-114; the Personnel
17 Policies-Requirement, 6-17-201(c)(2); the Personnel
18 Policies-Classified Employee Minimum Salary Act, 6-
19 17-2203; the Grading Scale - Teacher Training
20 Documentation, 6-15-902(c)(2); and then we have Class
21 Size and Teaching Load, which is standard 1-A.5 and
22 1-A.6, and the rules governing Class Size and
23 Teaching Load; and then GT, Gifted and Talented,
24 which was 6-42-101 et seq., 6-20-2208(c)(6), standard
25 2-G.1, and the rules governing Gifted and Talented

1 Program Approval Standards. They're rescinding all
2 of those waivers.

3 And that concludes my legal review.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

5 Any questions from the Panel in regards to the
6 waivers that are being rescinded?

7 MS. COFFMAN: Mr. Davis, I don't have a question
8 but I have a comment.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Please.

10 MS. COFFMAN: I just want to say to KIPP how
11 much -- how thoughtful that is and how much I
12 appreciate that forward thinking about a school
13 that's been in place for a while, and really
14 analyzing the waivers that you need and rescinding
15 the waivers that you're not using so that we have an
16 accurate measurement. I just applaud that.

17 SUPT. STITZINGER: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
19 there?

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have one.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: One is a suggestion. I'm
23 just looking at one of your comments -- I can't quite
24 remember -- under ALE Services. And so just the
25 description you provided in your comment, I

1 immediately thought about opportunities for you to
2 look at maybe doing a Jobs for Arkansas Graduates
3 program, because a lot of what is outlined in that
4 program would align nicely with some of the things
5 you have identified as challenges. So I would
6 recommend you reach out to our office to kind of look
7 at that.

8 And then, also just looking at your School
9 Counseling, again, like with the other group, we just
10 want to make sure that you're fully utilizing all the
11 resources that are out there for you. And so have an
12 opportunity to reach out to one of our offices,
13 either on the secondary education side or CTE side,
14 to make sure that -- of course, you want to make sure
15 that the mental health and academic pieces are
16 covered, but we know that career readiness is a huge
17 part of what makes students to be successful as well.
18 And so just make sure that that is covered.

19 And then just one last thing -- if you could
20 just speak to how you guys do offer CTE in your
21 schools. I noticed that you guys have a partnership
22 with post-secondary. But what are the offerings that
23 students can engage in through your campus?

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Actually, before you ask that
25 question, I'm going to hold it just for a second.

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sure.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Because I want to see if
3 there's any other from Ms. Summons' internal review
4 --

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Oh.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- if there are any things that
7 they may have identified that we may want to be aware
8 of, and then we can move to the general conversation
9 or comments.

10 INTERNAL REVIEW

11 MS. SUMMONS: Dorie Summons, Public Charter
12 School Director.

13 There are no remaining concerns. We do have
14 members of the Internal Review Committee here in the
15 audience and also via Zoom --

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you so much.

17 MS. SUMMONS: -- in case you have any questions.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you so much.

19 PANEL QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: With that, would you mind
21 addressing the question at hand?

22 SUPT. STITZINGER: Sure. So, and I think this
23 is somewhere in our application that we do have
24 partnerships with Phillips County Community College
25 and then Arkansas Northeastern College, as well,

1 where our students take concurrent courses and have
2 the opportunity to complete those CTE credits. But
3 we also have in-house opportunities for students and
4 we're kind of working to gradually increase the
5 number of those opportunities. Right now, they're
6 either through Virtual Arkansas or through one or two
7 teachers that are teaching them on our campuses,
8 specifically on our campuses in Blytheville. But Dr.
9 Francine Swickheimer who joined our team back in July
10 -- or returned to our team -- we've actually had a
11 bit more intensive conversations on what -- about
12 what our CTE program can look like in the future,
13 because it is very much aligned with our KIPP Forward
14 program, right, focusing on not just college but also
15 career and beyond.

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And I appreciate the
17 additional details on that. Again, I encourage you
18 to talk to our division because we highly recommend
19 and encourage and appreciate our secondary's who do
20 partner with post-secondary. But we realize that
21 that starts on the secondary campus with that
22 foundational course. And we just want to make sure
23 that that is truly in place so that they have a
24 strong continuum. So I encourage you to reach out to
25 our staff so they can support you in those efforts.

1 SUPT. STITZINGER: Absolutely. Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other general questions or
3 comments folks may have?

4 I do have a couple, if you wouldn't mind.

5 In looking at -- I'm obviously a big proponent
6 of -- it may not be obvious, actually -- a big
7 proponent of growth. And it appears that one school,
8 right, in Blytheville there -- you know, all the
9 other schools have shown some progress in regards to
10 growth for students, except this one institution.
11 Can you talk a little bit about that and what sort of
12 correction is happening there?

13 SUPT. STITZINGER: Sure. And just to make sure
14 that we're aligned, are you speaking of Blytheville
15 College Prep --

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I am.

17 SUPT. STITZINGER: -- our elementary school --

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I am.

19 SUPT. STITZINGER: -- in Blytheville? Sure.
20 I'll have Dr. Francine to kind of speak a little bit
21 more about that.

22 DR. SWICKHEIMER: Sure. So at that school we
23 have this year put in place some very specific
24 learning opportunities for our teachers. They are
25 getting coaching every week. We have partnered with

1 TNTP and they are coming in and coaching the teachers
2 once a month, and then they coach them virtually on
3 the other weeks. They're also coming in with their
4 coaches and providing some in-classroom support and
5 doing check-ins with them on the weeks that they're
6 not available. We're really focusing in on our less
7 novice teachers -- I mean on our novice teachers
8 because we know that those are the ones who need the
9 greatest support at this time. So that's one of the
10 ways that we're really leaning in to help support
11 that school.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: That's helpful. And can you --
13 can someone speak to attendance and how attendance is
14 being addressed? I know that there's been a little
15 bit of an issue in regards to attendance. And I'm
16 not sure if that's the case in neighboring districts,
17 but it's something that I've been made aware of. So
18 can you talk a little bit about that?

19 DR. SWICKHEIMER: Sure. So as far as
20 attendance, we -- I do meet with school leaders every
21 week and we go over their attendance by grade level
22 and we look for trends in regards to that. And the
23 expectation then is if a student misses more than
24 five days that a letter is going home to the parents.
25 The teachers reach out to them after three days if

1 they have missed. So we are trying to be proactive
2 this year in making sure that we're communicating
3 with the families on a regular basis so that we can
4 improve that attendance.

5 SUPT. STITZINGER: If I could add as well, I
6 think we're also working -- I mentioned our Student
7 Success and Support Coordinators earlier. So we're
8 beginning to leverage them more, right, to help
9 establish those connections or relationships with our
10 familiars and students, right, to help uncover and
11 address any barriers that may prevent -- be
12 preventing students from attending school. And then
13 we are also -- I think last year we struggled pretty
14 mightily with pivoting from hybrid learning to in-
15 person learning. Right? So what we're doing is
16 trying our very best to get our families back into
17 our buildings by hosting math and literacy nights,
18 data nights which is like report card nights but kind
19 of digging even deeper. So working really to
20 strengthen our relationships with not just our
21 students but also with our families so that it is
22 more of a partnership and we can increase those
23 attendance rates over time.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

25 Any other questions or comments?

1 Sure, Mr. Baldwin.

2 MR. BALDWIN: Yes, thank you.

3 So I like the way that you all addressed your
4 letter grades. You just came out and talked to us
5 about them. You have a clear plan to improve those
6 grades, and I like the fact that you started with
7 teacher training, helping the teachers advance their
8 training, and then also focus on literacy and math.
9 I thought that was really good. And then your five-
10 year renewal timeframe I think is appropriate and I'm
11 glad that you all chose that and I think that's the
12 right thing to do.

13 And then to go back to Ms. Coffman's comments
14 about giving up some of the waivers, I would really
15 like to understand your thinking --

16 SUPT. STITZINGER: Yeah. Sure.

17 MR. BALDWIN: -- behind that, because that's
18 unusual.

19 SUPT. STITZINGER: Yes.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Most schools don't do that. So
21 how did you all decide to do that?

22 SUPT. STITZINGER: Sure. So, in full
23 transparency there are a number of waivers that we
24 didn't realize that we had, and so we were already
25 doing some of those things. Right? And so when

1 looking through our list of waivers we realized we
2 are doing this; therefore, we do not need it. We
3 were also thinking through ultimately what's best for
4 kids, right, which was one of our reasons for
5 rescinding the Gifted and Talented waiver. Dr.
6 Swickheimer and her team are really developing a
7 strong plan to implement a Gifted and Talented
8 program at our schools next year. So like I said,
9 just what's in the best interest of our students, and
10 those are really kind of the two determining factors
11 in how we decided what we would rescind. I think
12 we've also realized through conversations that we can
13 continue to be innovative and push the envelope and
14 do the best with kids -- best for kids, while also
15 still aligning to, you know, the standards for the
16 state.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
18 from panel members?

19 MS. COFFMAN: I'm sending a big ol' ditto and a
20 big heart.

21 SUPT. STITZINGER: Thank you, Deb.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: All right. I think we're ready
23 for a motion.

24 MR. BALDWIN: I make a motion to approve as
25 presented.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Motion --

2 MS. SARACINI: And I second.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: It has been seconded.

4 Any conversation?

5 No conversation. We'll move to a vote. Those
6 in favor please do so by saying "aye."

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any opposed?

9 No opposition. Congratulations.

10 SUPT. STITZINGER: And thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We will move to a minute or two
12 of jotting down and recording our votes on the voting
13 sheet.

14 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Why don't we start to my right.

16 Ms. Wright-McMurray, would you like to indicate
17 how you voted and why you voted that way?

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. I voted for the
19 motion. And I wrote that I support the motion. KIPP
20 is committed to improving outcomes with their
21 students. They have developed a very thoughtful and
22 intentional plan for improvement of their outcomes.
23 I encourage them to work directly with our agency to
24 pursue opportunities to improve their career
25 readiness programs, inclusive of consideration of

1 implementing a JAG program.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Saracini.

3 MS. SARACINI: I commend KIPP Delta for
4 continuing to improve academic success. I support
5 the approval of KIPP Delta's renewal for five years.
6 Looking forward to seeing the impact of student
7 success as KIPP continues to address teacher support
8 and retention.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

10 I voted for based on the history of success of
11 enrolling and supporting students to and through
12 college and/or career, and KIPP Delta's thoughtful
13 approach to addressing concerns. I support their
14 five-year charter renewal.

15 Mr. Baldwin.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. And I voted for because of
17 your direct approach to student learning and
18 improving the skills of students, and also for the
19 five-year charter request.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Newton.

21 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion, with the
22 explanation KIPP Delta continues to implement
23 innovative educational strategies.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And Ms. Coffman.

25 I think you're still on mute, Ms. Coffman.

1 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

2 I voted for a five-year renewal. I thought it
3 was a thoughtful application and a thoughtful
4 presentation. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you so much.

6 We will take another five-minute break. Let's
7 make it 10 minutes. We'll take a quick 10-minute
8 break. That will allow folks to stretch a little
9 bit. So if we could, at 2:50, if we can return to
10 our seats for the final presentation and vote of the
11 day.

12 (BREAK: 2:41 P.M. - 2:49 P.M.)

13 6) PREMIER HIGH SCHOOLS OF ARKANSAS OPEN ENROLLMENT RENEWAL
14 APPLICATION

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay, we'll get started with
16 our final proposal for charter renewal of the day,
17 Premier High Schools of Arkansas.

18 Just to recap how the process will take place,
19 there will be a 20-minute presentation by the
20 applicant; if there is any opposition, there's a 20-
21 minute opportunity for opposition to the applicant or
22 to the application; if so, the applicant will have 5
23 minutes to address any other concerns provided by the
24 opposition. We will then move to public comments of
25 three minutes each, if necessary. And then we will

1 get into a legal review on waivers, our internal
2 review conversation, panel questions and discussions
3 on the broader operation of the institution, and then
4 the vote.

5 With that being said, if we could, if everyone
6 here who plans to or may even be called upon to speak
7 in regards to Premier High Schools of Arkansas, I ask
8 that you stand and please raise your right hand. Do
9 you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about
10 to give shall be the truth, the whole truth and
11 nothing but the truth?

12 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. Please have a seat.

14 We'd like to move forward with -- I'm assuming
15 it's going to be Mr. Felton, Junior to do the 20-
16 minute presentation. Is that correct?

17 MR. FELTON: That is correct.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We'd like to move forward with
19 the 20-minute presentation. Thank you for your time
20 today.

21 MR. FELTON: So thank you. For those panel
22 members who are present, I've made some minor
23 adjustments to the presentation; I've provided you
24 all with a copy of that as well.

25 My name is Dennis Felton. I serve as the State

1 Director of our Premier High Schools. Thank you for
2 having us today.

3 We want to spend some time introducing the team
4 that I do have here today. We have Mr. James Taylor,
5 who's our Executive coming out of Louisville; Ms.
6 Rhonda Bradford, who's our RES Arkansas
7 Superintendent; Ms. Katie Stephens, who's our
8 Executive Director for Finance for Arkansas; Mr.
9 Curtis Shack, who's our Executive Director of Data
10 and Information Systems; Mr. Aaron Duvall, who's our
11 CTE Director; I have Ms. Marla Pearson, who's our
12 Director of Special Education; I have Mr. Darius
13 Young, who serves as our Administrator for our
14 Premier High School Online, as well as our District
15 Testing Coordinator; I have Mr. Andrew Schroeder,
16 who's our Instructional Coach and Data Coach; and Ms.
17 Tomiko Davis, who's our Campus Director for Little
18 Rock.

19 Am I doing my own slides? I'm sorry.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, you will.

21 MR. FELTON: Okay.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: There should be -- is there --
23 no, that's not it. It may be inside the podium.

24 MR. FELTON: Sorry about that.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: That's all right. You don't

1 want me moving your slides, trust me.

2 MR. FELTON: So talking about our district
3 structure, if you remember here previously this year
4 we established Premier High Schools of Arkansas, in
5 which we added Premier High School of Fort Smith,
6 Premier High School Online, and Premier High School
7 of Texarkana. Those will be the campuses that we'll
8 be referring to today.

9 That's all the locations of our Premier all
10 across Arkansas, including our other districts as
11 well in Springdale and North Little Rock.

12 Looking at our enrollment, if you look at our
13 Little Rock campus we're at 78 students; our
14 Texarkana, we're proud at 45, just started this year;
15 Fort Smith, 74; our Online, 136; and our North Little
16 Rock District is 124; and Springdale, 91. In all of
17 those, including all the districts, we're serving
18 over 500 students in the state of Arkansas.

19 So at Premier we're still committed to providing
20 hope to students through a caring, mastery-based
21 learning environment. We want to continue to promote
22 a free society and cultivate moral and academic
23 excellence.

24 So just a reminder of who we serve: we continue
25 to serve students who are just looking for a smaller

1 learning environment; students who have become
2 disengaged in the educational process; students who
3 are at-risk or have already dropped out of high
4 school; students that are interested in working full-
5 time and going to school; students who are already
6 parents; and students who are already facing
7 delinquency and truancy issues in their local school
8 district and the local juvenile justice system.

9 We continue to offer an innovative mastery-based
10 learning model, so each student is engaged in a
11 personalized learning plan where they're engaged in
12 mastery-based learning. Each student has a student
13 success portfolio which helps them not only meet
14 their goals in high school, but helps them prepare
15 for their goals after high school. Each student is
16 exposed to a personalized learning coach and
17 advisory; that way, they understand the necessary
18 components they need not only to complete a high
19 school diploma, but those things they should be
20 working on beyond high school.

21 So looking at it by the numbers, across all of
22 our campuses we've been able to award over 300
23 diplomas. We continue to see a trend of students who
24 have previously dropped out of high school, students
25 who are currently parents. We've had some students

1 that have had an opportunity to even earn some
2 college credit. And we continue to try to push as
3 many kids as we can to get into some kind of post-
4 secondary goal plan, whether that's get into college,
5 get into an industry-based certification, get into a
6 military or branch of the Armed Forces.

7 We continue to connect with kids at Premier High
8 School by engaging them in activities inside the
9 classroom, as well as outside the classroom. We're
10 also highly encouraging our campuses to get students
11 off of the campus, get them on college campuses,
12 having those conversations with not only college reps
13 but getting them into career fairs, having
14 conversations with employers and individuals that
15 have some of these pathways that they can earn
16 certifications as well.

17 We continue to connect with our parents and with
18 our students as well. We think it's very important
19 to have the relationship with the parents and the
20 students. So we continue to not only facilitate
21 programs that have it, but at the same time inviting
22 the community and families in to be a part of that
23 school decision-making.

24 We continue to partner and connect with other
25 schools. One of the things that we feel like that

1 allows us to continue to engage in best practices is
2 by collaborating with other schools who are engaged
3 in best practices; by collaborating with other
4 schools that also serve similar demographics; and
5 then, of course, partnering with those higher
6 institutions to be able to provide students
7 additional pathways and being able to start the
8 conversations early; and those students that are
9 interested in potentially doing things like
10 concurrent credit, getting those students involved in
11 that as well.

12 For those that have reference to your -- the
13 slide I have here, you will see we've got -- noted
14 our attendance trends in this slide, as well as our
15 enrollment trends. And we continue to see where our
16 attendance, especially post-Covid, we'll continue to
17 work to try to engage students and get our attendance
18 where it should be. At the same time, you will kind
19 of see on the enrollment side our enrollments
20 continue to grow over the years, and we like to think
21 that that's been a response from the community of the
22 educational offering that we have.

23 Looking at our academics, if you look on the
24 next slide in the packet that I passed to you, we do
25 administer NWEA MAP assessments. We have seen mixed

1 results with that assessment and we continue to
2 identify students that are coming into our program
3 that are more than one or two grade levels below.
4 And so we're using this data to not only drive our
5 school improvement plan, but also drive the
6 individual intervention plans of those students as
7 well to get them back on track.

8 Talking about some of the awards and success of
9 the school, this school in Little Rock has received a
10 CSP grant which allows them to continue to expand the
11 educational offerings across the community of Little
12 Rock and expand into other areas. Also, we have over
13 -- in the past 10 years we had over 200 students to
14 graduate from our home Little Rock campus. This
15 campus also participated in the state's POC pilot
16 project, as well as got students engaged in
17 extracurricular activities -- which they were
18 recognized, as well as having staff members
19 recognized, in the local community for the work that
20 they're doing. And when this school started, a few
21 years later the Arkansas Charter School Office
22 designated this school as a Best Practices in
23 Personalized Learning.

24 The highlight of our engagement is that 25% of
25 our student population is actually enrolled or

1 engaged in activities outside the classroom. You're
2 going to hear from our CT Director, Mr. Duvall, here
3 in a moment, but we're proud that we have over 56% of
4 our students actually enrolled in some CTE pathway or
5 industry-based pathway or JAG program, which we have
6 implemented this year as well.

7 We continue to think that growing and
8 personalizing our professional growth for our staff
9 is important. We're getting job embedded coaching;
10 we're bringing in math and literacy consultants to
11 work with our teachers and administrators; we're also
12 getting our administrators involved in things like
13 Charter Leadership Institute. And from the district
14 officer perspective, we're continuing to provide as
15 much support for our schools; that way, we can
16 replicate the things that are going well, especially
17 having multiple Premier High Schools.

18 At this time I'll have Ms. Davis, our Campus
19 Director of Little Rock, come up and talk to you a
20 little bit about what it looks like for a student at
21 Premier High School.

22 MS. DAVIS: Good afternoon. Students at Premier
23 are greeted upon arrival daily by multiple staff
24 members. As a part of their daily schedule, students
25 receive social/emotional learning, in addition to the

1 personalized learning that's a part of the Premier
2 model. Each week, students set daily goals. The
3 setting of those goals happen on Fridays so that
4 students are prepared for the following week. The
5 goal-setting process supports students, embracing the
6 application of the Seven Habits of Highly Effective
7 People, such as being proactive, beginning with the
8 end in mind, and thinking win-win because students
9 set goals. Academic advising, tutorial sessions, and
10 independent study happen on a daily basis in support
11 of those goals. Teachers change classes, as opposed
12 to the students, during the morning hours to allow
13 students to work independently and then to receive
14 direct instruction from those students in each
15 content area. During the afternoon, students who are
16 a part of our CTE programs, such as Metro, JAG, and
17 Velvatex, attend those training programs, while those
18 students who are not receive additional RTI support
19 in their -- to address their learning deficits.

20 As previously mentioned, our model allows for
21 regular one-on-one tutoring. We have college and
22 career coaches who work with students on their post-
23 secondary goals, whether they plan to attend college
24 or enter the workforce.

25 Students have student success portfolios that

1 include their graduation projection plans, goal
2 sheets, congratulation slips to celebrate their
3 content mastery along the way, resumes, and any other
4 thing that may assist them after high school.

5 Our Student Engagement Specialists work hand-in-
6 hand with our students and teachers. They provide
7 the additional in-class support to our students, as
8 well as helping students outside of the classrooms.
9 The relationship our Student Engagement Specialist
10 has with parents, as well as the students, helps to
11 be proactive in addressing potential concerns that
12 will affect a student's success.

13 Our Graduation Advisory Committee works to
14 support student goals and identify opportunities for
15 students having -- by having post-graduation planning
16 conversations with those students and exposing them
17 to various opportunities to identify their interests.

18 Regular attendance is stressed and expected.
19 However, we understand some things do happen that are
20 outside the control of the student, and because of
21 this we have an attendance recovery program that
22 allows students to attend for an extended day to
23 recover that lost attendance. We also have a Dropout
24 Prevention Specialist who helps to -- helps with this
25 by contacting the parents and the students to help

1 identify the causes for the student's disengagement
2 and then to identify what is needed to get the
3 student back engaged.

4 We have a number of special features that allow
5 us to stand apart from other schools. We provide
6 character education continuously. Not only do we
7 have SEL taking place in the classroom daily, we also
8 have guest speakers each month; we call that our
9 Pizza With Professionals. This is our way of
10 introducing our students to various post-secondary
11 career options, some that require traditional post-
12 secondary education, others that do not. We just
13 hosted that the parent edition last month. We have
14 attended college events with our students, college
15 fairs, hosted college fairs, did college and career
16 application days for our students, and have FASPA
17 workshops to keep our students focused on what's
18 next. I say to students all the time, "The high
19 school diploma will come, but what next?"

20 Our students have an opportunity to participate
21 in extracurricular activities, such as basketball and
22 track. And we celebrate the large and small wins of
23 our students with monthly awards.

24 For grade promotions that happen during the
25 school year, based upon credit attainment, we host a

1 promotion ceremony for those students. That includes
2 the students -- all the other students lining the
3 hallways, and then that student that was promoted can
4 choose a song of their choice and then walk down the
5 hall to their new cohort class.

6 We also have student ambassadors who serve as
7 student leaders on campus. They assist with
8 activities on campus for Premier and Arkansas Baptist
9 College, the campus on which we're located. Our
10 ability to help students identify their interest and
11 make goals in relation to those interests is a
12 feature that guides the personalized learning and the
13 CTE programs that are available on our campus.

14 MR. FELTON: Thank you, Ms. Davis.

15 At this time we're going to have Mr. Aaron
16 Duvall, our CTE Director, share some of the exciting
17 things -- we've been citing partnerships and things
18 that we've been initiating at our campuses.

19 MR. DUVALL: Thank you. Yes. So two years ago,
20 we started implementing CTE programs on campus. And
21 one of the big reasons is exactly what Ms. Davis was
22 talking about; we have, you know, the graduation
23 part, but now what's after that? You know, we want
24 to make sure that students are ready for life after
25 graduation. And so we began with a lot of very

1 strategic partnerships. The first one was with
2 Little Rock Metropolitan Career Center and, you know,
3 they offer nine different pathways. Our students on
4 our Little Rock campus are taking advantage of
5 several of those pathways. We have students in
6 construction with internships available; we have
7 automotive services; we have a few kids in welding.
8 And I'm excited to say we have three kids right now
9 who are working towards their CNA and the goal is to
10 have them graduate, you know, at the end of the year
11 with their CNA license already. And so Metro allows
12 us to do that.

13 We also have a great partnership with Velvatex
14 cosmetology school, which is right across the street
15 from our Little Rock campus. And, right now, we have
16 students who are participating in that trade school,
17 working right now to get their hours towards
18 certification to become a licensed cosmetologist.

19 We also this year -- very, very excited to start
20 offering the JAG program. And so we have a lot of
21 students who have to work, and so after school
22 they're going to their places of employment. And so
23 we decided through a JAG program these students can
24 be getting credit for that work, as well as come back
25 to school in a JAG class and talk about their

1 experiences, learn those skills, those soft skills,
2 the interviewing skills, the resume writing, how to
3 fill out an application -- all the things that
4 employers tell us that our students -- you know,
5 students in general struggle with.

6 We have a -- also on our campus we were able to
7 implement a drone program. And one of those pictures
8 right there is us at the Little Rock Airport touring
9 air traffic control. I took that picture; it was
10 probably more exciting for me, but it was a great day
11 for our kids, and kids were asking about internships
12 there.

13 We also started the digital marketing course on
14 campus. And so students are using their great Tik-
15 Tok skills and now they can -- we can teach them how
16 to market themselves and how to turn that into a
17 career. And so through a lot of different
18 partnerships and some pathways that we can offer on
19 campus we're trying to give kids options, and so
20 trying to give them career options so when they
21 graduate they actually have those skills that they
22 can turn into, you know, a profitable career to help
23 themselves and their families.

24 We also have a great partnership with the Peak
25 Center in Fort Smith. So for our students there, you

1 know, at our Premier in Fort Smith, they're able to
2 attend the Peak Innovation Center, brand-new
3 facility. And right now, I have students in Network
4 Engineering and the drone program there as well.

5 So community engagement -- you know, Ms. Davis
6 talked about our Pizza With a Professional series
7 where we're able to invite speakers from the
8 community into the school and talk to our kids about
9 possible careers, motivational speakers, or just give
10 our kids a connection to the business world. And so
11 we've been able to do that, usually every-other-week.
12 We also have entrepreneurship workshops. We've
13 partnered with Sidney Moncrief's Game-Changer
14 organization where kids are shadowing CEOs and
15 learning about leadership skills. We have internship
16 opportunities for our students. You know, we have a
17 JAG program. We're working on service learning. We
18 were able to also partner with the State Chamber,
19 with Be Pro Be Proud, so had the big tour bus pulling
20 up for our kids so they can get hands-on experience.

21 And so, ultimately, through our CTE program
22 we're trying to expose kids to careers that maybe
23 they didn't even know were out there and then provide
24 some mentoring and coaching into how to get into
25 those careers to be successful after high school.

1 MR. FELTON: Thank you, Mr. Duvall.

2 So we continue to see our parents, our
3 community, businesses, our members -- community
4 members, as well as community leaders be engaged in
5 what we're doing and collaborating with us.

6 Here's a picture of our Fort Smith ribbon
7 cutting. Once again, we're proud of the response
8 from the community and the support that we're
9 receiving from our community partners.

10 That's our Texarkana ribbon cutting. We're
11 happy to be servicing that community as well, and
12 happy to see the response from the community and
13 students and parents that's interested in this
14 innovative educational model.

15 So looking at some of our successes -- the
16 student and parent testimonies that we've talked
17 through and hear about; also, our CTE partnerships
18 that we have; the engagement that we see from the
19 community and the parents; as well as our
20 personalized approach.

21 One of the things that we learned is, you know,
22 students can learn through a myriad of instructional
23 options. And we have to use the data that we have to
24 drive some of the instruction, especially closing the
25 learning gaps of some of our students. We've learned

1 that we have to support our staff through high-
2 quality professional development, and also have
3 ongoing conversations about the data they're seeing
4 and help them be best equipped to be able to use that
5 data.

6 We have to have mutual accountability. We're a
7 small school, and so that means that if we're working
8 on reading, everybody is working on reading, just not
9 the English teacher. If we're working on character
10 education, if we're working on building some of these
11 virtues in students, everybody is working on this.

12 We understand communication is important with
13 our families and our students, as well as the
14 flexibility. And we understand that education is not
15 a one-size-fits-all, but it should be personalized.

16 Some of the challenges we continue to face and
17 we're addressing is: attendance and engagement --
18 we're reminding students, post-Covid, of some of the
19 features that happen in onsite learning, some of the
20 programs and services are offering onsite. The
21 academic learning gaps we talked about previously --
22 we know we can't ignore some of the social problems
23 that our students are faced with. You know, whether
24 it's the violence in the community, the climate --
25 whether it's the poverty -- some of the things --

1 some of the challenges students are facing at home or
2 outside of school we have to be aware and work with
3 families and community members to be addressing them.
4 And then, there's recruitment and retention -- I
5 think we're seeing this across the industry and the
6 state as we continue to make sure we're taking care
7 of our teachers and going out to recruit the most
8 talented individuals and taking care of the teachers
9 that are working with us and making sure that we're
10 not only empowering them, but recognizing and
11 creating systems that we can recognize and award
12 their work as well.

13 So areas where we're trying to grow -- and kind
14 of our game plan is we have an attendance incentive
15 plan. We're partnering with people like Henderson
16 State; we're partnering with the state office to
17 engage in these conversations about best practices
18 with attendance, and how do we create incentives and
19 things to give students the understanding of why too
20 it's important for them to care as well.

21 We've hired Mr. Schrader, who's working with our
22 staff as far as using the NWEA MAP, using their state
23 assessment data to be able to help teachers drive
24 intervention and work with our school leaders on
25 their intervention plan to make sure that it's a

1 living document and we're progress-monitoring those
2 results. And as I stated previously, partnering with
3 other schools and engaging in conversations with
4 other charter schools and other leaders.

5 Of course, we have a school improvement plan.
6 We have goals outlining that plan that's addressed to
7 our deficiencies and challenges that we're faced up
8 against. We're working with the State through our
9 literacy plan to make sure that we have the adequate
10 literacy plan to increase reading levels across all
11 of our -- all of our students across the whole
12 school. Making sure they're exposed to high-quality
13 professional development and bringing in those
14 literacy and math experts to be able to work with
15 some of our novice teachers and working with some of
16 our school leaders.

17 Here you'll see our new goals. We want to
18 continue to make sure that each student has a Student
19 Success Plan and then they're accepted in some kind
20 of post-secondary track. We want to continue to try
21 to show growth on reading, math, and our science, and
22 our NWEA MAP assessments. We want to make sure that
23 we can get all of our students to engage in the state
24 assessment. We want all of our students to have
25 access to a social/emotional learning plan, and then

1 as well as 100% of our graduates actually graduating
2 with a high school diploma and have some kind of
3 industry-based certification and/or internship or
4 participating in the JAG program.

5 So why are we seeking 10 years? Premier High
6 Schools of Arkansas is seeking 10 years to continue
7 to provide an innovative alternate education option
8 for students in Arkansas. We want to continue to try
9 to work towards decreasing that dropout rate and
10 getting more completers, getting more students with
11 high school diplomas. We want to continue to prepare
12 students for the post-secondary goals that they've
13 set, as well as replicate this innovative
14 personalized educational model.

15 As I remind you, we are celebrating our 10-year
16 anniversary. And I think back 10 years ago, we only
17 had one Premier High School in Arkansas, and our
18 first graduating class was 10 students. And now we
19 look forward here 10 years later and we're projected
20 to offer over 120 graduates -- I mean 120 diplomas
21 this year and have over 300 diplomas that have been
22 awarded.

23 At Premier High School, we continue to keep
24 students at the center of everything we're doing and
25 continue to be responsive to the needs of Arkansas

1 communities.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
3 Felton, for that.

4 We will now -- if there is any opposition to the
5 renewal application, an individual has the
6 opportunity of 20 minutes to speak to that.

7 There doesn't appear to be any.

8 If there is any public comment regarding the
9 application process, individuals have the opportunity
10 to approach the podium and speak to that.

11 There doesn't appear to be any.

12 We will move to the legal review. Star of the
13 show today.

14 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

15 LEGAL REVIEW

16 ALTERNATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

17 MS. WAGNER: Okay. We're going to start with
18 Alternative Learning Environment; so Arkansas code
19 annotated 6-15-1005(b)(5), 6-18-503(a)(1)(c)(i), 6-
20 48-102, 6-48-103, standard 2-I.1, and the DESE rules
21 governing Special -- Student Special Needs Funding,
22 section 4. There were no legal concerns with this.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And as we've done with all the
24 charter renewals, once the waiver has been read along
25 with the status and standards and rules we'll open it

1 up for conversation regarding the specific waiver
2 topic. But we will reserve time after we go through
3 all the waiver topics for general questions in
4 regards to the renewal and the application process.

5 So regarding the Alternative Learning
6 Environment waiver are there any questions or
7 comments?

8 There doesn't appear to be any. So let's
9 continue.

10 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

11 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next waiver topic is
12 Board of Directors. I've got a long list here, just
13 to let you know. And I didn't have any legal
14 concerns about any of these. So it's Arkansas code
15 annotated section 6-13-608, 6-13-611, 6-13-612(c), 6-
16 13-613, 6-13-615, 6-13-616(a), 6-13-618, 6-13-619, 6-
17 13-620, 6-13-621, 6-13-630, 6-13-631, 6-13-634, 6-13-
18 1303, and 6-14-101 et seq., and then the ADE's
19 proposed rules governing Reimbursement of School --
20 by School Districts for Election Expenses.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions or comments
22 regarding this waiver request?

23 There doesn't appear to be any. We'll continue.

24 CLASS SIZE AND TEACHING LOAD

25 MS. WAGNER: All right. The next topic is Class

1 Size and Teaching Load, Arkansas code annotated
2 section 6-17-812, Standard 1-A.5 and 1-A.6, and the
3 DESE rules governing Class Size and Teaching Load
4 section 3 and 4. I have no legal concern. But I
5 notice a question.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. Any questions?

7 Ms. Coffman.

8 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. If the Charter would speak
9 to their reason for the Class Size and Teaching Load,
10 especially with the population of students that need
11 the most attention.

12 MR. FELTON: Due to the innovation of our model
13 and being able to allow teachers to be able to work
14 with students in different disciplines, this waiver
15 has allowed us to create the scheduling and
16 flexibility that meets -- that best meets our model.

17 MS. COFFMAN: So what is your class size?

18 MR. FELTON: I'm going to say typically 35 to
19 40, but that really depends on the content.

20 MS. COFFMAN: And the teaching load per teacher?

21 MR. FELTON: That's what I'm referring to.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Your teaching load per teacher
23 is 35 to 40?

24 MR. FELTON: Yeah. Our students work in like
25 cohorts. So, typically, in that cohort ratio you're

1 looking at like a 16, 17 to 1. But, yeah, we have
2 singletons. And so our teacher that's the math
3 teacher is responsible for teaching math for all the
4 students in the school.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. And so her total
6 teaching load is 35, 40 students, but she may work
7 with them in smaller cohorts of 10 to 15?

8 MR. FELTON: There you go.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

10 MR. FELTON: And because of the model, typically
11 you may have a lot of kids that only need one or two
12 credits, so they wouldn't have a full schedule.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

14 MS. COFFMAN: So the teaching load requirement
15 is 150. You're asking to exceed 150 per teacher?

16 MR. FELTON: That is correct. Because we have
17 some singletons, in the event that we have a teacher
18 that has to serve all students on campus.

19 MS. COFFMAN: I'm sorry; I'm not understanding.
20 If their teaching load is 35 to 40 kids a day, how is
21 someone exceeding 150?

22 MR. FELTON: So when I'm talking about the
23 singletons -- so let's use math, for example. And
24 let's say we have a campus that has 160 students and
25 every single one of those students had to take math,

1 that teacher would be the math teacher of record for
2 every single student.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: But when -- go ahead. I'm
4 sorry. Ms. Saracini.

5 MS. SARACINI: I just want to understand.
6 You're really asking for the Teaching Load versus the
7 Class Size, because the Class Size may not be; it's
8 just that at the end of the day you may have reached
9 over 150.

10 MR. FELTON: There you go.

11 MS. SARACINI: Correct?

12 MR. FELTON: Yes.

13 MS. SARACINI: Okay. Now -- I had to talk
14 myself through it. So really it's not Teaching --
15 it's not Class Size, because that's really --

16 MR. FELTON: There you go. Yeah, it's more of
17 your --

18 MS. SARACINI: -- more for elementary. It's
19 Load. Right?

20 MR. FELTON: There you go.

21 MS. SARACINI: Okay.

22 MR. FELTON: Like they're not -- they're not
23 normal bell-to-bell.

24 MS. SARACINI: Right.

25 MR. FELTON: There are, you know, 30 kids seven

1 periods a day, something like that.

2 MS. SARACINI: Right. It's just that they may
3 hold records for 150?

4 MR. FELTON: There you go.

5 MS. SARACINI: Okay.

6 MS. NEWTON: And are you prepared to say what
7 will be the maximum size for a teacher during a
8 teaching period, as opposed to all the students?
9 Like Thursdays, from 9:00 to 11:00 -- and that's a
10 class -- are you prepared to say that there would be
11 a maximum amount of students in -- per session, I
12 guess I will say?

13 MR. FELTON: Yes. But our model is not set-up
14 that way where kids are coming in -- like everybody
15 is in this class; they're set in cohorts. So back to
16 Ms. Saracini, it's more of the load.

17 MS. NEWTON: Well, is it limited cohorts?

18 MR. FELTON: Yes. That goes back to the ratio.
19 We don't -- our cohorts are not bigger than 25 kids
20 in that class setting at one time. Now their load,
21 as far as their responsibility, that will exceed 25.
22 But I just remind you, it just gives us flexibility
23 in the model that we're trying to run within our
24 school and it allows those teachers to be able to see
25 and we can set that schedule accordingly. It is not

1 set-up like a traditional bell-to-bell.

2 MS. NEWTON: So there -- do you say then that in
3 no circumstance will there be over 35 in a classroom
4 in a given period, a given class period?

5 MR. FELTON: I have to be careful with saying
6 that, because I have multiple campuses involved and
7 then we do have some campuses that have classrooms
8 that we can hold 30, 35 kids. Now with that being
9 said, there's a Student Engagement Specialist in that
10 room as well, you know, typically in classes that
11 size. So you have actually two adults in the room in
12 that kind of scenario.

13 MS. NEWTON: And I'm not as concerned about the
14 size of the classroom as I am the size of the class.
15 So, you know, you may have room to hold 50, but is
16 that an effective model? It's just -- and I
17 apologize during the meeting for not being an
18 educator, so I can't translate. My background is in
19 social work. And so giving -- acknowledging or
20 recognizing the need for more attention in one as
21 opposed to another group or whatever, designing
22 cohorts where they're mixed enough to be able to do
23 two or three things at one time, that's my concern,
24 is -- you know, because at some point maybe it might
25 become ineffective, the whole classroom setting. The

1 10% that get it are going to get it, and the others
2 may not.

3 MR. FELTON: Well, I'll assure you all on the
4 Panel that we do monitor that. We're trying to make
5 sure we make the best decisions as well and so we
6 don't stack-up the students in classrooms, due to the
7 nature of our model. So I am, once again, just going
8 back to the load. We're not packing classrooms up or
9 the class size versus the teaching load that teachers
10 are being able to take -- I mean --

11 MS. NEWTON: Well, now I may -- again, I may not
12 understand correctly. But it's not questioning
13 whether or not you were -- you're doing that, but the
14 possibility -- I thought, you know, you're setting
15 class sizes based on the law or the reasonableness of
16 effective teaching. So whether or not you would or
17 you wouldn't is, you know -- I don't know. Does that
18 make sense to anybody? Okay.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman, I don't want to --
20 I want to allow you the opportunity to get back in.
21 I know you started the questioning, so --

22 MS. NEWTON: Oh, I'm sorry.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- I want to make sure you have
24 --

25 MR. FELTON: I was going to add a comment, as

1 well.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Make sure -- okay. Why don't
3 we have a comment here, and we'll go back to Ms.
4 Coffman --

5 MR. FELTON: Okay.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- and see if there's any other
7 comments, and then we'll continue the conversation.

8 MR. FELTON: And I just want to say this for the
9 Panel to kind of put it in context. Because we are
10 -- students are engaged in a personalized learning
11 model, these teachers are not engaged in 100% direct
12 instruction all day. And so, there's some
13 opportunities where students are engaged in
14 independent learning, collaborative learning. And in
15 any event, there will be some times where there may
16 be more students but that's not your direct
17 instruction class. I don't know if that helps.

18 MS. NEWTON: I'd have to see it.

19 MR. FELTON: I'm inviting everyone. I'm
20 inviting. We welcome you to come check us out.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's go to Ms. Coffman, and
22 then we'll come back to you, Mr. Baldwin.

23 MS. COFFMAN: Well, I have [Zoom audio
24 distortion], number one. And I'm going to ask Dr.
25 Sutherlin to pull up your schedule that's in eSchool

1 and to take a look at that, and maybe we can have him
2 come up and look and see what's going on with school
3 schedules.

4 The Class Size -- the Teaching Load makes sense.
5 I'm the one math teacher in the school and I'm going
6 to make sure that I serve all of the kids that come
7 through there, that makes sense. But from what I've
8 seen in the classroom, to your point, is there's not
9 direct instruction going on; the kids are working
10 independently, and the teacher is moving around and
11 helping. And I struggle with the Class Size request.

12 And just, by the way, the standard for Class
13 Size in high school is 30 students.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Mr. Baldwin.

15 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

16 So, Mr. Felton, let me -- let me go back to my
17 site visit, when I came up and you all were kind
18 enough to host me up in Springdale. And -- because I
19 think what's happening is we've got apples and
20 oranges; and so you're talking apples and we're
21 hearing oranges, and so we're missing each other.

22 So when I came up to the -- to your school in
23 Springdale, there was a class in a big room that had
24 a number of kids; they were in a self-study class and
25 there was one teacher. And she was helping -- or he

1 was helping, but the kids were kind of doing work on
2 their own -- and there was probably 30 or 40 kids in
3 that class. And then there was another math class;
4 you walk down the hallway and there was math class
5 that was going on. And so your program is not the
6 traditional every hour the kids change classes to go
7 to English, to go to math, to go to something else,
8 which is what I think we're expecting in our minds.
9 So tell us about what an average day is like for a
10 student and where they are, who teaches them, and how
11 they get taught the full curriculum?

12 MR. FELTON: Okay. I'm also going to -- Mr.
13 Shack has reminded me -- in thinking about the
14 Teaching Load and Class Size, as well, because of the
15 model, yes, we may have 35 students enrolled in that
16 Algebra I course. But that doesn't mean all 35
17 students are going to that teacher at the same time.

18 To respond to you, Mr. Baldwin, I appreciate you
19 visiting our campus and spending some time with us.

20 Our students are working in cohorts. And
21 depending on the student's schedule -- we have
22 students that are pulled out from those cohorts to
23 get better direct instruction. We were talking about
24 the literacy, the math pullouts or the science
25 pullouts. In those small group settings, typically

1 there's no more than seven to eight students that are
2 working with that teacher in the small group setting.
3 And then you have -- those students can go back into
4 the bigger learning center in the classroom and
5 engage in independent study.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thanks for the explanation.

7 Are we waiting on -- yes -- schedule and --
8 that's uploaded in the system, to give us some --

9 MS. COFFMAN: I think we --

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- additional information? And
11 we have some --

12 DR. SUTHERLIN: Matthew Sutherlin, Standards and
13 Systems Support/Charter.

14 Currently, as far as the individual sections
15 there is not a section that is over 30, as far as the
16 maximum seat total as far as with the way that it's
17 scheduled. I guess when I'm looking at it, though,
18 from that perspective you could have one teacher who
19 is covering geometry and they're covering social
20 studies and they're covering, you know, your health
21 and P.E., all at the same time based on the way that
22 they're scheduling things. So that could be -- with
23 a Teaching Load waiver that could be as -- in my
24 mind, as many as 90 students maximum. Now, that
25 doesn't mean that that's going to be the case; I'm

1 just saying that's the way that it's set-up in the
2 system. So that -- I mean that's something you'll
3 have to weigh as you look at the Teaching Load
4 waiver.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And it appears that the Load
6 waiver -- am I correct in saying that I think we have
7 some clarification in regards to the Load waiver;
8 that makes sense. It's the Class Size waiver that I
9 think we're kind of struggling with.

10 DR. SUTHERLIN: So the Class Size waiver would
11 also deal with that particular issue. Because,
12 technically, you've got the 30 students that are
13 allowed in a high school class at one time, but that
14 teacher could be teaching multiple sections of
15 subjects at the same time. So that's -- I mean, I
16 don't know about their model and how they have that
17 set-up. But if that were the case, that could be
18 upwards of 90 in a classroom. Does that make sense?

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Yes.

20 Any other follow-ups to the information that
21 we've received?

22 Ms. Coffman, does that move toward any sort of
23 satisfying answer for you?

24 MS. COFFMAN: No. But I'm ready to move on.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. We will continue.

CURRICULUM GRADING AND CREDIT HOURS

1
2 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is Curriculum
3 Grading and Credit Hours. It's Arkansas code
4 annotated 6-15-902(a), Standard 1-A.2, and the DESE
5 rules governing Grading and Course Credit section 2-
6 2.01. And I have no legal concerns.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
8 this waiver request?

9 Hearing none, we'll continue.

FLAG DISPLAY

10
11 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is Flag
12 Display. It's Arkansas code annotated section 6-16-
13 106 and 6-16-105. And I have no legal concerns.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or concerns regarding
15 this waiver?

16 Hearing none, we'll continue.

FACILITIES

17
18 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Next one is Facilities, and
19 it is Arkansas code annotated section 6-21-117,
20 section 2 through section 5, and then standard 6-A.1.
21 I have no legal concerns.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments from the
23 Panel?

24 Hearing none, we'll continue.

SCHOOL CALENDAR/SCHOOL START DATE

1 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is School
2 Calendar or School Start Date, Arkansas code
3 annotated section 6-10-106. And I have no legal
4 concern.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments on our
6 favorite --

7 MS. COFFMAN: Our favorite question.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Our favorite waiver, yes.

9 MS. COFFMAN: Explain why you need -- please
10 explain why you need that?

11 MR. FELTON: Once again, our innovative model
12 allows -- this waiver allows us to have the
13 flexibility to make the schedule that's needed for
14 students and staff that best meets our model. So as
15 we talk about their day and students being able to
16 work in cohorts and having some of the innovative
17 things we're trying to do, from pullouts to having
18 these unique learning centers and, you know, credit
19 recovery labs and opportunities -- so this allows us
20 to have the flexibility in that schedule that best
21 meets our model.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Can you give some specific
23 examples of how this waiver has operated in allowing
24 you to do that, outside of the traditional calendar
25 and day?

1 MR. FELTON: Yes. So we talked about some of
2 the bells and whistles in us being able to design our
3 day that best meets our students' needs. And so if
4 we set up a traditional day, and maybe a student
5 spends 45 minutes here, 45 minutes here -- we have
6 some students that they need to stay over, or maybe
7 they only have these amount of credits needed to
8 graduate; so instead of forcing those students to
9 carry out a traditional day, they're able to work on
10 the things they need to work on. And then our staff
11 members are able to move around the pull those
12 students, as we need to, as well.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

14 MS. COFFMAN: I thought we were talking about
15 School Calendar.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Can you repeat that, please?

17 MS. COFFMAN: I thought we were talking about
18 School Calendar, 6-10-106.

19 MR. FELTON: One of the things that we're
20 seeking is to do some innovative things, especially
21 in looking at before and after school. I mean -- I'm
22 sorry -- before school starts and after when school
23 ends, especially looking at -- I know we've piloted
24 like some extension programs and seeing what that
25 looks like. And we have some schools, even in Texas,

1 we're watching right now as they kind of pilot this,
2 kind of a jumpstart, almost like a head-start before
3 school -- the school year starts. And we don't want
4 to put our-self in a bind not being able to replicate
5 one of those best practices that we're doing. And so
6 we continue to try to be innovative in our calendar,
7 and that's one of the things we're seeking to be able
8 to do here in the future. That way, we extend the
9 learning time for students and then be able to kind
10 of close some of these learning gaps.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Thank you. Questions or
12 comments?

13 MS. COFFMAN: May I follow-up?

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, please, Ms. Coffman, with
15 a follow-up.

16 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. So, Mr. Felton, are you
17 suggesting that you're going to start some number of
18 days early and extend your calendar some number of
19 days later, or are you --

20 MR. FELTON: That's correct.

21 MS. COFFMAN: How many days early?

22 MR. FELTON: We have not determined that.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do have a question.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: In your response to that

1 question, you specifically indicate TNTP and JAG as
2 part of the reasons why you need flexibility. Do you
3 mind providing a little bit more detail on how you
4 feel that these two pieces require you to have this
5 ask?

6 MR. FELTON: Well, in thinking about the school
7 day -- we've partnered with Little Rock School
8 District, and so one of the things that we do with
9 those students that are participating -- and I say
10 Little Rock School District, but we have some other
11 partnerships as well. They're starting over there at
12 1:00, and so that allows our students to do their
13 half-a-day of their courses on our campus and then
14 they're transferred over to that campus to finish
15 their day of doing that CTE. Now, of course, that
16 looks similar with students that are working through
17 JAG or students that are doing internships as well.
18 So they don't spend that whole day on campus; they're
19 spending that time doing their academic and then
20 they're able to engage in that additional pathway
21 they're engaged in.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I just think there's some
23 -- there's already some pieces in place that provide
24 that flexibility, and so I don't know for those
25 reasonings of why you would need to ask for this

1 waiver. But that's just my thought is I think
2 there's already flexibility there in place that
3 wouldn't require you to have to do that.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. And I think we want to
5 -- Mr. Felton, I think we want to be very thoughtful
6 when a waiver is requested that there is a plan in
7 place on how that's used versus the sort of "just in
8 case I might need it" kind of attitude; like we want
9 to be thoughtful about that. And so I think that's
10 where we're sort of falling here and being -- we're
11 trying to really parse out, if this were to happen,
12 is there a plan in place to be able to utilize it in
13 order to be able to measure how impactful this waiver
14 is in regards -- versus just having it available to
15 you. And that's what we're -- I think some of us are
16 struggling with.

17 MR. FELTON: Well, I can assure you of this, the
18 extension -- and when we're talking about the
19 extended school year, that has been available. We've
20 practiced that and we've seen a response to it where
21 our students and families appreciate the opportunity
22 to continue that learning throughout the school year.
23 Because sometimes you have some students that just
24 need a credit or two more to finish up that credit or
25 a credit to be able to move to that next grade level.

1 And we're serious as an organization about what's
2 going on before school. And if we're realizing these
3 kids are coming in and we're noticing they're a
4 couple of grade levels below we're going to have to
5 change what we're doing. And hopefully that's not
6 just Premier. I hope other schools are looking at
7 that as well, because just confining our-self to 178
8 days and trying to do some of this hard work that
9 we're doing, we're not being realistic. So we're
10 serious about the conversations we're having; we're
11 serious about looking at what Texas is doing for
12 starting the school year early, and what does that
13 head-start -- that pow-wow, the three full weeks look
14 like? And I'll be honest with you, it's going to
15 help us as well with our learning model. We've
16 learned that we have to spend time as well teaching
17 these students what it looks like to engage in a
18 personalized learning model and what study skills and
19 things they need in order to be successful in this
20 type of school. So how do you crunch all that
21 together? And, of course, we've got some character
22 ed. pieces and stuff we want to get in there as well.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic.

24 Please.

25 MR. TAYLOR: My name is James Taylor and I am

1 the Chief Financial Officer for Responsive Education
2 Solutions.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. I just want to make
4 sure, were you sworn in as well?

5 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I was, in fact. Yes, I was.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Continue.

7 MR. TAYLOR: I just wanted to mention the
8 extended day because we're talking about -- Dennis
9 has mentioned multiple times about looking to
10 incorporate something we have been doing -- that we
11 literally have just been piloting this year in Texas;
12 so it's something that's brand-new to our program.
13 And this is looking to catch-up some of that learning
14 loss that we had during Covid, and so what we have
15 looked at is starting potentially two weeks early and
16 then going two weeks late. But we've discussed
17 possibly shifting more early or more later, depending
18 upon how these programs work for us. So that's what
19 Dennis is trying to salvage with this waiver.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

21 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Can I add?

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, Ms. Wright-McMurray.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And I appreciate the
25 additional comments and clarification and your

1 comments about wanting to be more responsive to those
2 students' needs. I just don't want you to feel as if
3 in order for you to be able to offer some of the CTE
4 programs and to offer JAG that you have to have a
5 modified or flexible schedule to do that, because the
6 systems are not designed for that to have to take
7 place. I think there are opportunities for us to
8 have conversations about how we can get to what you
9 want to get to and not have to have that flexible
10 schedule outside of the norm, for you to still be
11 able to meet your needs and to be able to offer the
12 programs, because the programs are not structured or
13 designed to have to be offered in a modified format.

14 That's just my comment. And so that's why I
15 feel like that maybe for this part you're maybe
16 asking for it where you don't really have to do that,
17 so --

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Mr. Baldwin.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Let me ask -- I think it's helpful
20 to have the definition of early and late and the two
21 weeks before and two weeks after. How long will it
22 be before you all make a final decision and can tell
23 us exactly what you intend to do as far as starting
24 school early, keeping school late? Because that
25 would be helpful to us to know exactly --

1 MR. FELTON: Well, we're in discussion and
2 planning stages of that. Of course, we're looking at
3 things like resources, staffing, and things of that
4 nature. I would say at least 90 to 120 days before
5 we have it ironed out. And we want to make sure we
6 have everything together and we've ran it through all
7 the kinks, and then at the same time we want feedback
8 from our families. Right? We want to see their
9 pulse on it, their input as well. And so I would say
10 just due to the unique time of the year and us about
11 to let out for Christmas break probably 90 to 120
12 days.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So it's something you're
14 contemplating for the beginning of next school year?

15 MR. FELTON: There you go.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or comments
17 regarding this waiver?

18 Let's continue.

19 MS. NEWTON: I do have a question.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes.

21 MS. NEWTON: And it's not relative necessarily
22 to this application only. But isn't there a
23 stipulation in the Arkansas Department of Education's
24 regulations that school starts no earlier than and no
25 later than? Or is that something that charters have

1 as an opportunity to get waivers for? Because I know
2 at one point in time there was -- when school --
3 people knew when school started. You know, they may
4 not have necessarily knew what the breaks were in the
5 fall or spring or whatever -- well, maybe even that.
6 But I'm just wondering if that's -- if that opens up
7 a collage or a different start date than -- you may
8 have three children in school that have three
9 different dates to go to school. You know, I don't
10 know. I'm just wondering. And not -- like I say,
11 not relative to this application necessarily, but
12 just wondering if that's how it's structured.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Wagner, can you assist with
14 that?

15 MS. WAGNER: Yes. So, Ms. Newton, there is a
16 statute which is -- it actually is 6-10-106 that says
17 that school cannot start any earlier than two Mondays
18 before Labor Day. So we do have that in place. And
19 a traditional school district cannot get a waiver of
20 that start-date. So traditional school districts,
21 unless they're on an alternative calendar which
22 doesn't -- that doesn't change when they start. It
23 can change when they end, but it doesn't change when
24 they start. The only way to change when you start,
25 with a traditional school district, is to go to a 12-

1 month calendar.

2 MS. NEWTON: Go to what?

3 MS. WANGER: A 12-month calendar.

4 MS. NEWTON: I see. Thank you. So it's
5 different with charters because of the -- but I
6 thought at one point the rule was that any waiver
7 that a charter applied for or had opportunity to
8 access, public school had the same access? I may be
9 mixing up my time on the school board -- I mean Board
10 of Ed. with this, but I don't know. Does that sound
11 familiar to anybody? Yeah.

12 MS. WAGNER: So the law was specifically written
13 to exclude traditional school districts from being
14 able to get an Act 1240 waiver in this instance.
15 That was just how the law was written. But charters
16 are not exempt from getting a waiver of that statute.

17 MS. NEWTON: Okay. And I'm not suggesting that
18 they are. Just -- that was just kind of something
19 around that that I didn't understand.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

21 Any other questions or comments regarding this
22 waiver?

23 Let's continue.

24 INSTRUCTIONAL DAY

25 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next waiver topic is

1 Instructional Day. It is Arkansas code annotated 6-
2 16-102(a)(1) through (4) and then also section (c) of
3 that same code, and standard 1-A.4.2. And there were
4 no legal concerns with this.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
6 the instructional day waiver?

7 Seeing none, we'll continue.

8 GIFTED AND TALENTED

9 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is Gifted and
10 Talented, Arkansas code annotated section 6-20-
11 2208(c)(6) and 6-42-109, standard 2-G.1, and the DESE
12 rules governing Gifted and Talented Program Approval
13 Standards. And there were no legal concerns with
14 this waiver.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Comments or questions, Gifted
16 and Talented waiver?

17 Hearing none, we'll continue.

18 PERSONNEL POLICIES

19 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next section of waivers
20 are Personnel Policies. So like we've done before, I
21 had no concerns on any of these. So I would like to
22 run through them as quickly as possible, if that is
23 okay with everyone.

24 Okay. So Personnel Policies - Duty-Free Lunch,
25 Arkansas code annotated 6-17-111; Non-Instructional

1 Duties, Arkansas code annotated 6-17-117; Planning
2 Period, 6-17-114; Requirements, 6-17-201(c); Right to
3 Join a Professional Organization, 6-17-202; Committee
4 on Personnel Policies, 6-17-203, 6-17-205, 6-17-209,
5 also 6-11-129, and the DESE rules governing Document
6 Posting to School District and Educational Service
7 Cooperative Websites, sections 4 through 6;
8 Incorporation into a Teacher's Contract, 6-17-204;
9 Use of Personal Leave, 6-17-211; Employment of
10 Licensed Personnel, 6-17-301; Classified Personnel
11 Policies, 6-17-2301(c); Public School Employees
12 Minimum Sick Leave Law, 6-17-1301 et seq.; Teachers
13 Minimum Sick Leave Act, 6-17-1201 et seq.; Teacher
14 Fair Dismissal, 6-17-1501 et seq.; and Public School
15 Employee Fair Hearing, 6-17-1701 et seq.; Minimum --
16 sorry -- Classified Employee Minimum Salary, 6-17-
17 2201 et seq.; and then Salaries and Compensation,
18 Arkansas code annotated 6-17-2401 et seq., 6-17-908,
19 and 6-17-909 -- 919, excuse me. And then the 12-
20 Month Contract for an Agriculture Teacher, 6-17-802.
21 I have no legal concerns about any of those.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions or comments
23 regarding Personnel Policy waivers?

24 Okay. Let's continue.

25 PRINCIPAL

1 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is Principal,
2 Arkansas code annotated 6-17-302(a) and standards 4-
3 C.1 and 4-C.2. I had no legal concerns.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments?
5 We'll continue.

6 HEALTH SERVICES - SCHOOL NURSE

7 MS. WAGNER: Next, Health Services - School
8 Nurse, Arkansas code annotated section 6-18-706 and
9 standards 2-E.1 and 2-E.2. I have no legal concerns.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments?

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have --

12 MS. COFFMAN: Yes, I have a question. Go ahead,
13 Sonja.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No, go ahead.

15 MS. COFFMAN: My question is, do you have an RN?

16 MR. FELTON: No, we do not. But we contract out
17 with an RN that provides our screenings.

18 MS. COFFMAN: So, do you have a nurse onsite?

19 MR. FELTON: Not every day.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: How often do you have a nurse
21 onsite or what is that process like?

22 MR. FELTON: Typically, as needed, whether it's
23 like professional development, assessment trainings
24 and stuff, or screenings for our kids. But, of
25 course, it's a standalone high school, so they -- we

1 don't have as much. But when needed we do have
2 access to one in our network.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And what's been the challenge
4 around just finding someone to meet this?

5 MR. FELTON: Well, I think we know the workforce
6 at this time, and especially if -- it is hard for us
7 to compete when we're offering kind of a part-time
8 job compared to full-time, you know, institutions.
9 So that's where it's kind of worked out with us with
10 -- we have some in our network and we're able to have
11 access to them and use them as needed.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman.

13 MS. COFFMAN: Who do you partner with as needed
14 if there's an emergency?

15 MR. FELTON: Well, for emergency purposes we
16 have a school health officer that's designated and we
17 also have resources like Student Resource Officers
18 that are available as well. So in the need of a
19 medical emergency, we follow our protocol as far as
20 contacting those that need to be and getting those
21 people onsite -- you know, responding as anyone else
22 would and get the necessary people there.

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

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: He said a School Health

1 Officer?

2 MR. FELTON: Uh-huh.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm not --

4 MR. FELTON: A School Health Officer is the
5 person that's kind of like that first contact. So
6 you think about if something does happen, whether
7 it's a student that's not feeling well, been throwing
8 up in the bathroom, you have a student that is
9 running a high fever, things of that nature, they
10 would collect information, be able to contact the
11 appropriate personnel that's needed, and then be able
12 to get those resources available.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And this person, is it
14 someone who -- I mean what is the background for the
15 School Health Officer?

16 MR. FELTON: Typically, it's someone that's
17 working in our school office. So I don't want to
18 confuse this as a medical professional at all.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

20 MR. FELTON: This is a person --

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So it's somebody
22 designated on your staff and you're the person that
23 deals with our sick kids?

24 MR. FELTON: There you go.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And it would be a non-

1 medical person?

2 MR. FELTON: That is correct. And that way --
3 basically, the documentation. Right? And then if we
4 had something where we had to send something home or
5 to a doctor or any kind of -- if we had an incident
6 where we did have to call 9-1-1 or an ambulance, then
7 that person has all the information they need and we
8 have all the documentation stored as well to be able
9 to transition the information off.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So then with this waiver
11 we would be providing you the opportunity to not have
12 to have a trained medical person onsite or within
13 your district?

14 MR. FELTON: Every day. We're contracting out.
15 We're seeking -- I want to clear it. We work with RN
16 nurses and things of that nature, but we're seeking
17 not to have one on campus every day.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Mr. Baldwin.

19 MR. BALDWIN: What would be your ideal -- so if
20 they're not on campus every day, would it be every-
21 other-day or do y'all have a framework that you're
22 trying to work towards as far as having a nurse on
23 campus?

24 MR. FELTON: I'm going to say no. I know that,
25 once again, we're looking at, especially at this high

1 school age -- and the data we're looking at it
2 doesn't -- we don't have a lot of incidents that are
3 going on. But we do have access to one and they are
4 present when we're doing anything that requires a
5 health -- a professional, a health professional.

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: If I might, I just want to
7 follow-up on that.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely, Ms. Wright-
9 McMurray.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So I'm then looking at
11 also your other support services. So you are -- so
12 you're also farming out the mental health as well,
13 and there's not anyone that's on campus that
14 addresses that either?

15 MR. FELTON: Yeah, but that is a little bit
16 different, especially with telemedicine these days.
17 And, once again, we have some MOUs set up with some
18 individuals, if needed, to come onsite. But, yeah,
19 every day having someone report to the campus, we do
20 not have that. But we do have access and do have
21 that support personnel available for students and
22 have those MOUs in place with those providers.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other follow-up questions
24 regarding the health services/school nurse waiver?

25 Okay. Let's continue.

1 SCHOOL COUNSELOR

2 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is School
3 Counselor, standards 4-E.1 and 4-E.2. I'll go ahead
4 and also do the Comprehensive School Counseling Plan,
5 which is Arkansas code annotated 6-18-2003(a)(2)(a)
6 and standard 2-C.2. I have no legal concerns with
7 either one of these.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions regarding School
9 Counselor or Counseling -- School Counseling Plan?

10 Ms. Coffman.

11 MS. COFFMAN: So, earlier, you mentioned a daily
12 academic advisor. So I can understand if you were
13 replacing a counselor with someone that was doing
14 something similar, but I'm not really sure why
15 there's not a Comprehensive School Counseling Plan.

16 MR. FELTON: I just want to clarify. We're not
17 seeking to waive the plan at all. We're seeking the
18 licensure requirement.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So you're not --

20 MS. WAGNER: They are specifically seeking
21 (a)(2)(a) of that, so 6-18-2003(a)(2)(a), which just
22 says that it has to be done -- the plan has to be
23 done by a licensed counselor. So it's just the
24 licensure aspect that they are seeking a waiver of,
25 not the plan in its entirety.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

2 MS. COFFMAN: So standard 2 says that you're
3 going to provide a developmentally appropriate
4 guidance program. And so is that what you're
5 waiving? You're not going to provide a guidance
6 program?

7 MR. FELTON: And that could've been my lack of
8 interpretation. We were thinking that that was
9 basically saying that we run a traditional guidance
10 counselor program, and whereas in our model -- I'm
11 just going to go again and educate you all -- we use
12 college and career coaches on our campus, as well as
13 our teachers serve as academic advisors for our
14 students. So teachers are having -- let me back-up.
15 Teachers are trained to be able to understand the
16 academics and working with student transcripts,
17 working of the course sequence, also working on what
18 things that it takes to graduate. And so we expect
19 our teachers to have ongoing conversation and
20 advising, as a counselor would, to not only use that
21 data they have but also to engage in those
22 conversations. And then we do have a Comprehensive
23 School Counseling Services Plan that we have those
24 individuals working through as well. We're just
25 seeking the waiver of having a traditional guidance

1 program that's guided by a certified guidance
2 counselor.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Does that -- does that meet --
4 I want to make sure what they're requesting is
5 reflected in the waiver application?

6 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So what I hear him saying is,
8 you know, they're only -- they're requesting a waiver
9 from having a certified guidance counselor, but
10 they're comfortable with the plan and all those sorts
11 of things.

12 MS. WAGNER: Yes. So does that mean, Mr.
13 Felton, you want to take away (2)(c)(2) or you want
14 to keep (2)(c)(2)?

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And (2)(c)(2) speaks directly
16 to the Comprehensive School Counseling Plan?

17 MS. WAGNER: It's the guidance program, yes, for
18 -- to aid students in educational, personal, social
19 and career development.

20 So we'll rescind that one?

21 Okay. So just to clarify -- you want to go
22 ahead and --

23 MR. WALTER: Yeah. Tripp Walter, APSRC.

24 I didn't really want to speak to that directly,
25 but I just wanted to assure the Panel that the school

1 is, and obviously will continue in the future, to
2 provide the Comprehensive School Counseling Plan
3 that's required by statute. I know there's a
4 confusion with (2)(c)(2), and I think that's going to
5 be eliminated now. And I know that -- well, I know
6 -- I think that was probably a concern of some of you
7 as to that. It's just, again, as with other of the
8 services, they handle the provision of it in a
9 slightly different way, but it is going to be
10 provided and provided with fidelity.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any final questions or comments
12 in regards to this portion of the waiver request?

13 MS. COFFMAN: So was (2)(c)(2) rescinded?

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, (2)(c)(2) has been agreed
15 upon and rescinded.

16 If you -- Mr. Felton, would you step to the mic
17 and agree that you have rescinded (2)(c)(2)?

18 MR. FELTON: The Charter agrees to rescind
19 (2)(c)(2).

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

21 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you.

23 Let's continue.

24 LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST/LIBRARY MEDIA SERVICES

25 MS. WAGNER: All right. So Library Media

1 Specialist and Library Media Services are the next
2 two waiver topics. I'm going to go ahead and do them
3 together. So it's Arkansas code annotated 6-25-103
4 and 6-25-104, and then it's standards 4-F.1, 4-F.2,
5 and 2-D.1. I did ask the Charter to be prepared to
6 discuss how they were going to teach Library Media
7 standards.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We'll allow the Charter to
9 address the question in regards to teaching Library
10 Media standards.

11 MR. FELTON: The Charter makes sure that the
12 Library Media standards are incorporated in our
13 English Language Arts courses to insure those
14 standards are covered.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions or comments in
16 regards to the response by the Charter in regards to
17 Library Media standards?

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And who is responsible for
21 that? I'm sorry; I'm -- I was trying --

22 MR. FELTON: I'm sorry. Our English Language
23 Arts courses.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions?

1 Ms. Coffman.

2 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. So previously you said that
3 there was not -- that most of your students were
4 working on a personalized learning plan. And so does
5 the curriculum that you're using already have that
6 embedded? Because I didn't see that type of direct
7 instruction when I was onsite.

8 MR. FELTON: No. This is supplemental
9 instruction that's embedded in those courses. It's
10 kind of the same -- we have to do the same thing,
11 even when you think of things like electronic
12 resources, teaching kids. You know, I had mentioned
13 the study skills and things of that nature. And so
14 it's supplemental to our curriculum but it's embedded
15 and taught to all students.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Let's continue.

17 FOOD SERVICES

18 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is Food
19 Services. And Mr. Walter and Mr. Felton will
20 probably have to help me with this one. I know they
21 were asking for Arkansas code annotated 6-18-705 and
22 standard 3-D.1. There was some confusion about the
23 rules, so --

24 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC.

25 To address the questions in Ms. Wagner's review,

1 we do not need a waiver of 6-18-705 and we do not
2 need to add the DESE rules governing Nutrition and
3 Physical Activity and Body Mass Index for Age
4 Assessment Protocols in Arkansas Public Schools.

5 MS. WAGNER: So to clarify, they would only be
6 asking for a waiver of standard 3-D.1.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions in regards to
8 that standard?

9 We'll continue.

10 SUPERINTENDENT

11 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is
12 Superintendent. It's Arkansas code annotated section
13 6-13-109, 6-14-427, standards 4-B.1, 4-B.2, and the
14 DESE rules governing Superintendent Mentoring
15 Program. There were no legal concerns.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Comments or questions regarding
17 this waiver request?

18 FOOD SERVICES (continuing)

19 MS. COFFMAN: Mr. Davis, I need to go back and
20 ask Ms. Wagner a question about Food Services.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely. Absolutely. We're
22 going to revisit the Food Services request. Ms.
23 Coffman, please, go ahead.

24 MS. COFFMAN: Ms. Wagner, what does that really
25 mean when they waive 3-D.1 for food? That means

1 they're not providing food?

2 MS. WAGNER: So I will let the Charter answer
3 that. I was -- Mr. Felton told me that they were in
4 fact providing food. But I will let Mr. Felton speak
5 on that.

6 MR. FELTON: Currently on our campuses we do
7 offer a breaks and lunch program. Just remind the
8 Panel, this district entails more than one school and
9 I'm sure there will be expansion plans in the future.
10 And so we just want to -- didn't want to put our-self
11 in the situation where we had a campus that we opened
12 up that was small and that didn't -- wasn't a need
13 for breaks and lunch program that we wouldn't be
14 requiring our-self to do so.

15 MS. COFFMAN: So if you're going to open up a
16 new campus, you would have to come before the Charter
17 Panel with an amendment and at that time you could do
18 that. But the way that standard is worded you're in
19 accordance with federal and state laws regarding food
20 services.

21 MR. FELTON: Yes, that is correct. And I'm just
22 reiterating that this is a waiver that we'll continue
23 to want to keep because we may open up a school in
24 the future and because there's multiple schools
25 within this district that we don't want to give this

1 waiver up and have to come back and ask for the
2 waiver again. Just reminding the Panel we have had
3 this waiver for 10 years in existence of our charter,
4 so it's not foreign or not a new waiver.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So is this waiver -- I'm sorry;
6 Ms. Coffman, why don't -- is there anything else
7 you'd like to ask before I jump in?

8 MS. COFFMAN: No. It just doesn't make sense
9 why you're waiving some state and federal laws around
10 food.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And so my question was, it
12 appears that you then -- you haven't utilized this
13 waiver, right, over the -- and currently you're not
14 utilizing this waiver, nor is there a plan to utilize
15 this waiver with the current existence or in the
16 current schools. Is that fair to say? It appears
17 that your thinking is moving forward there may be a
18 need for this waiver?

19 MR. FELTON: That is accurate.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: With that thought, I think the
21 question then becomes if you were to move forward
22 with an expansion or an additional campus there will
23 be a process at which you can then apply for that
24 waiver for that specific campus. And so it might be
25 more appropriate to do that at that time versus

1 needing this waiver now. So is this something you're
2 willing to rescind?

3 MR. FELTON: Can I get a second?

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely.

5 MR. BALDWIN: May I ask a question? It's a
6 legal question.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Sure. Sure. We have a
8 question by Mr. Baldwin that's going to go to Legal
9 Staff.

10 MR. BALDWIN: So Ms. Coffman talked about
11 federal and state laws. We don't have the authority
12 to rescind a federal law, do we?

13 MS. WAGNER: No, we do not.

14 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

15 MS. WAGNER: And I would just echo what Ms.
16 Coffman said. They would have to -- in order to open
17 a new campus they would have to come and request an
18 amendment before this CAP, at which case they could
19 then put that waiver on -- that waiver request on
20 that at that point. And the only other charters that
21 have a waiver of that section are virtual charters;
22 that's it.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Thanks.

24 MR. FELTON: All right, Mr. Davis.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes, sir.

1 MR. FELTON: We would like to keep the waiver,
2 but it seems that --

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, it is, you know --

4 MR. FELTON: -- the State has otherwise. So we
5 -- I just want to insure that we at least keep this
6 waiver, because we still need the waiver within the
7 district for our online school. I don't know if the
8 State just wants to make it where that particular
9 campus continues to have the waiver, and I guess
10 we'll have to rescind it for the rest of the
11 campuses. And then if I open up a new campus I'll
12 have to request for that waiver in the future.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Is that something that's a
14 possibility or if they have the waiver for the online
15 they then have to -- they need to waive it for the
16 entire district?

17 MS. WAGNER: So we can specify that it is for
18 the virtual only. We have other charters that we
19 have done that with, so -- other school districts as
20 well.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Are you in agreement
22 with that, Mr. Felton?

23 MR. FELTON: Yes, we're good with that.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Thank you.

25 Let's continue. And the next waiver request,

1 please?

2 SUPERINTENDENT (continuing)

3 MS. WAGNER: We had gotten to Superintendent.
4 Was there any discussion about Superintendent? Would
5 you like to go back and --

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Sorry. That is correct. We
7 did -- Superintendent was introduced but then we
8 backed up.

9 Any questions or comments in regards to the
10 waiver request for Superintendent?

11 There doesn't appear to be any. Let's continue.

12 TEACHER LICENSURE

13 MS. WAGNER: Okay. The next waiver topic is
14 Teacher Licensure, Arkansas code annotated section 6-
15 15-1004, 6-17-309, 6-17-401, 6-17-418, 6-17-902, 6-
16 17-908, and 6-17-919, standard 4-D.1, and the DESE
17 rules governing Educator Licensure section 7. No
18 legal concerns.

19 MS. SARACINI: I would like to make a comment.
20 You guys have the highest percentage of licensed
21 staff of any of the charters I've reviewed. I
22 commend you.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any questions or comments in
24 regards to that charter waiver request?

25 Okay. Hearing none, we'll continue.

1 TRANSPORTATION

2 MS. WAGNER: Next waiver topic is
3 Transportation, Arkansas code annotated section 6-19-
4 101 et seq. No legal concerns.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions regarding this
6 waiver?

7 There doesn't appear to be any. Let's continue.

8 BUSINESS MANAGER

9 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic is Business
10 Manager, Arkansas code annotated section 6-15-2302
11 and standard 3-A.5. No legal concerns.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments?

13 There doesn't appear to be any. We will
14 continue.

15 9-12 CURRICULUM

16 MS. WAGNER: The next waiver topic, 9-12
17 Curriculum, standard 1-A.1.3. I have no legal
18 concerns.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Questions or comments regarding
20 Curriculum waiver standards?

21 MS. COFFMAN: Yes.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have a question too.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Why don't we start with
24 Ms. Coffman, and then we'll go to Ms. Wright-
25 McMurray.

1 Ms. Coffman, please.

2 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. Mr. Felton, if you would
3 explain why you're requesting this waiver and what
4 this really means?

5 MR. FELTON: Due to the unique population that
6 the Charter serves, the Charter seeks to continue to
7 offer the necessary things students need to be able
8 to graduate from high school. I do want to make a
9 note, in the event that there's a student or parent
10 interested in taking additional course offerings that
11 we do meet those students and parents where they are
12 and we have extensive partnerships with people like
13 Virtual Arkansas to offer those courses. But we do
14 focus on the 22 and we will remain to offer the 22
15 required graduation requirements.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman, does that meet --
17 is that answer satisfactory to your question?

18 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. I think Ms. Wright-McMurray
19 also had a question.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Absolutely. Ms. Wright-
21 McMurray.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Like previously, just
23 wanting to get a better understanding of why JAG is
24 specifically mentioned as a reason or rationale for
25 needing this waiver?

1 MR. FELTON: So some of our students -- the
2 course offerings and the programs that they're doing,
3 once again we're just seeking not to offer the full
4 38 units, but being able to offer what students need
5 to graduate.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Wright-McMurray, does that
7 answer --

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: It can be done without
9 needing to specify it as part of the waiver, but
10 we'll just -- that's all of my conversation.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Let's continue.

14 RESCINDED AND NEW WAIVERS

15 MS. WAGNER: Okay. For the continuation of
16 waivers, the Charter is requesting to rescind five
17 waivers. They are requesting to rescind Acquisition
18 of Commodities, which is Arkansas code annotated
19 section 6-21-303; the School Safety, standard 6-A.2;
20 the Monitoring, standard 1-A.3; Consolidation,
21 Annexation and Formation, Arkansas code annotated 6-
22 13-201 et seq.; and Attendance, the DESE rules
23 governing Mandatory Attendance Requirements for
24 Students Grades 9-12.

25 The Charter is asking for no new waivers.

1 And that concludes my legal review.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for the legal review.

3 Are there any questions regarding the waivers to
4 rescind?

5 Hearing none, we will move on.

6 INTERNAL REVIEW

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: If I can ask Ms. Summons to
8 approach the podium and give us an understanding of
9 the internal review and any issues that arose from
10 the internal review.

11 MS. SUMMONS: Dorie Summons, Public School
12 Charter Director.

13 We don't have any remaining concerns. However,
14 we do have some Internal Review Committee members
15 that are via Zoom and some in person --

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Fantastic.

17 MS. SUMMONS: -- and that's in case you have any
18 questions.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

20 PANEL QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We'll move to the broad
22 conversation with the Panel.

23 Panel, I invite you to offer questions in
24 regards to the charter renewal from Premier High
25 Schools of Arkansas. Questions or comments?

1 Mr. Baldwin.

2 MR. BALDWIN: When did you guys obtain your
3 first charter approval? I'm looking at the different
4 schools --

5 MR. FELTON: In 2012. We opened up 13-14 school
6 year. Premier High School of Little Rock was our
7 first one.

8 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Was that a 10-year
9 approval?

10 MR. FELTON: Five-year approval at that time.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Five-year. So this -- so you've
12 had two five-year approvals or --

13 MR. FELTON: That is -- we were issued a charter
14 for five years and then we were renewed for five
15 years.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So you're choosing a 10-
17 year renewal this time. Is there a reason why you
18 wanted to go 10 instead of just another 5?

19 MR. FELTON: Yes. I like to think that the work
20 we're doing in Arkansas, the work -- if I can speak
21 on the -- I guess the grandfather campus of Little
22 Rock, I think about 10 years of that school being the
23 community school; I think about the 10 graduation
24 classes that went to that school, the alumni; I think
25 about the community partnerships and engagement in

1 that school. And if I was to sit here and think
2 about what that community -- that school community
3 looks like with that school not being there, I see an
4 asset missing from the community. That school has
5 worked hard to be able to niche in the community.
6 And so it being a community school -- we've had your
7 blessing, as well as the support of our families and
8 our students for 10 years, and we're looking forward
9 to 10 more years of that work. And so with that
10 being said -- and a thing that we're confident in,
11 because we did it for 10 years, we continue to share
12 with you all the results and the feedback that we're
13 receiving from the people that we serve, and we want
14 to continue to serve them for 10 years.

15 MR. BALDWIN: So, you know, I look at you guys
16 as a new -- kind of a new school model. And there
17 was, you know, a number of questions that I'm not
18 sure we've fully grasped the answers to. And then
19 your ESSA scores are not -- you know, you're new, so
20 you don't have scores like an older school would. So
21 I guess my thought would be is there a detriment to
22 you, other than the emotional side of it, of having a
23 5-year renewal as opposed to a 10? Is there a
24 functional detriment?

25 MR. FELTON: I would say no. But I am seeking

1 -- and if that's the Panel's stance of it's the ESSA
2 Index Score that's concerning for the 5 years, I
3 would highly challenge you all to look at some of the
4 qualitative data that we have and also looking at how
5 we're fulfilling our mission and vision. I do
6 understand that the State has created an
7 accountability system that's used by all public
8 schools in Arkansas. I think the State has also
9 taken a stance to determine that there are some
10 unique schools in the state that serve unique
11 populations, that that accountability model may not
12 be the most accurate measurement. And so when I look
13 at the work that we're doing and I look at the
14 response we're receiving from the people that we
15 serve, I am very proud of the work that we're doing.
16 And this team that sits behind me, they don't ignore
17 that data. They're very conscious of the ESSA Index
18 Score. We're working with institutions to understand
19 what calculates that ESSA Score -- I mean the ESSA
20 Index Score. And then we're educating our
21 administrators and teachers on what day-to-day
22 behavior, whether it's attendance, growth on
23 assessments, students engaged in community service
24 learning, to be able to impact that score. But I
25 would challenge you to not let that score be a

1 complete evaluation of the work that we're doing in
2 our schools and the impact that we're making in the
3 community.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any other questions or
5 comments?

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have a comment.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes.

8 MS. NEWTON: I have a comment.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Why don't we start with Ms.
10 Newton --

11 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- and then we'll come back.

13 MS. NEWTON: And I agree with you
14 wholeheartedly. But I think it's our responsibility
15 to look at the standards and the rules and
16 regulations as they apply to public schools -- not
17 public schools -- charter schools. And my argument
18 is probably -- it may never happen, but this group of
19 individuals and their families need more support than
20 others. But I don't think we can look at waiving
21 things around health, healthcare, food and a variety
22 of other waivers that I just -- I'm not comfortable.
23 Because by doing so, in my interpretation, we
24 discount the value of these families if we say, you
25 know, everybody else has got a nurse, access to a

1 nurse and whatever. Whether it's food or whatever it
2 is, whatever we're looking at, I think that we do a
3 disservice to the population that's already
4 struggling to get to these points and need more
5 consideration than some of the public schools, in my
6 estimation.

7 So I struggle with that, that some of the things
8 that involve health and wellness and food and
9 nutrition aren't the most important things. And I
10 think my personal feeling is that you have a solid
11 program and a solid approach and curriculum, but
12 there are some things that are troubling to me. And
13 I don't know about the process but -- if we could,
14 you know, move on with the caveat that these things
15 will be addressed and corrected within a period or
16 whatever. But personally I think that this is the
17 most fragile population of all, and to assume that we
18 can -- you know, food, it may be the only meal of the
19 day. I don't know. Healthcare, you know, if you
20 said to me, "Well, we have a CNA on staff and she
21 does an assessment" -- but if I'm the secretary and
22 somebody comes in and has a 104 fever I may think --
23 just think they need a Tylenol. I'm not suggesting
24 -- but it's not an expectation -- I don't think it's
25 reasonable to have an expectation that someone that

1 doesn't have a connection or some training can make
2 decisions, because then it opens you up to liability.
3 You know, my kid had a third-degree whatever and you
4 thought it was just a red spot -- a third-degree
5 burn. So I don't know.

6 But I'm saying to you, based on my experience
7 and career, is that we have a deeper responsibility
8 to the young people that have been dropped out or
9 pushed out of school. And there are a variety of
10 different reasons and a variety of different supports
11 that for whatever reason the public school can't do,
12 and you're designed to do that and are doing a
13 wonderful job. So I take the stance that maybe
14 you're more responsible than, you know, the system;
15 you're more responsible to making sure that every T
16 is crossed and every I is dotted as it relates to
17 population, because if you lose them again the
18 likelihood of them going straight to the Department
19 of Corrections is a high percentage.

20 So that's my point, for whatever it's worth.

21 MR. FELTON: Yes.

22 MS. NEWTON: But I -- you know, I think extra
23 pain, extra whatever, extra help, extra supports,
24 whether we've got -- you know, we might need mentors,
25 we might need somebody that sponsors somebody into

1 welding to get their welding -- you know, all those
2 things that are available in public school that are
3 just pushed -- and, you know, you either do it or
4 don't; you know, whether it's a math class, science
5 or whatever I think we need to be more diligent. And
6 not to suggest that one population is more important
7 than the other, because a public school says, "Well,
8 what about us?" But I just really think that this is
9 oftentimes the last chance for these young people and
10 everything has to be looked at in totality. And it's
11 a little bit different maybe than a school in the
12 Heights, say for instance.

13 MR. FELTON: Yeah.

14 MS. NEWTON: Yeah. So that's just my opinion.

15 MR. FELTON: I definitely appreciate you saying
16 that. That is what we believe in, Ms. Newton. I
17 don't want to mislead anyone on this Panel that we're
18 doing anything less for this population. I spoke to
19 a lot of things that we are doing. It is -- it's
20 data-driven. And, you know, if I can speak to --
21 what we're speaking to is the sustainability and the
22 impact that this school is having over X-amount of
23 years. And I can assure you, whether we're granted 5
24 or 10 years, we would never offer students anything
25 less than what they would receive across town.

1 MS. NEWTON: I believe that.

2 MR. FELTON: Now, the good thing about what we
3 have is we're small and so we are able to personalize
4 and address the individual needs of our families.
5 Now, it may look different, you know, in our school.
6 You know, maybe we're contracting it out or we have a
7 partnership. But, you know, just like Mr. Duvall --
8 he communicated that we have almost 15 partnerships
9 and pathways that we're doing for students. And I'm
10 not comparing it to any other school in our area or
11 any other charter school. But that's come through
12 our relationships through our community partners
13 where we're able to offer these things that students
14 don't have opportunity at their local school they're
15 at.

16 So we are going to continue to go above and
17 beyond for this population. Because as you said,
18 this population does need more.

19 MS. NEWTON: And I think you should go above and
20 beyond. I think it's your mission, it's your goal,
21 and it's your passion. But on the other hand, we
22 can't -- I cannot, as a Charter Authorizing Panel
23 member, look at the things that are just as critical
24 concerning health and welfare that are not met. I
25 don't say this is not a valid or worthy application

1 to move forward. But just -- you know, the -- you
2 said we'll have 15 partners. Well, maybe we look at
3 them and say, "You know, you need about five more
4 because you need some -- to cover these areas." So
5 I'm not saying that you haven't had the effort or
6 that you aren't putting forth the effort in dealing
7 with a vulnerable population. But at the same time I
8 -- you know, earlier, when we were reviewing a
9 charter and had questions about them having one nurse
10 for a system as opposed to no nurse, no medical care
11 at all. So I think it's important, and especially in
12 this day and time, that we give the best that's
13 available to us. And this is just as important as --
14 I don't -- I can't say anything -- one -- it's just
15 as important to me, for me, as getting Algebra I.
16 Because unless you're health, unless you're safe,
17 unless you're full, none of that matters.

18 MR. TAYLOR: May I just address --

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah. And before you do that,
20 just a point of clarification, Ms. Newton, I do --
21 you know, based upon what has been discussed here
22 today, they are providing food services, breakfast
23 and lunch, to all students, and have been. And so I
24 don't think that there is a concern about their
25 ability to meet that need.

1 MS. NEWTON: Oh, I thought -- I'm sorry; I
2 misunderstood. Because I thought they were talking
3 about additional students wouldn't have that.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: They were saying if they were
5 interested in opening --

6 MS. NEWTON: I see.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- another campus --

8 MS. NEWTON: I see.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- would they -- would they be
10 able to do that immediately for that campus.

11 MS. NEWTON: Right.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: But in regards to the current
13 campuses that they serve they are enrolled in a
14 program to provide --

15 MS. NEWTON: Right. I did understand that.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- breakfast and lunch to all
17 students. Just a point of clarification.

18 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Sorry about that.

20 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Davis. I
21 specifically wanted to bring that up and make sure
22 that we -- that the Panel understood that, which is
23 that we do provide breakfast and lunch to all of our
24 on-campus students. It is only in the -- and we do
25 have a virtual program and that's the only location

1 in which we do not provide the services.

2 The other is is that we do contract -- we do
3 contract with an RA, and so we do have -- sorry -- an
4 RN. We do contract with an RN, and so we do have
5 health services available on-call; they're just not
6 on campus. And so it's the on-campus folks where we
7 have that health -- where we have the Health
8 Administrator who's there. One of the reasons for
9 that, and it's very important for us, is we work in
10 very small campuses; so our campuses are very small
11 and they do not have, you know, the size nor the
12 resources on each campus. And the reason we do that
13 is so that we can go into communities and work with
14 our group of students in a very individualized
15 fashion. And so if you look at our campuses, we only
16 have one campus, other than our virtual, that's over
17 100 students; the others are all right around 100
18 students or less. And so we do look different. We
19 have an individualized program. We seek to make sure
20 every single student is taken care of, and we seek to
21 make sure that all of their needs are taken care of
22 as they go through our program. It just looks
23 different than other systems. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

25 MR. FELTON: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Wright-McMurray, I know you
2 had questions or comments.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes. So this is one of
4 the charters that I did have an opportunity to go and
5 visit. So, first, I just wanted to thank Mr. Felton
6 and his team for hosting myself and one of my other
7 team members on that day. We did get a chance to
8 visit classrooms and interact with teachers -- and I
9 don't know if they were prepped or not, but the kids
10 were all actively engaged.

11 But I will say also that I noticed, that
12 probably didn't come from prep, is that some of our
13 students that, for whatever reason, were not
14 successful in a traditional classroom environment and
15 are now at Premier are finding their second chance,
16 so a second life at a high school experience. One
17 example was a student that was running for Class
18 President or something like that; she had -- her
19 campaign banners were all over the walls. And so,
20 traditionally, those may have been students that
21 probably would not have been given that opportunity
22 in a traditional setting, but now at Premier they're
23 getting that second chance. So I would like to say
24 that I feel that they are working towards -- almost
25 to Mr. Baldwin's point -- that they are working

1 towards getting there.

2 In talking with Mr. Duvall about CTE and what's
3 happening there and, you know, the JAG program,
4 they're putting those pieces in place.

5 I feel -- and I know we're not at that part yet
6 -- I feel that maybe 10 years does not give us a
7 chance to -- give you guys a chance to come back and
8 to really showcase where you've gotten to. So,
9 potentially, my thought is just that probably we do
10 maybe need to consider a shorter time, just to give
11 you that opportunity to show a little bit more
12 outcomes and success on what you have accomplished,
13 so you can better tell your story. Because I think
14 there is a really good thing, a great thing that's
15 happening there. You guys are putting the pieces in
16 place to have a phenomenal system in place. But I'm
17 just not 100% sure you're just 100% there right now,
18 but I see those things coming.

19 Back to Ms. Saracini's point of having the most
20 licensed teachers, they're trying to put the correct
21 pieces in place to be successful. And so I think
22 just giving them an opportunity to be able to come
23 back and just show that I think would be of benefit
24 on a modified timeline.

25 MR. FELTON: Yeah. I was going to -- and if I

1 can, I appreciate you coming to visit our campus, Dr.
2 McMurray, and that feedback. We do -- we do want to
3 come back; right? We want you guys to hear the great
4 things that are going on. But this renewal hearing,
5 even if we could do it in seven years -- I mean, this
6 actual renewal hearing -- we don't have any problem
7 coming back to you all, sharing the great work that
8 we're doing in our schools and the progress that
9 we're making. But to come to actually be renewed and
10 renew the charter, I really would like to do that
11 every 7 to 10 years. I'm negotiating now at 7. But
12 this renewal process -- we would love to come back
13 and share the great work that we're doing. And for
14 those that have been on the Panel, we're a frequent
15 group and a frequent organization you get to visit
16 with to hear some of this work. We don't shy away
17 from that.

18 MR. BALDWIN: You know, my thought is we're
19 trying to help. You know, we're not trying to cut
20 your period back because we're trying to hurt; we're
21 trying to help because you all are a new school. It
22 is different when you're new than when you've been
23 around 20 or 30 or 40 years. So I kind of like your
24 7-year negotiation.

25 But one of the ideas, as we were talking -- and

1 we've done this before yesterday -- what if we -- and
2 I'm just talking to the Panel now --

3 MR. FELTON: Okay.

4 MR. BALDWIN: -- because I'm just -- this is
5 just my thoughts, so they have to think about this.
6 What if we did a 7-year renewal and then asked them
7 to come back in 3 years and report to us, like we did
8 the other group?

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yeah.

10 MR. BALDWIN: Is there any thought on that?

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So let me -- a couple of
12 things. First of all, I'm smiling because I love the
13 fight. I mean, there is no doubt in my mind that
14 you've got someone who is working for the best
15 interest of students standing before us today. And I
16 thoroughly appreciate that and really want to applaud
17 that.

18 I do have some concerns, particularly when I
19 look at growth, right, and -- because growth is what
20 happens when students are with you and the
21 institution is an outlier. Now to be fair, you're
22 dealing with probably the most vulnerable population
23 of students. And so there is some real challenges in
24 getting those students to get to a point -- and it
25 takes probably a little longer to get them to a point

1 in which you can start to see some movement on
2 growth. But I appreciate that. I appreciate the
3 effort.

4 Help me understand, outside of just pure fight
5 with negotiation, 7 versus 5. What -- is there a
6 programmatic reason why 7 makes more sense than 10,
7 than 5? Or is it just because, you know, I -- you
8 know, is it just purely negotiation? I'd like to
9 think that we're focused on, you know, the impact of
10 -- an impact to the program by providing an
11 opportunity to do 10 years or 7 years or 5 years,
12 like what does that look like. I think on the 5-year
13 scale, all right, I think we have some -- well, on
14 the 5-year scale I think that there is an argument to
15 be made or a conversation to be had around the issue
16 of accountability and insuring that we are, as a
17 panel, doing our due-diligence in regards to
18 accountability by limiting it to a 5-year time period
19 that then will require the organization to come
20 before us, sooner rather than later. And I think
21 that's where some of the comfort comes from. I am
22 not sure, based upon how you responded to 7 years,
23 that there's some reason and rationale behind the 7
24 years outside of "I wanted 10, you want 5, let's kind
25 of cut it in the middle."

1 MR. FELTON: Part of that is negotiation, but
2 the majority of it is believing in the work that we
3 do every day. I am very aware that you can award me
4 5 years today, and due to the authority of this panel
5 you can request me to come back in six months. So I
6 would also challenge the Panel if you have the
7 ability to call this Charter back to report out at
8 any given time, then what would be your concern by
9 issuing 7 versus 10? We are committed to doing the
10 right work every day. Whereas, it's good to look up
11 and have a panel or a charter date that's expiring in
12 5 years or expiring in 10 years, that people that sit
13 behind me are committed to doing the right work every
14 day, one kid at a time. That will not change no
15 matter how many years are awarded today. I'm hoping
16 that having 10 years of doing the work in Arkansas,
17 and having the support of the people that we serve
18 and having the support of our community partners
19 helps with the argument that this has been a model, a
20 school and a charter, that has been an asset in the
21 community for 10 years and will continue to be an
22 asset in the community for 10 years under the
23 direction of this office and under the direction of
24 this Panel.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

1 Any other questions or comments before we move
2 to a motion?

3 MS. COFFMAN: Yes.

4 MS. NEWTON: Was Ms. Summons --

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ms. Coffman.

6 MS. NEWTON: I didn't know if Ms. Summons was
7 coming.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Let's go to Ms. Coffman first.

9 MS. COFFMAN: So this feeling that -- I
10 appreciate that ResponsiveEd is providing the service
11 for these students. But I came today to hear some
12 specificity in the action plan for these students,
13 and I didn't hear that. I didn't hear the
14 specificity that I was expecting around attendance,
15 because we were onsite and did not see the number of
16 kids that should've been there. I didn't -- we
17 talked; I asked them to come into my office and we
18 worked on that. I'm looking for strategic plans to
19 address the needs of kids, and I think you hit on it
20 when you said that you didn't see it in the growth.
21 And so whether the kids are onsite or working
22 remotely, there should be growth if the wraparound
23 services are being provided.

24 And then when -- the vagueness around the
25 Calendar, the Class Size and the Teaching Load is

1 just not getting to the specificity that I need for
2 anything beyond 5 years.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for that, Ms.
4 Coffman.

5 Any other Charter Panel members with comments or
6 questions?

7 With that being the case, I'd like to entertain
8 a motion.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I move that we approve the
10 renewal of Premier charter for a 5-year period.

11 MS. SARACINI: I'll second.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: There's been a motion and a
13 second that we approve the application for charter
14 renewal with Premier High Schools of Arkansas for a
15 5-year time period. Are there any conversations
16 about the motion?

17 Hearing none, I ask that all Charter Panel
18 members indicate their approval by stating "aye."

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any denials or any problems
21 with that?

22 It has been moved and properly seconded; the
23 "ayes" have it.

24 Congratulations on the charter renewal of 5
25 years for Premier High Schools of Arkansas.

1 Panel Members, can you please record your vote
2 and then we will get back to -- we will talk about
3 that vote.

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Why don't we start -- we
6 haven't started with Ms. Coffman. Why don't we start
7 there, and then we'll go to Ms. Newton.

8 Ms. Coffman.

9 MS. COFFMAN: I voted for the 5-year renewal.
10 The Charter needs to continue to work on their
11 specificity of their plans to support students.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Ms. Newton.

13 MS. NEWTON: I vote yes. And I said though
14 there are concerns about operation, I think that the
15 Charter has demonstrated consistency in moving in the
16 right direction.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Mr. Baldwin.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I vote yes. I believe the
19 5-year renewal is appropriate for a new charter. And
20 I think you guys have moved a long distance in 5
21 years.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I voted yes, based upon the
23 identification of the staff, the desire to serve the
24 most challenged students, and the opportunity to
25 provide positive opportunities to students. I

1 support a 5-year renewal application.

2 Ms. Saracini.

3 MS. SARACINI: I support the 5-year renewal of
4 Premier High Schools of Arkansas. Looking forward to
5 seeing the growth in the near future of student
6 success.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Ms. Wright-McMurray.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for. And I said I
9 support the motion. Premier charter is developing a
10 plan to improve outcomes for their students. The 5-
11 year renewal will allow the Charter an opportunity to
12 begin further development of this plan, implement
13 their strategies that can present measurable outcomes
14 in accordance with their population.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you so much.
16 Congratulations.

17 MR. FELTON: Thank y'all.

- 18 1) CONSIDERATION OF THE 2023 CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL MEETING
19 DATES
20 2) CONSIDERATION OF THE 2023 CHARTER APPLICATION AND RENEWAL
21 TIMELINE

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Panel, I do want to remind you
23 that there were a couple of items that we moved
24 earlier today toward the end of the agenda. And so
25 we need to go ahead and address those items.

1 The first item we had was in regards to the --
2 remind me?

3 MS. WAGNER: It was the Calendar.

4 I was actually going to ask if you would like to
5 table those two until tomorrow we can do that.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: What's the pleasure of the
7 Panel? Would we like to table those until tomorrow?

8 Yes.

9 Do we need a vote and a motion on that?

10 MS. WAGNER: No. You can just table them.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. We'll go ahead and table
12 those two items tomorrow. I think we've gotten our
13 sea legs under us, so it will move rather quickly
14 when we get to those items tomorrow.

15 Thank you so much for all the time given today,
16 and thanks for all the hard work by Staff and those
17 individuals supporting students in the state of
18 Arkansas.

19 ADJOURNMENT

20 MS. WAGNER: Yeah. We didn't do a motion to
21 adjourn.

22 Wait, wait, wait. Mr. Davis

23 MS. SARACINI: I make the motion to adjourn.

24 MS. WAGNER: We didn't do a motion to adjourn.

25 MS. SARACINI: I make the motion to adjourn.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Motion to adjourn.
2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I second.
3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And a second. All right.
4 MS. SARACINI: All in favor?
5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: All those in favor say "aye."
6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)
7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Any opposed?
8 Motion passes.

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10
11 (The meeting was concluded at 4:38 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on December 13, 2022; that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

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

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

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: January 1, 2023.

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